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May We Have Your Attention Please? Human-Rights NGOs and the Problem of Global Communication

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Abstract

Historically, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) have relied on mainstream news media to expose human-rights violations and encourage governments to pressure the perpetrators. Thanks to the Internet, NGOs are crafting new strategies for conducting information politics. Despite the obvious democratization of access to the means of communication, however, the new media may in fact represent a more challenging environment in which to be heard for some groups seeking global attention. We draw on agenda-setting research to develop a theory of global attention bottlenecks and use it to explain the success of 257 transnational human-rights groups at generating attention in both international mainstream news media and social media outlets. We conclude that most NGOs lack the organizational resources to compete effectively for either traditional news coverage or for public attention and that the Internet is unlikely to resolve the problem of global communication.

Keywords

social media, Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, NGO, human rights, news media, advocacy

> Amnesty International doesn't just reveal the outrage of human rights abuse but inspires hope for a better world through public action and international solidarity. We help stop human rights abuses by mobilizing our members and supporters to put pressure on governments, armed groups, companies and intergovernmental bodies.
>
> —Amnesty International[1]

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The quote above summarizes the strategy of publicizing human-rights violations to bring international pressure to bear on the perpetrators. Although of course nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) engage in a wide range of advocacy activities and not all NGOs seek publicity to help them in their work, most of the literature on transnational activism acknowledges that the ability to raise awareness, frame issues, and hold abusers accountable in the public sphere is a critical asset. Scholars have pointed to numerous examples of successful efforts to raise global awareness, including the antiapartheid movement in South Africa, the Zapatista movement in Mexico, the campaign to ban landmines, and the Free Tibet movement. In each case, scholars have argued that NGO networks were able to share new information, reframe existing problems, and inform public opinion by engaging the news media, thereby encouraging governments to take action (Bob 2005, 2009; Bogert 2011; Burgerman 2001; Froehling 1997; Keck and Sikkink 1998; Khagram and Sikkink 2002; Price 1998, 2003; Risse-Kappen et al. 1999; Ron et al. 2005; Shipper 2012).

Thanks to the Internet and the rapid emergence of new and social media platforms, NGOs have more tools at their disposal than ever to sound the alarm and generate international awareness; many observers have heralded the arrival of a new era in NGO effectiveness (Deibert 2000; Earl and Kimport 2011). Clay Shirky (2011: 28–43) has argued, "As the communications landscape gets denser, more complex, and more participatory, the networked population is gaining greater access to information, more opportunities to engage in public speech, and an enhanced ability to undertake collective action." Such comments reflect an important thrust of constructivist arguments about the emergence and impact of norms in world politics (Finnemore and Sikkink 1998; Price 2003) and a plank in the optimists' platform in the debate over the emerging role of the Internet in politics and foreign affairs (for an excellent brief discussion, see Chouliaraki 2008; also Benkler 2007; Howard et al. 2011; Shirky 2011; Waldorf 2012). In short, many observers believe that the Internet is "supersizing" the NGO community's capacity to conduct information politics of various kinds (Earl and Kimport 2011; Kingston and Stam 2013).

We argue, on the contrary, that the optimists have made the mistake of focusing too much on the nature of technology and too little on the central problem of global communication: the scarcity of attention. In short, although some of the specific challenges have changed with the evolution of the Internet, the enduring scarcity of both news media and public attention ensures that transnational information politics is an expensive and highly competitive process. As a result, conducting even modestly successful global information campaigns is much more difficult than many have believed and will remain difficult in the future.

Furthermore, despite a good deal of case study-based scholarship on NGO information politics, there is little quantitative evidence to support the notion that NGOs are able to make regular, strategic use of the global news media, much less the newer social media. In fact, despite the centrality of news coverage to many accounts of NGO success, there are few studies that examine the NGO news coverage link or how much news coverage specific transnational NGOs generate and the factors that determine their success. As a result, the debate over the potential impact of the Internet lacks an important baseline for comparison.

In this article, we address the debate about the potential impact of the Internet on NGO global communication efforts and attempt to establish such a baseline by asking how successful NGOs are at generating attention with respect both to global news media coverage and to the Internet and the social media. Our findings strongly suggest that conventional assumptions about the effectiveness of the traditional news media-enabled information politics are misguided and cast serious doubt on the notion that the Internet presents a solution to the problem of global communication.

In the next section, we briefly review the literature on NGO information politics and describe the problem of attention scarcity. We then outline and test several hypotheses regarding the potential success of human-rights NGOs at gaining attention through both the traditional and new media. After describing our data and methods, we present our findings and conclude with a discussion of the implications.

Transnational Information Politics and the Competition for Attention

In their pioneering work, *Activists beyond Borders*, Keck and Sikkink (1998) identified information politics as a central element of transnational activism. Almost by definition, the power of information politics generally and of the boomerang pattern more specifically stems from the level of visibility an NGO's efforts achieve. Although NGOs conduct a great deal of useful work and communication that is not visible to public audiences, transnational human-rights NGOs rely on information politics to set public agendas, raise political stakes, change government incentive structures, and reframe existing situations, which historically has meant reliance on the media (Cottle 2008; Cottle and Nolan 2007; Franks 2010; Koopmans 2004; Ron et al. 2005). This is especially true given the geographic and cultural distances between the groups NGOs are trying to help and the publics and governments NGOs are trying to mobilize. Almost by definition, the power of information politics stems from the level of visibility an NGOs efforts achieve. As Keck and Sikkink (1998: 22–23) argue,

> The media is an essential partner in network information politics . . . Although NGO influence often depends on securing powerful allies, their credibility still depends in part on their ability to mobilize their own members and affect public opinion via the media.

Thus, like most political actors, NGOs will almost always prefer more attention to less attention, other things being equal (Cottle and Nolan 2007; Murdie and Peksen 2014).

Although the strategy of information politics is appealing from the perspective of pluralist democratic theory, we argue that significant information effects, whether via old or new media, will always be exceptions rather than the norm and that the ability to initiate them is for the most part limited to a handful of organizations. The central reason for this is that attention is a scarce resource. As the extensive literature on agenda setting has demonstrated, no matter which audience we consider (the news media, individual citizens, government officials, etc.), the amount of attention that audience can pay to what is happening in the world is fixed.

As a result, the competition for attention is a zero-sum game. Any attention one actor gains is attention lost by another. On any given day, the volume of issues and voices looking for attention vastly exceeds the carrying capacity of any of these audiences. And because attention is a critical prerequisite for political action, it follows that the competition for attention is strenuous, and victory requires significant resources (Carmines and Stimson 1989; Downs 1972; Hilgartner and Bosk 1988; Koopmans 2004; McCombs and Zhu 1995; Neuman 1990; Walker 1983; Webster 2011; Zhu 1992).

NGOs and the Competition for News Media Attention

Human-rights groups seeking global news coverage face several obstacles stemming from the scarcity of attention. First, they must compete both against other, more powerful political actors as well as with an increasing number of other human-rights NGOs and their causes (Cooley and Ron 2007; Cottle and Nolan 2007), not to mention other kinds of news and information altogether. As a great deal of research has shown, most reporting about public policy is indexed to official sources and traditional government beats (Bennett et al. 2008). As NGOs typically lack a formal role in the policy process and many are relatively unknown, even to journalists, the indexing process ensures that most NGOs are fighting an uphill battle to gain media attention for their campaigns (Danelian and Page 1994; Franks 2010; Thrall 2006; Waisbord 2011).

Second, as many studies have shown, the attention of the Western/Northern news media is heavily skewed toward a few countries; most countries in the developing world get almost no coverage whatsoever even in the few elite newspapers like the *New York Times* that provide extensive coverage of foreign affairs (Wu 2000). Wu (2007), for example, found that not a single African country made the list of top twenty most covered nations in either the traditional or online versions of major U.S. news media (including television) during two sample periods in 2003. Thus, NGOs active in those less visible nations must face the reality that their efforts will likely claim a very small proportion of the global news hole.

Third, the skewed distribution of overall news attention extends to coverage of human rights more specifically. Although global news attention to human rights has steadily increased since the 1980s (Cmiel 2004; Ramos et al. 2007), the overall level of Western/Northern media coverage given to human-rights issues in most nations is quite low. Ramos et al. (2007) have shown that two leading Northern news organizations (the *Economist* and the now-defunct *Newsweek*) provided very little overall coverage of human rights on a nation-by-nation basis and that most of that coverage was concentrated on a handful of countries—typically the same nations that already received a great deal of attention from the Northern media (Russia, China, etc.). Although they do not report this result directly, an analysis of their replication data set reveals that 78 percent of the two hundred nations in their study received zero human-rights coverage in either the *Economist* or *Newsweek* in any given year between 1986 and 2000—a serious obstacle to NGO media efforts across most of the world.

To win the competition for news media attention, NGOs need organizational resources such as money, credibility, technical capability, and close relationships with political elites. These resources, however, tend to be unevenly distributed (Berry 1999; Schattschneider 1960), and victory in attention-getting competitions tends to be self-reinforcing. NGOs, for example, which manage to win the competition for the attention of donors, will be able to build strong organizations capable of winning other attention competitions. Furthermore, as Cottle and Nolan (2007) observe from their interviews with NGO communication managers, the competition among NGOs for both media attention and funding has heightened with the proliferation of NGOs over the past two decades. With big budgets, NGOs can hire scientists and activists, design engaging Web sites, film video in distant locations (Franks 2010), and package all of their materials in multiple formats for easy media and public consumption. This, in turn, will lead potential donors to consider those NGOs better investments, further enhancing those NGOs' ability to win the competition for media and public attention at the expense of less well-funded NGOs. Over time, this process has led to significant polarization in attention and to a situation in which just a handful of "gatekeeper" NGOs with massive budgets tend to symbolize the human-rights community in the mind of most of the public and the news media, while the vast majority of NGOs get very little attention (Bob 2009; Florini 2000).

NGOs and the Competition for Public Attention

The difficulty of satisfying news gatekeepers, of course, is exactly what has spurred so many groups to turn to the Internet where they can communicate directly to the public. In doing this, however, NGOs have simply traded one attention-getting competition for another because the amount of attention citizens can pay to NGOs is limited in the same way the news media's attention is limited. Rather than competing for the news media's attention, NGOs now compete for the attention of individual citizens themselves. In short, NGOs must now build audiences online and in the social media in much the same way that news organizations do, by offering content and opportunities for interaction that are more compelling than that available elsewhere.

In the increasingly fragmented online environment, however, this has become an extremely challenging feat and one that requires substantial resources. Although digital technologies and the Web have dramatically reduced the costs of distributing information, they have done less to reduce the costs of producing information that people want to consume or marketing that information to the public (Hindman 2008). Digital video cameras are cheaper, for example, but people skilled in making movies and telling good stories are not. Moreover, NGOs are not the only beneficiaries of the falling costs of communication. Thus, NGOs' communication efforts must also compete with a rapidly increasing amount of communications and information from all kinds of other sources.

The result of competition for attention in the online environment, studies have shown, is that Web site and blog traffic, YouTube video views, Facebook likes, and Twitter followership are all heavily skewed toward a relatively small number of

popular people, organizations, or outlets both generally and with respect to any given subset of people or topics (Cheng et al. 2008; Farrell and Drezner 2008; Hindman 2008; Kwak et al. 2010). The most popular Web sites enjoy millions more visitors than less popular ones do; the most followed Twitter and Facebook users have millions of followers compared with the 120 or so of the typical users, and for every video that goes viral on YouTube, there are thousands that almost no one ever sees. Given all this, we argue, few NGOs will have the resources to generate substantial amounts of attention-worthy content and successfully market it to a global audience on a regular basis.

Hypotheses

The preceding argument implies several hypotheses regarding the success NGOs will have at getting attention that run contrary to the existing literature on information politics and the emerging optimism about NGO use of social media. Given the unequal distribution of organizational resources, our first two hypotheses are that world news media coverage of NGOs will be heavily skewed toward a relatively small number of groups and that the distribution of attention will correlate closely with the distribution of organizational resources and the head start that larger and better funded NGOs enjoyed with the advent of social media.

Hypothesis 1: Global news media attention will be heavily concentrated on a few NGOs.
Hypothesis 2: The distribution of global news media attention among NGOs will correlate closely with the distribution of organizational resources among NGOs.

Hypotheses 3 and 4 make the same predictions but with respect to getting the attention of individual citizens via the Web and social media:

Hypothesis 3: Global public attention on the Web and in social media will be heavily concentrated on a few NGOs.
Hypothesis 4: The distribution of global public attention will correlate closely with the distribution of organizational resources among NGOs.

Hypotheses 3 and 4 lie at the crux of the current debate. Although many observers would acknowledge that Hypotheses 1 and 2 are likely to be true, the premise recent enthusiasm about the Web and social media is the supposed democratization of communications. If the Internet is indeed democratizing NGO communications, then Hypotheses 3 and 4 must be false. If they are true, however, then the promise of the Web and social media to provide improved access to the global public for all groups—especially the less wealthy and powerful in society—may turn out to have been an appealing illusion. Unfortunately, perhaps, we predict that the very same groups that have had the most success getting attention from the traditional news media will be the same groups that have the most success getting attention in the emerging public sphere of the Web and social media. Thus, Hypothesis 5 is as follows:

Hypothesis 5: The distribution of global public attention among NGOs will correlate closely with the distribution of news media attention among NGOs.

And despite the promise pointed to by many in the wake of Invisible Children's Kony 2012 campaign, the same iron law of attention applies to the ability of NGOs to win news media attention through their use of social media. Although it is certainly true that NGOs have on occasion managed to break in to the traditional news cycle through communications that began in the social media arena, in general we argue that the same limits of attention will make it very unlikely for even the largest NGOs to make a regular habit of generating news coverage through social media efforts. Simply put, Facebook posts, YouTube videos, and tweeting are no more likely to make news for an NGO than press releases have ever been, leading us to Hypothesis 6.

Hypothesis 6: NGO social media communications efforts will not correlate with NGO news coverage on specific issues.

Data and Method

To test our hypotheses, we measured the amount of attention 257 human-rights NGOs received both in the global news media and directly from the public via the new and social media. The NGO sample included organizations identified as active in transnational human-rights advocacy by the Yearbook of International Organizations, the keeper of record of such organizations. Our goal was to include only those groups for whom media visibility was clearly critical to their work. We thus eliminated groups that only operated domestically or that only provided services (training, legal research, etc.) to other NGOs. The data set includes both the largest, best-funded, and well-known groups like Amnesty International, Doctors Without Borders, and Human Rights Watch (HRW) as well as much smaller, poorly funded, and far less well-known groups like Worker Rights Consortium, Migrants' Rights International, and Global Lawyers and Physicians.[2]

To test Hypothesis 1, we searched for each group's name in the Lexis-Nexis Major World Publications database and determined the number of stories in which each group appeared in each of the three years from 2010 through 2012—a time period that coincides with emerging widespread social media usage by NGOs.[3] The Major World Publications database contains 628 news outlets and includes many of the most prominent newspapers in the world from every continent including the *New York Times*, the *Times* of London, the *Globe and Mail*, the *Moscow Times*, and so on. This database, though not perfectly representative of the global news hole, reflects a very wide swath of international news coverage. If an NGO cannot manage substantial coverage across the news outlets in this collection, which includes the agenda-setting newspapers in the nations most likely to provide human-rights support, then it is almost impossible to imagine that the NGO is using mainstream news media to conduct effective information politics.

To test Hypothesis 3, we measured each NGO's ability to gain direct public attention in several ways. First, we conducted Web searches for each organization's name using Google to see how many hits that search returned and then determined how many links on the Web led to each NGO's Web site. These two figures provide a high-level summary of how visible each NGO is online (on this, see Hindman 2008). Second, we determined whether each NGO had an active account or channel on Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube and, if so, how many likes, followers, or views the group had as of December 2012. As it turned out, 82 percent of the NGOs used Facebook, 74 percent used Twitter, and 58 percent used YouTube. For attention-measuring purposes, we counted those NGOs that did not use a given social media as having zero likes, followers, or views, respectively. Our logic here is straightforward: Given that any NGO could be using all of these social media to reach people, the very fact that a group is not using one of them is a relevant fact. And, even more simply, it is a truism that an NGO's reach is in fact zero for any medium in which it does not communicate.

To measure organizational resources and test Hypotheses 2 and 4, we rely here on each NGO's annual budget as reported in annual reports on their Web sites or, in some cases for U.S.-based groups, from tax forms located on the Charity Navigator Web site. Ideally, we would be able to measure the relative impact of various forms of attention-generating capability such as scientific expertise, strategic marketing effort levels, staff and membership size, proximity to news media headquarters, and the like (Ron et al. 2005; Thrall 2006; Wu 2000). However, most of these organizational resources have a direct connection to financial resources—Having a bigger staff and serving a larger membership both require bigger budgets. Thus, all things being equal, an organization's budget should be a reasonably good proxy for its attention-generating capacity.

To test Hypothesis 5, we did two things. First, we simply compared NGO news coverage against NGO online and social media visibility metrics. Second, to make provide a stronger sense of our argument about the direction of causality and the importance of having a "head start" in the battle to win public attention in the social media, we also gathered news coverage data on the NGOs from 2000 to 2002 in nine elite news outlets around the world. We treat this period as the "pre-social media" era and correlate each NGO's total news appearances in that era with its visibility in the social media as measured in 2012.

Finally, to test Hypothesis 6, we used the Twitter API to gather all tweets (almost eight thousand of them in total) between August 31, 2011, and July 1, 2012, from four of the NGOs that were most heavily covered in the news media: Amnesty International, HRW, Oxfam, and Doctors Without Borders. We then analyzed their tweets to measure how often the NGOs used specific topical hashtags (e.g., #syria, #armstreaty, #foodcrisis) and recorded the five most frequently used topical hashtags for each organization. To the extent that NGOs are using Twitter as a strategic communication device, the most frequently used hashtags should be a good indicator of where they are focusing their information politics efforts. We then compared NGO Twitter activity with news coverage of those topics.

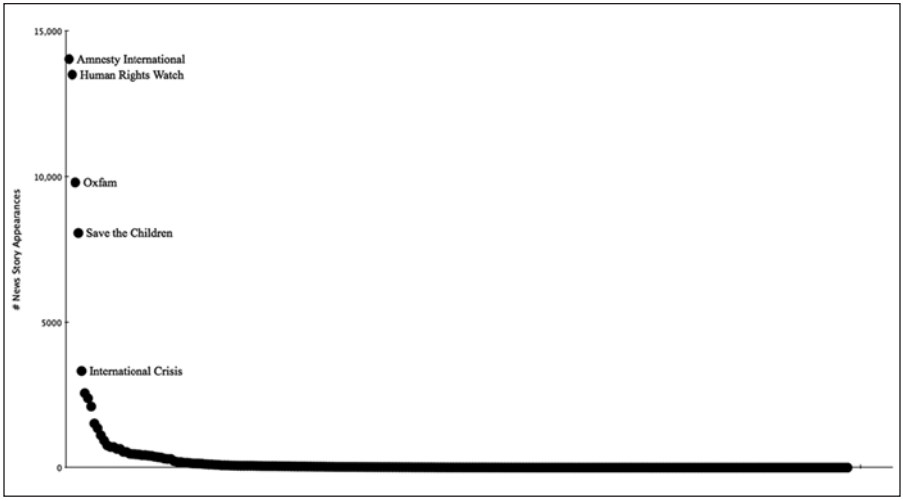

Figure 1. Distribution of global news coverage of human rights NGOs, 2010–2012.
Note. NGOs = nongovernmental organizations.

Results

Figure 1 provides strong support for Hypothesis 1. In any given year, 40 percent of the NGOs failed to appear in even one news story in the global news flow—and a quarter of the groups failed to appear in a single news story between 2010 and 2012. Conversely, the three most heavily covered NGOs—Amnesty International, HRW, and Oxfam—accounted for 50 percent of all NGO news appearances between 2010 and 2012. Twenty-six NGOs, just 10 percent of our sample, accounted for 91 percent of all news appearances.

Table 1 illustrates the same dynamic with respect to global public attention, supporting Hypothesis 3. Public attention via the social media is in fact just as heavily concentrated as news media attention. The top 10 percent of the sample enjoyed 92 percent of the Twitter followers, 81 percent of the Facebook likes, and 90 percent of the YouTube views. Thanks in part to many groups simply not even trying to use the social media and in part to a simple lack of success in getting attention online, the least visible 50 percent of the NGOs in each medium are in fact getting about as much attention as the average *individual* user of Facebook or Twitter.

Table 2 shows the relationship between annual budgets and the ability to generate global attention both from the news media and from the public, providing support for Hypotheses 2 and 4. The results appear to indicate that there is a threshold budget of about $10 million per year before NGOs start getting any real traction in the attention-getting game in either the news or the social media.

This finding confirms and extends what previous research has shown regarding the importance of organizational resources for attracting attention from the news media.

Table 1. Distribution of Global Public Attention to NGOs.

	NGO Attention-Getting Category			
	Top 5%	Top 10%	Bottom 50%	All
Mean Google Hits	9,876,923	5,673,077	52,113	744,000
Mean Inlinks	9,432	5,786	83	893
Mean Facebook Likes	148,286	84,028	262	10,438
Mean Twitter Followers	250,987	134,657	97	14,792
Mean YouTube Views	2,060,229	1,253,673	83	141,580
n	13	26	129	257

Note. NGOs = nongovernmental organizations.

Table 2. Organizational Resources and NGO Attention Getting.

	Organizational Budget			
	<$1 Million	$1M–$10M	$10M–$100M	>$100M
Mean News 2010–2012	58	139	1,500	2,608
Mean Facebook Likes	845	7,684	23,997	124,863
Mean Twitter Followers	788	10,074	63,854	130,780
Mean YouTube Views	22,406	227,877	394,028	816,368
Mean Inlinks	329	1,152	2,599	4,156
n	42	69	23	11

Note. A one-way ANOVA was performed for each relationship above. In every case, the results were statistically significant, with $p = .000$. NGO = nongovernmental organization; ANOVA = analysis of variance.

In short, the data indicate that the ability to conduct traditional information politics on a global scale is restricted to organizations with annual budgets in the hundreds of millions, groups like Amnesty International, HRW, Doctors Without Borders, and Save the Children. These NGOs have offices around the world, and employ scores of professionals with the expertise required to demonstrate credibility on the issues and to interact effectively with legal, governmental, academic, and journalistic audiences.

More surprisingly, given the optimists' claims is how important organizational resources appear to be in explaining success with the social media. If social media strategies were the solution to the news media bottleneck that optimists have suggested, we should expect to see a relatively large number of NGOs with low news visibility getting plenty of attention in the social media. To the contrary, however, of the sixty-five NGOs in the lowest quartile of news attention, just two had above average social media visibility (Earth Justice and International Women). And in fact, the global public's attention is even more polarized between winners and losers than the news media's attention has been.

Admittedly, these findings establish only a correlation between organizational resources and the ability to get attention from the media and from individual citizens. Although we do not directly test alternative explanations here, it is worth a moment to consider whether there might be another variable at work here. Of course, this variable will not only have to correlate with attention-getting outcomes but also with organizational resources. This rules out several possibilities such as the location of organizational headquarters, specific areas of organizational concern, organizational structure, and so forth, none of which correlate with organizational resources. In fact, it is very difficult to imagine any other variable that would explain organization visibility and be related to but independent from organizational resources.

One possibility is that strategic choices, rather than resources, might explain the results (Powers 2014). On the face of it, there is good reason to imagine that NGO communication strategies are closely connected to the level of organizational visibility. On a case-by-case basis, we would be surprised if organizations that place a premium on making news or gaining followers on Twitter, for example, did not enjoy greater visibility than those that do not. At the broad level, however, we find strategic choice an unlikely primary driver of these results for at least two reasons. First, as noted above, we culled the data set to ensure that it contained only transnational NGOs whose very missions make broad visibility a positive outcome. It seems unlikely that any of these NGOs would voluntarily choose the path of less attention. Second, and perhaps most importantly, organizational resources dictate the range of available strategies. Large, well-funded NGOs could make a decision to avoid publicity, but no such organizations exist in our sample. Conversely, however, all of the smaller and least well-funded organizations struggle to gain any visibility whatsoever in any venue. Accordingly, organizational resources, not strategic choice, seem far more likely to be the primary explanatory factor at work. Finally, if strategic choice did explain the results, the results would still fly in the face of the optimists' position, which argues that the social media should be boosting the fortunes of smaller organizations.

To be clear, the problem is not that less well-funded groups cannot afford to use Facebook, Twitter, or YouTube—The NGOs with budgets under $1 million use social media at rates only somewhat lower than the best-funded groups. The dilemma, we suggest, is threefold. First, well-known NGOs start with the advantage of being well known; lesser known groups must work harder and spend more to build name recognition and awareness of their efforts (on the increasing competition to create NGO brand identities see Cottle and Nolan 2007). Unfortunately, the second challenge is that the poorer NGOs also lack the resources to market themselves and to attract people to their Web sites and Twitter feeds in the first place. And third, many poorer NGOs simply cannot keep up with the array and quality of information that is generated by the larger groups (see Franks 2010 on the increase in NGO-generated media content, for example). A cursory look at the Web sites and social media accounts of our NGO sample reveals a chasm between the depth, relevance, quality, and sheer volume of information generated by wealthy groups like Amnesty International on one hand and the much less impressive information coming from more poorly funded groups like

Migrant Workers' Rights, Global Lawyers and Physicians, or the Prison Watch Network on the other (Kingston and Stam 2013).

Figure 2 supports this reasoning and supports Hypothesis 5, indicating that the very same groups who have long been the most effective at getting attention in the traditional news media are also the most effective at getting the public's attention online and through the social media. The correlation between an NGO's total news appearances between 2000 and 2002 and its combined Facebook likes, Twitter followers, and YouTube views as measured in 2012 is .76 ($p = .000$). We see two dynamics at work here. The first is simply the point made above: Creating attention-getting content is expensive regardless of the distribution platform and thus resource-rich groups are likely to do better in the competition online as well as off-line. The second is that visibility in the traditional news media translates to an important advantage in the online attention competition. NGOs that have appeared in the news media historically enjoyed a significant head start at the dawn of the social media era. People are more likely to seek out these NGOs online because people already know who they are. Newsworthy NGOs are also more likely to be included in the tweets and posts and videos of news organizations, further raising their visibility in the social media.

Turning to the question of whether NGOs can use social media communications to help shape news media coverage of specific issues, our initial results support Hypothesis 6 and suggest that the answer is no. As Table 3 indicates, NGOs appeared in just 2 percent of the news stories on the fifteen topics most frequently tweeted about by their organizations, suggesting that Twitter's ability to help NGOs break in to the traditional news media is quite limited. That said, NGOs' success does appear to depend to some degree on both strategy and context. NGOs appeared in 0.9 percent of news stories on the five most heavily covered topics (one thousand or more news stories per topic) and 2.7 percent of stories on topics that generated 100–999 stories, but in 7.8 percent of the five topics receiving the least coverage. Slicing the cases from the other direction, NGOs appeared in 0.2 percent of the stories about topics they tweeted about least, but they appeared in 2.7 percent of stories about topics they tweeted about most frequently. Although the sample here is too small to generate statistically significant results, the findings echo previous work by Ramos et al. (2007) and suggest that NGOs are likely to be at least somewhat more influential when issues are quite new or underreported.

To explore this argument in a bit more depth, we turn to a consideration of the Kony 2012 campaign. Figure 3 illustrates the level of coverage concerning Joseph Kony in the *New York Times* and the Major World Publications database from June 2010 through July 2013. As Figure 3 makes clear, there was zero coverage of Kony in the *New York Times* and very little across the Major World Publications in the months leading up to the Invisible Children campaign in March 2012. The unprecedented speed and size of the Kony 2012 social media campaign (Hudson 2012; Kron and Goodman 2012; Waldorf 2012) did indeed translate to attention from the news media—The *Times* mentioned Kony in 28 stories in March, and Kony appeared in 603 stories across the Major World Publications that month. But, as is inevitable given the nature of the attention-getting competition in the news media, Kony quickly fell off

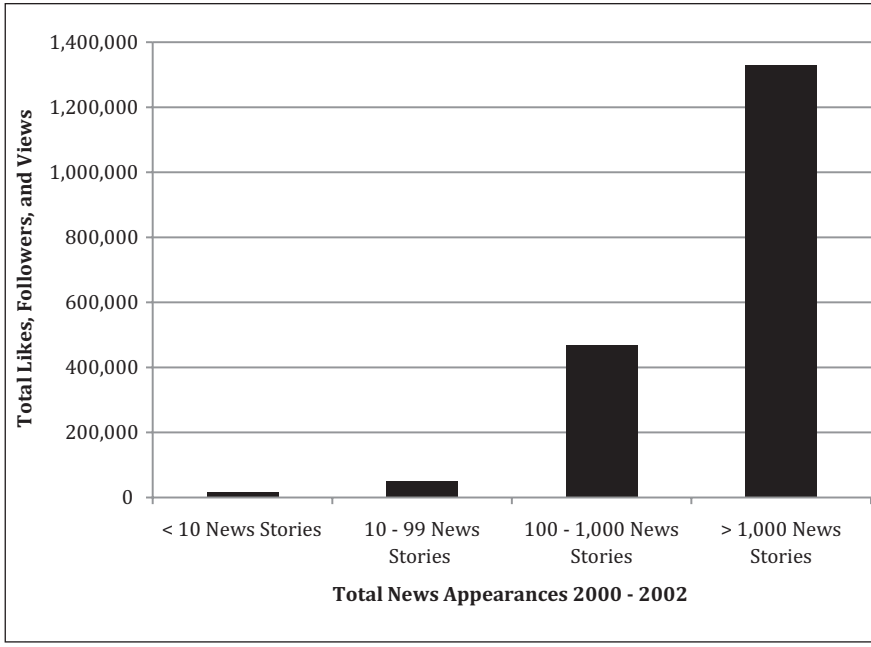

Figure 2. NGO attention getting in traditional versus new media.
Note. NGO = nongovernmental organization.

the news radar and coverage reverted to pre-Kony 2012 levels within a couple of months. The same pattern held for mentions of Invisible Children itself, though the episode led to somewhat elevated coverage of the NGO in the aftermath, illustrating that getting attention does indeed have important benefits for NGOs.

By way of contrast, let us also consider the efforts of HRW to bring the Kony case to the world stage and to the U.S. political agenda in particular. HRW, we note, is one of the world's most important human-rights organizations, one of the "gatekeeper" NGOs (Bob 2009) responsible for helping anoint causes as human-rights issues in the first place. HRW launched a campaign expressly to encourage the Obama administration to intervene to deal with Kony in the fall of 2010 (Mackey 2012). The campaign included a professionally produced Web video along with supporting press releases, content on HRW's Web site, and so forth. However, despite HRW's status and obvious intention to generate publicity and news coverage in the American press, HRW did not appear in a single *New York Times* story that mentioned Kony until October 2011, *after* Obama ordered the Special Forces to Uganda. In total, HRW appeared in just five *New York Times* stories about Kony from 2010 through the end of 2012 and its Kony video had been viewed only fifty-seven thousand times over two years.

Thus, even history's most successful social media campaign provided only a limited solution to the problem of scarce attention. HRW's experience is the more

Table 3. NGO Hashtag Use and News Coverage from August 1, 2011, to July 31, 2012.

Top Hashtags (NGO)	Total Uses of Hashtag[a] (As % of All NGO Tweets)	#NYT Stories on Hashtag Topic	% of NYT Stories That Mention a Tweeting NGO
#russia (HRW)	19 (0.2)	3,415	1.4
#egypt (AI)	173 (2.2)	1,821	1.2
#syria (AI, HRW)	268 (3.4)	1,760	4.1
#climate (Oxfam)	172 (2.2)	1,380	0.5
#libya (AI, HRW, MSF)	277 (3.5)	1,242	0.5
#southsudan (MSF; Oxfam)	276 (3.5)	457	1.8
#lgbt (HRW)	19 (0.2)	440	0.23
#somalia (MSF, Oxfam)	237 (3.0)	427	2.1
#bahrain (AI, HRW)	125 (1.6)	308	4.9
#hiv (MSF)	113 (1.4)	286	3.5
#strvd (MSF)	160 (2.0)	244	10.2
#foodcrisis (Oxfam)	189 (2.4)	86	4.7
#g20 (Oxfam)	130 (1.6)	59	0
#armstreaty (AI, Oxfam)	301 (3.7)	8	100
#patentpool (MSF)	86 (1.1)	0	0

Note. NGO = nongovernmental organization; NYT = New York Times. HRW = Human Rights Watch. AI = Amnesty International. MSF = Medicins Sans Frontieres.

common one, suggesting that scholars need to pay more attention to the information politics campaigns that fail to put those strategies in perspective. If the largest and best-funded NGOs like HRW cannot generate social media attention and news coverage on command, it is hard to imagine smaller and more poorly funded groups doing so.

Conclusion

In sum, we find that global attention is heavily skewed toward a few large and well-funded NGOs regardless of the venue. Moreover, our results suggest that the competition for the attention of individual citizens online not only advantages those organizations that were already well known but may even be more strenuous than the competition for traditional news coverage has been. Our findings suggest several implications and avenues for future research.

First, the optimists are wrong about the Internet. Technology will not transform NGO communication ability because it can never resolve the central problem of global communication: the zero-sum nature of attention. To win attention competitions, we have argued, requires having the organizational resources necessary to create newsworthy and compelling information for both media and public audiences. As a result,

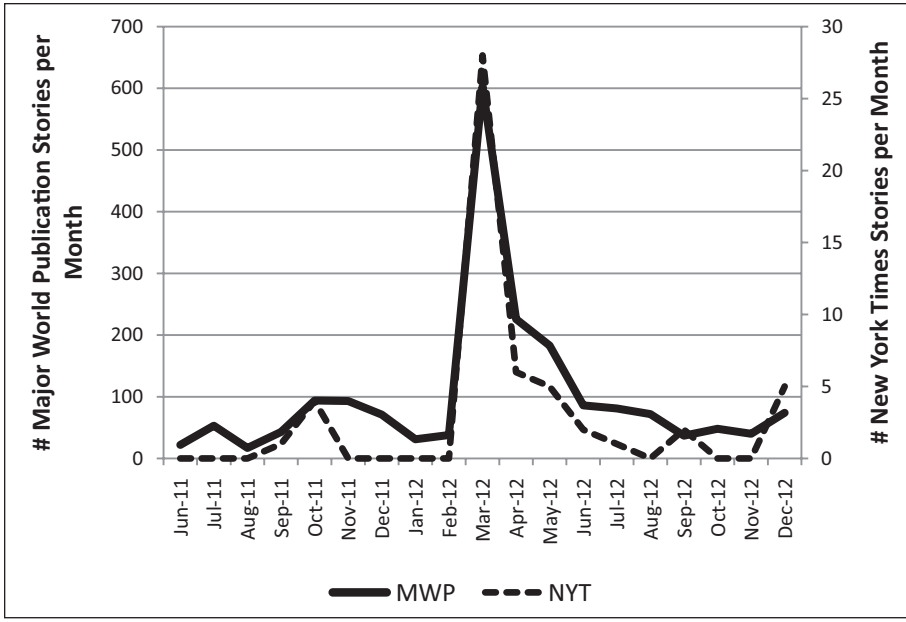

Figure 3. News coverage of Joseph Kony.
Note. NYT = New York Times. MWP = Nexis Major World Publications.

the overall distribution of attention will always tend to follow the distribution of resources in the NGO universe.

Second, the optimists were wrong even before the Internet. Previous research oversells the historical promise of transnational information politics, in large part thanks to focusing on successes without considering failures. Not only are most transnational NGOs incapable of mustering the necessary resources to conduct such a campaign, even the largest NGOs have always faced the reality of the limited carrying capacity of the human-rights agenda in the news media. Not all large NGOs can make front-page news about their own issue on a given day. Even leading NGOs must take turns waiting for the opportunity to create a serious spike in public awareness. Nor will this change with the Internet. We may not be able to predict exactly which human-rights issue will be the next big thing, but we can confidently predict that there will only ever be one big issue at a time taking up the majority of journalist and public attention. Given this, future research could extend our understanding by investigating more carefully both the successes and failures of NGOs to generate sustained global attention over time.

Third, attention scarcity also explains why there can only ever be a few high-profile NGOs in a given issue space like human rights. Different issue spaces, like economic markets, may be bigger or smaller according to the salience of the issue, but each issue space comes with its own attention limits that dictate how many NGOs that space can support. Given this, NGOs that manage to establish a leading reputation enjoy

advantages (funding, membership) that make it difficult for other NGOs to compete for attention. Future research exploring how NGO issue spaces emerge and evolve over time, as well as how specific organizational resources and strategies help generate visibility, will be useful to help understand this dynamic.

Finally, our findings imply that future research on global communications should focus not on technology but on how the distribution of attention is likely to change over time in light of new technologies. On this score, we predict that the evolution of the information environment and the continuing fragmentation of the mass audience will make things more difficult for all NGOs over time. First, the smaller audiences for news publications mean that winning the battle for media attention has a lower payoff than in the past. Second, thanks to citizens' increasing control over what information they consume in the digital age, winning attention from the public directly is also getting more difficult. Future research that helps us understand the evolution of attention will go a long way to improving our understanding of global communication more generally.

Appendix

Alphabetical List of NGOs

"Fray Bartolome de las Casas" Center for Human Rights
3D—Trade–Human Rights–Equitable Economy
ACSUR Las Segovias (La Asociacion para la Cooperacion en el Sur)
Action on Disability and Development
Advocacy Project
Advocates for Human Rights
Advocates International
Africa Action
Africa Legal Aid
African Commission of Health and Human Rights Promoters
African Partnership for Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights of Women and Girls
African Rights Monitor
Al-Awda—Palestine Right to Return Coalition
Alliances for Africa
Alternatives International
American Anti-Slavery Group
American Friends Service Committee
American Refugee Committee International
Amnesty International
Amos Trust
Anti-Slavery International
Arab Association for Human Rights
Arab Commission for Human Rights
Arabic Network for Human Rights Information

Asia Pacific Forum of National Human Rights Institutions
Asia Pacific Refugee Rights Network
Asian Centre for Human Rights
Asian Forum for Human Rights and Development
Asian Human Rights Commission
Association for Progressive Communications
Association for the Prevention of Torture (APT)
Association for Women's Rights in Development
ASTRA—Central and Eastern European Women's Network for Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights
Avocats Sans Frontieres (ASF; Lawyers without Borders)
B'nai B'rith International
B'Tselem
Bread for the World, Stuttgart (Brot fur die Welt)
Breakthrough
Business and Human Rights Resource Centre
Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies
Campaign for an Inter-American Convention on Sexual and Reproductive Rights
Canadian Council for Refugees (CCR)
Canadian Lawyers for International Human Rights (CLAIHR)
Carter Center
Catholic Family and Human Rights Institute
Center for Economic and Social Rights
Center for Health and Gender Equity
Center for Human Rights and Environment
Center for Reproductive Rights
Center for Victims of Torture
Central American Women's Fund
Centre on Housing Rights and Evictions
Child Rights Information Network
Child Soldiers International
ChildHope UK
Children First International
ChildRight Worldwide
Civil Rights Defenders
Clean Clothes Campaign
Committee of 100 for Tibet
Committee of Concerned Scientists
Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ)
Conectas Human Rights
Conscience—the Peace Tax Campaign
Consortium for Street Children (CSC)
Consumers International
Coordination of Action Research on AIDS and Mobility—Asia

Corporate Watch
Crisis Action
Cultural Survival, Inc
Defence for Children International
Derechos Human Rights
Disabled Peoples' International
Doctors Without Borders
Doha Centre for Media Freedom
Earthjustice Legal Defense Fund
EarthRights International
East African Human Rights Institute
East Timor and Indonesia Action Network
Education Development Center
Egyptian Organization for Human Rights
Electronic Frontier Foundation
Emergency
Equal Rights Trust
Equality Now
Equipo Nizkor
Equitas (International Centre for Human Rights Education)
Eurochild
European Association for the Protection of Human Rights
European Association of Lawyers for Democracy and World Human Rights
European Digital Rights
European Disability Forum
European Roma Rights Centre
European Youth Network on Sexual and Reproductive Rights
Finnish Refugee Council
Food Information & Action Network
Freedom House
Global Exchange
Global Forest Coalition
Global Fund for Women
Global Human Rights Defence
Global Lawyers and Physicians
Global March Against Child Labour
Global Rights
Global Witness
HAI—Asia-Pacific
HelpAge International
Helsinki Foundation for Human Rights
Human Rights Association
Human Rights Council of Australia
Human Rights Education Youth Network

Human Rights First
Human Rights Foundation
Human Rights House Network
Human Rights Watch
Human Rights without Frontiers International
IBA Human Rights Institute
Institut kurde de Bruxelles
Institute for Human Rights and Development in Africa
Institute of War and Peace Reporting
Inter-American Institute of Human Rights
Interights
International Alert
International Association for Religious Freedom
International Bridges to Justice
International Bureau for Children's Rights
International Campaign for Human Rights in Iran
International Campaign for Tibet
International Center for Transitional Justice
International Commission of Jurists
International Commission of Missing Persons
International Committee for the Indigenous Peoples of the Americas
International Committee on the Rights of Sex Workers in Europe
International Community of Women Living with HIV/AIDS
International Council of Voluntary Agencies
International Council of Women
International Crisis Group
International Dalit Solidarity Network
International Federation for East Timor
International Federation for Human Rights
International Trade Union Confederation
Int'l Federation of Action by Christians for the Abolition of Torture
International Federation of Journalists
International Federation of University Women
International Freedom of Expression Exchange
International Gay and Lesbian Human Rights Commission
International Human Rights Association of American Minorities
International Human Rights Commission
International Human Rights Observer
International Humanist and Ethical Union
International Institute for Child Rights and Development
International Institute for Human Rights, Environment and Development
International Labor Rights Forum
International League for Human Rights
International Lesbian and Gay Association

International Planned Parenthood Federation—global/central
International Prostitutes Collective
International Refugee Rights Initiative
International Rescue Committee, Inc.
International Service for Human Rights
International Women's Development Agency
International Women's Peace Service
International Women's Rights Action Watch
International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs
International Youth Human Rights Movement
Isis Women's International Cross Cultural Exchange
Islamic Human Rights Commission
Jacob Blaustein Institute for the Advancement of Human Rights
Jesuit Refugee Service
Karamah: Muslim Women Lawyers for Human Rights
KidsRights
Kurdish Human Rights Project
Latin America Bureau, London
Latin American and Caribbean Committee for the Defense of Women's Rights
Latin-American Campaign for the Right to Education
Latvian Centre for Human Rights and Ethnic Studies
Lawyers' Rights Watch Canada
Ligue de la zone afrique pour la défense des droits des enfants, étudiants et élèves
MADRE
Marangopoulos Foundation for Human Rights
Marie Stopes International
Media Foundation for West Africa
Mental Disability Rights International/Disability Rights International
Middle East Children's Alliance
Migrants' Rights International
Miguel Agustin Pro Juarez Human Rights Center (Centro Prodh)
Minority Rights Group International
Movement Against Racism and for Friendship between Peoples
Network for Education and Academic Rights
New World Hope Organization
Norwegian Refugee Council
One World Foundation of New York
Overbrook Foundation
Oxfam International
Pan African Women's Organization
Peace Brigades International
Perhaps Kids Meeting Kids Can Make a Difference
Permanent Assembly for Human Rights
Physicians for Human Rights

Plan International (nexis = plan intl + children)
Platform for International Cooperation on Undocumented Migrants
Polaris Project
Prison Watch International
Progressio
Protection International
Public Services International
Rabbis for Human Rights
Rädda Barnen—Save the Children Sweden
Rafto Foundation
Red de Trabajadoras Sexuales de América Latina y el Caribe
Redress Trust
Refugees International
RenéCassin
Reporters sans Frontieres (Reporters w/o Borders)
Right Sharing of World Resources
Right to Die Europe
Right to Energy—SOS Future
Right to Play International
Rights and Resources Initiative
Rigoberta Menchú Tum Foundation
Robert F. Kennedy Center (formerly Speak Truth to Power)
Save the Children US
School of the Americas Watch
Simon Wiesenthal Center
Smokers Association
Social Justice Committee
Society for the Promotion of Human Rights in Employment
Soroptimist International of the Americas
Soteria International
Survival International
Survivors of Torture International
Swedish NGO Foundation for Human Rights
Tactical Technology Collective
Terre des Femmes
Terre des Hommes Switzerland
The Advocates for Human Rights
The International Movement Against All Forms of Discrimination and Racism
Tibet Justice Center
Torture Abolition and Survivors Support Coalition International
Trans Africa Forum
U.S. Committee for Refugees
Unitarian Universalist Service Committee
United for Foreign Domestic Workers' Rights

United for Intercultural Action
Urgent Action Fund for Women's Human Rights
Vital Voices Global Partnership
Waging Peace
WAO-Afrique
Widows' Rights International
Witness
Womankind Worldwide
Women's Global Network for Reproductive Rights
Women's Learning Partnership for Rights, Development and Peace
Women's Link Worldwide
Worker Rights Consortium
World Organization against Torture
Youth for Human Rights International

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Notes

1. http://www.amnesty.org/en/how-you-can-help (May 20, 2013).
2. A complete list of the groups is available in the appendix.
3. The Major World Publications database does not contain full sets of the full text from all news outlets going back too far and thus cannot be used for longer time series. We also gathered news coverage data from 2000 through 2009 in nine elite newspapers (*New York Times, Times of London, Toronto Star, The Australian, Corriere della Serra, El Pais, Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, Washington Post, South China Morning Post*). Although we report primarily on the 2010–2012 data because they are more current, the general patterns do not change when we consider the longer time frame.

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Civil Society Organizations at the Gates? A Gatekeeping Study of News Making Efforts by NGOs and Government Institutions

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Abstract

This article applies a combination of an input–output content analysis and in-depth interviews with nongovernmental organization (NGO) communication professionals to determine whether the growing incorporation of press releases in editorial print content could be a new public forum through which international political actors, such as NGOs, could gain wider news access by serving as emerging key players in global civil society. The study indicates that Belgian news coverage of international aid issues is more often based on NGO press releases than government press releases. We also found that the agenda-building capacities of NGOs and government institutions are enhanced as journalists present information subsidies as original journalistic work in most cases. Nonetheless, we must tone down prevailing one-sided conclusions, as most press releases are not just copy-pasted. Instead, most are supplemented with additional sources and information. The data, moreover, identify different journalistic roles of NGOs according to their objectives. While some issue press releases to raise short-term public awareness and donations for humanitarian crises (mobilization), others have developed into established expert news source organizations that provide background information and reliable eyewitness accounts to journalists.

Keywords

news access, NGOs, agenda building, global civil society, public sphere

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Introduction

The mass media are central in the conceptualization of a public sphere, which refers to an arena "which is dedicated to open-ended discussion and debate, the proceedings of which are open to entry and accessible to scrutiny by the citizenry" (Webster 2011:24). The widest possible representation of viewpoints in the news is a precondition for participants in the public sphere to make the best possible decision (Habermas 1974, 1992). "Put succinctly, who gets 'on' or 'in' the news is important" (Cottle 2000:427). Yet, research has shown that news access is strongly determined by the distribution of power and resources. Studies repeatedly demonstrated how established sources—especially politicians, government institutions, and well-resourced companies—enjoy privileged news access compared with nonmainstream sources, including ordinary citizens and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) (Cottle 2000; Gans 1979, 2011; Hall et al. [1978] 1999; Sigal [1973] 1999; Wolfsfeld 2011).

In the contemporary news ecology that is characterized by the tendencies of cost-cutting, globalization, and digitalization, the power relationships between these different types of actors fluctuate and their ramifications are far-reaching. On the one hand, some authors, including Davies (2008), describe how traditional media brands increasingly cut costs for purely economic reasons. As a result of contracting newsrooms, journalists are inclined to use press releases as "information subsidies" (Gandy 1982) to manage their workload. Several studies have demonstrated that public relations (PRs) boost the already privileged news access of established third parties such as politicians or corporations, as they can afford to invest in media-tailored communication strategies (Curtin 1999; Lewis et al. 2006; McManus 2009). On the other hand, some scholars underline the need to move beyond this narrow view of PR as the "handmaiden" of political and corporate power, pointing to opportunities in source professionalization for more balanced news access for a wider range of actors (Greenberg et al. 2011:65). Central in this line of thought is the expansion of civil society to the global level, which is an outcome of the growing gap between the global scene, where problems such as environmental pollution or terrorism arise, and the nation-state, where these problems must be managed (Cammaerts and Van Audenhove 2005; Castells 2008; Curran 2010). Accordingly, this article explores a constellation of news sources that journalists can draw upon in the global public sphere. International NGOs (INGOs) are taking part in global civil society as they deploy new digital leverage to offer their expertise and eyewitness accounts in media packages to journalists (Castells 2008; Powers 2012).

Few studies, however, have empirically examined whether INGOs' news management strategies result in more balanced news access. Therefore, this article empirically investigates to what extent the prevailing trends of cost-cutting, globalization, and digitalization have changed the dynamics between journalists and their sources. In contrast to many studies of changing journalist–source relationships (e.g., Lewis et al. 2006), we do not approach this question from the perspective of the journalist; instead, we take on the perspective of the source. Focusing on Belgium as home base to the European Union and as a hub for INGO activity with many agencies headquartered in

Brussels, we compare the news access for two so-called privileged or established news sources, the Belgian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the European Commission, to two emerging sources of news, the INGOs Médécins sans Frontières (MSF), and the Belgian Consortium for Relief Help 12-12. For this purpose, the study applies a quantitative and qualitative input–output analysis to investigate how and to what extent press releases by these two different types of organizations are adopted in the foreign news coverage of four Belgian newspapers. The results are further informed by a series of in-depth interviews with communication professionals in the Belgian departments of INGOs. In the literature review, we first discuss the emerging role of NGOs as a news source. Subsequently, we elaborate on source strategies of agenda building within the contemporary news environment.

International NGOs: The New(s) Kids on the Block?

Several authors point to the vital role of foreign reporting in a globalized world (Joye 2010; Sambrook 2010). However, numerous studies have demonstrated that international news coverage, including international aid coverage, is dominated by authoritative sources and especially government sources, who provide a national framework to interpret international news events (Lee et al. 2005; Livingston and Bennett 2003; Paterson 2006). The dominance of government sources in foreign reporting is exacerbated by cost-cutting strategies in newsrooms all over the world. The declining number of foreign correspondents and specialized reporters further increases the news media's dependence on international news agencies and information subsidies from official or other well-resourced sources (Sambrook 2010; Volkmer and Fridaus 2013). This growing presence of prepackaged information in the news production process, however, offers possibilities to NGOs to influence the media agenda and gain increased prominence in news coverage, especially as we witness a shift from the public sphere situated within the nation-state to the global public sphere (Castells 2008, 2010; Cottle 2009; Volkmer 2003). The development and rapid rise of new digital networks provided the technological basis for the globalization of society, a "process that constitutes a social system with the capacity to work as a unit on a planetary scale in real or chosen time" (Castells 2008:81). In this new global playing field, traditional nation-states are confronted with global, nonstate actors such as international corporations, which often undermine their power (Fenton 2010; Vargas and Paulin 2007). Castells (2008) points out that this "decreased ability of nationally based systems to manage the world's problems on a global scale has induced the rise of a global civil society" (p. 83). While public confidence in traditional politics is decreasing, the social and political role of NGOs is enhanced as they take part in this global civil society and react to the challenges and problems in the globalized world as advocates of citizens' needs, interests, values, and rights (Fenton 2010).

The field of NGOs or "formal, 'non-statutory,' non-profit-making organizations" (Deacon 2003: 99) is enormously broad and diverse. However, in the context of this article that discusses the development of a global public sphere, we focus on INGOs. We dwell on the definition of Castells (2008), who refers to INGOs as

> private organizations (albeit often supported or partly financed by public institutions) that act outside government channels to address global problems. Often they affirm values that are universally recognized but politically manipulated in their own interests by political agencies, including governments. In other words, international NGOs claim to be the enforcers of unenforced human rights. (p. 84)

Their activities focus on practical problems or specific cases that are internationally recognized (Benthall 1993; Castells 2008; Fenton 2010), such as the fight against lapidation of women ("issue management," Davies 2008:185). In contrast to Castells, nonetheless, we are aware of the fact that INGOs not always operate outside government channels. In many cases, they are part of global governance, for example, as "experts" on UN panels, as lobbyists that exert pressure on international policy makers concerning certain topics, or as deliverers of welfare programs in the absence of functioning states. Well-known examples of INGOs are Greenpeace, Oxfam, Amnesty International, and MSF.

The primary strategy for NGOs to gain trust and support is through news coverage of their activities and achievements. Citizens are mobilized via media reports and news access is necessary to exert pressure on governments or multinationals (Blumler and Gurevitch 2005; Castells 2008; Davis 2000, Davies 2008; Fenton 2010; Gaber and Willson 2005; Thrall et al. 2008; Waisbord 2011). If we also take the changing media ecology into account, where news organizations increasingly save costs to the detriment of foreign coverage (cf. supra), it is obvious that journalists are increasingly compelled and less reluctant to rely on the expertise of INGOs as information providers on global issues and advocates of the public interest (Curtin 1999; Powers 2012; Reich 2011). To our knowledge, the extent to which this is happening has not been comprehensively empirically tested; however, a number of studies exist that provide evidence for this claim. For one, Fenton (2010) interviewed several NGO communication managers who stated that it has become easier for them to insert themselves into the news production process as foreign news desks are contracting.

In this respect, PRs are a powerful tool for NGOs to acquire news access in a "more dynamic process of contestation in given fields of discourse" (Davis 2000:50). In addition, the development of a global civil society has resulted in a dramatic rise in the number of (I)NGOs over the last several decades (Cottle 2009; Fenton 2010; Kennedy 2009). As a consequence, (I)NGOs today regularly face direct competition for news access, not only from established news sources such as government officials but also from other (I)NGOs (Cottle and Nolan 2007; Fenton 2010). The combined result of these forces is that NGOs are professionalizing their PR activities to become "news shapers" (Manheim 1998). Several studies have demonstrated the overall instrumentalization and marketization of the global aid and development field (Chouliaraki 2013; Cottle 2009; Deacon 1996; Miller 1993) as well as the incorporation of a "media logic" or, more specifically, a "journalistic logic" in NGOs' communication efforts to gain news access (Cottle and Nolan 2007; Fenton 2010; Greenberg et al. 2011; Waisbord 2011). With respect to media coverage, some NGOs have meticulously constructed an image of a reliable and credible news source organization ("authorized

knowers," Fenton 2010:155) by means of sophisticated media strategies, including collaborations with scientists or politicians (Davis 2010; Livingston and Asmolov 2010; Waisbord 2011). Other NGOs produce their own research reports (Gaber and Willson 2005) or try to gain media attention by organizing "pseudo events" (Boorstin [1962] 1992), by installing celebrities as NGO ambassadors (Cottle and Nolan 2007; Fenton 2010; Gaber and Willson 2005; Thrall et al. 2008), or by providing "home connections" in disaster reporting by focusing on the work of national delegates (Cottle and Nolan 2007). Almost all NGOs have by now installed paid or voluntary communication officers "who are in charge of news management tasks, such as maintaining Web sites and social media, producing news releases and newsletters, holding press conferences, and reaching out to reporters" (Waisbord 2011:147). To enhance news access, NGOs regularly take up the role of news gatherer and news producer by delivering "media packages" or "information subsidies" to newsrooms (Aday and Livingston 2008; Davis 2010; Fenton 2010; Sambrook 2010; Vargas and Paulin 2007; Waisbord 2011). Nevertheless, there is little empirical proof with respect to whether and to what extent these PR activities can open the (news) gates for the new global players as compared with more established third parties. These questions are the focus of our empirical analysis, but we first discuss different aspects of agenda building.

Source Strategies: Levels of Agenda Building

If successful in their attempt to "publish their information subsidies, practitioners influence the media agenda, the public agenda and public opinion, a process known as agenda building" (Sallot and Johnson 2006:152). However, in terms of their overall impact on the content of the news, we can distinguish between three distinct levels of agenda building.

The first level examines the circumstances that influence whether PRs can put a topic on the media agenda, thus telling us "what to think *about*" (Sallot and Johnson 2006:152). If the press release can open the gates, the second level concerns itself with the degree to which PR information is adopted by journalists in terms of "*what* to think" (Sallot and Johnson 2006:152). Journalists can copy and paste the press release verbatim, presenting it to the public as the "legitimate" way to think. Alternatively, they could also expand upon the PR material with contrasting points of view or critical background information that diminish the strength of the argument in the press release. Moreover, researchers often underestimate people's ability to critically process the news and form their own opinion (Castells 2010; Orgad and Vella 2012; Seu 2011). Most authors state that NGOs are rather unsuccessful in their PR efforts at both levels of agenda building. For example, Lewis et al. (2006) not only found that NGO press releases rarely resulted in coverage, but they also observed that NGO PR material is mostly used in a fragmented way in that often no more than a quote extracted from the press release "to provide a contextual or opposing viewpoint to the main focus of a piece" (Lewis et al. 2006:23). Nonetheless, and as indicated above, Fenton (2010:161) concluded from interviews with NGO communication managers that "the majority of NGOs felt that because of the space that journalists are now required to fill and the

time pressures in which they do it, their copy gets picked up more readily and more rarely gets changed."

Here, we point to a third level of agenda building, which is related to the fact whether journalists admit the use of PR material in the news or instead—as a defense mechanism to maintain their professional image of active "news breakers" that pursue the public interest—prefer to veil their (often routine) interactions with source professionals. These consist not only of press releases but also include personal relationships and other more subtle contacts between the two parties. As PR professionals want to present their information subsidies as original journalistic content that serves the public interest instead of a form of free advertising in favor of specific private interests, we can state that source efforts are more successful when information subsidies are presented as the result of independent journalistic news gathering and production (Davies 2008; Davis 2000; Van Hout and Jacobs 2008). Reich (2010), for instance, found that PR practitioners are identified as information sources in no more than 11 percent of the observed cases as their presence in the news is mostly covered in what he calls a "smokescreen of anonymity" (p. 811). Furthermore, many press releases indirectly end up in the hands of journalists as part of news agency copy that they unsuspiciously believe to be original journalistic content. This established "multistaged process of news sourcing" or "ladder of news sourcing" is nonetheless a key complication for researchers who attempt to quantify the use of PR material in journalistic products (Franklin 2011:101). Therefore, we will discuss in the next section, we adopted a multimethod approach to studying the effectiveness of NGO and government source strategies in the Belgian press.

Method[1]

This article examines the assumption that the incorporation of press releases in editorial content could be an avenue for INGOs to gain wider news access. The research design consists of a combination of a quantitative and qualitative content analysis of Belgian newspapers, supplemented by in-depth interviews with INGO communication professionals. Considering that PR material is often concealed in the news output (e.g., Reich 2010), we conducted an input–output content analysis (Lams 2011; Quandt 2008) of press releases and the corresponding foreign news output in four Belgian newspapers in 2011. In light of our conceptual framework that discussed the proliferation of INGOs that promote specific global issues (Castells 2008), our focus lies on press releases following international aid projects. We selected four actors representing the two different types of organizations that we have discerned in the literature review: Two established government institutions and two INGOs (more specifically two international aid agencies) that combined with the news media compose the "crisis triangle" (Cottle and Nolan 2007). The focus on international aid coverage further links to the conception of our modern society as a world risk society (Beck 1992) that is increasingly preoccupied with invisible, unpredictable, and uncontrollable risks, including disasters, poverty, pandemics, and conflicts.

At the input side, we selected the Belgian departments of two INGOs: MSF and the Belgian Consortium for Relief Help (Consortium 12-12). Although MSF and Consortium 12-12 are both INGOs, their functioning as international aid agencies differs substantially. MSF has evolved from a small organization in lack of resources before the 1980s to the world's largest independent medical relief organization that throughout the year publicizes international crises and its own aid missions (Dechaine 2002 in Fenton 2010:155). "Importantly, to gain widespread acceptance by the mainstream media, MSF also had to project a 'public image of neutrality' not so far removed from the journalistic ethics of objectivity and neutrality" (Fenton 2010:156).

By contrast, Consortium 12-12 is a temporary cooperation between five aid organizations that is only activated at times of major international crises such as most recently the Syrian civil war. Interestingly, it was established in the late 1970s as a technique of fund-raising in response to a request from the news media to speak with one voice and to provide one account number in times of major emergencies (Philippe Henon, interview). In many respects, the Consortium is very similar to Britain's Disaster Emergency Committee in terms of "an influence for cooperation and coordination, to balance the growing competitiveness" (Benthall 1993:54). By including these two INGOs, we can investigate a broader scale of PR efforts and compare their effectiveness. As Consortium 12-12's main purpose is to achieve intensive, short-term media exposure for fundraising, we expect that Consortium 12-12's press releases will be featured more often in the news output than MSF press releases. In addition to the NGOs, we have selected the Belgian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the European Commission as two established source organizations that compete with INGOs for news access. All press releases of these two institutions are available on their Web site where we have filtered out all press releases about international aid to compare them with the INGO press releases.

At the output side, our sample consists of two popular (*Het Nieuwsblad* and *Het Laatste Nieuws*) and two upmarket (*De Standaard* and *De Morgen*) newspapers. These are Belgium's four most important newspapers in the Dutch-speaking region (De Bens and Raeymaeckers 2010). We collected all international aid press releases of the four organizations in 2011 and searched for the corresponding foreign news output in the four newspapers. In first instance, we gathered all news articles that contained the name of the organization as a keyword in the online Belgian newspaper database Mediargus. From this original selection that includes all news articles about the four target organizations in the sample period (including those not inspired by PR material), we only analyzed all articles appearing up to seven days subsequent to the dissemination of the press releases that bore a clear resemblance to the original PR material. This resemblance could involve a verbatim reproduction of (parts of) the press release, but even if no sentences are literally copy-pasted, it can still be clear from the overall content or particular point of view that the journalist has used information from the press release. In total, one hundred ninety-six press releases and fifty-six newspaper articles were selected for the quantitative analysis (Wester et al. 2006) following the research design of Buijs et al. (2009) and Lewis et al. (2006) with a focus on the degree of verbatim reproduction at the level of a sentence as a measure of

Table 1. Overview of Interviews with NGO Communication Professionals in June/July 2009.

Interview	Name	Affiliation 1	Affiliation 2
1	Gerda Wylin	Caritas International Belgium	Consortium 12-12
1	Joëlle Verriest	Caritas International Belgium	Consortium 12-12
2	Koen Baetens	MSF Belgium	/
3	Erik Todts	Oxfam Solidarity Belgium	Consortium 12-12
4	Philippe Henon	UNICEF Belgium	Consortium 12-12

Note. NGO = nongovernmental organization; MSF = Médécins sans Frontières.

reproduction. However, due to the different focus (domestic vs. foreign news) and scope of our research (conventional content analysis vs. input–output analysis), international comparisons must be made with caution.

The quantitative findings are further elaborated and illustrated first by means of a more in-depth qualitative content analysis (Wester et al. 2006) of the selected press releases and news articles. The coding was conducted by two independent researchers (a trained student from the master program in journalism studies and the first author of this article) who relied on a coding sheet for the quantitative analysis and who made transcripts of the qualitative analysis (e.g., which other sources are used in the article and what are they saying). Their interpretations of the research material were then one-on-one compared to ensure the consistency and reliability of the research findings. Second, the analysis was expounded by means of interviews with five communication professionals who work for the analyzed INGOs to deepen our understanding of their PR efforts (see Table 1). These interviews were conducted in June/July 2009 as part of a stand-alone research project but given their focus on INGO media relations in a Belgian context they are particularly relevant in light of the conducted content analyses. The interview respondents all work as communication professionals for MSF or one of the five aid organizations that take part in the Belgian Consortium for Relief Help (Caritas, Oxfam, UNICEF). The interviews with Erik Todts (Oxfam) and Philippe Henon (UNICEF) are especially relevant, as they are also the official chairman, and press and communication officer for Consortium 12-12. As a result, they were able to offer insights on the functioning and media planning of the Consortium.

All analyses were conducted in view of the following two key research questions that emerged from the literature review. Our first research question deals with the degree to which INGOs gain news access by means of PR material compared with established sources (agenda building in terms of "what to think *about*"). We compared the uptake by Belgian newspapers of government press releases with the uptake of INGO press releases. Related to this is the question of whether Belgian newspapers integrate relatively more Consortium 12-12 press releases than MSF press releases in their news output. Secondly, the analysis examined the extent to which press releases of the four selected organizations are simply reproduced in the news article, thereby succeeding in imposing a preferred interpretation framework, and to what extent the use of press releases is veiled in Belgian newspapers, thereby presenting them as

Table 2. Overview of Published Press Releases per Newspaper (*N* = 196).

	De Standaard	De Morgen	Het Laatste Nieuws	Het Nieuwsblad	Total articles (1)	Total press releases (2)	Ratio ½ (%)
MSF	9	8	2	3	22	59	**37.3**
12-12	2	5	6	3	16	27	**59.3**
Foreign Affairs	1	4	5	2	12	37	**32.4**
European Commission	2	5	3	1	11	73	**15.1**
Total articles	14	22	16	9	61	196	**31.1**

Note. MSF = Médécins sans Frontières.

independent journalistic products instead of prepackaged news or free advertising (agenda building in terms of "*what* to think").

Results

In general, one hundred ninety-six press releases resulted in fifty-six news articles. As five news articles contained press release material by two different organizations, we have a total sample of sixty-one press releases (31.1 percent) that were traceable in the news coverage. These numbers are too low for advanced statistical analyses. However, they do allow for descriptive analyses. When combined with the interviews, they point to some important differences between the four source organizations. This section is organized around the two main research questions.

Research Question 1: Differences in News Uptake between the Organizations

Table 2 shows that Consortium 12-12 is most successful in gaining news access by means of information subsidies, as sixteen of its twenty-seven press releases (59.3 percent) resulted in news coverage. MSF (37.3 percent) and the Belgian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (32.4 percent) complete the top three positions. The European Commission is lagging far behind, with a success rate of only 15.1 percent, although it sent out most press releases. In absolute numbers, MSF takes the lead, followed by Consortium 12-12, the Belgian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and the European Commission. These findings indicate that distributing more press releases does not automatically result in more news coverage. As many journalists complain of "press release overload," this does not seem to be the best strategy to set the news agenda. Our interviewees agree that "if you communicate too much, you undermine your own message because people will stop paying attention to it" (Philippe Henon, UNICEF/ Consortium 12-12).

The relatively higher success rate of INGO press releases compared to the two government institutions confirms that journalists are compelled to rely on INGOs as information providers on international aid issues (Davis 2010; Powers 2012). This assumption was confirmed in the interviews, where Erik Todts (Oxfam/Consortium 12-12) points out that journalists have evolved from specialists in the 1980s to all-rounders today. Therefore, they lack the necessary skills and background knowledge to report on international issues accurately. In line with Fenton (2010), our interviews show that, combined with the elevated workload in many newsrooms, journalists are more inclined to rely on INGO information subsidies. For example, Erik Todts (Oxfam/Consortium 12-12) points out that

> journalists miss the necessary background knowledge to cover international events. Moreover, the resources to produce news have been cut. As a consequence, I get ten phone calls from journalists every year with the request to explain the basics of an issue.

Gerda Wylin (Caritas/Consortium 12-12) further underlines that "the Internet has also changed a lot. There is so much information and everything needs to go fast. The pressure is higher, not only for journalists but also for us." The analysis shows that the higher workload for journalists translates differently in news access for MSF and Consortium 12-12, as will be discussed in the next section.

MSF. MSF press releases are remarkably more often published in the quality newspapers compared to press releases of the other organizations (see Table 2). The qualitative content analysis further points to relevant differences in the content of the press releases and news articles. Most press releases of the four organizations that resulted in news coverage discuss major crises, dramatic news events, or international events involving Belgians. This finding is in line with literature stating that

> the media spotlight is apt to roam quickly from one disaster/emergency to another . . . and are drawn selectively to images of distress . . . Such fleeting coverage, at best, provides sparse context or historical background and even less follow-up coverage of post-conflict, post-emergency communities or longer-term processes of development. (Cottle and Nolan 2007:863)

During the interview, Philippe Henon (UNICEF/Consortium 12-12) confirmed that

> some stories are too long-lasting, such as the Darfur crisis, and therefore almost never result in news coverage. We also observe several phases in the news cycle: The first days of an emergency are the most important ones and often result in news coverage, but the media attention decreases very quickly.

Gerda Wylin (Caritas/Consortium 12-12) complained that

> news production is an unpredictable process where some cases do and other cases don't result in media coverage. The news media are often too superficial and too much focused

on scoops that deliver large audiences. There can be only one crisis, we never observe two crises in the news at the same time.

MSF is the only organization that succeeded in putting such ongoing crises and background information on the mainstream news agenda. The findings indicate that MSF is able to deploy its particular position as an expert and established news source on international aid issues to lever news attention to long-term disasters and underlying processes that generally fail to attract the attention of mainstream news media (Joye 2010). As other interviewees acknowledge, the decreasing attention of news media to foreign affairs generally and long-term humanitarian disasters in particular requires this agenda-building capacity for international aid agencies. Indeed, MSF proactively and regularly distributes information subsidies about the settlement of international aid projects in different countries and regions. Moreover, MSF provides contextual information and reports about long-term disasters and distributes policy statements in reaction to political decisions (or their absence). Such policy statements often discuss global problems, including AIDS, the dismal situation of African refugees in Europe, or the international community's attitude to the civil war in Libya. The strategic choice to provide background knowledge and analysis was confirmed in the interview with Koen Baetens, who referred to MSF's "double mandate" as the organization not only strives for medical aid but also wants to bear witness to the development of disasters or the persistence of injustice. Moreover, he stressed that MSF's PR efforts always depart from operations in the field to address the media as expert sources. Other interviews also show that this kind of in-depth reports on international events is especially appealing to quality newspapers. This conclusion is strengthened by the observation that MSF was also consulted in many other articles in the quality newspapers that were not directly inspired by press releases. Although these articles are not part of our sample, they nonetheless illustrate that the quality newspapers actively consult MSF in the news-gathering process.

The input–output analysis shows that many MSF press releases discussing ongoing crises and background information resulted in news coverage, such as a press release about the dismal situation of immigrants on the Italian island Lampedusa. Another example was an article in *De Morgen* (December 14) about the enduring crisis in the Central African Republic that verbatim summarizes an in-depth MSF report. During the interview, Koen Baetens also pointed toward MSF's long-standing relationship with photographers to visualize testimonies of people on the ground as a strategy to put "silent emergencies" on the agenda. We found evidence of this strategy's effectiveness in *De Standaard*'s feature (November 17) of a MSF photo report about "urban survivors," people in conditions of extreme deprivation.

Belgian Consortium for Relief Help. In 2011, Consortium 12-12 distributed four retrospective press releases about the Haiti earthquake in 2010 and 23 press releases about the severe drought in the Horn of Africa. Our analysis indicates that the strategy to communicate only during limited periods about major events triggers relatively more news coverage than the constant and thus more often neglected flow of press releases

coming from other organizations. Nonetheless, the analysis suggests that MSF anticipates Consortium 12-12's activities. MSF distributed only six press releases about the drought in the Horn of Africa and thus seems to avoid a battle for media attention with Consortium 12-12. Instead, MSF preferred to focus on international problems that are not covered by an intensive media campaign. The analysis supports this, as only one article contains PR material from both Consortium 12-12 and MSF. This article in *De Morgen* (July 29) focused on Consortium 12-12's call for fund-raising and only refers to other organizations (MSF, Red Cross) in the final paragraph, which underwrites Consortium 12-12's privileged news access compared with other INGOs.

Philippe Henon (UNICEF/Consortium 12-12) affirmed that Consortium 12-12's emphasis on spectacular international news events and wide-scale fund-raising explains its higher presence in popular newspapers: "Belgian news media, and especially VTM (commercial broadcaster), intend to give the audience what it wants, and preferably news that can be linked to the Belgian context." Previous studies have indeed shown that popular newspapers prefer dramatic news events, particularly when these can be domesticated for a Belgian audience (Joye 2010; Wouters et al. 2009). The latter was also the case for MSF, as two of the five articles in the popular newspapers that are based on MSF press releases discuss the dramatic and violent death of a *Belgian* MSF worker in Somalia and do not focus on MSF's international aid projects. Correspondingly, Cottle and Nolan (2007) also acknowledged this emerging tendency of the media to "routinely request and receive 'regionalized' material for their media reports" (p. 870).

In sum, the data show a different journalistic role for MSF and Consortium 12-12. Most Consortium 12-12 press releases have the purpose of raising short-term public awareness and donations for international crises (mobilization). In contrast, MSF established itself as an expert news source organization by regularly providing background information and reliable eyewitness accounts to journalists (Davis 2010; Powers 2012).

European Commission and Belgian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The two government institutions are far less successful than the two INGOs in building the news agenda by means of information subsidies. Press releases are particularly focused on their financial contribution to international aid, which seems to appeal less to journalists than INGO expertise (MSF) or fund-raising campaigns (Consortium 12-12).

This conclusion is especially applicable to the European Commission with only 15.1 percent of its press releases resulting in news coverage. Only three out of seventy-three articles are explicitly inspired by its press releases. In eight other news articles, we only found traces of European Commission press releases that were used as additional pieces of information for the broader scope of the news articles. Four of these articles discuss the civil war in Libya and the Ivory Coast and consist primarily of a description of the most recent settlements of the war and the activities or statements of the international community (European Union, United Nations, individual nation-states, etc.). The remaining four articles deal with the famines in North-Korea and the

Horn of Africa, focusing on the local circumstances and international fund-raising activities (two articles also contain Consortium 12-12 PR material).

Contrary to the press releases of the European Commission and echoing the tendency to domesticate foreign news events, the Belgian Ministry of Foreign Affairs is slightly more successful in building the agenda with twelve news articles (success rate 32.4 percent). Nonetheless, most of the articles are short, factual pieces that summarize the Foreign Affairs press release. One press release is covered in all four newspapers and announces a possible mission of the Belgian intervention team B-Fast at the scene of a nuclear disaster in Japan (March 12). The information in the press release is elaborated by the journalists in a limited way by adding contextual information about the functioning of the team or about interventions by other governments. Six articles elucidate the financial contribution of the Belgian Ministry of Foreign Affairs to fight the famine in the Horn of Africa. The remaining two articles—published in two different newspapers on the same day—cover the death of a Belgian MSF worker in Somalia and are mainly based on the corresponding MSF press release that is supplemented with reactions of family members and friends gathered by the journalists. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs is only mentioned in the final paragraph as the responsible agency for the repatriation of the body.

Next to the issue of domestication, the inefficacy of European Commission press releases to be picked up by Belgian journalists might be explained by the fact that most of their press releases on international aid are distributed in English. These information subsidies cannot just be copy-pasted but instead require an extra effort from the Belgian journalist as they first need to be translated before they can be published. Therefore, efficiency considerations (Gans 1979) might also explain why European Commission press releases are less effective in building the news agenda compared with press releases of the Belgian Ministry of Foreign Affairs despite a substantially higher press release output.

Research Question 2: Levels of Agenda Building

Most articles (thirty-seven out of fifty-six articles or 66.1 percent) in the sample are entirely written by the journalist in his or her own words, while thirteen articles are partly a verbatim reproduction of a press release, and six articles are entirely copy-pasted from a press release. However, we need to acknowledge that agenda building also includes less explicit forms of recycling or copy-pasting. For example, the message of a press release can be paraphrased by a journalist with no supplementary information added to the actual content of the press release. Therefore, we did not restrict the analysis to the proportion of the article that is directly copy-pasted from the press release. We have included an analysis of the types of information that have been added to the press release by the journalist. This observation tempers the original optimism slightly, as we found that in fourteen of the fifty-six articles (25.0 percent), the journalist did not supplement the information in the press release with additional news gathering but merely copy-pasted or paraphrased the press release. In a considerable three-quarters of the articles—about equally divided between the four

organizations—journalists did supplement the information in the press release with additional news input, mainly extra facts, background information, in-depth analysis and reactions. This finding points toward a limited agenda building capacity of all four organizations in terms of "what to think."

In some cases, the press release appears to have initiated the news article; this especially seemed to be the case when the information in the press release was not supplemented with additional information. In contrast, in many other cases where the journalist actively produced a news report, the press releases seem to feature as nothing more than an additional source. One example is a news article about the civil war in Libya on October 5 by *De Standaard* correspondent Jorn De Cock, who is known as an expert in Middle East coverage with a broad network of informants. In the news report, he piles together different pieces of background information about the regime of Muammar Kadhafi to understand the harshness of the dictator in the battle over Sirte. He adds depth to the article by quoting a civilian that was interviewed by Reuters, rounding out the article with a critical reflection on the humanitarian situation in the city. This is where he copies a quote from the MSF press release, complementing it with reactions from the International Red Cross and the Libyan political opposition. In other words, it seems that MSF's agenda building power in this specific case was quite limited.

In other cases, the press release served as a source of inspiration to write a news piece about the topic while the journalist complemented the press releases by actively contacting the source organization with a request for additional or more current information, thereby also creating agenda-building opportunities. A good example is an article in *De Standaard* on December 26 about the situation of Sudanese refugees. Clearly inspired by an MSF press release, the journalist opted to disregard a mere copy-pasting of the information subsidy and instead contacted the doctor who is quoted in the press release for current information. The article was further complemented with background information about the political situation in Sudan and an expert analysis.

The interviews further confirm that INGO PR activities are no longer limited to press releases or press conferences but have extended to many additional strategies and tactics such as the use of celebrities as INGO ambassadors. All the interviewees acknowledged the importance of diversified news making practices in the contemporary news ecology. Koen Baetens, for example, referred to MSF's strategy of directing journalists to the weblogs of their employees in the field, or offering personal talks with Belgian MSF workers about their experiences. Philippe Henon (UNICEF/Consortium 12-12) stated that

> formerly, when we used to organize a press conference, many journalists would have shown up. Today we really need to have something extraordinary to say or nobody shows up. So we adjusted our strategy by including informal media contacts and giving the journalists more exclusive information.

In accordance with similar research by Van Leuven, Deprez, and Raeymaeckers (2013), we found that forty-six of fifty-six articles (82.1 percent) do not refer to the press releases as a source of information. It seems that journalists prefer to veil PR material in a "smokescreen of anonymity" (Reich 2010) to safeguard their professional image of editorial independence, thereby presenting the PR information as original journalistic work instead of a form of free advertising in favor of specific private interests. Often, quotes from press releases are presented as if the journalist contacted the organization. Six articles vaguely refer to the selected organizations as an "information source" (e.g., "report," "spokesperson"), but only four articles (7.1 percent) explicitly state that the journalist used press release material (e.g., "The Foreign Secretary declared in a press release . . ."). Three of these four articles refer to the national news agency Belga in their byline. Seven other articles that have Belga in their byline do not explicitly mention the use of press releases, which points to a ladder of news sourcing.

Discussion and Conclusion

Applying a combination of an input–output analysis and in-depth interviews with INGO communication professionals, this article examined the assumption that the incorporation of press releases in editorial content could be an avenue for INGOs to gain wider news access.

In line with the work of Cottle and Nolan (2007), our study shows that the two selected INGOs invest considerable time and resources in the production of "media packages" to gain news access. As a result, we found that Belgian newspapers in their reporting on international aid issues are more inclined to publish INGO press releases compared to press releases that are distributed by government institutions (Research Question 1). For both types of organizations, we found that their agenda-building capacity is enhanced on the one hand, as in most cases their information subsidies are presented as original journalistic work. On the other hand, we need to tone down one-sided conclusions as—in contrast with the findings of Fenton (2010)—our data show that most press releases are not just copy-pasted, but they are instead combined with additional sources and information (Research Question 2). In sum, it seems that INGO press releases—and to a lesser degree government institutions' press releases—are often consulted as a news source in international aid coverage, but their agenda-building capacities in terms of "*what* to think" seem rather limited if we only take into consideration the amount of text that has been taken from press releases. Further research in the field of framing analysis is necessary to assess the extent to which this capacity is sufficient to determine the overall frame of these news articles.

In terms of theoretical implications, the analysis provides additional insight into the changing constellation of news sources related to the global public sphere. It confirms that MSF and Consortium 12-12 are key players in the global civil society to whom Belgian journalists turn for information about global issues, international aid in this case. Nonetheless, as Waisbord (2011) states, the field of NGOs is too diverse "in terms of issues and demands, approaches to news making, and perception of

legitimacy as sources of information" (p. 151) to generalize the findings of this study. Indeed, with respect to the INGOs under consideration in this article, the content analysis identified important differences between the two types of INGOs studied here, a finding that was also supported by the interviews. In line with the findings of Cottle and Nolan (2007), our study shows that—in an increasingly competitive international aid field—both INGOs use different strategies to "brand" themselves and to communicate with journalists and audiences. MSF is most effective in setting the news agenda in *absolute* numbers, especially in the quality newspapers. Following Waisbord (2011), MSF can be considered as a "technical" INGO that distributes background reports about the settlement of international aid projects in different countries and regions throughout the year. From this authoritative position as an expert source on the ground, MSF is able to lever news attention to long-term disasters (Cottle 2009; Davis 2010; Powers 2012). The role of the Belgian Consortium for Relief Help 12-12 is different as its communication efforts are focused on sudden crises and fundraising. The efficacy of this mobilization strategy is confirmed by the finding that Consortium 12-12 is most effective in setting the news agenda in *relative* numbers. Consortium 12-12's emphasis on spectacular international news events, particularly when these can be domesticated for a Belgian audience, is especially appealing to popular newspapers.

Waisbord (2011) and Deacon (2003) also point out that we need to acknowledge the wide variety in NGOs' success in gaining news access. Most press releases in this study focused on international disasters that appeal to traditional news values (drama), while the chances of other issues and INGOs—especially when they interfere with state or corporate interests (see Gaber and Willson 2005)—to build the news agenda may be much more limited. Furthermore, the two INGOs under consideration in this study are relatively well-resourced organizations with strong media connections, while other NGOs may lack the social and material means to develop a broad range of media-tailored strategies (Deacon 2003; Fenton 2010). It might also be that Belgium—with its high concentration of NGOs—is a distinct case where journalists automatically pay more attention to NGO press releases. Further research on INGOs in different countries that cover different "global issues," such as global warming and human rights, is thus necessary to formulate an overall conclusion with regard to INGOs' news-making efforts in the global public sphere. In addition, it is also necessary to expand our focus from press releases in newspapers to other INGO communication strategies. This is especially important considering the changing ecology of news where INGOs may also be more inclined to skip established news organizations as intermediary channels to influence policy making and instead deploy new digital leverage to communicate directly with citizens, activists, or policy makers.

Another critical note is made by Davis (2010), who points out that because most INGOs focus on "single issues," their development as an overall important actor in the global public sphere is hindered. In other words, rather than powerful actors in the global public sphere who can impact a *broad* range of decision-making processes, INGOs are to be regarded more as effective and skilled newsmakers in certain *specific* fields of discourse, such as international aid. This might also be one of the reasons why both government institutions in this case study appear to be "less successful" than the

INGOs in their news making efforts. In addition, INGOs have stronger incentives to shape news coverage as it is their main instrument to influence policy making. By contrast, government institutions are less dependent on media coverage to reach their goals, since they already are the key decision makers. For them, news coverage is more a means to communicate decisions to citizens.

One final remark deals with our interview study. Although documenting a general outline of INGO practices, the in-depth interviews were conducted in 2009. Since then the political and economic foundations of the global public sphere have undergone major changes (cf. the enduring global economic and financial crisis). Further research is needed to investigate the extent to which INGOs have been hit by this crisis and to what extent they have adjusted their communication strategies.

Overall, the main contribution of our study is that it adjusts the image of PR as "a wizard-like character who hides behind the curtain, pulling the strings that advance elite interests, manipulating democratic processes and using ethically questionable tactics to influence the outcomes of public policy debate" (Greenberg et al. 2011:76). Those practices undoubtedly do exist, but our findings illustrate that the development toward a digital and global public sphere offers opportunities to nonestablished news sources—with little direct influence on the political stage—to gain news access and possibly change the outcome of the decision-making process. In this sense, despite the fact that the resources to produce information subsidies and set up media-tailored strategies are unequally distributed, we agree with McIntosh White (2012) that the changing news ecology offers new possibilities for INGOs to raise their voice in the public debate. From this point of view, PR material *can* be a positive contribution to the global public sphere in that INGOs and governments intend to inform the public about matters of general interest.

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1. For more detailed information about the coding sheet of the input–output analysis and the topic list of the in-depth interviews, please contact the authors.

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Political Agenda Setting as Mediatized Politics? Media–Politics Interactions from a Party and Issue Competition Perspective

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Abstract

The paper puts forward, and empirically explores, claims on how the literature on political agenda setting could inform the concept of mediatized politics. It uses as a starting point the lack of empirical research within mediatization studies, arguing that the field of political agenda setting offers important supplements through systematic investigations of the media's role in promoting social problems on the political agenda. However, this does not imply a straightforward merging of the two traditions. Instead, I discuss how agenda-setting perspectives offer a more active and visible role for political actors and political logics in the media–politics relationship, presenting analyses that find media influence on political issue attention to be conditioned by policy responsibility and the competition between opposition and government. Furthermore, the paper takes issue with the zero-sum game interpretation of the media–politics relationship, where mediatization necessarily implies decreasing political influence. Future research, on both mediatization and agenda setting, need to address how the media (re)distributes power between different actors or institutions in politics. As a first step toward this goal, I show that opposition parties (in some respects) are more mediatized than government but that this constitutes an opposition strength in party competition.

Keywords

political agenda setting, mediatized politics, party competition

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Introduction

This paper explores the concept of mediatized politics from the perspective of political agenda setting. The two literatures of mediatization (cf. Strömbäck 2008) and political agenda setting (cf. Walgrave and Van Aelst 2006) share an empirical focus on how mass media influence politics. Yet they are rarely seen in connection. Studies of political agenda setting have largely concentrated on empirical tests of the relationship between issue agendas in media and politics. To be sure, this field of study could profit from the theoretical perspectives developed in the mediatization literature, both when contextualizing findings and when developing research questions and hypotheses. However, as a careful start of bringing the two traditions closer together, this paper focuses on how political agenda setting could contribute to extant understandings of mediatized politics. Political agenda setting supplements the strong emphasis on conceptual discussions of form/format in mediatization research through systematic empirical studies of issue content and the role of the media in promoting social problems on the political agenda. Using this as a foundation, two claims are developed and empirically illustrated. The first is that political agenda-setting studies offer a more active and visible role for political actors and political logics in the media–politics relationship, as exemplified by recent agenda-setting contributions finding that media influence on politics is conditioned by party strategies (cf. Green-Pedersen and Stubager 2010). The second claim is that the media–politics relationship too often is portrayed as a zero-sum game, where a media logic is pit against a political logic. For research on both mediatization and political agenda setting to move forward, there is a need to address how the media (re)distributes power between different actors or institutions in politics.

The claims are substantiated using evidence from a Danish study of party responses to news stories. First, however, the literature on mediatization will be briefly presented, before elaborating on the claims and on the potential synergies between the two literatures. The "Design and Data" section describes the data on media and party agendas from Denmark, while the subsequent "Analyses and Discussion" section presents and discusses the empirical results.

Mediatization of Politics

The fact that politics is *mediated* and that the media is the "most important source of information and channel of communication between the citizenry and political institutions and actors" (Strömbäck 2008: 236) is the cornerstone for any perspective on media influence or media effects in political communication. The concept of *mediatization*, however, concentrates on a more complex process through which media communication shapes and reshapes society and politics.[1] Although definitions vary, a common ingredient is that mediatization involves increasing media influence in society and politics (Mazzoleni 2008; Strömbäck 2008, 2011b). Most often, this influence is conceptualized in a zero-sum game interpretation where gains for some actors come at the expense of others (Strömbäck and Dimitrova 2011): In other words, mediatization of politics implies a decreasing political influence (cf. Meyer 2002; Strömbäck

2008). In some contributions, like Mazzoleni and Schulz's (1999: 250) widely cited view on the effects of mediatization, this changing power balance is portrayed in a normative and clearly pessimistic fashion: "Mediatized politics is politics that has lost its autonomy, has become dependent in its central functions on mass media, and is continuously shaped by interactions with mass media." Hjarvard (2013) provides a warning against normative, pre-determined ideas about the consequences of mediatization, stressing the need to study the consequences of increased media influence empirically. In this respect, Strömbäck's (2008) four dimensions of mediatization constitute a useful starting point for applied mediatization work. According to his definition, the level of mediatization is determined by (1) the degree to which the media are the most important source of information and channel of communication, (2) the extent to which media are independent from political institutions, and the degree to which (3) media content and (4) political actors are governed by a media or a political logic.

This definition rests heavily on the notions of media and political logic. The former concept has received a great deal of attention in mediatization contributions (cf. Altheide and Snow 1979; Kunelius and Reunanen 2012; Mazzoleni 1987; Strömbäck and Esser 2009). According to Strömbäck (2011b: 373), "news media logic" might be a more appropriate term, as it basically covers everything that influences the production and dissemination of news: from format characteristics, institutional routines and rules, to standards of newsworthiness. Focusing on the consequences of mediatization, Esser and Matthes (2013) portray media logic as an incentive structure that shapes politics. Merging these two perspectives, the point is that today's "media democracies" constrain the choice sets of political actors, effectively encouraging forms of political communication that devalue political substance at the cost of conflictual, sensational, personalized, and simplified messages. Most definitions capture the commercial dimension of such messages, and thus Landerer (2013) notes that the concept of media logic is about the adaptation of news making to expectations about which styles of presentation that could attract a larger audience, rather than to the actual substance of the policy issue at hand.

Mediatization studies are fairly silent about political logic, and consequently politics often seem to be represented as a "nonmedia logic" in the literature (Landerer 2013: 246). However, some definitions of political logic do exist. Normally, these center around policy making, as in Strömbäck's (2008: 233) emphasis on "collective and authoritative decision making." Even when a broader picture of politics is presented, as in Meyer's (2002) distinction between a policy and a process dimension, conclusions rarely seem to emphasize that politics is also about electoral competition and the struggle to gain acceptance for one's preferred solutions. As a result, the battle of logics often end up as a fight between "bad media" and "good politics" (Landerer 2013: 256), where media is driven by commercial strategies that undermine political substance in favor of sensation and conflict, while politics is seen as the will and efforts to solve important societal problems through compromise and negotiations.

Recent years have seen some attempts to explore mediatized politics empirically. For instance, related to the third dimension of mediatization, there is evidence to

support that journalists retain the most power of the content and framing of news (Strömbäck and Nord 2006) and that mediatization of news content is stronger in the United States compared with European countries (cf. Esser 2008; Strömbäck and Dimitrova 2011). This is reflected in a higher degree of media interventionism, as journalists increasingly report on politics in their own words leaving less and less room for the voice of political actors in political news. Media control of media content does, however, not necessarily threaten a balanced news coverage, as shown by studies of direct democratic campaigns in Switzerland where the media reproduced the frames of political actors and also reported equally on pro and con arguments (Hänggli and Kriesi 2010). Another set of newly published studies looks at how mediatization affects the organization of European political parties. Among the clearest noticeable trends, based on case studies in Austria, Germany, Great Britain, and Switzerland, were the increase in organizational resources for communication (Donges 2008; referenced in Esser and Matthes 2013). Although the empirical picture is becoming clearer, most pieces of the mediatized politics puzzle are nevertheless missing. As pointed out by one of the most active contributors to the field, there is still "a remarkable dearth of systematic empirical research on the mediatisation of politics" (Strömbäck 2011a: 423).

Agenda Setting as Mediatized Politics?

The literature on political agenda setting concentrates on the degree to and ways in which the media agenda influences the agendas of political actors. A great deal of attention has been devoted to the question of "who influences whom." However, acknowledging the reciprocal nature of the relationship between media and politics, recent studies have concentrated on identifying the conditions under which news becomes politics (Walgrave and Van Aelst 2006). The main results indicate that concentrated policy responsibility or institutional ownership makes news influence more likely, as witnessed by presidential responses to foreign policy relative to domestic issues (Wood and Peake 1998); dramatic and sensational issues like crime and environment are more prone to media effects than for instance undramatic and abstract issues like taxes and public sector reforms (Soroka 2002); loss of domestic policy influence through processes of multi-level governance increases media influence on parliament, as seen in relation to EU-dominated issue like environment and agriculture (van Noije et al. 2008); media coverage more often sparks party attention when it deals with issues that the parties care about or "own" (Green-Pedersen and Stubager 2010).

Few attempts have been made to look at how the literatures of mediatized politics and political agenda setting inform each other (but see Strömbäck 2011a). Note, however, that some early contributions to the mediatization debate were theoretically close to agenda-setting perspectives. One example is Hernes (1978) who base his thesis about the "media-twisted" society on many of the same assumptions as the agenda-setting tradition (see Baumgartner and Jones 1993): That is, modern society is characterized by a surplus of information and a deficit of attention, making the agenda-setting function of the media a powerful political tool. As the literatures of mediatization and

agenda setting developed, the connection between them seems to have been more or less lost. Aiming to reconnect, this paper looks at potential synergies between the two traditions, both theoretically and empirically. Writing from within the field of political agenda setting, my goal at this early stage of communicating across perspectives is threefold: First, I hope to illustrate how existing empirical descriptions of mediatized politics could be strengthened by taking into account the key results of political agenda-setting studies. Second, the idea is to increase the attention to political logics in mediatization processes. Finally, I (re)introduce a target for future research, in both agenda-setting and mediatization studies, that could produce more knowledge about how the media affects the distribution of power between different political actors and institutions in society. Below, I elaborate on these goals. For the latter two, the subsequent discussions serve as a starting point for the empirical analyses that are presented and discussed after the section on research design.

As the above review indicates, mediatization studies have been characterized by a strong focus on theorizing and a limited amount of empirical research. This makes for an interesting contrast to agenda-setting studies, where the situation has been rather the opposite. However, this means that the latter field could benefit from a closer look at the richness of theoretical perspectives within the mediatization literature. My focus here, however, is on the ways in which agenda setting offers systematic empirical investigations of the news–politics relationship. At the core of this contribution is the original agenda-setting hypothesis (a simple signal-response model): When news salience increases and an issue rises on the media agenda, the probability of a political response increases and the issue moves higher up on the political agenda. The strength of this effect varies, and the opposite pattern of influence is certainly also a fitting description of the media–politics relationship in many situations. Still, cumulative research efforts clearly indicate that the issues which news institutions focus the most on are likely to become politics.[2] In other words, the outcome of news selection processes influence *which issues* political actors pay attention to. Mediatized politics is consequently more than a dominance of media forms or formats in political communication. Systematic evidence suggests that the actual content of politics is affected by news attention. Through their agenda-setting function, the media influence which social problems receive political attention and, ultimately, which problems that are met with policy solutions. This would seem highly relevant for a concept of mediatized politics, supplementing the empirical foundation for the claim that the media alters politics.

Balancing the Logics of Politics and News Media

However, rather than seeing this as a straightforward add-on to the mediatization thesis, this paper argues that the incorporation of the core agenda-setting idea and results should be accompanied by more attention to the motives and incentives of political actors. Answering the call for mediatization research that supplements existing notions of political logic (Landerer 2013; Strömbäck 2008), the aim is to show that agenda setting offers further nuances to extant descriptions of mediatized politics. Studies of

political agenda setting increasingly highlight the many contingencies of media influence on politics (Walgrave and Van Aelst 2006). For instance, recent agenda-setting contributions have applied the theory of issue ownership, according to which a party's history of political prioritization, competence, and policy results on a specific issue generates an electoral advantage because the public comes to think of the party as more capable of handling it (Petrocik 1996). Results show that parties are more likely to respond to news on issues they "own" (cf. Green-Pedersen and Stubager 2010), with, for instance, left-wing parties responding more often to news on (un)employment and the environment and right-wing parties especially attentive to news on crime and immigration. This points to a key assumption in the general model of political agenda setting underlying my argument: For political actors, like parties and interest groups, media attention to issues are opportunities of politicization. In the same way that media logic could be seen as an incentive structure, shaping the way in which political actors communicate their messages, logics of party, and issue competition are crucial to whether media-generated opportunities of politicization are seized. If they offer a means to politicizing preferable issues, own competence or the incompetence of opponents, then news attention often turns into politics. Relative to how political logic has been conceptualized in most mediatization studies (see discussion above), this approach shifts focus from a policy-seeking or decision-making dimension to an electoral or vote- and office-seeking dimension thus contributing to a more "complete and realistic conceptualization of the political process" (Landerer 2013: 249).

The key implication is that mechanisms of party and issue competition play a role when news triggers political attention. The first empirical task of the paper is thus to demonstrate how the agendas-setting influence of the media is strongly affected by a political logic. Leaving the ownership perspective aside, I concentrate on the basic yet crucial influence of policy responsibility. The argument is that government power is a key factor in understanding how and why political agendas are continuously set by the media (Thesen 2013). Using a sample of Danish news stories, distinguishing between political responses from government and opposition parties, I show that office position and policy responsibility determine party preferences for different tones in political communication: Opposition parties respond to bad news that implicitly or explicitly attribute blame to the government, because this will help politicize government incompetence. The government responds to good news that reflect positive developments in social problems because this could politicize policy success but is also forced to react when news explicitly address government responsibility, and thereby threatens its image as responsive and competent. To the extent that this holds true, mediatized politics should be considered as a more evenly matched meeting between a news media and a political logic. A process where political actors actively use media attention to their advantage, thus behaving in accordance with a *political* logic of party competition.

Media and Politics as a Zero-Sum Game?

The review suggested that several contributions perceive the media–politics relationship as a zero-sum game where a media logic is pit against a political logic. Cook

(2005: 163) observes how politicians might win the daily battles but end up losing the war "as standards of newsworthiness begin to become prime criteria to evaluate issues, policies and politics." This notion is widely supported within the mediatization literature, which generally assumes that mediatization implies decreasing political influence. To some extent, this perspective is moderated in the most recent accounts of mediatized politics (Esser and Matthes 2013; Strömbäck and Van Aelst 2013). The idea here is that political institutions vary in their need for publicity, and this variation, in turn, explains why institutions or processes that are "characterized by the power- and publicity-gaining self-presentational aspects of political logic" are more mediatized than those "characterized by the policy- and decision-based production aspects" (Esser and Matthes 2013: 177). While this differentiation is useful and inspiring, it is still implicitly based on the zero-sum game assumption: The most mediatized institutions stand to lose the most influence. This is also reflected in the term "self-mediatization," which describes politicians' proactive efforts to use the media to their own ends. By emphasizing the downside of such activities, stressing that "there is plenty of evidence that political actors quickly lose control over the news agenda" (Esser and Matthes 2013: 178), the image of impotent political actors is to some degree still upheld. Instead, I prefer the concept "strategic adaptation" (Landerer 2013: 255) because it captures both the strength of the media (forcing actors to adapt) and the motives of parties and politicians (strategically using news in party competition).

When political actors adapt to or master the media and the media becomes more and more important in society, any a priori conclusion of losses in political influence is at least questionable. What facilitates such an argument is the strong emphasis on form/format in much mediatization research, accompanied by a lack of attention to the issues and problems on the agenda and the question of who benefits from the political attention these problems are receiving. The effect of mediatization on different political actors is an empirical question; some might lose, but others could win. Reintroducing a key question put forward more than three decades ago (Hernes 1978), but which has remained largely unanswered, both mediatization and political agenda-setting studies should devote attention to how the media influence the distribution of power between different actors or institutions in politics.

The second empirical task of this paper is therefore to explore this path of research, providing empirical analyses (from the same Danish case) suggesting that opposition politics is more mediatized than government politics and discuss how this constitutes opposition strength in party competition. The basic theoretical idea is still that opposition and government parties face different constraints when working with the same "publicity-oriented" activities. Both would like to maximize attention to advantageous issues and avoid the less preferable issues from the media agenda, and this leads to different preferences for tones in political communication as argued above. The point here, though, is that the nature of the media agenda, and of party competition, skews the outcome of political agenda-setting processes in favor of opposition parties. I provide two examples to substantiate this claim. First, I show how opposition parties have more opportunities to politicize favorable issues from the media agenda, as criteria of newsworthiness produce a negativity bias in news coverage. Second, I draw on both

mediatization and political agenda-setting perspectives and illustrate how scandal-like news constitutes powerful agenda-setting opportunities for opposition parties. Besides reflecting a news media logic, where the performance of politics takes precedence over policy content, stories of incompetence and lack of integrity have also been shown to decrease the vote shares of involved parties (Clark 2009). To the extent that opposition parties focus on these stories, trying to increase public attention to ministers caught lying, serious malpractice or incompetence in policy making or implementation, they constitute a strong opposition asset in media-based party competition. Instead of a zero-sum game between media and politics, news media logic and political logic thus often reinforce each other, creating an opposition bias in the opposition–government game.

Design and Data

The arguments of the paper are illustrated with data on media and party agendas in Denmark. A sample of more than 2,000 news stories from one year (2003–2004) was coded. Next, each story was "forwardtracked" to see whether it made it to the opposition's and the government's agenda in the following four weeks. The sections below elaborate on the independent and dependent variables applied in the empirical analyses.

Independent Variables

The news stories were collected using Danish radio news broadcasts (twice daily) from the Danish Broadcasting Corporation, which in this period held a de facto monopoly on national radio news. Each individual news feature of the radio broadcasts constituted the coding unit. After reading a summary of each feature, variables were assigned values measuring its content in terms of issue content, news tone, blame attributions, and so on (see below). The individual news features were subsequently aggregated on news story level to form the unit of analysis. Time- and place-specific events or statements, and not recurring social problems, determined the grouping of individual features. For instance, news features on unemployment figures are produced regularly. But even though they are thematically identical, they are indeed separate news stories based on different events. This collection procedure produced the following six variables.[3]

News salience, or the intensity of media attention reflecting a stories placement on the media agenda, is measured as the number of radio news features broadcast about a story. The relationship between news salience and political agendas is well established in the literature, and we should therefore expect to see a strong relationship between the level of news attention and the probability of a political response.

The coding of *news tone* (good, bad, and neutral[4]) was done from the point of view of government, directly addressing the role of policy responsibility and the competition between opposition and government as theorized in the second claim. The operationalization draws on Baumgartner and Jones's (1993: 51) coding of news content: "if

you were an industry leader [minister], would you be pleased or unhappy to see such a title?" Obvious examples would be news about increasing inflation, industry closures, crime, accidents, spread of new diseases, and so on. However, also stories where the government is content with a specific policy but nevertheless met by criticism (not contradicted by government support) qualify as bad news. The assumption is that the minister in charge would have preferred a different news content, or no story at all.

Blame attribution is central to the argument as it intensifies opposition response on one hand and forces government to stop ignoring bad news and start responding on the other. It was measured through the presence of government criticism in news items.[5] The word "criticize," or its synonyms, need not be present, but the item should point to conditions, actions, or intentions, which the addresser clearly sees as censurable and for which the government is blamed.

The coding of scandal-like news, questioning the *competence or integrity* of the government, was based on Clark's (2009) notion of non-policy valence events. The variable is meant to capture news that question the policy-neutral values that politicians want to be identified with and are expected to live up to. Two values are in focus here: competence and integrity. The former typically relates to failures or deficiencies in the making or implementation of policies. One example is when a tax loophole, which the previous government had proposed to close, was ignored by the ministry and ended up costing the state more than 170 million USD. Other indicators of incompetence is when the government is criticized by recognized and credible actors like, for instance, the European Human Rights Court, or when proposals or statements are withdrawn shortly after they were issued reflecting poor judgment or a lack of strategical foresight. The latter value, integrity or honesty, most often concerns stories with an element of scandal or breach of promises. Examples cover economical infidelity, tax-fraud and professional misconduct, or preferential treatment.

Besides the four main explanatory variables presented above, some of the empirical models include a control variable meant to accommodate the reciprocal nature of the media–politics relationship. Specifically, each story was coded according to whether opposition or government played a role in initiating the story. The resulting variables, respectively, labeled *Opposition initiation* and *Government initiation*, thus reflect the judgment that a news story would not have entered the news agenda (at that specific point in time) had it not been for the involvement of the opposition or the government. The inclusion of these variables strengthens the specification of the news to politics relationship in the empirical models, serving to curb endogeneity as their estimates could be expected to influence both independent and dependent variables.

Dependent Variables

In the period under study, 2003–2004, government power in Denmark had just shifted (2001) from a social democratic-led coalition (Social Democrats and Social Liberals) to a bourgeois coalition (Liberals and Conservatives). In addition to the Social Democrats and the Social Liberals, the "left of government" opposition was made up of the Red Green Alliance and the Socialist People's Party. The *opposition's agenda*

was proxied through the institution of parliamentary questioning used to control the government but at the same time broadcasting and building party profiles (Wiberg and Koura 1994). The institution is transparent and easily accessible in its content (Q&A), and thus attractive both for the opposition and for the news media. Studies show that non-legislative activities do in fact work as instruments of political agenda setting for the opposition (Green-Pedersen and Mortensen 2010). Also, parliamentary questions have been used extensively in agenda-setting studies (cf. Green-Pedersen and Stubager 2010; Soroka 2002), and this strengthens the current study's value as a representative of the broader field of political agenda setting.

The government's agenda was measured through the weekly press-meetings of the prime minister (PM). The meetings are typically held every Tuesday at the PM's Office, during approximately the same period as Parliament is seated (September to early June). On average, one week a month is without a press-meeting as the PM is occupied with other meetings or journeys. The meeting takes place right after the weekly ministerial conference and starts with a ten to twenty minutes speech from the PM mainly divided between presentation of issues that have been discussed in the ministerial conference and a few topics of choice on which he speaks more freely. The measure does not capture those parts of the government's issue attention expressed through other ministers and other contexts, but this is alleviated by the fact that the PM represents the whole government. He divides his attention among the different ministries, as also his comments to the agenda of the ministerial conference show. Therefore, the measure should still qualify as a government agenda and not only a PM agenda. The lack of extensiveness thus primarily means that the agenda space is limited compared with the parliamentary questions from the opposition.

Table 1. Descriptives of Variables Applied in the Analyses (N = 2,161).

Variable Name	*M*	*SD*	Minimum	Maximum
Opposition initiation	0.05	0.21	0	1
Government initiation	0.13	0.33	0	1
News salience	1.78	2.38	1	50
News tone	63.02	38.56	0	100
Blame attributions	0.12	0.33	0	1
Blame attributions: Non-policy/valence	0.02	0.14	0	1
Opposition response	0.11	0.31	0	1
Government response	0.03	0.17	0	1

For each story coded in the radio news, the opposition's questions[6] and the PM's speech at the press-meetings[7] were thoroughly read to check whether the story had made it to the opposition and government agenda in the following four weeks. The press-meetings were introduced by Liberal PM Anders Fogh Rasmussen in 2001, and there are several gaps in these records. This, together with the availability of Danish agenda-setting data, affected the choice of time period for the study. It is possible that the "new" institution of press-meeting could make my period of study less representative when thinking of the pre-2001 situation in Denmark. With regard to the period

after 2003–2004, there is little reason to suspect that the relevance of this study's findings has decreased substantially. First, Fogh Rasmussen's successors have continued to hold press-meetings and have continued to attract a lot of attention to them. Second, the institute of parliamentary questioning has been stable in the last ten years, after a long period of increased use from the 1960s to the 1990s (Green-Pedersen 2010).

More generally, the assumptions underlying this study's agenda-setting model still apply. Although Danish politics has seen a change of government since my data were collected, it is still characterized by minority governments that rule through stable bloc majorities. Thus, the media is able to communicate (and the public is able to understand) the distribution of policy-making powers, which is a necessary condition for a model that centers on policy responsibility. Furthermore, elections are still competitive (as illustrated by the change in government), and this continues to make the vote-seeking party strategies at the heart of my model relevant. Finally, Denmark conforms (at a minimum) to the first phase of mediatization. In other words, politics takes place and is communicated in the media. Thus, Danish parties who want to compete for votes on different issues must ensure that their priorities and positions are visible in the media. Although new media outlets have increased their importance since 2004, most features of the Danish media system remain the same.

Analyses and Discussions

Using empirical examples from the data set described above, the two sections below discuss potential contributions of agenda-setting studies to the understanding of mediatized politics. Each section starts off with a recapitulation of the core argument, before presenting empirical evidence to illustrate and support the claim.

The Political Conditionality of Mediatized Politics

In the theory section, I argued that the nature of party competition and policy responsibility affects party responses to news. In the competition for votes and political power, opposition parties attack using government weaknesses found in bad news stories, reflecting poorly on the way government handles its policy responsibilities. Government, however, must defend the legitimacy of their policy responsibility and do so by a twofold strategy. The strategy of choice is to respond to good news to activate positive competence evaluations in the electorate. However, when responsibility is attributed to the government, ignoring bad news is less attractive as the chance of "getting off the hook" decreases. Bad news featuring blame attributions thus force government to answer to uphold its image as responsive and competent.

To test this, multivariate logistic regression was used to estimate the empirical relationships between news tone and blame attributions (independent variables) and opposition and government response (dependent variables). The regression models also included other independent and control variables of interest, such as news salience and variables indicating whether news stories had been initiated by political actors. Results are displayed in the appendix (see Table A1). In short, the estimated parameters of

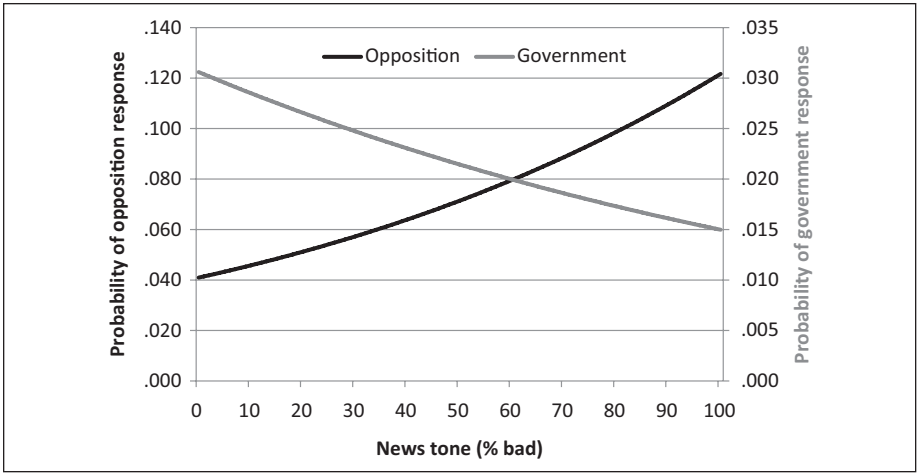

Figure 1. Predicted probability of opposition and government response to news with and without blame attributions.
Note. Estimated with Model II, Table A1 (both opposition and government). Rest of independent variables set at their mean.

both news tone and blame attributions are significant and have the right sign. To give a more intuitive interpretation of the results, predicted probabilities of party response were estimated for every observation in the sample at substantially interesting values of the independent variables. These estimations are based on Model II (opposition and government), and the resulting mean predicted probabilities are presented in Figures 1 and 2.

Figure 1 depicts the relationship between news negativity and party response. Overall, the x-shaped figure clearly indicates how the two actors differ in their reactions to news attention: When news worsens, the opposition responds; and when news gets better, the government responds. Holding all other variables constant, a switch from a one-sided good story to a one-sided bad story triples the chances that opposition parties react to news attention (from .04 to .12). In the case of government, the same change in news tone is accompanied by a halving of response probability (from .031 to .015).[8]

Figure 2 shows predicted probabilities of party responses for stories with and without blame attributions. Attributions of blame to the government more than double and triple the probability of opposition and government response, respectively. While opposition parties only respond to 7 percent of stories without government criticism, a parliamentary question could be expected for every fourth (.25) story featuring such elements. A strong increase is noted also for government response, although with lower probabilities (from .017 to .044). The expectation of a dual strategy of government, including both proactive strengthening of the public's perception of government success through good news response (Figure 1) and reactive responsiveness to attributions of blame for negative developments, is therefore confirmed.

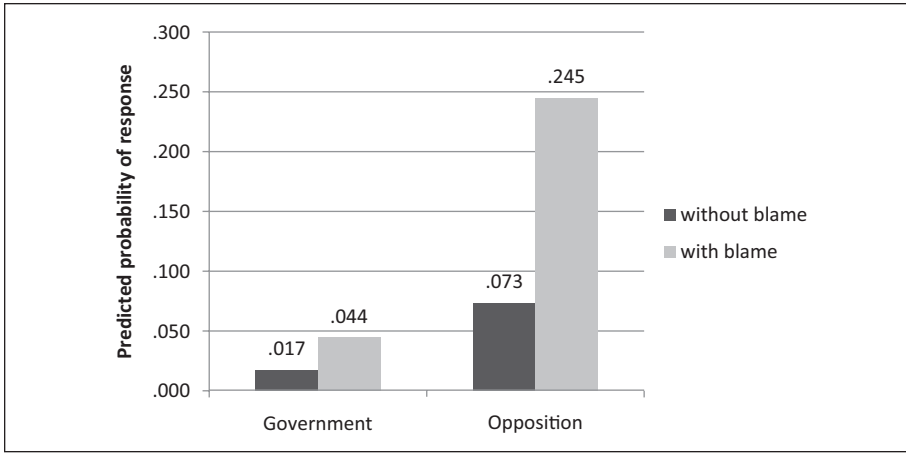

Figure 2. Predicted probability of opposition and government response to news with and without blame attributions.
Note. Estimated with Model II, Table A1 (both opposition and government). Rest of independent variables set at their mean.

Overall, the results elaborate on the simple signal-response model of political agenda setting, where only salience is used to predict political attention to news. Adding a "political filter" related to party competition and policy responsibility shows that when media influence politics, there is most certainly also a political logic at play. Even though a lot of the social problems communicated in the media attract political attention, parties are still in a position to select those problems that serve their interests well. In other words, political agenda setting, and thus also aspects of mediatized politics, involves a political selection of news where party strategies and party competition over votes and office play an important role. If not a counter-argument to the mediatization thesis, this at least serves as a more careful or balanced perspective on media influence on politics.

Mediatized Politics and the Opposition–Government Game

The final claim of the paper was that the relationship between media and politics should not only be seen as a zero-sum game and that research on both mediatized politics and political agenda setting will have to address how the media influences the distribution of power between different political actors and institutions. Following my own suggestion, I present a couple of empirical examples suggesting that opposition politics is more mediatized than government politics, and arguing that this provides the opposition with an advantage in its competition with the government.

First, the empirical material from my Danish case shows clear traces of a negativity bias in the media. The average share of negativity in the sampled radio news agenda is 63 percent (see Table 1). Measured alternatively, nearly 48 percent of the news stories

are more bad than good, with 31 percent neutral and only 21 percent more good than bad. One of the key news values in modern journalism, negativity, thus clearly shapes the tone of news coverage. Furthermore, blame attributions containing explicit government criticism features in 12 percent of the news stories. With the response patterns from the previous analyses in mind, there should be little doubt that news media logic and the nature of the media agenda assure opposition parties considerably more opportunities to activate agenda-setting advantages.

Adding to this, the models reported above suggest that opposition parties are more influenced by news attention, while government responses to a much higher degree follow in the wake of their own policy initiatives and statements (cf. the coefficient of "Own initiation," Table A1). Although opposition politics thus could be labeled more mediatized, this should not be read as a sign of weakness. Rather, news negativity and the mechanisms of opposition and government response together facilitate a context where, for instance, bad news featuring blame often will dominate issue dialogue in party competition. From the perspective of political agenda setting then, the fact that opposition politics is more mediatized means that opposition parties have more opportunities and stronger incentives to join or initiate dialogue on the basis of news stories.

Second, so-called non-policy valence events (Clark 2009) that challenge the government's image with respect to competence and integrity represent extremely attractive agenda-setting opportunities for the opposition. The valence concept (Stokes 1963) has mainly been put to use on policy issues where parties or candidates not only hold identical positions (reduction of crime, economic growth, etc.). It does however also cover values that we expect politicians to adhere to, such as honesty, trustworthiness, and competence. The potential of news stories questioning government competence or integrity derives from the fundamental character of these values. Parties, and their constituencies, often disagree on how social problems are to be handled. But no party and no voter would disagree that political representatives should be able to deal with these problems in a competent and honest manner, regardless of which political solution is chosen. If not, the question whether elected leaders are fit to govern is inevitably raised. And unlike in the case of, for instance, failed economic growth, which often can be (more or less credibly) attributed to external factors like international economic trends, the blame for non-policy valence failures is virtually impossible to escape.

To investigate the effect that news stories covering non-policy valence events have on opposition responses, the blame variable applied earlier (see Table A1 and Figure 2) was split in two. The resulting two variables, *Substance blame* and *Non-policy blame*, distinguish between attributions of blame related more to policy content and stories that deal with the government's lack of integrity or competence. An otherwise identical regression to Model II (Opposition) reported above was then run, the results of which are displayed in the appendix (see Table A2). The estimated parameters of both blame variables are significant and have the right sign. Mean-predicted probabilities are presented in Figure 3. The results find that the opposition is twice as likely to respond to news that contains substance blame, compared with news without blame.

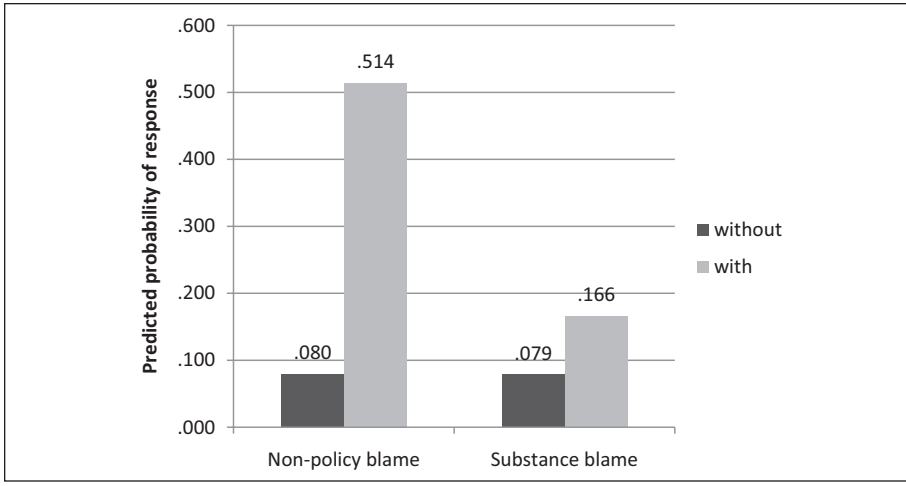

Figure 3. Predicted probability of opposition response to news stories with and without non-policy blame and substance blame.
Note. Estimated with model from Table A2. Rest of independent variables set at their mean.

When attributions related to policy content are present, opposition parties respond in 16 percent of the cases. However, the impact of the agenda-setting advantages brought on by news that challenges government integrity or competence is far stronger. Stories that involve, for instance, ministers caught lying or serious incompetence/malpractice in policy implementation or making are 43 percentage points (from .08 to .51) more likely to make it to the opposition's agenda than stories without such elements.

These stories are perfectly tailored news material, often over-fulfilling news value criteria, because they have an undisputable core of wrongdoing, an identifiable culprit, relate to commonly accepted values in both politics and society and hold the potential to end political careers. The fact that this also matters for opposition politicization again reflects how specific aspects of the news media logic reinforce a logic of party competition in a way that affects the distribution of power in a democratic system. Keeping in mind the strong effect that non-policy blame has on opposition response, that these events have been proven to affect the vote shares of involved parties (Clark 2009), and that government actors carrying policy responsibility are more prone to be involved in these different types of scandals, they could be seen as an example of strong mediatization where the media affect both the form(at) of politics and the balance between government and opposition.

Conclusion

The empirical results presented in this paper—and agenda-setting studies in general—provide systematic documentation of how the media, through assigning "political relevance and importance to social problems by selecting and emphasizing certain issues and neglecting others" (Mazzoleni and Schulz 1999: 251), exert influence on

democratic politics. In this way, agenda-setting perspectives inform discussions about the fourth dimension of mediatization, where the key question is the extent to which political actors are governed by a political or a media logic. Looking at the overall results, there is little doubt that media's political agenda-setting power is an important element of party competition. When news institutions mediate a problem at the expense of others, emphasize positive or negative developments, and communicate blame, some parties will be advantaged while others will suffer a handicap. Thus, "mediated realities" (Strömbäck 2008: 238) or media depictions of social problems and the implicit or explicit attribution of responsibility for them come to influence the opposition–government game. Both in terms of how the players relate to the media agenda and in the sense that the attention generated will be skewed in favor of the opposition. Mediatized politics and the typical issue selection of the media, often producing news that is negative, critical, and sensational, thus have a non-trivial impact on political agenda setting.

However, my emphasis on the vote- and office-seeking dimension of political logic offers a different take on mediatization, where political perspectives become more visible and more important. The results support the core message that policy responsibility and party competition are crucial to political agenda setting, supplementing the above conclusion that the media influences political issue attention. In the same way that journalists retain ultimate control over media content (Cook 2005; Strömbäck and Nord 2006), thereby keeping the upper hand in the third dimension of mediatization, the present study suggests a similar, although opposite, conclusion regarding the fourth dimension: The media can trigger political attention and direct political attention to events and issues, but political logics strongly influence what type of content parties politicize. Consequently, mediatized politics involve a *political* selection of news where party strategies and party competition over votes and office (and policies) play an important role.

Furthermore, the focus on party competition could also challenge the distinction between news media and political logic that prevails in the mediatization literature. For instance, although one could see opposition responses to negative news as a reflecting an adaptation to or adoption of a news media logic where conflict and polarization is important, this paper argues that it is equally right—and useful—to see it as inherent to politics. In this perspective, strong agenda-setting effects or close interactions between media and politics take place as a result of overlapping or reinforcing logics, rather than one logic dominating the other. Arguably, though, what I have labeled a political logic pertaining to party competition could be perceived as a logic that guides individual parties. Such a perspective underlines that even though individual political actors might not see a contradiction between strategic, competitive behavior and a media logic, politics as a whole could still suffer when the outcomes of individual positive-sum games are aggregated. This is perhaps most visible when considering how opposition parties utilize non-policy valence events from the news, a pattern which might shift attention from more important political issues. Still, party competition should be considered an important logic not only for individual actors but also at the level of political systems. Through their vote- and office-seeking

strategies, where the media play a dominant role, parties communicate their issue priorities and positions to the electorate. From the perspective of the present study, this ensures the continuing successful linkage between parties and voters (cf. Dalton et al. 2011), which in turn is a necessary condition for legitimate and democratic policy making.

Finally, although it may sound trivial, we need to remember that "media influence" is of a mediating character. There is no "party of the media"; even though the media select or negotiate which issues and opinions that will become news, these problems and viewpoints most often originate elsewhere. The media *mediate* opinions, interests, and social problems. Extending this point, I have tried to argue that mediatization does not necessarily equal a zero-sum game between the media and political parties. Increased importance of the media together with political actors that are able to adopt to a news media logic, might, for instance, produce more powerful parties at the cost of other institutions, actors, or groups in politics, which lag behind in terms of media knowledge and media exposure. To come closer to an understanding of media influence on politics, new research efforts in both political agenda setting and mediatization of politics should therefore direct attention to how the media redistributes power between different actors or institutions in politics. Among several interesting tracks for future research in this regards would be to pursue questions relating to whether changing issue content and framing of news over time, that is, toward more sensational issues and negative coverage, have affected the electoral competition between incumbents and challengers, the politicization of new issues like immigration and environment, and, consequently, the success of parties and interest groups organized around these issues.

Appendix

Table A1. Logistic Regression Models.

	Opposition Response		Government Response	
Variables	Model I	Model II	Model I	Model II
News salience	0.250*** (0.032)	0.223*** (0.033)	0.169*** (0.031)	0.151*** (0.032)
Own initiation	0.461 (0.287)	0.489 (0.301)	1.085*** (0.296)	0.784* (0.314)
Opponent response	0.826* (0.329)	0.903** (0.340)	0.879** (0.319)	0.692* (0.347)
News tone (% bad)		0.012*** (0.002)		−0.007† (0.004)
Blame attributions		1.409*** (0.187)		0.967** (0.373)
Constant	−2.716*** (0.102)	−3.722*** (0.215)	−4.386*** (0.195)	−4.017*** (0.287)
N	2,161	2,161	2,161	2,161
Pseudo-R^2	.0763	.145	.138	.151

Note. Dependent variables are opposition and government response to news stories (0 = *no response*, 1 = *response*). Standard errors in parentheses.
†$p < .10$. *$p < .05$. **$p < .01$. ***$p < .001$.

Table A2. Logistic Regression Model.

Variables	Opposition Response
News salience	0.220*** (0.034)
Own initiation	0.448 (0.310)
Opponent response	0.875* (0.345)
News tone (% bad)	0.012*** (0.002)
Blame: Substance	0.848*** (0.215)
Blame: Non-policy	2.502*** (0.380)
Constant	−3.689*** (0.215)
N	2,161
Pseudo-R^2	.155

Note. Dependent Variables are opposition and government response to news stories (0 = *no response*, 1 = *response*). Standard errors in parentheses.
†$p < .10$. *$p < .05$. **$p < .01$. ***$p < .001$.

Table A3. Examples of Good, Bad, and Neutral Stories.

Good	Bad	Neutral
Traffic, fewer speeding offenses	Wage-earners fear of losing work increases	Prohibition against photographing in courts ("defense lawyers applaud, while the press protests")
Fewer people die of cancer	Security problems at Barsebäck (nuclear plant)	
Great potential for voluntary mergers of municipalities	House prices and inequalities across Denmark	Upturn to come ("economic rise next year . . . But the treasury will lack 27 billion DKR")
Great user satisfaction with court-sponsored mediation	Fewer burglaries solved	
Fewer work-related accidents	More traffic accidents	Al Qaeda crushed, risk of terror ("Al Qaeda nearly crushed, still the risk of international terror as high as ever")
Regions get control of recent years rise in expenses	Negative growth in Denmark	
Record entrepreneurship among immigrants	Children get too much sugar	UN climate conference, Russia ("did not get an answer to the big question: Will Russia accept the Kyoto-agreement?")
DSB (Danish State Railways) trains are on time!	Agriculture, farms close down as never before	

Table A4. Examples of Substance Blame and Non-Policy Valence Blame.

Substance Blame	Non-Policy Valence Blame
Unemployment, government passive	Minister for the Environment accused of giving preferential treatment to friends
Bill proposal, civil agents, and critique	Minister for Food, Agriculture and Fisheries spoke falsely about number of pigs
Government fails on gender equality	UN criticizes Danish immigration law
Decline in taxation revenue, miscalculations	
National Audits Office critiques Ministry of Ecclesiastical Affairs	Breach of promise, home care service for the elderly
Early retirement plan, critique	

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Notes

1. The mediatization literature covers a wide variety of studies analyzing media influence on several areas outside politics (cf. Hjarvard 2013; Lundby 2009). Our focus here is nevertheless on mediatized politics, and the discussions are therefore limited accordingly.
2. See, for instance, review in Walgrave and Van Aelst (2006).
3. An inter-coder reliability test (n = 313) produced satisfying results, with Krippendorff's alphas ranging from .79 to .86 for the content variables.
4. See Table A3 in the appendix for coding examples.
5. See Table A4 in the appendix for coding examples.
6. For spring 2003, data were made available through the Danish agenda-setting project (www.agendasetting.dk). Questions from the 2003–2004 session were collected from the Folketing's web archive (webarkiv.ft.dk).
7. Video recordings were made available by Local Eyes TV and Ritzaus Bureau.
8. The probabilities are consistently lower for government response, which is due to differing agenda capacity of the institutions used to measure government and opposition attention. The prime minister addresses approximately five to eight issues in the speech at his weekly press-meeting, adding up to a considerably lower number of response opportunities than that found in the institution of parliamentary questioning. I therefore do not focus on differences in the level or absolute size of changes when comparing opposition and government. For the same reasons, the two y-axes on opposition and government response are scaled differently.

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After Leveson: Recommendations for Instituting the Public and Press Council

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Abstract
The aim of this article is to review the work of the official inquiry committee headed by Lord Justice Brian Leveson in Britain. It is argued that the existing situation in Britain is far from satisfactory, and that the press should advance more elaborate mechanisms of self-control, establishing a new regulatory body called Public and Press Council that will be anchored in law, and funded by organizations that are independent from government and the media. The new independent regulator should be empowered with greater and unprecedented authority, and with substantive sanctioning abilities.

Keywords
Britain, codes of ethics, Leveson, media ownership, press regulation, Public and Press Council

Introduction

On July 13, 2011, British Prime Minister David Cameron set up an official inquiry committee headed by Lord Justice Brian Leveson to study the culture, practice, and ethics of the press. This was in the wake of revelations concerning phone hacking conducted by the *News of the World* tabloid into the phones of celebrities, politicians, and other members of the public, including the missing schoolgirl Milly Dowler and her family. In July 2011, *News of the World* was closed down, and a few days later, Prime Minister Cameron instructed Leveson to focus on the relationships between the press and the public, the press and the police, and the press and politicians. He asked

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Leveson to make recommendations for change so as to devise a more effective press regulator (The Right Honourable Lord Justice Leveson 2012b, Vol. I, Part A, chap. 1: 3–5).

The lengthy Leveson Report of 1,987 pages was published on November 29, 2012, after some nine months of deliberations. Its most significant recommendation was the regulation of the press by the establishment of a new press standards organization backed by legislation to ensure its effectiveness. The new regulator should be independent of both the press industry and the government. This paper thus focuses its attention on this important issue.

This paper agrees with Leveson that the existing situation in Britain is far from satisfactory; that the press should advance more elaborate mechanisms of education, raising awareness of ethical concerns and self-control, and that while these mechanisms are indeed necessary, they are not sufficient. This essay agrees with Leveson that there is a need of empowering the new regulatory body with legal authority, thus equipping it with substantive ability to sanction.

The article ends with concrete recommendations as to how to improve the work of the press and to ensure that it will adhere to basic ethical and professional standards. Some of the recommendations are in line with those of the Leveson Inquiry. Others draw upon my own experience as a member of the Israel Press Council (1997–2000). As a public representative on the Israel Press Council, I have firsthand insights regarding the extent that public interests are secondary to those of the press. During my time on the Israel Press Council, I embarked on research to study the history of my Council as well as the situation in Britain and in Canada. I found that the three countries have followed the same erroneous model that was built to serve first and foremost the interests of the press industry, not those of the public. Leveson outlines many of the model's shortcomings.

The Work of the Leveson Inquiry Commission

The Leveson Inquiry heard 337 witnesses and received nearly three hundred written statements. Leveson (The Right Honourable Lord Justice Leveson 2012a: 4) found abundant evidence to suggest, "beyond any doubt," that on many occasions the press disregarded its public responsibilities. As a result, the press caused "real hardship and, on occasion, wreaked havoc with the lives of innocent people whose rights and liberties have been disdained" (The Right Honourable Lord Justice Leveson 2012a: 4). The evidence showed that large parts of the press had been engaged in a widespread trade in private and confidential information with little regard to the public interest. Although the press was fully aware of the gross transgression, no newspaper conducted an investigation into its own practice or into the practice of others. No newspaper sought to discover or expose whether its own journalists had complied with data protection legislation (The Right Honourable Lord Justice Leveson 2012a: 7). In all, 829 people were regarded by the police as being likely victims of phone hacking by the press in elaborate illegal schemes that involved payments to public officials, computer

hacking, mobile phone theft, and other irresponsible and unethical activities (The Right Honourable Lord Justice Leveson 2012a: 8). There has been extensive evidence of the publication of private information without consent and legitimate public interest, exhibiting utter disregard of any ethical standards and very little thinking about the negative consequences for those whose privacy was invaded (The Right Honourable Lord Justice Leveson 2012a: 10). Misrepresentation, distortion, and embellishment became part of the press culture.

Regarding the existing Press Complaints Commission (PCC), Leveson concluded that it had failed to achieve its aims. That same culture vigorously resists or dismisses complaints as a matter of course (The Right Honourable Lord Justice Leveson 2012a: 11). He proposed a new press standards organization that would deal with complaints against newspapers via a cheap and easy arbitration process, so that aggrieved people who feel they have been wronged by the press can find justice without appealing to the courts. The new body would have the power to investigate serious breaches of conduct; be able to fine newspapers up to £1 million if it found they had acted badly, and form an arbitration system for people who felt that they fell victim of press intrusion (The Right Honourable Lord Justice Leveson 2012a: 34; 2012b: Vol. 4, Part K, chap. 7, para. 4.38, p. 1767). It would also promote high standards and encourage transparency. This arrangement would provide the public with confidence that their complaints would be seriously dealt with.

Leveson said this organization must be independent of both the government and the press, and that it must be backed by law. He recommended some kind of "verifying" body to check every two or three years that it was doing its job properly (The Right Honourable Lord Justice Leveson 2012a: 36). Indeed, the government should protect journalists so as to enable them to do their job thoroughly and responsibly. The government should also ensure that appropriate steps are taken when journalists transgress professional boundaries and allow narrow, partisan interests to blind their better judgment.

Leveson proposed that membership in this new organization would be voluntary. Specific advantages will be offered to members, including having access to cut-price tribunal system (The Right Honourable Lord Justice Leveson 2012a: 42).

Media Ownership

The British media is concentrated in the hands of a few owners. The comprehensive Report of the Select Committee on Communications of U.K. Parliament showed that in terms of national market share by circulation, *News International* controlled 35.5 percent, *Trinity Mirror* controlled 20.3 percent, *Daily Mail and General Trust* controlled 19.3 percent, and *Northern and Shell* controlled 11.9 percent. The four largest national newspaper companies controlled 87 percent of the market (House of Lords Communications Committee 2008: chap. 4). The same is true in the local newspapers: "four publishers now have almost 70% market share across the UK" (Douglas 2010; House of Lords Communications Committee 2008: summary).

Table 1. UK Media Market 1997-2009.

Title/company	1997	2002	2009
News International	34.4	32.2	33.8
Trinity Mirror	23.9	20.2	16.2
Northern and Shell	14.3	13.8	13.5
Daily Mail and General Trust	13.6	18.5	19.9
Telegraph Group	7.7	7.3	7.3
Total of Market	93.9	92	90.7

Table 1 shows that over the years, five companies have controlled more than 90 percent of the media market in the United Kingdom (House of Lords Communications Committee 2013: 134).

Current media ownership rules do not adequately protect diversity and plurality of views. Leveson was certainly aware of the problem, accentuating the importance of maintaining a plural media and of having many different sources of news, controlled by many different people:

> It is only through this plurality, specifically in relation to news and current affairs, that we can ensure that the public is able to be well informed on matters of local, national and international news and policy and able to play their full part in a democratic society. (The Right Honourable Lord Justice Leveson 2012a: 29)

Leveson (The Right Honourable Lord Justice Leveson 2012b: Vol. 1, chap. 4, pp. 180–92, and Vol. 3, chap. 9) dedicated two chapters of his Report to the issue of plurality. He recommended that the levels of influence that would give rise to concerns in relation to media plurality be lower ("probably considerably lower") than the levels of concentration that would give rise to competition concerns (The Right Honourable Lord Justice Leveson 2012b: Vol. 3, chap. 9, p. 1470). Leveson (The Right Honourable Lord Justice Leveson 2012b: Vol. 3, chap. 9, p. 1473) concluded that the Government should consider

> whether periodic plurality reviews or an extension to the public interest test within the markets regime in competition law is most likely to provide a timely warning of, and response to, plurality concerns that develop as the result of organic growth recognising that the proposal for a regular plurality review is more closely focussed on plurality issues.

The establishment of powerful media empires in England feeds the debate on social responsibility. Free speech entails freedom to scrutinize the market, not to buy it. Liberal governments should not allow a "free market" situation in which media barons may buy whatever they wish, thereby increasing their power and their maneuverability to promote partisan interests (Cohen-Almagor with Seiterle 2004; Curran and Seaton 2010: 291–395; Fenton 2009; Frost 2007: 187–245). Decentralizing ownership defuses potential threats to democracy.

Leveson considered the question of whether to introduce a specific cap on the percentage of media ownership. Following consultation with relevant people and organizations, Leveson (The Right Honourable Lord Justice Leveson 2012b: Vol. 3, chap. 9, p. 1468) decided to avoid setting a cap because this might leave no room for flexibility and might risk commercial sustainability and innovation. Instead of resorting to specific quantitative terms that are not opened for interpretation and cannot be manipulated by media barons, Leveson (The Right Honourable Lord Justice Leveson 2012b: Vol. 3, chap. 9, p. 1469) played into their hands by adhering to qualitative terms about "sufficiency of plurality" and recommending "behavioural remedies" that would enforce standards and ensure plurality. Leveson thus missed the prospect of setting the terms and restrict media ownership, and media cross ownership in Britain. While we should encourage business people to invest in the press and in the media at large, and while we appreciate that these people will remain in business only if they make a profit, there should be a limit on the profit, and the power they accumulate with it. This limit should be set in clear words as well as numbers. Setting a cap of 15 percent of the press market (The Right Honourable Lord Justice Leveson 2012b: Vol. 3, chap. 9, p. 1466),[1] while allowing up to 10 percent additional ownership of digital media,[2] would ensure that the business will be sustainable, with scope for innovation while at the same time would ensure plurality of interests and sufficient market competition. The power and influence of media moguls must be constrained.

Journalism as a Profession

Money is a powerful asset and so is knowledge. Journalists are our eyes and ears on the world. As we do not have the time to study each and every decision that is of interest, including those decisions that may affect our lives, we rely on agents to collect this vital information for us. Without professionals who provide us with the facts, who bring us the news, who watch the governmental decisions and inform us of important policy changes, we would remain in the dark and might make uninformed decisions that might harm our best interests. We as a society have vested interest in a vibrant, professional and responsible press.

Emphasis should be placed on professionalism, answerability, accountability, and responsibility. *Professionalism* refers to the ability of a field of practice to settle boundaries and avoid intrusion from external factors. It is about the specialization of labor and control of occupational practice. Compared with occupations, professions are characterized by having a social contract with the state (Waisbord 2013: 84). At the same time, they distance themselves from politics and politicians, something that journalists do not do nor do not wish to do. Many, if not most journalists, perceived their profession as a hack, a trade, or craft. As Michael Jordan was born with a basketball in his hand, so they believe they were born with a pen (or keyboard) in their hands. They were blessed with a gift of God to write and uncover "the truth." This gift, this talent, is enshrined in them. They need not study it. Thus, they wish to have some elements of professionalism, and first and foremost work autonomy (Waisbord 2013: 44). Autonomy is necessary for journalists to offer a critical view of society, its politics and

economy (Cohen-Almagor 2013). But they do not welcome other trademarks of the profession: defined rules, body of knowledge, accreditation, exams, monitoring bodies, responsible ethics, and the possibility of sanctions (Aldridge and Evetts 2003; Cohen-Almagor 2005a; Deuze 2005; Keeble 2001; Lambeth 1992; Meyers 2010; Overholser and Jamieson 2005; Pritchard 2000; Rosen 1999). Many journalists are content to have loosely or ambiguously defined ground rules that are enforced or ignored according to their own personal discretion. The loose ends provide them with an open playground that perfectly fits their work "ethics." The ambiguity creates fuzzy boundaries and allows "creative" and sometimes adventurous conduct. However, as agents of a powerful resource in society, journalists must conduct their affairs carefully and should not overstep their boundaries. Power must have boundaries; otherwise, the temptation for abuse might be too compelling. The boundaries are set by professional codes and standards (Couldry 2012; Curran 2011; Frost 2007; Harcup 2004; Jacquette 2007: 95–125, 268–73; Kieran 1998; Knowlton and Reader 2009: 3–16, 44–65; Scheuer 2008: 61–82). As it is unthinkable to allow other agents of power in society to act without proper professional standards, so it is unthinkable to allow journalists to act with complete freedom and oblivious attitude to risks and harmful consequences. An engineer who builds unsafe bridge would face harsh sanctions for endangering public safety and human life. A physician who amputates the wrong leg would be required to account for her wrongful conduct. A lawyer who fails to follow legal directives might pay with her job. A banker who attempts to embezzle clients' money may face prison. A pilot who jeopardizes passengers' lives by drinking alcohol deserves to be fired. Similarly, a journalist who recklessly destroys a person's life and reputation or unjustifiably undermines state security should be held responsible for her wrong conduct and face significant sanctions both as retribution and deterrence for others. Journalism should not be stripped of professional standards. Freedoms of expression and of the press are vital for democratic life but unlimited freedom might lead to anarchy and lawlessness.

The concept of *answerability* implies responsiveness to the views of all with a legitimate interest in what is conducted, whether as individuals affected or on behalf of society. It includes a willingness to explain and justify actions of publication or omission. The outcomes of answerability express and reaffirm various norms relevant to the wider responsibilities of an organization in society. The emphasis is on the quality of performance (McQuail 2003: 204).

Answerability is closely related to *accountability*. The former accentuates more the need to respond to external claims, pressures, demands, providing explanation for one's conduct. The accompanying concept of accountability refers to a person or organization that is able to answer for one's conduct and obligations. In turn, when we speak of *social responsibility*, we refer to the responsibility of individuals, groups, corporations, and governments to society. The difference between responsibility, on one hand, and answerability and accountability, on the other, is that the first connotes a more voluntary and self-directed character. The accountable person or organization is also answerable.

Responsibility and accountability are important as sometimes people and organizations seek independence from their responsibilities. Ambrose Bierce (1911), an American journalist and satirist, described responsibility as a "detachable burden easily shifted to the shoulders of God, Fate, Fortune, Luck or one's neighbor. In the days of astrology it was customary to unload it upon a star." Of course, there is in Britain a tradition of progressive and professional journalism in the mainstream media that reports the news in an excellent fashion.[3] But there are also profit-driven tabloids that would publish anything that may increase their sales, with little notice to ethical standards and professional ethics. Because of that reckless conduct, the Leveson Inquiry was established. When a story is regarded as big enough, Leveson (The Right Honourable Lord Justice Leveson 2012a: 10) acknowledged, the ethical and legal provisions count little. They are either manipulated or broken.

To ensure that some ethical and professional standards are maintained, the press must have a strong, independent, and effective council, with significant powers of sanction and with transparent policies, processes, and responsibilities. The suggested organization should promote responsible press freedom while protecting public interests. "Public interest" concerns matters that could potentially affect the public at large. Thus, for instance, public interest relates to the promotion of freedom of expression and freedom of the press, the promotion of ethical standards in journalism, the promotion of professional accountability, the promotion of the underpinning democratic values of respecting others and not harming others, the detection of crime or serious impropriety, the protection of public health and safety, and the prevention of the public from being misled by an action or statement of an individual or organization (Editors' Code of Practice—UK, henceforth *Editors' Code UK*; Ethics guidelines—The Canadian Association of Journalists 2011, henceforth *Canadian*). Achieving these goals simultaneously might prove to be a difficult task. Thus, there is a need to strike a balance between competing and sometimes conflicting interests in accordance with a predetermined or ad hoc set of priorities for the public good.

Instituting the Public and Press Council

This new organization should be called The Public and Press Council, its name reflecting the dual responsibility it has to protect and promote freedom of expression and freedom of the press and, at the same time, ascertain that vital public interests such as individual privacy, state security, and press accountability remain intact.

The Public and Press Council should publicize itself, its powers, work, and adjudication to make itself known to the public and to gain its trust. The budget to run the council's affairs should be far larger than it now is. Leveson (The Right Honourable Lord Justice Leveson 2012a: 12) noted that the PCC has been run on a tight budget and without sufficient resources.

Leveson has made many important observations. Many of his recommendations are in the right direction for more responsible press that enshrines the basic values that enable its operation in democracies—respect for others and not harming others. Individuals should be perceived as ends, never as means. The dignity of the person

should be cherished and respected unless the person in question acted wrongly, in violation of these same basic liberal values. Under all other circumstances, the pursuit of profit, laziness, overconfidence, arrogance, dismissiveness, dogmatism, incuriosity, self-indulgence, contempt, the search for glory, and any other partisan motive are never justified as reasons for submitting people to invasive reporting and unprofessional conduct, stripped of any regard to the harmful consequences of the unethical conduct.

Code of Practice, Journalist Oath, and Conscience Clause

Journalists are also citizens. Like every citizen, they must obey the law. Therefore, journalists need to familiarize themselves with the legal directives that are relevant to their profession. In addition, journalists are required to conduct their affairs in accordance with a known, transparent and public set of moral principles and standards. Indeed, the Public and Press Council's adjudication should be made in accordance with a written Code of Practice. Such a code signifies professionalism and responsibility. It is an instrument of conscience-raising and has important ethical and educational implications. The Code can also fulfill important public relations function in promoting the stature of the journalistic profession. The Code should be written by members of the Public and Press Council (possibly with the advice of external experts in media studies) in clear language that lay people can comprehend. The Code of Practice should not cover areas that are covered by the law but should set normative standards for ethical and professional reporting. The Code of Practice should be circulated among press circles and among the public at large so people will be aware of its existence.

The Code of Practice should be incorporated into the contracts of editors and reporters. Editors should see that the Code is on the desk of every reporter. When I was a member of the Israel Press Council, I studied many codes of ethics from different countries, including the United States, Australia, Canada, Israel, and Europe and had many conversations with the leading Israeli experts on code of ethics, Professors Asa Kasher and Yehiel Limor, who have collected such codes for many years.[4] The Code should contain the following ethical principles and norms:

General Principles

- Human dignity of every individual must be respected (*German Press Council Guidelines, MediaWise* 2001, henceforth *German*; Council for Mass Media in Finland 2011, henceforth *Finland*).
- Respect diversity, pluralism, and multiculturalism (*Canadian*).
- Minimize harm (Society of Professional Journalists 1996, henceforth SPJ): Do not harm anyone unless you have strong moral justification; do not harm people caught up on the fringes of events that are not of their own making.
- Accountability: Be accountable to the public for the fairness, honesty, and reliability of reporting (Norms of Journalistic Conduct, India, Press Council of

India 2010, henceforth *Norms India*; Australian Press Council 2011a, henceforth *Australian; Canadian*).

- Responsibility: Think about the likely consequences of your report prior publication and weigh justifications for reporting against important countervailing considerations.
- Privacy is a human right. As a general rule, do not invade personal privacy (*Norms India; Australian; Editors' Code UK*; Press Council of Ireland, henceforth *Ireland; New Zealand Code: Press Council's Statement of Principles*, henceforth *New Zealand Code*; Code of Ethics for Press, Radio and Television in Sweden). You may invade privacy only when you are certain it is in the public interest, to be distinguished from prurient motives. Following the lessons of the Princess Diana affair (Brown 2008; Cohen-Almagor 2006; Stanyer 2013), it is unacceptable to use long-lens photography to take pictures of people in private places without their consent.
- Accuracy: Strive for accurate reporting. Attempt at collecting all relevant facts and applying pertinent considerations. Do your homework before writing. Deliberate distortion is never permissible (*Norms India; Australian*; SPJ; Israel Code: Rules of Professional Ethics of Journalism 1996, henceforth *Israel Code; Editors' Code UK; Canadian; Ireland; New Zealand Code*; Barker and Evans 2007).

Do

- Always check and recheck your resources and your own conduct (*New Zealand Code*).
- Invite dialogue and criticisms (SPJ). Doing so is beneficial as it could lead to further knowledge. Inviting criticisms is always a win–win situation: either you verify your data, or you save yourself from publishing error.
- Distinguish between comment, conjecture, and fact (*Norms India; Editors' Code UK; Ireland; New Zealand Code; Finland*; Barker and Evans 2007).
- Distinguish between editorial text and advertisements (*German*).
- Admit error and strive to correct it promptly with due prominence (SPJ; *Israel Code; Canadian; Ireland*).
- Grant fair opportunity to reply to inaccuracies (*Canadian*).
- Give voice to the voiceless (SPJ).
- Treat interviewees with respect and fairness. "Interviewees have the right to know in advance the context in which their statements will be used. They must also be told if the interview will be used in multiple mediums. The interviewee must always be told whether the conversation is intended for publication or will be used exclusively as background material. It is worthwhile consenting to interviewee's requests to read their statements prior to publication, if the editorial deadline permits. This right only concerns the personal statements of the interviewee, and the final journalistic decision cannot be surrendered to any

party outside the editorial office" (*Finland*).[5] Recording of interviews requires the consent of the interviewee (*Norms India*).
- Protect confidential resources (*Editors' Code UK; Ireland*).
- Apply ethical discretion when paying for stories. Paying criminals, terrorists, racists, and other antisocial people for their stories is problematic. When payment is made, disclose this to the public and explain how public interest was served (*Editors' Code UK; Canadian*).
- Keep the business side of the paper (influence of companies owned by the publisher) from dictating content to the editorial side (news and views) (*Israel Code*; Schudson 2008; Steel 2012).
- Be vigilant and courageous when you seek justice and aim to hold those with power accountable for their deeds (SPJ; Himelboim and Limor 2011).

Do Not

- Never plagiarize (SPJ; *Israel Code; Norms India; Canadian*).
- Do not mislead, misrepresent, fabricate, or plagiarize (*Israel Code*).
- Avoid altering images and sound in a way that might mislead the public (*Canadian; New Zealand Code; Finland*).
- Do not obtain or seek to obtain information or pictures through harassment, intimidation, extortion, threats, or persistent pursuit (*Israel Code; Ireland*).
- Do not aid in staging, promoting, or exaggerating events or rumors (SPJ).
- When using social networking sites to obtain information, do not use subterfuge to gain access to private information; verify the credibility of sources; apply ethical considerations and transparency (*Canadian; New Zealand Code*).
- Avoid undercover, misrepresentation, deceit, subterfuge, or other clandestine methods of gathering information except when all traditional open methods of information gathering were exhausted and failed to yield information vital to the public (SPJ; *Israel Code*; Barker and Evans 2007; *Canadian; Editors' Code UK; Ireland*). The use of unlawful means of obtaining information might seriously impair public trust in journalism.
- Every person wishes to protect her good name. Avoid smearing people by innuendo or implying guilt by association. Avoid malicious misrepresentation and unfounded accusations (*Ireland*).
- Avoid publication of material intended to cause grave offense, harm, or to stir up hatred against an identified individual or group (*Ireland*). The application and employment of violence, terror, and racism should be condemned in explicit language. *Norms India* stipulate, "While reporting news with regard to terrorist attacks or communal riots, the media should refrain from publishing/telecasting pictures of mangled corpses or any other photographic coverage which may create terror, or revulsion or ignite communal passion among people. Newspapers/journalists shall avoid presenting acts of violence, armed robberies and terrorist activities in a manner that glorifies the perpetrators on their acts, declarations or death in the eyes of the public. Publication of interviews of

anti-social elements by the newspapers glorifying the criminals and their activities with the resultant effects are to be avoided" (*Norms India*).

- Avoid prejudicial, discriminatory, or pejorative reference to a person's race, color, religion, sex, or sexual orientation, and to any physical or mental illness or disability (*Israel Code; Editors' Code UK; Canadian; New Zealand Code*). Moreover, editors must make concerted, sustained efforts to recruit, retain, and develop staffs that reflect the variety of the communities they serve.
- Do not accept gifts, favors, free goods or services, and other benefits from news sources or organizations that the newspaper may cover (SPJ; *Canadian*).
- Do not use or pass to others financial information revealed during research.
- Remain free of associations and activities that may compromise integrity or damage credibility (SPJ; *Israel Code; Canadian*).
- Children deserve particular care and consideration. Do not exploit the innocence of children to get information (Guidelines on Media Reporting on Children, India; *Israel Code; Editors' Code UK; Canadian; Ireland; New Zealand Code*; Barker and Evans 2007).

Furthermore, the press may adopt its own *Journalist Oath*, similar to the Hippocratic Oath in medicine (http://www.indiana.edu/~ancmed/oath.htm). The oath should outline in stringent terms values that would not change over the years. It would become public knowledge if any press agency decided not to accept the oath.

The contract of press journalists should also include a *conscience clause* that would protect them from being coerced into doing clearly unethical work that negates their conscience. The conscience clause would enable them to resist pressures to breach the ethical code without fearing of losing their job. It is noted that the National Union of Journalists (NUJ) has argued for a conscience clause for many years and, in 2003, was backed by the Commons Select Committee on Privacy and the Media. However, the PCC opposed the proposed measure, arguing instead that editors were the keepers of ethics in the newsroom and that journalists had nothing to fear. Leveson (The Right Honourable Lord Justice Leveson 2012a: 16) begged to differ, saying that he was struck by the evidence of journalists who felt that they were hard pressed to contravene the code of practice. He thus suggested including a conscience clause in the journalists' contracts. The president of the International Federation of Journalists (IFJ), Jim Boumelha, welcomed the backing of the conscience clause, saying,

> In too many cases journalists face the choice of either undertaking work with which they are not comfortable or face the prospect of losing their job . . . [Journalists] need to be given the confidence to abide by their union's code of conduct and to say no without fear of disciplinary procedures. (*Ifex* 2012)

Membership

The appointment of the chair and all members of the Public and Press Council must be independent and transparent. The chair should be a senior public representative who

has experience in working with the press, understanding how it works, its advantages, constraints, and how it makes decisions. In Australia, the chair is appointed by the Council from people who have not had previous connections involving ownership or employment by the media (*Australian*). In Israel, often the president of the Press Council is a retired Justice of the Supreme Court.[6] Similarly, the Danish and the Swedish Press Councils are chaired by a respected judge (Higham 2012; Sweden Press Council).

The Public and Press Council should not be too big or too small to enable effective decision-making process. It should thus have between ten and thirty members. The Council will be comprised of public representatives and representatives of the press industry, of the proprietors, and of the editors. A special and independent Select (or Appointment) Committee, selected by leading publishers and prominent journalists, would decide who would serve on the Public and Press Council among those who offer their candidacy. Leveson (The Right Honourable Lord Justice Leveson 2012a: 32; 2012b; Vol. 4, Part K, chap. 7, para 4.8, p. 1760) recommended that the appointment panel should be appointed in an independent, fair, and open way; contain a substantial majority of members who are demonstrably independent of the press; include at least one person with understanding and experience of the press; and include no more than one present newspaper editor.

The independent public representatives should have a majority within the body and include the chairperson—this to avoid a partisan majority and a leader who would care more for the interests of the industry than for those of the public. The Public and Press Council should not include any serving editor as well as any present members of the Government and the House of Commons.

Members of the Public and Press Council should serve for a period of five years.[7] They could be reelected by their colleagues for an additional five years if the majority of members felt that they could continue carrying out their duties and if the representatives felt that they were able to continue to commit themselves. After a maximum period of ten years, members should retire so as to allow the introduction of new members.

The Public and Press Council should convene at least six times a year, once every two months. The chair will have the discretion to call more meetings if she sees it necessary. All meetings will be fed online live on the Council's website unless special circumstances necessitate close-door meetings.

For effective work of the Public and Press Council, it is essential that senior, qualified public representatives would assume this role upon themselves, and that the press industry would be fully represented. Thus, incentives should be offered to ensure that the public and the press interests are promoted. The incentives may include the following:

- Members of the Public and Press Council should be paid for each meeting in which they take part. One of the inherent problems in the working of the PCC concerned its voluntary character. The PCC was composed of relatively prominent people who did not have the time and the will to adequately meet the

responsibilities involved. Volunteering is a lofty idea, but it hindered the effective working of the PCC. Serving on the Public and Press Council should be considered a heavy responsibility that deserves some financial recognition. The exact payment should be decided in accordance with the budget of the Council. In any event, the payment should not be seen in terms of a salary but as a token of appreciation for the commitment, time, and effort invested by the members.

- Membership in the Public and Press Council should be perceived as a badge of honor. Each newspaper will be required to inform its readers on its first page that it is a member of the Council. As the Public and Press Council gains prestige, members of the Council will be happy to comply with this requirement. Thus, the public becomes aware that the paper it reads assumed some ethical and professional responsibilities and is abiding by the accepted Code of Practice.
- The government would reward members of the Public and Press Council by inviting their reporters to official press meetings, engage with members in informing the public about ministries' operations, decision-making processes, and policies. Newspapers that opted out of membership in the Public and Press Council would not enjoy the same rights and privileges.
- Public officials working for the government, hence for democracy, should be encouraged to cooperate with the responsible press.
- The publication of public advertisements in papers that are affiliated with the Public and Press Council should be encouraged.
- Leveson (The Right Honourable Lord Justice Leveson 2012a: 16) suggested that only members of the new body will have access to its litigation system. If by declining membership in the regulatory system a newspaper has deprived a claimant of access to a quick, fair, low-cost arbitration, the court could then deprive the newspaper of its costs of litigation even if it had been successful, as success could have been achieved far more cheaply if it was a member of the new regulatory body. In other words, newspapers that decided to opt out would face paying all the legal costs of court proceedings against them for, say, defamation or invasion of privacy.
- Similarly, Leveson (The Right Honourable Lord Justice Leveson 2012a: 16) proposed that if newspapers that chose not to subscribe to the new regulatory body were found to have infringed the civil law rights of a claimant, they could be considered to have shown willful disregard of professional standards and thereby lead to a claim for exemplary damages.

Thus, it is suggested to create a two-tier press system of those who accept the professional responsibilities associated with membership in the Public and Press Council and those who do not. Those who prefer to be associated with the Council ipso facto declare that they see themselves as credible and professional. It is in their best interest to safeguard and protect the adopted Code of Practice. Association with the Council should be looked on as adding to the good standing and reputation of journalism. The public would grow in awareness to differentiate between those newspapers that accept

and abide by ethical standards and accordingly publish news that are fit to print, and other newspapers that would print any news that are fit to sell.

In line with the Leveson Report (The Right Honourable Lord Justice Leveson 2012a: 15), it is suggested that the Public and Press Council hear complaints about the conduct of the press, order appropriate redress, promote high standards, investigate serious breaches of the Code of Practice, and provide a fair, quick, and inexpensive arbitration service. For processing complaints, it is suggested that alongside the Public and Press Council, an Ethics Tribunal should be established to deal with complaints.

The Ethics Tribunal

The Tribunal size will be determined by the number of complaints: the more complaints, the larger its size. If needed, the Ethics Tribunal will have hundreds of members. Its flexible size will ensure quick and effective handling of complaints. Each panel of the Ethics Tribunal should consist of three members: a public representative who understands the work of the press, a lawyer, and a former employee of the press. The chair of the Ethics Tribunal will appoint the panel at her discretion per the case at hand with the aim to ensure that the public and the press will receive adequate representation on the panel. Attempt at reaching consensus will be made but two-to-one decisions will be binding if the desired consensus would not be reached.

Members of the Ethics Panel dealing with complaints should convene by the end of each month, or every two or three months, depending on the number of complaints, for a weekend during which they would hear complaints and adjudicate.[8] They will study the complaints and will issue a reasoned response within a month.

It is assumed that it will be a great honor and privilege to sit on this Panel. Members of the Ethics Panel will receive payment for their involvement. The payment per session should reflect appreciation for their effort, expertise, and goodwill in resolving public complaints in a professional and timely fashion.

An Appeal Panel may be convened in case of need, appointed by the chair of the Ethics Tribunal and in her discretion. Both sides—the public and the press—will have the right to appeal against the decision of the Ethics Panel. The Appeal Panel will consist of five members, representatives of the public and the press. The decision of the Appeal Panel will be final and binding.

By the end of each year, the Ethics Tribunal will issue an annual report about its work, which will be freely available to all interested parties and could be read on the relevant media website. The reports will be as detailed as possible, including the terms of practice, how the terms were implemented, reflections on past-year work, lessons, reasoning for specific decisions, and recommendations for the future.

Sanctions

The press industries have perceived the press council and the PCC more or less as lightning rods. They existed to show that the press cared about ethics, that it grappled with ethical dilemmas, and that it was interested in public concerns; therefore, there

was no need for restrictive legislation. Generally speaking, press councils are designed to receive and deal with public grievances as well as to calm intolerant tendencies on the part of the legislature. They are aligned with the interests of the press, at the expense of protecting and promoting public interest.

In Britain, the only power that the press council and the PCC had was the publication of adjudication against the papers. This was a very limited power. Newspapers in Britain that opted out and were not members of the press council were not obliged by its adjudication. Papers that did publish adjudication of justified complaints against them did not necessarily grant the adjudication a prominent place in the newspaper. The suggested Public and Press Council must be equipped with far more significant powers.

Furthermore, for effective operation, the Public and Press Council must secure the trust of the people. Large segment of society were unaware of the work of the PCC, and many of those who were aware of its work did not appreciate it.[9] This was because the PCC was a voluntary body, with little authority and powers, with very limited abilities, questionable transparency, and only qualified support of the industry. Leveson (The Right Honourable Lord Justice Leveson 2012a: 12) noted that the PCC has not monitored press compliance with the Code of Practice and the statistics it published lacked transparency (Fielden 2011). The press industries wanted the council to act as a preventive body, to preempt measures that would interfere with press freedom. They did not really want the PCC to represent the public interests. They funded the work of the PCC, and through this, they secured their dependence. The result was that the public perceived the work of the PCC as a "sold game," and most of it remained indifferent or uninterested in what the PCC did.

Some of the papers, while upholding the idea of press freedom, abused that freedom. This should not be allowed. It is essential that the Public and Press Council be accorded the powers to humiliate, to expose hideous and ghastly publications and behavior. These powers should include the following:

- The publication of adjudication: Any newspaper against which a complaint has been upheld should publish in full the Public and Press Council's adjudication on that complaint. The publication should appear in a prominent place in the newspaper as well as on the Public and Press Council's website. If the Council is unhappy with the placement of the adjudication in the newspaper, it should be able to ask the paper to republish the item on a specific page. The Public and Press Council should be able to decide where, on what page, the adjudication should be published, so as not to allow newspapers to bury the adjudication in small letters on a back page. This power is the only power that is granted to press councils nowadays throughout the world, including the Australian, the New Zealandian, the Canadian, and the Israeli (Cohen-Almagor 2007).
- The ability to impose significant fines on newspapers for gross misconduct. In Denmark, the failure to comply with the Press Council's directives could potentially lead to a fine (Denmark Press Council; Fielden 2012: 72).

The fines should be given to designated charities. Because of the inherent conflict of interests, the fines should not be made available to sponsor the work of the Public and Press Council. After the tragic death of Princess Diana in 1997, the PCC contemplated this idea, but in the end, it was decided not to expand the powers of control. Leveson (The Right Honourable Lord Justice Leveson 2012a: 34; 2012b: Vol. 4, Part K, chap. 7, para. 4.38, p. 1767) proposed that the new body will have the power to impose financial sanctions up to 1 percent of turnover with a maximum of £1million.[10] The ability to impose fines would enhance the effective working of the Public and Press Council.

- The ability to suspend journalists for gross misconduct for a limited period of time. At the same time, I would not recommend sanctions to suspend or expel members of the Public and Press Council. The Council has a vested interest to encompass as many organizations as possible as this would promote responsible and professional journalism.
- The ability to suspend publication of newspapers. This is another point of disagreement with Leveson. Leveson (The Right Honourable Lord Justice Leveson 2012a: 34; 2012b: Vol. 4, Part K, chap. 7, para. 4.38, p. 1767) concluded that the new body should not have the power to prevent publication of any material at any time. I think a threat to suspend publication even for one day would be effective, even more than fines. In Britain, the competition between the tabloids is particularly fierce. Readers looking for their usual paper would not find it when suspended, then they would buy another paper and might switch their allegiance.

Complaints to the Public and Press Council should be made in writing, snail mail and/or electronic mail, free of charge, as is the case now. The procedure should be fast, informal, and available to ordinary people. One should not have to have a lawyer to be represented.

Funding

Funding is an essential prerequisite for independence of the councils. Leveson (The Right Honourable Lord Justice Leveson 2012a: 15; 2012b: Vol. 4, Part K, chap. 7, paras. 4.14–4.17, pp. 1761–62) suggested that funding would have to be agreed between the new body and the industry with security of funding over a reasonable planning period. I disagree. I think this is one of the major flaws of the Leveson recommendations. The Public and Press Council should be funded by an independent body—a charity or a foundation—that cares about the press and understands its significant role in a democratic society. The assumption is that the regulatory body would not easily bite the hand that feeds its activities. The Public and Press Council is required to be apolitical, and without any affiliation to the media. There should not be any financial strings to the government or to the industry, both have a strong inclination to influence and shape the work of reporters. Existing bodies such as the British

Educational Communications and Technology Agency, Goldman Sachs Gives, or the Becht Family Charitable Trust would be suitable; alternatively, special charities ("Concerned Citizens for Accountable Media") could be founded. We must change the existing situation where proprietors fund the council that is supposed to scrutinize its conduct. This creates an obvious conflict of interest. There is room to suspect that the public interests are not adequately served when the entire funding comes from the industry.

Legislation

When I was appointed member of the Israel Press Council, I was very much against free press legislation. I was, quite innocently, convinced that self-regulation of the press is essential and that it would suffice for maintaining ethical and professional standards. My three-year membership on the Council had slowly made me reconsider the issue. The fieldwork conducted in Britain and Canada provided me with further food for thought, as all data came to suggest that self-regulation simply does not work (Cohen-Almagor 2002, 2005a, 2005b). The history of the Press Council and the PCC amply demonstrates that there is a need to legally underpin the independent self-regulatory system, to facilitate its conduct, and to anchor its sanctioning powers in legislation. Leveson (The Right Honourable Lord Justice Leveson 2012a: 17) came to the same conclusion. He explained that legislation would enshrine a legal duty on the government to protect freedom of the press; it would reassure the public that the newly instituted body is credible and effective; it would validate the code of practice and the benefits given to those who deserve them, and it would institute dispute resolution mechanisms.

The legislation would reassure the public that the basic requirements of professionalism, independence, transparency, accountability, and effectiveness are met. The legislation would validate the Press Code of Practice and would empower the Public and Press Council to impose sanctions when these are deemed warranted.

Education and Training

Legislation is very much needed, but it should not come at the expense of promoting ethical standards and professionalism. Journalism is neither a simple job nor a sort of divine endowment with which one is blessed. Reporters should cultivate ethical behavior, be aware of ethical concerns, the potential for conflict of interests, and the burdens of responsibility. Many of the problems we presently witness within the British press can be resolved if journalists develop a rigorous ethical framework that prescribes their bounds of conduct, and raises their awareness as to what practices can be adopted and what is simply not to be done. Media ethics courses in institutions of higher education, and in-house training can be instrumental in developing and promoting standards of good, professional practice. The Public and Press Council should be able to recommend minimum levels of training for industry professionals (Barker and Evans 2007: 91).

Online Content

One of the significant oversights of the Leveson Report was the lack of sufficient attention paid to online content and the challenges facing journalism in respect of technological developments, particularly in relation to social media. Leveson (The Right Honourable Lord Justice Leveson 2012b: Vol. 1, chap. 3, pp. 167–69) said that the relative lack of Internet-specific regulation is unlikely to change and provided a general overview of the Internet, including blogs and social networking sites. Here, Leveson used a very broad brush to paint a situation that is difficult to control. The relatively few pages dedicated to this sphere shows that the Internet was not foremost on his mind. Alas, the Internet deserves a very close scrutiny as its implications on journalism are substantial and far-reaching. Due to the proliferation and fragmentation of the news market, the field of journalism is changing, with noteworthy effects on its professional culture (Lee-Wright et al. 2011; Zelizer 2009). Between 35 and 40 percent of news consumers in the United Kingdom use the Internet for news; of them, 8 percent make the Internet as their main source of news (Brock 2012: 520). A total of 19 percent of people who use the Internet as source of news use Facebook and Google News while 9 percent use Twitter as a source of news (Ofcom 2012: 12). The press as well as broadcast networks are pushed to engage with digital technologies in their business and production models. They digitize their operations and try to cope with the new online practices that have arisen from rapidly developing technologies and social network sites. The Leveson Inquiry had a golden opportunity to relate to the changing nature of journalism by presenting "outside-the-box" ideas that combine innovation, self-regulation, and governmental incentives to empower professional and responsible journalism. Unfortunately, Leveson had missed that golden opportunity.

People will grow accustomed to the many advantages of online reporting and would prefer it more and more over the print press. There will be growing open discussions about the merits and flaws of the new forms of media. Attempts will be made to remedy the flaws. Thus, it is time to consider the introduction of appropriate standards for online media organizations. Speedy communication, competition, and the urge for rapid publication should not compromise professional standards of accuracy, fairness, verification, answerability, responsibility, and accountability. All efforts should be made to make the media sites and the links they contain credible; indeed, links to other sources should be made available after careful scrutiny. Online content should be edited and reported as carefully as print content. The same Code of Practice outlined above is applicable also to the Internet. All media organizations, both online and offline, are required to adhere to standards of moral and social responsibility, commitment to preserving and promoting security online and offline, respect for intellectual property and copyrights, and adherence to the liberal principles we hold dear: liberty, tolerance, human dignity, respect for others, and not harming others.

The entire process of debating, implementing, and promoting standards should be transparent, opened for critique and feedback. The Internet via its social media networks, blogs, and other forums provides a platform for a democratic, deliberative, and reflective dialogue between readers and reporters. Forums can be created for debating

issues of the day, including the way they are reported and analyzed. Readers should enjoy the opportunity to comment on news and opinions, to provide feedbacks and to submit complaints. The ease of communication encourages talkative, controversial views that would keep debates lively and engaging. Netcitizens[11] will be welcomed to provide criticism on the media Hotline (or Feedback Forum) and will receive an answer within twenty-four hours. Netcitizens will have the option to make their feedback public or private, with or without attribution.

The Hotline (or Feedback Forum) will be operated by a team of professionals who will provide effective and speedy response to all questions and criticisms. The Hotline/Feedback Forum will provide easy accessibility, high availability, and an assured response. Both queries and answers will be transparent. They will be posted on the Hotline/Feedback Forum hosted by the media outlet. Transparency also means that the rules and procedures according to which concerns will be processed are adequately explained and so are retractions and corrections. The system will be explained in detail, and additional help will be made available if needed. Netusers should have the ability to track their concerns throughout the process, and they should be informed of the final outcome of the process. The relevant media organization will make publicly available annual reports on the basic statistics and experiences with the Ethics Tribunal and the Hotline/Feedback Forum.

This is a rough proposal. I hope it will attract deliberations and challenges, evoke attention, and gather momentum.

Conclusion

The press is first and foremost a business. Often, when editors and reporters are faced with situations where they have to decide between economic interests and other interests (reporting the news, serving as a watchdog of government offices, conducting an investigative reporting), the decision is likely to be influenced by business considerations. The reality is simple: Newspapers exist to make money. They could continue doing their work only if they are economically sound and sustainable. Thus, the need to institute an organization that would adequately represent the public. Calling that organization "The Public and Press Council" accentuates the need for balancing public interests against press interests. Equipping that organization with substantial powers is essential for ascertaining that crude business interests will not override legal dictates and ethical norms.

Freedom of speech and of the press is an important value in every democratic society, sine qua non for furthering individual autonomy and promoting civic rights. Freedom of the press must include the duty to keep the public informed about developments relating to its common good. Free press is an instrumental good, good as far as it results in the promotion of public interest and the reinforcement of the democratic ideals (Petley 2012: 537). It is certainly not freedom to conduct any business, falsely using concepts like the "public right to know" as a pretense to transgress law and ethical norms.

The British model of press regulation has influenced other countries, including Australia, Canada, and Israel, that adopted similar models for regulating their own media outlets. Thus, it is reasonable to assume that these and other countries will carefully observe changes in the British model. It is quite likely that the Leveson bulky report will make some impressions, but it is too early to say which of its many recommendations will be adopted. Future studies will reflect on the report's implications and impact on the British and other presses.

Journalism is in transition as it is challenged by growing competition and rapid technological developments. It grapples with print, broadcasting, and online platforms as well as with financial austerity. The financial health of the news industry is failing, mainstream audiences are on the decline, and professional authority, credibility, and autonomy are eroding (Peters and Broersma 2012). The ease of access to the Internet, its low cost and speed, its chaotic structure (or lack of structure), the anonymity that individuals and groups may enjoy, and the international character of the World Wide Web make the Internet an attractive alternative to the print press. With the rise of the Internet, the average net circulation of tabloid newspapers in the UK decreased by 49 percent while broadsheets have experienced a fall of 32 percent, and mid-market newspapers have lost 21 percent of their net average circulation (Ofcom 2012: 24). There is a little doubt that innovation will continue to be one of the main features of new journalism. In its experimental stage, the Internet was based on open dialogue, where scientists posted Requests for Comments (RFC); on free exchange of information and ideas; and on collaboration rather than competition.[12] There were no barriers, secrets, or proprietary content. Indeed, this free, open culture is critical to the development of new technologies and for the shaping of new media. In the same spirit of Request for Comments in the early days of the Internet, I invite readers to reflect on the ideas presented here and to explore new ways of thinking about new journalism, the advantages, the challenges, and the appropriate ways to address those challenges.

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1. Media analyst Alison Enders testified to Leveson that no media company should be allowed to control more than 15 percent of the media market by revenue. Similarly, the

Media Standards Trust asserts that 15 percent cap is suitable (see House of Lords 2013: 231).

2. The Secretary of State for Business Rt. Hon. Dr. Vince Cable testified to Leveson (The Right Honourable Lord Justice Leveson 2012b: Vol. 3, chap. 9, p. 1467) that a limit of 25 percent of combined media markets might be appropriate. The Campaign Group for Press and Broadcasting Freedom recommends that media ownership above 15 percent may be permitted subject that the organization meets certain public interest obligations and that the maximum cross ownership be 30 percent (see House of Lords Communications Committee 2013: 50–55). The National Union of Journalists recommends setting maximum market share at 25 percent (House of Lords Communications Committee 2013: 247).
3. One referee noted that there are mainstream journalists who maintain high standards and produce excellent investigative copy. He or she named three—Nick Davies (the *Guardian* journalist who largely exposed the Hackgate scandal), Glenn Greenwald (the *Guardian* journalist at the heart of the recent state surveillance/Prism controversy), and the *Independent* war reporter Patrick Cockburn.
4. See Kasher (2005), and Himelboim and Limor (2006, 2011).
5. See also German Press Council Guidelines (*MediaWise* 2001).
6. Including the present one, Justice (ret.) Dalia Dorner (see Cohen-Almagor 2005a, 2005b).
7. In New Zealand, the chairperson of the Press Council serves for a five-year term, while other members serve for four years. In Denmark and in the Netherlands, members of the Press Council serve for four years. In Australia and India, members serve only three years. In my opinion, this is a very short term as it takes a while for people to understand the work of the Council, its composition, and inherent limitations. In Australia, however, a public member or journalist member may be reappointed twice (see Fielden 2012).
8. In Israel, the Ethics Panel convenes in according to need (see Cohen-Almagor 2003).
9. Similar problems are documented in Israel and Canada (see Cohen-Almagor (2005a: 124–51).
10. For further discussion, see Australian Press Council (2011b: 18).
11. The term "netcitizen," as it is employed here, is not neutral. It describes a *responsible* use of the Internet. While it is possible to speak of "good" and "bad" citizens, the term "netcitizen," as adopted here, has only positive connotations, referring to concerned Internet users who utilize the Net in multipositive, social, responsible, nonabusive ways and who are willing to be proactive in promoting social Internet environment.
12. Steve Crocker from UCLA played a key role in establishing the request for comments in 1969 (see http://tools.ietf.org/html/rfc1).

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News, Discussion, and Associative Issue Ownership: Instability at the Micro Level versus Stability at the Macro Level

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Abstract

Associative issue ownership refers to one of the prerequisites for representative democracy—public awareness of the issue priorities of competing political parties. This article addresses the question of how the instability of associative issue ownership at the micro level of individual voters, which could be due in part to election news and political discussion, adds up to the relative stability of associative issue ownership at the macro level. The data come from a panel survey and a content analysis of newspapers and television news bulletins in the 2010 Dutch Parliamentary Election Campaign. Cross-nested multilevel logistic regression models were applied to estimate the impact of political news and political discussion on different respondents for different parties and issues. The findings show how contagion, by traditional issue ownership associations, explains the relative stability at the macro level in spite of volatility at the micro level. Campaign news and political discussion increase the likelihood of contagion by traditional issue priorities of political parties, while also evoking change due to their convergence on the issues of the campaign, from which the parties that own these issues take advantage, among others the VVD and the PVV in the 2010 campaign.

Keywords

agenda setting, election campaign, media effects, public opinion, voting behavior

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Representative democracy relies on citizens who base their party choice on their awareness of the issue priorities and issue proposals propagated by competing political parties. This study on *associative issue ownership* explains how media coverage and public discussion facilitate public awareness of the issue priorities that parties propagate.

The theory of issue ownership seeks to explain the role of issues both in the party choice of voters and in the strategic behavior of parties (e.g., Ansolabehere and Iyengar 1994; Bélanger and Meguid 2008; Benoit and Hansen 2004; Budge and Farlie 1983; Green and Hobolt 2008; Petrocik et al. 2003). According to issue ownership theory, voters associate parties with specific issues and evaluate parties differently on their ability to solve these issues. A party *owns* an issue when a large group of voters attributes this issue to this party (*associative issue ownership*) and considers this party to be best equipped to deal with that particular issue (*competence issue ownership*; Petrocik 1996; Walgrave et al. 2012). Parties have an electoral advantage over other parties on owned issues and are likely to win the elections when their owned issues are high on the media agenda (Ansolabehere and Iyengar 1994; Budge and Farlie 1983; Petrocik, 1996). In election campaigns, parties therefore often emphasize "owned" issues to prime their salience in the decisional calculus of voters (Petrocik 1996; Petrocik et al. 2003–2004; Walgrave and De Swert 2007). The majority of the work examining issue ownership makes use of the concept competence issue ownership. Attention for associative issue ownership is relatively new (see Tresch, Lefevere and Walgrave, forthcoming ; Walgrave et al. 2012).

Associative issue ownership is the equivalent of public awareness of the issue priorities of parties in the empirical research literature. "(Associative issue ownership) is the spontaneous association between issues and parties in the minds of voters, resulting from a history of attention," as argued by Walgrave et al. (2012: 779). A common history of attention suggests that the apparent stability of associative issue ownership at the macro level of the electorate as a whole is due to the stability of associative issue ownership at the micro level of individual respondents. However, several studies suggest that associative issue ownership at the micro level of individual voters is instable in the short run, which appears to be exacerbated by media coverage and political discussion (De Bruycker and Walgrave, forthcoming; Tresch et al. 2013). Therefore, the research question of this study is as follows:

> **Research Question 1:** How do election news and political discussion during an election campaign alter voters' perceptions of associative issue ownership on the individual level (micro level), and how do these forces nevertheless mount up to the relative stability of associative issue ownership at the aggregate level of the electorate (macro level)?

Stability of Issue Ownership

Issue ownership is conceived as a stable party characteristic in the literature about historical cleavages between societal groups where parties originated from (e.g.,

Budge and Farlie 1983; Klingemann et al. 1994; Lipset and Rokkan 1967). Linkages between specific social groups, issues, and parties are still important to claim issue ownership (Stubager and Slothuus 2013).

Nevertheless, recent work has shown that issue ownership is not a fixed feature, especially not in multiparty systems (Aalberg and Jenssen 2007; Bélanger 2003; Brasher 2009; Damore 2004; Holian 2004; Walgrave et al. 2009). In a multiparty system with ample room for issues on the media agenda, parties have no alternative but to challenge the ownership of the parties that were most successful in setting the media agenda (Aalberg and Jenssen 2007; Stubager and Slothuus 2013). In a multiparty system, it is exceptional that a majority of voters point to one party as the party best able to deal with an issue, which makes competence issue ownership a less useful concept in a multiparty system than associative issue ownership (Bélanger and Meguid 2008; Walgrave and De Swert 2007). Even parties in two-party systems converge somewhat on issue emphasis to enable dialogue (Sigelman and Buell 2004). Obviously, issue ownership is not stable yet in the case of new issues (De Bruycker and Walgrave, forthcoming). As a result, attention in the recent issue ownership literature has shifted to short-term origins of issue ownership associations at the level of voters (e.g., Aalberg and Jenssen 2007; Bélanger 2003; Brasher 2009; De Bruycker and Walgrave, forthcoming).

Research shows that the media play an important role in the creation and transmission of issue profiles of parties that alter intended party choices in election campaigns (e.g., Kleinnijenhuis et al. 2007; Kleinnijenhuis and De Ridder 1998; Walgrave et al. 2009; Walgrave and De Swert 2007). Journalists seem to be aware of issue ownership. At least, they enforce these reputations in their writings (Hayes 2008), whereas voters are susceptible to party issue profiles displayed in the media (Aalberg and Jenssen 2007; Walgrave et al. 2009). On the basis of an experimental study, Walgrave et al. (2009) find that voters' perceptions of competence issue ownership are affected by media messages in the short term. In addition, Aalberg and Jenssen (2007) show in a quasi-experimental study that winning televised election debates can alter voters' perceptions of a party's competence issue ownership. Tresch et al. (forthcoming) found evidence that election news affects voters' perceptions of associative ownership on the basis of a panel survey study-embedded experiment of two valence issues and four parties in Flanders.

Toward a Theory and Testable Hypotheses

Short-term effects of news coverage (e.g., Tresch et al. forthcoming) and political discussion come on top of the elementary *Stability Hypothesis* (H1), which maintains that associative issue ownership simply derives from one's previous issue ownership associations in an autoregressive process.

> **Stability (H1):** If a respondent associates a specific party with a specific issue at the start of the election campaign, then the likelihood increases that this party will be associated with this issue by this respondent immediately after the elections.

Issue ownership may be volatile at the level of individual voters but nevertheless highly stable at the aggregate level due to *contagion* (H2). Beliefs, attitudes, and subsequent behaviors are infectious, according to contagion theories in the communication networks literature (cf. overview Monge and Contractor 2003). Voters do not experience election campaigns in isolation but as participants in various communication networks. Networks expose people, groups, and organizations to information and attitudinal messages. Recent exposure increases the likelihood that network members who forgot about the issues will include them once more in their judgment, which is the basis of priming (Iyengar and Kinder 1987; Iyengar 1990). The *Contagion Hypothesis* states that especially long-term associations between parties and issues that were widespread already before an election campaign will infect voters with more idiosyncratic beliefs during an election campaign.

Contagion (H2): The higher the percentage of respondents who associated a specific party with a specific issue before the campaign, the higher the likelihood that this party will be associated with this issue by a specific respondent immediately after the elections.

The electorate is clearly not a homogeneous entity when it comes to campaign and media effects (Kleinnijenhuis et al. 2007; Nadeau et al. 2008). An important characteristic is the voter's level of political knowledge. Studies (e.g., Arcenaux 2006; De Vreese and Boomgaarden 2006) found significant differential effects of media exposure as a function of already existing political knowledge. The *Political Learning Hypothesis* simply states that whoever knows more, learns more.

Learning (H3): The more politically knowledgeable a respondent is before the campaign, the higher the likelihood that this respondent will associate a party with an issue immediately after the elections.

Attention waves for issues in the media are the driving forces of change during an election campaign. The main way voters obtain political information during the election campaign is through the mass media (Graber 2002). According to attribute agenda setting (McCombs 2004; Shehata and Strömbäck 2013), a transfer of salience is to be expected from the media to voters. Voters who read or hear about a specific party–issue combination in the news are more likely to associate this party with this issue in the future themselves. Consequently, we formulate an (attribute) *Agenda-Setting Hypothesis*:

Agenda Setting (H4): The more news on a specific party addressing a specific issue is encountered by a respondent during the election campaign in the media that he or she uses, the higher the likelihood that this party will be associated with this issue by this respondent immediately after the elections.

The news is expected to be the primary driver of change during election campaigns. However, because the news will be often about parties that address issues that were

already owned by them, the news is often expected to reinforce the ownership of parties over their traditional issues. In the case that two parties are (almost) equally associated in the news with a particular issue, we expect that as a result of contagion (H2), the party that is the (traditional) owner of the issue will benefit most.

Another way to bring to mind the issue priorities of parties is through deliberation as a result of political discussion (Eveland et al. 2011; Huckfeldt et al. 2004). It should be noted that fostering the majority belief that different parties prioritize different issues is precisely a prerequisite for the survival of political disagreement and democratic debate, which is a central concern in the literature about political discussion (Huckfeldt et al. 2004). Hence a *Deliberation Hypothesis* with respect to political discussion can be offered:

> **Deliberation (H5):** The more a respondent is involved in political discussion, the higher the likelihood that this respondent will associate a party with an issue immediately after the elections.

News and deliberation may also moderate other effects. As the news is expected to bring *new* issue priorities of parties to the forefront, the news is expected to *weaken* the stability of associations of parties with issues in the minds of voters. In the overview of hypotheses in Figure 1, such interaction effects are visualized as arrows that become thinner or thicker.

We expect that discussion will also *weaken* stability. Both news and discussion are expected to *strengthen* the contagion effect as they expose citizens to majority beliefs that specific parties own specific issues.

> ***Interaction Effects of H1 and H2 with H4 and H5:*** News about the issue position of a party with respect to an issue and political discussion will
> weaken the stability of a respondent's associations of that party with that issue (H4 × H1 and H5 × H1).
> strengthen the contagion effect of a society's associations of a party with that issue (H4 × H2 and H5 × H2).

Method

Case Selection

The Dutch electoral system is one of the most proportionally representative systems in the world, with a large number of competing political parties. In the 2010 Dutch Parliamentary election campaign, eighteen parties competed for votes. In this study, we focus on the eleven parties with seats in Parliament before the elections, namely, Christian Democratic Appeal (CDA), Christian Union (CU), Democrats'66 (D66), Green Left (GL), Labour Party (PvdA), Animal Party (PvdD), Freedom Party (PVV), Political Reformed Party (SGP), Socialist Party (SP), Proud of the Netherlands (TON),

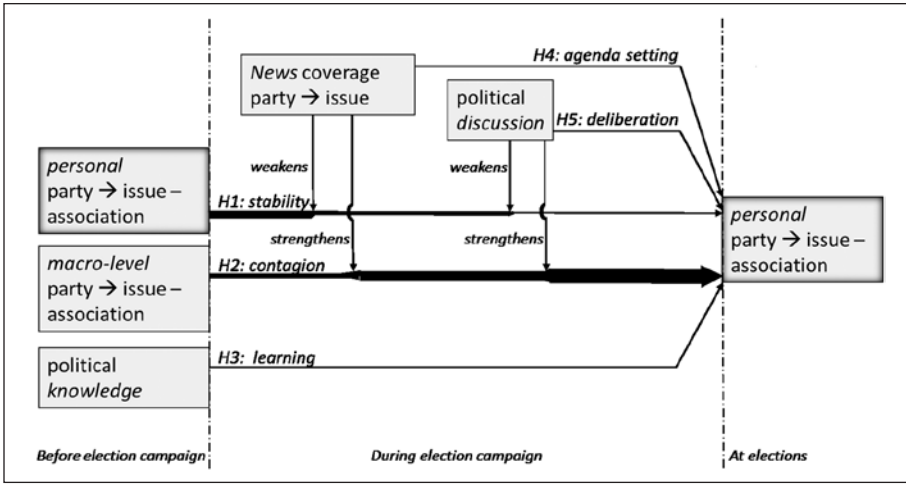

Figure 1. Conceptual path model to explain associative issue ownership at individual level. The expectation of decreasing stability in the election campaign at the individual level is represented with a decreased width of the stability arrow (H1). The increasing chance of contagion is represented with an increased width of the contagion arrow (H2).

and Liberal Party (VVD). All except for one (TON) maintained seats, whereas no new parties gained seats. In extremely fragmented party systems, parties are initially able to emphasize a much more specific set of issues to speak to their own voters than in less fragmented party systems. However, as the parties will not all be able to put their issues onto the media agenda, they are likely to engage in a fierce battle over issue ownership.

Data

The present study combines panel survey data and content analysis data. Survey data from the same respondents at more than one moment in time enable the measurement of shifts in issue ownership within subjects, in addition to shifts between subjects as is the case in experiments. Detailed questions about media use enabled a link to content analysis data for the media that were actually used by specific respondents.

Panel survey data. The survey data stem from an eleven-wave panel survey conducted by polling organization IntomartGfk during the 2010 Dutch Parliamentary Election Campaign. This panel contained extensive questions about the use of a broad variety of newspapers and TV news bulletins, a broad range of questions about associative and competitive issue ownership with respect to twenty political issues that dominated the news, as well as most other variables encountered in election research, such as political discussion, political knowledge, and social demographic variables. We use especially the data collected in the

two waves in which associative issue ownership was assessed, which were the pre-campaign wave (wave 1) and the post-electoral wave (wave 11). The first wave conducted on April 8-10 contained 1,801 respondents and the eleventh and last wave held on June 10-14 contained 1,362 respondents (retention rate = 75.6 percent). This survey consists of a cluster sample of respondents that is representative for the Dutch electorate, in terms of 2006 party preferences, turnout in 2006, and sociodemographic variables. We restrict our data analysis to the 1,362 respondents who participated in both waves. Panel attrition was not at all related to gender, education, and party preference, but it was very weakly related to political knowledge (less than 0.5 percent explained variance).

Content analysis data. We analyzed the news from seven national newspapers (*Algemeen Dagblad, NRC Handelsblad, De Telegraaf, Trouw, de Volkskrant, Spits*, and *Metro*) and two television stations: *NOS* (a public broadcasting company) and *RTL* (a commercial broadcasting company). The period that was covered in the news is the entire period in between the first and last wave of the panel survey. The coding of the articles was conducted using the Network of Evaluative Texts (NET) procedure, a semantic network analysis method (Kriesi et al. 2008; Van Cuilenburg et al. 1986). The NET method divides a text into a number of so-called "elementary statements." Here "Party (representative)/predicate (pro or con)/Issue Position" statements for eleven parties and twenty issues matter (n = 2,905).

Coding was performed during the campaign by a team of coders with the iNet-coding module of the Amsterdam Content Analysis Toolkit AMCAT (Van Atteveldt, 2008). Intercoder agreement between three coders with respect to the presence or absence of party statements about issues in fifty-three news articles amounted to 91 percent. Intercoder reliability as measured by Krippendorff's alpha for interval-level measurements amounted to .70.

Linking media content to the respondents. The content analysis variables were aggregated per medium, and within each medium for each combination of eleven parties, twenty issues and weeks. Survey questions to measure to which newspapers and televised news broadcasts a respondent exposed himself or herself were used to calculate the number of news items that he or she could have possibly encountered about a specific combination of a party with an issue in a given week. For each of these combinations, a respondent's news score was calculated as a weighted sum of the amount of news items, with weights depending on the frequency of the use of each medium. If NOS television news reported two times about a party–issue combination, and De Volkskrant four times, then the weighted sum for a respondent who always watches NOS news and who reads de Volkskrant once a week (=1/6 since Dutch newspapers do not appear on Sundays) would amount to $\frac{(1\times 2)+(1/6\times 4)}{1+1/6}=\frac{16}{7}=2.29.$ Note that this procedure amounts to media weights at the aggregate level that reflect the size of the audience of each medium.

Operationalization

Issue ownership is measured traditionally with questions about which party is best able to solve the most important national problems. Nevertheless, this operationalization of issue ownership is limited. Questions about problems do not reveal associations with issues (e.g., employment) for which problematic real-world developments (e.g., huge unemployment) are temporarily absent (Sheafer 2007). "Best able" is moreover easily confounded with party preference (Bélanger and Meguid 2008; Stubager and Slothuus 2013; Van der Brug 2004). Associative issue ownership is operationalized here with questions geared toward measuring voter perceptions of the issue salience of parties (Kleinnijenhuis and Pennings 2001).

Associative issue ownership at the individual level is operationalized as whether a respondent associates a party with an issue spontaneously (1 = yes; 0 = no). To measure associative issue ownership, respondents were asked, both in the pre-campaign wave in the first week of April and in the post-election wave in the days after the elections on June 9, which issues come to mind if he or she thinks about that party in the first place, and in the second place. Respondents could choose from a list of twenty predefined newsworthy issues and were free to add other issues as well. The analysis is restricted to the twenty predefined issues because only 2.5 percent of the responses referred to other issues. Due to the question format with two questions for each of the eleven parties, it was possible for voters to list twenty-two associations. For respondents who participated in both waves, the average number of issue associations was 13.7 issues in the pre-election wave and 15.5 issues in the post-election wave, which indicates an average campaign effect of 1.8 additional issue associations.

Associative issue ownership at the societal level is measured as the number of other respondents who associate a specific party with a specific issue (or more precisely, the logarithm from this number plus one, so as to avoid conclusions based on outliers). This variable runs between 0.69 and 6.86.

News Attention for the coverage of the association between a specific party and a specific issue was defined as the logarithm (with base 2) of the number of news statements (plus one) about it in the media used by the respondent (cf. section on linking media content to respondents above), which results in a measure ranging from 0 to 5.25. Logarithms assume that percentage changes rather than absolute changes in news attention matter.

Political Knowledge is measured on the basis of twelve items. In the first wave of the survey, the respondents watched four photos displaying politicians, after which they were asked to mention the name of the politician, the party he or she belonged to, and his or her political office. On average, respondents were able to answer eight questions correctly. Cronbach's alpha of this index is 0.85. At the level of respondents, we also included sociodemographic variables such as *Gender* (0 = female; 1 = male).

Political Discussion was measured with the question how the respondent reacted to political discussions. Not participating was coded as 0, listening but not expressing opinions was coded as 0.5, and expressing an opinion as 1.

Model Specification

Units of analysis on which the data analysis rests are combinations of 1,362 respondents, who participated in the first and last waves of the panel survey study, eleven parties, and twenty issues, which results in n = (1,362 × 11 × 20 =) 299,640 units of analysis. As associative issue ownership is a binary variable, a cross-nested logistic multilevel model with respondents, parties, and issues as equivalent higher order levels is appropriate. Some hypotheses, such as H3 (knowledge) and H5 (discussion), predict an effect across the board that is not restricted to specific issues and parties. The precise sources of variation per hypothesis will be detailed in Table 3.

All independent variables were standardized, which has two advantages: (1) the sizes of "unstandardized" regression estimates based on standardized values for different independent variables in a logistic regression can be compared in an intuitive way and (2) multilevel models without Bayesian priors tend to run into convergence problems less often.

Results

Issue Ownership at the Macro Level

Table 1 gives an aggregate overview of voters' perceptions of issue ownership of twenty issues by eleven parties before and after the 2010 Dutch parliamentary election campaign. The more shaded the cell is, the more often voters associate a specific party with a specific issue.

Table 1 first of all shows that voters perceive differences between the eleven parties in the ownership of these twenty issues. This is in line with Walgrave et al. (2012), Aalberg and Jenssen (2007), and Bélanger and Meguid (2008). We will discuss Table 1 from left to right, as parties are sorted from left to right and issues from bottom to top according to the number of associations.

The PVV (anti-immigrant party) strengthens its associative issue ownership of asylum seekers and immigrants (from 70 to 84 percent). An interesting case is that the VVD was able to strengthen its issue ownership of the mortgage interest tax rebate (from 25 to 41 percent) in spite of, or as a result of, the campaign strategy of the CDA to capture issue ownership (from 15 to 27 percent). Thus, the shifts in voters' perceptions of associative ownership suggest that the campaign by and large strengthens issue ownership, which is in line with the preliminary findings of Tresch et al. (2013). The clearest case of issue ownership is entrepreneurship because three-quarters of the respondents associate entrepreneurship with the Liberal Party (VVD).

The correlation of associative issue ownership perceptions between the pre-campaign and post-electoral waves is .95 at the aggregate level as compared with .34 at the individual level. Thus, associative issue ownership is highly stable at the aggregate level but volatile at the individual level. In the pre-campaign wave, the respondents make 10,993 party issue associations, of which 7,662 survive in the post-electoral

Table 1. Issue Ownership of Twenty Issues for Eleven Parties (Percent per Party of Issues Associated with Party before and after 2010 Campaign, *n* = 1,362 Respondents).

Issue	PVV	VVD	PvdA	CDA	GL	SP	D66	TON	CU	PvdD	SGP
Asylum seekers and immigrants											
Pre	70	6	8	2	4	5	2	40	1	1	2
Post	84	8	16	2	4	4	1	46	1	0	2
Norms and values											
Pre	2	2	2	38	3	2	1	3	42	3	34
Post	3	1	5	42	3	3	3	4	50	6	36
Social security											
Pre	0	2	25	4	15	35	6	2	8	1	5
Post	1	3	40	6	21	42	8	2	11	2	6
Taxes and cuts in government expenditures											
Pre	5	23	17	19	5	8	11	12	7	2	4
Post	4	39	14	21	6	7	12	6	6	1	6
Nature and environment											
Pre	0	0	1	0	47	2	2	0	1	46	1
Post	0	0	1	0	58	2	1	0	2	59	0
Mortgage interest tax rebate											
Pre	2	25	25	15	6	7	12	3	4	1	1
Post	5	41	17	27	4	9	13	1	2	0	1
Crime											
Pre	37	9	3	3	2	2	2	21	4	1	4
Post	42	9	5	3	1	3	2	29	4	1	4
Education											
Pre	0	3	7	2	9	6	26	1	10	1	5
Post	1	3	7	3	10	8	30	1	10	0	4
Health care											
Pre	1	3	7	6	8	15	7	2	8	1	4
Post	4	5	13	7	11	24	7	1	8	1	3
Pensions of the elderly											
Pre	6	3	12	7	3	16	5	1	2	0	2
Post	14	6	13	10	3	25	6	1	3	1	2
Administrative renewal											
Pre	2	5	3	1	3	2	29	5	2	1	2
Post	2	7	3	3	7	5	32	4	2	1	1
Employment											
Pre	0	6	16	3	4	12	5	2	3	1	1
Post	0	9	18	3	6	11	4	1	2	1	1
Agriculture											
Pre	0	0	0	10	6	1	1	0	1	24	3
Post	0	0	0	7	4	0	1	0	1	32	2
Developmental aid											
Pre	4	2	5	2	7	3	2	2	5	2	4
Post	5	1	6	2	8	3	2	1	6	3	4

(Continued)

Table 1. (Continued)

Issue	PVV	VVD	PvdA	CDA	GL	SP	D66	TON	CU	PvdD	SGP
Entrepreneurship											
Pre	0	30	1	0	0	1	2	4	0	0	1
Post	0	28	1	1	1	1	2	3	0	0	1
Missions Dutch army abroad											
Pre	1	2	14	17	2	2	1	1	5	0	1
Post	1	1	8	12	1	1	1	0	2	0	1
European cooperation											
Pre	1	4	2	12	2	2	8	1	2	1	1
Post	2	1	2	13	2	1	9	1	3	1	1
Efficient government											
Pre	4	7	1	1	2	3	6	7	1	1	1
Post	3	3	1	1	2	2	4	2	1	1	1
Accessibility and mobility											
Pre	1	12	1	5	3	1	2	6	0	1	1
Post	0	7	1	3	3	1	2	5	1	1	1
Fighting terror											
Pre	12	2	0	1	0	0	0	5	0	0	1
Post	7	1	0	1	0	0	0	4	0	0	0

The percentage of voters who associated the PVV with asylum seekers and immigrants increased from 70 to 84 percenty. Party names and party families to which parties belong were explained below Figure 1.

wave. However, they gain 13,497 party issue associations during the campaign, which resulted by and large in strengthened issue ownership at the aggregate level.

Table 2 gives an aggregate overview of the attention in the media for party statements about issues with respect to issues according to the Dutch media, as a weighted average across media that were actually used by respondents. Media attention for party statements about issues is equivalent to the media attention for issue positions of parties. Rows and columns are presented in the same order as in Table 1. The higher the number in the cell is, the more often the association was covered by the media. Comparing Table 2 with Table 1 confirms at a glance that the media reflect issue ownership. The PVV prioritizes the issue of asylum seekers and immigrants, the ecologist party GL prioritizes nature and the environment, the right-wing VVD focuses on crime, and so on. In line with U.S. campaigns (Sigelman and Buell 2002), the parties converged on the issues, at least according to the media, most notably on news about taxes and government expenditures.

The content analysis data reveal that parties converged especially on news about a 4 billion euro government loan of the Dutch government to Greece, and about ramifications of the necessity of future cuts in government expenditures by government advisory bodies. Issue ownership theory predicts that the issue owner (i.e., the VVD) will benefit from this news.

The impact of associative issue ownership on the vote is beyond the scope of this article. However, it seems that this prediction came true. The VVD became the largest

party in the Netherlands (from twenty-two to thirty-one seats) for the first time in their history. The PVV included the Greeks in its aversion against immigrants and achieved the largest increase in the number of seats (from nine to twenty-four seats). Both parties became indispensable for the coalition government after the elections.

Issue Ownership at the Micro Level

We now turn to the individual level with the help of our cross-nested multilevel logistic regression model. We will present four different models. Model 1 is the "empty" model, which is basically an analysis of variance that attributes differences in associative issue ownership to differences between respondents, between parties, and between issues. The random intercept effects for model 1 show that the variation in respondents' associations of parties with issues has to do with the nature of issues first, with respondents' characteristics second, and finally with the features of parties. The empty model explains about 8.7 percent of issue ownership associations as measured by Nagelkerke's R^2.

The fit of each subsequent model is better than the fit of the previous one, which is apparent from the decreasing Akaike information criterion (AIC) and deviance information criterion (DIC) scores and the increasing scores for Nagelkerke's R^2. Model 2 adds fixed effects for all independent variables, except for news and political discussion. This model shows a significant positive effect of voters' associative issue ownership perceptions in the pre-election wave (H1) and a significant positive contagion effect (H2). We see that voters are likely to associate an issue with the same party as they did in the pre-election wave and that the more respondents associate a particular party with a particular issue in the pre-election wave, the more likely it is that a specific respondent will hold this association in the post-election wave. In addition, we find a significant positive effect for political knowledge. Especially voters with a high level of political knowledge are likely to become aware of more associations (H3).

In addition to the previous variables, model 3 displays a positive significant effect for news attention and political discussion. This tells us that the more news a party obtains with its issues, the more likely the voter is to associate the party with its issues afterward (H4). Involvement in political discussion increases the likelihood that a respondent will associate a party with an issue across the board (H5).

Model 4 includes as interaction effects that both news attention and political discussion weaken the effect of one's personal associations between parties and issues, while strengthening the effect of widely held societal associations. Generally speaking, campaigns revitalize the collective memory of traditional issue ownership associations. Campaign news and political discussions have a *mainstreaming* effect. This revitalization of issue ownership due to the media is striking as the media also show a strong tendency to converge on the issues of a specific campaign (cf. Table 2).

We tested whether model 4 could be improved by including more sociodemographic variables (education, age, gender) as well as more subtle effects of knowledge. Only gender shows a small additional effect: Men tend to associate parties more often with issues than women. The finding that higher level of knowledge is associated with

Table 2. Attention for Issue Positions/Issue Association by Party in the National Media (Number of Items with Issue Associations per Party Averaged across Media Use Respondents).

Issue	PVV	PvdA	VVD	CDA	GL	SP	D66	TON	CU	PvdD	SGP
Asylum seekers and immigrants	6.8	3.0	2.7	0.7	0.6	0.4	0.2	0.0	0.2	0.0	0.1
Norms and values	0.2	2.9	0.7	1.7	0.2	0.1	0.2	0.0	1.7	0.0	3.6
Social security	1.1	3.6	4.5	2.3	2.1	0.6	1.8	0.0	0.8	0.1	0.2
Taxes and government expenditures	3.5	15.6	15.6	11.2	5.1	5.2	5.4	0.8	3.7	0.8	0.9
Nature and environment	0.8	1.3	0.9	2.6	3.3	0.4	0.8	0.0	1.5	1.2	1.0
Mortgage interest tax rebate	0.5	3.1	2.6	4.1	1.9	0.8	1.9	0.0	0.6	0.3	0.0
Crime	1.9	3.2	6.1	4.4	3.4	0.7	1.1	0.0	0.4	0.3	0.9
Health care	0.4	2.8	2.1	1.3	0.6	1.4	0.5	0.1	0.8	0.5	0.2
Education	0.6	4.5	3.3	3.5	0.9	1.1	3.0	0.2	0.4	0.1	0.6
Pensions of the elderly	0.8	4.1	0.9	1.5	1.0	1.7	1.0	0.0	0.4	0.4	0.0
Administrative renewal	2.1	1.8	0.6	0.6	1.8	0.1	1.6	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.0
Employment	0.6	2.7	3.3	2.3	1.0	1.3	1.0	0.1	0.5	0.1	0.2
Agriculture	0.0	0.0	0.1	0.2	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.4	0.0
Developmental aid	1.0	0.3	0.3	0.2	0.1	0.1	0.0	0.0	0.3	0.0	0.0
Entrepreneurship	0.4	1.6	1.3	0.9	0.4	0.6	0.8	0.1	0.5	0.0	0.1
Missions Dutch army abroad	0.5	4.8	0.3	0.2	1.6	0.4	1.4	0.0	0.5	0.1	0.2
European cooperation	0.9	0.0	1.1	0.6	0.0	0.5	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.2
Efficient government	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.1	0.1	0.0	0.2	0.0	0.1	0.1	0.0
Accessibility and mobility	0.1	1.2	4.9	3.9	1.6	0.7	0.2	0.0	0.1	0.0	0.0
Fighting terror	0.0	0.1	0.3	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Row percent distribution issue associations between parties	9	20	22	16	10	6	8	1	5	2	3

The bottom row shows that Dutch citizens encountered, given their personal choice of news media, on average the VVD in 22 percent of the news statements about issues. The remaining cells represent the average amount of news items about positions of specific parties with regard to specific issues to which respondents attended. The number of items per party–issue combination is the outcome of (1) the weekly (lack of) attention of individual respondents for specific news media and (2) the amount of news in each of these news media in each of these weeks about each specific party–issue combination.. Party names and party families to which parties belong were explained below Figure 1.

resistance to associations in the news (in line with Zaller 1992) disappears after the inclusion of contagion effects in the model. Presumably one's resistance is restricted to uncommon associations in the news due to one's infection by opinions held by the majority of society. One may expect that frequent participation in the waves of the panel survey during the election campaign results in a higher level of political knowledge, with a similar effect as a priori political knowledge (H3). This is true, although the effect is small. Allowing for random slopes shows that the effects of issue news were strongest for news about asylum seekers and immigration, whereas the effects of party news were strongest for news about the PVV. The significance of the variables in model 4 was not affected by any of these refinements.

A Closer Look at the Interaction Effects between News, Discussion, and Contagion

The goodness-of-fit measures in Table 3 do not immediately reveal the substantive impact of the inclusion of interaction effects in model 4. The regression curves in Figure 2 show how contagion (H2) depends on the news (left pane H2 × H4) and on political discussion (right pane H2 × H5). At the horizontal axis, the percentage of the population that associated an issue already with a party before the campaign is plotted, and at the vertical axis, the probability is plotted that a voter who did not associate that party with that issue before the campaign will do so after the campaign. Without contagion, a completely flat regression line will show up.

The regression curves in the left pane show that the probability that a party will be associated with an issue in the mind of voters who did not make this association before the campaign depends heavily on the percentage of the population according to which the issue was owned already before the campaign, especially when the party is often associated with this issue in the news.

Figure 2 implies that this probability was high in the case of the PVV and the issue of asylum seekers and immigrants, since 70 percent of the voters associated the PVV already with this issue before the campaign (cf. Table 1) although the PVV attracted not the maximum amount of attention for this issue in the 2010 campaign (cf. Table 2). Figure 2 implies also that this probability was high in the case of the VVD and the issue of taxes and cuts in government expenditures, since this association achieved the maximum amount of news, although the VVD was not already an absolute issue owner before the campaign like the PVV (23 percent instead of 70 percent, cf. Table 1).

Voters who do not attend to the news are on average still vulnerable for contagion by majority opinions (dotted regression line in left pane) in contrast to voters who do not even listen to political discussions (dotted regression line in right pane). Apparently political discussion is a prerequisite to become aware that many fellow citizens really believe that specific parties prioritize specific issues, whereas attention to newspapers and television is not indispensable here.

Figure 2 shows all in all at a glance that the interaction effects included in model 4 of Table 4 bear, *on average*, a substantive impact in spite of the considerable variation between respondents, parties, and issues that is apparent from the variance of the random intercepts in Table 4.

Discussion

What are the relevance and theoretical implications of this study for the field and which future lines of research can be identified? Public awareness of the issue priorities that parties propagate is a key concern of representative democracy. Whether voters are aware of issue priorities of parties is captured in the recent literature about the concept of associative issue ownership (Tresch et al., forthcoming; Walgrave et al. 2012). This article aimed to connect the early research findings that show overall stability of issue ownership at the aggregate level (Budge and Farlie 1983; Petrocik 1996)

Table 3. Logistic Multilevel Regression to Explain Personal Party–Issue Associations/Associative Issue Ownership at the Elections.

		Model	1			2			3			[4]		
Fixed Effects	Hypothesis	Variation Sources	*B*	*SE*	Significance	*B*	*SE*	Significance	*B*	*SE*	Significance	*B*	*SE*	Significance
H1	Issue ownership inertia	par, iss, resp				0.312	0.005	***	0.310	0.005	***	0.369	0.014	***
H2	Issue ownership contagion	par, iss				1.374	0.012	***	1.355	0.012	***	1.030	0.024	***
H3	Political knowledge	resp				0.218	0.015	***	0.169	0.016	***	0.168	0.016	***
H4	News	par, iss, resp							0.064	0.011	***	−0.393	0.043	***
H5	Discussion	resp							0.117	0.016	***	−0.200	0.045	***
H4 × H1	News weakens H1	par, iss, resp										−0.040	0.008	***
H4 × H2	News strengthens H2	par, iss, resp										0.265	0.042	***
H5 × H1	Discussion weakens H1	par, iss, resp										−0.037	0.014	***
H5 × H2	Discussion strengthens H2	par, iss, resp										0.482	0.038	**
Fixed intercept			−2.902	0.191	***	−3.680	0.093	***	−3.676	0.091	***	−3.654	0.092	***
Random intercepts variance														
Parties (n = 11)		par	0.080			0.029			0.027			0.027		
Issues (n = 20)		iss	0.584			0.117			0.108			0.113		
Respondents (n = 1,362)		resp	0.198			0.192			0.181			0.175		
Goodness of fit														
AIC			142,372			106,977			106,887			106,667		
DIC			142,364			106,963			106,869			106,641		
Nagelkerke's R^2			.087			.356			.357			.358		

Variation sources: par = across parties; iss = across issues; resp = across respondents; AIC = Akaike information criterion; DIC = deviance information criterion. *SE* = standard error; H1 = Stability Hypothesis; H2 = Contagion; H3 = Learning; H4 = Agenda Setting; H5 = Deliberation.
* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

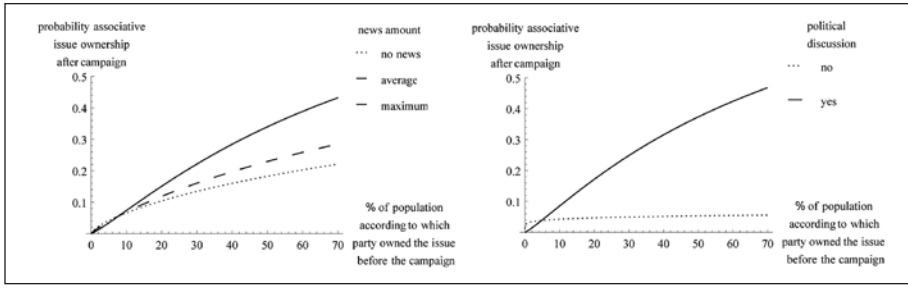

Figure 2. Interaction effects of news, discussion, and contagion to account for the probability of associative issue ownership after the campaign.
The figure is based on the regression coefficients for the variables in model 4 of Table 3, which represent average effects across respondents, parties, and issues, and on the original values of these variables rather than on standardized values. Both panes share as assumptions the absence of an association of the party with the issue before the campaign and an average amount of political knowledge. The left pane assumes moreover an average amount of discussion and the right pane an average amount of news.

and recent research that shows instability at the level of individual voters, most notably due to the news in the mass media (e.g., Aalberg and Jenssen 2007; Walgrave et al. 2009; Walgrave and De Swert 2007).

This non-experimental study brings data together about a large number of parties, issues, media, and respondents before, during, and immediately after the 2010 Dutch election campaign. The findings confirm that associative issue ownership is rather unstable at the individual level, especially due to news attention peaks for specific issues, that is, financial support for Greece and cuts in government expenditures. The parties who already owned the issues in the news—most notably VVD and PVV—could strengthen their ownership and could win at the 2010 elections, which confirms the not-so-minimal impact of the media when political issues are at stake (Shehata and Strömbäck 2013).

The empirical evidence strongly suggests that contagion is the missing link through which issue ownership associations at the individual level are infected by collective issue ownership associations that were vested already before the election campaign. This contagion effect generates not only stability at the macro level of the electorate but also instability at the level of individual voters who bring their idiosyncratic associations in line with more widely held issue ownership associations. A cross-nested multilevel regression analysis reveals that attention to the news and political discussions are major channels through which contagion occurs. Without political discussion, contagion appears to be almost impossible.

However, this study also has its limitations. Issue ownership associations were only measured in two waves of a panel before and after a single election campaign. Future studies should attempt to collect longitudinal data on more elections. This would allow us to estimate the durability of the contagion effect, that is, that voters who forgot about issue ownership will tend to associate parties once again with their owned issues

after a few years, or even decades. This study shows an autonomous role for associative issue ownership, but it is also worthwhile to examine the combined effect of associative and competence ownership, and to incorporate the effect of news about successes and failures of parties ("horse race news") on the latter (Kleinnijenhuis et al. 2007). This would allow us to assess whether it is indeed easier to change perceptions of competence issue ownership than of associative issue ownership as argued by Walgrave et al. (2009). The field would benefit from comparative work on issue ownership, because the Dutch case examined here is one of the most fragmented party systems in the world. Other party systems and other media systems may yield other opportunity structures to converge on the issues (Sigelman and Buell 2004), or to focus on niche issues. However, we do not see convincing a priori reasons why the findings would not be generalizable.

Notwithstanding the shortcomings of this study, we consider it as a major dual insight—also from the normative point of view of democratic deliberation—that campaign news and political discussion strengthen both stability and change. Political news and political discussion strengthen stability by raising especially the awareness of traditional issue priorities of political parties. They evoke change as well due to their convergence on the issues of the campaign from which especially the parties who own these issues will benefit.

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Is the Internet Homogenizing or Diversifying the News? External Pluralism in the U.S., Danish, and French Press

Matthew Powers[1] and Rodney Benson[2]

Abstract

This study examines whether news is more or less homogeneous online than in print across agenda-setting news outlets in the United States, Denmark, and France. Examining similarities and differences in the genres, topics, and authors of news in each country's leading newspapers, it finds little evidence of greater online homogeneity in any country. U.S. news outlets are more differentiated online than in print, while French news outlets have similar levels of print and online differentiation. Online data for Denmark reveal no consistent pattern in the direction of either homogeneity or differentiation. These findings suggest that the differentiating effects of the online environment are strongest in countries (e.g., the United States) where media markets are being restructured to include more direct competition between agenda-setting news outlets at the national level. By contrast, countries (e.g., France and, to a lesser degree, Denmark) with high levels of print differentiation have similarly high levels online due to the path-dependent effects of their national media systems.

Keywords

journalism, comparative research, Internet, press systems, public sphere

Is the Internet homogenizing or diversifying the news across similar news outlets? Existing scholarship offers competing answers to this question. On one hand, some argue the financial malaise accompanying the Internet's rise has contributed

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to a situation in which a depleted journalistic workforce is expected to produce round-the-clock news across multiple platforms: This trend, joined with the ease in which the Internet facilitates constant journalistic monitoring of rival news organizations, creates strong incentives to compete by copying (Boczkowski 2010; Redden and Witschge 2010; Rosensteil 2005). On the other hand, some suggest digital technologies collapse space and time and bring previously dispersed news outlets directly into competition: At least some media organizations seem to be responding to this challenge by differentiating themselves either ideologically, topically, or stylistically (Barnhurst and Nerone 2001; Baum and Groelling 2008; Hallin and Mancini 2004).

In this article, we contribute to this debate by examining the similarities and differences in the genres, authors, and topics of news across agenda-setting newspapers (both print and online versions) in Denmark, France, and the United States. Our aims are fourfold. First, we provide a cross-national perspective to the debate about news homogeneity. Second, we assess homogeneity along two dimensions: as both the overall concentration of genres, authors, and topics in agenda-setting newspapers and as the degree to which individual news outlets differentiate their mixture of such elements from one another. Third, we introduce measures and methods for studying homogeneity online that may be useful to other researchers. Fourth, by using data collected from the months preceding the 2008 global financial crisis, we provide a historical baseline for future research on content homogeneity and differentiation.

Our cross-national comparison is informed by a media systems approach (Hallin and Mancini 2004). Media systems refer to the political, economic, professional, and regulatory forces that shape journalism in different countries. In *Comparing Media Systems*, Hallin and Mancini suggest three distinct models in Western Europe and North America: a "liberal" model, expressed most clearly in the United States and characterized by the relative dominance of market and commercial forces; a "democratic corporatist" model, seen in Denmark and other northern European countries and characterized by the coexistence of commercial logics and public service media; and a "polarized pluralist" model, seen in Mediterranean countries (including France) and characterized by low levels of commercialism and greater state involvement. In examining the mixture of genres, authors, and topics in representative media system countries, we seek to test whether structural variations across media systems help explain the degree of homogeneity/differentiation in news content and form within and across media systems. In so doing, we help build and refine theory examining the relationship between media systems and news content (Aalberg et al. 2010; Esser and Umbricht 2013; Humprecht and Büchel 2013; Wessler et al. 2008).

Existing Perspectives on Homogeneity and Differentiation

Is online news more or less homogeneous than print across similar types of outlets? And to what degree does the online environment maintain or transform existing cross-national differences between media systems? The research literature suggests three

possibilities: more homogeneity online than in print, more differentiation online than in print, and print–online similarity (i.e., no substantial difference).

Those who see more homogeneity online than in print argue it is the result of commercial, professional, and technological factors. Commercial competition has intensified in recent years, leading news organizations to enact strategies designed to yield larger cost savings via workforce reductions and production synergies (Picard 2011). Pre-existing professional tendencies to monitor and imitate are amplified online, as journalists can see their competitors' news judgments in real time (Boczkowski 2010). Internet technologies force journalists to take on multiple tasks in a publishing environment that is transformed from a "news cycle" to a "news cyclone" (Klinenberg 2005: 54). Homogeneity between news outlets is greater online than in print as a result of these commercial, professional, and technological factors, which encourage monitoring and reliance on wire services and press releases (Boczkowski 2010; Redden and Witschge 2010; Rosensteil 2005).

The factors shaping homogeneity exist in all three countries in this study, but in an uneven fashion. A feature of liberal media systems is their tendency toward higher levels of commercialism than other media systems (Dimitrova and Strömbäck 2012; Hallin and Mancini 2004). This is especially true of U.S. media, which are among the world's most commercialized: Prior to the financial crisis, advertising accounted for 80 percent of total U.S. newspaper revenues compared with 57 percent in Denmark and 40 percent in France (Benson 2009; Harrie 2009). European counterparts, by contrast, are buffered by subsidies and other protective measures aimed at ensuring differentiation across news outlets. French subsidies rank among the highest in Europe (Benson 2009), substantially higher than Danish subsidies (Allern and Blach-Ørsten 2011); American newspapers receive no direct subsidies (Starr 2004). Given existing research that shows how the strong presence of commercial forces and relative absence of state support creates a bias toward more homogeneous content (Aalberg et al. 2010; Curran et al. 2009; Dimitrova and Strömbäck 2012), U.S. newspapers might be assumed to be more homogeneous (both in print and online) than newspapers in Denmark and France, even as the literature predicts greater homogeneity online in all cases.

Others see the online environment encouraging a very different phenomenon, namely, more differentiation online as online publishing restructures media markets, bringing multiple outlets into competition with one another (Barnhurst and Nerone 2001; Baum and Groelling 2008; Prior 2007). Now that audiences can, and do, read news outside their local markets (Thurman 2007), news organizations—particularly agenda-setting national newspapers—find themselves competing in new ways. Economic research suggests that the competitive conditions of these restructured markets will lead to "product differentiation" with news outlets diversifying offerings to appeal to distinct audiences (Gal-Or and Dukes 2003; George and Waldfogel 2003). In discussing the advent of online news sites, Barnhurst and Nerone (2001) make precisely this argument about online news in the United States: "In an electronic marketplace, we can imagine a series of truly national newspapers competing. Why shouldn't these come to occupy partisan positions (of the European sort)?" (p. 294).

According to this view, partisanship is one dimension of a broader trend toward differentiation in online environments that are not just about news but also "space[s] of opinion" (Jacobs and Townsley 2011). Here, too, the argument is especially claimed with respect to the United States, where media markets are being restructured most significantly. In Denmark and France, media markets were already centralized in a single city (Copenhagen and Paris) with newspapers competing head-to-head for audiences (Albert 2004; Allern and Blach-Ørsten 2011). By contrast, U.S. markets for most of the twentieth century were—even for agenda-setting newspapers—regional or local, creating the conditions for what Hallin and Mancini (2004: 286) term "catch-all-ism," that is, the tendency of outlets with local monopolies to cater news to the widest possible audience. Because the market structures enabling the strategy of catch-all-ism diminish online, publishing strategies are similarly expected to shift.

Finally, it is possible that cross-medium differences may not exist in either direction—toward either greater homogeneity or differentiation. Instead, we might expect to see within-country similarities both in print and online as well as cross-national differences. Strands of cross-national and print versus online research do find print and online similarities stemming from shared organizational, professional, and cultural norms (see the overview in Mitchelstein and Boczkowski 2009). Boczkowski's (2004: 73–76) study of U.S. newsrooms found strong tendencies, particularly at elite newspapers like the *New York Times*, to recreate print norms in online settings. Finnemann and Thomasen (2005) studied Danish newspapers and online news sites, and report mostly print-to-online similarities in topical selections, news formats, and page layouts. Quandt's (2008) five-country study (which includes both the United States and France) finds hardly any cross-medium differences in topical reporting patterns, and reports enduring cross-national differences. Finally, Nielsen's (2013) six-country study (including the United States and France) finds cross-national structural differences in national media industries and within-country structural similarities for print and online news, suggesting similar patterns for news form and content.

Comparative research suggests that the degree of cross-outlet differentiation varies cross-nationally. The Danish and French political systems are home to more major political parties than the American system (eight, six, and two, respectively). While there has been a loosening of any direct interconnection between political parties and media outlets across Western Europe, the histories of such systems push "toward the politicization of the media" and a tendency of media outlets to be identified with general political currents (Hallin and Mancini 2004: 61). Indeed, existing comparative research consistently finds that the relative prevalence of opinion and deliberative content vis-à-vis strictly news content is greater in polarized pluralist and democratic corporatist systems than in liberal systems (Benson et al. 2012; Esser and Umbricht 2013; Sheafer and Wolfsfeld 2009). These differences may further be shaped by the state's use of subsidies, discussed above, to expand the range of available voices in the media system. Because the U.S. media have the lowest degree of political parallelism, homogeneity (both in print and online) can be expected to be most prevalent there, while differentiation will be more characteristic of both Denmark and France. In no case, though, would dramatic cross-medium differences be expected.

Hypotheses

Drawing on the above literatures, this article examines the degree of homogeneity and differentiation in the print and online versions of leading Danish, French, and U.S. newspapers. In looking at the "form" (Barnhurst and Nerone 2001) and content of news, we investigate the level of concentration of various genres, authors, and topics for a given sample of national newspapers as well as the degree of differentiation in the specific mixes between the newspapers in each country. In other words, rather than analyze internal pluralism (i.e., the diversity of form or content in a single news item or news outlet), our focus is on external pluralism (i.e., the diversity offered up by a larger collection of media outlets and the differentiation among those outlets; see Hallin and Mancini 2004: 29).

All hypotheses concern the following elements of news form and content that have been identified by scholars (Benson 2009, 2013; Esser and Umbricht 2013; Wessler et al. 2008) as distinguishing media systems: (a) journalistic genres, such as news, opinion, and deliberation; (b) authorship, whether by staff journalists, wire services, or non-journalists; and (c) topical foci, such as international, government, business, sports, and arts and entertainment.

Hypothesis 1: Because the online environment encourages an intensification of monitoring and imitation across outlets, we expect homogeneity to be greater online than in print in all national cases. Greater homogeneity is indicated by higher concentration in a national sample and lesser differentiation between news outlets in genres, types of authorship, and topical foci.

Hypothesis 2: Because online environments intensify competition by centralizing the market for online news at the national level, thus increasing incentives for differentiation, we expect homogeneity to be lesser online than in print in all national cases. Lesser homogeneity is indicated by a lesser concentration in a national sample and higher differentiation between news outlets in genres, types of authorship, and topical foci. Given that print markets are already nationalized to a certain extent in France and Denmark, the gap between print and online should be lesser in these countries than in the United States.

Hypothesis 3: Because media systems shape the conditions of news production, we expect the degree of homogeneity to differ systematically across countries both in print and online. In particular, we expect French and Danish news to be less homogeneous than U.S. news both in print and online due to more competitively structured centralized markets, higher degrees of political parallelism, and the presence of government subsidies intended to expand the range of debate and expression.

In sum, Hypothesis 3 posits within-nation similarities between print and online versions and continued cross-national differences both in print and online and is therefore in principle competing with Hypotheses 1 and 2, both of which posit differences between print and online editions. These latter hypotheses differ in their hypothesized

direction of difference and are therefore also partially competing with each other (partially because it is possible that some dimensions of news will converge while others will diverge).

Sampling and Coding Methods

This study examines leading newspapers in Denmark, France, and the United States. The countries selected differ in terms of political systems, market structures, and levels of commercialism; as such, we can examine the degree to which news homogeneity at the level of agenda-setting newspapers is shaped by system characteristics—or, in contrast, whether online platforms exert their own cross-national effects across systems. In Hallin and Mancini's (2004) classification, the United States accords with the liberal model, Denmark the democratic corporatist, and France the polarized pluralist (while sharing some tendencies with democratic corporatist systems). In selecting these countries, we thus build on and extend existing cross-national comparative research engaging with this media systems model (Benson et al. 2012; Curran et al. 2009; Esser and Umbricht 2013).

Research in both the United States and Western Europe shows that newspapers—despite numerous business challenges—continue to produce the majority of news content (Leurdijk et al. 2012; Pew Research Center 2010). We focus explicitly on a strategic sample of three national newspapers per country because existing research also suggests online competition has its greatest impact at the national level (Baum and Groelling 2008; Boczkowski 2010). While not representative of all outlets, three newspapers provide a reasonable entry-level view of system properties and allow for the collection of more detailed data than would a larger sample; similar numbers of newspapers per country are examined in Boczkowski (2010), Esser and Umbricht (2013), Humprecht and Büchel (2013), and Wessler et al. (2008).

Specific newspapers were selected for their agenda-setting positions within their respective national journalistic settings (Albert 2004; Finnemann and Thomasen 2005; Weaver et al. 2007): in Denmark, these outlets are *Berlingske Tidende, Jyllands-Posten*, and *Politiken*; in France, *Le Monde, Le Figaro*, and *Libération*; and in the United States, the *New York Times, Washington Post*, and *Los Angeles Times*. In selecting these newspapers, our aim is to facilitate a cross-national analysis of leading national newspapers that compete with one another for both audiences and journalistic prestige.[1]

For each newspaper, print front pages and online home pages (top two screen shots) were coded and analyzed (see Cooke 2005 and Van der Wurff and Lauf 2005 for similar methods). Given consistent findings of the prominence accorded to the front page by both journalists and their audiences (Hubé 2008; Weldon 2008), these pages are an appropriate setting to examine similarities or differences in news. It cannot be assumed, however, that similar patterns hold for other parts of newspapers, either print or online.

News homogeneity is measured and analyzed for three variables—genre, authorship, and topical focus. Our unit of analysis is the news "element." News packages (especially online) often contain multiple elements—such as topical labels,

Figure 1. Example of news elements.
① Link to section page: coded as "sports" topic, "newspaper" author, "news" genre.
② Story headline: coded as "sports" topic, "newspaper" author, "news" genre.
③ Story text: coded as "sports" topic, "newspaper" author, "news" genre.
④ Author byline: coded as "sports" topic, "newspaper" author, "other" genre.
⑤ Story headline: coded as "international" topic, "newspaper" author, "news" genre.
⑥ Q&A: coded as "sports" topic, "non-journalist" author, "deliberative" genre.
⑦ Postmark Beijing (blog): coded as "international" topic, "newspaper" author, "opinion" genre.
⑧ Playback (blog): coded as "sports" topic, "newspaper" author, "opinion" genre.
⑨ Scene (photos): coded as "sports" topic, "wire service" author, "news" genre.

headlines, images, texts, and links—each of which may have a different genre, author, or topical focus (see Figure 1 for an illustration of coding by element). After the completion of coding, specific genres were placed into broader "summative indices" relating to hypotheses (Cassidy 2005: 270): news (event articles, features news articles, news analyses, transcripts of court decisions or political speeches, databases, photos, and multimedia), opinion (signed opinion essays, official newspaper editorials, cartoons, and blog posts), deliberation (interview transcripts, polls, online chats, and forums), and other (advertising, newspaper title, internal marketing, byline, date, and time stamp).

Each element was also coded for author: journalist, wire service, non-journalist with an organizational affiliation (e.g., academics, civic organization leaders, government officials, etc.), or unaffiliated individual (typically an audience member writing comments). Finally, each element was coded for its topical focus—international, government and domestic politics, business, arts and entertainment, sports, and crime.

To assess system-level concentration and cross-outlet differentiation in news, this study utilizes two measures: the Hirschman–Herfindahl Index (HHI) and the Deviation Index (DI). In our study, the HHI measures the degree to which genres, authors, or topics are concentrated or dispersed within a country sample.[2] It is calculated for each news outlet by squaring the average percentage for each variable and summing the

total.[3] In the U.S.'s *Los Angeles Times*, for example, 91.0 percent of all print authors are journalists, 6.5 percent are wire copy, 2.5 percent are non-journalists, and 0 percent are unaffiliated. Squaring each percentage and summing the total provides a highly concentrated HHI score of 8,329.5. This score is then averaged with the average scores of the country's other two news outlets to create a national HHI score. The highest possible score is ten thousand and indicates total dominance by a single element type; the lower the score, the greater dispersion of elements across the country sample. We use the DI (Hellman 2001), an indicator of differentiation, to measure the deviation in the specific mixture of genres, topics, or authors *between* outlets in a country sample. The DI is calculated by subtracting the averages (in decimal form) of a given variable's categories (such as news, opinion, and deliberation for "genre") in one outlet from the corresponding averages in another outlet and then summing the differences; these calculations are performed for all three outlets in a country sample (e.g., *New York Times* vs. *Washington Post, New York Times* vs. *Los Angeles Times, Washington Post* vs. *Los Angeles Times*) and then averaged. The highest possible score is 2.0, while the lowest is 0 (indicating no deviation at all); the higher the score, the greater the deviation between news outlets.

To contextualize both indices, we also provide country-level data for each variable showing (1) the news outlet with the highest percentage of a given element, (2) the news outlet with the lowest percentage of the same element, and (3) the overall country average for the element. Where the HHI and DI provide indicators of system-level homogeneity and cross-outlet differentiation, these contextual data show which genres, authors, and topics are dominant in each country and particular news outlets, providing information crucial to analyzing and explaining the findings.

Data for all newspapers and all countries were collected on three weekdays from July through September 2008: Wednesday, July 23; Tuesday, August 12; and Friday, September 5.[4] By spreading collection dates out over multiple summer months, the sample provides greater generalizability than would be possible with data collected in a single week (Barnhurst 2010; Riffe et al. 1993). In providing a snapshot of news content, we offer simultaneous observations of different platforms, not an over-time analysis of homogenization. Events occurring on sample days that might affect topical findings include the arrest of Bosnian Serb leader Radovan Karadzic (July 23), the Beijing Summer Olympics (August 12), and the U.S. Republican Party national convention (September 5). Removal of these data from the sample, however, did not substantively change within-country or cross-national findings.

Three graduate student coders—each native to the country whose media they coded—captured snapshots of online editions at 8 A.M. (local times) to ensure temporal equivalence. A pretest among coders was performed to ensure coders understood the protocol; e-mail dialogues among coders resolved coding disagreements to ensure reliability. Using Krippendorf's alpha, overall reliability (determined by three sample tests taken from the U.S. data, constituting 10 percent of the overall data) between coders was .803. For authorship, average reliability was .805; for genre, .736; for topical focus, .855.

Findings

Genre

French and Danish print newspapers have lower HHI scores and thus mix genres more than their U.S. counterparts (7,017.8 and 7,886.0 vs. 9,403.6, respectively); deviation between print newspapers is also larger in France (0.446) and Denmark (0.286) than in the United States (0.073). These findings are consistent with expected media system differences. Online, however, U.S. newspapers mix genres as much or more than their European counterparts: the U.S. HHI concentration score for online newspapers falls dramatically to 6,170.1 versus HHI scores of 5,712.8 for France and 9,484.8 for Denmark. Cross-outlet differentiation (DI of 0.337) also increases online for U.S. newspapers as it decreases in France to 0.234 and in Denmark to 0.065. The online environment thus clearly correlates with higher external pluralism in genres in the United States but not in Denmark and only to a limited degree in France; print–online differences are also consistently greatest for U.S. newspapers (see Table 1).

Table 1. Genre Concentration and Deviation between Outlets by Country: Print and Online.

	Print		Online		Difference	
Country	HHI	DI	HHI	DI	HHI	DI
United States	9,403.6	0.073	6,170.1	0.337	−3,233.5	+0.264
France	7,017.8	0.446	5,712.8	0.234	−1,305.0	−0.212
Denmark	7,886.0	0.286	9,484.8	0.065	+1,598.8	−0.221

Note. HHI measures concentration for the entire sample; lower scores indicate lesser concentration (greater mixing). DI measures differentiation across individual outlets; higher scores indicate greater differentiation. HHI = Hirschman–Herfindahl Index; DI = Deviation Index.

In print, U.S. newspapers focus on news genres and little else. The minimal deviation between outlets results from the *New York Times* and *Washington Post*, but not the *Los Angeles Times*, using below-the-fold "teasers" to opinion pieces. Online, U.S. newspapers offer a greater mix of genres, incorporating more opinion and deliberation. The average DI score increases as each U.S. newspaper differentiates itself by using greater amounts of different genres: opinion for the *Washington Post* (21.8 percent of genre elements), deliberation for the *New York Times* (3.7 percent), and news for the *Los Angeles Times* (47.8 percent; see Table 2).

In France, deviation across outlets is lower online than in print due to a slight convergence in relative emphasis on news and opinion and a more dramatic convergence in use of deliberation. In the print versions, *Le Monde* (14.1 percent) makes the greatest use of deliberative elements whereas *Libération* (1.6 percent) makes the least use; online, use of deliberation ranges more narrowly from 9.6 percent at *Libération* to 8.0 percent at *Le Figaro*. However, as indicated by minimal difference in the HHI scores

Table 2. Prevalence of Genres by Country: Print and Online.

Country (*n* Print, Online)	Genre	Print			Online		
		Average	High	Low	Average	High	Low
United States (781, 1,281)	News	76.6	78.9_{WP}	74.0_{LAT}	43.7	47.8_{LAT}	36.1_{WP}
	Opinion	2.8	4.6_{WP}	0_{LAT}	12.5	21.8_{WP}	7.8_{NYT}
	Deliberation	0	0	0	2.5	3.7_{NYT}	0.7_{LAT}
France (498, 1,056)	News	50.6	60.9_{LIB}	48.7_{LM}	44.2	49.4_{LF}	41.5_{LIB}
	Opinion	7.4	15.8_{LF}	0_{LIB}	8.5	13.1_{LM}	2.5_{LF}
	Deliberation	8.8	14.1_{LM}	1.6_{LIB}	8.8	9.6_{LIB}	8.0_{LF}
Denmark (241, 1,203)	News	56.8	60.4_{JP}	51.1_{POL}	58.8	67.7_{JP}	51.8_{BT}
	Opinion	7.1	13.3_{POL}	0_{BT}	0.3	0.8_{BT}	0_{POL}
	Deliberation	1.2	6.0_{BT}	0_{JP}	1.0	1.9_{BT}	0_{JP}

Note. WP = *Washington Post*; LAT = *Los Angeles Times*; NYT = *New York Times*; LIB = *Libération*; LM = *Le Monde*; LF = *Le Figaro*; JP = *Jyllands-Posten*; POL = *Politiken*; BT = *Berlingske Tidende*. Percentages do not total 100 because non-editorial elements are not listed; see note 3.

from print to online, French newspapers in both mediums overall provide roughly comparable mixes of genres (about 50 percent news, 7–8 percent opinion, and 9 percent deliberation).

The Danish sample is the only country sample where genre concentration is greater online than in print. Moving from print to online, the reliance on news stays about the same (57–59 percent) but the use of opinion and deliberation drops to almost nothing. Cross-outlet deviation is also less online than in print as this shift away from non-news genres occurs almost uniformly across the three Danish newspapers.

Types of Authors

Both in print and online, French newspapers include the widest range of authors (HHI of 7,054.2 and 5,104.2, respectively), followed at some distance by Danish (8,781.4 and 6,315.6) and U.S. (9,012.1 and 8,173.9) newspapers. In all three countries, HHI concentration indexes are lower online than in print: In other words, the degree of mixing of types of authors is greater online. Deviation between newspapers, both in print and online, is also highest in France (0.407 and 0.372, respectively), followed by Denmark (0.159 and 0.197) and the United States (0.091 and 0.193). Within-country differentiation of outlets thus stays relatively constant for France and Denmark but is higher online than for print in the United States. Summarizing the level of difference between print and online, concentration changes most dramatically for France and Denmark while deviation between outlets rises most in the United States (see Table 3).

In all three countries, journalists are by far the dominant "author," even more so if one takes into account wire service copy as well as newspaper staff writers or

Table 3. Author Concentration and Deviation between Outlets by Country: Print and Online.

	Print		Online		Difference	
Country	HHI	DI	HHI	DI	HHI	DI
United States	9,012.1	0.091	8,173.9	0.193	−838.2	+0.102
France	7,054.2	0.407	5,104.2	0.372	−1,950.0	−0.035
Denmark	8,781.4	0.159	6,315.6	0.197	−2,465.8	+0.038

Table 4. Prevalence of Authors by Country: Print and Online.

Country		Print			Online		
(*n* Print, Online)	Author	Average	High	Low	Average	High	Low
United States	Journalist	95.0	97.6_{WP}	91.0_{LAT}	89.9	92.9_{NYT}	84.8_{LAT}
(722, 1,004)	Wire	4.2	6.5_{LAT}	2.0_{WP}	5.7	13.4_{LAT}	1.1_{NYT}
	Non-Journ.	0.8	2.5_{LAT}	0_{NYT}	2.7	5.4_{WP}	0.3_{LAT}
	Unaffiliated	0	0	0	1.7	3.4_{NYT}	0_{WP}
France	Journalist	76.4	91.2_{LIB}	62.7_{LM}	66.3	79.7_{LF}	58.4_{LIB}
(423, 913)	Wire	9.5	12.7_{LM}	4.8_{LF}	15.2	20.2_{LIB}	10.0_{LM}
	Non-Journ.	5.7	8.2_{LM}	0_{LIB}	3.8	6.4_{LIB}	0.4_{LF}
	Unaffiliated	8.5	16.4_{LM}	0_{LF}	14.7	22.8_{LM}	4.5_{LF}
Denmark	Journalist	93.1	97.6_{BT}	85.7_{POL}	76.3	81.0_{JP}	66.5_{BT}
(202, 1,124)	Wire	5.0	8.6_{POL}	2.4_{BT}	21.3	31.2_{BT}	16.5_{JP}
	Non-Journ.	2.0	5.7_{POL}	0_{BT}	2.4	2.5_{JP}	2.2_{POL}
	Unaffiliated	0	0	0	0	0	0

Note. Non-Journ. = Organizationally-affiliated non-journalist author; Unaffiliated = unaffiliated individual author.

correspondents (see Table 4). The print-to-online difference in concentration of genres would be less if these two types of journalist authors were combined into a single category, given that decreases in staff-written content are partially offset by wire service increases.

In the United States, most of the print-to-online increase in outlet deviation is due to greater use of wire service copy by the *Los Angeles Times* (6.5 percent in print, 13.4 percent online) and a decrease by the *New York Times* (to just 1.1 percent online). If HHI is calculated to include journalists and wire service materials as a single category, it is still lower online than in print (9,145.3 vs. 9,810.9, respectively; figures not shown in tables) but extraordinarily high in both instances. The remaining print-to-online difference in authorship differentiation between outlets is linked to a greater use of organizationally affiliated non-journalist authors at the *Washington Post* (to 5.4 percent online) and of unaffiliated authors at the *New York Times* (to 3.4 percent online).

In general, for both print and online, Danish authorship patterns resemble U.S. newspapers more than French ones. Relatively lower authorship concentration at Danish online newspapers stems primarily from greater use of wire materials and lesser use of staff news. In print, a small level of deviation between outlets is accounted for in part by the opposition between *Politiken* and *Berlingske Tidende* in their use of non-journalist organizationally affiliated authors (5.7 percent of authored elements in the former and none in the latter); online, any deviation is wholly due to differences between outlets in the amount of wire service copy used, with *Berlingske Tidende* including twice as much as the other papers (31.2 percent vs. 17.8 at *Politiken* and 16.5 at *Jyllands-Posten*).

French newspapers, both print and online, incorporate substantially more non-journalist organizationally affiliated and unaffiliated individual authors than their U.S. and Danish counterparts. In print, total non-journalist authored materials account for 14.2 percent of authored elements (compared with 0.8 percent in the United States and 2.0 percent in Denmark); online, total non-journalist authored materials account for an even greater proportion of the French sample (18.5 percent of all authored elements, compared with 4.4 percent in the United States and 2.4 percent in Denmark). Average deviation between outlets is similar in French print and online editions: in both cases, deviation is largely organized around an opposition between *Le Figaro* on one side and *Le Monde* and *Libération* on the other. More than its competitors, *Le Figaro* highlights journalist-authored content (95.1 percent of all online elements, including both staff journalists and wire service copy; figures not shown in tables). Online versions of *Le Monde* and *Libération*, by contrast, place greater emphasis on non-journalist authored materials (26.9 percent of all *Le Monde* authored elements and 21.4 percent for *Libération*; figures not shown).

Topical Focus

Concentration of topics (HHI) is lower in France and the United States than in Denmark for print newspaper editions. At the same time, concentration scores are lower online than in print in France and Denmark, declining from 2,375.2 to 2,216.8 in France, and from 3,361.9 to 1,985.7 in Denmark, while remaining largely the same in the United States. In contrast, deviation between outlets is not consistently higher in the European countries than in the United States. For print editions, deviation is highest in Denmark (0.623), twice as high as in France (0.298) and the United States (0.289); online, deviation falls to 0.479 for Denmark, stays about the same at 0.377 for France, and rises to 0.495 for the United States. The print-to-online tendency toward greater deviation is thus highest in the United States (see Table 5).

In all three countries, the print-to-online difference in concentration of topics generally correlates with a decrease in international and government coverage (see Table 6). International topics fall from 22.6 to 15.8 percent in the United States, from 41.5 to 21.8 percent in Denmark, and from 31.0 to 21.7 percent in France; government topics decline from 20.0 to 15.9 percent in Denmark and slightly from 38.9 to 37.3 percent in the United States, while remaining steady in France (20.6 percent in print and 21.7

Table 5. Topical Concentration and Deviation between Outlets by Country: Print and Online.

	Print		Online		Difference	
Country	HHI	DI	HHI	DI	HHI	DI
United States	2,745.0	0.289	2,841.8	0.495	+96.8	+0.206
France	2,375.2	0.298	2,216.8	0.377	−158.4	+0.079
Denmark	3,361.9	0.623	1,985.7	0.479	−1,376.2	−0.144

Table 6. Prevalence of Topics by Country: Print and Online.

Country (*n* Print, Online)	Topic	Print			Online		
		Average	High	Low	Average	High	Low
United States (730, 1,025)	International	22.6	28.4_{LAT}	17.3_{WP}	15.8	18.1_{WP}	13.3_{LAT}
	Government	38.9	43.8_{LAT}	32.7_{WP}	37.3	48.4_{WP}	32.2_{NYT}
	Business	5.2	6.0_{WP}	3.1_{LAT}	7.1	13.6_{NYT}	2.2_{LAT}
	Arts	9.7	12.2_{NYT}	5.6_{WP}	18.3	27.2_{LAT}	5.5_{WP}
	Sports	11.4	18.8_{WP}	6.2_{LAT}	10.2	14.5_{LAT}	6.5_{WP}
	Crime	5.5	6.0_{WP}	4.6_{LAT}	2.7	4.2_{WP}	1.8_{NYT}
France (378, 780)	International	31.0	38.1_{LM}	21.2_{LIB}	21.7	25.9_{LM}	14.4_{LF}
	Government	20.6	25.0_{LIB}	18.0_{LM}	21.7	23.9_{LIB}	18.3_{LM}
	Business	13.8	16.1_{LF}	11.6_{LM}	13.3	21.3_{LF}	5.5_{LIB}
	Arts	15.3	19.7_{LF}	12.7_{LM}	15.1	16.7_{LIB}	11.6_{LM}
	Sports	8.5	11.7_{LF}	6.3_{LM}	7.7	10.3_{LM}	5.5_{LIB}
	Crime	0.5	0.7_{LF}	0_{LIB}	2.6	3.6_{LM}	0.8_{LF}
Denmark (205, 953)	International	41.5	53.4_{JP}	31.1_{POL}	21.8	34.7_{BT}	16.0_{JP}
	Government	20.0	23.0_{POL}	17.0_{JP}	15.9	18.8_{BT}	13.6_{JP}
	Business	6.3	12.5_{JP}	0_{POL}	14.0	22.4_{JP}	5.8_{BT}
	Arts	16.1	39.5_{BT}	9.5_{POL}	16.4	19.9_{POL}	13.8_{JP}
	Sports	0.5	1.1_{JP}	0_{BT}	17.3	24.6_{POL}	10.8_{BT}
	Crime	4.4	12.2_{POL}	0_{JP}	7.2	10.5_{JP}	4.7_{BT}

Note: Totals may not add up to 100 percent because "Other" is not included.

percent online). Thus, any print-to-online increase in external pluralism of topics can be partially interpreted as a shift away from public affairs.

In the United States, deviation between the print editions is expressed in part by an opposition between the different types of soft topics used by the *Washington Post* and the *Los Angeles Times*. Where the *Post* focuses more on sports (18.8 vs. 6.2 percent, respectively), the *Los Angeles Times* places more emphasis on arts and entertainment (11.9 vs. 5.6 percent, *Los Angeles Times* figure not shown in table). Online, deviation between U.S. newspapers increases as each outlet accentuates distinct topical foci: the

Washington Post places the greatest emphasis on government (48.4 percent), the *New York Times* highlights business (13.6 percent), and the *Los Angeles Times* focuses on arts and entertainment (27.2 percent).

Topic concentration and deviation levels remain relatively constant for French newspapers both in print and online, and there seems to be no single pattern of print differentiation among particular newspapers. Online, however, *Le Figaro* clearly focuses most on business (21.3 percent vs. 14.3 for *Le Monde* and 5.5 for *Libération*), while *Le Monde* and *Libération* favor international news topics (25.9 and 24.9 percent vs. 14.4 percent in *Le Figaro*). Similarly, Denmark's relatively high level of deviation between outlets is due to a complex pattern of differences between outlets. For print editions, *Politiken* is opposed to *Jyllands-Posten* in placing more emphasis on crime and less emphasis on international news and business, and to *Berlingske Tidende* in placing less emphasis on arts and entertainment. Online, deviation between outlets is organized around an opposition between *Berlingske Tidende* on one side and *Politiken* and *Jyllands-Posten* on the other. Whereas *Berlingske Tidende* emphasizes more hard news topics (government, international news), *Politiken* highlights more sports and arts/entertainment and *Jyllands-Posten* highlights more business and crime.

Conclusion

In print, French and Danish newspapers tend to be less homogeneous than U.S. newspapers, as indicated by HHI concentration scores for genres, authors, and topical foci. Deviation between print editions also tends to be higher for France and Denmark than for the United States. Online, U.S. news outlets exhibit as much—and in some cases more—overall diversity and cross-outlet deviation as their European counterparts. One exception is authorship: both in print and online, France clearly includes the most diverse mix of authors as well as the largest deviation between outlets. These findings lend support to Hypotheses 2 and 3, which emphasize the differentiating effects of the online environment and the path-dependent effects of national media systems. By contrast, a clear trend toward news homogeneity is not evident in any country in the shift from print to online, leading us to reject Hypothesis 1.

Our findings also support Hypothesis 2's specific claim that the Internet's capacity to "nationalize" media markets will increase external pluralism. The United States, with its pre-existing regionalist print tendency toward "catch-all-ism," most consistently exhibits print-to-online decreases in HHI scores (indicating increasing overall diversity) and increases in cross-outlet deviation. Conversely, the absence of any major Internet-led market restructuring in France and Denmark may help explain the smaller differences in cross-outlet deviation between print and online samples. Relatively greater cross-medium similarities in France and Denmark may also result from press subsidies that shield newspapers in these countries (especially in France) from intensified market pressures online.

At the same time, it is important to note that nationalized Internet media markets augment, rather than replace, the pre-existing print markets. While leading U.S. newspapers differentiate themselves online from their competitors, they do so in ways that

accentuate local urban cultures and dominant industries—thus explaining why, in relation to one another, arts and entertainment is highlighted most in Los Angeles, politics most in Washington, D.C., and business most in New York.[5] These findings may also be shaped by competition from news outlets and online pure players not included in this sample (e.g., *Politico* in Washington, D.C., the *Wall Street Journal* in New York).

Whereas the U.S. findings suggest how technology can reshape certain structural features of media systems (e.g., centralizing market competition), the French case shows how political and economic factors may promote similarities between print and online editions even in the face of technological change. Both in print and online, French newspapers tend to have relatively low HHI concentration scores and high deviation across outlets. The shift from print to online seems to have minimal effects: In two of the three variables examined (authorship and topic), deviation between French newspapers is more or less the same in print and online. France's history of political parallelism and news subsidies may promote news differentiation even in the midst of economic and technological upheavals; in general, a relatively higher level of state intervention may insulate French journalism from market pressures.

To a certain degree, French outlet deviation is organized around an opposition between *Le Figaro* on one hand, and *Le Monde* and *Libération* on the other. This opposition parallels the gap between the newspapers in terms of advertising reliance (70 percent of total revenues for *Le Figaro* derive from advertising, compared with 40 percent and 20 percent for *Le Monde* and *Libération*, respectively; Benson 2009). These findings accord with existing research that suggests media systems with diversely funded news outlets help ensure a substantial degree of external pluralism, in part because different funding structures seem to support different journalistic emphases (Benson 2013; Curran et al. 2009). It also supports a large body of comparative research that finds continuities in the French media despite technological change, and in contrast to the United States (Albert 2004; Benson 2013; Benson and Hallin 2007).

The Danish case presents a number of discrepancies. While print findings largely accord with Hypothesis 3, online data reveal no consistent patterns in support of either homogeneity or differentiation. Genres are more concentrated and exhibit less deviation between outlets online than in print; online authorship is less concentrated than in print and includes more deviation between outlets; topics are less concentrated online but deviation between outlets is smaller. The absence of any clear direction may stem from tensions in the democratic corporatist model, which straddles the greater state intervention typical of France and the high levels of commercialism more typical of the United States (Allern and Blach-Ørsten 2011). Further research is needed to investigate the specific factors shaping Danish external pluralism, especially online.

This study's findings have implications for assessing the relationship between national media systems and democracy. The debate about homogeneity and differentiation is in important ways about whether online news environments have tendencies to enhance or reduce the media options available to citizens. Political economic analyses have long warned of the dangers of monopolistic media markets for news diversity (Baker 2007); the findings here confirm these warnings—the U.S. sample is the least diverse in print—even while showing that Internet technologies may help restructure

markets, at least at the national level, and offer much-needed competition. In this regard, our findings provide room for optimism about the capacity of competitive markets to foster a certain degree of form and content pluralism. It must be acknowledged, however, that differentiation in dimensions like authorship points to not only an increased online use of non-journalistic voices (and thus an expansion of the public sphere) but also an increased reliance on wire service copy (potentially standardizing and narrowing public discourse); similarly, online increases in topical diversity are often linked to a decline in international and governmental coverage.

Non-commercial constitutive political choices (Benson 2013; Starr 2004) also remain important in shaping the amount of differentiation in media systems, as the French case illustrates. No single factor, to be sure, single-handedly makes news more or less homogeneous or differentiated. For this very reason, to ensure a broad array of voices, topics, and forms of expression in the public sphere, competitive commercial markets may need to be coupled with government policies explicitly designed to promote forms of speech undersupplied by markets (Baker 2007).

Future research could expand on the analysis offered here in several ways. We hope that additional research can draw on this 2008 baseline data to better understand how homogeneity and differentiation change over time. Inclusion of additional legacy news outlets as well as online pure players could help tease out the degree to which homogeneity and differentiation exist across a broader range of news outlets; while our focus has been on national newspapers, local and regional media markets should also be examined (see, for example, Esser and Umbricht 2013). Finally, research should be expanded to include other countries, both within Hallin and Mancini's three models and beyond them.

While scholars have convincingly demonstrated online increases in homogeneity at the level of specific news articles (Boczkowski 2010; Redden and Witschge 2010), we show that many general aspects of news content and form may in fact be more differentiated across outlets online. Other research suggests substantially greater partisan or ideological differentiation across outlets online than in print (Baum and Groelling 2008). Still other research suggests that online news may include a wider range of sources (Humprecht and Büchel 2013). Capturing the specificity of each of these dimensions of homogeneity and differentiation and integrating them into a more comprehensive explanatory framework remains a key task for scholars of both online news and comparative media systems.

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Notes

1. For the United States, we selected the *Los Angeles Times* (as did Humprecht and Büchel 2013) and the *Washington Post* over the higher circulation *Wall Street Journal* and *USA Today* because the *Times* and the *Post* both maintain a more general interest profile (unlike the *Journal*, which caters to business audiences) and retain a higher level of journalistic prestige than *USA Today* (as measured by Pulitzer Prizes, of which the *Washington Post* had 47, the *Los Angeles Times* 41, and *USA Today* none).
2. The Hirschman–Herfindahl Index (HHI) can also be used to measure the "internal" pluralism of each media outlet (see Benson 2013; Entman 2006).
3. Because not all categories equal 100, percentages were recalculated to equal 100. For example, U.S. genre elements total 79.4 percent, and the remaining elements are article bylines, advertisements, and so on, and are not related to hypotheses and therefore removed for the analysis. These recalculations are done for HHI and DI scores for both genre and topic.
4. Detailed coding of all page one/home page news elements for three newspapers each in three countries necessitated a relatively small sample of days. Van der Wurff and Lauf's (2005) study, which coded at a similar level of detail, only encompassed a single day.
5. Of course, New York is also a center for arts and entertainment, which helps explain why the *New York Times*' online level for this topic was only slightly behind that of the *Los Angeles Times* (in print, it is actually slightly ahead of the *Los Angeles Times*). We did not code separately for types of culture, but if we had, the *New York Times* would probably have led the other two newspapers in its emphasis on "high" culture.

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Book Review

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Deepa Kumar
Islamophobia and the Politics of Empire: Empire at Home and Abroad. Haymarket Books, 2010. 20pp. ISBN: 978160846211 7.

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A great deal of attention paid to the subject of Islamophobia in the last two decades or so. The end of the Cold War created a considerable focus on the Muslim world and its responses to the global hegemonic forces of neoliberalism, corporatism, and globalization. Some of these resistance modes of being have centered on issues of violence and conflict, which have largely resulted from dispossession and acute disenfranchisement. At the global level, the Muslim world has been characterized and projected to the popular consciousness by highlighting "alien values", the "problems of multiculturalism", the apparent "threats of immigration", and "issues of security". This has been acutely felt within Western Europe, particularly after the bombings in places such as the Netherlands, Spain, and England during the mid-2000s. In the 1990s, as the events of the Bosnian conflict elevated the awareness of Muslims within Europe, the term Islamophobia became popular parlance within aspects of the academic community, the policy world, and among civil society actors. Islamophobia has remained a hotly contested subject ever since then.

With the events of 9/11 more than a decade ago, Islamophobia has become a specific concern in the United States, and perhaps more acutely than ever. In documenting this important phenomenon, the academic community in the United States has begun to appreciate its significance and to that end generate critical scholarship to raise awareness, bringing much needed light to this important but much misunderstood topic. The book by Deepa Kumar is a welcome primer in this field. Written in a punchy prose that is both direct and clear, the issue of Islamophobia is purposively and accurately delineated in this decidedly beneficial introductory text. The volume aims to explain the situation of Islamophobia in the United States by undertaking a complete overview of the origination of the concept in its wider Western European historical setting, and then going on to explain how it arrived and become what it is in the United States today. Each of the ten chapters are lucidly laid out, and the analysis commences at the very start in relation to the study of how Islam and Muslims have been perceived in Europe throughout the ages and how that perception has carried across the Atlantic Ocean. The chapters go on to analyze how specific forms of anti-Muslim racism and discrimination against Muslims now characterize the Islamophobic experience in the United States.

Chapter 1 offers a history of contact between Islam and Europe since the beginning, providing an overview of the nature of ethnic and cultural relations, as well as religious and political, between the two great civilizations of Islam and Christianity. In particular, how anti-Muslim sentiment was instrumentalized by the political and religious elites of Europe are explored, and how it established the foundations for what became colonialism, racism, Orientalism, and, ultimately, Islamophobia in the current period, is the focus of chapter 2. This second chapter reflects on how in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries European colonialism embarked on a process of capturing Muslim lands, determining a way in which to promote Christian and European values, all the while attempting to dismantle the Islamic world. This chapter also usefully delineates how European authority over the world was replaced by American domination after the Second World War, and how scholarship on Islam and the Muslim world maintained racialized discourses that supported the machinations of colonialism in the contemporary era. How Orientalism combined with contemporary racism and how it continues to maintain its presence in the United States is the focus of chapter 3.

The next section of the tome explores how American foreign policy effectively instrumentalized Islam as a political tool in the maintenance of authority over a wide region and over a prolonged period, and especially after the Second World War. It was a strategy utilized periodically from the center at the behest of U.S. government policy-making interests. This chapter specifically focuses on the Middle East and, in particular, Saudi Arabia as a case study of U.S. involvement in Muslim lands. It illustrates how the United States intially promoted Islamism as a way in which to keep certain nation-states in check, only maintaining positive relations with those who would promote U.S. interests in the region; however, after 9/11, these very same Islamists became specific enemies of the United States. In chapters 5 and 6, the focus turns to the concept of political Islam itself, where it is argued that it is a more recent phenomenon rather than one rooted in the historical origins of Islam and its contact with Europe. Twentieth-century political Islam is a function of the period in which it was formalized, and here it is the instances of U.S. foreign policy and the decline of the former Soviet empire that readies the ground open for the further development of this variant of the politicization of Islam. In moving towards the more recent periods in U.S. foreign policy history, chapter 7 explores how the mode of the "war on terror" was supplanted into the popular imagination after the events of 9/11, and its particular characteristics in the light of the post-Cold War setting in which it was formulated. Both the neoconservative and liberal camps of dominant American political thinking are aligned in their approach to the Muslim world and in the promotion of U.S. Islamophobia.

The third key segment of the book considers how Islamophobia has become institutionalized in the American domestic context. Chapter 8, in particular, explores how the U.S. system has manifestly created the conditions to legitimize Islamophobia in a whole host of criminal justice frameworks where notions of national security are placed ahead of those relating to freedoms, liberties, and securities enshrined in the U.S. Constitution. Here, American citizens of Arab or Asian descent have been especially vulnerable to the forces of the state, regulalry facing incarceration,

surveillance, and overt policing which are legitimized in the name of "homeland security." It is also an experience that has a media and political characterization, popularized among the average American citizen as justifiable practice. It is argued that the United States perpetuate this approach as a way to maintain a sense of fear among the population at large. Thereby inducing loyalty to the existing military-industrial complex and its impact on foreign policy in the Middle East and internal domestic concerns towards terrorism given the wider backdrop of the "war on terror." In this regard, "the ground Zero mosque" debacle of 2012 is discussed in detail in chapter 9. This whole event was considered a significant victory for the far right and the popular neoconservative mind-set, which had grown appreciably leading up to that period. In many ways, the agenda was entirely usurped, and the populace at large was unable to discern the details, fueled by the misinformation readily propounded in the media. Political point scoring came from various aspects of the far right through influential networks on the Internet as well as in mainstream politics and media outlets. Chapter 10 suggests that these right-wing Islamophones are not merely fringe members of society or disconnected campaigners of anti-Muslim sentiment. Rather, they exist at a far more organized level that is often unacknowledged. In the Academy, these Islamophobes have a certain impact which places liberal and freethinking scholars at jeopardy, as well creating the context for unnecessary scrutiny and observation of minority or Muslim-background scholars who would provide incisive critiques. In conclusion, Kumar argues that Islamophobia is not at all about religion. Indeed, it is about politics, and therefore the solution to Islamophobia is to be found at the political level. The author postulates the view that localized action groups that have resisted racism and discrimiation in the past provide useful learning curves for those working to fight Islamophobia today. Localized bottom-up activity can create the momentum to suitably contest the workings of Islamophobia, which is held as a form of neo-imperialism.

American domination of the world rests on notions of perpetuating the need to promote forms of liberty, democracy, and freedom, but it does so based on terms set by its imperialist dogma. These machinations not only have a global impact but also local reach, such that in domestic American society Islamophobia has become an everyday phenomenon. A particular strength of this book is that it generates an analysis of a global challenge and how it is constructed by the very same powers that wish to seek to alleviate it as the cause célèbre of the neoconservative and right-wing liberal sections of dominant American political thinking. In that respect, this project usefully captures left-leaning arguments that situate Islamophobia as part of a global phenomenon of Empire, and how the U.S. Empire continues to maintain its position in spite of all the competing economic challenges from the eastern parts of the world. The end of the Cold War led many neoconservatives to argue that no longer will there be a "red menace" globally and locally. Communism was deemed as the most evil of national political projects and that it had to be fully resisted at all costs, and that, principally, the United States would be the vanguard against it. When the Berlin wall fell in 1989 and the Soviet empire collapsed two years later, the same Cold War machine-brain rationale helped to construct U.S. foreign policy that maintained itself in the light of

the construction of a new enemy, an enemy that was once a supporter, and an enemy that was once created at the behest of what is now its adversary .

The great Ibn Khaldun considered the rise and fall of civilizations over seven hundred years ago. He outlined a theory which suggested that ultimately all civilizations collapse on the foundations upon which they were built. They lack the ability to maintain the interests of the people at large because they promote the interests of the few at the expense of the many. These empires break from within and from without, while competing empires find ways in which to demonstrate their authority and exhibit their strength . Throughout the twentieth century, the United States, lagging behind Europe until the end of the Second World War, rose to become one of two global superpowers. It has maintained a global position of authority unknown in history. With the fall of the soviet Empire, the machinery of war and the desire to maintain domestic growth and economic profit championed the global worldview that neoliberalism was the only system that functioned effectively. It is this economic and cultural imperialism that has now led to the rise of Islamophobia in the United States as a tool of Empire, not only to maintain its position in the wider world as one of global policeman and the purveyor of all things moral and right, but to ensure that the populace at home remain loyal to this national and international political project, largely through fear, but also through misinformation and insouciance disseminated by the restricted worldviews of elite media and political actors.

This book is a refreshing contribution to a rapidly evolving field of sociological and political science inquiry. It is written with a smooth and efficient writing style that engages the reader effortlessly and sympathetically, laying out the details of the arguments in clear and precise terms. Not only is the author adding to existing knowledge in meaningful ways, Kumar is also guiding the reader on a path of discovery that establishes the foundation of understanding stage by stage. The subject matter may suggest a target audience within the United States; however, the book is of considerable interest to scholars of Islamophobia the world over. In particular, what it does is to highlight and emphasize the importance of understanding the political context in appreciating the nature, the impact, and the effect of Islamophobia upon societies. Where there is growing anti-Muslim sentiment throughout the world the ingredients that create these outcomes are similar. Conspicuously, this is found not only in Western Europe but also in wider Europe, including Russia. It is also found in the Middle East, including Turkey. For some it is regarded as a shining light in the appreciation of the balancing of democracy, Islam, and capitalism in Muslim majority societies; however, Islamophobia exists inside Turkey as much as the wider world looks at Turkey through Islamophobic eyes. As a result of the events of the Arab spring, while the Western media fears and ultimately repels notions of an Islamic awakening, inside these very same Arab countries, there are liberal and conservative pro-Western allegiances that circulate the view that Islam is a problem. Across various realms of Southeast Asia, Muslim minorities are presented as “terrorists”, and various states express “the need to fight terrorism” as a national policy. In all of these instances, Islamophobia emerges as a political tool at the hands of existing elites who vie for authority in a world where neoliberalism is the dominant national and international agenda. In this respect the

Marxian political economic analysis at the heart of Kumar's excellent treatise on Islamophobia in the United States has wide application and merit.

The book opens up a whole host of opportunities for scholars to engage in further research in appreciating the nuances of Islamophobia in the United States. The material is accessible, fluid, articulate, and wholly evocative in an area of thinking that is highly charged and deeply polarized. The United States is in the midst of a profound phase of Islamophobia that will have lingering impacts for the foreseeable future. Activists, antiracist political actors, civil society organizations, historians, political scientists, sociologists, and media studies scholars will find this volume worthwhile. While there is much in Kumar's admirable tome that will appeal to many working in this area, the study is also of considerable interest to the lay reader who is able to acquire a wide-ranging appreciation that starts at the very beginning and focuses on the very specific. This book is likely to remain of significant importance over the years to come.