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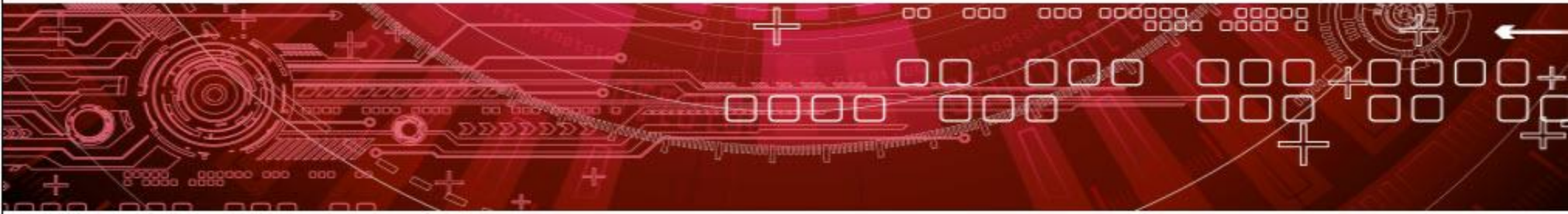

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Imitation in the Quest to Survive: Lessons from News Media on the Early Web

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This article examines the patterns of hyperlinking among key online newspapers from 1996 to 2000 and provides critical insight into the processes by which media companies adapt to new technology. Theories of organizational imprinting and imitation in the media industry are used to frame the rise of online news in an effort to describe processes of growth and to track the interactions among legacy newspapers during a formational period in the development of online news. Patterns of digital connectivity reveal the evolution of an increasingly close-knit online news community and the trajectory of leadership positions in the online environment. The analysis reveals various approaches that leading organizations used as they adapted to online technology, providing guidance for organizations moving forward.

Keywords: news, organizations, new media, Internet, network analysis

The newspaper industry is an archetype of the struggle to adapt to new technology, as newspapers have faced serious challenges in transforming to digital production (Boczkowski, 2004). Although the World Wide Web was invented in 1990, the revolution in mass communication did not commence until 1994, when a beta version of Netscape enabled graphic Web browsing. In turn, this article focuses on 1996 to 2000 as a critical period of adaptation for newspapers on the Web. In examining this process of adaptation, scholars have studied the degree of interactivity afforded by online newspapers (Massey & Levy, 1999), the growth of online news business models (Thompson & Wassmuth, 2001), and the efficiency of online channels for communicating news in a timely manner (Li, 2006). Studies also looked at the evolution of content on the Web, including an examination of the rapid growth of online news content (Greer & Mensing, 2004) and a subsequent analysis of the changes in technology and services offered by those newspapers (Greer & Mensing, 2006).

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In contrast, this work explores theoretical foundations of adaptation to change to explain how online newspapers adapt to new technologies. We draw on *imprinting*, a construct borrowed from organizational science, to explain the decisions newspapers made as they moved online. To evaluate the early dynamics of growth on the Web, we examine patterns of hyperlinking among the websites of legacy newspapers in the 1990s. Legacy newspapers, especially those on the early Web, are important because of their central role in the industry. The core question we address is how legacy newspapers developed a digital presence through the use of hyperlinks as structural tools for establishing and maintaining positions in the online ecosystem. Moreover, through the frame of imprinting, we address how online newspapers learned from one another during this formative period, as evidenced by imitation of structural patterns of organizations founded during a common time period.

The following sections interweave history of the Web with the rise of online news and the decline of legacy newspapers. Echoing other histories of the Web (e.g., Ankerson, 2012), we use an analysis of archived Internet data to capture the transition of legacy newspapers to the Web. The analysis provides a macro-level perspective of industry-wide change using historical data sources to contextualize the process. We conclude by discussing lessons that can be applied to future generations of technology innovations.

The Newspaper Industry and the Emergence of the Web

The U.S. newspaper industry thrived for more than a century as a stable population of organizations and encountered several technological disruptions, including changes in paper manufacturing that slashed printing costs and increased production (Lee, 1937) and the advent of the Linotype, which changed printing standards (Schwarzlose, 1987). Technological changes chipped away at the solid foundation of the newspaper industry, but newspaper circulation grew through the early 1990s. Revenue and circulation began to slip in the mid-1990s and dropped dramatically in the 2000s.

Technological changes, however, were not the sole factor influencing transformation in the news industry at this time (Deuze, 2007). Market conditions were accompanied by other social forces that influenced newspapers' online development. Boczkowski (2004), for example, highlights the variations in organizational structure and practices as an important factor in newsroom adoption of technology. Gilbert (2005) adds that the threat of competition among these organizations influenced technological investment processes, highlighting the importance of social forces in examining the process of technological adoption.

In the move to adapt, newspaper content was made available through bulletin-board systems and online service providers such as Prodigy and America Online as early as 1992. By 1994, approximately 60 U.S. newspapers offered content via an Internet access point; however, fewer than 10 were accessible on the Web (Li, 2006). The Raleigh *News & Observer* launched a Web page in September 1994, followed by the *San Francisco Examiner/Chronicle* in November, and the *San Jose Mercury News* in December. *The New York Times* launched its Web edition in early 1996 (Gunter, 2003).

According to Li (2006), 1995 and 1996 marked a turning point for online newspapers. Prior to this point, the goal of many newspapers was simply to claim that they had a presence online. Beginning in

1996, newspapers began to experiment with the development of unique content and the use of the Web for distributing timely information. In 1996, about 15% of newspapers had some form of online presence—amounting to approximately 250 online newspapers. As of 1997, half of U.S. newspapers (approximately 745 news outlets) had websites, and by 1998, there were 1,749 online newspapers in the U.S. (Editor & Publisher Directories, 2006). By 2000, online news was developing as an integral factor in the business model of newspaper companies.

The Role of the Hyperlink

The hyperlink is a basic unit of communication on the Web (Halavais, 2008) and an element that has an important impact on digital journalism. It has existed since the Web was first established and was part of the Hypertext Markup Language (HTML) specifications for the first Web pages (Berners-Lee, 1999). Hyperlinks helped to create the basic structure of a website, guiding users between Web pages and across domains. Most early online newspapers contained lists of article headlines hyperlinked to Web pages containing full articles (Scott, 2005). From the start, hyperlinks were an integral part of the Web's structure, central to information flow across Web pages. The degree of hyperlinking used to guide readers, and to point to other content sources, proved to be a critical factor in driving the growth of newspapers (Weber, 2012). The use of hyperlinks by U.S. online newspapers increased considerably between 1997 and 2001 (Tremayne, 2004). Patterns of hyperlink use over time provide insight into the means by which newspapers integrated new Web technology into their workflows. The degree of hyperlink use also provides insights into the structure of and interactions within the online newspaper community.

In a review of extant hyperlink scholarship, De Maeyer (2012) argues that existing research aligns with one of two axes of thought: The first axis frames hyperlinks as an indicator of social phenomena, whereas the second axis frames hyperlinks as an indicator of structural patterns. These two related bodies of research demonstrate that hyperlinks are both social and structural. As a social phenomenon, hyperlinks serve as a means for exchanging resources and information (Gonzales-Bailon, 2009), expressing individual interests and preferences (Etling, Kelly, Faris, & Palfrey, 2009), and conveying political conversation (Adamic & Adar, 2001). In the context of journalism, hyperlinks are indicators of gatekeeping (Dimitrova, Connolly-Ahern, Williams, Kaid, & Reid, 2003) and credibility (Tremayne, 2005). C. W. Anderson (2013) argued that hyperlinks are a critical source for understanding change in journalism, as the changing nature of their use is indicative of broader systemic changes in the newspaper industry.

From a structural perspective, hyperlinks serve as proxies for endorsements (Kleinberg, 1999) and alliances (Park, Kim, & Barnett, 2004), and they can be signals of shared characteristics or markers of reputation (Ognyanova & Monge, 2013). Hyperlinks provide key infrastructure for the navigational process by which users move through a website and experience its content (Brügger, 2009). At a global level, scholars have found that broad hyperlinking patterns reveal common structures across topical domains, such as the existence of highly interconnected clusters of Web pages that provide cores for communities of Web pages (Barabasi, 2002). Hyperlinks also provide a means for mapping the global distribution of information (Tremayne, 2004).

Shumate and Lipp (2008) argue that a better understanding of structural patterns over time is critical to understanding the foundational building blocks of organizational action. In the context of this article specifically, De Maeyer and Le Cam (2015) argue for a deeper examination of journalism's hyperlinking history as a key to interpreting the present role of hyperlinks in the news industry and to understanding ongoing change processes. In turn, this article focuses primarily on the structure of hyperlinking activity during early periods of newspaper Web use, as opposed to examining the context and content surrounding given hyperlinks. Nevertheless, because hyperlinks guide consumers from the content of one Web page to that of another, or from one location on a Web page to another, these structural patterns are broadly indicative of the structure of the content itself.

Hyperlinking Patterns of Online Newspapers

In response to the need for continued research examining the structural role of hyperlinks in the development of news media, this work explores patterns of imitation and imprinting through the structural relationships represented by hyperlinks. Hyperlinks proved central to the development of online newspapers but created a challenge for news producers as hyperlinks allowed for free-flowing access to information. In contrast with editorial policies, much of the early history of the Web was marked by democratic collaboration, such as the sharing of information and knowledge among website developers. In the early days of online news, the use of hyperlinking to drive traffic to other sources was viewed as anathema (Boczkowski, 2004). Editors saw hyperlinking as a problem because it encouraged the reader to leave the newspaper's own page.

The hyperlinking patterns of a website are often directly indicative of the type of information provider (Weber & Monge, 2011). As De Maeyer and Holton (2016) found, hyperlinks between news websites have stronger connections than those in other contexts, as journalists place greater significance on the transmission of information between sources. Early patterns of hyperlinking on the Web represent a significant experiment with new technology by an industry that was traditionally reluctant to adapt to new technological regimes (Coddington, 2014). Furthermore, early decisions regarding online presence can have an impact on the growth trajectory of a website (Weber, 2012). The relationship of websites, as demonstrated by the hyperlink structure of their connections, similarly impacted the evolution and success of online newspapers over time. Thus, the structure of relationships between newspapers on the early Web is interrogated as follows:

RQ1: What is the pattern of hyperlink connections between online newspapers in the early years of their emergence on the Web?

Imprinting and Structural Imitation

The early structure of online newspapers was largely dependent on the role of Web technology as perceived by innovators in the 1990s. The organizational theory of imprinting provides a basis for exploring early perceptions of the Web and for understanding the impact of those perceptions on the growth of online news. Imprinting posits that during critical founding and transition periods, organizations are particularly susceptible to external stimuli, such as the influence of other organizations (Marquis &

Tilcsik, 2013). Imprinting is the degree to which a new organization, or an organization undergoing transformation, reflects the economic, political, and social conditions during its founding or transition period (Johnson, 2007). Imprinting provides an explanation for the high degree of similarity among organizations in an industry: Organizations develop similar characteristics in response to the shared pressures and demands to which they are subjected. The imprinting framework is applied in a wide variety of fields (for a review, see Marquis & Tilcsik, 2013) and is well suited for the study of adaptation under new conditions.

Imprinting as a Process

In recent years, research on imprinting and imitation during the foundational periods of organizations focused on the process by which imprinting is realized (Baron, Burton, & Hannan, 1996; Johnson, 2007). Johnson suggests this process can be broken into its component elements, focusing first on the process of founding and the way in which "available elements" are incorporated into new structures, and second, on understanding how these elements are then reproduced over time. Work in this area has demonstrated that the environmental conditions during founding have a strong impact on the trajectory of an organization and its ability to remain competitive (Shinkle & Kriauciunas, 2012).

Imprinting and Imitation in Journalism

Within journalism, imprinting may be linked to a trend toward imitation in both form and content (Boczkowski, 2010). Davis and Greve (1997) note that imitating is a key practice during periods of change and has been well established as a process for organizational learning (Huber, 1991). Indeed, the act of imitation has been viewed in several studies as part of the early process of imprinting (Boeker, 1987; Kim, Yang, & Hwang, 2002; Kogut, 1993).

Within the context of journalism, the advent of the Web, uncertainty in the media industry, and the accelerated news cycle made the practice of reproducing existing materials increasingly central (Boczkowski, 2009). Patterns of imitation were also evident in a study of online news production in Korea, which found that the 13 most popular online newspapers delivered similar headlines (Lim, 2012). Even design similarities are not "random happenstance," but emerge from a variety of forces in a dynamic environment (Cooke, 2005). This echoes prior work on intermedia agenda setting showing that newspapers would look to industry leaders and would often duplicate what was being covered on competitors' news digests (Boyle, 2001; Meraz, 2011).

Although the analysis of imitation in news typically examines content, this article focuses on similar tendencies in the hyperlinking patterns of online newspapers as another indicator of imitation. This echoes De Maeyer's (2012) view that hyperlinks are both social and structural in nature and loosely draws on imprinting literature that focuses on how founding conditions lead to similarities in structural patterns (Marquis, 2003; Milanov & Fernhaber, 2009). Imitation in the use of structural hyperlinking patterns may thus be an indicator of a broader process of imprinting resulting from the environmental conditions at founding and from interactions with a larger cohort of organizations.

Organizations, such as traditional newspapers, entering into a new space tend to engage in a process of organizational bricolage. Through bricolage, organizations borrow ideas and practices from competitors and adapt based on previously successful strategies (Perkmann & Spicer, 2014). This is akin to the manner in which newspapers experimented with new forms of online publishing. The more organizations rely on a common set of resources, the more likely those organizations are to adopt similar practices (Chen & O'Mahony, 2009). Resources, in this context, include knowledge of a new technology, human capital, and technological standards. The broad focus on hyperlinking patterns thus looks at the development of common practices and access to common resources.

Reproducing and repurposing news stories are understood practices, but less is known about the similarities in structural features among online newspapers. Similarities in structural features are likely to be reflected by the degree to which Web adaptation strategies of legacy newspapers mirror each other in terms of hyperlinking. As discussed, imprinting is prominent in periods of uncertainty and leads to similarities across organizations. In this case, the focus is on similarities in hyperlinking behavior, as follows:

RQ2: Do online newspapers share similar hyperlinking patterns in the early years of the Web?

Method

We use hyperlink analysis to examine the structure of relationships among newspapers. Hyperlink analysis has been established as a key approach to studying the growth of websites (Park & Thelwall, 2003) and is a critical tool for understanding news and information flows (Weber & Monge, 2011; Weber & Nguyen, 2015). Social network analysis is used as a methodological approach to examine the structure of the newspaper industry on the Web.

Data

This article leverages data from the Internet Archive (https://archive.org), a nonprofit organization that aims to archive and preserve the Web. We used data from the Internet Archive's 20th Century collection, which is the largest archive of Web pages from 1996 to 2000. No coherent archive of Web pages prior to 1996 is available. To facilitate analysis, archived data were extracted in the Web Archive Transformation (WAT) metadata format. WAT is a metadata specification that captures key fields from raw Web pages and allows for faster analysis and data extraction. Key fields include inbound hyperlinks, outbound hyperlinks, file size, keywords, descriptive text, and content type (HTML, images, video, etc.). The compressed records for the 20th Century collection are 7.2 TB. Data were sorted and extracted into tabular format using a customized data extraction tool and a high-performance computing cluster (Weber & Nguyen, 2015). Data and source code used in this study are available online.[1] Each record contains the originating Web page (source), the linked-to page (destination), the date of the record, the number of hyperlinks between the two pages on that date, and any associated descriptive text.

[1] Data and source code used in this study are available at https://github.com/mwe400/IJOCNewsOnEarlyWeb

Data Selection

This research focused on mainstream news sites that existed during the early period of the Web. Mainstream news websites—mainly a few key competitors— produced the majority of news content during this period (Weber & Monge, 2011). Our analysis was restricted to the online behavior of the top 25 newspapers in terms of print circulation in each year from 1996 through 2000. Annual circulation data were collected from the Alliance for Audited Media. Table 1 shows the cumulative list of the 28 newspapers occupying positions in the top 25 at any time during that time period. Print circulation was used as opposed to online circulation for two primary reasons: First, print circulation is a key indicator of revenue during this period, and second, online measures of audience were limited during the early development of the Web. Online start date was estimated through a triangulation of sources, including first recorded date in the Internet Archive. The structural relationships of the focal online newspapers were extracted from a data set of more than 1.2 billion Web pages, which is a repository covering a much larger data set of newspaper content. The data were reduced to a smaller scale to represent key relationships between major actors.

Hyperlink Data

The extracted data included all hyperlinks to and from the domains of the 28 legacy newspapers studied (N = 3,524,364 records). The key properties of each hyperlink were its source, destination, weight, and timestamp. The source and destination were specific domains (e.g., "nyt.com," "yahoo.com"). The weight was the total number of hyperlinks from any page in the source domain to any page in the destination domain.

Because of the frequency of Web crawls used to archive the data, a yearly time frame was used for analysis. Summary data of the crawling activity is presented in Table 2. As the table shows, there was a significant variance in the amount of crawling activity. *The Atlanta Journal-Constitution* was crawled once in 1996, whereas *The New York Times* was crawled 257 days in 2000. Website domains were crawled an average of four days in 1996, and an average of 174 days in 2000. The low frequency of crawling activity in 1996 is due to the nascent nature of the Web at that time; the crawling activity is far more significant by 2000. Our focus on crawling activity across a given year helps to account for variance within the year, and by averaging the data, we are able to overcome the impact of differences in crawl frequencies.

Table 1. Summary Statistics for Focal Newspapers.

Newspaper	Founding	Online Founding	Avg. Circulation	Avg. of Outlinks	Avg. of Webites Outlinked	Avg. of Inlinks	Avg. of Webites Inlinked
The Atlanta Journal-Constitution	2001[a]	1998	341,481	30	18	1,666	1,253
The Arizona Republic	1890	1995	455,457	785	527	3,810	2,439
The Boston Globe	1872	1998[b]	471,279	11	2	153	124
Chicago Sun Times	1948	1997	488,171	471	299	8,405	5,323
Chicago Tribune	1847	1998	655,843	800	400	3,882	2,556
The Dallas Morning News	1885	1996	509,008	156	63	4,413	2,922
The Denver Post	1892	1996	365,295	1,096	877	4,322	2,814
Detroit Free Press	1831	1996	369,346	352	196	6,063	4,210
Houston Chronicle	1901	1996	548,767	1,560	1,228	8,468	5,331
Los Angeles Times	1881	1996	1,088,989	1,454	836	18,546	12,188
Miami Herald	1903	1998	353,274	29	17	598	426
Minneapolis Star Tribune	1867	1996	371,010	597	352	5,635	3,724
New York Daily News	1919	1996	730,627	144	16	1,820	1,156
New York Post	1801	1998	432,214	525	29	1,816	999
Newsday	1940	1996	568,881	794	596	6,079	3,366
The New York Times	1851	1996	1,294,596	194	120	40,055	25,009
The Orange County Register	1905	1999	362,350	700	607	2,375	1,600
The Oregonian	1850	1997	351,577	989	679	2,891	1,695

The Philadelphia Inquirer	1829	1999	418,064	224	124	477	335
The Plain Dealer	1842	1996	392,107	265	114	2,338	1,464
Rocky Mountain News	1859	1998	402,767	48	28	702	248
The San Diego Union Tribune	1868	2002	376,341	—	—	—	—
San Francisco Chronicle	1865	1996	467,597	1,075	721	21,206	11,523
The Star Ledger	1832	1996	405,130	475	218	10,317	6,323
Tampa Bay Times	1884	1998	358,014	116	70	185	63
USA Today	1982	n/a	1,693,185	3,226	1,737	61,584	33,109
The Wall Street Journal	1889	1996	1,809,191	667	507	16,519	12,424
The Washington Post	1877	n/a	807,586	4,502	2,544	31,862	19,529

[a] *The Atlanta Journal* and *The Atlanta Constitution* formally merged into one daily newspaper, *The Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, in November 2001. The two newspapers had shared a newsroom since 1982. The merger date is given here as the founding, although the two newspapers ran a joint website as of 1998. *The Atlanta Constitution* was founded in 1868, and *The Atlanta Journal* was founded in 1883.

[b] December 12, 1998.

Table 2. Crawling Activity Summary.

	Days Crawled				
Newspaper	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000
The Atlanta Journal-Constitution	2	1	—	2	13
The Arizona Republic	3	14	10	107	219
The Boston Globe	—	—	1	6	10
Chicago Sun Times	—	5	1	63	132
Chicago Tribune	—	—	—	113	210
The Dallas Morning News	—	4	10	108	215
The Denver Post	—	1	7	78	184
Detroit Free Press	1	3	2	99	197
Houston Chronicle	1	3	20	137	236
Los Angeles Times	5	10	—	127	252
Miami Herald	—	—	—	7	15
Minneapolis Star Tribune	1	10	14	106	219
New York Daily News	—	—	3	11	62
New York Post	—	—	1	78	249
Newsday	1	6	10	96	200
The New York Times	4	5	10	82	216
The Orange County Register	—	—	—	87	178
The Oregonian	—	1	15	139	254
The Philadelphia Inquirer	—	—	—	36	181
The Plain Dealer	1	14	20	106	241
Rocky Mountain News	—	—	5	22	19
The San Diego Union Tribune	1	6	28	72	157
San Francisco Chronicle	4	3	6	140	229
The Star Ledger	1	37	34	145	257
Tampa Bay Times	—	—	1	21	50
USA Today	13	19	20	138	230
The Wall Street Journal	8	26	25	112	226
The Washington Post	10	36	20	62	206

When a hyperlink between two domains was recorded more than once during a given year (62% of all cases), those hyperlinks were combined and their weight was averaged. The average was used as opposed to a sum to capture the relative strength of the relationship during the time period, as some domains were crawled and recorded more often than others. The five-year data set (n = 869,128 records) contained 211,741 unique domains, including the focal newspaper websites along with every site that had hyperlinks from or to them. Table 3 provides descriptive statistics for the hyperlinks among the focal websites.

Table 3. Hyperlink Descriptives for the 28 Newspapers Included in the Analysis, 1999–2000.

	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000
Total number of unique hyperlinks	22,141	107,116	157,168	227,960	354,743
Total number of unique websites	12,623	45,867	68,155	95,221	142,750
Unique hyperlinks to newspaper domains	14,112	94,427	152,089	217,093	330,881
Unique hyperlinks from newspaper domains	8,071	12,757	5,133	10,990	24,053
Unique hyperlinks among newspaper domains	42	68	54	123	191
Unique hyperlinks among newspaper domains (w > 1)	18	49	35	76	98
Unique websites linking to newspaper domains	6,730	39,117	65,081	89,295	129,601
Unique websites linked from newspaper domains	6,605	9,536	4,492	8,916	18,864

Analysis

Analyses were conducted using the R platform for statistical computing (R Core Team, 2015; RStudio, 2015). To address the first research question on emerging hyperlink patterns among newspapers, we extracted the annual networks of hyperlinks across news sites. To reduce potential noise in the data, we dropped ties with an average weight of one (a single hyperlink between any pages in the domains recorded in the respective year). We computed a range of network characteristics for that graph for each time point including density, reciprocity, transitivity, and in-degree and out-degree centralization.

Density refers to the number of ties that exist as a ratio of the total potential number of ties. *Reciprocity* is a tendency toward a back-and-forth exchange, or symmetric social interaction. Reciprocity is measured as the proportion of hyperlinks from Site A to Site B where the reverse hyperlink from B to A is also present. *Transitivity*, or clustering, is based on the propensity to close triangles and is linked to the emergence of closely knit social groups. Transitivity is computed as the proportion of cases where existing hyperlinks from A to B and A to C are also accompanied by a hyperlink from B to C. Finally, *centralization* measures the extent to which certain key sites in the hyperlink network tend to have a disproportionately large number of incoming hyperlinks (in-degree centralization) or outgoing hyperlinks (out-degree centralization). High in-degree centralization signals the emergence of dominant actors that accumulate influence and have more connections compared with the rest of the network (Wasserman & Faust, 1994).

To evaluate the observed levels of reciprocity, transitivity, and centralization, we conducted conditional uniform graph (CUG) tests with 1,000 replications each, conditioning on network size and density (B. S. Anderson, Butts, & Carey, 1999). In those tests, networks are drawn randomly from a uniform distribution of graphs with the same number of nodes and edges as the observed data. The characteristics of the generated graphs are compared with those of the empirical network. This allows researchers to assign more meaningful interpretations to features of the observed data. For example, we might not know if a centralization score of 0.30 is low, high, or typical for a certain kind of network. A CUG test might show that out of thousands of generated graphs with the same size and density as ours, very few or none have a centralization score as high as 0.30, pointing instead to the existence of some underlying network formation mechanisms that favor centralization.

To address the second research question on similarities in linking patterns across newspapers, we examined incoming and outgoing hyperlink profiles of each news domain. For each year in the data, we identified the top 5,000 domains with the most hyperlinks from online newspapers and the top 5,000 with the most hyperlinks to online newspapers. We refer to the vector describing the number of hyperlinks each of those 5,000 sent to a news domain as that domain's *incoming hyperlink profile*. The *outgoing hyperlink profile* of an online newspaper was the vector describing the volume of its outgoing hyperlinks to each of the top 5,000 websites. We selected the top 5,000 websites in each case so that the results are less likely to be influenced by the growing total number of sites from year to year and are more likely to be determined by the specific portfolio of websites that were linked most frequently.

To examine hyperlinking similarity, we calculated the correlations between outgoing hyperlink profiles of all online newspapers in the data. To evaluate similarity, we computed the correlations between the incoming hyperlink profile vectors for each online newspaper. We further examined the average profile correlations over time. To evaluate the observed average similarity levels, we used permutation tests similar to the CUG test. We reshuffled the incoming and outgoing hyperlinks of online newspapers 1,000 times and compared the average profile similarity scores from the resulting permuted profiles to those of the observed data.

Results

The descriptive analysis of the hyperlink data provides a snapshot of the general patterns of newspaper growth on the Web. Table 4 summarizes the growth of hyperlinking for online newspapers in our sample.

Table 4. Summary of Hyperlinking Behavior by Year.

Year	Newspapers with External Links	Outgoing Hyperlinks (*n* Hyperlinks)		Incoming Hyperlinks (*n* Hyperlinks)		Outgoing Hyperlinks (*n* Websites)		Incoming Hyperlinks (*n* Websites)	
		Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
1996	14	833	1,704	1,321	2,106	475	958	614	881
1997	18	1,055	1,734	7,714	12,962	580	951	3,632	5,379
1998	23	382	631	10,150	16,711	205	354	5,633	8,474
1999	27	657	786	12,536	17,981	407	605	8,040	11,155
2000	27	1,250	1,557	17,909	22,898	859	1,081	12,255	15,571

In general, out-linking and in-linking activity grew over time, as did the number of unique websites that engaged in hyperlinking activity. This is expected given the general growth of the Web over time, and in particular during the early period of the Web. There is a notable decline in 1998. The decrease in 1998 was due, in part, to changes in Internet standards, which interfered with existing archiving protocols. The result was that the archival records for 1998 did not increase in accordance with the growth of the Web. Figure 1 provides a summary visualization of the interaction among the 28 focal websites and illustrates the increased hyperlinking activity among them over time and the increase in clustering as domains became more connected.

The hyperlink network of the focal online newspapers was sparse but grew denser over time. The network exhibited very little reciprocity in the early years of the Web. In the conditional uniform graph test, the proportion of graphs with reciprocity as high or higher than the observed data was 100% for 1996 and 1998, 15% for 1997, 83% for 1999, and 3% for 2000. These results show that it was not until 2000 that the hyperlink structure started exhibiting more reciprocity than expected from a network of that size and density.

The transitivity of the online newspaper domain network also increased over time. The zero transitivity in 1996 was due to the small number of ties in the network; this is not surprising given that hyperlinks were first used for internal structure of websites. From the 1,000 graphs with a similar density generated in our test for that year, 90% also had a transitivity of zero. From 1997 to 2000, none of the networks generated for the CUG test had transitivity as high as the observed measure. After its tentative first year on the Web, the newspaper network began exhibiting considerable triadic closure (clustering).

The network became more centralized from 1996 to 1999, both in in-degree and out-degree centralization. In 2000, the centralization scores dropped compared with 1999 but remained relatively high. None of the 1,000 graphs drawn for each year in the data from a density-conditioned uniform graph distribution had in-degree or out-degree centralization as high as that of the empirical networks. As centralization increased over time, key actors emerged within the newspaper hyperlink network. *The New York Times* and *The Washington Post* received the most incoming hyperlinks from other publications in the later years under examination. The most active website in terms of linking to other news sources was the *Detroit Free Press*.

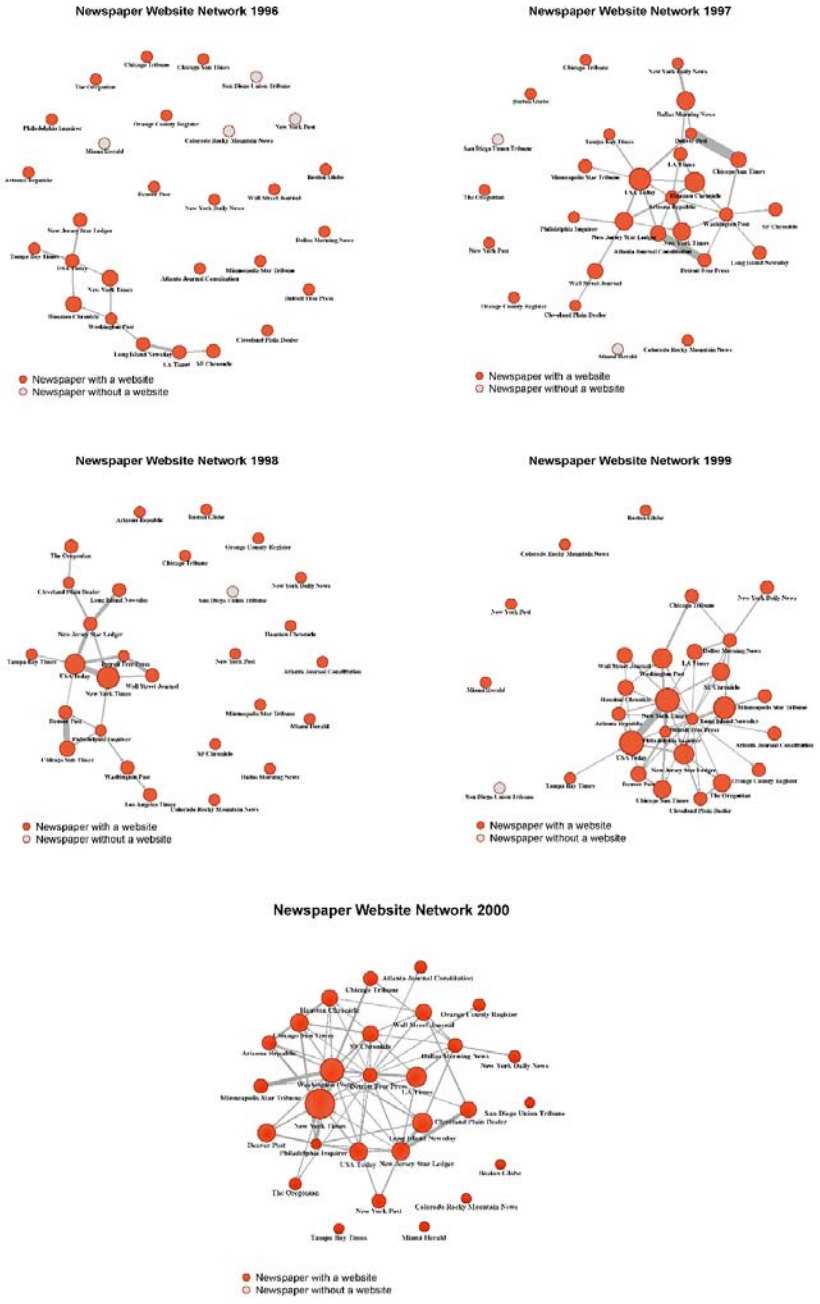

Figure 1. Hyperlink networks among news organizations (hyperlinks with weight larger than 1).

To address the second research question, we examined the similarity in the incoming and outgoing hyperlinks of the news domains with the top 5,000 most active sites in our sample each year. Our analysis focused on top-level domains; in other words, we examined inbound and outbound links from nytimes.com, as opposed to internal links within the domain. Figure 2 depicts the average outgoing hyperlink profile correlations, which ranged between 0.08 and 0.12 over the five years in the data. We also examined the similarity of the online newspapers based on the profiles of incoming hyperlinks for each online newspaper. Correlations ranged from 0.04 to 0.09, and were highest in the beginning and the end of the examined period.

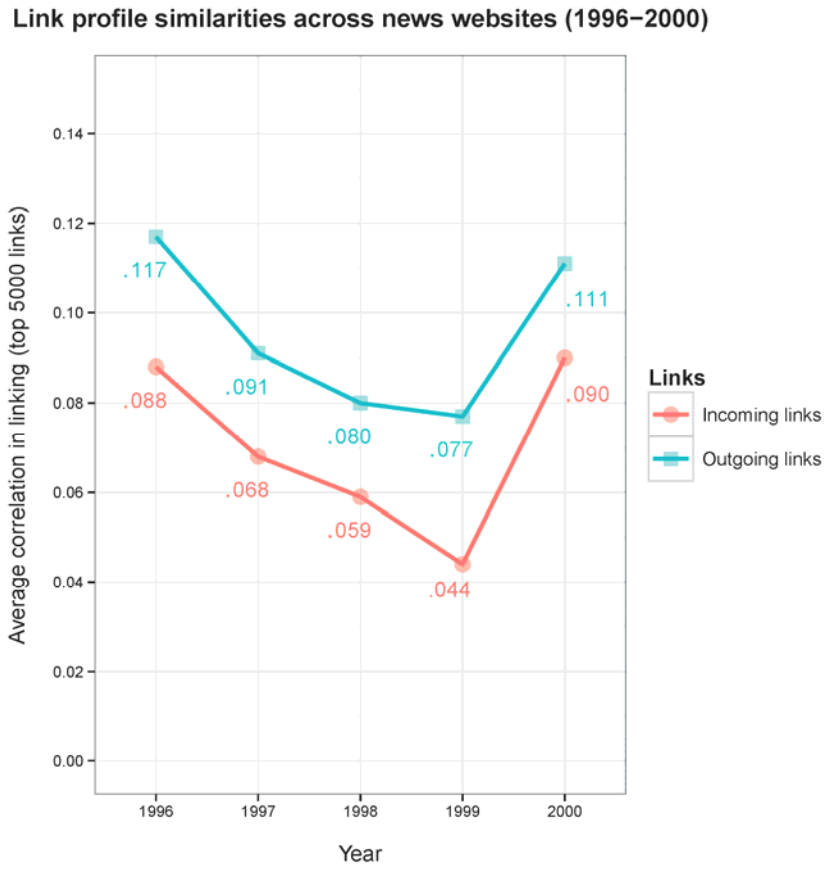

Figure 2. Average hyperlink profile similarity among news websites by year.

Because of the fairly large and diverse number of domains with hyperlinks to and from news organizations, the hyperlink profile correlations appear fairly small in size. Permutation tests show, however, that given the number of websites and the density of the ties, the observed similarities are highly significant. Reshuffling the incoming and outgoing hyperlinks of online newspapers 1,000 times for each time point, we found that in all but one case, 100% of the permutations for both incoming and outgoing hyperlinks produced average profile similarities lower than those of the observed data. The exception was outgoing hyperlinks in 1996, where 98.5% of the permutations had average correlations lower than the observed data.

Discussion

This study details patterns by which early online newspapers emerged on the Web and points to implications about imitation among newspaper companies. The general upward trend in hyperlinking patterns reflects an increasing diversity of news content, the growing traffic of users necessitating more sophisticated navigation to different sources of content, and the maturing technological competencies within the industry. Quantitatively, these findings reinforce certain expectations that have been put forth in prior scholarship. For instance, interpreted as a high-level structural indicator (Barabasi, 2002), the hyperlink patterns revealed here trace the development of an increasingly interconnected online newspaper community. As a marker of reputation, the increase in the degree of hyperlinking to specific Web domains further reveals the emergence of leaders in a new digital space. For example, as illustrated in Table 2, *USA Today* received a high degree on inbound hyperlinking activity, suggesting many other websites included links pointing to the domain of this newspaper. *USA Today* was an early adopter of hyperlinks, and recent work has shown that newspapers that adopted hyperlinking practices early on were more likely to emerge as leaders in the online news space (Weber & Monge, 2011).

Finally, from an evolutionary perspective (Shumate, 2012), structural similarities in linking provide suggestive clues about imprinting and imitation in news organizations. Here, patterns of outbound hyperlinking are most critical, as they are indicative of the actions of a specific newspaper. Inbound hyperlinking activity gives a broader context characterizing the behavior of websites within this ecosystem, but the outbound hyperlinks are most representative of the actions of stakeholders within a given newspaper.

Descriptive findings of link volume detail the overall activity within the industry during its online transition. Beginning in 1996, newspapers were shifting to digital production, but in general they were relatively inactive and, as illustrated by the low density of their hyperlinks, isolated on the Web. Over time, density of the network increased, pointing to a higher degree of exchange and interaction among websites in the news community. Reciprocity remained low, showing that hyperlinking among the websites in this analysis was generally unidirectional. Although newspapers occasionally linked to one another early on, hyperlinks between websites were seldom reciprocated. This aligns with knowledge about early uses of hyperlinking for advertising and information purposes and is consistent with the patterns discussed below, signaling the emergence of online leaders.

Hyperlinks as Indicators of Structure and Content

Another important perspective is the use of hyperlinks as status cues—an approach used early on by Google's search-result-ranking algorithm that allowed it to outperform all of its competitors. As demonstrated in Table 1, there was a wide variation in hyperlinking activity across websites. The consistently high centralization of the newspaper network suggests that even among that elite group of publications, some, such as *The New York Times* and *The Washington Post*, were particularly prominent online. Others, such as the *Detroit Free Press*, were especially likely to generate hyperlinks to other media. These differences map onto two distinct online strategies driving the structural patterns of early newspaper websites. Whereas some publications were focused on maximizing user retention by providing more content and having fewer opportunities for their readers to exit from a domain via outgoing hyperlinks, others saw themselves as hubs directing people to a variety of available information sources. This pattern of hubs and authorities was still nascent on the early Web, but recent research demonstrates its increasingly popularity over time (Weber & Monge, 2011).

For major newspapers, the use of hyperlinks steadily increased over time. This broad trend is demonstrated in Table 3, where the increase in outbound hyperlinking activity is evident. Year over year, there was a significant growth in the connections among newspaper domains as the average number of incoming and outgoing hyperlinks of each news outlet grew. Interpreting this increase in connectivity through the lens of newsroom norms and practices is consistent with prior research (Gao & Vaughn, 2006) suggesting that hyperlinking was increasingly recognized as a strategic tool. Hyperlinks provide structure to a website but also direct attention to particular content by guiding the consumer to a given Web page (Carpenter, 2010; Ketterer, 2001).

Exploring larger structural patterns enables an examination of the trajectory of online newspapers as a dynamic system of organizational actors. As legacy newspapers adapted to the Web, they began to accept and realize the importance of interconnectedness among websites. Again, this pattern of connectivity is evident in the results presented in Table 3, which illustrates the increase in activity outbound and also between newspaper domains included in this study. Connectivity helps to increase information flow, but it also serves institutional purposes (e.g., signaling affiliation or joint action). For example, newspapers under common owners formed content-sharing alliances and were likely to link to one another under such agreements. The news-site community became more closely knit over time, as evidenced by the growing transitive closure of the hyperlink network. Another relevant finding showing changing perceptions in the industry is the fact that reciprocity increased in 2000, marking a shift in the hyperlinking strategies of newspaper companies on the Web.

Hyperlinking During a Foundational Period

Hyperlinking is a key aspect of digital adaptation. The investigation of structural similarities among newspaper websites supports the notion that imprinting occurred in the industry during its early online years. In this context, imprinting is studied by examining the correspondence in hyperlinking patterns across newspapers. Following studies on entrepreneurs during early foundational periods, this takes a structural view of imprinting and emphasizes the process of structural emergence during this key

period of change (Milanov & Fernhaber, 2009). While our tests did not focus on establishing causal mechanisms, one plausible explanation for similarity in this context is the trend toward imitation across news organizations.

Previous research has demonstrated the major impact of the Web in promoting newsroom imitation and content replication (Boczkowski, 2010) and more broadly in newsrooms competing for consumer attention (McManus, 1994). There is evidence that isomorphism has become an entrenched mechanism of growth for online news worldwide (Lim, 2012). In particular, it is reasonable to expect that normative influences of the isomorphism process (Sydow, Schreyögg, & Koch, 2009) led newspaper companies to adopt similar hyperlinking strategies. Certain practices of hyperlinking were established by the leading newspapers and quickly adopted by competitors in an attempt to keep up. The similarity in these patterns is shown in the correlation results provided in the online supplemental material.[2]

Interestingly, similar patterns are at play in today's online news environment. In 2015, Facebook launched its Instant Articles feature, whereby content of partner newspapers is prominently featured on the social media company's application and loads faster than the content of competitors. The benefits of this tight coupling of content partners with Facebook have prompted an increase in partnerships with the social media company (Gaines, 2016).

The role of technology in promoting content imitation is well established (Boczkowski, 2010; Mecca & Mumford, 2014), and this study contributes to the literature by establishing the dynamic as a broader structural phenomenon that clearly influenced the development of news media on the early Web. Our analysis examined similarities in the outgoing hyperlinks generated by news websites (indicating strategic connectivity to the rest of the Web) and the incoming hyperlinks (signaling how presence was perceived by others online). More recent work has further indicated that social media technology may propagate trends of imitation by allowing competitors to more closely monitor one another's activity (Chadha & Wells, 2016).

Both earlier research focusing on content and the present study examining hyperlink structure suggest that imprinting and imitation occur during periods of disruption and as new organizational structures are emerging. Imprinting may occur at the cost of innovation and competitiveness, but it may also help an organization survive periods of disruption (Marquis & Tilcsik, 2013). Consistent with imprinting, the degree of hyperlinking similarity declined over time from 1996 to 1999, only to increase again in 2000. The decrease is partly explained by the general increase in the number of websites with hyperlinks to and from news organizations as years passed. It may also be attributable to increasing comfort with Web technology.

These findings also highlight the importance of imprinting for innovation within the newspaper industry, echoing research from entrepreneurship literature (Hsu & Lim, 2013). As legacy newspapers enter mobile and social media, they face opportunities and challenges not unlike those encountered in the initial transition to the Web. Similar to practices familiar from early online newspapers, those endeavors

[2] Online supplemental material is available at https://github.com/mwe400/IJOCNewsOnEarlyWeb

initially focused on broadcasting and popularizing journalistic content. Use is evolving beyond the simple sharing of news stories as mobile apps and social media become ubiquitous among mainstream news sources. News media outlets are once again under economic pressure to fully exploit the available new platforms and formats. Technological and market forces have led many outlets toward increased interactivity with other information sources and a more personalized and responsive approach to audiences.

Limitations

The present study has three key limitations. First, the number of longitudinal variables available for inclusion in this study was relatively limited. In general, there is a lack of complete data detailing the organizational attributes of news organizations in prior decades. For example, many of these hyperlinks could be determined by other patterns of influence such as ownership and advertising partnerships; however, a cohesive record of this type of data is scarce.

Second, the use of archival Internet data is a limitation. Archivists have documented numerous challenges with archiving digital content. For instance, an ongoing Library of Congress initiative to capture election websites has faced challenges associated with capturing content across technological standards (Grotke, 2011). Prior studies examining the completeness of hyperlink data from the Internet Archive demonstrated that as much as 20% to 30% of hyperlinks are missing from any given subset (Weber & Nguyen, 2015). Given that such omissions tend not to be systematic, it is arguable that the resulting data represent a random sampling of hyperlinking behavior.

Third, the period examined in this study covers five years. By comparison, many studies of imprinting focus on longer time periods. Admittedly, a longer time period would allow for a better understanding of the degree to which early imitation carried on into later cohorts, thus focusing on the second stage of the process of imprinting suggested by Johnson (2007). Notably, other studies of emergence and entrepreneurship (Baron et al., 1996) have used shorter time periods. Some recent studies have used time periods between five and 10 years (Baron et al., 1996; Heiman & Clarysse, 2005; Leung, Foo, & Chaturvedi, 2013).

Future Studies

This study underscores how imprinting factored into the early formation of online newspapers. At present, new technology is once again creating new avenues of competition among Web services. The rise of new access points to the Internet, such as mobile applications and social media websites, is driving a new process of reinvention for media companies. Findings from this study suggest that there will be substantial levels of imitation and similarity early in the adaptation of new technology. Future research should examine the impact that levels of structural, technological, and content imitation have on the performance and success of organizations over time.

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Exploring Neuromarketing and Its Reliance on Remote Sensing: Social and Ethical Concerns

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This article evaluates the consequences of neuromarketers' reliance on direct and indirect forms of remote sensing. These remote sensing strategies, tactics, and resources include various sophisticated techniques for evaluating neuronal and behavioral responses to commercial messages with the aid of functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI) technology. The information generated with the aid of fMRI, in combination with inferences drawn from the massive data analyses enabled by machine learning techniques, is expected to contribute to the power and influence of market-oriented segmentation and targeting. After characterizing the current state of and future trends in applied neuromarketing research, we discuss how reliance on descriptive, predictive, and prescriptive communications strategies enabled by remote sensing will affect the life chances and well-being of segments of the global population. We conclude with a discussion of the moral and ethical implications of these developments, primarily in the context of public policy deliberations related to privacy and surveillance that we associate with remote sensing.

Keywords: *neuromarketing, remote sensing, ethics, privacy and surveillance, discrimination, inferential statistics, technology assessment*

The potential for neuroscience to reveal the workings of the human brain has burgeoned as an area of interest for diverse audiences in the decades since the emergence of an interdisciplinary approach to the study of the brain and its functions. Of particular significance has been the development of insights into how the brain both changes and can be shaped as a function of experience (Ansari, 2012; Lenroot &

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[1] We would like to express our appreciation of the considerable efforts made by our reviewers to improve this article by their pointed questions, helpful suggestions, and generous supply of detailed and hyperlinked references to articles that greatly enhanced our understanding of many of the technical issues related to neuroscience and its applications in the field of marketing.

Giedd, 2006). Consequently, we observe increasing agreement that neuroscientific discoveries are key to the management of human activities, including psychiatric illnesses, economic behaviors, social experiences, spirituality, and ethics (Abi-Rached & Rose, 2010).

Although concerns have been expressed about what Tallis (2011) has termed "neuromania"—the view that the complexity of human consciousness can be reduced to neural activity—neuroscience research methods are nevertheless being applied to an array of new fields, such as neuroaesthetics, neurotheology, neurolaw, neuroeconomics, and neuroeducation, to name a few. Not surprisingly, these new knowledges have made their way into the commercial sector—specifically in the field of neuromarketing, where companies offer assessments and predictions about consumer behavior based on images of the brain's reactions to stimuli (Ariely & Berns, 2010). These reports are used to develop advertising strategies that are designed to influence consumers' responses to messages regarding the attributes of products and services in the marketplace.

Based on its utilization of insights derived from neuroscience, the scope of neuromarketing's impact within society is potentially enormous. Farah's (2012) review of the ethical, legal, and societal impacts of neuroscience begins with a rather expansive claim that any "behavior that depends upon being able to understand, assess, predict, control, or improve human behavior is, in principle, a potential application area for neuroscience" (p. 573). Although scholars such as Eser, Isin, and Tolon (2011) do not see anything inherently problematic about using scientific technology and neurocognitive models to advance commercial interests, they do suggest that the application of imaging technologies to probe the machinations of the human brain, "especially beyond what one might divulge in traditional behavioural testing" (p. 860), raises ethical concerns. Murphy, Illes, and Reiner (2008, p. 298) highlight similar ethical considerations regarding (1) the protection of various parties who may be harmed or exploited through the process of neuromarketing and (2) the protection of consumer autonomy if applications of brain imaging technology are developed to the point that they can enable what is effectively the manipulation of consumers from afar. Stanton, Sinnott-Armstrong, and Huettel (2016), on the other hand, acknowledge that potentially serious ethical issues may emerge from neuromarketing research practices which are largely proprietary and opaque. However, they also conclude that most of the commonly expressed ethical concerns, especially those related to consumer autonomy and privacy, are not meaningful issues because of the current levels of capability on display in current implementations, and they are not expected to be improved substantially in the near future.

This article focuses on some of the more troubling questions that arise when we consider what is being learned about the general population, as well as about particular segments of that population, from intensive studies of relatively small convenience samples (Falk, Berkman, & Lieberman, 2012; Falk, Cascio, & Coronel, 2015) in combination with the predictive models of consumer behavior derived from what has commonly been referred to as "big data analysis" (Barocas & Nissenbaum, 2014; Dwork & Mulligan, 2013; Yeung, 2017).

We explore the essence of these concerns through a critical examination of applied neuroscience by marketers through what we see as a metaphoric extension of the meaning of the term *remote sensing* beyond that traditionally associated with the images and maps derived from data gathered by earth-

orbiting satellites (Longley, Barnsley, & Donnay, 2001/2005). For our purposes, the meaning of remote sensing will be extended to include various devices, strategies, and techniques that enable the identification, evaluation, and production of influence over a whole host of targets of interest based on meaningful measures of remoteness or distance (Gandy, 2012).

This article evaluates the social consequences that flow from the reliance of neuromarketers on direct and indirect forms of remote sensing. We call particular attention to a number of troublesome outcomes that are likely to result from the industry's increasing use of enhanced forms of visualization and analysis of neuronal activation enabled by functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI). After characterizing the current state of neuromarketing research, noting the kinds of instrumental and theoretical challenges that currently limit the nature of the applications of scientific insights in the marketing realm, we turn our attention to the ways in which greater reliance on neuroimaging and other remotely acquired information about consumers will affect the life chances and well-being of segments of the global population, many of which are already burdened by economic, social, and political discrimination (Grier & Kumanyika, 2010).

Our concerns about remote sensing as a means of gaining knowledge, or strategic intelligence about individuals and the groups to which they have been assigned by algorithmic assessments, are closely linked to concerns raised by privacy and surveillance scholars about the threats to autonomy and self-determination (Zarsky, 2003, pp. 35–44) associated with the segmentation of populations and the targeting of manipulative communications (Barocas & Selbst, 2016; Calo, 2014, pp. 1031–1034).

What Is Neuromarketing?

In the 1950s, Vance Packard (1957) observed how advertising agencies had begun to use the research of cognitive psychology and behavioral science to probe the consumer mind for information that would inform the design of effective subliminal advertising campaigns. The aim was to convince groups of people to perform simple actions such as buying a product. Of necessity, advertising had to be "convincing with limited arguments and few words" (Ellul, 1964, p. 364). Here, the primary purpose of advertising was the creation of a particular way of life. It was not as important to persuade the individual through rational means; rather, the aim was to implant in the individual a certain way of thinking about life, appealing to desires over reason (Girard, 1976).

Over the years, consumer market research has continued to build on these methods and now incorporates the diagnostic techniques of neuroscience to give rise to neuromarketing, a contemporary form of market research that uses brain and other bioimaging technologies to track how consumers respond to advertising stimuli. Marketers use these data as aids to understanding the nuances within messages that distinguish between those that are more or less effective in mobilizing a desired response.

Although the terms *neuromarketing* and *consumer neuroscience* have been used interchangeably in the literature, consumer neuroscience tends to refer to academic research that combines neuroscience, psychology, and biology to explain contextually situated human behavior such as consumption (Plassmann, Venkatraman, Huettel, & Yoon, 2015; Stanton et al., 2016). Neuromarketing tends to refer to

practitioner interest in neurophysiological tools that are used when conducting commercial market research (Javor, Koller, Lee, Chamberlain, & Ransmayr, 2013). Whereas neuromarketing is primarily focused on the effort to mobilize consumer demand for the goods and services provided by clients, cognitive neuroscientists, in partnership with social marketing researchers, often seek to reduce harmful consumption practices, such as smoking, while increasing participation in beneficial activities, such as exercise (Farah, 2014).

Neuromarketing has also been categorized as a subarea of neuroeconomics (Camerer, Loewenstein, & Prelec, 2005; Kenning & Plassmann, 2005), in which "the application of neuroscientific methods to analyze and understand human behaviour in relation to markets and marketing exchanges" (Lee, Broderick, & Chamberlain, 2007, p. 200) is increasing. Neuroeconomics aims to make sense of economic problems through the analysis of the neural correlates of decision making (Hubert & Kenning, 2008), focusing on variables commonly studied in behavioral economics, such as risk (Kahneman & Tversky, 1979), self-control (Hare, Camerer, & Rangel, 2009), and reward magnitude (Smith & Walker, 1993).

For this article, we use the term *neuromarketing* to refer to a commercialized market research method for studying brain activity that combines the methodologies of neuroscience and behavioral psychology to generate greater understanding about how consumers respond to products, brands, and advertising stimuli. These insights are then used to inform the development of advertising strategies that are designed primarily to "nudge" particular demographic groups or population segments to take consumptive action.

While neuromarketing builds on traditional forms of market research comprising both physiological measurement and communicative interactions, its technological resources have been expanded to incorporate advanced neuroimaging techniques to measure, collect, and interpret consumer responses to stimuli, which some neuromarketers think are more accurate and reliable predictors of behavior than self-report (Fortunato, Giraldi, & Oliveira, 2014; Venkatraman et al., 2015). This is thought to be especially important with regard to preferences about which consumers or citizens are often reluctant or unwilling to reveal to others (Jost, 2017).

The two most common brain imaging techniques involve functional magnetic resonance imaging, which determines neurological activity based on changes in blood flow to certain areas of the brain, and electroencephalography, which uses electrodes applied to the scalp to measure changes in the electrical field in the brain (Ariely & Berns, 2010). The information obtained from what some have referred to as "neural focus groups" (Falk et al., 2012) is not only used to calibrate advertising stimuli according to bio- and neurological responses but is also generalized for a range of data profiling activities, such as identification, classification, and representation of consumers in the form of automated data profiles. Schneider and Woolgar (2012) offer a helpful summary of the practical application of neuroanalytical techniques:

> Brain imaging is used to assess which areas of the brain are active in relation to specific tasks undertaken by the subject, and what is the extent of this activity. This is done, for

> example, in relation to the visual perception of the colour or shapes of products, or the effect on the brain of certain smells and odours. In the case of fMRI, the extent of brain activity is inferred from changes in the amount of blood flow in specific areas of the brain. Although the original measurement information is numerical, not visual, the protocol for presenting this information typically represents this information through the use of various colours. It is this which enables the subsequent locution, in a telling use of metaphor that the brain "lights up" in response to certain forms of stimulation. (pp. 172–173)

Noninvasive imaging tools used for measuring consumer responses to stimuli also include a range of biometric indicators traditionally used in studies of consumer psychology (Andrejevic, 2012). Biometrics are said to have become popular resources for marketers because they are believed to provide insight into unconscious mental processes (Venkatraman et al., 2015, p. 5). Nielsen (2016) uses both brain imaging and biometric tools to measure real-time brain and other physiological responses. As its website states, Nielsen aims to "capture a more comprehensive view of the non-conscious aspects of consumer decision-making with the most complete set of neuroscience tools at a global scale" (para. 1). Other proponents such as Lindstrom (2010), Fugate (2008), and Zaltman and Zaltman (2008) claim that when researchers use brain imaging tools, they are able to map neural functions connected to vision as well as individuals' cognitive and affective responses to advertisements.

However, Wilson, Gaines, and Hill (2008) emphasize that conclusions drawn from the correlations between brain functions and blood flow, for example, should be approached with caution. These kinds of interpretations require drawing connections between cognitive or affective responses to neural activity and then characterizing the meaning of the neural activity that occurs in particular regions of interest within the brain. Although neuroscience has certainly made advancements in connecting neural activity to blood response, "much remains to be learned about the relationship between a task-related thought or emotion and neuronal activity" (Wilson et al., 2008, p. 394). Indeed, the nature of this challenge is so substantial that critical observers have likened understanding the complexity of the neural systems in the brain to understanding the operation of a microprocessor and have suggested that current investigative strategies in neuroscience would not be up to the task (Jonas & Kording, 2017).

Assessments of the accuracy, reliability, and predictive utility of these measures when applied to the requirements of marketers are more difficult to produce. This is due in part to neuromarketers' reluctance to reveal the nature of their particular strategies and techniques to their competitors. Despite calls for neuromarketing companies to adopt policies of data and protocol transparency (Stanton et al., 2016), rigorous evaluative assessments of particular neuromarketing experiments and campaigns are rarely published in scholarly marketing journals. However, an early assessment of a number of these studies claimed "that at least some aspects of advertisement perception, brand memory and economically relevant choice behaviour are amenable to neuroscientific investigation" (Plassmann, Ambler, Braeutigam, & Kenning, 2007, p. 165). They continued to suggest, however, that "the current research is a patchwork of largely unrelated studies addressing a wide range of potentially relevant issues. It appears that, to date, no direct 'recipes' can be derived from this new research" (p. 166).

Somewhat later, a series of studies, referred to as “Neuro 1” and “Neuro 2,” were organized by the Advertising Research Foundation to help commercial buyers of neuromarketing services evaluate and compare the quality of the guidance being offered by different vendors (Varan, Lang, Barwise, Weber, & Bellman, 2015). These studies revealed considerable disagreements among vendors about what their methods predicted about how individual advertisements performed, and they use different terms to identify what was actually being measured. This led the evaluators to suggest that “the study does demonstrate that these measures do not reflect a common truth” (p. 187), which would make it difficult for purchasers of these services to understand what precisely they were buying in this emerging commercial service market.

Despite these criticisms, neuromarketers continue to construct models and characterizations of consumers derived from their interpretations of experimental data. These data inform the creation of consumer profiles that are used to categorize individuals and groups as particular “brain types.” This knowledge is then used by marketers to segment consumers into groups in terms of their expected response to particular commercial messages. Schneider and Woolgar (2012) explain that such uses of brain imaging and other measures of physiological responses

> reveal and enact a particular version of the consumer that depends on an achieved contrast between what appears to be the case—consumers’ accounts of why they prefer certain products over others—and what can be shown to be the case as a result of the application of the technology—the hidden or concealed truth. (p. 171)

These “new and improved” impressions of consumers’ worlds are disclosed to neuromarketers’ clients as insights into the theoretically constructed and empirically validated models of their targets. Such representations of the consumer hinge on the assumption that consumers are (a) entities who do not know themselves very well and (b) marketing targets that can be triggered into buying responses through exposure to advertising stimuli calibrated to activate specific internal drives.

Remote Sensing

Because of the reliance of neuroimaging on technological resources to gather data about the status and changes taking place in different areas of a person’s brain, and because the transformation of that data into visual representations involves the use of various statistical methods to produce accurate, reliable, and conceptually valid approximations of a complex process, we refer to neuroimaging as a form of remote sensing (Arnason, 2010, p. 190).

Of course, this quality of remoteness is not limited to that which is implied by the use of visual images meant to reflect changes in the blood-oxygen-level-dependent signals being detected in different regions of interest within a research subject’s brain. It is more critically associated with the remoteness of this proxy measure from the great variety of cognitive and affective responses it is actually meant to represent (Farah, 2014, pp. S19–S21; Poldrack & Yarkoni, 2016).

A still further sense of remoteness is associated with attempts to relate the responses observed in research subjects in the laboratory to those of other individuals who might be exposed to the same (or similar) stimuli in their homes or in their neighborhood markets. It is this particular relationship—the one in which cognitive and affective responses of research subjects to features of a commercial message are used to predict a behavioral response, such as the purchase of a particular brand of chocolate by members of the general public (Kühn, Strelow, & Gallinat, 2016)—that we identify as the most remote—and the most concerning.

The term *remote sensing* is generally applied to the use of a range of technologies to gather information at some distance in time or space from the object, entity, behavior, or phenomenon of interest (Lillesand, Keifer, & Chipman, 2015). The use of these technologies is widespread and growing despite the fact that distance, however conceived, usually represents a threat to the accuracy, precision, and reliability of the information that would have been gathered if a more direct, or less remote, method of observation or measurement were available at a reasonable cost (Farah, 2012; Mingers, 2006; Pickles, 1995). Researchers interested in capturing and representing spatiotemporal relations between individuals have suggested that remote sensing and social sensing are analogues or complements that differ in terms of their emphasis on the socioeconomic characteristics of data subjects (Liu et al., 2015). However, because social sensing, as proposed as a conceptually distinct analytical focus, relies primarily on data from identifiable individuals, it loses the critical dimension of remoteness that we associate with the experimental research and inferential classifications used by neuromarketers.

The most traditional use of the term *remote sensing* refers to the great physical distance from which earth-orbiting or geostationary satellites capture information and facilitate the production of images that inform us about the past, present, and future status of the people, places, and things being sensed from afar.

As is common with most uses of remote sensing technology, there is a need for the identification of proxy measures that can stand in for or represent the actual subject of interest (Liu, et al., 2015; Longley et al., 2001/2005). The variety and extent of information about geographic areas represented in colorful maps reflect the use of statistical techniques that provide measures of closeness or similarity that describe relationships not fully captured by notions of physical distance (Pickles, 1995). Correlation-based assessments of the relationships between variables, or measures of theoretical constructs, are especially useful as indicators of the similarity or difference between theoretically defined objects of interest. Multidimensional techniques such as factor and cluster analysis and multidimensional scaling are often used to identify different types of people on various levels. The fact that it is up to the analyst to determine how many factors, clusters, or dimensions will be defined by which sets of measures and criteria of importance underscores the diversity of ways in which an indicator of distance, or similarity, can become a standard for neuromarketers' strategic decision making (Cappella, 2017, pp. 8–9; Mingers, 2006).

Much of the widespread public interest in applications of neuroscientific methods is understandably associated with the colorful maps of activated regions of brains that have been scanned. The attractiveness and power of these images is sustained in part because the general public is unaware of the quite substantial technical and statistical preprocessing of data that enables the publication of

"images that actually look like brains" (Woolrich, Beckmann, Nichols, & Smith, 2016, p. 184). There are ongoing debates about the extent of the accuracy, precision, and reliability associated with different representations of the status of the proxies being used as a basis for drawing inferences about a subject's response to various stimuli in a range of contextual situations (Cascio, Scholz, & Falk, 2015; Falk et al., 2015; Farah, 2014). These debates tend to focus on the appropriateness of the statistical tools being used to support or evaluate the claims being made by scientists or practitioners.

Statistical Inference and Samples

Unlike traditional uses of statistics in support of the description and representation of objects and entities and the relationships between them, we primarily seek to call attention to the remoteness associated with the use of statistics in support of inferential assessments of people, places, and things that have not actually been sensed or measured directly.

For example, much social and behavioral science research, as well as much marketing research, seek to expand our understanding of the nature of human beings in general. In cases of applied research, such as that concerned with public health, experiments designed to provide information about health-related problems are performed with animal models or proxies because of ethical or legal barriers to human experimentation. This kind of remote sensing depends to a great extent on the ability of researchers to demonstrate that there are enough similarities between these models or proxies and the humans who are the real targets of interest.

A somewhat different set of considerations arises when assessments, plans, and policies are made that are likely to affect people, but not necessarily those who have given their informed consent to serve as participants in experiments, surveys, or other data-generating activities. Whether they are paid or are serving as volunteers, these research subjects who stand in for the rest of us are generally given the sense that they are making a contribution to the well-being of the population at large, or some special segment that they are believed to represent. Indeed, in the case of university or government-funded research projects, researchers are usually expected to identify the nature of the trade-offs between the risks these subjects face and the benefits to be realized by society. Unfortunately, these human subjects guidelines generally do not constrain the kinds of experiments and studies carried out by commercial firms engaged in marketing research (Murphy et al., 2008).

Most of these examples of remote sensing in the social and behavioral sciences and applied communication research involve the use of inferential statistics, a well-established set of principles and practices that supports the expression of claims about a population made on the basis of observations derived from a representative sample (National Research Council, 2013, pp. 123–131). The assumptions about the representativeness of the samples are traditionally based on the randomness with which the samples have been drawn from target populations. Unfortunately, many factors—including those that systematically exclude some members of a population from being included in the sample (imprisonment, homelessness, illiteracy, etc.) and failures to recruit and retain minority research subjects (George, Duran, & Norris, 2014)—contribute to many samples being far from representative (Heinrich, Heine, & Norenzayan, 2010).

It is generally agreed that many of the insights about consumers based on information drawn from focus groups organized by neuromarketers are likely to be of questionable value because these samples are small and not representative of the general population from which they are drawn (Ariely & Berns, 2010). Even neuroscientists have expressed concern about the fact that they have relied on small convenience samples for the development of their insights about the nature of human information processing and associated behaviors (Falk et al., 2013). However, as we will discuss, concerns about the representativeness of samples seem less likely to be meaningful concerns as additional technologies of remote sensing become the norm in marketing.

Classification, Segmentation, and Prediction

Classification—the assignment of persons, places, and things to categories or groups and then treating them or relating to them differently from members of other analytically defined groups (National Research Council, 2013)—is at the heart of our concern about analytics and prediction in relation to marketing.

Bowker and Star (1999) first remind us that "to classify is human," but as they finish their masterful exploration of the ways in which we engage in this activity, they also note that classifications are powerful technologies that have become almost invisible, without losing any of their power to alter the quality of our lives. In offering what they characterize as a pessimistic view of the classifications that are being developed and put into use outside of our awareness and critical reflection, they suggest that "we are taking a series of increasingly irreversible steps toward a given set of highly limited and problematic descriptions of what the world is and how we are in the world" (Bowker & Star, 1999, p. 326).

Population segments identified through analysis are often saddled with classificatory markers that then serve to establish and reinforce negative stereotypes about the members of those groups. As Poudrier (2003) suggests, the generation of categories of healthy or unhealthy behaviors "tend to correspond intimately with moral concepts of good and bad conduct, as well as virtuous and immoral individuals or communities" (p. 118).

Geographers engage in forms of remote sensing (Longley et al., 2001/2005) that share features with those we have identified as increasingly popular among neuromarketers. The incorporation of multiple forms of data in geographic information systems has enabled marketers to develop maps of neighborhoods or cities that use colors to identify areas to avoid as well as those that appear ripe for exploitation (Barreneche, 2012).

An early provider of cautionary tales about implications of the strategic use of geographic information system technology (Pickles, 1995) provided examples of the various ways in which users—ranging from insurance companies basing rates on "zones and localities of risk" to marketers seeking to extend the potential of "direct-mail solicitation to exact marketing" based on "recorded purchasing and general expenditure records"(p. 16)—made use of this rapidly developing resource.

Early work among marketers to characterize the socioeconomic and psychological attributes of the residents in particular types of neighborhoods in the United States made use of “geodemographic” clustering models brought to public attention by Michael Weiss (1988). Weiss described the 40 types of neighborhoods defined by census block groups used to characterize different zip codes around the United States. Although the primary determination of each neighborhood was based on similarity or closeness in terms of sociodemographic attributes of residents, the value of this demographic clustering developed for marketers by the Claritas Corporation was that it allowed the identification of similar clusters wherever they were located. Thus, on a cluster map of the United States, “people who live 3,000 miles apart yet share the same neighborhood type have more in common with each other than with those people who live only three miles away” (Weiss, 1988, p. 6).

Unfortunately, what was developed as support for segmented marketing strategies for political candidates and public policies as well as commercial goods and services also served to reproduce and reinforce a set of stereotypes for these residential segments by providing thumbnail demographic sketches that included race, levels of education, and primary forms of employment and consumption. The labels assigned to these clusters—such as “Hard Scrabble,” “Tobacco Roads,” and “Blue Blood Estates”—underscored their role as markers of status and commercial and political value (Weiss, 1988, pp. 268–392).

We fully expect that neuromarketers will eventually incorporate the identification of cognitive styles and decision-making strategies (Kozhevnikov, Evans, & Kosslyn, 2014) into their efforts to assign neighborhoods, groups, and individuals into differentially valued market segments (Venkatraman, Clithero, Fitzsimons, & Heuttel, 2012). The expected value of these enhanced segmentations is based in part on the expectation that “neuroscience data can indicate implicit processes, improve out-of-sample predictions, improve the generalization of models of behavior, and provide a reliable and process-based approach for segmenting customers” (Venkatraman et al., 2012, p. 146).

With the development of collective databases, such as the Brain Atlas, which made it possible to “store information on how the brain varies across age and gender, across time, in health and disease, and in large human populations” (Van Horn & Toga, 2016, p. 265), we also expect that a greater variety of population segments will be associated with cognitive maps in ways that facilitate their targeting by marketers (Poldrack & Yarkoni, 2016).

Neuromarketers increasingly seek to use experimental research to support the development of strategic marketing initiatives that will be informed by a range of inferences about various population segments. As we have suggested, the segmentation of relevant populations into groups based on their characteristics has been dramatically altered by the development of consumer analytics. Psychographic data, or information about attitudes, tastes, preferences, and types of personalities, have been demonstrated to enhance the predictive power of message strategies that were previously based only on demographics (Sandy, Gosling, & Durant, 2013). Significant improvements in descriptive, predictive, and prescriptive profiles of consumers are likely to be developed with the information derived from neuromarketing research, such that “it may be possible to segment consumers by brain differences that do not directly map onto demographics or psychographics” (Stanton et al., 2016, p. 4).

Consumer Surveillance and Ethical Concerns

As Olteanu (2015) reasons, using neuroimaging in a setting where the overall goal is to sell more products can foreground ethical issues. Indeed, ethical implications emerging from advancements in the technologies and practices used by neuromarketers consistently highlight the potential to manipulate individual decision making. In reviewing a series of studies involving neuromarketing professionals, Hensel, Iorga, Wolter, and Znanewitz (2017) noted that twice as many advertisers considered neuromarketing more efficient than traditional forms of market research, but respondents also claimed that neuromarketers were not as ethical.

Echoing the perspectives we have taken in this article, these ethical issues do not always arise explicitly from data collection, such as the methods and instruments used to conduct experimental research; rather, important ethical issues arise primarily from the way these data are applied. For example, many believe that it would be unethical to use segmentation and targeting tactics to influence consumers without their being made aware of the manipulative strategies and discriminatory goals being pursued. It is suggested that if this kind of "stealth marketing" using advanced neuroscience tools became possible, then it "should be regulated by an ethical code as early as possible" (Hensel et al., 2017, p. 9).

Attached to this view is the concern that neuroscience has the capacity to make advertisements more powerful, potentially creating desires for inferior products and items a consumer might not actually need or be able to afford, or by strengthening desires that consumers have struggled to manage in the past (Grier & Kumanyika, 2010). As a counter, Stanton et al. (2016) reject the claim that neuromarketing can be used to move beyond prediction to actually influence consumer choice. As they see it, predicting behavior is different from applying coercive force. They argue that prediction does not necessarily deny or undermine the rationality of the individual or group whose behavior is being predicted. At the same time, they suggest that experiments "can clearly and causally demonstrate the power of marketing manipulation on consumers' behavior that operates outside of conscious awareness" and that "shaping consumers' choices is the goal of marketing generally" (p. 7).

Yet even after noting that marketing information can "strongly influence their choices, even when the consumers had no conscious awareness that their choices were being influenced" (Stanton et al., 2016, p. 6), this kind of influence is not seen as enough of a basis for imposing an ethical constraint on marketers. For these defenders, control over consumers has to be absolute. "Consumers might have more control when they are consciously aware of what influences them, but that does not mean that they lack all control when they are not consciously aware of what influences them" (Stanton et al., 2016, p. 6). In what seems like a rather extreme view, they suggest that such "physiology-based marketing allows consumer choices to remain free, even if they are significantly influenced by physiological factors that consumers cannot control" (Stanton et al., 2016, p. 7).

Nevertheless, we believe that it is reasonable to claim that targeted communication, designed to influence consumer behavior to varying degrees, is an ungranted influence, the power of which is increasing as insights derived from applied neuroscientific research accumulate and the number of practitioners and applications expands.

Relatedly, while some authors considered the application of neuroimaging to the political environment as a means to "better understand unconscious consumer response and preference" (Olteanu, 2015, p. 192), others viewed such strategies as an ethical violation (Hensel et al., 2017) since altering an individual's decision-making process could be interpreted as an incursion into the right to freedom of thought as a fundamental aspect of one's autonomy (Rouvroy, 2008). This is especially problematic as it relates to the targeting of members of vulnerable groups, such as children, the elderly, and those with physical and/or mental disability (Hensel, Wolter, & Znanewitz, 2016). Although some neuroethicists have argued for the development of more robust regulatory frameworks to protect members of these particularly vulnerable population segments (Farah, 2012), we suggest that it is also important to consider expanding the meaning of vulnerability to include the socially and economically disadvantaged (Grier & Kumanyika, 2010, pp. 355–356; Rogers, Mackenzie, & Dodds, 2012; Shavitt, Jiang, & Cho, 2016).

Despite positive moves to regulate neuromarketing, beginning with increased attention to privacy concerns, direct and indirect surveillance of target populations has yet to become a central focus of public policy debates. When critical observers of developments in neuroscience and its application in marketing consider privacy at all, their attention tends to focus on threats to individual research subjects (Hensel et al., 2017; Olteanu, 2015; Stanton et al., 2016). The primary emphasis in defenses of neuromarketing is that there are no privacy threats to the majority of populations because they are not the actual or direct subjects of laboratory experiments involving brain scans (Stanton et al., 2016, p. 5). But few deny that many consumers are the direct or indirect subjects of market tests or campaigns informed by those experiments, for which no informed consent has been sought.

Unfortunately, group privacy is still a marginalized concept (Taylor, Floridi, & van der Sloot, 2017), and apprehension about the gathering of strategic intelligence by means of remote sensing by neuromarketers is limited to concerns about advances in technology that would enable the direct gathering of information from an identifiable individual (Farah, 2012, p. 578).

Conclusions

Among a number of ethical implications that we have identified with regard to neuromarketing, we have emphasized those that bear a specific relationship to remote sensing, statistical discrimination, and invasions of privacy. Many of our concerns are related to what we understand as expectations of fairness, including the reasonableness of the expectation that an individual's life chances are not shaped by the stereotypes that have been applied to the groups to which that individual may have been assigned by social, political, or statistical processes.

Related concerns adhere to what legal scholars explore under the heading of due process (Crawford & Schultz, 2014). The absence of informed consent as a constraint on the collection of direct or indirect information about individuals is at the heart of these concerns. As we have suggested, remote sensing technologies ignore any consideration of the legitimate interests of the persons whose life chances have been or are likely to be altered by the delivery of persuasive messages targeted on the basis of predictive segmentation processes (Burdon & Harpur, 2014, p. 696).

Of particular importance with considerations related to fairness are those cases involving the opportunities and limitations individuals face as a result of algorithmically determined scores, many of which are estimations of the levels of risk that are assigned to the groups into which an individual has been sorted (Burrell, 2016; Dixon & Gellman, 2014). Many of us consider it unfair that people who are already burdened by the cumulative disadvantages associated with poverty, racial and ethnic discrimination, and other extremes of categorical vulnerability are likely to be burdened further by additional classifications and predictive assessments of the behavioral choices they are considered likely to make (d'Alessandro, O'Neil, & LaGatta, 2017). Monahan's (2017) notion of "marginalizing surveillance" fits well within the scope of neuromarketing research and its pursuit of market segmentation, because, as he sees it, "through categorization and sorting, surveillance enacts forms of structural violence against marginalized Others" (p. 192).

It is especially unfair if neuromarketers are able to make use of the kinds of additional information they will obtain from experiments and analytics to influence the behavior of consumers in ways that limit, rather than improve, their life chances (Murphy et al., 2008, p. 299; Popescu & Baruh, 2017).

Privacy scholars have been especially concerned about the impact of strategies adopted by powerful actors to make use of knowledge about the general public and certain segments to influence their decision making. These concerns include the loss of autonomy as a vital dimension of social, economic, and political self-determination (Calo, 2014; Cohen, 1996). Fortunately, there are signs that policy makers in the United States are beginning to pay more attention to the role of context as a basis for consumers' expectations of privacy. These policy makers are also routinely including corporate actors along with government agencies as targets of interest in their efforts to manage unease about big data analytics and the discriminatory impacts of its use (White House, 2016). We also note the role that increased awareness of the nature and scope of inequality plays in the public sphere. In this regard, we are hopeful that consideration of the function and implications of remote sensing in general, and with special attention to its use by neuromarketers, will help shape future debates about how current trends in inequality can be reversed.

The place of neuromarketing in these debates must be framed in a way that emphasizes the power dynamics in an industry that has the potential to shape the life chances of individuals as members of already disadvantaged groups. It is reasonable to suggest, then, that a path to addressing these issues should be pursued through governmental bodies, interdisciplinary groups of researchers, practitioners, and diverse publics that will become actively involved in formulating strategies for the regulation of the discriminatory use of diagnostic technologies in marketing.

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Rethinking Hallin and Mancini Beyond the West: An Analysis of Media Systems in Central and Eastern Europe

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This study aimed to validate and extend Hallin and Mancini's framework of comparison to discriminate empirical types of media systems in Central and Eastern Europe. We tested and complemented their original dimensions by using aggregated data from 11 countries (Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, and Slovenia). Our study shows the strength of political parallelism and public service broadcasting as variables for comparison. It also found that press freedom and foreign ownership point to significant differences between media systems in the region. Finally, a cluster analysis revealed the existence of three groups of media systems and provides empirical support for the assertion that there is no unique type of East-Central European media system.

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Since Hallin and Mancini published their seminal work *Comparing Media Systems: Three Models of Media and Politics* in 2004, a few attempts have been made to empirically test their standardized measures and models in several Western countries (Brüggemann, Engesser, Büchel, Humprecht, & Castro, 2014) and to use their original dimensions to analyze particular cases among East-Central European media systems (Dobek-Ostrowska, 2012; Jakubowicz & Sükösd, 2008). These studies highlight the need to provide a robust array of variables that can combine the qualitative insight provided by previous case studies in "the East" with a thorough empirical analysis of cross-national data in the region.

Hallin and Mancini's (2004) book offered an agreed-on framework of comparison for media systems of Western Europe, Canada, and the United States. Relying on a thorough historical review, this book combined several dimensions—labeled "media markets," "political parallelism," "journalistic professionalism," and "role of the state"—that yielded three different and well-known models of media systems. The "polarized pluralist model" gathered European Mediterranean countries with highly politicized media and low journalistic professionalism; the "democratic corporatist model" included Northern European countries with welfare state traditions, strong public service broadcasters, and partisan media along identity groups; and the "liberal model," which is predominant in Anglo-Saxon countries, was characterized by a weak role of the state and strong objective and neutral journalism.

These models and the dimensions along which they are built have since been used extensively as a theoretical framework for case selection in comparative studies. However, it was only recently that they were tested by means of data and empirical analysis. Drawing on a multiplicity of methods of data collection, Brüggemann et al. (2014) "measured" media systems in "the West" and conducted an exhaustive analysis of experts' interviews, surveys, yearbooks, documents and reports, and content data. Their results served to validate and refine Hallin and Mancini's dimensions and found four empirical types of media systems (central, northern, western, and southern), with Northern European countries joining a new type characterized by high press subsidies. A further analysis was able to cross-validate and thus strengthen the Brüggemann et al. findings using qualitative comparative analysis (cf. Büchel, Humprecht, Castro-Herrero, Engesser, & Brüggemann, 2016).

In the present study, we go a step further to rethink the Hallin and Mancini (2004) framework of comparison by applying it to Central and Eastern Europe (or CEE). We draw on the operationalization and data sources used by Brüggemann et al. in 2014. We test the tools used by Bruggemann et al. (2014) for the West in the East and adapt their framework to explain the interplay between media and politics in 11 EU countries from CEE. To do so, we rely on further comparative and theoretical approaches for Eastern Europe (Gross, 2004; Hallin & Mancini, 2012a; Jakubowicz, 2008; Peruško, Vozab, & Čuvalo, 2015; Voltmer, 2008, 2013a) that allow us to couple Hallin and Mancini's original dimensions with new variables that are relevant to the case of CEE. Our analyses show that press freedom and foreign ownership, together with political parallelism and the strength of public service broadcasting (PSB), have a rather high explanatory power and indicate meaningful differences between countries. These dimensions are

finally used to build three types of media systems in the region (eastern, central, and northern media systems).

Approaching Media Systems in the East

To date, several studies have applied Hallin and Mancini's framework to countries beyond the West (e.g., Dobek-Ostrowska & Glowacki, 2008; Trpevska & Micevski, 2014). The most remarkable of these contributions is a follow-up edition by the authors themselves (Hallin & Mancini, 2012b). This publication represents a valuable compendium of case studies, among which chapters on Baltic (Balčytienė, 2012) and Polish media systems (Dobek-Ostrowska, 2012) can be found. Both Dobek-Ostrowska and Balčytienė identified elements of the polarized pluralist media system model (Hallin & Mancini, 2004) among their objects of study. On the one hand, Balčytienė concluded that journalism underwent a late professionalization in the Baltics, as in the polarized pluralist model. However, she also found elements of the liberal model (a laissez-faire media policy and strong tabloid and commercial media) and of the corporatist model (a tighter regulation of the media in regard to preserving the public interest and national identity). On the other hand, Dobek-Ostrowska embedded Poland in the polarized–pluralist ideal type. This is evidenced, the author argued, by its high levels of state intervention in public service, strong tradition of advocacy journalism, and strong media politicization.

Dobek-Ostrowska's and, to a lesser extent, Balčytienė's identifications of CEE countries with Hallin and Mancini's (2004) polarized–pluralist model are no exceptions. Other authors have considered the postcommunist media systems in CEE as shifting toward that model. CEE media systems have been compared with Italy, where PSB has had institutionalized links to political parties (Splichal, 1994) and the press is still broadly commercialized (Voltmer, 2008). Hallin and Mancini argued that CEE media systems resemble those of Greece, Spain, and Portugal rather than that of Italy, with the latter being a more long-lasting democracy whose parties have stronger societal alliances and consensual politics (Hallin & Mancini, 2012a, p. 19). CEE media systems have also been compared with those in Southern Europe based on low newspaper circulation and low quality of their PSB (Peruško, Vozab, & Čuvalo, 2013).

All of these case studies and theoretical approaches tell us that we can describe CEE media systems' development and prospects by looking at the evolution of European Mediterranean countries starting from the 1970s. However, notwithstanding similar patterns between Eastern and Southern Europe, Hallin and Mancini (2012a, p. 18) warned about the encompassing shortcomings and the limits that such an approach can carry on the development of new comparative theory.

One of those shortcomings, as Voltmer (2013a) and Zielonka (2015) put it, is the assumption that emerging media systems in the East will not deviate from Western models. According to Voltmer, media systems development in CEE has gone hand in hand with a particular evolution of their cultural background and political systems and therefore cannot be classified into any of the three models conceptualized by Hallin and Mancini (2004). For example, in CEE, the media inherited certain structural elements of the former communist state media that are resistant to change. The supervisory bodies and

systems that fund public media are still opaque; they are often strictly regulated only on paper and are very dependent on the ruling political parties' interests and goals (Bajomi-Lázár, 2014). Parties have "colonized" the media to channel media resources, such as public subsidies, advertising, and airtime frequencies, to their supporting networks (Bajomi-Lázár, 2014, p. 23). A "business parallelism"—media owners involved in politics and other businesses—has spread across the region (Zielonka, 2015, p. 24), and there are strong links among media moguls, local political elites, and economic investors in Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, and Slovenia (Örnebring, 2012). In addition, a strong advocacy tradition is inherent to journalistic culture in countries such as Bulgaria, Hungary, Romania, or Poland, where a nonpartisan reporting style is not unanimous and objective journalism never fully took over from opinionated journalism (Gross, 2004; Lauk, 2008). Finally, the economic vulnerability of the media due to low advertisement revenues, the lack of a consolidated system of press subsidies, or difficulties in exporting local media products (Zielonka & Mancini, 2011) enhanced media ownership concentration. It also prepared the ground for stronger governmental control, especially over PSB.

Whether one approaches CEE media systems' categorization by scrutinizing similarities to the developments in Western Southern Europe or by investigating CEE under the assumption of its exceptionality, whether it is a matter of "degree rather than kind" or vice versa (Dryzek & Holmes, 2002, p. 256), the question rises regarding the extent to which CEE media systems should be treated as a homogeneous entity. Can we assume that CEE media systems all belong to the polarized-pluralist ideal type? Even if we consider that CEE embodies a new kind of media system not included in Hallin and Mancini's framework, can we adequately describe Eastern Europe with just one model?

This drives us to the core issue that our study addressed: the need for a reconceptualization of Hallin and Mancini's dimensions of comparative analysis that is valid for CEE countries. As Hallin and Mancini (2012a) acknowledge, their analysis

> is not intended as a universal framework; it is based on the concrete historical experience of a particular set of nations, and any attempt to extend the analysis beyond that set of cases is likely to require significant modification of the conceptual framework. (p. 15)

Therefore, our study delved first into the dimensions and indicators that Hallin and Mancini used to analyze the West and deductively tested them in 11 CEE countries: Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, and Slovenia. Second, it considered new variables to inductively account for further relevant idiosyncratic paths in CEE.

Dimensions to Describe Media Systems in the East

Which elements in Hallin and Mancini's (2004) framework can be transferred to the empirical analysis of media systems in CEE? Brüggemann et al. (2014) offer a first benchmark for the West. They operationalized Hallin and Mancini's dimensions by looking at the "inclusiveness of the press market" (whether the press reaches out a broad audience), "political parallelism" (i.e., the extent to which the media

advance political and partisan goals), and "journalistic professionalism" (the extent to which journalists are autonomous and follow distinctive and ethical principles). They further distinguished and measured three different types of state intervention (all of them included as subdimensions in Hallin and Mancini's dimension role of the state), which were labeled "public broadcasting" (that complements private media), "press subsidies" (that support private media), and "ownership regulation" (that restricts media activity).

Departing from the aforementioned dimensions and subdimensions, in the following, we consider four main distinctive developments of CEE media systems and explore the divergent intensities and paces of such developments across countries as accounted by previous studies (Gross, 2004; Hallin & Mancini, 2012a, 2012b; Jakubowicz, 2008; Voltmer, 2008, 2013a).

Recent Past of Media Censorship and State Control

Former communist states of Bulgaria or Romania saw a much stronger control of the media than Poland, let alone the Baltic countries. Whereas the former countries suffered from political control until the very end of their communist regimes, Poland benefited from a lively civil society (the most conspicuous example of which is the important role of *Solidarnosc* in the democratization of the country) and a strong underground press (or *Samizdat*). In the Baltics, the media may have gained autonomy because of an atmosphere of cultural resistance against past Soviet occupation and press control, which, after the Iron Curtain fell, favored the limitation of party ownership of media (Balčytienė, 2012). From attacks and threats against journalists (see Santana Pereira, 2012, for the Romanian and Bulgarian cases) to self-censorship in newsrooms, the current range and high variance in terms of "media freedom" across the region have their roots in divergent historical backgrounds of media censorship and state control. Smilova and Smilov (2015) further note that, in practice, media freedom has not yet improved in countries with weak mechanisms of law enforcement and widespread informality such as Bulgaria. In spite of media policymaking and laws to protect the freedom of the media, the mimetic transplantation of models in the West to CEE media systems has so far failed, and the political past still has an important weight, especially under certain governments that try to use the media to advance their political goals (Balčytienė, Bajomi-Lázár, Štětka, & Sükösd, 2015). These events make it necessary to tackle the measurement of media freedom across countries with otherwise different trajectories of media censorship.

Citizens' Political Demobilization and Weak Partisan Alignments

Unlike in democratic corporatist media systems, in which partisanship is linked to traditional organized social groups (Hallin & Mancini, 2004), new EU democracies suffer from weak civil societies (Gross, 2004; Jakubowicz, 2008), higher levels of electoral volatility than Western Europe (van Biezen, 2000; Dassonneville & Hooghe, 2011), and low levels of political mobilization (Tworzecki & Semetko, 2012). As Voltmer (2013b) states, most parties in new democracies have shallow roots with their constituencies (with a few exceptions such as the communist successor party MSZP in Hungary). Low membership and elite-centered machineries are the norm among CEE parties (Mancini, 2015; Zielonka, 2015). Electoral volatility is especially pronounced in countries where alignments along the left–right axis compete with other ideological streams, such as those leaning on the old Russian communism and the new nationalist reformism, as in the Baltic region (Balčytienė, 2012). Although Poland has historically had

a stronger civil society and political opposition than its neighbors, its particularly unstable party system (Tworzecki & Semetko, 2010) also may have played a part in the instability of its citizens' partisan affections. Overall, the low levels of political mobilization and high electoral volatility mirror citizens' weak and changing political preferences and can make the detection and measurement of media's political parallelism (e.g., by assessing partisan preferences of media audiences) particularly challenging.

Rapid Political and Economic Institutionalization

After the fall of its communist regimes, CEE underwent rapid political, social, and economic changes, embracing capitalism, democracy, and human rights in a very short period of time. This made the process of institutionalization and the development of a legal structure uneven, enhancing three relevant trends in the CEE media landscape. First, PSB remained strong and tightly controlled by institutional and political structures inherited from the past, keeping most of its former employees. The public granting of licenses to private TV investors also developed into a politicized and tightly centralized process (Sparks, 2008). Second, CEE press industries became, in contrast, a quickly deregulated territory with the proliferation of small newspapers coming under the control of private investors in the early 1990s. Since then, direct press subsidies seem to be a rare media policy across the CEE region, albeit more opaque and politicized ways of funding private media, such as state advertising, are frequent in countries such as Bulgaria, Romania (Preoteasa & Schwartz, n.d.) and Slovenia (Hrvatin & Petković, 2008). Third, although the progressive entrance of CEE countries into the European Union brought about compliance with its digital media policy, the development of information and communication infrastructures under the supervision of national governments was slow, and the Internet and digital media penetration are still weak compared with those of Western European countries (Peruško et al., 2015). By extension, online news use is low, particularly in countries such as Bulgaria and Romania.

Foreign Ownership of Media Markets

Internationalization and the presence of foreign capital have also been stronger factors in the formation of CEE media systems than in the development of Western European media systems (Hallin & Mancini, 2012a). As Klimkiewicz (2009) notes, the dominance of foreign ownership in the press and, to a lesser extent, in the broadcasting sector has been a structural distinctive feature of CEE media systems relative to other countries in Europe. This makes it relevant to account for how CEE media markets have unfolded, not only in the light of media audience patterns, as we do through the dimension of press market inclusiveness, but also from the perspective of media markets' ownership structures.

During the first years after the twilight of communist regimes, investors gained control over media enterprises at very low costs (Zielonka, 2015), which attracted a high amount of U.S. and EU capital (Peruško & Popoviç, 2008). Since the 1990s, foreign investors, mainly Western-based transnational media companies, have been "conquering" and shaping media markets across CEE. This trend has progressed at a quicker or slower pace depending on the country. Whereas in the early 1990s, the majority of press media in Hungary was transferred to foreign investors, the privatization of the press in Poland was very closely supervised by the government and foreign ownership within broadcasting was limited. Similarly, in Slovenia, there was an extended restriction on foreign ownership from 1994 until 2001, and media outlets were also

profitable, which most likely explains the lower levels of foreign ownership in the country compared with other CEE markets (Štětka, 2012). Trends in foreign ownership are changing in some countries, however. Whereas Estonia has always been dominated by foreign ownership, in Czech Republic, the shift in media ownership to local business elites as a consequence of the 2008 economic crisis and declining advertising revenues has been one of the most dramatic across the region (Balčytienė et al., 2015, p. 122).

The entrance of foreign ownership had important consequences for CEE media markets. It went hand in hand with an increase in media ownership concentration, which some argue may have led to the instrumentalization, weak journalistic professionalism, and tabloidization of the media content over time in Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary, Romania, and Poland (Dobek-Ostrowska & Glowacki, 2008).

In sum, the question rises as to what extent Hallin and Mancini's dimensions can be used to analyze the differences and similarities among young Eastern European media systems and which variables should be operationalized to account for the CEE idiosyncrasies described. We also sought to investigate whether CEE media systems can be embedded into a single model or whether, as in Western democracies, we find important divergences between groups of countries. This led us to formulate the following research questions:

RQ1: How can Hallin and Mancini's framework of comparison be applied and extended to analyze Central and Eastern European media systems?

RQ2: Which typology of media systems best describes CEE?

Method and Data

Analogous to Hallin and Mancini's (2004) approach, we followed the most similar system design to select our cases because we were primarily interested in capturing heterogeneities among otherwise similar media systems (Wirth & Kolb, 2004). CEE media systems belong to transitional countries, the historical conjuncture and rapid social change of which explain why "generalizations regarding media evolution in the region are possible" (Gross, 2004, p. 114). We confine our analysis to only those 11 CEE competitive democracies that belong to the European Union. Due to EU preaccession processes and subsequent membership, CEE countries had to comply with EU common standards and media regulation such as the Audiovisual Media Services Directive. The fact that CEE media systems mirror Western European dual media models speaks to the particular process of "Europeanization" undergone by new EU Eastern countries compared with non-EU members (Dobek-Ostrowska, 2015; Schimmelfennig & Sedelmeier, 2005).

To analyze the aforementioned media systems, we relied on several methods of data collection. We drew on experts' interviews (European Media Systems Survey, 2010; World Values Survey, 2005–2007), surveys (Eurobarometer, 2011), yearbooks (European Audiovisual Observatory, 2011; Freedom House, 2010; World Press Trends compilation, 2010), documents and reports (Hanretty, 2009), and content analysis (European Election Studies, 2009) spanning a period from 2007 to 2011 (see Table A1 in the Appendix).

To analyze our data, we first engaged in a deductive approach by testing the operationalization of Hallin and Mancini's dimensions as in Brüggemann et al. (2014), which consists of four dimensions and three subdimensions. Thus, we analyzed the inclusiveness of the press market, political parallelism, journalistic professionalism, and role of the state dimensions, the last of which was considered a multidimensional category and was disaggregated into public broadcasting, press subsidies, and ownership regulation subdimensions. Similar to Brüggemann et al., we *z*-standardized and averaged all of the indicators used to measure such dimensions and subdimensions to build indices. For Western Europe, Brüggemann et al. showed that the original framework held acceptable degrees of internal consistency for all indices. However, for CEE, the political parallelism dimension and the press subsidies subdimension had to be modified because the indicators used to measure such dimensions were not correlated sufficiently to assume that they were capturing parts of the same construct (Cronbach's $\alpha < .50$). For political parallelism, the indicator relying on political preferences of each media outlet's audience, namely media–party parallelism, had to be dismissed, and the press subsidies subdimension had to be disaggregated into direct and indirect subsidies (value added tax reductions; see Table 1).

Table 1. Indicators.

Dimension	Indicator	Data source
Press market	Daily newspaper reach Working-class reach Women reach	WPT 2008–2010; WVS, 2005–2007; EB76, 2011; EES, 2009
Political parallelism	Separation of news and commentary Partisan influence and policy advocacy Political orientation of journalists Political bias Public service broadcasting dependence	EES, 2009; EMSS, 2010; Hanretty, 2009
Journalistic professionalism	External autonomy, internal autonomy Professional guidelines, media credibility Public orientation	EMSS, 2010
Public broadcasting	Market share of public TV License fee revenue	EAO, 2011
Ownership regulation	TV regulation, newspaper regulation Cross-media regulation	WPT, 2010
Direct subsidies	Press subsidies	WPT, 2010
Indirect subsidies	Tax reduction	WPT, 2010
Online news use	Information source online	EB76, 2011
Press freedom	Press Freedom Index	FH, 2010
Ownership concentration	C3	Peruško & Popoviç, 2008
Foreign ownership	Foreign TV owners among top-3 commercial operators	Peruško & Popoviç, 2008

Note. WPT = World Press Trends compilation; WVS = World Values Survey; EB76 = Eurobarometer; EES = European Election Studies; EMSS = European Media Systems; EAO = European Audiovisual Observatory; FH = Freedom House.

We also considered four new variables (foreign TV share, ownership concentration, press freedom, and online news use) to account for those systemic elements of CEE that may have added to the variance within the region. As advanced in the first section of this article, high foreign media ownership is a trend that influenced CEE media markets and structures in significant ways, one of which may be the concentration of media capital. Therefore, we accounted for the percentage of foreign TV share among the top-three TV market players, as provided by Peruško and Popović (2008), and we used their C3 index, that is, the percentage of audience share of the three leaders in the TV market. We accounted for foreign audience share in the TV market because, according to Klimkiewicz (2009), in the time span considered in our study, the TV market offered more variation across CEE countries than did the print media sector, in which the dominance of foreign and transnational ownership was much more pervasive. Furthermore, as noted by Štětka (2013), as a result of profit declines, there is a consistent pattern across the region of foreign media investors selling their stakes to local businesspeople over the past several years, a process that has been much more prevalent in the press than in the broadcasting sector. In addition, we accounted for differences in press freedom to signal those cases that carried a past of particularly strong and systematic media censorship and state control by means of the Freedom of the Press index by Freedom House (2010). The Freedom House index accounts for political and economic factors that impact news reporting and access to information. Finally, online news use served to assess the extent to which the particularly slow development of information and communication infrastructure in the region may be affecting citizens' use of Web-based news media content. Overall, the resulting framework showed satisfactory levels of internal consistency (Cronbach's α = .62–.80; DeVellis, 2003, p. 95; Hair, Anderson, Tatham, & Black, 1998, p. 88). The detailed operationalization of each of the dimensions considered is shown in Table A2 of the Appendix.

To build types of media systems, we reduced the number of parameters (i.e., dimensions/variables) to analyze an otherwise limited number of cases (11 media systems). The low case number prevented us from using principal component analysis. Instead, we used an adaptation of multidimensional scaling called CoPlot. Similar to multidimensional scaling, CoPlot maps the relative commonalities and differences between cases (e.g., countries) as distances onto a two-dimensional space (Borg & Groenen, 1997). However, CoPlot allows cases and variables to be visualized simultaneously by generating a conventional multidimensional scaling map and, in a further step, adding vectors to indicate the relationships between variables. As a goodness-of-fit measure for the overall solution, we used the coefficient of alienation, indicating the relative loss of information caused by the transformation of multidimensional data into two dimensions. Overall, the patterns of relationship shown in CoPlot allowed us to reduce the number of *z*-standardized variables to four main dimensions. Finally, we used these four dimensions to run a hierarchical cluster analysis using Ward's method and applying squared Euclidean distances as a measure of similarity. The analysis yielded three different clusters that were confirmed by conducting a nonhierarchical cluster analysis using another distance matrix: centroid-based *k*-means method (Milligan & Sokol, 1980).

Results

Is Hallin and Mancini's (2004) framework proper to analyze CEE? What dimensions should one consider to discern differences and similarities in the East? Table 1 shows all of the indicators that can describe the differences and similarities between media systems in the region. A series of correlations adds to the validation of Hallin and Mancini's framework in the East and shows how some of the old dimensions based on the Hallin and Mancini framework and new variables applicable to the East are related in meaningful ways. As Hallin and Mancini hypothesized and Brüggemann et al. (2014) confirmed for Western Europe, political parallelism and journalistic professionalism are negatively correlated also in Eastern Europe (r_s = .68, p < .05). In addition, we found that the more indirect and direct subsidies a media system has, the stronger its press market is (r_s = .70, p < .05, and r_s = .61, p < .05)[2]. Unlike Hallin and Mancini, we could not find a significant relationship between political parallelism and most of the subdimensions of the role of the state or between an inclusive press market and highly professional journalism. Nevertheless, we found a positive and significant correlation between professionalism and online news use (r_s = .71, p < .05), between online news and press freedom (r_s = .62, p < .05), and between press freedom and professionalism (r_s = .62, p < .05). Finally, parallelism and freedom of the press were negatively correlated (r_s = .62, p < .05).

To analyze a sample with few cases (11 media systems), we reduced the number of variables by projecting our cases onto a two-dimensional space (see Figure 1). By doing so, we could (a) plot the values of all media systems for each variable considered and (b) simultaneously depict the correlations between our variables (visualized as vectors in Figure 1). As shown in Figure 1, the positions of the vectors signal highly positively correlated variables (for those that point in the same direction), highly negatively correlated variables (for those pointing in opposing directions), and variables that are not correlated at all (those that are [quasi-]orthogonal to each other). The average correlation between vectors (i.e., variables) was greater than .7, and the coefficient of alienation showed acceptable levels of goodness of fit (<.15; Bravata, Shojania, Olkin & Raveh, 2008). By mapping the cases and variables, we were able to visually identify patterns in our data that guided us through our subsequent statistical analysis.

[2] Subscripts represent Spearman's rho correlation. See http://users.sussex.ac.uk/~grahamh/RM1web/APA%20format%20for%20statistical%20notation%20and%20other%20things.pdf

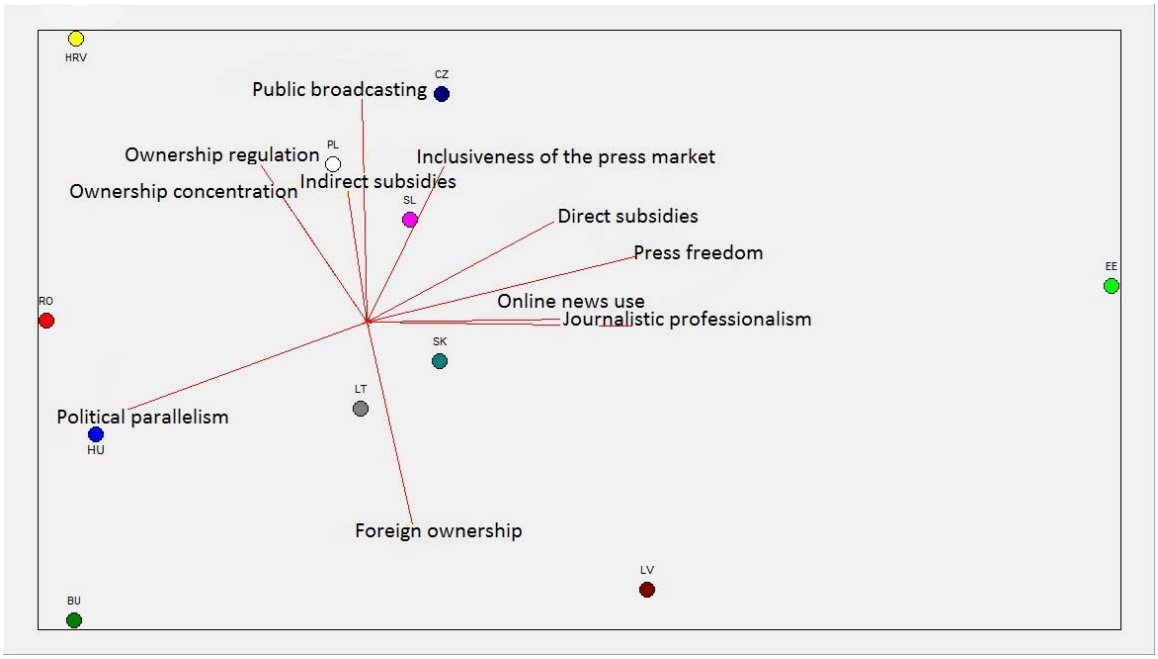

Figure 1. Multidimensional scaling of dimensions and countries. BU = Bulgaria; HU = Hungary; RO = Romania; LT = Lithuania; SK = Slovakia; LV = Latvia; EE = Estonia; CZ = Czech Republic; PL = Poland; HRV = Croatia; SL = Slovenia.

First, we selected dimensions that were more distant from the others and thus reflected different phenomena, namely, political parallelism and foreign ownership (see Figure 1). Second, we accounted for those variables that have traditionally been used to analyze and differentiate media systems in CEE, namely, freedom of the press (e.g., Jakubowicz & Sükösd, 2008) and PSB (e.g., Csigó, 2008; Popescu, Toka, Gosselin, & Santana Pereira, 2011; Sparks, 2008). Third, we confirmed their explanatory power by assessing the extent to which they allowed us to detect significant differences between cases in our data (i.e., press freedom). We also grouped closely correlated dimensions and ran reliability tests to examine whether the inclusion of single variables led to lower levels of consistency. This was the case for PSB. Overall, the following four main explanatory variables, two original dimensions and two new variables, were finally selected: political parallelism, public broadcasting, foreign ownership, and press freedom. The subsequent cluster analysis yielded a meaningful typology of media systems.

Our hierarchical cluster analysis resulted in three different groups of media systems, named after their approximate geographical location: eastern, central, and northern (see Figure 2). Among the eastern cluster, we find Bulgaria, Romania, and Hungary. Czech Republic, Poland, Croatia, and Slovenia belong to the central cluster, and Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, and Slovakia form the northern one. The clusters were validated through three different robustness checks. First, we conducted a second cluster analysis using centroid-based *k*-means as an algorithm of aggregation whereby we were able to replicate the three-cluster solution. Second, we ran a second hierarchical cluster analysis with all of the indicators that were

originally considered to describe differences and similarities between media systems in the region besides the four main explanatory variables. This confirmed the three groups, and only Estonia was detached from the northern cluster and emerged as an outlier (see Figure 1 for a graphical depiction). A third test omitting Estonia from our cluster analysis with the four variables of theoretical and empirical interest, and also with the totality of indicators, confirmed the three-cluster pattern and the particularity of the Estonian case.

Overall, our data point at the impossibility of explaining CEE media systems by using just one model. The resulting three groups are distinctive in many instances (see Table 2).

Table 2. Cluster Profiles.

Type of media system	Political parallelism	Public broadcasting	Press freedom	Foreign ownership
Eastern: Bulgaria, Romania, Hungary	1.09	−0.76	−1.11	0.53
Central: Czech Republic, Poland, Croatia, and Slovenia	−0.12	1.06	0.11	−0.93
Northern: Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, and Slovakia	−0.70	−0.49	0.72	0.54

Note. Values are *z*-standardized indices.

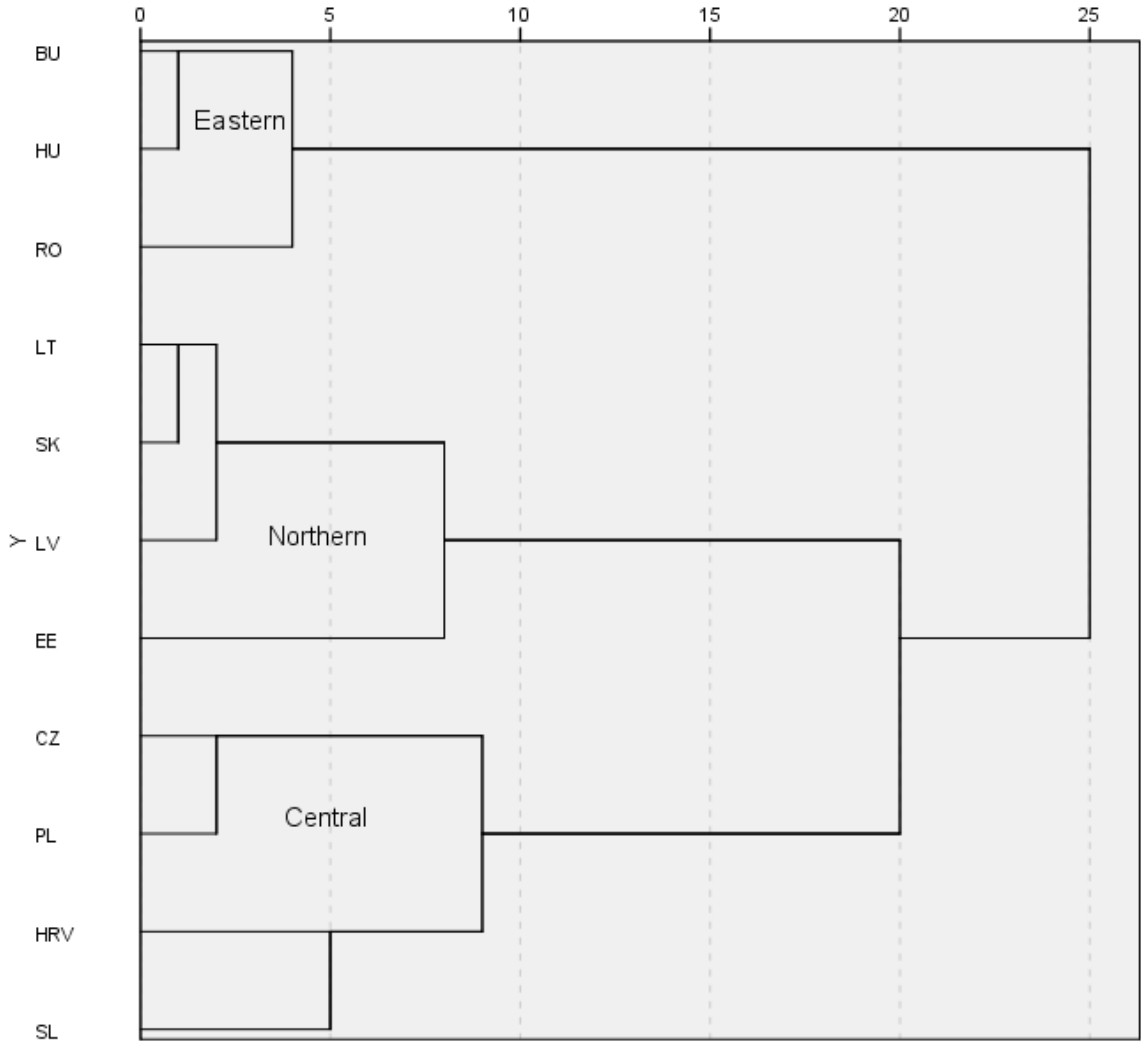

Figure 2. Dendogram of the hierarchical cluster analysis. BU = Bulgaria; HU = Hungary; RO = Romania; LT = Lithuania; SK = Slovakia; LV = Latvia; EE = Estonia; CZ = Czech Republic; PL = Poland; HRV = Croatia; SL = Slovenia. Numbers on top represent distances at which cases have been grouped (0-25 scale).

The eastern cluster (Bulgaria, Hungary, and Romania) holds the highest levels of political parallelism combined with the lowest investments in and the lowest audience of PSB. These countries also have the lowest rates of press freedom and relatively high levels of foreign ownership (compared with the countries in the central cluster). Nevertheless, Romania is closer to the central cluster with regard to the latter variable, with the lowest levels of foreign investments among the 11 countries considered. In addition, the eastern cluster has the lowest levels of online news use, professionalization of the journalists, and regulation of media ownership (results not shown).

The central cluster (Croatia, Czech Republic, Poland, and Slovenia) is located somewhat between the eastern and the northern cluster, except for foreign ownership, the score for which is much lower than those for the rest of the clusters, and for PSB, which scores significantly higher than the others. Its high levels of ownership concentration, which come with the highest levels of ownership regulation, are also remarkable.[3] In this last dimension, however, we find a high degree of variance within all clusters, which we attribute to the binary nature of the indicators used to operationalize the regulation of ownership.

The northern cluster (Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, and Slovakia) is characterized by the lowest levels of political parallelism, the highest levels of press freedom, and the highest levels of foreign ownership. The countries in this cluster also grant the highest levels of journalistic professionalism and online political information use and the lowest levels of ownership concentration. However, as the successive cluster analyses conducted to provide robustness to our results suggest, Estonia may be a particular case in several respects. It is not only the "outstanding disciple" in the dimensions already mentioned (strong journalistic professionalism, high online news use), but it also does not square with the low levels of inclusiveness of the press market attributed to the northern cluster (Estonia has the highest score in newspaper reach). In addition, the role of the state in Estonia is much more prominent than in the rest of countries belonging to this cluster, where we could not find the strong direct and indirect subsidies and the relevance of PSB found in Estonia.

Discussion

Our study showed that Hallin and Mancini's (2004) framework must be adapted to the specific features of CEE (RQ1). First, press freedom and foreign ownership were considered as additional variables of theoretical interest because of their ability to explain differences between CEE countries on their own. Low levels of freedom of the press were found to align with historical trends in countries such as Romania and Bulgaria, which had particularly strong media censorship and state control during their communist pasts. We also found that the relevance of foreign ownership from the beginning of the 1990s could be traced in northern countries and Hungary, whereas the restrictions to foreign ownership in the late 1990s in Slovenia and the recent leave of foreign media investors from Czech Republic had a translation into their current low scores. Second, some reformulations in the operationalization of the Hallin and Mancini dimensions were needed for their framework to be applied to Eastern Europe. On the one hand, the

[3] Klimkiewicz (2009) notes that even where regulations set stricter limits to broadcasting after 1989 (e.g., Czech Republic, Hungary, and Slovakia), foreign ownership increasingly became dominant relative to local media ownership.

indicator relying on the political preferences of each media outlet's audience—media–party parallelism—in the index of political parallelism had to be dismissed to avoid low levels of internal consistency. We attribute such inconsistent values of media–party parallelism to high degrees of electoral volatility and a lack of clear partisan alignments among CEE constituencies, as the previous literature shows (e.g., Dassonneville & Hooghe, 2011). Citizens' weak and changing political preferences can make it difficult to detect and measure media's political parallelism by means of partisan preferences of media users.

On the other hand, the press subsidies subdimension had to be disaggregated into direct and indirect subsidies. The rapid and uneven political institutionalization and press deregulation that occurred during the first several years after the twilight of communist regimes are plausible explanations for the great gap found between direct subsidies (which are nonexistent as such in the majority of CEE countries) and the much higher variance found for indirect subsidies across CEE. Furthermore, the indicator direct subsidies on its own seems to point to meaningful differences between countries. Whereas more opaque forms of direct funding abound in the region, only media systems that underwent profound normative developments (e.g., in compliance with recent EU accession processes) and with media policy tools supporting public interest content or national minorities happen to hold such a funding scheme (see Peruško, 2013, for the Croatian case). Third, PSB and political parallelism, as key parameters to explain the interplay between media and politics in the region (Csigó, 2008; Jakubowicz & Sükösd, 2008; Voltmer, 2008), revealed significant heterogeneities between countries with weak party systems with a tendency to politically use the media (Poland or Romania) and more stable political settings such as Estonia. Finally, contrary to our expectations, high levels of foreign media investment did not go hand in hand with high levels of ownership concentration. Further research should empirically address the question of whether foreign ownership may enhance media concentration, given the relevance of the latter for CEE media autonomy and content quality, as argued by previous literature (Dobek-Ostrowska & Glowacki, 2008).

Our analysis also revealed that CEE does not embody a single media system model, but can actually be segmented into three different types (RQ2). Eastern media systems (Bulgaria, Hungary, and Romania) formed a cluster characterized by extreme levels of political parallelism and low levels of press freedom. Central media systems (Czech Republic, Croatia, Poland, and Slovenia) shared the relative strength of their PSB and the lowest levels of foreign ownership. Finally, a northern cluster (Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, and Slovakia) showed the highest levels of press freedom, the highest levels of foreign ownership, and the lowest levels of political parallelism. Estonia happened to be a very particular case within this third cluster, the singularity of which was confirmed by a more comprehensive robustness check with further variables, where Estonia also showed the highest rates of online news use, inclusiveness of the press market, and press subsidies, with substantial similarities to the Scandinavian countries (Zielonka & Mancini, 2011).

This study has a number of limitations and future challenges inherent to the difficulty of the task undertaken. First, more (longitudinal) research is needed to properly outline the key factors that characterize a region in which some countries are still teetering toward a "political gray zone" (Carothers, 2002, pp. 9–11) and whose hybrid media systems are the product of historical legacies, imitative processes, and multiple transformations (Jakubowicz & Sükösd, 2008; Mancini, 2015; Voltmer, 2012). In this vein, the rapid changes undergone by CEE media and political systems in the past two decades have

put any attempt to "immortalize" a typology of media landscapes in the region at risk of capturing a slightly blurred photograph. For example, whereas our study partly mirrors the deterioration of media freedom and autonomy that started to make its way in Poland in the 2000s and in Hungary in the 2010s (see Bajomi-Lázár, 2014), new data would be needed to capture the extent and implications of the comings and goings of governmental interference over PSB in Croatia. Hungary, Romania, and Bulgaria have also been characterized as particularly changing democracies, in which media are partly free (Dobek-Ostrowska, 2015). Overall, media laws are frequently amended and shifts in media ownership are continuous and oftentimes opaque, which make it difficult to build a durable description of the nature of media structures in the CEE region (Mancini, 2015).

Second, redundancies can be found between some of the dimensions we considered. There is at least one theoretical and one empirical reason why this might not be problematic for the purposes of our study. On the one hand, even if an indicator is used in more than one dimension, each dimension rests on a particular constellation of indicators that belong to each other and hold internal consistency. On the other hand, when we excluded a variable built on similar indicators as those used to construct other dimensions (e.g., press freedom), our analysis clustered countries in a different way.

Third, the data used may limit the equivalence of some of our analyses. For example, the limited scope of the World Press Trends database led us to build on a binary indicator to measure the regulation of media ownership, which may have overstated the amount of variance between countries on this particular issue. The World Press Trends compilation's lack of reliability tests usually conducted in scientific cross-national studies has also been a basis for objection. Thus, we relied on original laws or EU reports for some indicators when available (e.g., ownership regulation) and cross-validated with further data when possible.[4] The European Media Systems may also entail further problems with subjectivity because it relies on online interviews with experts. Nevertheless, Popescu et al. (2011) confirmed the validity of their data by contrasting it to other data sets.

Fourth, other variables may reveal further media heterogeneities worth addressing. The representation of minorities in media programming and newsrooms or the extent of media fragmentation along ethnic and political lines in countries such as Croatia or Slovenia, compared with more homogeneous ones (Poland or Czech Republic), may also contribute to characterizing groups of media systems in the region. Variables at the political system level (e.g., degree of proportional representation) might also be examined and linked to media systems characteristics (Hallin & Mancini, 2004).

[4] The European Platform of Regulatory Authorities website served as consulting national legislation regulating media ownership (retrieved from http://www.epra.org/articles/; legislation in July and October 2015). Our data on broadcasting concentration and cross-ownership regulation were also cross-validated with the report on transnational media concentrations in Europe from the Advisory Panel to the CDMM on media concentrations, pluralism, and diversity questions (2004) for Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Hungary, Romania, and Slovakia. Wyka (2010) was used to cross-check press ownership regulations in Hungary and Czech Republic.

Finally, our study indicates several variables and four main dimensions with high explanatory power—PSB, political parallelism, foreign ownership, and press freedom—that need to be further explored. They represent a valuable first benchmark that, together with previous approaches (Dobek-Ostrowska, 2015; Peruško et al., 2013; Santana Pereira, 2012), can be used to address the need for a valid theoretical and empirical framework that sheds light on the ways in which media systems in Western and Eastern European countries could be described and compared.

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Appendix

Table A1. Data Sources.

Data source	Time period	Collection method	Population	Sample	Response rate
European Audiovisual Observatory	2011	Secondary collection from Eurodata TV Worldwide and public services broadcasting annual reports	PSB	Census	N/A
European Election Studies I: Voter survey	2009	CATI [a]	Population aged 18 and older	1,000–1,005 per country	7–24%
European Election Studies II: Media study	2009	Content analysis	Main national television and newspapers	2–4 TV channels and 3 newspapers per country	N/A
European Media Systems Survey	2009–2010	Online survey	Experts of media and politics from academic institutions	17–35 per country	20–48%
Eurobarometer 76	Autumn 2011	Survey	EU citizens	1,000 face-to-face interviews per member state	N/A
Freedom House	2010	Survey and secondary collection of institutional reports	Experts from Freedom House	N/A	N/A
Hanretty (2009)	1944–2007	Data collection from public services broadcasting and LexisNexis	PSB	1 or 2 TV channels per country	N/A

Peruško & Popoviç (2008)	2008	Secondary collection from EU Commission, Council of Europe and European Institute for the Media	TV channels	Main TV channels	N/A
World Press Trends	2008–2010	Secondary collection from national newspapers associations and public institutions	N/A	N/A	N/A
World Values Survey	2005–2007	Face-to-face (and telephone) interviews	Population aged 18 and older	657–2,064 per country	26–93%

Table A2. Operationalization of Dimensions.

Dimension	Indicator	Measure	Data transformation	Scale	Source
Press market[b]	Overall daily newspaper reach	Standard measures of national market research institutes (e.g., TNS Gallup) "Could you tell me to what extent you read the written press?"[c]		%	WPT, 2008–2010; EB76, 2011
	Working-class daily newspaper reach	"People use different sources to learn what is going on in their country and the world. For each of the following sources, please indicate whether you used it last week or did not use it last week to obtain information: . . . Daily newspaper." "In a typical week, how many days do you follow the news?"[d,e]	Filtering cases/respondents describing themselves as "working class"	%	WVS, 2005–2007; EES, 2009
	Women daily newspaper reach	Standard measures of national market research institutes (e.g., TNS Gallup)		%	WPT, 2008–2010

Dimension	Indicator	Measure	Data transformation	Scale	Source
Political parallelism[f]	Lacking separation of news and commentary	Number of evaluative references per news story		*N*	EES, 2009
	Partisan influence and policy advocacy	(1) "How far is the political coverage of each of the following media outlets influenced by a party or parties to whom it is close?" (2) "To what extent does each media outlet advocate particular views and policies?"	Additive index of measures 1 and 2 (Popescu et al., 2011)	0–20	EMSS, 2010
	Political orientation of journalists	"The political orientation of the most prominent journalists is well-known to the public."		0–10	EMSS, 2010
	Political bias	"To what extent does each media outlet present equally well the arguments of all sides in political debates?"	Inverted scale	0–10	EMSS, 2010
	PSB dependence	(1) Rate of CEO turnovers (2) Rate of government changes followed by CEO turnovers within six months	Inverted average index of measures 1 and 2 (Hanretty, 2009)	0–1	Hanretty, 2009
Journalistic professionalism[g]	Internal autonomy	"How much is the political coverage in the following media outlets influenced by its owners?"	Inverted scale	0–10	EMSS, 2010
	External autonomy	"Politicians, business people and interest groups influence what the news media report and how by pressurizing and bribing individual journalists."	Inverted scale	0–10	EMSS, 2010
	Professional guidelines	"Journalists agree on the criteria for judging excellence in their profession regardless of their political orientations."		0–10	EMSS, 2010

Dimension	Indicator	Measure	Data transformation	Scale	Source
	Media credibility	"News media enjoy a lot of credibility."		0–10	EMSS, 2010
	Public orientation	"Journalists are motivated by an ethic of serving the public interest."		0–10	EMSS, 2010
Public broadcasting[h]	Market share of public TV	Average daily market share		%	EAO, 2011
	Revenue (license fees) of PSB	Public revenue (U.S.$) divided by GDP (U.S.$)		*N*	EAO, 2011
Ownership regulation[i]	TV ownership regulation[j,k]			Binary	WPT, 2009
	Newspaper/publisher ownership regulation[j]			Binary	WPT, 2009
	Cross-media (print/broadcast) ownership regulation[j]			Binary	WPT, 2009
Direct subsidies[l]	Press subsidies	Press subsidies (U.S.$) divided by GDP (U.S.$)		*N*	WPT, 2010
Indirect subsidies[m]	VAT reduction	General VAT rate minus average press VAT rate (VAT single copy and VAT subscription sales)		Percentage points	WPT, 2010
Press freedom	Press Freedom Index	Inverted Scale Press Freedom Index		%	Freedom House, 2010
Online news	Online news use	Information sources on political and national affairs		%	EB76, 2011
Foreign ownership	TV Foreign Ownership	Foreign TV owners among top-three operators		%	Peruško & Popoviç, 2008
Ownership concentration	C3	Concentration of the three stronger players of the market		%	Peruško & Popoviç, 2008

Note. WPT = World Press Trends; EB76 = Eurobarometer; WVS = World Values Survey; EES = European Election Studies; EMSS = European Media Systems; EAO **=** European Audiovisual Observatory; PSB = public service broadcasting; VAT = value added tax.
[a] Computer-Assisted Telephone Interviewing. [b]Average index of the three respective indicator indices (Cronbach's α = .76). [c]For Latvia, Slovakia, and Slovenia. [d]For Czech Republic, Latvia, Lithuania, and Slovakia. [e] We used the percentage of respondents that follows the news seven days a week, which is as equivalent to daily newspaper use as possible.
[f] Average index of the five respective *z*-standardized indicator indices (Cronbach's α = .62). [g] Average index of the five indicator indices (Cronbach's α = .88). [h] Average index of the two respective *z*-standardized indicator indices (Cronbach's α = .65). [i] Average index of the three respective indicator indices (Cronbach's α = .80).[j] For Lithuania and Romania, information retrieved from respective laws regulating the media sector. [k] For Slovenia, the information was retrieved from the act regulating the transposition of the Audiovisual Media Services Directive. [l]For Croatia, WPT (2011). [m]For Bulgaria, Latvia, Poland, Slovakia, and Slovenia, WPT (2009).

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Burning Down the (White) House: Partisan Attempts to Undermine American Exceptionalism

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Although it is well established that U.S. politicians tend to promote American exceptionalism, we argue that partisans often attempt to undermine American exceptionalism when doing so improves the standing of their party. Results of three studies provide support for this expectation. Study 1, using American National Election Studies cumulative data, finds that evaluations of the United States' global standing are linked to evaluations of the political parties. Further, which party currently holds the White House affects partisans' appraisals of the nation's global standing. Study 2 employs an experiment where partisans are exposed to a news story proclaiming American exceptionalism to either be intact or in jeopardy. Results provide additional evidence that appraisals of the United States' global standing are more pessimistic when the president is from the opposing party. Study 3 uses a content analysis of presidential convention speeches and demonstrates that presidential candidates attempt to undermine American exceptionalism when the other party holds the White House.

Keywords: American exceptionalism, social identity theory, partisan identity, national identity, motivated reasoning, presidential discourse

In his final State of the Union address, Barack Obama unequivocally dismissed any concerns that the United States' position atop the global hierarchy had somehow weakened. Instead, he proudly proclaimed, "The United States of America is the most powerful nation on Earth, period. Period" (Obama, 2016). Obama's assertions are just one example of the widespread endorsement of American exceptionalism by U.S. politicians. American exceptionalism has been a regular fixture in political discourse since World War II (Domke & Coe, 2010). Indeed, citizens who follow politics have consistently been encouraged to hold the conviction that the United States is a unique and superior nation (Gilmore, Meeks, & Domke, 2013; Gilmore, Sheets, & Rowling, 2016; Rojecki, 2008).

Although previous literature has largely focused on the promotion of American exceptionalism, there is no shortage of examples of politicians expressing dire concern about the nation's prominence. For example, Donald Trump's "Make America Great Again" slogan was effectively used to rally citizens who

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believed that the essence of their country had begun to slip away (Greenhouse, 2016). Previous election cycles are rife with similar examples. In 2008, Democrats lamented, "This is not our America," (Edwards, 2007) and warned, "Bush and the Republicans have undermined the greatness of America" (Clinton, 2008). Several years later, Republicans were sounding the alarm, portraying the United States as a "nation of crisis" (Cain, 2011) and claiming that "something was wrong in America" (Santorum, 2012).

This tendency to undermine America's greatness seems at odds with the widespread belief in American exceptionalism (see Gallup, 2010). Such disparate portrayals can be explained, in large part, by partisan politics. We argue that partisans become motivated to undermine American exceptionalism when doing so improves the relative standing of their political party. The United States' successes or failures reflect on the president and his or her party (Lobo & Curtice, 2014). The more dominant the nation's global standing, the more the president's partisans can justify in-group favoritism. Conversely, the opposing party should engage in more in-group favoritism when the country's superiority is questioned. Partisans should be motivated (a) to interpret information about the United States' global standing and (b) to portray the state of the nation's global standing in ways that best serve the interest of their political in-group. Thus, in many circumstances, Americans will actively or implicitly seek to undermine American exceptionalism.

Although it may seem obvious that partisans are willing to undermine American exceptionalism if it serves their party's interests, there is limited empirical evidence demonstrating this behavior. This study seeks to bridge the distinct conversations that proclaim (a) Americans are committed to viewing their nation as truly exceptional and (b) partisans are motivated to improve the relative status of their party. Specifically, we expect that how partisan citizens process political information, and how political elites talk about the United States, depends on which party currently holds the White House. We test these expectations by employing three studies. Study 1 uses American National Election Studies (ANES) cumulative data from 1984 to 2012 to test (a) whether evaluations of the United States' global standing are linked to evaluations of the political parties and (b) whether partisans are motivated to have a more optimistic or pessimistic estimate of the country's global standing depending on which party holds the White House. Study 2 examines how partisans process news stories about the United States' global standing by employing an experimental design where partisans are exposed to a news story proclaiming American exceptionalism to be either intact or in jeopardy. Study 3 uses a content analysis of presidential convention speeches from 1948 to 2016 to explore whether U.S. presidential candidates either promote or undermine American exceptionalism, depending on which party holds the White House.

Group Status and the Self-Concept

The United States' global standing is vitally important to many Americans, in part because people use the groups to which they belong to help define their self-identity. According to social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979), social groups provide cognitive categories that people use to construct a mental representation of the self. If a social identity is internalized as self-defining, then the status of that group impacts self-evaluation (Tajfel, 1982). Crucially, group status is relational—the value of a social group depends on how favorably it compares to other relevant groups. Positive evaluations of the in-group in

comparison to an out-group enhance self-esteem, while comparisons that favor the out-group will diminish self-esteem (Tajfel & Turner, 1979).

Many Americans internalize their national identity as an important facet of their self-concept (Huddy & Khatib, 2007). The United States' global standing can, therefore, become important for self-perception. As a result, most Americans are motivated to embrace *American exceptionalism*, which is the idea that the United States is unique, a transcendent force of good, and the pinnacle of human progress (Rojecki, 2008). Embracing American exceptionalism assures citizens that they are a part of something meaningful and transcendent (Kane, 2003). If the United States is perceived to be the greatest country in the world, then Americans can perceive themselves to have more value and self-worth than citizens of other countries (Gilmore, 2014, 2015).

Although most U.S. citizens generally hold an exaggerated opinion of the country's global standing (Gallop, 2010), this assessment can be complicated by partisan commitments. In the same way that national identity can be self-defining, so, too, can political affiliation. It has been well established that many Americans have a powerful psychological attachment to their political affiliation (Iyengar, Sood, & Lelkes, 2012). For strong partisans, their political identity may be more salient and applicable to their self-concept than their national identity. Once an individual identifies with a political party, his self-concept becomes tied to the fate of that party (Green, Palmquist, & Schickler, 2002). Consequently, partisans become fixated on the status of their party in comparison to the opposition (Mason, 2015). Engaged partisans become emotionally invested in whether their party triumphs over the opposition (Green et al., 2002). These concerns can take precedence over pragmatic concerns about the nation's well-being (Gutmann & Thompson, 2012). For example, even though both parties constantly make overtures about wanting bipartisan achievements, when it comes down to it, partisans are simply unwilling to compromise on their partisan commitments and policy agendas (Harbridge, Malhotra, & Harrison, 2014). Similarly, partisans may become motivated to undermine American exceptionalism when doing so improves the relative standing of their political party.

The United States' Global Standing and Political Party Evaluations

The relative status of a social group can be literal (e.g., objective conflicts over resources), but it is often symbolic. Social identity theory emphasizes the central role perception plays in driving behavior. A social category only matters if a person or group determines it does (Oakes, 2002). For example, one citizen may take great pride in being Texan, while another citizen may care greatly about being from Chicago, but not view her Illinois residency as part of her identity. Further, group evaluations are always relative and negotiated (Hunter, 1991). Social identity categories are neither static nor fixed—they are socially constructed and dynamic (Jenkins, 2008). Thus, the relative status of a social group is determined, in larger part, by symbolic resources and the ability to influence perception (Alexander, 2010).

One of the most important symbols in determining the relative status of the U.S. political parties is the president. Because the president symbolically represents the United States (Coe & Neumann, 2011), the nation's successes and failures directly reflect on the president—even in many cases when the

president is not solely, or even partially, responsible (Iyengar, 1994). Presidents do not just provide a symbolic representation of the United States; they also symbolically represent their political party (Lobo & Curtice, 2014). Presidents serve as the figurehead for, and are normally seen as the "prototypical" member of, their party (Dow, 2001). As a result, evaluations of a president naturally transfer to evaluations of his or her political party. Thus, a president's approval rating will affect the evaluations of his or her party (Lobo & Curtice, 2014).

A successful president will boost the relative standing of his or her party, while a president mired in struggles and low approval ratings should dampen evaluations of the party. Even though people are motivated to view their in-group as superior, they can, at times, be forced to acknowledge and confront a marginalized social standing (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). For example, it is well established that the public's perception of the state of the economy guides evaluations of the president and the political parties (Vavreck, 2009). When a president presides over a poor economy, members of the president's party may be forced to acknowledge this poor performance and, thus, have a harder time blindly trumpeting the superiority of the in-group. Members of the opposing party, on the other hand, will be reassured of the relative superiority of their party (Marcus, Neuman, & MacKuen, 2000). These partisans may gleefully point to these poor economic indicators as proof that their party would do a better job.

Thus, the United States' global standing will be seen as a reflection of the president's performance, which will, subsequently, be seen as a reflection of the president's party. We therefore expect that a partisan's evaluation of the United States' global standing will influence the degree to which partisans engage in in-group favoritism. Specifically, we expect that for a president's partisans, assessments of their party will rise and fall with their perceptions of the nation's global standing. For members of opposing party, on the other hand, assessments of their party will increase as they become more pessimistic about the United States' global standing, while in-group favoritism will decrease as they become more optimistic about the country's global standing. Thus, we present the following hypothesis:

H1: *For a president's partisans, there will be a positive correlation between the United States' global standing and in-group favoritism; for members of the opposing party, there will be an inverse relationship between the nation's global standing and in-group favoritism.*

Partisan Perceptions About the United States' Global Standing

As mentioned above, members of a social group are motivated to cognitively evaluate information in a way that favors the in-group over the out-group (Turner, Hogg, Oakes, Reicher, & Wetherell, 1987). People often engage in "motivated reasoning," where they interpret and process information in a manner that can help them achieve specific goals (Kunda, 1990). To reassure themselves that their social groups are superior, people may actively look for information that confirms existing beliefs, counterargue or dismiss discordant information, and interpret information in a biased manner (Taber & Lodge, 2006). This biased processing overemphasizes information that supports the standing of the in-group while undermining information that promotes the status of the out-group. For example, partisans tend to ignore or downplay information that presents their preferred politicians in an unfavorable light (Lebo & Cassino, 2007). Further, Democrats and Republicans often hold very different beliefs about

relatively objective information, such as the unemployment rate, inflation, or crime rates (Bartels, 2002). Given that the United States' global standing should affect the relative status of the political parties, partisans should be motivated to interpret the country's global standing in a way that will promote the status of their party. Democrats and Republicans should, therefore, have very different evaluations about the state of the union depending on which party holds the White House. We therefore present the following hypothesis:

H2: *(a) Members of the president's party will have a more optimistic appraisal of the United States' global standing, while (b) members of the opposing party will have a more pessimistic appraisal of the nation's global standing.*

News Media Coverage of American Exceptionalism

U.S. citizens' knowledge about the country's global standing is largely informed by mediated information (Albertson & Gadarian, 2015). Citizens cannot truly know about the essence of their nation, its people, or its relation to other nations through direct experience (Anderson, 1991). Instead, citizens often learn about social and political realities by listening to political speeches or consuming news media (Graber, 2001). The news media play a particularly important role in conveying information about the United States' current situation and/or its global standing.

In many cases, the news media engage in "uncritical patriotism"—that is, they hold an unequivocally positive evaluation of the country (while rejecting any criticism). Such an approach promotes an overly optimistic evaluation of the United States (Gilmore & Rowling, 2017). Some journalists, however, engage in "critical patriotism," which includes feelings of affection toward the country, but also a willingness to critique it when such criticism can help to improve the nation (Gilmore et al., 2013). These disparate news portrayals should encourage either a more or less favorable perception about the United States' global standing, respectively. On the whole, the more positive the media coverage, the more optimistic citizens should be about the country.

At the same time, we expect that partisans will process positive or negative coverage of American exceptionalism through the lens of their political commitments. As suggested by partisan-motivated reasoning, partisans tend to fixate on information that makes their party look good (Taber & Lodge, 2006) and downplay information that makes their party look bad (Lebo & Cassino, 2007). We therefore expect that when partisans receive messages that question whether the United States is truly exceptional, the president's partisans will resist this message, while members of the opposing party will readily accept the message. Thus, we expect an interaction between party affiliation and news media coverage about the United States' global standing:

H3: *When partisans receive a news story that is pessimistic about the United States' global standing, perceptions of the nation's global standing will decrease at a lower rate among the president's partisans' than among members of the opposing party.*

Presidential Candidates and American Exceptionalism

National identity does not reflect an objective reality; nations are socially constructed and maintained through discourse (Coe & Neumann, 2011). As symbolic leaders of the country, U.S. presidents are particularly important in this construction (Hutcheson, Domke, Billeaudeaux, & Garland, 2004). Presidents have been particularly invested in promoting the United States' global status as truly exceptional (Gilmore, 2015; Neumann & Coe, 2011). Strategically, it makes good sense for presidents to promote American exceptionalism (Domke & Coe, 2010)—the country's successes and failures symbolically reflect on the president. Presidents stand to benefit from increasing the perception that the United States is in a particularly exceptional position (Gilmore, 2014).

Although it has been well established that presidents tend to evoke American exceptionalism (Gilmore et al., 2016), such a view likely obscures another trend—the tendency for presidential candidates from the opposing party to bemoan the nation's failures and shortcomings. Other presidential candidates can also play an important role in shaping the nationwide discourse about the United States (Huddy, 2001). Presidential candidates should strategically strive to construct a portrait of the country (positive or negative) that will help boost their chances of being elected. Specifically, presidential candidates should seek to either uphold or undermine American exceptionalism, depending on who currently holds the White House. The party that holds the White House will be motivated to uphold an idealized version of the United States, while members of the party that does not hold the presidency stand to benefit by devaluing the nation's global standing. For example, in 2008, Democrats warned, "Bush and the Republicans have undermined the greatness of America" (Clinton, 2008), and in 2012, Republicans proclaimed, "something was wrong in America" (Santorum, 2012). Thus, we present the following hypothesis:

H4: *Presidential candidates will express more pessimism about the United States' current status when the opposing party holds the White House.*

Study 1

Study 1 examines whether there is a correlation between perceptions of the United States' global standing and in-group favoritism (H1) as well as whether partisan affiliation conditions appraisals of the country's global standing (H2). We tested these hypotheses by employing the American National Election Studies cumulative data for 1948 to 2012 to examine the associations between partisanship, pessimism about the United States' global standing, and in-group favoritism. This ANES file merges "into a single file all cross-section cases and variables for select questions from the ANES Time Series studies conducted since 1948" (ANES, n.d., para. 1). Analysis was limited to 1984 thru 2012, however, because previous years did not include all of the measures required to test our hypotheses.[1]

[1] ANES data for the 2010 midterm election was not made available in this data set.

Measures

In-group favoritism. Favorability toward Democrats and Republicans was measured using a 100-point feeling thermometer. *In-group favoritism* (M = 36.30, SD = 30.21) was constructed by subtracting favorability scores toward the out-group (M = 38.75, SD = 22.87) from scores toward the in-group (M = 75.05, SD = 16.91).

Perceived global standing. Evaluations of the United States' global standing was measured by asking, "During the past year, would you say that the United States' position in the world has grown weaker, stayed about the same, or grown stronger?" (1 = *grown weaker*, 2 = *stayed the same*, 3 = *grown stronger*; M = 1.83, SD = 0.76).

Control variables. Various control variables, which are often related to political attitudes (e.g., Kaye & Johnson, 2002), were included in our analysis. To reduce the potential for confounding relationships, we controlled for variables that had a significant relationship with in-group favoritism and/or perceptions of the United States' global standing (see Table 1, Table 2, and Table 3). Control variables included *ideology* (7-point scale ranging from *extremely liberal* to *extremely conservative*; M = 4.24, SD = 1.40), *political interest* (3-point scale, "Would you say that you have been/were *very much interested*, *somewhat interested*, or *not much interested* in the political campaigns [so far] this year?"; M = 2.11, SD = 0.75), *education* (4-point scale ranging from *grade school or less* to *college or advanced degree*; M = 2.45, SD = 0.96), *household income* (5-point scale ranging from *0–16th percentile* to *96th–100th percentile*; M = 2.87, SD = 1.16), *age* (M = 46.23, SD = 17.17), *gender* (male = 44.7%, female = 55.3%), and a *race dummy variable* (White = 78.8%, other race/ethnicity = 21.2%).

Analytic Technique

Analysis was performed using ordinary least squares regression. Data files were merged based on who was currently president at the time of each survey. Thus, the "Reagan" variable included surveys from 1984, 1986, and 1988; "H. W. Bush" comprised 1990 and 1992; "Clinton" was based on 1994, 1996, 1998, and 2000; "W. Bush" included 2002, 2004, and 2008; and "Obama" was based on 2012.

Study 1 Results

In-Group Favoritism

As shown in Table 1, in years in which a Republican was president, among Democrats there was a significant negative relationship between *the United States' perceived global standing* and *in-group favoritism*. This includes the presidencies of Reagan, $\beta = -0.19$ (SE = 1.04), $p < .001$; George H. W. Bush, $\beta = -0.15$ (SE = 1.09), $p < .001$; and W. Bush, $\beta = -0.16$ (SE = 1.96), $p < .001$. Conversely, when a Republican held the White House, Republicans showed a significant positive relationship between *perceived global standing* and *in-group favoritism*: Reagan, $\beta = 0.13$ (SE = 0.97), $p < .001$; H. W. Bush, $\beta = 0.17$ (SE = 1.14), $p < .001$; and W. Bush, $\beta = 0.15$ (SE = 1.57), $p = .001$.

Table 1. Relationship Between Perceptions About the United States' Global Standing and In-Group Favoritism During Republican Presidencies.

	Reagan		H. W. Bush		W. Bush	
	Democrats	Republicans	Democrats	Republicans	Democrats	Republicans
	β	β	β	β	β	β
Age	0.05#	−0.05	0.02	−0.04	0.07	−0.04
Gender	0.02	0.00	0.05	−0.01	0.10*	0.07
Education	−0.03	0.01	0.06	0.00	−0.09#	−0.05
Income	−0.09**	0.02	−0.21	0.08	−0.06	0.08
White	−0.09**	−0.02	0.04	−0.06	−0.06	0.03
Interest	0.11***	0.14***	0.13***	0.05	0.15**	0.15**
Ideology	−0.20***	0.31***	0.33***	0.23***	−0.18***	0.29***
Global standing	−0.19***	0.13***	−0.17***	0.14**	−0.16***	0.15**

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$. # $p < .10$.

As shown in Table 2, when a Democrat held the White House, on the other hand, among Democrats there was a significant positive relationship between *perceived global standing* and *in-group favoritism* during the presidencies of Clinton, β = 0.09 (*SE* = 1.08), $p = .001$, and Obama, β = 0.20 (*SE* = 0.96), $p < .001$. Conversely, Republicans showed a significant negative relationship between *perceived global standing* and *in-group favoritism* when Clinton, β = −0.14 (*SE* = 1.08), $p < .001$, and Obama, β = −0.16 (*SE* = 1.71), $p < .001$, were president. H1, therefore, received strong and consistent support.

Table 2. Relationship Between Perceptions About the United States' Global Standing and In-Group Favoritism During Democratic Presidencies.

	Clinton		Obama	
	Democrats	Republicans	Democrats	Republicans
	β	β	β	β
Age	0.05	−0.04	0.00	−0.02
Gender	0.08**	0.01	0.04*	−0.01
Education	−0.10	−0.03	−0.01	−0.06*
Income	−0.06*	0.02	−0.04	−0.02
White	−0.10***	0.06*	−0.15***	0.03
Interest	0.13***	0.18***	0.13***	0.12***
Ideology	−0.22***	0.28***	−0.22***	0.35***
Global standing	0.09**	−0.14***	0.20***	−0.16***

*$p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

Party and Perceptions of America's Global Standing

As shown in Table 3, Republicans were significantly more likely than Democrats to hold a more optimistic appraisal of the United States' global standing during the presidencies of Reagan, β = 0.24 (*SE* = 0.03), $p < .001$; H. W. Bush, β = 0.18 (*SE* = 0.04), $p < .001$; and W. Bush, β = 0.38 (*SE* = 0.06), $p < .001$. Conversely, Republicans were significantly more likely than Democrats to hold a more pessimistic

appraisal of the United States' global standing during the presidencies of Clinton, β = −0.22 (*SE* = 0.03), $p < .001$, and Obama, β = −0.36 (*SE* = 0.03), $p < .001$. *H2* was therefore supported.

Table 3. Relationship Between Party Affiliation and Perceptions of the United States' Global Standing.

	Reagan	H. W. Bush	Clinton	W. Bush	Obama
	β	β	β	β	β
Age	−0.14***	−0.12***	−0.05**	−0.06#	−0.03#
Gender	−0.11***	−0.11***	−0.05**	−0.00	−0.01
Education	−0.04#	0.02	−0.08***	−0.13***	0.01
Income	0.04#	0.01	0.02	0.03	−0.01
White	0.01	0.01	−0.04*	0.02	−0.11***
Interest	0.04*	0.00	−0.17***	−0.04	0.04*
Ideology	0.09***	0.09**	−0.07***	0.07#	−0.17***
Party	0.24***	0.18***	−0.22***	0.38***	−0.36***

Note. Party: 0 = Democrat, 1 = Republican.
* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$. # $p < .10$.

Study 1 Discussion

Study 1 provided evidence (1) that party evaluations are affected by perceptions of the United States' global standing, and (2) that perceptions about the nation's global standing are contingent upon party affiliation. Specifically, analysis of ANES data from 1984 to 2012 shows a clear pattern of partisan evaluations shifting depending on who holds the White House. As the United States' perceived global standing improves, a president's partisans hold higher levels of in-group favoritism. When the perceived standing drops, however, they hold more pessimistic evaluations about their group's standing. For members of the opposing party, the reverse is true—as perceptions of the United States' global standing become more pessimistic, they display more in-group favoritism. Further, evaluations of the country's global standing appear to be filtered through a partisan lens. Members of the president's party are more likely to hold an elevated perception of the United States' global standing, while members of the opposing party are more likely to hold a more pessimistic appraisal of the nation's standing. Although members of the president's party might demonstrate less in-group favoritism as they perceive the country's global standing to drop, they are less likely to hold such a pessimistic appraisal to begin with.

Study 2

Having found initial support for H1 and H2, we set out to more clearly establish causality and directly test how partisans process communication messages proclaiming American exceptionalism to be either intact or in jeopardy. Specifically, Study 2 employs an experimental design to more directly test whether perceptions of the United States' global standing are conditioned by party affiliation (H2) as well as to examine how partisans process news media messages that offer either optimistic or pessimistic portrayals of American exceptionalism (H3). Data for Study 2 were collected in 2014, when Barack Obama was president of the United States. We therefore expected that Democrats would have a higher evaluation

of America's global standing, while Republicans would be more pessimistic about the current state of the union.

Participants

A sample of Republican and Democrat participants was recruited through Survey Sampling International (SSI). SSI uses quota sampling to recruit samples whose demographic profiles closely mirror those of the target population. A comparison of study participants (N = 196) to the national population shows that the sample provided a good representation of Republican and Democrat identifiers (see Table 4).

Table 4. Comparison of Study Samples to National Party Populations (in percentages).

	National Democrats	Study Democrats	National Republicans	Study Republicans
Gender				
Male	43	49	52	48
Female	57	51	48	52
Age[a]				
18–29	17	19	13	16
30–49	32	36	33	37
50–64	31	28	30	27
≥ 65	19	17	23	20
Racial identity				
White	61	70	87	92
Black	21	21	2	1
Hispanic	10	7	5	6
Income				
≤ $30,000	29	23	19	14
$30,001–$75,000	32	50	34	48
≥ $75,001	29	27	34	14

[a] Excluding those under age 18.

Experimental Procedure

Study 2 employed a two-cell between-subjects experimental design. Participants were randomly assigned to one of two versions of a constructed op-ed news article that participants were told "appeared in a recent issue of *USA Today*." The article was either (1) optimistic or (2) pessimistic that the United States' status as the greatest country in the world would remain intact. The optimistic American exceptionalism story argued that the United States has always overcome the challenges it has faced, pointed to signs of an economic rebound, claimed that U.S. values were as strong as ever, and asserted that "without hesitation we are the world's lone superpower." The pessimistic story argued that the United States was experiencing a long-term decline, pointed to signs of economic stagnation, questioned whether

Americans still hold exceptional values, and asserted "we can no longer claim without hesitation that we are the world's lone superpower."

Measures

Partisan affiliation. Participants were asked, "Which of the following best describes your party affiliation?" (*Democrat*, *Republican*, *Other*, *None*). Participants who did not answer Democrat or Republican were redirected out of the survey.

Perceived global standing. Participants were asked on a 7-point scale ranging from *grown much weaker* to *grown much stronger*, "During the past year, would you say that the United States' position in the world has grown weaker, stayed about the same, or grown stronger?" (M = 3.38, SD = 1.44).

Random assignment check. In total, 97 participants (49 Democrats, 48 Republicans) were assigned to the pessimistic condition, and 99 participants (52 Democrats, 47 Republicans) were assigned to the optimistic condition. There were no significant differences in the distribution of demographic variables such as age, $\chi^2(54) = 54.134$, $p = .469$; education, $\chi^2(4) = 6.14$, $p = .189$; income, $\chi^2(7) = 4.787$, $p = .686$; gender, $\chi^2(1) = 0.516$, $p = .473$; White, $\chi^2(1) = 0.209$, $p = .648$; or party, $\chi^2(1) = 0.079$, $p = .778$.

Analytic Technique

The interaction between political affiliation and news coverage about American exceptionalism on perceived global standing was assessed using a two-way analysis of variance. Planned comparisons, using the Sidak correction to control for Type I error, were used to examine the effects of the manipulation within parties.

Study 2 Results

Contrary to expectations, there was not a significant interaction between the news coverage and political party, $F(1, 192) = 0.48$, $\eta^2 = 0.00$, $p = .49$. There were, however, main effects for the news coverage manipulation, $F(1, 192) = 5.99$, $\eta^2 = 0.03$, $p = .015$, and for party, $F(1, 192) = 34.39$, $\eta^2 = 0.15$, $p < .001$. Pairwise comparisons show that among Republicans, appraisals of the United States' global standing were significantly lower in the pessimistic (M = 2.51, SE = 0.19) than in the optimistic condition (M = 3.10, SE = 0.19), $p = .03$. Among Democrats, however, there was not a significant difference between the pessimistic (M = 3.75, SE = 0.19) and the optimistic condition (M = 4.08, SE = 0.18), $p = .21$. Additionally, pairwise comparisons show that Republicans held significantly lower appraisals than Democrats in both the pessimistic ($p < .001$) and optimistic ($p < .001$) conditions (see Figure 1). We therefore found partial support for H3.

Study 2 Discussion

Although there was not a significant interaction between political party and the experimental manipulation, we find evidence that partisans' assessments of the United States' global standing are conditioned by their political affiliation. First, there was a main effect of party. Democrats, on the whole, were much more optimistic about the nation's global standing than Republicans. This was expected, given that Obama was president at the time of data collection. The key importance of party affiliation may have accounted for a lack of significant two-way interaction. Regardless of whether the news story promoted or undermined American exceptionalism, there was a fairly consistent gap in how optimistic Democrats and Republicans were about the United States' global standing.

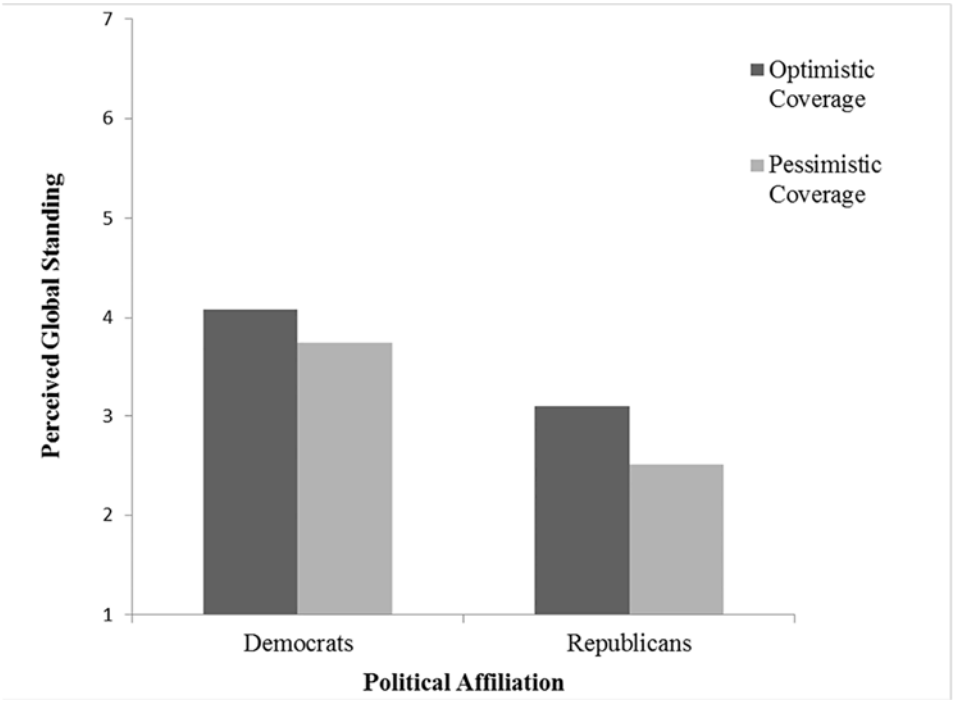

Figure 1. Interaction between political affiliation and news coverage about American exceptionalism.

We did expect that the pessimistic news coverage would lower perceptions about the United States' global standing at a more dramatic rate among Republicans than among Democrats. Pairwise comparisons do provide some evidence of this trend. The manipulation significantly lowered Republicans' perceptions of the country's global standing. Among Democrats, however, the effects of the manipulation were nonsignificant. These results provide evidence that news coverage about the United States' global standing can influence citizen perceptions, but we only see clear evidence of this trend among members of the party that does not currently hold the White House.

Study 3

Studies 1 and 2 demonstrate that evaluations of the United States' standing in the world are filtered through a partisan lens. Partisanship should not only come into play at the level of individual psychology, however. National identity is constructed through communication processes (Coe & Neumann, 2011; Hutcheson et al., 2004). Presidential candidates should strategically strive to construct a portrait of the United States (positive or negative) that will help boost their chances of being elected. The party that holds the White House should be motivated to uphold an idealized version of the United States, because they wish to be positively associated with national pride. These partisans need to convince citizens that things are going well in the country and that voting to keep the same party in power will ensure the country's continued prosperity. Alternatively, the party that does not hold the presidency should benefit by undermining American exceptionalism. The more they can convince potential voters that things are not going well, the more likely citizens will be to vote for change. Study 3 tests our expectations that presidential candidates will express more pessimism about the United States' current status when the opposing party holds the White House (H4). We do so by examining the acceptance speeches of presidential nominees.

Data

To examine whether presidential candidates attempt to undermine American exceptionalism strategically, we examined the convention speeches of every Democratic and Republican presidential nominee from 1948 to 2016. We use convention speeches because they serve as the symbolic kickoff for the general election, where each presidential candidate has the opportunity to unite his or her party and highlight the key themes that will be persistent throughout the general election (Benoit, Blaney, & Pier, 2000). Thirty-four speeches were retrieved from the American Presidency Project (see Table 5 and Table 6). We then performed a content analysis to count the number of times each candidate explicitly mentioned a concern about the United States' current status.

Measures

Pessimism about the United States' standing was conceptualized as any statement that suggests the nation's greatness, standing, or well-being is *not currently* what it once was or should be. This includes discourse about (a) economic, social, or political challenges and shortcomings; (b) concerns about the direction of the country; (c) the erosion of U.S. values; (d) a lessening of the nation's greatness and/or standing in the world; (e) the need to change or rebuild the United States. Each speech was coded for the number of distinct times these concepts appeared. Intercoder reliability was assessed on a roughly 10% subsample (four randomly selected speeches). Results demonstrated very strong reliability (Krippendorff's α = .97).

Pessimism about the United States was then operationalized for analytic purposes as a ratio of the total counts of concerns about the United States (M = 10.56, SD = 10.29) divided by the number of words in the speech (M = 3,817.32, SD = 1,350.26). This proportion measure accounts for the variance in

length of each speech. For ease of interpretation, this ratio was presented as number of threats per thousand words (M = 2.92, SD = 2.53).

Party status. Each speech was coded based on whether the White House was currently held by the candidate's political (1) in-group or (2) out-group.

Party. Each speech was coded as presented by a (1) Democrat or (2) Republican.

Study 3 Results

Consistent with expectations, results of an independent-samples t test were significant, t (34) = 7.61, p < .001. Specifically, out-group candidates were more likely to evoke pessimism about the United States' standing (M = 5.58, SD = 2.37) than in-group candidates (M = 0.90, SD = 1.08). H4 was therefore supported. Tables 5 and 6 display the results for each presidential candidate.

Table 5. Republican Presidential Nomination Acceptance Speeches.

Year	Presidential candidate	Party in White House?	Number of threat codes	Total words	Threats per 1,000 words
1948	Thomas Dewey	No	6	1,371	4.38
1952	Dwight Eisenhower	No	6	1,331	4.51
1956	Dwight Eisenhower	Yes	3	4,342	0.69
1960	Richard Nixon	Yes	4	5,356	0.75
1964	Barry Goldwater	No	20	3,186	6.28
1968	Richard Nixon	No	30	4,664	6.43
1972	Richard Nixon	Yes	0	4,348	0.00
1976	Gerald Ford	Yes	2	2,895	0.69
1980	Ronald Reagan	No	42	4,640	7.03
1984	Ronald Reagan	Yes	0	4,926	0.00
1988	George H. W. Bush	Yes	0	4,139	0.00
1992	George H. W. Bush	Yes	9	4,511	2.00
1996	Robert Dole	No	17	5,771	2.95
2000	George W. Bush	No	16	4,118	3.89
2004	George W. Bush	Yes	7	5,012	1.40
2008	John McCain	Yes	10	3,971	2.52
2012	Mitt Romney	No	23	4,087	5.63
2016	Donald Trump	No	67	5,096	13.15

Table 6. Democratic Presidential Nomination Acceptance Speeches.

Year	Presidential candidate	Party in White House?	Number of threat codes	Total words	Threats per 1,000 words
1948	Harry Truman	Yes	2	2,687	0.74
1952	Adlai Stevenson	Yes	1	1,723	0.58
1956	Adlai Stevenson	No	17	2,449	6.94
1960	John Kennedy	No	13	2,561	5.08
1964	Lyndon Johnson	Yes	0	2,297	0.00
1968	Hubert Humphrey	Yes	1	2,862	0.35
1972	George McGovern	No	15	2,123	6.78
1976	Jimmy Carter	No	20	2,932	6.82
1980	Jimmy Carter	Yes	1	4,660	0.21
1984	Walter Mondale	No	10	2,418	4.14
1988	Michael Dukakis	No	7	3,194	2.19
1992	Bill Clinton	No	26	4,426	5.87
1996	Bill Clinton	Yes	0	6,991	0.00
2000	Al Gore	Yes	3	5,411	0.55
2004	John Kerry	No	20	5,212	3.84
2008	Barack Obama	No	21	4,697	4.47
2012	Barack Obama	Yes	7	4,478	1.56
2016	Hillary Clinton	Yes	22	5,389	4.08

There are some notable examples that exemplify these trends. In particular, several candidates evoked numerous displays of pessimism when the opposing party held the White House, but this pessimism disappeared the following election when they were incumbents (Richard Nixon: 30 instances in 1968, none in 1972; Jimmy Carter: 20 instances in 1976, one in 1980; Ronald Reagan: 42 instances in 1980, none in 1984; Bill Clinton: 26 instances in 1992, none in 1996). Conversely, in 1952, following Harry Truman's (D) presidency, Adlai Stevenson (D) expressed little pessimism (one instance). Stevenson lost the election, and the following year, running as a challenger, expressed much more pessimism (17 instances). It is also worth noting that Donald Trump displayed far more pessimism than any other candidate.

Additionally, we considered other factors that may have influenced the displays of pessimism (party affiliation and temporality). First, we checked whether these results were contingent upon party affiliation. Results of a two-way analysis of variance revealed no significant interaction between party status and party affiliation, $F(1, 32) = 0.53$, $\eta^2 = 0.02$, $p = 0.47$; nor was there a main effect of party affiliation, $F(1, 32) = 0.52$, $\eta^2 = 0.02$, $p = 0.47$. Next, we used ordinary least squares regression to check whether the displays of pessimism had changed over time. Results did not provide any evidence of a time effect $b = 0.02$ ($SE = 0.02$), $p = .382$. This suggests that these trends are not contingent upon party or time period.

Study 3 Discussion

The results of Study 3 reveal a long-standing tradition of the party that does not hold the White House attempting to undermine American exceptionalism, while members of the party that holds the White House are much less likely to paint such a dire portrait. These findings provide evidence that politicians evoke concerns about the United States' current standing for strategic reasons. It appears to be understood that whichever party holds the White House will be directly associated with the country's successes or failures. These cognitive associations, along with the desire to promote the interest of the in-group and derogate the out-group, lead to politicians emphasizing the problems in the United States when they do not hold the White House, while downplaying or ignoring these issues when they do.

General Discussion

Although there is no doubt that American exceptionalism is an important and widespread belief in the United States, there is also a clear trend of U.S. partisans casting doubt about the greatness of the country. This tendency to undermine American exceptionalism seems at odds with what we know about the impetus for people to hold elevated opinions of their national identity. We argue that partisans are willing to undermine American exceptionalism when it helps improve the relative standing of their party. Specifically, the United States' successes or failures reflect on the president and, in turn, on his or her political party. Thus, the more citizens perceive the United States to have a dominant global standing, the more the president's partisans can justify in-group favoritism. Conversely, members of the opposing party stand to benefit when the nation's global position is perceived to weaken. Given this context, we expected partisans to employ both cognitive and discursive strategies to improve the relative standing of their party. Specifically, we predicted that partisans will process political information and political elites will talk about the United States in a way that either upholds or undermines American exceptionalism, depending on which party currently holds the White House.

Results of three studies provide clear support for these expectations. First, Study 1 provides evidence that evaluations of the United States' global standing are linked to evaluations of the political parties. Additionally, it demonstrates that partisans' appraisals of the country's global standing are affected by which party currently holds the White House. Study 2 provides additional evidence that appraisals of the United States' global standing are more optimistic when the president is identified as an in-group member and are more pessimistic when the president is a member of the out-group. Finally, Study 3 demonstrates that the degree to which U.S. presidential candidates promote or undermine American exceptionalism depends on whether their party currently holds the White House. We elaborate on these findings below.

First, because the president symbolically represents the United States, as well as his or her political party, we expected that a partisan's evaluations of the country's global standing would influence the degree to which partisans engage in in-group favoritism. Analysis of ANES data from 1984 to 2012 shows a clear pattern of partisan evaluations shifting depending on who holds the White House. As the United States' perceived global standing improves, a president's partisans hold higher levels of in-group favoritism. When the perceived standing drops, however, they are likely to hold less optimistic evaluations

about their group's relative standing. For members of the opposing party, the reverse is true—as perceptions of the nation's global standing become more pessimistic, they display more in-group favoritism. These findings are important because they demonstrate a widespread connection between the United States' global standing and the relative status of the political parties.

Such a connection would provide the necessary motivation for partisans to evaluate and/or discuss the state of the union in a way that promotes the interest of the political in-group. Committed partisans may be so caught up in political competition that they would prefer to see the United States look bad if it also makes the opposing party look bad. It is not surprising for anyone who has followed U.S. politics in recent years that partisans would employ such a tactic. For example, during Obama's first term, Republican leaders made it clear that one of their primary objectives was making sure Obama did not succeed as president—even if it came at the cost of U.S. success (Lillis, 2011). Similarly, many Democrats are openly hoping that Trump's legislative plans fail miserably (Ferrechio, 2017).

Although it may seem obvious that partisans are willing to put their party's interest over the country, there is limited empirical evidence demonstrating this behavior. Thus, this study provides important evidence that Americans are willing to undermine American exceptionalism when it serves their party's interests. We sought to demonstrate these patterns in two ways. First, we examined the degree to which partisans had optimistic or pessimistic appraisals about the United States' standing in the world. Second, we investigated the discursive strategies employed by presidential candidates to discover whether they were likely to express concerns about the United States when the other party holds the White House.

Studies 1 and 2 provided evidence that perceptions about the United States' global status are contingent upon party affiliation and are filtered through a partisan lens. In both studies, we found that members of the president's party are more likely to hold an elevated perception of the United States' global standing, while members of the opposing party are more likely to hold a more pessimistic appraisal. Although members of the president's party might be likely to engage in less in-group favoritism as they perceive the country's global standing to drop, they are also less likely to hold such a pessimistic appraisal to begin with. Finally, we expected that politicians would discuss the United States' global standing in a way that was most conducive to promoting the relative status of their party. The president will clearly benefit from promoting American exceptionalism, because the nation's successes and failures are used to evaluate the president. At the same time, the candidates from the opposing party would benefit from convincing citizens that the United States is not currently all it is supposed to be. The results of Study 3 reveal that presidential candidates strategically undermine American exceptionalism when their party does not hold the White House, while in-group candidates shy away from expressing concern about the United States. These findings provide evidence that politicians evoke concerns about the country's current standing for strategic reasons. These strategic calculations are patently clear when looking at presidential candidates such as Nixon, Carter, Reagan, and Clinton, who all expressed high levels of pessimism about the country when they were running as challengers but abandoned such dire portrayals four years later when they were campaigning for reelection.

More recently, the strategy of undermining American exceptionalism proved effective for Donald Trump, whose convention speech was far more pessimistic about the United States than any other speech

in our sample. Trump's slogan, "Make America Great Again," clearly conveys that the United States has lost its exceptional status. Throughout his campaign, Trump lamented the erosion of the United States' economy, political institutions, and world standing. This message resonated with many disaffected voters who were ready to try something different (Greenhouse, 2016). Now that Trump is president, however, the responsibility for the country's success symbolically falls on his shoulders. Unsurprisingly, he began touting his "tremendous success" early in his presidency (Freeman, 2017). We should, therefore, expect that Trump's 2020 campaign will shy away from critiquing the current state of the country.

It is important to note some limitations to these studies. First, Studies 1 and 2 relied on single-item measures for perceived global standing. This was a result of using ANES measures. Clearly, perceived global standing is a more complex concept that would be better measured with a range of items. A similar issue arises in Study 3, where we coded "pessimism about America" as a homogeneous variable, even though politicians can express pessimism about many different aspects of the United States. In short, this study operationalizes some of our concepts in a way that simplifies their complex nature. Study 3 also relied solely on convention speeches. While convention speeches provide a good representation of the type of campaign a presidential candidate will run (Benoit et al., 2000), a lot happens during presidential campaigns that we did not capture. Examining a wider range of presidential speeches, as well as the types of pessimism expressed by different candidates, and placing that discourse in historical context could provide some valuable insights into the ways U.S. politicians seek to construct more pessimistic or optimistic portrayals of the nation.

Despite these limitations, taken together, the results of these three studies provide some important additions to the American exceptionalism literature. Specifically, we have demonstrated that, in many cases, partisans are willing to undermine American exceptionalism if it promotes the interest of their political party. Such findings lend credence to the concerns that partisans are unwilling to find pragmatic solutions that can benefit the country (Gutmann & Thompson, 2012; Harbridge et al., 2014). Part of the problem is likely that partisans truly believe the United States can only be great if *their version* of the United States is enacted. Partisans get so caught up in a symbolic war to define social reality (Hunter, 1991) that they may have a hard time viewing the United States as exceptional if it does not promote the policies and values that they believe to be at the essence of U.S. identity. That is, partisans desire to construct a version of U.S. identity that is synonymous with their partisan identity. Such a struggle demonstrates that even though most Americans can agree there is something special about American identity, partisans do not hesitate to throw the United States under the bus if it helps them achieve their partisan goals. This article provides important empirical evidence that partisan commitments can motivate Americans to both evaluate and discuss the nation's status less favorably if it serves the interest of their political party. Even though there is widespread agreement that the country would be better served if the political parties put aside their differences, there is little evidence that partisans are willing to prioritize the country over their party (Gutmann & Thompson, 2012; Harbridge et al., 2014). Ultimately, partisans appear willing to undermine American exceptionalism if it benefits their party. This suggests that until Americans come to see their national identity as more important than their partisan identity, pragmatic solutions that benefit the country may be in short supply.

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Mythologies of Creative Work in the Social Media Age: Fun, Free, and "Just Being Me"

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Over the past decade, work in the cultural sector has grown evermore precarious amid heightened competition, rampant insecurity, and the individualization of risk. Despite this, social media personalities—including bloggers, vloggers, and Instagrammers—seem to have attained a much-vaunted career dream: They get paid to do what they love. Accounting for this disparity, we highlight the role of popular media discourses that hype the possibilities of a career fashioned online. Our study draws on a qualitative analysis of more than 200 articles to reveal how these influencers circulate a patterned set of mythologies about creative work in the social media age. Such narratives about the fun, free, and authentic nature of their self-starter careers conceal less auspicious realities, including the demands for emotional labor, self-branding labor, and an always-on mode of entrepreneurial labor. Together, these myths help perpetuate an image of glamour in these industries as part of a "creativity *dispositif*" that both disciplines and incites cultural workers and aspirants.

Keywords: social media, labor, self-branding, creative industries, cultural production, Internet celebrity, influencers

In early 2016, *The Washington Post* published a feature on Vietnamese American nail artist and Internet sensation Myha Luong, better known by her Instagram moniker Lovely Mimi (McCoy, 2016). Like much popular coverage of social media personalities, the article "How to Become Internet-Famous in Under a Year" was less an instruction manual for fame-seekers and more of a pseudo-treatise on the democratic potential of digital media. Luong, a self-described "rebellious" adolescent who dropped out of high school as a pregnant teen, defied her scrappy roots to ascend to the coveted yet ever-elusive status

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of Instagram celebrity. Within months, she had amassed more than a million Instagram followers; however, she downplayed any calculated status-seeking efforts by noting, "I don't know how they found me" (McCoy, 2016, para. 12). By early 2017, Lovely Mimi was peddling hair extensions on her personal website, hyping her latest single on iTunes, and promoting her upcoming appearance on the sixth season of VH1's reality show *Love & Hip Hop Atlanta* (Turner, 2017). She thus seemed to make the much longed for leap from "microcelebrity"—wherein individuals engage in an "amping up" (Senft, 2013, p. 25) of their popularity over the Web—to multimedia entrepreneur.

Lovely Mimi's rise to fame, we contend, is analogous to other popular narratives about social media celebrities—or to use the voguish term, "influencers"—published in recent years, including articles with such buzzy headlines as "Meet the YouTube Millionaires" (McAlone, 2016), "Average Internet Celebrities Make $75,000 per Instagram Ad and $30,000 Per Paid Tweet" (Novak, 2016), and "Millennial 'Influencers' Who Are the New Stars of Web Advertising" (Kay, 2017). Often, these articles emphasize the meritocratic potential of social media platforms: With enough talent, ostensibly anyone can secure a career in which labor and leisure blend. That is, they can get paid to do what they love—a phrase that Tokumitsu (2014) designated the "unofficial work mantra of our time" (para. 4).

Despite the cheering—even intoxicating—tone of such articles, the reality of work in the media and culture industries is much less glamorous. Often, creative laborers are located in industries and organizations marked by staggeringly high barriers to entry, periodic instability, and structural forms of inequality and discrimination (Blair, 2001; Freidman, Laurison, & Miles, 2015; Gill, 2010, 2014). Moreover, these workers are expected to engage in persistent forms of entrepreneurial labor, in which they internalize the risks of independent employment, roused by the "promise of one Big Job being right around the corner" (Neff, Wissinger, & Zukin, 2005, p. 319). The rapid rise of the digital economy has done little to challenge the most formidable features of creative work; instead, recent scholarship suggests that new media technologies seem to amplify some of the less idealized features, including the itinerant nature (Gill, 2010), the reliance on discourses and practices of risk (Cohen, 2015; Neff, 2012), and the requisite blurring of one's personal and professional lives (Duffy & Hund, 2015; Gregg, 2011). Taken together, these perspectives signal a patent disparity between the rhetoric of creative work—with its profound idealization of entrepreneurial careers enabled by social media—and the realities of precarious labor in the digital economy. We argue that media and popular culture discourses—particularly those shaped by social media's fame beneficiaries themselves—play a crucial role in mythologizing the possibilities of a career fashioned online. To better understand these discourses, we conducted a qualitative textual analysis of more than 200 articles published over a 10-year span that covered fashion bloggers, YouTube beauty vloggers, and Instagram influencers.

Our analysis revealed that these social media personalities circulate an interrelated series of mythologies about "work" in the age of social media, invoking the ideals of fun, authenticity, and creative freedom. Yet, such patterned narratives conceal the less auspicious elements of this work, including the demands for emotional labor, self-branding labor, and an always-on mode of entrepreneurial labor, all of which function as prerequisites for attaining these coveted proto-careers. We conclude by offering potential explanations for this mythology at the individual, industrial, and ideological levels. In particular, we argue that such mediated myths contribute to what McRobbie (2016) describes as the "creativity

dispositif" that both disciplines and incites contemporary cultural laborers, offering models for success—as well as a promise of hope—in an otherwise bleak employment landscape.[2]

Creative Work in the Digital Economy

Over the past two decades, as part of the academy's ostensible "turn to cultural work" (Banks et al., 2014, p. 3), scholars across the fields of media and communication, sociology, occupational studies, and higher education, among others, have examined the changing nature of media and creative labor (e.g., Friedman et al., 2015; Hesmondhalgh & Baker, 2011; McRobbie, 2016; Neff et al., 2005). Whereas some of these studies delve into particular production cultures (e.g., Deuze, 2007; Duffy, 2013; Hesmondhalgh & Baker, 2011; Mayer, 2011), another stream of research highlights the changing conditions of work for freelancers, contract hires, and interns (e.g., Corrigan, 2015; de Peuter, 2014; Frenette, 2013; Gill, 2010). Members of this swelling category of contingent workers confront long hours, temporary work arrangements, and the mentality that, as Blair (2001) put it, "You're only as good as your last [TV script, magazine article, commercial]" (see also Bielby & Bielby, 1994; Neff, 2012; Ross, 2009). Participants in the so-called "glamour labor" (Wissinger, 2015) industries of fashion, beauty, modeling, and lifestyle face a not dissimilar set of demands: the relentless nature of "keeping up appearances" and performing "aesthetic labor" to produce an image that projects one's status (Entwistle & Wissinger, 2006; Witz, Warhurst, & Nickson, 2003), the need to constantly present one's "best self" to remain employable (Mears, 2011), and the expectation to appear fun and carefree despite labor conditions that are onerous or angst-producing (Wissinger, 2015).

As these and other studies have made clear, the emergence of digital and social media has radically reconfigured the nature of cultural labor. Offering an astute summary of some of the defining features of "new media work," Gill (2010) catalogued low pay, prolonged hours, long-term insecurity, and a demand for continuous self-training—attributes seemingly offset by a "love of the work." She also highlighted the importance of one's self-promotional activities: Workers seem to internalize a self-marketing orientation in which "life is a pitch." This imperative has only intensified amid a sprawling social media economy in which ideologies and practices of self-branding are paramount (Duffy & Hund, 2015; Gershon, 2017; Hearn, 2008; Marwick, 2013). As job seekers vie for work in a hypersaturated talent market, one's digital reputation becomes a form of currency (Cohen, 2015; Gandini, 2016; Gershon, 2017).

Collectively, these factors index a wider shift toward the politics of precarity, wherein earlier forms of bureaucracy and economic security are being eradicated in the face of post-Fordism, a structural transformation characterized by a "de-standardization of employment, de-unionization of labor, dis-aggregation of production, [and] de-industrialization of economies" (de Peuter, 2014, p. 5). To be sure, *precarity* is a highly contested term with overuse that threatens to "hinder the development of coherent

[2] A *dispositif*, sometimes called an "apparatus," "device," or "construction," is a collection of interrelated forces that move and change in real time, forces which nevertheless form a framework or schema of positions and relationships that can be detected when one engages with them directly (see also, Deleuze, 1991).

political critique of digital labor by conflating the struggles of 'uberworked and underpaid gig workers'" (van Doorn, 2017, para. 8, citing Scholz, 2016) with more privileged workers, including artists and new media producers. Collapsing disparate forms of work under the "containing category of creativity" misses crucial differences in the types of labor under analysis (Neilson & Rossiter, 2005), and also subsumes issues that fall outside the domain of work into labor relations.[3] In an effort to disentangle this conceptual morass, de Peuter offers a typology of three precarious labor subjectivities, including the "cybertariat," Huws' (2003) conception of workers competitively innovating themselves out of existence within the informatization of capital; the "autonomous worker," conceived by Lazzarato (1996, p. 140) as both imperiled by and embracing work flexibilization, hoping that shouldering the burden of risk might bring unprecedented rewards; and finally, the "precog," that is, the "nonstandard cognitive worker" who "might have a prestigious occupation but labors under classic precarious conditions" (de Peuter, 2011, p. 420). "In its bid to cope," de Peuter (2011) observed, the precog "can adopt dispositions that make it not only a victim of post-Fordist capital but also a model subject of it" (p. 420). As we show in the following section, digital and social media content producers—including bloggers, vloggers, and Instagrammers—fit into the latter category.

New Models of Creative Work: Bloggers, Vloggers, and Influencers

The past decade has witnessed the emergence of a new archetype of career success, embodied by Internet personalities—fashion bloggers, YouTubers, and social influencers, among others—who seemingly make a living from their passion projects. Some scholars use the framework of microcelebrity (Senft, 2013) to call attention to online personalities' attention-seeking and reputation-management practices (Abidin, 2015; Khamis, Ang, & Welling, 2016; Marwick, 2015). As Marwick (2015) summarizes, "In the broadcast era, celebrity was something a person was; in the Internet era, micro-celebrity is something people *do*" (p. 140). Other researchers have drawn on in-depth interviews and participant observation to highlight the immaterial labor demanded of bloggers and influencers. To maintain their socially mediated personae, these individuals seem compelled to express passion (Duffy & Hund, 2015), feign devotion to retail brands and sponsors (Duffy, 2017; Rocamora, forthcoming), and maintain a level of intimacy with readers, viewers, and fans (Abidin, 2015; Cunningham & Craig, 2017). Such self-branding and positioning work is particularly endemic in what Elias, Gill, and Scharff (2017) articulate as "aesthetic entrepreneurialism," a feminized endeavor of styling, adorning, and transforming oneself to create a subject who is "autonomous, self-inventing and self-regulating" (p. 39).

Critical studies of bloggers and influencers support and extend earlier sociologies of the glamour labor industries, which emphasize the distinctive hiring structures (entry through unpaid, speculative work); their heavy reliance on image as a proxy for success (where workers struggle to be the person who appears as their online, curated, filtered persona); the paramount placed on the aesthetics of that image; and their demand for a seamless melding between the personal and professional. As *precogs*, bloggers, vloggers, and Instagrammers have careers subsidized by passionate satisfaction and heightened social status, rather than stable, full-time employment; their reliance on sponsorships and appearance fees

[3] These issues include bare survival under neoliberal and biopolitical pressures, as per Butler (2006, 2010; discussed in Watson, 2012).

makes work intermittent and unpredictable; and they depend on the whims of a mercurial fan base as they vie to stay visible and relevant. But while astonishing success is the exception rather than the rule, popular media nevertheless seem to lavish attention on those who have achieved a much-vaunted career dream: They get paid to do what they love. Courting this discursive positioning, we contend, is a key part of these workers' jobs—and one that maintains their status as exemplary worker-subjects.

Method

Our study draws on a qualitative textual analysis of popular media coverage of social media-enabled careers that was published over a 10-year span (2006–2016). Using the LexisNexis database, we conducted a search query of international (English-language) articles for *profession* or *career* cross-listed with each of the following terms: *Instagram* (223 documents), *fashion* and *model* (997 documents), *fashion blog* (418 documents), and *beauty vlog* (366 articles).[4] Although the question of what constitutes "popular" media is increasingly difficult to pin down in an age of ubiquitous online news and information, we opted to analyze news articles/features for two reasons: (1) Mediated depictions of media and creative industries play a critical role in discursively positioning these fields at the imagined "center" of the social world (Couldry, 2003; see also Neff, 2012); and (2) popular media articles have a wider, less specialized audience than content creators' self-authored content channels. Given that this audience is likely less familiar with the Internet personalities, media expositions tend to focus more on their career trajectories and professional experiences. The first 100 articles from each set (organized by relevance) were coded. We subsequently eliminated duplicates, discussions that were irrelevant to our search (e.g., "role models" in a search for models), and those texts that failed to engage with digital/social media. We supplemented these data with news and feature articles collected over the past five years on the broader topics of "social media" and "work" catalogued by both authors for their individual studies. We decided to include these curated collections to broaden the search beyond the LexisNexis purview and to provide context for the specific fashion/beauty/glamour focus of our initial data set.

Our final sample consisted of more than 200 articles, and researchers coded the sets of articles independently. The qualitative coding schema was guided by a preliminary review of the data and included the following categories: (1) showcasing one's private life, (2) the blurring of work/play, (3) parties/networking/socialization, (4) freedom/flexibility, (5) authenticity and self-expression, (6) image-building and self-promotion, (7) relating to audiences, (8) partnerships with retail brands and other media industries, and (9) career aspirations and narratives about "breaking in" or "getting discovered." Using a grounded theory approach with its simultaneous processes of data collection and analysis (Glaser & Strauss, 1967), we further refined the concepts inductively to develop the categorical themes that we present below.

[4] These particular subfields, we contend, represent the most visible instances of the digital glamour industries.

Mythologies of Creative Work

Our findings revealed that workers mythologize their careers through discourses of fun, authentic self-expression, and creative freedom. In analyzing these patterned narratives, we contend that they gloss over a less-prodigious reality, whereby worker-subjects must engage in persistent emotional labor, continuous reputation management and self-branding, and the presentation of an entrepreneurial subject who does it all. To see where the demands to disguise the work inherent in "glamour labor" are at play, as well as to highlight the mythologizing tendencies deployed by the laborers themselves, we turn to examples from our sample of media articles.

"I'm Having So Much Fun!": The (Emotional) Labor of Love

The Internet personalities chronicled in our sample were effusive about the characteristically enjoyable aspects of their careers, and they often attributed these "dream jobs" to a strike of good fortune. Of her proudest achievement, Irish beauty blogger Ciara O'Doherty offered, "Getting to do what I love every day and calling it 'work' is amazing. I'm always pinching myself. I don't take it for granted" (Becca, 2015, para. 15). O'Doherty added of her new morning TV gig, "I style and showcase looks from some of my favourite brands, it's lots of fun!" (Becca, 2015, para. 3). Similarly, British beauty blogger Dawn Higgins reflected on the privilege of getting invited for a sneak peek at an upcoming collection—an experience she described as "a real pinch-me moment" ("Personal Stylist," 2011). This same allusion appeared in a feature on New Zealand blogger Amanda Shadforth. When asked to speculate about the source of her fashion blog's astounding popularity, Shadforth offered, "I don't really know and still have to pinch myself at the success of the site" (Lee, 2014, para. 11). The gratitude of workers calculatedly in awe at their own run of luck feeds into the myth of chance success, implying that if they could get lucky, so could anyone.

Workers were also unreserved in their praise for professions that enabled them to pursue their so-called passions. For instance, an article detailed how Australian Instagrammer Alyce Cowell self-fashioned a career that married her interests in fashion and writing. As she reflected, "Being able to combine my loves is an absolute dream. You can express yourself and feel fantastic at the same time." Sharing the history of her professed "passions," she continued, "I've always considered myself a creative type, and find fashion [to be] incredible fun" (Domjen, 2011, para. 1). As Cowell's account makes clear, workers routinely cast their professions as work that *does not seem like work*; instead, it is portrayed as a hobby they would pursue even without financial remuneration. This is a key point: paid labor smacks of the kinds of wage labor drudgery these workers report being happy to leave behind; instead, we are reminded by YouTuber Alfie Deyes that working "every hour in the day" is "fun":

> It's not about the money. . . . The only difference between it being my job and not being my job is that I have more time to put into it. It allows me to have every hour in the day to put into making YouTube videos, which is exactly what I want. I'm having so much fun. (Marr, 2014, para. 7)

Indeed, even in those instances in which creators peeled back the curtain on less idealized elements of the profession—the high levels of dedication and long hours—expressions of passion were offered to explain why the article subjects worked so uncompromisingly. As a YouTuber offered of the slow takeoff of her site, "I was never worried about how fast I was growing because I was making content that I was passionate about and it was more of a hobby for me—in many ways, it still is" (Devlin, 2016, sec. "Tips," para. 3).

In a similar vein, tween fashion blogger-turned feminista/actress/online magazine creator Tavi Gevinson framed her work as a "labor of love," justifying, "Even though it was summer break and I got no sleep, putting the book together has definitely been a labor of love. I couldn't wait to get to the library every morning to work on it" (Morfoot, 2012, para. 3). In another instance when the rhetoric of love and passion was used to rationalize conditions of overwork, Irish model/deejay Vogue McFadden explained how she "loves" the hectic pace: "I think I would drive myself insane if I wasn't doing something at every second of the day. I like being as busy as I am, and I just love it" ("The Model Bloggers," 2015, para. 12).

Importantly, such allusions to "dream jobs," "passion projects," and "labors of love" highlight a far less dazzling truth about the social media workstyle: It requires a persistent performance of sentiment. Emotional labor is thus a requirement for success, compelling the individual to produce a particular (often work-prescribed) emotion in herself to inspire a desired feeling in another (Hochschild, 1983). For content creators who spend their lives in the presence of socially mediated audiences, the compulsion to simulate or, better yet, actually feel a particular sentiment is a job requirement. Consistent with this stance, performances of passion and sociality were frequently coupled with humble gratitude; workers were reportedly "amazed" and felt "blessed" at their luck. As Australian model Ruby Rose offered, "Being among the who's who of the fashion industry, sitting with all these international guests and then watching a runway while eating dinner, that's an example of why this job is amazing" ("Roses," 2011, paras. 9–10). Humbling themselves in this way pays off through a self-effacement that belies the time, effort, and capital it often takes to break into this world (Duffy, 2017).

As London fashion blogger/stylist Angie Smith pointed out, "a warm, friendly personality is a must if you want to get on in this industry" (Wilson, 2013, para. 5). And, indeed, the labor of (public) relationship-building has taken on a new urgency for cultural workers expected to ratchet up followers, friends, and likes. Yet, in keeping with the need to conceal the energy expended on such "relational labor" (Baym, 2015), social media creators cast these connections as more important than money; getting paid was almost an afterthought, as per Deyes' comment "it's not about the money." It is in this vein that Chinese blogger Daphne Charice claimed that she was inspired to keep an active Instagram feed to ensure that her "followers feel like they can relate to my postings on fashion, music and life stories—experiences and opinions that are sometimes emotional, sometimes motivating" (Kamal, 2015, p. 8). Of course, such statements mask the fact that these affective/emotional relationships are financially incentivized by the digital attention economy.

"Just Being Me": The Promotional Labor of Authenticity

At the same time that content creators praised the fun, fulfilling nature of their social media-enabled professions, they also lauded careers that enabled them to be themselves. As YouTube star GiGi Dubois noted in response to a question about the best part of her job, "not caring what people think and just being me and posting it!" (Starngage, n.d., para. 8). Style blogger Natalie Joos, similarly, rejected the temporal cycle of fashion to play up her inner self-expression: "I don't adhere to trends. I just do my thing" (Pithers, 2012, para. 9). Such accounts highlight the resonant ideals of realness and authenticity in the social media age (Banet-Weiser, 2012; Cunningham & Craig, 2017; Marwick, 2013; Pooley, 2010). As fashion and lifestyle blogger Fiona Milne observed, "I think that's what appeals to people[:] when you speak the truth and you're authentic" (Merten, 2007, p. 54).

Accordingly, content creators outwardly rejected any calculated attempts to build their social media personae. Tavi Gevinson noted the importance of being herself in a *Hollywood Reporter* feature:

> I realize that the things I find beautiful are the things that are weird. Then I know I don't have to be perfect, or gorgeous, or pretty. I just have to be the same kind of thing that would make me excited about being a human. That's just being yourself, and it's great. (Chan, 2015, para. 7)

Similarly, YouTube sensation Tyler Oakley explained in a *TIME* feature,

> Since the beginning I have always tried to just be me. There have been moments in my career as a YouTuber where I've recognized that I'm trying to emulate something else . . . and I realize that's not what I want to be putting out. (D'Addario, 2015, para. 4)

Other vloggers described how they eschewed canned performances and repudiated the slick aesthetics of traditional media. Bethany Mota, in a *Times of India* piece counseling "How to Go From a Nobody to a Social Media Somebody," made this directive clear: "Let the bloopers stay. Who wants to watch somebody who is always perfect? Be human. My fans expect it. I mess up all the time. Being imperfect is normal on YouTube" (Irani, 2015, para. 5). YouTuber Shannon Harris similarly relayed, "I make my videos just as much for you as for me. . . . No one is going to like every single look but that's just life" (Devlin, 2016, para. 1). Although these digital media personalities celebrate being true to themselves, the acknowledgment of audiences in their comments (i.e., "fans") is a testament to what Pooley (2010) has called "calculated authenticity" in which, through self-work, authenticity becomes "a means to the end of self-promotion" (p. 78).

The promotional value of authenticity is particularly evident in a comment from Lianne Texeira, the YouTube creator of alter ego/fashion detective "Alisha." She advised, "Don't write about something everyone else is already doing. Avoid covering famous artists and designers. And follow your instincts and personal style; like Alisha, don't follow trends. Be honest to your art" (Singh, 2016, para. 7). Here, "honesty" is used to signal individual self-expression *as well as* an instrumental way to establish a brand niche (avoiding what "everyone else is already doing"). This niche-building "authenticity" mandate was

also evident in blogger Margaret Zhang's explanation for her site's success: "I think it's important to have genuine, authentic, original content that nobody else has, not to emulate anybody else's style and not to look around too much for inspiration from the same field" (Waterhouse, 2014, para. 4).

Expressions of authenticity also framed interactions with branded goods, signaling the expectation that influencers only endorse products they already use (Duffy, 2017; Rocamora, forthcoming). Thus, although British blogger Danielle Wightman-Stone declared that getting "sent lovely shoes and handbags to write about" is a "nice perk," she is quick to point out, "I only blog about items I like and make sure users know when I've been sent them [from a brand or advertiser]" (Wilson, 2013, para. 7). Here, again, emotional labor and calculated authenticity are evident as content creators insist that their sentiments in sponsored posts are genuine, because they blog about a product only if it fits with who they "really" are. Deflecting potential critiques of "selling out," vlogger Jamie Berger offered, "I want my subscribers to trust me. If I were to endorse products I didn't use or like it would be apparent and it would come off very fake" (Kopun, 2015, para. 44).

In other instances, narratives of unexpected, accidental fame helped to refute notions of deliberately staged personae. As the blogger behind Oracle Fox remarked, "It's almost an accident that [the site] has ended up where it is today. I think [my blog] was a natural progression for me as an artist and is a wonderful way to engage with a different audience as well as the artistic community" (Lee, 2014, para. 7). The ideal of unanticipated success was also apparent in a comment by the founder of the Budget Fashionista blog, who chronicled her path as follows:

> It was basically by mistake. I never planned for it to be this way. When I started my blog, blogs weren't what blogs are now. People were like, "What's a blog?" I really just started it as a way to communicate with friends about these things I was finding while shopping and a way for me to help curtail my own spending. I am still surprised that people read me and that advertisers want to work with me. (Huegenin, 2007, para. 1)

In each of these cases, the individual was seemingly driven by authentic, creative self-expression when success "found" them. By disavowing calculated, entrepreneurial ambitions, content creators encourage individuals to have blind faith in their own creative impulses, thereby maintaining the flow of new material crucial to the ongoing viability of the marketplace. Yet, despite the effusive praise for "being me," maintaining a consistent persona that withstands the whims of everyday life amounts to consistent persona maintenance. Burnishing the self-brand is above all a form of labor that, explains Hearn (2008), involves an "outer-directed process of highly stylized self-construction, directly tied to the promotional mechanisms of the post-Fordist market" (p. 201). Indeed, these content creators must be vigilant in their efforts to remain "on brand," lest they risk losing audiences and, ultimately, advertisers.

To be sure, there were a few moments when deliberate attempts to build or manage one's persona were laid bare. For instance, one blogger revealed the strategic nature of content timing: "I realised that between 5 and 10 pm was the best time to post a selfie, and it would have a higher chance of making the popular posts page, which then gets you thousands of followers" ("Insta-nt Celebrity,"

2013, para. 8). Such thoughtful strategizing belies the casual look and feel of such posts, which are carefully created, curated, and placed to appear candid.

"I Do Everything Myself": The Entrepreneurial Labor of Doing It All

As independent workers *par excellence*, the bloggers, vloggers, and influencers in our sample routinely valorized the autonomy, flexibility, and even transience of their self-starter careers. Atlantic-Pacific creator Blair Eadie was thus grateful for a job in which "every day at work is different" ("Blogger Spotlight," 2010, para. 9). Instagrammer Daphne Charice, meanwhile, denigrated the banality of a more conventional career path: "I have always admired professional careers like engineering, architecture and dentistry—at least a stable 9-to-5 job—but I realised somewhere along the way that such a path wouldn't work well with me. I just wasn't born for it" (Kamal, 2015, p. 8). Here, both Eadie and Charice laud enterprising careers that enable them to circumvent the bureaucracy and rigidity of a "traditional" work environment. Even when acknowledging the downside of leaving the 9-to-5 behind, so-called superblogger Gala Darling invoked the mythos of passionate work: "People think blogging is a great way to leave the nine-to-five behind, but I probably work many more hours than most people in office jobs" (Warrington, 2013, para. 17). She then qualified this with a telling statement: "The difference is, I love every minute.".

In a nod toward wider culture's fetishization of entrepreneurship, social media personalities reflected on the benefits of retaining complete control over their business ventures. In an editorial, British YouTuber Tanya Burr (2014) offered the following account of the creative process:

> Uploading a YouTube video is so satisfying. They take a while to film and edit, but I love the creativity of deciding what they're going to be about, and the technical parts, like editing, too. I do everything myself—my channel is my baby. (para. 3)

YouTuber Lauren Riihimaki similarly explained, "I do the entire process myself, beginning with brainstorming the video concept, collecting the supplies from an assortment of retailers, and filming the entire process with the occasional help from either my boyfriend or my dad" (Israelson, 2014, para. 17). Riihimaki fulfills, or at least appears to fulfill, the roles of art director, stylist, videographer, and talent. To be sure, cultural workers of all stripes are expected to have myriad proficiencies (e.g., Deuze, 2007) and engage in entrepreneurial labor (Neff et al., 2005); however, the latest iteration involves publicly embracing and celebrating one's multiskill persona. Such accounts of "doing it all" perpetuate an image of a pure creative visionary whose products are undiluted by the contributions of others. Glamourizing the protean work style also serves to exonerate (intentionally or not) the kind of overwork and self-extension required to woo the affection of a capricious and fickle boss: the audience. And, indeed, fans of social media personalities reportedly feel duped when they find out their favorite blogger or vlogger has solicited help with their "independent" creative projects. In 2014, for instance, YouTube vlogger Zoe Suggs received significant backlash from fans who were surprised to learn that her book *Girl Online* was coauthored by a ghost writer (Awford, 2014).

Moreover, presenting oneself as a do-it-all, multiskilled maven suggests independence from the platforms to which their brand persona is hitched (e.g., YouTube or Instagram). As blogger Brianne Garcia

noted, "The social-media sites we post on now will also likely be obsolete in a digital minute. Defining your work by the technology that displays it is futile" (Meder, 2014, para. 18). Relatedly, model Bree Warren pointed out, "You have to be much more than just a model these days. You have to be a social media player, a brand, a negotiator, a manager, a fresh face and a travel veteran" (Kehren, 2014, para. 4). This structural directive captures the importance of entrepreneurialism in a new key. Whereas self-enterprising workers could once stay ahead by honing skills in their given area of expertise, they are now compelled to respond every time a new platform emerges. Workers are therefore impelled to accept—even enjoy—the type of career transitions associated with the independent economy because their identity as creative branded personae depends on it.

Discussion and Conclusion

The emergence and growth of the digital economy has incited a vibrant dialogue about the changing culture and conditions of work. These discourses vary extensively in nature and scope, but media coverage of a particular subset of cultural producers—fashion bloggers, vloggers, and Instagram influencers—is rife with optimism. Our analysis of such coverage reveals the extent to which these Internet personalities actively participate in this mediated lauding, in part by circulating a patterned set of myths about themselves and their proto-careers. However, in constructing their work as an amalgamation of pleasure, authentic self-expression, and autonomy, they systematically conceal the less idyllic realities of creative work in the social media age. We contend that mythologizing the possibilities of a career fashioned online is crucial to their image-building, casting themselves as "model subjects" while prodding others to follow in their path.

Overwhelmingly, the social media content creators we examined expressed intense feelings of pleasure and fun, emphasizing that "work" is a labor of love, with compensation as a mere afterthought. The apparent pleasure of these jobs was especially discernible in their declarations of luck, including allusions to serendipitous success and "pinch me, I must be dreaming" moments. The persistent performance of positive sentiment revealed an investment in emotional labor to present a likable persona, which, as some intimated, is necessary to attract substantial followings. Moreover, within this rhetoric of love, luck, and passion, rationalizations of overwork seeped through: Work stretched to all hours of the day as the division between personal and professional was rendered invisible (Gregg, 2011).

In addition to invocations of fun and luck, social media producers celebrated the valuable stance of authenticity: Work entails "just being me," thereby obscuring any kind of job-related drudgery. But although appeals to "realness" and "sincerity" seem to have all the trappings of inner-directed self-expression, passing references to audiences (and hence advertisers/sponsors) reveal the calculated nature of such authenticity appeals (Pooley, 2010). In other words, the quest to remain perennially on brand requires a deft performance of one's image, one that requires considerable self-branding labor (Banet-Weiser, 2013; Duffy & Hund, 2015; Gandini, 2016; Hearn, 2008). Undoubtedly, this work of persona maintenance is crucial to gaining followers and fans—the economic life-blood of their online careers.

Finally, cheering accounts of "doing it all" capture the demands of the post-Fordist economy and, in particular, the expectation that workers furnish multiple proficiencies, flexibility, and cross-platform

tech savvy. At first blush, a career in which "every day is different" sounds exhilarating; however, projecting such excitement necessarily camouflages the radically unstable, profoundly taxing nature of these enterprising careers. Similar to the "labile laborers" examined by Morgan and Nelligan (2015), namely those who seem to internalize the "individualistic and competitive structures of the new economy" (p. 68) through professional pliability, these entrepreneurial laborers put a positive spin on onerous requirements. Projecting a relaxed ease while shouldering these burdens secures a total ownership of the product—a stance necessary to producing an image of self-enterprise and sense of being primed for a career that spans industries and platforms. After all, ensuring that all creative credit goes to them alone is vital to their overall brand persona. In actuality, agents, publicists, and a coterie of invisible "behind-the-brand" workers may help to burnish this image across the sprawling social media ecology (Duffy, 2017, p. 215).

Taken together, these narratives cloak the more troubling elements of independent employment, including chronic instability, the absence of benefits and training, and a lack of organized support/worker protections (Lane, 2011; Neff, 2012; Ross, 2009). Upbeat accounts of socially mediated success also serve to gloss over how the "politics of insecurity" (Huysmans, 2006; see also Beck, 1992) affect categories of workers unevenly: Low-wage and low-status workers are especially disadvantaged by the forces of worker individualization that are celebrated in popular media (e.g., Smith, 2016). The digital version of this lopsided structure amounts to what Ross (2013) described as a "jackpot economy" where media focus above all on the "winners" of prized fame—despite the fact that existing markers of privilege are often prerequisites for success.

To be sure, the notion of being plucked from obscurity and thrust into the limelight is a well-worn trope in media coverage of celebrity (Lowenthal, 1961). Yet, today, this mythos shrouds the less providential reality of the social media economy. In particular, those at the receiving end of good fortune are already well positioned for luck to strike: They have existing markers of social and economic privilege as well as the type of aesthetics familiar to the "glamour industries" (Wissinger, 2015; see also Banet-Weiser, 2012; Duffy, 2017). Therefore, the ideal of luck draws attention away from the machinations of success already in place, including one's social location. Saying "just lucky, I guess" makes it seem as though anyone could be so fortunate. Any revelation that the lucky few are structurally placed for fortune to strike threatens to weaken the strong pull for new aspirants—those who provide the crucial fan base necessary to keep the whole enterprise up and running.

In closing, we offer potential explanations for why these workers consistently present an image of social media labor in disparity with the precarious realities of creative employment. Such explanations address the individual, industrial, and ideological logics of social media labor, but they by no means function independently. At the individual level, these myths serve the bloggers, vloggers, and Instagrammers whose success is bound up with the creation and maintenance of a particular branded persona. Circulating these and other stories about themselves makes them more relatable, a requisite emotional stance crucial to "making it" in these domains. Moreover, these individuals are working in industries that demand the appearance of glamour to attract followers and thus sponsors; yet, "glamour labor" by definition entails work that is concealed to outsiders (Wissinger, 2015). Thus, the world these

workers inhabit seems like a dream because, for the enterprise to function, it has to look like one: filtered, soft-edge glamour is heightened by pushing the work from view.

And finally, these mediated myths fulfill an ideological function in their representation of the so-called "new economy" to various publics; such mediated discourses function as part of what McRobbie (2016) identified as a "creativity *dispositif*" that both encourages and disciplines laboring subjectivities for a radically unstable economy. Indeed, the digital creative economy depends on the belief that social media work is easy and potentially profitable; hope is hitched to a utopian, albeit depoliticized, promise (Weeks, 2011). By presenting the careers of digital influencers, microcelebrities, and the instafamous as both desirable and viable, aspiring creators are encouraged to toil in exchange for autonomy, excitement, visibility, and passion. The activities of the latter are driven by the hope that they, too, might win huge followings that will allow them to command the fees that these workers garnered "just by luck," all while being themselves. Participation in this system requires their investments of time, energy, and content—all of which help to sustain the circuits of digital capitalism.

In sum, the mythologies we have described here contribute to a wider discourse of a digital world—one that seems far removed from the realities of "gig-ified" employment. In fact, the laborers in our study work very hard to distance themselves from this kind of precarity, managing and coping with their own circumstances in ways that produce them as both victims and model subjects of the system in which they toil. As we argued, these workers are best conceptualized as precogs, the nonstandard cognitive workers in prestigious occupations who nevertheless labor under "classic precarious conditions" (de Peuter, 2011, p. 420). Despite the glamorous aura, bloggers, vloggers, and Instagrammers cope with uneven or intermittent pay, fluctuating fan bases, and intense demands to self-innovate to keep up with constantly evolving means for producing and promoting their self-brands.

This coping mechanism, however, involves self-presentation as exemplary worker-subjects, untroubled by these precarious conditions, while in fact embracing them. Taking this stance is crucial to creating an image of fun, free, and authentic work that conceals its inauspicious realities. In so doing, these workers actively create a mythos that intentionally grows their fan bases, while inadvertently serving a larger ethos that disciplines and incites would-be cultural laborers to try their hand at this kind of work. Creating a scrim that clouds perceptions of the deinstitutionalized, individualized, and demanding reality of the work, these mythologies sustain and justify a world of "Insta-glam" for the very few, by presenting it as a democratic path to success available to all.

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A Practice-Based Approach to Online Participation: Young People's Participatory Habitus as a Source of Diverse Online Engagement

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Based on comparative qualitative research with 14- to 25-year-olds in Italy and the UK, this study draws on Bourdieu's theory of practice and culturalist perspectives on citizenship, and situates participation as a socially embedded, contingent online/offline practice that is shaped by the interrelation between participatory habitus, differential access to resources, and the political context. Young people's diversity is manifested in their different vocabularies of participation, which include a vocabulary of (a) citizenship orientations, (b) citizenship practices, and (c) digital engagement. Based on vocabularies of participation, 5 participatory habitus were identified: the legitimate, the critical, the alternative, the radical antagonist, and the excluded. Each participatory habitus is produced by different combinations of resources and political experiences, and in turn shapes how young people participate on- and offline.

Keywords: young people, Internet, participation, social media, participatory habitus

Research into youth political participation has shown that although young people's involvement in electoral politics is declining, they engage in a more diverse range of participatory practices (Bennett, 2008; Loader, 2007). Consequently, scholars have argued that a paradigm shift has occurred in participation patterns, from conventional political participation toward lifestyle politics (Giddens, 1991; Vromen, Loader, & Xenos, 2015) and an emerging civic style, namely, "actualizing citizenship," which has replaced the traditional "dutiful" style (Bennett, 2008).

These civic patterns represent two ideal types that are deemed to differ in terms of communication and action repertoires, information styles, and civic skills. Whereas the "dutiful citizen" engages in public life out of a sense of personal duty and through the mediation of organized groups (parties, unions, etc.), the "actualizing citizen" favors a personalized, expressive engagement in lifestyle-related issues, loose modes of affiliation, and repertoires of individualized action (Bennett, 2008, 2012;

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Bennett, Wells, & Freelon, 2011). Moreover, in the dutiful style, becoming informed about public issues and government communications is conceived of as part of being a good citizen. However, a one-way, top-down communication process where information is sourced from authoritative media and political sources, and where interpretation is framed by group belonging, is favored. Conversely, actualizing citizens tend to actively construct "personally and socially curated information networks" (Wells, 2014, p. 625), that is, personalized repertoires of information sources in which mainstream media outlets and alternative media sources are mixed with young citizens' own experiences and the experiences of their peers, as circulated through (mediated) word of mouth. The reliability of such diverse sources of information is not judged primarily based on their authoritativeness. Rather, it is socially accomplished through interactions. Accordingly, actualizing citizens reject a "purely consumerist orientation to information" (Wells, 2014, p. 624) and expect media platforms to encourage users' participation (Wells, 2015). In this light, the communicative affordances of social media facilitate novel, individualized modes of engagement that are commensurate with the patterns of actualizing citizenship.

Therefore, by placing the relationship between communication, media, and participation at the core of citizenship (Dahlgren, 2009), this body of writing contributes to expanding the notion of participation beyond the "minimalist model" (Carpentier, 2011). It also leads to reframing the issue of youth disengagement as a disconnection between the institutions of representative democracy that promote the dutiful paradigm, on the one hand, and the emerging citizenship practices preferred by younger generations, on the other (Loader, Vromen, & Xenos, 2014).

Nonetheless, portraying youth as a uniform generation adhering to the actualizing civic model risks obscuring the differences among young people and the persistence of social and digital inequalities in their participation. Contrary to such an understanding of youth as a homogeneous category, empirical studies point to the coexistence of old and new grammars of political action (O'Toole & Gale, 2010) and the permanence of a dutiful citizenship style, with the majority of young people still favoring a traditional notion of participation centered around voting (Cammaerts, Bruter, Banaji, Harrison, & Anstead, 2014). In addition, these studies emphasize that the ideal "networked young citizen" (Loader et al., 2014) is actually shaped by the lived experiences of young people. Indeed, social inequalities account for differences among disengaged and engaged young people in terms of political skills and citizenship orientations (Bastedo, 2014; Cammaerts et al., 2014; Wood, 2014), and for their unequal voices in society. Whereas actualizing forms of engagement appear to reduce inequalities of participation based on age and gender, they tend to increase inequalities based on education and socioeconomic status (Quintelier, 2008; Sloam, 2014).

The influence of social inequalities on participation is also manifest when looking at young people's "vocabularies of citizenship," that is, the set of resources that individuals and groups mobilize in the process of understanding participation—and their own potentials for political agency (Lister, Smith, Middleton, & Cox, 2003; Lyson, 2014; Thorson, 2012). The broader the vocabulary of citizenship, the wider the repertoires of civic and political practices one has access to. However, vocabularies are unequally distributed: What Thorson (2012) calls "expansive citizenship vocabularies" (p. 81) are indeed linked to higher educational attainment, meaning that more educated youth can count on a wider variety of resources and repertoires to participate in society.

The idea of young people being universally engaged in online participation has also been questioned, as much as the overall association between creative, interactive uses of social media and participation. Recent studies delimit the positive impact of social media use on youth engagement to specific practices. For example, Gil de Zúñiga (2012) concludes that the consumption of news via social media is an important predictor of on- and offline participatory practices, whereas the frequency of social media use *per se* is not related to citizens' participation. Similarly, Ekström, Olsson, and Shehata (2014) consider the Internet and social media as consisting of distinct spaces—and associated practices—having diverse implications for the political socialization of young people. Drawing on longitudinal data, they observed that youth who are active in the online news space are also more likely to be interested in politics and engage in political talk. Conversely, over time, creative and social interaction spaces have a tendency to draw adolescents' attention from social and political issues.

Whether social media use softens or deepens patterns of political inequality has also been a matter of concern. Xenos, Vromen, and Loader (2014) conclude that although there is a persistent and significant relationship between socioeconomic status and political activity, social media use appears to be indirectly related to softening patterns of political inequality. Other studies, instead, suggest that inequalities in online political participation may result not only from traditional stratification factors (i.e., socioeconomic status and political interest) but also from inequalities in digital literacy (Schols & Jansz, 2014).

Consistent with the acknowledgement of the diversity of young people, the emphasis in this article is on youth's everyday lived experience, which informs their on- and offline participatory practices. I draw on Bourdieu's "theory of practice" (Bourdieu, 1977; Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992) as a way to account for differential access to resources that explains young people's different positions along the actualizing–dutiful citizenship continuum. I also argue that shared vocabularies of participation correspond to a shared participatory habitus produced by different combinations of resources and experiences. The analysis of young people's vocabularies presented in this article shows how different online participatory practices relate to diverse offline participation repertoires, and how each combination of on- and offline citizenship practices shapes and is shaped by a distinctive participatory habitus along the dutiful–actualizing spectrum.

Bourdieusian Analyses of Youth Participation

Bourdieu's theory of practice is premised on the notions of field, capital, and habitus, and their dynamic interrelationships. According to Bourdieu (1998), society is composed of distinct social spaces or fields, each structured by its own values and rules, in which social agents interact and struggle depending on their respective position, which is defined by the agent's habitus and capital. Although the three main forms of capital—economic, cultural, and social (Bourdieu, 1986)—only exist and function in relation to the field in which they are produced, the relationship between capital and field is not static. The habitus is produced by the conditionings associated with a particular position in the field and is thus the embodiment of social structures that function as schemata of "*perceptions, appreciations, and actions*" (Bourdieu, 1977, p. 83; emphasis in original) regulating practices and thoughts. As such, the habitus engenders practices that are both adapted to the field and reproduce social structures. On the other side, the field is

also shaped and transformed by the practices of those who introduce in the field dispositions acquired outside of its boundaries. The field sets the conditions under which capital and habitus are actualized, or not.

Bourdieu's conceptual triad has already been adopted in studies of youth participation. Marsh, O'Toole, and Jones (2007) emphasize that young people's political experiences are shaped by their belonging to groups—and their associated systems of roles, values and norms—and by their differential access to economic, social, and cultural resources.

Wood's (2014) study of citizenship orientations and practices across four school communities in New Zealand similarly shows how actors in the same field "adhered to a shared habitus of participation that reflected the combined and interrelated social, economic and cultural capital, or 'participatory capital' within a school community" (p. 585). The study also shows how different "participatory habitus" are associated with different positions in the power structure of society. The "participatory capital" shared by students and teachers of advantaged schools is more often awarded with legitimacy and turned into symbolic capital. By contrast, members of the working class or the rural school communities in Wood's study lacked the resources and experiences to access this "elite/global participatory capital." In line with Bourdieu, then, Wood analyzes the habitus of different actors and the distribution of capital within the field to map out the structure of power relations between different positions of individuals and groups in the field itself. Moreover, she emphasizes how young people actively participate in the construction of participatory capital rather than being passive recipients of habitus (Holland, 2009).

That the relationship between habitus and participation is not linear is also the conclusion of McFarland and Thomas's (2006) study of the impact of youth volunteering on future political participation. Following Bourdieu, they argue that "the alignment of experiences and resources with certain fields of activity creates a career structure where participants sense a degree of match/mismatch or inclusion/exclusion" (p. 403). Young people from higher educated and wealthier families benefit from resources and experiences that help them lead youth voluntary associations and become politically active once they are adults. However, notable variations in the extent to which individuals activate their own reserves of resources and experiences exist and can be explained by understanding youth associations as sites of political socialization that are "independent of class background" (McFarland & Thomas, 2006, p. 421).

Similarly, Loader, Vromen, Xenos, Steel, and Burgum (2015) examine the role of students' unions in facilitating the development of the "young citizen habitus." They show that student societies provide young people with the opportunity to experientially engage in relevant participatory practices, and with access to forms of social and cultural capital that will shape their future political participation.

Drawing on prior research adopting and adapting Bourdieu's theory of practice to the study of youth political participation, participatory habitus is here understood as the outcome of social practices generated through interactions in specific social contexts rather than the product of top-down political socialization in which young people are positioned as passive recipients.

Method

The qualitative data presented here were collected in 2015 as part of a wider, mixed methods research project that investigated the relationship between political participation and social media in Europe from the viewpoint of both citizens and political actors, using surveys of adult population, interviews with parties' campaign managers, interviews with young people.

The analysis will focus on interviews with forty 14- to 25-year-olds carried out in Italy and the UK. To examine whether and how online and offline participation varied among young people based on their citizenship vocabularies, the participants were selected through a theoretical sampling to include both dutiful and actualizing citizens. Therefore, participants were recruited among the following categories: (a) members of political parties, students' unions, and other formal opportunities for youth participation (youth parliaments, youth councils, etc.); (b) activists in social movements, students' cooperatives, squats, and Italian "social centers"; (c) volunteers in youth organizations and civil society associations; (d) young entrepreneurs. The last two categories included self-defined "disaffected" young people. In line with a theoretical sampling research design, interviews were collected until a "theoretical saturation" (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) was reached, that is, until it emerged (a) that in each country participants belonging to the same category showed consistent on- and offline practices and attitudes and (b) that clear cross-country similarities and differences could be identified (see the Appendix).

The interviews were conducted in English (UK) and Italian (Italy), and lasted one hour on average. They were transcribed and analyzed through NVivo, using a combination of inductive and theoretical thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006). Inductively, three main themes emerged, on which regularities and differences were drawn, and different participatory habitus were identified:

1. Citizenship orientations: young people's own understanding of participation, their political knowledge and values, their civic contribution (individual or collective), their self-positioning in the political field.

2. Citizenship practices: the scale and repertoires of participation.

3. Digital engagement: young people's own understanding of the online world and its participatory potential, which enables certain online activities while inhibiting others.

Analysis

The Legitimate Participatory Habitus

This participatory habitus is distinctive of British interviewees who shared a dutiful civic style, centered around voting and party politics, as Andrew (23 years old) well synthesized: "I think being a member of a party is still . . . . I mean, it's probably not, but it is what I think of when you say political participation." Dutiful young citizens in the UK also shared similar political socialization patterns, media

habits, and media literacy. Having grown up in high-cultural-capital families (the economic capital, instead, was more varied), they had also acquired or were pursuing significant institutionalized cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1986). All were socialized into politics at home, in a context where~~, every day,~~ political talk and the practice of keeping up with news were recognized as part of being a "good citizen."

Outside of the family, their experiences of participation were also similar. Typically, these young citizens were affiliated with political parties, have been involved in parties or other formal opportunities for youth participation (e.g., the UK Youth Parliament) since teenagers, and in political students' societies and students' unions (SU) boards at the university. These experiences provided already well-equipped young individuals with further civic competences, and forms of cultural and social capital that reinforced their central position in the political field ("You can change things so easily in the students' union . . . so having the power to actually really influence things is a privilege" said Sarah, age 21).

The legitimate participatory habitus is characterized by an individual orientation toward legitimized political issues and formal political structures, which is expressed through a combination of dutiful and actualizing civic practices. Their understanding of participation is close to the dutiful citizenship model, placing voting and party politics at the core of democratic participation. However, these interviewees differ from the ideal dutiful citizen; they do not participate out of a sense of personal duty but rather out of personal interest and fulfilment and are interested in issue politics (e.g., gender issues). Also, their participatory habitus is differently actualized: Sarah and Thomas are active in formal political structures that grant them full participation in political processes and decision-making. By contrast, Olivia and Andrew are currently "standby citizens" (Amnä & Ekman, 2014), that is, they are politically informed, stay alert, and are ready and willing to take political action if needed.

In terms of their engagement with the news, they rely on trusted, authoritative news sources such as *The Guardian* and the BBC, thus conforming to what could be labeled as "dutiful information style" (Wells, 2015). Nonetheless, their information practices have changed and have adapted to a mobile~~, active~~ _lifestyle in which mobile devices and social media play the major role. Especially, in their daily social media practices, the online "news space" seemingly overlaps with the "space of social interaction" (Ekström et al., 2014) and the practice of relational maintenance.

> Olivia (22): I have the BBC news app on my phone and whenever I have a moment in the office, when I'm not doing something immediately, I'll flick to it. . . . I get a lot of headlines from Facebook cause I follow all of the newspapers on Facebook. . . . I have BBC, NBC, CNN, *The Guardian*, *Times*, *The Economist*, *New Statesman*, I have every obvious one and they pretty much fill my newsfeed, actually, yeah, and whenever I'm sort of scrolling down the newsfeed, looking at stuff by my friends, it's interspersed with news.

Thanks to their experiences within the SU, the UK Youth Parliament, and/or political parties, they master the operational and communicative competencies required to conduct online campaigns, and they recognize the value of social media for facilitating communication between active members: "Now we've made Facebook pages for our causes, and these group chats that we've done for the UK Youth Parliament are very, very good at keeping communication sort of instantaneous" (Thomas, 16).

However, they were very critical of political discussions on social media, and of online participation when not associated with active engagement in political groups.

The Critical Participatory Habitus

Young Italians who were affiliated with political parties were more diverse in terms of their civic and digital practices compared with their British peers. These young "critical" citizens also adhered to a predominantly dutiful citizenship model centered around the institutions of representative democracy. However, they differed from "legitimate" young citizens for their patterns of political socialization and their attitudes toward political parties. First, their political socialization was not initiated in the family context but was rather autonomous and peer driven, starting during high school or college. Second, they shared a more critical view of party politics because of a generational disconnection that inhibits greater participation of young people within their parties (Sofia, Matteo, Marco), or because of the hybrid political parties they belonged to—parties at the intersection of formal political parties and social movements (Alberto, Francesca, Simone).

Therefore, the reasons for two distinctive participatory habitus among equally dutifully oriented young citizens emerged because of the different configurations of the British and Italian political systems. Both are characterized by a marginalization of young voters and signs of blockages in political parties' interactions with society. In the UK, the first-past-the-post electoral system excludes smaller parties, which tend to be more popular among young voters, and provides major parties with little incentives to engage with the issues that many youngsters care about (Sloam, 2014). In Italy, an average aging political class; the emergence of an antipolitical, postideological style of leadership (Bordignon, 2014); and the presence of an antipolitical and antiparty political party in Parliament (Bordignon & Ceccarini, 2015) variously contribute to deepen the disconnection between politicians and young voters.

As a consequence of their more disillusioned participation in party politics, critical youth's vocabularies revolve around the expression of individual identities despite their belonging to institutionalized groups.

Their information practices are varied but center on authoritative and institutional sources: (Online) newspapers are central in the media diet of Sofia, Marco, Alberto and Simone, whereas Francesca prefers TV news and local newspapers, and Matteo combines all news TV channels and institutional websites. Compared with the legitimate habitus, these young citizens are more critical toward the hybridization of news and relational spaces on social media and more reliant on authoritative sources:

> Simone (24): Facebook . . . yes, it's an important source of information, but there's everything there, you can find both the most illuminating comment from the public intellectual and the most idiot thing from some weird guy. So you need to discriminate. . . . With newspapers you are not required to do so. They do it for you. Newspapers tell you, "This is a journalist, so it's worth reading."

Like their legitimate peers, however, these interviewees have been variously involved in online campaigning, both through their personal profiles or the party/candidate profile. Their communicative and digital competences are varied, though. For example, at the age of 19, Marco was part of the campaign staff of a party leader during the 2013 national elections and acquired the civic and digital skills that enabled him to produce and share political content on social media, and moderate heated political discussions. Alternatively, because of his prior involvement in the students' movement and the particular party he belongs to, Alberto has developed critical media literacies that are usually distinctive of "radical antagonists." While acknowledging the advantages of social media for organization and for broadcasting information, he is also cognizant of the commercial nature of the social media platform, and the problematic implications of its political uses:

> Alberto (23): It is based on what we call the sharing economy, isn't it? That is, [it is based] on the monetization of social relations, on unpaid labor. So, by using Facebook one validates this business model. Merely by using Facebook, with a page or your own profile, you contribute to this economy.

On the contrary, despite their active engagement in political campaigning on Facebook, Simone, Francesca, Matteo, and Sofia are less confident in their digital skills.

The Alternative Participatory Habitus

Young people adhering to the alternative participatory habitus show consistent socialization patterns, civic orientations, and citizenship practices in both countries, though the specific political issues around which they mobilize are varied. They mostly grew up in highly educated, middle class or upper middle class families, where they have been socialized to actualizing citizenship practices and values. Their life trajectories included early experiences of volunteering and engagement in local communities. As a consequence of these early experiences, their civic orientations combine national/global orientations with a strong sense of belonging to a community. In other words, their current participation practices are embedded in the local community but have national or global ambitions. Matthew, Rebecca, and Amy perceive their participation in housing or organic food students' cooperatives as both a way to participate in their local communities and as a way to promote an alternative lifestyle against capitalism and neoliberal ideology. Marta, Luca, and Tommaso are involved in antimafia and anticorruption movements, or associations against (food) poverty that are locally embedded but have a national scope. Moreover, these "alternative" young citizen share vocabularies of participation that revolve around the expression of a collective "we." Paradigmatic in this respect is Matthew, who, in the course of the same interview, shifts from an individualized vocabulary of citizenship when he speaks of his experience within the SU board to a vocabulary centered on a collective "we-ness" when speaking about the housing coop. This is consistent with the findings of prior practice-based approaches to youth participation that show how the habitus shapes and is shaped by the field (e.g., Loader et al., 2015):

> Matthew (22): I was on the board of directors for that, I have been elected and I was also involved in the political campaigning for the organization. So that helped me a lot about campaigning business and ways of organizing within organizations. . . . But as the

> cooperatives we are very much autonomous . . . one of the coop's principles is autonomy and independence, so we try to do without these organizations.

Whereas research has shown a positive relationship between early volunteering and dutiful participation in adulthood (McFarland & Thomas, 2006), the alternative participatory habitus leans more toward the actualizing citizenship pole. These young citizens engage in protests, political consumerism, petitions, and DIY citizenship (Hartley, 1999; Ratto & Boler, 2014), without completely rejecting dutiful citizen practices or the collaboration with political institutions at the local and/or national level. In spite of a shared distrust in political parties—perceived as not representing young people's interests—they still value voting as a key channel of participation.

The actualizing style also shapes their information practices, characterized by a combination of online mainstream media outlets, Facebook (where they keep up with news from youth organizations and social movements), and blogs (as sources of alternative, issue-specific news). Their media diets, though, are more the by-product of their social networks rather than of strategic choices. Moreover, interviewees vary in their digital skills and attitudes toward the Internet. Most have moderate digital skills—except for Tommaso and his friends, who designed an app to prevent food waste, that connects NGOs and shops/food retailers. All, however, use social media as effective tools for timely coordination and decision-making, as well as for broadcasting information about events or petitions, thus fostering the horizontal, nonhierarchical structure of these groups.

> Rebecca (21): For example, we had a little bit of a thing, 'cause we realized that the rice cakes that we were selling had palm oil in them, and we had a meeting and we were like, "Oh, what can we do?" But we were not many of us at the meeting, so we couldn't really decide right there what we wanted to do. . . . So we saw you can ask questions on Facebook, so we asked, "Shall we sell it, or no?" and that is really a good way of getting more people join the debate, because, really, everybody who buys this food is part of the co-op, because it's nice to have the opportunity to participate.

> Tommaso (25): I'm a techno-fan. So, I use Google Drive to organize events and I use Doodle. When we need to talk, paradoxically we don't use WhatsApp but a dedicated platform, Podio, that enables effective exchange of information within the group. So, yes, we are very digital oriented.

The Radical-Antagonist Participatory Habitus

Radical antagonists are truly "networked young citizens" (Loader et al., 2014): They reflexively engage in actualizing citizenship practices enacted through social media networks, and their point of reference is represented by the "global information networked capitalism" (Loader et al., 2014, p. 145) responsible for corrupting the democratic system. Therefore, and contrary to the "alternative" habitus, radical antagonists share a strong dissatisfaction with party politics and the institutions of representative democracy. Their anger stems from a perceived disconnection between democracy as a value and the practice of democracy (see also Cammaerts et al., 2014). Consequently, activists exclusively engage in

DIY and radical citizenship practices, including protests, occupations, and hunting sabotage, which provide them with a strong sense of political efficacy and gratification. However, their civic orientation is far from purely individual, being instead shaped by a strong sense of belonging to collective identities.

As much as they resist the power structures of contemporary democracies, from which they feel excluded, they also share a critical attitude toward mainstream media. Radical antagonists have developed robust critical skills and have strategically constructed sophisticated media diets, based on individual interests and trusted networks.

> Alicia (25): Mainstream media's a joke, it's corporate and it just makes me angry. So, where do I get my news. . . . Well you know, you kinda hear about shit! I mean, online usually, from like things that aren't mainstream media. There's problems with that, but there's problems with mainstream media, so you just have to be smart about it. . . . I wouldn't look at just one thing, so even some mainstream media outlets, you can look at.

Their critical skills also include awareness of the so-called algorithmic authority (Lupton, 2015; Rogers, 2013). Namely, they understand that search engines do not provide "raw," "truthful" data, and critically view results of online queries as the outcome of power relations. Issues of privacy and digital veillance (Lupton, 2015) are also addressed by radical antagonists, who express concern for their digital footprint and the ways in which relationships and participatory practices are commodified into a "culture of connectivity" (Van Dijck, 2013). Consequently, they enact tactics of resistance against cybersurveillance (Leistert, 2012) by favoring alternative social media and messaging apps that guarantee end-to-end encryption and higher anonymity:

> Alicia (25): You can just get a confirmation bias via a feedback loop, so you've got, you know, I mean, Google perpetuates this. Because you know, when you are searching on Google from your IP address or if you logged on, even worse, you know, the kind of things you click on will end up becoming the things more likely to be at the top. So it's just a confirmation bias; you're looking for what you think the truth is and Google tells you that's what the truth is.

> Aurora (25): Textsecure and Surespot are two good messaging apps, based on end-to-end cryptography, which means that two people can exchange messages that can only be decoded by the sender and the receiver. . . . Another helpful tool is Obscurecam, an app for photos and videos. Based on facial recognition techniques, it obscures the face with pixels so that in case of demonstrations you can directly share the photo online while protecting someone's anonymity.

Their greater digital literacy is also expressed in the production of communication. Radical antagonists are "social politics curators" (Thorson, 2014), that is, they are actively engaged in sharing political content on social media (Facebook, Twitter, and blogs) for political campaigning. They are also engaged in citizen journalism and other forms of media activism:

> Aisha (20): I also worked for some other activists in Germany. They are an alternative media news network, and I do research with them sometimes. . . . It's, like, we just started, it's like a grassroots thing, we started eight months ago, so we had to learn so many things, like how to contact activists and interviewing them and growing because we started out, like, eight to ten people, now we're like 40.

> Aurora (25): last year we launched an app that generates automatic chains of retweets, inspired by the Occupy Wall Street "human megaphone," so that if someone sends a message, everyone replicates it. We launched it on occasion of a national demonstration for housing rights in Rome with the aim to give real-time news and fight the dominant frame of mainstream media.

Moreover, among these interviewees, peer relations are seemingly more influential on political socialization than political talk in the family context or a common socioeconomic background. Recent studies also showed that civic talk with peers is a stronger predictor of political interest and political expression than civic talk with parents (Ekström & Östman, 2015). The contribution of peer relations in the development of political interest and democratic values is related to changes in both the media environment and the conditions of childhood and adolescence (Livingstone, 2009; Pasquier, 2005), whereby the influence of peer and media cultures goes to the detriment of parents' and teachers' authoritative roles. Indeed, the Internet and social media provide marginalized youth with the opportunity to actively develop connections with like-minded individuals and move beyond geographic—and symbolic—restrictions (boyd, 2014):

> Aisha (20): To be honest, at my school I was the only vegan and the only person with global views on being bisexual, no LGBT community existed, and if I hadn't had the Internet, where I can actively see people talking, sharing, and caring about these things, I just . . . I think I wouldn't go through it the way I just did it. Because I think the Internet can be a good supportive network if you live in a village or conservative environment and you feel like you are the only one, but that's not true.

The Excluded Participatory Habitus

In both countries, "excluded" young people express high degrees of alienation from politics in combination with a low sense of self-efficacy. Interviewees adhering to this habitus tend to belong to ethnic or other minority groups, and most tend to be from lower socioeconomic backgrounds. Civic talk in the family context was rarely part of their political socialization, nor was watching the news with their parents. They also share a narrow understanding of political participation, which, consistent with a dutiful civic orientation, is equated with voting, and as such is only actualized closer to elections:

> Deepa (22): I have no interest in, like, politics. The only time I'd ever get interested in some kind of political debate is when it comes to elections. So, for example, for us, I think our general elections are coming up soon, I think, I am not entirely sure [laughing]. This is how much I keep up with it. So when it comes close to the time of the

> campaigns, they become a little bit more like "Ok, you guys will be voting soon," I'll be interested then, because I'd be more interested to know what they have to say.

A closer look at their citizenship vocabularies, though, shows how "excluded" young citizens do not express boredom for politics and political news because they are indifferent to any political or social issue. Rather, by avoiding political news, they express a profound form of disaffection with the political game and the political discourse, which they perceive as inaccessible (see also Bastedo, 2014). More specifically, those in their 20s complain about politics being distant from the issues young people care for, and about politicians not addressing them. They also lament their lack of the civic skills and literacies that are required to meaningfully engage with the political discourse. Teenagers' feeling of exclusion, instead, is grounded in their narrow understanding of participation and their ineligibility to vote. Consequently, they claim the right to vote at 16 and wish they were taught more about politics in school. For different reasons, then, both teenagers and young people share a sense of political inefficacy for not being heard, and feel ill-equipped to vote:

> Deepa (22): Personally, I just find it really boring. I just find it like three grown men just constantly arguing, arguing, arguing!

> Monica (25): We grow up on the streets, not in a well-off home among lawyers, barristers, and the like. I have realized that they use a totally different language from mine.

> Emily (15): I think vote at 16 will be more effective because young people have . . . a right to know . . . because young people are the new generation. They are gonna be the ones who are around a lot more. Around for a longer period of time. So they deserve the right to have an opinion on what is happening in their community and their nation.

This attitude toward national politics is also reflected in their information practices: They rely on a limited number of mainstream media sources, prefer the short-news format, and delve deeper only in the news they are more interested in, such as local news or issues that affect young people, like mental health and bullying.

> Bethany (14): I only watch the news when I see something, they have an event talking about what these politicians are up to. Or I read, do you know those little, those writing parts at the bottom of the screen when there is news on? I read that sometimes, 'cause it talks about, it summarizes it. 'Cause I find that it's easier to understand when it's a bit summarized.

> Sara (14): I don't look for news myself, I read what I bump into. I mean, sometimes I read articles on politics, but I am not very interested in it. I read things my friends share, or about actors and singers, who travel around the world. I am a bit fascinated by that.

However, some "excluded" are actively engaged in youth volunteering associations, especially those aimed at promoting youth's well-being and social inclusion. They are also generally engaged in

creative uses of the Internet: They maintain blogs, write fan fiction, and create videos. Together with radical activists, indeed the "excluded" climb up the "ladder of opportunities" (Livingstone & Helsper, 2007). This finding is consistent with quantitative and longitudinal data showing how engagement in the creative space is not necessarily associated with the development of public orientation and interest in politics (Ekström et al., 2014).

> Emily (15): The Internet is a very important part of my life. I spend literally . . . like, 60% of my life on the Internet, 'cause I just find it so much more interesting online . . . that you can do so much more online, than . . . yeah . . . I like reading online, 'cause I have like . . . this website where we can read, people can write stories and we can read them, we can share them with each other. And I like obviously looking at photos, at photography, so I can get inspiration for my own photography. I like YouTube, so you can learn more about people online. I have my YouTube channel, stuff like that . . . it is about me, about my friends. We all, like, do videos together.

> Deepa (22): I used to blog as well . . . I didn't have like a specific area that I would spoke about, it was just quite literally "I'm thinking of that today, so let me write about it."

The habitus of exclusion, though, does not necessarily configure a permanent position in the political field. As it emerged from the analysis of the other citizen habitus, the habitus is the dynamic product of social interactions embedded in specific contexts, and it is likely to change when the field and capitals change too. For example, Gabrielle (24) has grown up in a "laid back" family, where "politics was never really spoken about," but her sexual identity shaped the conditions for her socialization into a legitimate participatory habitus during college, where she became the SU LGBT officer.

Discussion and Conclusion

This study has argued that a practice-based approach to youth participation provides an analytical framework for thinking of the correspondence between attitudes, practices, skills, and knowledge, and one's position in society. Accordingly, in this study, participation is conceptualized as a socially embedded, and contingent online/offline practice that is shaped by the interrelation between participatory habitus (experiences and attitudes), differential access to resources (as determined by social class, education, ethnicity, and gender), and the political context.

The analysis of youth's vocabularies of participation has shown that young people adhere to different participatory habitus, each characterized by distinctive dispositions regarding (a) citizenship orientations, including orientations toward the institutions of representative democracy; (b) citizenship practices; and (c) digital engagement (as shown in Table 1).

Table 1. Participatory Habitus in Summary.

Participatory habitus	Civic orientation	Civic practices	Major source of political socialization	Information style	Digital participatory practices
Legitimate	National Individual	Dutiful	Home	Hybrid	Information Fundraising (Occasionally) online campaigning
Critical	National Individual	Hybrid	Peers/autonomous	Dutiful	Information Online campaigning
Alternative	Local, national, and global Collective	Hybrid	Home	Actualizing (nonstrategic)	Information Online coordination and decision-making Online campaigning Petitions
Radical antagonist	Local, national, and global Collective	Actualizing	Peers/autonomous	Actualizing (strategic)	Information Online campaigning Petitions Citizen journalism Digital activism
Excluded	Local Individual	Dutiful	Consistent disaffection in both home and peer groups	Dutiful	Creative and recreational User Generated Content (UGC)

Against assumptions of a clear-cut paradigm shift in participatory patterns, the findings show a variety of positions along the actualizing/dutiful continuum, with each habitus combining practices and civic styles of both models, as well as individual and collective agency. In addition to this, and contrary to prior studies (McFarland & Thomas, 2006), "legitimate" and "alternative" young citizens show how volunteering can equally result in standby or DIY citizenship, without necessarily leading to dutiful citizenship in adulthood.

Moreover, youth's vocabularies emphasize the dynamic process through which a habitus is acquired and the codetermination of habitus, field, and capital. Whereas participatory habitus are influenced by both parents' and class's habitus—from which young people draw schemes, experiences, and resources—they are not strictly determined by early socialization. Personal life trajectories concur to inform the habitus in various ways. For example, young people may have been socialized into a specific participatory habitus in a durable way but may lack the opportunities and motivations to activate it later in life, as in the case of some "legitimate" interviewees who are now "standby citizens" (Amnä & Ekman, 2014). Others, instead, have been socialized into collective civic identities and participation practices later in life, during adolescence, and through interactions with peers—as radical antagonists show.

Finally, consistent with prior research showing that the relationship between social media use and youth participation is not linear, the findings highlight the diversity of young people's uses of social media. Those still adhering to a dutiful citizenship model tend to create a hybrid social media space in which news and relational spaces overlap; young activists who engage in on- and offline actualizing citizenship make political uses of social media-including forms of citizen journalism and media activism. By contrast, those who are more politically disenfranchised are actually engaged in a variety of creative uses of social media. Additionally, the data show how young citizens combine different social media platforms in their communication repertoires and engage in diverse communicative spaces that are defined by the specific social and technological affordances of each platform (Schmidt, 2014).

The evidence of different issues of concern among young people in Italy and the UK, and possible variations within the same participatory habitus across countries, suggest that a practice-based approach to youth participation provides a valuable analytical tool for understanding young people's engagement within its sociopolitical context. Therefore, a Bourdieusian approach to the practice of participation also helps identify common patterns across the diversity of individual lived experiences, with young people's belonging to a plurality of social worlds (Lahire, 2011). Such an approach could inform further comparative studies of youth's participation on- and offline.

The findings also have implications for the future of democratic engagement in Western democracies. Although many of young citizens' participatory practices challenge traditional modes of political participation and point to disconnections between young people and party politics, the interviews nonetheless highlight youth's desire to be heard and to participate in society. Therefore, although the right to not participate should be respected (Cammaerts et al., 2014), acknowledging that the experiences of citizenship and the opportunities for engagement are diverse and unequal is vital if we want to establish a new connection between young people and democratic life.

However, this study has some clear limitations. First and foremost, the sample is limited in size and diversity of young people's experiences: All the interviewees are or have been socially and politically engaged. Moreover, most are university students. Therefore, given that education has a strong relationship with participation (Sloam, 2014), we can assume that socioeconomic inequalities, and their influence on both online and offline participation are likely to be minimized by interviewees' educational achievements. At the same time, the fact that most interviewees, especially in the UK, are or have been

university students is consistent with prior evidence that actualizing citizenship practices are stratified along the lines of social and educational inequalities (Sloam, 2014).

Moreover, because the aim was to demonstrate the potentialities of a Bourdieusian approach to youth participation and to identify the main features of each participatory habitus, a systematic comparison of the two political fields, and its implications for youth participation, was beyond the scope of the article. However, major differences between the two countries exist, among which two were especially influential on the empirical data collected: First, in 2015 the UK faced both general elections and Labour leadership elections, whereas only a proportion of Italian citizens were involved in regional elections. Second, young people in the UK are offered more institutionalized opportunities for participation, such as SU and youth parliaments.

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Appendix

Table A1. Participants.

Name[2]	Age group	Country	Category	Socioeconomic background	Other relevant information	Participatory habitus
Sofia	20–25	Italy	1-local democratic party (PD)	Middle class		Critical
Tommaso	20–25	Italy	3/4-young entrepreneur and volunteer against food poverty	Upper middle class		Alternative
Aurora	20–25	Italy	2-media activist and "social center"	Middle class		Radical antagonist
Sara	14–19	Italy	1-youth local council	Lower middle class		Excluded
Marta	20–25	Italy	3-association against mafia and corruption	Middle class		Alternative
Monica	20–25	Italy	3-association for youth participation in deprived urban areas	Lower class	Unemployed	Excluded
Francesca	20–25	Italy	1-candidate in local elections, regionalist movement	Middle class	Lower educated family, region with high presence of regionalists	Critical
Simone	20–25	Italy	1-regionalist movement	Middle class		Critical
Marco	20–25	Italy	1-former member of UDC (Christian party), member of the European Democrat Students network (Edsnet)	Middle class	Originally from a small village in Southern Italy	Critical
Luca	20–25	Italy	3-volunteer, Catholic association against poverty	Middle class		Alternative
Matteo	14–19	Italy	1-local Forza Italia	Middle class	Lower educated family, region with high	Critical

[2] To guarantee participants' anonymity, names were chosen based on lists of popular names in Italy and the UK for specific years, and for ethnic minorities.

					presence of regionalists	
Alberto	20–25	Italy	1-local counsellor SEL (left-wing party)	Middle class		Critical
Zoe	14–19	Italy	2-"social center" and students' movement	Middle class	Ethnic minority	Radical antagonist
Micol	20–25	Italy	3-association for young Jews	Upper middle class	Religious minority, but secular family	Alternative
Giorgia	20–25	Italy	4-young entrepreneur	Middle class		Excluded
Paulo	14–19	Italy	1-project on European citizenship in a vocational school	Middle class	Ethnic minority	Excluded
Giulia	14–19	Italy	1-project on European citizenship in a vocational school	Lower class	Single-parent household	Excluded
Susanna	14–19	Italy	1-project on European citizenship in a vocational school	Lower middle class		Excluded
Carlo	14–19	Italy	1-project on European citizenship in a vocational school	Upper middle class	Father is an entrepreneur	Excluded
Elena	20–25	Italy	2-No Borders activist	Middle class		Radical antagonist
Sarah	20–25	UK	1-general secretary SU	Lower middle class	Family lived on benefits	Legitimate
Matthew	20–25	UK	2-students' cooperative	Middle class		Alternative
Bethany	14–19	UK	3-antibullying ambassador	Working class	Ethnic minority	Excluded
Rebecca	20–25	UK	2-students' cooperative	Upper middle class		Alternative
Amy	20–25	UK	2-students' cooperative	Upper middle class		Alternative
Aisha	20–25	UK	2-media activist and students' cooperative	Lower middle class	Ethnic and religious minority, vegan, and LGBT	Radical antagonist

Gabrielle	20–25	UK	1-LGBT officer	Lower middle class		Excluded
Emily	14–19	UK	3-antibullying ambassador	Lower middle class	Single-parent household	Excluded
Myra	14–19	UK	4-young entrepreneur	Middle class	Ethnic and religious minority	Excluded
Deepa	20–25	UK	3-volunteering counsellor for mental health and antibullying	Lower middle class	Ethnic and religious minority	Excluded
Andrew	20–25	UK	1-Labour Party, SU	Upper-middle class	Parents are journalists	Legitimate
Olivia	20–25	UK	3-Amnesty International	Middle class	Father currently unemployed	Legitimate
Alicia	20–25	UK	2-squatter	Middle class	Now homeless	Radical antagonist
Lyla	14–19	UK	3-Amnesty International	Lower middle class	Ethnic and religious minority. Family lived on benefits	Alternative
Dave	20–25	UK	2-Activist, anticuts movement, animal liberation, No Borders	Lower middle class	Currently unemployed, vegan	Radical antagonist
Thomas	14–19	UK	1-UK Youth Parliament	Middle class	Mother is a mature student and a tutor in a teaching university	Legitimate
Gemma	20–25	UK	3-38 Degrees staff	Middle class	Italian, studying in the UK	Alternative
Jessica	20–25	UK	2-students' movement	Middle class		Radical antagonist
Nicholas	20–25	UK	2-students movement	Middle class	Vegan	Radical antagonist
Duncan	20–25	UK	2-students movement	Middle class		Alternative

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A Sound Bridge: Listening for the Political in a Digital Age

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This article examines how catchy sounds ("Why This Kolaveri" ["Why This Murderous Rage"]) can function as sonic cues for political participation. Exploring the sonic dimensions and aural imaginaries at play in mediated public spheres, we show how #Kolaveri became a sound bridge that enabled potent encounters among journalists, politicians, and citizens embroiled in heated debates about corruption in India. Tracing #Kolaveri's movement across media platforms, we analyze three dimensions of the sonic cue—its availability, performativity, and resonance—that gave it a catalytic charge. Suggesting that sound technologies and practices constitute vital cultural and material infrastructures on which a bridge between the popular and the political can be built, we argue that cases like #Kolaveri disclose new ways of listening for the political and new modes of participation—the expression of sonic citizenship—in a digital era.

Keywords: sound studies, digital culture, social media, networked publics, media convergence, television, digital politics

Shouting, chanting, murmuring, whispering, and choosing to remain silent are all ways of making oneself heard. And if we agree that people entertain the political in range of mediated and embodied ways, then surely listening for the political is an important part of the story. However, voice, speech, and representation continue to be privileged over listening when it comes to understanding democratic participation. In the burgeoning scholarship on mediated political cultures in the present moment, we are only now beginning to pay attention to a wider range of sounds, their circulation across media platforms, and varied listening practices that reshape political culture in different parts of the world (Chakravartty & Roy, 2015; Kheshti, 2015; Kraidy, 2016; Qiu, 2014; Yang, 2009). This article focuses on the circulation of

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a catchy tune from a popular Tamil film song, "Why This Kolaveri" (Sony Music India, 2011), across various media platforms to examine how a sonic cue can spark and sustain debates and, under the right circumstances, transform how we listen for and apprehend the political in a contentious, highly fragmented, and deeply hierarchical public sphere.

Kolaveri was released on YouTube in November 2011 as part of the marketing strategy for a Tamil-language film, *3*. Shot and edited in a "making of" style and featuring the film's lead actors, director, and music director, the song became popular within a few hours of its online release. The quirky "Tanglish" (Tamil and English) lyrics appeared on the screen as hard-coded subtitles, thus making it easy to follow and sing along with and contributing to the song's popularity among non-Tamil-speaking audiences in India and across the world. Over a span of two to three months in late 2011 and early 2012, individuals in different parts of the world uploaded cover versions and remixes. And not unlike the circulation of other global pop hits such as "Gangnam Style," *Kolaveri* also inspired flash mobs in different cities. What was different in this case, however, was how the song—the catchy opening line and the word *kolaveri* (murderous rage) in particular—was redeployed and drawn into a broader and explicitly political arena to make sense of the scale and complexity of corruption and governance. Figure 1 shows one of many tweets that used the refrain of the song to connect *Kolaveri* to ongoing political conversations.

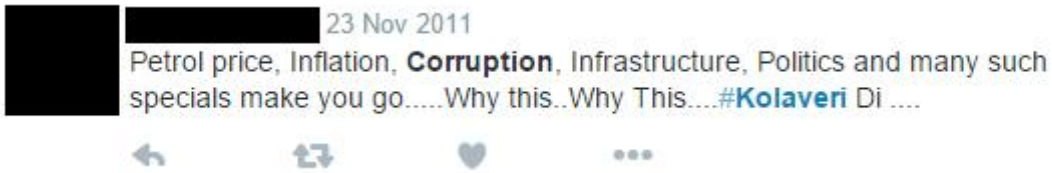

Figure 1. One of the many tweets connecting* Kolaveri *to ongoing political issues.

The song struck a chord with a wide swath of urban and semiurban middle classes across the country whose political imaginations had been stoked by a series of investigative "sting operations"—exposés carried out by various news organizations—that revealed links among political figures, business leaders, and in one particularly damning instance, prominent journalists (#Radiagate; Chadha, 2012). It was not entirely surprising that *Kolaveri* resonated with the anticorruption protests that Anna Hazare launched in April 2011 and that gained immense political traction under the guidance of Arvind Kejriwal, the political and public relations face of the anticorruption movement who has since gone on to launch the mercurial Aam Aadmi Party (Common Man Party).[2] Moreover, the fact that #Kolaveri is going strong to this day, more than five years after it first captured attention, seems all the more remarkable in a media and political culture marked by networked and mobile publics that shift shape as events unfold (Kraidy, 2016; Papacharissi, 2015; Punathambekar, 2010).

[2] For an account of the anticorruption movement, the formation of the Aam Aadmi Party, and shifts in political power in India, see Sitapati (2011), and a series of essays published on the influential collaborative blog Kafila (https://kafila.online/tag/anna-hazare).

This is, in some respects, a familiar story. We now have a growing body of scholarship on the surprising ways in which symbols and icons from popular culture are at times deployed with great effect in the political sphere (Jenkins, Shresthova, Gamber-Thompson, Kligler-Vilenchik, & Zimmerman, 2016; Kumar, 2015; Yang, 2009). In the Indian context, too, the phenomenal expansion of mobile and digital media infrastructures and platforms since the early 2000s has transformed the ways in which popular culture mediates the political, recasting how political talk and engagement are woven into the rhythms of everyday life. However, scholars have tended to pay attention to the proliferation of screens and the visual dimensions of public political discourse while ignoring the accompanying changes in the soundscape. In fact, even when we consider the auditory experience of politics, our language remains in thrall to visual metaphors (Ihde, 2007). Drawing on recent work in sound studies and digital media studies (Kheshti, 2015; Lacey, 2013; Manoukian, 2010; Stoever, 2016), this article traces how #Kolaveri was taken up in remix videos, news parodies, political campaigns, Facebook pages, and redeployed on Twitter to make sense of corporate and political corruption over a four- to five-year span.[3] Exploring the sonic dimensions and aural imaginaries at play, we argue that #Kolaveri functioned as a sound bridge that enabled a range of potent encounters among journalists, politicians, and citizens embroiled in long-standing and heated debates about citizenship and political participation.

A sound bridge is a familiar media unit and editing technique that is used to smooth transitions between scenes in a film, particularly when setting up expectations that are then immediately confirmed (Bordwell & Thompson, 2004). It is, in many respects, the aural equivalent of the cross-fade. However, a sound bridge can also surprise and disorient viewers. As Murch (2004) suggests, unexpected combinations of visuals and sounds can be deployed such that the audience is unable to "relate the sound to the visual except perhaps metaphorically" (p. xiii), thereby inviting them to make deeper and more meaningful connections between sound and visuals than they would otherwise. Creative uses of sound bridges can, in other words, produce a "greater dimensionality of experience" (Murch, 2004, p. xiii). Murch also points out that an untethered sound is particularly potent, seemingly everywhere (p. xiv) and nowhere, in part because audiences cannot place its source. Once it is unmoored from its filmic origins, a catchy sound such as *Kolaveri* has the capacity to connect to diverse contexts. This sense of a sound bridge being connective also encourages us to think about sound in relation to urban spaces and infrastructures. A wealth of recent scholarship in geography and other disciplines has alerted us to the manifold links between sound and space, showing how sounds have the capacity to "mark out territories," produce "acoustic arenas," and, more generally, contribute to the "production of space" (Gallagher, Kanngieser, & Prior, 2016). Taking a spatial approach also encourages us to consider the fact that bridges are, in the first instance, designed to overcome divisions in the world. Even though bridges can and do collapse and are often actively destroyed in times of conflict, they are sites of chance and, at times, charged encounters, and they enable and constrain linkages between individual practices, collective rituals, and the built environment (Sabry, 2010). Thus, examining the difference that catchy sounds might make in densely mediated political cultures involves following the links and associations that a sound such as

[3] *Kolaveri* also proved effective for bringing up a range of other issues, including caste injustice, sporting scandals, and gender and sexual violence during this time. But in this article, we have chosen to focus on the issue of political corruption.

Kolaveri makes across different private and public spaces, taking into account the relations between media infrastructures, platforms and their affordances, and a range of user practices.

Adopting this expansive perspective, we show how #Kolaveri functioned as a sound bridge that was separated from the filmic context and used in a range of metaphorical and connective ways by journalists, politicians, and citizens coming to terms with a thoroughly mediated anticorruption movement and, more generally, a political culture shaped by new media logics. Far from being a "viral" expression of a senseless, irrational, and fleeting antipolitical rage by angry citizens, sound bridges such as #Kolaveri can be understood as mobile communicative structures that enable political participation—in this case, a deeply felt sentiment of outrage—in the face of technological, political-economic, and sociocultural constraints and transformations. In making room for and gathering all manner of sentiments, expressions, aspirations, and identities, #Kolaveri discloses new ways and locales in which we might listen for the political and discern new modes of participation—the expression of sonic citizenship—in a digital era.

Sound, Politics, and Citizenship: Listening and Looking

The sonic turn in the humanities, particularly in film and media studies, has been long overdue. In the South Asian context as elsewhere, scholarship on media and public culture has been dominated by a focus on visual practices. Although the study of media gradually became a more transnational affair during the 1990s, tracking closely the globalization of media across Asia, Africa, and Latin America, scholarly attention has remained attuned to screen cultures. With "public culture" emerging as an analytic framework for understanding media, consumption, and culture in the postcolonial world in an era of economic and cultural globalization, visual forms (film, television, and advertising, in particular) and a focus on viewers, spectators, and interocular fields came to structure studies of media and mediation throughout the 1990s and early 2000s (Appadurai & Breckenridge, 1995; Kumar, 2006; Mankekar, 1999; Mazzarella, 2003; Pinney, 2001; Rajagopal, 2001). That we have approached the link between media and the political from a visual perspective becomes even more apparent when we consider the very direct connections between cinema and politics in south India, where former film stars mobilized their star image and fan base to run for political office (Pandian, 1992; Srinivas, 2013). Even in the detailed and richly theorized accounts of the performative dimensions of politics in south India, the focus remains on visual symbols and logics. The circulation and impact of songs, dialogues, and varied listening practices that shaped these actors' star image and the fan cultures and associations that were crucial for electoral mobilization remain understudied. The title of Pandian's (1992) seminal book on cine-politics, *The Image Trap*, signals a broader theoretical trap that media scholars have only recently begun to undo.

To be sure, there were notable exceptions, including key studies of oratory and language (Bate, 2009), cassette culture in India and Iran (Manuel, 1993; Sreberny-Mohammadi & Mohammadi, 1994), and some focus on music and music videos on satellite television (Kumar & Curtin, 2002; Kvetko, 2004). With the consolidation and gradual institutionalization of film studies in the South Asian context beginning in the 2000s, there has been a surge of interest not just in film music (Booth, 2008; Majumdar, 2001; Sundar, 2014) but also other sites and forms of sound work, voice, and the formation of listener communities. For instance, Jhingan's (2016) work on how specific media technologies and formats

transformed the circulation of music, music industry logics, and listening practices have been key to an emergent body of scholarship that moves away from a strict focus on cinema.

Furthermore, the link between media and the political has been framed largely in relation to news and the rapid expansion of television infrastructures and the phenomenal growth of 24/7 news channels beginning in the mid-1990s. The impact of television news on the political public sphere has been analyzed predominantly through visual logics—of witnessing, displaying, and making visible being vital to the democratizing possibilities of media infrastructures (Peters, 2001). Also, given the linguistic and regional politics in the Indian context, scholars have also drawn attention to the democratizing potentials of bringing "small-town, non-metropolitan, or provincial actors" (Roy, 2011, p. 761) into a broader visual field. Television news's impact, moreover, is gauged in relation to the genre of talk TV and debate TV that networks, including NDTV, CNN-IBN, and Times Now, among others, invested in extensively. Programs such as *We the People* (NDTV), *Face the Nation* (IBN), and *News Hour* (Times Now) allowed news networks to make claims about their centrality to the formation of an informed and deliberative public in India. Drawing on global formats, these programs have thrived on a mix of breaking news segments and panel debates involving business, bureaucratic, and political experts to frame issues pertaining to national interest and citizenship that then spill over and continue across other media platforms, including online social networks.

With crowded ticker tapes, flashy graphics, hectoring anchors, and multiple talking heads shouting over each other, the genre of debate TV has come under intense criticism for both its sensationalist impulses and its shrillness. The critique that the visual dimensions of mediated politics has detracted from the act of listening was recently furthered by television news anchor Ravish Kumar, as well in a remarkable telecast produced in February 2016, following agitations at Jawaharlal Nehru University in New Delhi, and threats leveled against journalists who sought to clarify claims about antinational slogans raised during student protests.[4] In this special broadcast, modeled as an impassioned plea for genuine deliberation, Kumar frames the dream of television news leading to an informed and engaged citizenry as having turned into a nightmare. What is of importance for us here, however, is the darkening of the television screen (or shutting off the visual) as a narrative device to denote India's plunge into darkness. As Kumar spells out the pressures of the "debate TV" format and its implications on the tenor of discussions about nationhood and citizenship, the screen fades to black rapidly, with his voice-over urging for a return to deliberation based on careful listening. This strand of critique extends to the realm of digital and social media as well, with several scholars pointing out that the democratic potentials of networked and peer-to-peer communication remain bedeviled by many of the same problems associated with other media forms. Kumar's criticism is also centered on the familiar tropes of the tabloidization of news and decline in civil discourse (Turner, 1999), updated to account for the polarized and abusive nature of online conversations (Udupa, 2015). Listening, as it is used here, is about watching and paying attention, being informed, and thus being an engaged citizen. What critics like Kumar do not consider is the vastly reconfigured soundscape that audiences are immersed in on a daily basis and how that has transformed modes of listening in private and public life.

[4] For more details on the JNU agitations, see Kawade (2016).

Following Lacey, we situate the #Kolaveri phenomenon as part of a much broader "re-sounding of the public sphere" (Lacey, 2013, p. 11) that accompanied the expansion of media infrastructures, platforms, and practices beginning in the mid- to late 1980s across many postcolonial nations making the transition to neoliberal market economics. In the Indian context, one key milestone in the aural resignification of the public sphere during the 1980s would be the use of cassette tapes during the 1989 elections, which, as Manuel (1993) argues, "provided many of the basic prerequisites for . . . a democratic restructuring of media content and control" (p. xv). Although Manuel's emphasis on grassroots and participatory dimensions of cassette culture is questionable given the organization of the music industry in India and the uneven spread of technology, we can recognize the advent of cassette technology as having put in place new logics of circulation and uses of sound. Cassette culture remade not just the political domain during, say, campaign season, but quickly became an unobtrusive and taken-for-granted part of public and private spaces across the subcontinent. The take-up and diffusion of cassette technology also transformed a public culture that was, until the mid-1980s, largely tuned in to film music. Within a matter of years, India's soundscape went from being dominated by state-run broadcasting to a varied musical culture that included various regional, religious, devotional, folk, and pop songs and sounds.

The shift away from a statist media system that cassette culture, among other media technologies and forms including the VCR, inaugurated during the 1980s can now be seen as having set the stage for a series of policy, technology, and media transitions throughout the 1990s and 2000s involving FM radio, cable and satellite television, and mobile and digital platforms (Pavarala & Malik, 2007; Sen, 2014). These transitions, moreover, are marked by audience and user practices such as the routinization of calling in and interacting with radio jockeys and other listeners on FM radio networks, creative uses of caller tunes and ringtones (Gopinath, 2005), the circulation and sharing of music and other sounds via inexpensive SD cards (Mukherjee, 2016), and the emergence of a vibrant new sphere of remixing, fusion, and other kinds of sound performances on platforms such as SoundCloud and YouTube.

Quotidian and popular media uses that have proliferated over the past two decades suggest that there is substantive sound work that has been happening alongside Photoshop, remix, and mash-up practices that mark participatory cultures across the world. To be sure, #Kolaveri can be situated within a broader history of sounds and protest cultures. There is a rich archive of religious hymns, marching songs, and catchy slogans in South Asia that scholars are only now beginning to mine from a sound studies standpoint. Although rooted in ethnomusicology, Sherinian's (2014) account of Tamil folk music, in which she traces how the work of Dalit composer/theologian Rev. Dr. James Theophilus Appavoo "brought about a consciousness of oppression" (p. 242), marks an important start. Tracking the production, circulation, and reception of songs, Sherinian shows how "shared musical relationships" can become a means for people to "create a context for liberation" (p. 4). Damodaran's (2017) account of the musical repertoire of the left-wing Indian People's Theatre Association also adds to our understanding of sounds and social movements, particularly in showing how music served as a bridge between various artistic forms, including dance and theater. If the history of progressive social movements is one space to explore the politics of sound, another point of entry would be the fierce debates around what constitutes "noise," noise control, and abatement policies in different cities around the world (Cardoso, 2012), and how varied sounds and accompanying listening practices come to mark religious, racial, and ethnic identities (Stoever, 2016). As Zuberi (2017) points out in a trenchant essay on music, race, and religion, listening to

music enables negotiations of Muslim identity even as "speaking as Muslim" has become a fraught affair in a post-9/11 context.

Needless to say, this thumbnail sketch of complex transformations of soundscapes needs careful elaboration and is beyond the scope of this article. It is possible, however, to discern the emergence of varied listening publics and ensure that we situate links between sound, politics, and citizenship in a transnational context as well as a longer historical trajectory. To be clear, we do not privilege the aural as a corrective to the visual. Indeed, our analysis below pays close attention to a wide range of media forms and practices. Rather, our emphasis on the sonic dimensions of #Kolaveri and the movement of this sonic cue across media platforms calls attention to and takes seriously the intersensorial nature of mediated public cultures (Connor, 2004). We amplify the soundscape to suggest that sound technologies and practices constitute a vital cultural and material infrastructure on which a bridge between the popular and the political can be built and, in rare instances, maintained over time. #Kolaveri was one such rare and resonant sound bridge. In what follows, we build on scholarship on mediated activism and the work that cultural symbols do (Schudson, 1989) to argue that a sonic cue must be available, performative, and resonant to become a sound bridge and facilitate connections across cultural and political domains.

#Kolaveri: The Making of a Sound Bridge

Available

"Why This Kolaveri Di" was released on YouTube on November 17, 2011, and made available on a range of media platforms including FM radio programs, television channels, as a caller tune for mobile phones, and as a digital file for download and circulation. As the most searched song on YouTube during that week, featured on MTV that weekend (November 19–20), widely publicized on CNN as the most watched YouTube video of 2011, and global news coverage of a surprising "viral" hit from south India, *Kolaveri* was clearly available as a digital artifact. Not surprisingly, in popular commentary about the song, the focus was predominantly on the question of how this song from a south Indian film could possibly go viral on a global scale. Of the efforts to determine the causes of this viral success, some themes found more circulation than others—the use of Tanglish (a portmanteau of the languages Tamil and English, which were used in the song), the simple rhythmic pattern that allowed the song to serve as a format in which everything from Chipmunks to politics could be transposed, and the clever marketing strategy of releasing a making-of video that decoupled the song from its filmic origins.[5] However, this marketing-oriented discourse—one that is rehearsed with every instance of a purportedly viral proliferation (e.g., "Gangnam Style")—repeatedly fails to account for why this particular song and not another captured people's imaginations. We would point instead to the affective dimensions of *Kolaveri* (i.e., its rootedness in a very specific caste and class-based experience of masculinity, romance, and tragedy, and its cathartic framing of this quotidian experience—of young men coming to terms with the impossibility of some of their desires).

[5] For a marketing perspective on why *Kolaveri* went viral, see Jack in The Box Worldwide (2011).

In many ways, *Kolaveri* was the breakout example of a Tamil film song featuring a male protagonist singing a song that involves him ruing the act of falling in love and castigating the woman he fell in love with or, as is usually the case, women in general. His angst invariably forms the kernel of such songs, which have then been articulated in various ways over the years. Part lament and part outburst, these songs of failed love condemn the notion of romantic love itself and frequently celebrate male bonding and friendship as the antidote to the ill effects of falling in love with a woman. The male protagonists in these songs see romantic love as an affliction and, subsequently, cast themselves as suffering subjects. Songs about impossible love have been a staple of Tamil cinema and have acquired a particular affective charge as caste and class politics have been transformed under the impact of economic and cultural globalization since the late 1980s. Consider, for instance, the song "Take It Easy, Urvasi," from the 1994 film *Kadhalan* ("Lover"), a song seen as a celebration of the "euphoria of consumption" (Dhareshwar & Niranjana, 2000, pp. 199–200). However, even as the song celebrates commodity culture and youth culture's centrality to global signs and symbols, the song (and the hook—"take it easy policy") also tried to address anxieties about the benefits of economic reforms that would, in the fullness of time, reach them. In one sense, the call to "take it easy" can be seen as the precursor to the rage indexed by #Kolaveri, a rage about corruption and dispossession that animates urban middle-class citizens' concerns and gets channeled through a range of social networking platforms. In other words, the distance traversed from "Take It Easy, Urvasi" (in 1994) to "Why This Kolaveri Di" (in 2012) is a mark of the deep sense of disappointment that the promises of economic and cultural globalization were never delivered.

As Kohli (2012) and other scholars have pointed out in recent analyses of reforms and their impact on poverty, "three decades of economic growth have been accompanied by growing inequality" (p. 2). It is crucial, moreover, to grasp that this frustration with the state of democratic politics that the anticorruption movement mobilized in 2011 had been brewing over a long period of time. Recent expressions of what Roy (2016) calls a "distinctive public form of civic anger" (p. 362) can be located in relation to the profoundly uneven impact of economic reforms through the 1990s and 2000s, and, even further back, in key political economic realignments during the late 1970s and early 1980s. It is hardly a surprise, then, that the light-hearted suggestion to a newly emergent youth culture to "take it easy" and wait for the benefits of globalization to reach them could not be sustained or reinvoked two decades later.

We situate *Kolaveri* within this longer trajectory of cultural politics to move away from both marketing and academic discourse about virality, and to argue that the tragicomic register on which the song works, coupled with the indeterminacy of *veri* (rage), made the song radically available for appropriation, remixing, and recirculation by a range of actors. In other words, the song's ambivalent affective appeals (let us not forget that the performance in the original video did not signal rage or anger) was a crucial factor in its popularity and circulation. As Papacharissi (2015) has argued, the "affective attunement" at work in music also shapes interactions on social media platforms. And where *Kolaveri* is concerned, in less than a week of the song's release, we began to see numerous "affective gestures" being made across platforms (YouTube-Twitter-TV news) that, in turn, called "networked publics into being" (Papacharissi, 2015, p. 24; Yang, 2009). For instance, on November 24, 2011, a week after the release of "Kolaveri," a young man in New Delhi slapped the cricket administrator and veteran politician Sharad Pawar. Within a matter of hours, a number of citizens started using #Kolaveri (and less frequently, #KolaveriDi) and the phrase "Why This Kolaveri" to begin discussing this expression of rage against a

corrupt politician. Some users even uploaded mash-up videos using television footage of the politician being slapped, with their own "take" featuring the *Kolaveri* song as background music. Set to the tune of the song but with lyrics rewritten to address political corruption, and layered with images of Pawar and other politicians' implication in various scandals, these videos were an early indication of how #Kolaveri became available as a potent sonic cue in a public sphere already structured by deeply felt sentiments of rage and frustration.

Performative

If "Kolaveri's" availability as a digital artifact and a deeply meaningful sociocultural referent is one dimension of its becoming a sound bridge, the remarkable range of the uses to which it was put rested on the song's performativity and, in particular, the refrain it offered. Within days of the song being released and #Kolaveri emerging across social media platforms, a range of remixes and mash-ups that were familiar in terms of popular music and memetic culture made their way onto YouTube, Twitter, and Facebook.[6] However, performativity here is about more than being able to sing, dance, and orchestrate a flash mob. It is first about numerous users—from journalists and politicians to everyday citizens—employing the opening line of the song ("Why this Kolaveri"), as is, to express a sense of bewilderment regarding the scale of political corruption. The repetition of this line across media platforms as an insistent question led to #Kolaveri becoming an instantly recognizable sonic cue in a political culture anchored predominantly to visual cues. Consider, for instance, the tweets in Figure 2:

These tweets—performative statements that linked #Kolaveri to a range of political concerns from foreign direct investment in retail to spectrum allocation for mobile telephony—call attention to how a shared and recognizable sonic cues can weave political matters into the rhythms of daily conversations on Twitter and other platforms already sparked by frenetic news media coverage. The continual use of #Kolaveri alongside other hashtags that invoke or name political parties (BJP, Congress, AAP, etc.), key politicians, and events and scandals places the sound within a vibrant and networked intertextual field including jokes, memes, and videos circulated via Facebook and WhatsApp that, on the whole, reveal how citizenship is constituted as much by play and performance as it is by normative understandings of deliberation and participation (Bayat, 2009; Brock, 2012; Jones, 2013).

[6] There are a number of such instances, from "Gangnam Style" to the use of music in election campaigns and protest cultures in various African contexts (Gunner, 2009; Nyairo & Ogude, 2005).

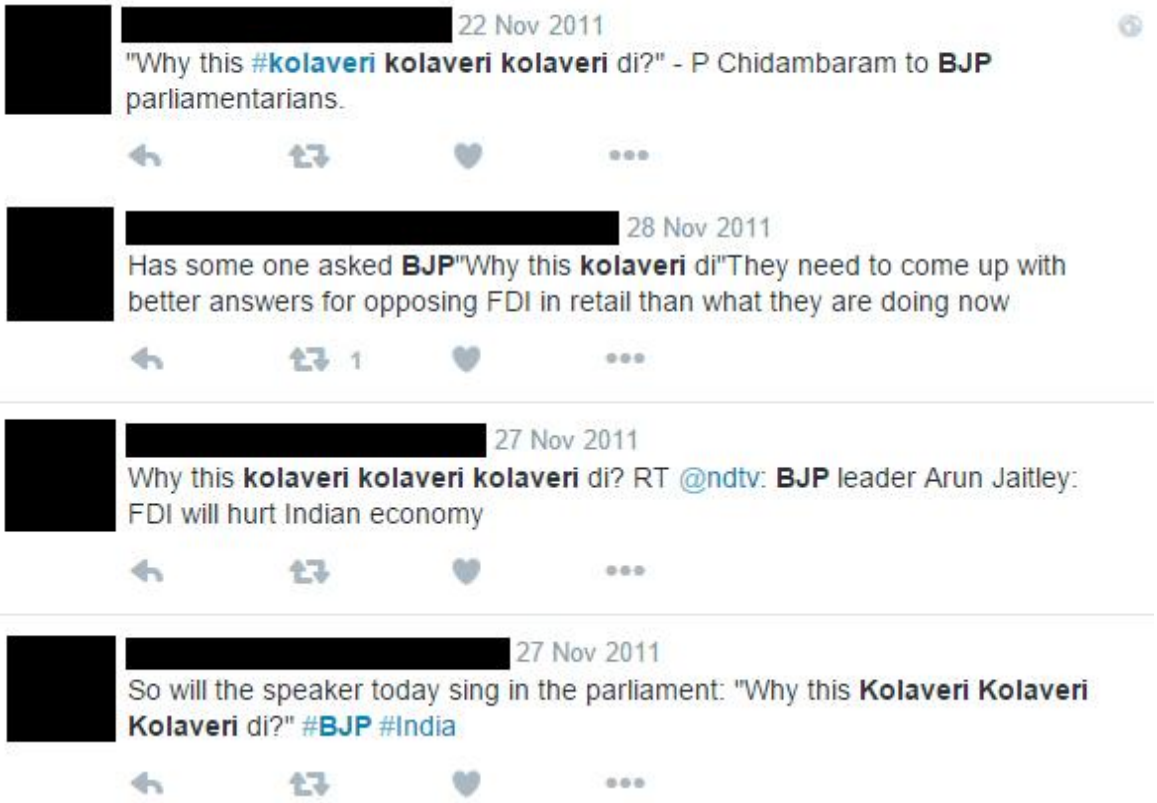

Figure 2. "Why This Kolaveri" as an insistent political question.

Repetition, a crucial dimension of such performances, was thus the first signal of the aural register at which hybrid platforms like Twitter can operate. For a hashtag is not only a "performative statement," as Bruns and Burgess (2011) have argued, but can also be, as Lacey (2013) has pointed out, an invitation to listen rather than read. For what the song offered, beyond a catchy opening line, was also a refrain and rhyme scheme that users could appropriate, rework, and sound out. The key linguistic device employed in the song is the epenthetic "*-u*" inserted to ensure the flow of the rhyme scheme, signaling both emphasis and a break that allows the song to proceed further. This formal element of the song facilitated creative uses of the refrain that, in turn, gave #Kolaveri a promiscuous and catalytic charge.[7] For instance, Figure 3 shows a tweet that cannot be read but, in fact, has to be sung or sounded out.

[7] For another instance of how a formal or structural element in a song enables creative expression, see Nyairo (2005), in the Kenyan context.

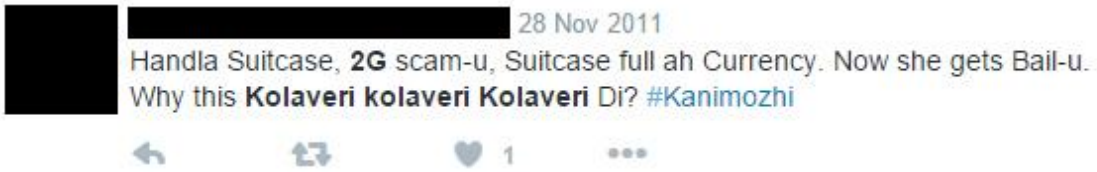

Figure 3. A* Kolaveri *tweet that has to be sung, not read.

In the tweet featured in Figure 3, it is the refrain premised on the epenthetic *-u* that links different elements of a political scandal—suitcases used to carry cash for bribes, the 2G spectrum allocation scandal, and judicial decisions involving Kanimozhi, a major political figure. Yoking the popular song to an ongoing political issue, #Kolaveri thus works as a powerful refrain—an element in a song that marks a "break" but also has the potential to "break up and break open" ("Resonance," n.d.). In other words, #Kolaveri moves away from the song's filmic and seemingly apolitical origin to become a shared cue for conversations in an otherwise fractious political sphere.

This kind of redeployment of a sonic cue is, to be sure, not limited to the Indian context and can be predicated on public performances at the intersection of, say, religion and politics as well. Consider Roshanak Kheshti's (2015) analysis of the aural dimensions of postelection protests in Iran in 2009. In her account of Iranians expressing dissent against the state, Kheshti draws attention to a video entitled *Inja Kojast* ("Where Is This Place?"). The video is powerful not because of its visuals but rather because of the nightly rooftop chanting that made up the soundtrack—*"All-Ahu-Akbar . . . Inja Kojast?"*—and that was taken up in numerous other anonymous videos circulated via YouTube. Kheshti's emphasis on the "sonic performative" also draws attention to a refrain. Where #Kolaveri is concerned, if the refrain marked out an acoustic territory that could attract a range of voices, expressions, political statements, and conversations, it was the performance of the refrain that produced a space—a multilane sound bridge—where the popular and the political converged in unpredictable ways. Performativity, more broadly, is what gave a popular and semiotically open sound like *Kolaveri* a political charge.

Resonant

The power that this refrain accrued, however, cannot be understood solely in relation to social media platforms. The territory that #Kolaveri marked out as a site for political performance must account for not just interactions between users but also processes of media convergence (Jenkins, 2006; Kraidy & Mourad, 2010) that shape how a particular sound moves across media platforms, becomes resonant, and gathers publics over time. In our understanding of how cultural symbols or representations gather force and significance in a given cultural context, we often turn to resonance and relevance. Schudson (1989) is right to point out that the resonance of a given symbol or cultural artifact has to do in part with how well it speaks to audiences and how "a public and cultural relation among object, tradition, and audience" (p. 170) emerges. This emphasis on relevance and significance becomes even more acute in a context in which a vast majority of digital artifacts that engage the political on a daily and routine basis find limited circulation. To be sure, this is not to reduce participatory culture to a narrow question of short-term

effects. However, in a country where less than 5% of the population actively participated on platforms like Twitter and YouTube, the question of resonance hinges on whether a given digital artifact and its uses—the various remixes and political deployments of "Kolaveri," in this case—are widely recirculated and discussed in other media channels. In the Indian context, we would point to television's role, particularly television news, in resounding this sonic cue that was first produced and heard on social networking sites.

Among the many news programs that devoted attention to #Kolaveri, one show stands out for the manner in which the sonic cue was deployed: *Gustakhi Maaf* ("Pardon the Transgression"), a daily satirical puppet show broadcast on the Hindi language channel NDTV.[8] Launched in 2003 as an official adaptation of the successful French puppet show *Les Guignols de l'info* ("News Puppets"), *Gustakhi Maaf* features a host who introduces short skits that offer comedic interpretations of news and current affairs. Producers have successfully localized the program, as Kumar (2012) outlines, by using popular film songs (from Hindi-language Bollywood films) "to amplify themes of love, betrayal, and loyalty to describe shifts in political coalitions and changes in personal fortunes in Indian politics" (p. 85). Given the long-standing practice of also rewriting song lyrics to fit a particular skit, it is not surprising that *Kolaveri* was also taken up on this program. In one segment, broadcast on November 28, 2011 (less than 10 days after *Kolaveri* was released on YouTube), *Gustakhi Maaf* featured a cast of puppets of major politicians who were all implicated in the corruption scam as well as the anticorruption movement. Echoing tweets that framed south Indian politicians in the 2G spectrum scam in relation to broader discontent involving other corporate and political figures, these skits featured puppets of the sitting prime minister (Manmohan Singh), Sonia Gandhi (President of the Congress Party), Anna Hazare and Arvind Kejriwal (the figurehead and architects of the anticorruption movement), and others singing, to the tune of "Why This Kolaveri," about their political misfortunes: "Why is Lokpal very, very weak; Government full of goon-u goon-u; Wearing khadi white-u; For public all is night-u, public future black-u." Again, it is worth noting here the use of the refrain, the rhyme scheme, and the play with words to refer specifically to the demand for a *Jan Lokpal*, an independent investigative body to handle cases of political and bureaucratic corruption.

It goes without saying that these skits had tremendous rhetorical force given the influence that NDTV wields in the Indian political landscape and the fact that television news had focused intensely on the anticorruption movement since April 2011. Moreover, this program had built its reputation to the extent that politicians were eager to be featured as puppets, with some skits even staging conversations between a politician and her or his puppet.[9] Beyond the issue of news parody, this is a program that reveals how puppetry as a creative form reconfigures, as Kraidy (2016) argues, "the scale between the human body and the body politic" (p. 145). By bringing the issue of corruption into a "humanly portable arena" and using a sonic cue that had already drawn connections between various actors, *Gustakhi Maaf* allowed audiences to grasp the political in its entirety and, in the process, served to consolidate #Kolaveri as a sound bridge on which a televisual public could gather.

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[8] For more on this program's adaptation (from France) for an Indian audience, see Kumar (2012).

[9] Prannoy Roy, the founder and CEO of NDTV, recalled in an interview that one politician demanded to know why *Gustakhi Maaf* had not yet made a puppet in his image and that he would even do his own voice-over if needed (see Kaushik, 2015).

Another dimension of "Kolaveri's" resonance across media spaces is illustrated by its use in support of the anticorruption movement by Dr. Parag Jhaveri, a local politician in Mumbai. Within three weeks of the release of the original track, Jhaveri had capitalized on the song's availability and performativity (through the refrain and rhyme scheme) to produce a remixed version, what he called a "political song," to proffer support to the anticorruption protests headed by Anna Hazare in New Delhi. English and Hindi television news channels amplified the reach of Jhaveri's song by cutting to performances of the remixed version by the politician and his supporters in between their coverage of the protests in the nation's capital. The voice-overs employed in these news segments are as instructive as the act of the remix itself, with the commentary typically focused on the original *Kolaveri* being on everyone's tongues. In narrativizing the song's success using such metaphors, the news reports linked the song's resonance to both corporeal dimensions (its affect of rage and dispossession) and the linguistic openness enabled by its inventive incorporation of English words with the Tamil epenthetic *-u*. But in building the remixed political song into their coverage of the anticorruption movement, television news outlets also participated in furthering its resonance across a media and political system deeply fractured by long-standing regional and linguistic divisions. The networks of circulation for the remixed song also folded back into social media, as tweets in Figure 4 indicate, with regional chapters of India Against Corruption (IAC) then discussing on Twitter the possibilities of producing more versions of the song to reiterate their key political demand (i.e., the formation of a *Jan Lokpal*).

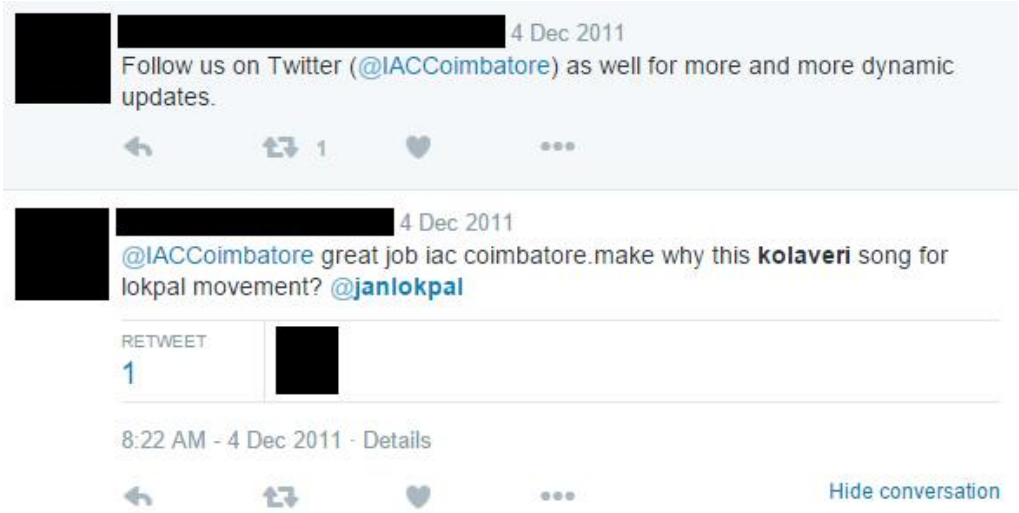

Figure 4. Tweet connecting* Kolaveri *to the Lokpal movement.

By moving across media platforms and forging links among audiences constituted along linguistic and regional lines, #Kolaveri thus served as a sound bridge between the popular and the political. To be sure, *Kolaveri* was not the only sonic cue that was available in Indian public culture that could have been mobilized during the anticorruption movement. It became a sound bridge because of the half-fortuitous combination of being available, performative, and resonant. We say half-fortuitous to signal the political,

sociocultural, and technological constraints at work, and to acknowledge other sonic cues that are not amplified and are often dampened, muffled, doctored, or silenced. It is also worth noting that there is nothing sacrosanct about "Kolaveri"—the fact that people could be playful[10] and use the song in any way they deemed fit is central to its influence. In sharp contrast to other powerful cues, such as *Azaadi* ("freedom") and other slogans deployed in protests, "Kolaveri's" playfulness and attendant wistfulness ensured its circulation. By virtue of not being weighed down by explicit political connotations, #Kolaveri became a sound bridge on which ordinary citizens, seething with rage, as well as journalists, politicians, and other elites could gather and pose the same question—"Why this murderous rage?"

Sound, Listening, and Sonic Citizenship

Suggesting that sound technologies and practices constitute a vital cultural and material infrastructure on which a bridge between the popular and the political can be built, we have traced how a sonic cue ("Kolaveri") can initiate the making of a sound bridge (#Kolaveri) in a given social and political context. By sound bridge, we mean a particular sound that connects distinct settings/scenes/contexts, but also "sound," as in sensible, reasonable, grounded, and carefully designed. Moving beyond established notions of sound bridges in film studies, we suggest that sound bridges disclose to us new ways of listening for the political and new modes of participation—the expression of sonic citizenship—in a digital era. In doing so, we have privileged sonic and aural dimensions while accounting for a range of media forms that were crucial to #Kolaveri being available, performative, and resonant. This is not to ignore or downplay the visual. After all, the affective appeals, resonance, and circulation of the sonic cue we have analyzed here rested on a rich set of visual cues including a making-of video with subtitles, television news segments, and, crucially, puppets resembling politicians. However, as Sterne (2003) and other scholars have pointed out, "sonocentrism" is a strategy to analyze an event, a phenomenon, or cultural artifact that takes the sonic as a starting point. Such a move becomes even more crucial, as we have detailed, in global media and communication studies where scholarship has tended to privilege the visual.

This article thus joins the sonic turn in many disciplines in the humanities and social sciences to underscore the importance of sound and listening practices in the mediation of politics and citizenship across the world (Gürsel, 2013; Stoever, 2016). Citizenship, as Andrisani (2015) contends, "is articulated in sound" as much as it is through other sensory registers. The question, then, is how do we listen for political participation and evaluate claims about citizenship that are increasingly made through creative sound work as much as through textual and visual practices? Within a vast and varied soundscape that characterizes contemporary Indian public culture, we have traced how a sonic cue that emerges from the domain of popular culture can, under the right circumstances, be transformed into a communicative infrastructure, a sound bridge, that makes room for and gathers together a host of political and cultural sentiments, expressions, and aspirations.

In doing so, we also hope to join a broader conversation on how digital infrastructures, platforms, and practices have transformed political cultures worldwide. In an era marked by the relentless corporate

[10] The song also sparked discussions about misogyny in Tamil film music (see Kumar, 2011).

makeover of news media and a concomitant decline in public trust in journalism, the routine creation and circulation of a range of content via mobile and digital networks offers a strikingly different and immensely popular mode of engagement with the political. However, our understanding of emergent logics of digital re-mediation will always have an "analytical deficit," as Chakravartty and Roy (2015, p. 313) argue, if we continue to emphasize "numerical salience" and focus solely on electoral politics. Framing the link between the popular and the political in terms of effects will only ensure that "the varied institutional shifts and practices of interpretation, interaction, and contestation that generate political agency and social life remain hidden from view" (Chakravartty & Roy, 2015, p. 313). We cannot grasp the significance of #Kolaveri either in the power of participatory culture or in its failure to reshape electoral outcomes. Rather, it affords us a glimpse into the shifting cultural foundations of democratic politics. Moving away from thinking about how popular culture can serve as a terrain for learning and practicing skills that can then, in some stagist fashion, be applied to the political, we have tried to capture here the complex interplay between established media institutions (TV news, film industries), digital platforms (Twitter, YouTube, etc.), and user/audience imaginaries and practices. And within this emergent media landscape, apprehending political shifts and transformations involves listening as much as looking and seeing.

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Predicting Fashion Involvement by Media Use, Social Comparison, and Lifestyle: An Interaction Model

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This study theoretically connects a host of communication and sociological variables with individuals' cognitive fashion involvement. Our empirical model tests an interaction effect through which media use, social comparison, and lifestyle produce a joint effect on fashion involvement. A random sample of 500 young Chinese individuals, ages 18 to 30 years, were interviewed via telephone. Results show that (1) media modality (i.e., traditional and new media) hardly makes any difference in explaining variance observed in fashion involvement; (2) fashion-related content across different forms of media is highly congruent, revealing between-media invariance; and (3) the persuasive power of fashion media is demonstrated in young people's professed willingness to adapt their appearance to the norms set by the media.

Keywords: moderation effect, social comparison, fashion involvement, media use, lifestyle

The task of defining fashion involvement appears deceptively simple because the meaning of the concept seems closely confined within the adornment industry, brands, and product (H.-S. Kim, 2005). A closer look, however, reveals the conceptually daunting side of an intricate person–object relationship (O'Cass, 2004). As the nature of that relationship spans practically all human activities, studies of fashion involvement inevitably have to address issues relevant to almost all academic disciplines.

Existing literature has identified fashion magazines and websites as the two primary sources of knowledge and feelings about fashion, as well as of consumption intention of fashion products (e.g., Evrard & Aurier, 1996; C. Martin, 1998). For instance, exposure to a thin-ideal image tends to prime social comparison (e.g., Bessenoff, 2006; Festinger, 1954). When adopting criteria for social comparison, people typically rely on mass media for guidance, reassurance, and, from time to time, even rationalization for their attitudinal and behavioral conversion between brands, designers, and products; this is particularly so among younger people (K. Chan, 2008; Sohn, 2009; S. H. Zhou, Zhou, & Xue, 2008). Individuals locked

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into the mindset of social comparison tend to pick up cues from mass media and use these cues as heuristics for the emulation of role models (Morrison, Kalin, & Morrison, 2004; Tiggemann & McGill, 2004). Some scholars view this pattern in terms of mass media's power to define success and shape career and lifestyle aspirations (e.g., Cheung & Yue, 2000). Part of the persuasive power of mass media in this regard stems from its selective representation of reality (e.g., idols or models), giving potency and legitimacy to certain ideas and behaviors, and thus raising the salience of some aspects of fashion (e.g., thin, masculine, gender neutrality) while reducing others (Botta, 1999; M. C. Martin & Kennedy, 1993).

When it comes to fashion perceptions, considerable discrepancies exist between Western and Chinese cultures in the way people understand and handle complex relationships among self, others, and the media (Davis, 1992; McCracken, 1988; Simmel, 2001; Wong & Ahuvia, 1998). Not surprisingly, research has well documented the claim that individuality has a more dominant place in Western than in Chinese society, where norm conformity typically reigns (K. Chan, 2008; Giacalone & Rosenfeld, 1989). As such, material products of fashion are more likely to take on symbolic meanings such as privilege and social status in China than in the West (K. Chan, 2008). According to Hu (1944), face (*mianzi*), or how one looks in front of others, in Chinese societies has greater centrality in maintenance (following the routine) than initiation (breaking the mold) because *mianzi* is largely propped up by its value as the benchmark of success and good taste (Wong & Ahuvia, 1998).

With social comparison as the larger research context and media persuasion as the main locus of study, we raise the following research questions: How is involvement in fashion connected to patterns of communication? What is the role of media exposure in the construction and consolidation of fashion involvement? What is the relationship between media exposure and fashion involvement when lifestyle and social comparison are taken into consideration?

Involvement in Fashion

One way to explicate fashion involvement traditionally is to see it as a joint product of exogenous societal-level factors such as income, peer influence, and communication, or institutional environment and endogenous psychological factors such as ego, values, beliefs, and dissonance (Rothschild, 1979). Another and more recent approach is to define fashion involvement in relation to attachment, risk perception, and capability of self-image improvement (Batra, Ramaswamy, Alden, Steenkamp, & Ramachander, 2000; Khare & Rakesh, 2010). Our study focuses on material possessions and psychological attachment to these possessions, in keeping with a line of inquiry that started in the late 1980s (e.g., Mittal & Lee, 1989; O'Cass, 2000; Ohanian, 1990). Cognitive and affective commitment to a target (be it an idea, an object, or an action) is usually accompanied by mental resources channeled toward a quest of information relevant to that target. According to H. Kim (2008), involvement determines one's tendency to pay close attention to products or to engage actively in particular product-acquisition activities. Highly involved individuals evaluate a product more smoothly and show heavy reliance on marketing information (Chang, 2010).

If it is conceptualized not as an object but as a set of behaviors (Vieira, 2009) or a coded one (Davis, 1992), fashion then is instrumentally linked with the pursuit of happiness. Richins (1994)

presented empirical evidence for a causal mechanism through which individuals scoring high on materialistic measures were more inclined to express themselves through exterior appearance such as clothing. In the same vein, Workman and Lee (2011) interpreted clothing to be a reflection of cultural, economic, and social status. Clothing acts as "a filter between the person and the surrounding social world'', and its values are interpreted as being "intimately tied to the self" and as forming "the core of one's personal identity" (Hitlin & Piliavin, 2004, p. 382). Put differently, under certain circumstances, people use fashion both to distinguish themselves from others, to highlight personal values, and to integrate with others in a bid to follow group norms (Banister & Hogg, 2004; Piamphongsant & Mandhachitara, 2008).

Through socialization, individuals either learn to adopt or are assimilated into enduring sets of values and belief systems, some of which overlap with their worldviews and ideology. The notion that fashion clothing is an integral part of life, "a meaningful and engaging activity" (O'Cass, 2004, p. 870), places an implicit emphasis on people's internalized values and beliefs that are capable of motivating and guiding cognitive elaboration, impression management, and purchasing behaviors. Fashion addicts or people obsessed with appearance management tend to think of it frequently and are likely to dwell on fashion-related self-references much more often than those who do not (O'Cass, 2000).

Media Exposure

In the study of fashion involvement, one cannot underestimate the roles played by the media, not only in disseminating information, conveying images, and interpreting events but also in defining norms, setting trends, building role models, and legitimizing a given lifestyle. Moreover, fashion media promote a desired lifestyle byshowing "how beauty, sexuality, career success, culinary skill, and social status can be sold and bought in the consumer marketplace" (Croteau & Hoynes, 2003, p. 188). In the process of media's linguistic representation of the cultural industry, consumption of luxury fashion is drowned in symbolic values (B. Zhang & Kim, 2013).

Most existing studies treat media use as equivalent to exposure, and it is most often indexed by asking respondents how often (usually in a week) they use a specific medium (Hollander, 2006). Furthermore, sociologists who emphasize the role of social relations in shaping individuals tend to give significant credit to mass media for being a powerful socializing agent in almost all aspects of people's lives. Studies that examine the linkage between media exposure and involvement typically loop back to the fundamental polemic about whether involvement leads to attitude change and how and when the process takes place (Hollander, 2006).

Furthermore, "the dominant models within social psychology view involvement or personal relevance as a cornerstone in how or whether people deal with new information and communication" (Hollander, 2006, pp. 377–378). Hargreaves and Tiggemann (2003) acknowledged that idealized images of men and women are an easy staple in media content, and their presence is so pervasive that exposure to these images is almost inevitable.

Social Comparison

Theories of social comparison are built on the assumption that people possess a shared need for self-evaluation. A common strategy to make that evaluation is self-referencing or comparison with similar others within groups and in face-to-face settings (Festinger, 1954). Regardless of whether people make judgments of others, the comparative judgment in social interactions has been extensively studied across decades of research (e.g., Foley, Ngo, & Loi, 2016; Kruglanski & Mayseless, 1990; Tylka & Sabik, 2010).

Despite numerous replications and convergence of findings, some of the later studies have yielded results that marked a consistent movement away from the original expectations. For instance, scholars found that individuals also compare themselves with dissimilar others (M. C. Martin & Kennedy, 1993), beyond face-to-face situations, and with impersonal images in advertising (e.g., Engeln-Maddox, 2005). In addition to attitude and opinions, social comparison also involves self-improvement and self-enhancement (e.g., Brown, Ferris, Heller, & Keeping, 2007; Eddleston, 2009).

To the extent that social comparison is an integral part of cognition, it has been found to operate in two opposite directions. Downward comparison indicates some measure of contempt for people who are deemed or perceived to have an inferior appearance, mostly in terms of cosmetics, clothing, fashion accessories, and/or the air with which they carry themselves. At the other end of the continuum, upward comparison refers to admiration of people who appear superior to oneself in those regards (Buunk & Gibbons, 2007; Olson & Evans, 1999). As expected, these two types of comparison produce very different emotional responses, with the former usually leading to positive moods, a sense of superiority, and high self-esteem, and the latter resulting in negative emotions (Lam & Huang, 2013; Schiffman & Kanuk, 2004), loathing of self and others, and low self-esteem (Morse & Gergen, 1970).

Interestingly, forces of social comparison have been shown to drive individuals to sites of information and images where negative consequences of egoistic damage are more likely to occur (Hendriks & Burgoon, 2009; Richins, 1991). Beauty norms and an ideal body image are a case in point. Researchers have found that television plays an important role in shaping appearance norms, albeit occasionally at the cost of self-loathing (e.g., Botta, 1999; Sohn, 2009). Similarly, by virtue of its specialization, fashion magazines hold an even stronger potential to trigger mental mechanisms of social comparison, more so for younger than for older people (Richins, 1991; Sohn, 2009).

Lifestyle

Early lifestyle research was mostly contextualized in product marketing and consumption behavior. Plummer (1974) argued that lifestyle segmentation includes the concepts of lifestyle patterns and market segmentation that put consumers into different groups based on their activities, interests, and opinions. Zablocki and Kanter (1976) noted that individuals share a tendency of self-segmentation through things they like to do and the way they spend their leisure time and income. Accordingly, the Values, Attitudes, and Lifestyles (VALS) measurement was developed and used to separate individuals into eight groups by their psychological attributes, demographics, and consuming behaviors: Innovators, Thinkers, Achievers, Experiencers, Believers, Strivers, Makers, and Survivors.

The segmentation model of VALS subsumes three primary motivational dimensions: ideals, achievement, and self-expression. Among the eight distinct lifestyle types, Thinkers and Believers are motivated by ideals, and their behaviors are guided by knowledge and principles; Achievers and Strivers are motivated by excellence in performance and exhibit their success to friends through flaunting material possessions; Experiencers and Makers demonstrate the motivation of self-expression. They enjoy social activities, diverse experiences, and risk seeking; Innovators have all three motivations to varying degrees, but Survivors do not show any prominent motivation (SRI Consulting Business Intelligence, 2003). In fashion marketing studies, a typical consumer does not make purchases solely out of utilitarian concerns (Kahle, 1985). As a type of consumption motivation and a source of desirable social rewards (McCracken, 1988), acquisition of fashion products in general and clothing in particular could help establish identity and communicate social differentiation (J. K. C. Chan & Leung, 2005). Achievement and self-expression-oriented lifestyles therefore constitute an important factor that precedes fashion involvement.

In this study, we treat lifestyle as a contingent factor for media's impact on fashion involvement for two reasons. First,despite its close connection with one's ascribed social status, the general pattern of lifestyle is usually formulated at an early age and tends to be an enduring personal character. Second, as a trait, lifestyle is more susceptible to change in the external environment than are innate attitudes and worldviews (e.g., Harcar & Kaynak, 2008).

Research Context

Perhaps nothing is more representative of today's Chinese popular culture than brand names, designer products, vogue, and fashion. Since the 1980s, China has experienced waves of great economic booms spurred by policies encouraging reform and opening up. China's annual economic growth rate has routinely topped upward of 8% to 10% during the past 15 years (Lei, 2007). During the late 1980s and the early 1990s, the notion of "postsocialism" appeared in discussions related to globalization (Liu, 2004; N. Wang, 1993). Various discourses mainly respond to economic and material environmental changes in the hope of introducing pluralistic global culture to China (X. D. Zhang, 2001, 2008) and connecting China with the postsocialist world (Erjavec, 2003). Global cultural interactions cause a "hybrid post-revolutionary culture" in China (Liu, 2004, p. 3). Fashion terms such as consumerism, consumer society, and middle class can be encountered quite often in pop culture. These materialistic and symbolic resources, very much an ideology in themselves, have been shown to have the power to override political debates in China (Paek & Pan, 2009).

The advent of commercialization in China has given brand-name and luxury products a revered status as the symbol of success and the most visible showcase of face (*mianzi*) within people's social network (Hui, Zhou, Han, & Kim, 2003; C. J. Wang & Lin, 2009; Wei & Pan, 1999; L. Zhou & Hui, 2003). Consumption in China is "not just meant to meet basic needs but also to fulfill a social need for identification, status and social recognition" (Thompson, 2010, p. 73).

Conformity to social norms and cultural values representing collectivist cultures continues to persist, even though the influence of globalization looms large (Corbu, 2009; Jin & Kang, 2011). Clothing reflects economic development, cultural value, and social norms (Workman & Lee, 2011). Apparel

selection is affected not only by individual's tastes and lifestyles but also by particular social norms (Khare, Mishra, & Parveen, 2012). In a collectivist society, people use fashion clothing to manage and exhibit their group affiliations (Banister & Hogg, 2004; Piamphongsant & Mandhachitara, 2008) and to represent the symbolic values endorsed by the group (Michaelidou & Dibb, 2006). Individuals actively look for the latest fashion information cues approved by the group they look up to (Auty & Elliott, 1998) and adopt fashion clothing styles associated with these group norms (McCracken, 1988) in a bid to gain group acceptance and membership (Auty & Elliott, 1998).

In the process, perceptions of socio-ideological surroundings also matter. For example, political orientation plays a part in China's fashion industry as well. In Mao's era, whole populations were dressed in gray, black, white, army green, and navy blue, colors that embody the schemes of Chinese puritan communism (Zhao, 1997). In the 1990s, rampant mass consumerism increased Chinese people's interest in Western fashion styles. "The nature of the symbolic values attached to fashionable clothing depends on the cultural and political history of the country and the characteristics and variety of the ethnic groups of which it is composed" (Crane & Bovone, 2006, p. 324).

The rise in people's purchase power and the will to consume has become an important consideration in policy formulation. People have started to pay much more attention to style and taste as a means to expressing differences, consolidating identity, and, ultimately, maintaining social status. Chinese consumers capable of purchasing luxury goods fall roughly into two social strata: the super-rich and the rising middleclass ("Branding in China," 2007). An almost perfect relationship can be detected between people's social anchoring, their attitude toward spending, and patterns of their actual purchase behavior (e.g., Huang, 2005; Lu, 2006).

The young Chinese generation has been found to exhibit a particularly strong propensity for brand-name products (Kalish, 2005; Kwan, Yeung, & Au, 2003). Western values of individualism and consumerism have eroded centuries-old domination of collectivism for Chinese young people (Stevenson & Zusho, 2002). In their 2010 China Consumer Survey, McKinsey and Company reported that Chinese consumers were creating a distinct identity. "They have not only distinctive tastes and priorities but also unique ways of choosing and buying products" (Atsmon, Dixit, Magni, & St-Maurice, 2010, p. 12). Guided by previous research, we raise the following research questions:

RQ1: What is the relationship among media exposure, social comparison, lifestyle, and fashion involvement?

RQ2: What is the relationship between media exposure and lifestyle when involvement in fashion is high? Do lifestyles motivated by achievement and self-expression moderate the relationship between media exposure and fashion involvement?

RQ3: What is the relationship between social comparison and lifestyle? What kind of lifestyle can predict social comparison?

Existing studies have found that people who engage in upward social comparison show a stronger desire for more possessions and consumption (Ogden & Venkat, 2001). Young people are attracted to brands endorsed by their celebrity icons because they want to strive for the idealized self-identity (Swann, Seroussi, & Giesler, 1992). Social comparison is quite often triggered by aspiration to be fashionable, rich, attractive, and respected (K. Chan, 2008). Individuals who experience social comparison with ideal images on media would like to create inflated and unrealistically high evaluations of their icons' living standards (Kasser, 2002). Considering the relationship between social comparison and lifestyle, we ask:

RQ4: If the relationship between involvement in fashion and exposure to fashion media depends on one's lifestyle, does social comparison account for such an effect?

Method

Sample

Data for this study were collected from a telephone survey in 2011. A total of 500 young residents in Guangzhou, a large southern metropolis, were selected through random digital dialing methods. Slightly more than half (53.8%) of the interviewees were males, and 46.2% were females. A total of 59% of the respondents were between 18 and 24 years of age, whereas the rest were between 25 and 30 years (41%). Respondents with junior college or college education constituted 63.6% of the sample. The unmarried individuals occupied a much larger percentage than the married, which were 75% and 25% respectively. Table 1 shows the details.

Table 1.Sample Statistics.

Demographics	%
Sex	
Male	53.80
Female	46.20
Age (in years)	
18–24	59.00
25–30	41.00
Education	
High school	22.40
Junior college and college	63.60
Postgraduate and above	2.20
Others	11.80
Income (CNY)	
Less than 40,000 (include 40,000)	19.40
40,001–80,000 (include 80,000)	25.00
80,001–100,000 (include 100,000)	7.60
100,001–140,000 (include 140,000)	36.80
140,001–200,000 (include 200,000)	6.00
More than 200,000	5.20
Marital status	
Unmarried	75.00
Married	25.00

Note. *N* = 500.

Measurements

Fashion involvement was measured using four 5-point Likert-scale items (1 = *strongly disagree*; 5 = *strongly agree*) based on the measurement of product involvement originally designed by O'Cass (2000). The four questions were (1) "Fashion clothing is a significant part of my life"; (2) "I am very much involved in fashion clothing"; (3) "I would say that fashion clothing is central to my identity as a person"; and (4) "I pay a lot of attention to fashion clothing." Reliability score of the four items was adequate (Cronbach's α = .72). A factor analysis (principal component oblimin rotation, eigenvalue > 1) generated one single factor that we labeled the Fashion Involvement Scale (see Table 2). This factor was used in subsequent analyses.

Table 2.Factor Analysis (Principal Component With Oblimin Rotation) on Fashion Involvement Indicators.

	Fashion Involvement
Fashion clothing is a significant part of my life.	.76
I am very much involved in fashion clothing.	.78
I would say that fashion clothing is central to my identity as a person.	.80
I pay a lot of attention to fashion clothing.	.63
Variance accounted for (%)	70.00

Note. Loadings on the factor are sufficiently clean that no cross-loaders at or larger than .25 are observed (*N* = 500).

For media exposure, respondents were asked to report how frequently they used two forms of media: fashion websites and fashion magazines. A 3-point Likert-scale item (1 = *never*; 2 = *sometimes*; 3 = *often*) was used. This was followed by a few more measures, such as "How many fashion magazines do you often read?"; "How much time do you spend on website browsing every time?"; and "How many fashion websites do you often browse?"

For lifestyle measurement, 10 items were selected from the Values, Attitudes, and Lifestyles measure (VALS: SRI Consulting Business Intelligence, 2003) using a 5-point Likert scale (1 = *mostly disagree*; 5 = *mostly agree*). Items concerned with special cultural issues (e.g., Biblical references, the mention of the federal government) were excluded. Several other items that are detached from the Chinese social reality or are outside the scope of daily conversations (e.g., racial, sex, bipartisan issues) were also excluded. Still others that failed to meet the loading criterion of at least .60 (McCroskey & Young, 1979) were likewise dropped. An exploratory factor analysis of the 10 items resulted in four clean factors in accordance with the conceptualized distinctions among Strivers, Experiencers, Thinkers, and Survivors. Together, the four factors account for 63.4% of the total variance (see Table 3).

Table 3.Factor Analysis (Principal Component With Oblimin Rotation) on Lifestyle Indicators.

	Striver	Experiencer	Survivor	Thinker
I like to dress in the latest fashions.	.77			
I follow the latest trends and fashions.	.76			
I dress more fashionable than most people.	.73			
I want to be considered fashionable.	.64			
I am always looking for a thrill.		.82		
I like a lot of excitement in my life.		.71		
I am really interested in only a few things.			.81	
I must admit that my interests are somewhat narrow and limited.			.80	
I am often interested in theories.				.85
I would like to understand more about how the universe works.				.74
Variance accounted for (%)	28.71	13.23	12.41	9.05

Note. Loadings on the four factors are sufficiently clean that no cross-loaders at or larger than .25 are observed. Actual cross-loading figures are therefore omitted for ease of reading (*N* = 500).

The first factor, Strivers (eigenvalue = 2.87; variance = 28.71%) contains four items, characterizing people who are fashion conscious, fun seeking, and mindful about what others think of them. The second factor, Experiencers (eigenvalue = 1.32; variance = 13.23%), includes two items representing young people who seek variety and excitement and savor the new, the offbeat, and the risky. The third factor, Survivors (eigenvalue = 1.24; variance = 12.41%), subsume people who are the least motivated. They are comfortable with what they are familiar with and are primarily concerned with safety and security. They focus on meeting survival needs rather than fulfilling desires. The fourth factor, Thinkers (eigenvalue = 0.91; variance = 9.05%), are pragmatists who value order, knowledge, and responsibility and look for durability, utility, and value in the products they buy. Taken together, the four lifestyle types were conceptually consistent with the theoretical expectations described by SRI Consulting Business Intelligence (2003).

Social comparison was measured with four items developed by Krcmar, Giles, and Helme (2008) using 5-point Likert-scale items (1 = *strongly disagree*; 5 = *strongly agree*). The items were (1) "I compare my body and looks to actors and celebrities that I see in magazines or websites"; (2) "I compare my dress and adornments to actors and celebrities that I see in magazines or websites"; (3) "At parties or other social events, I compare my body and physical appearance to those of others"; and (4) "At parties or other social events, I compare my dress and adornments to those of others." Reliability of the four items was more than acceptable (Cronbach's α = .76). A factor analysis (principal component oblimin rotation, eigenvalue > 1) generated a single factor labeled as the Social Comparison Scale (see Table 4). The factor accounted for 58% of the total variance.

Table 4. Factor Analysis (Principal Component With Oblimin Rotation) on Social Comparison Indicators.

	Social Comparison
I compare my body and look to actors' and celebrities' bodies and looks that I see in magazines or websites.	.73
I compare my dress and adornments to actors' and celebrities' dress and adornments that I see in magazines or websites.	.76
At parties or other social events, I compare my body and physical appearance to the bodies and physical appearance of others.	.81
At parties or other social events, I compare my dress and adornments to dress and adornments of others.	.78
Variance accounted for (%)	58.98

Note. Loadings on the factor are sufficiently clean that no cross-loaders at or larger than .25 are observed (N = 500).

Demographic variables include gender (1 = *male*; 2 = *female*), age (measured in two-year increments), education (ordinal measures from primary school, junior high school, senior high school to junior college, college, and graduate school), household annual income (total income from all members of the family), marital status (1 = *unmarried*; 2 = *married*), and occupation.

Results

General Pattern of Media Use

According to the results, gender was significantly correlated with media use ($\beta_{magazine}$= .14; p < .01; $\beta_{website}$ = .13; p < .01). Females, compared with males, were more likely to use fashion media frequently. The other demographic factors such as education level, income, marital status, and age were not associated with media use.

More than 68% of the respondents mentioned that they read fashion magazines sometimes, and close to 20% of the respondents read them often. More than 40% of respondents replied that they did not regularly read a particular fashion magazine and optionally selected different ones to read.

Among these respondents, nearly 34% used fashion websites very often, and more than 52% used websites sometimes. About 24% spent half an hour on obtaining fashion information online each time, and nearly 12% spent one hour online every time. There was no significant difference between males and females in selecting fashion media. Both fashion magazines and websites were popular among young people.

Research Question 1

Regression analyses were conducted to test the predictive power of the three norms. Across demographics, females were significantly more likely than males to pay close attention to fashion clothing (β = .17, p < .001), a finding that is neither surprising nor inconsistent with prior research reports (e.g.,

Auty & Elliott, 1998; Hourigan & Bougoure, 2012). Marital status was significantly but negatively related to fashion involvement (β = −.10, p < .05). The rest of the three demographic attributes, particularly income and education, were completely absent of significant prediction.

Controlling for demographics, lifestyle emerged as the strongest predictor, accounting for 19% of the variance in fashion involvement. Three of four lifestyle types (factors) significantly related to fashion involvement. Being highly self-conscious and fashion conscious, Striver was fully equivalent to mental or behavioral commitment to fashion as the strongest beta indicates (β = .41, p < .001). Experiencer was another strong indicator of fashion involvement (β = .12, p < .01). Survivor was the only lifestyle that was mildly but significantly opposed to fashion involvement (β = −.09, p < .05). Survivor's consumption pattern mainly oriented to low price and pragmatic purposes, therefore, it was not difficult to understand its inclination against consumerism and fashion issues.

The second strongest factor was media exposure, accounting for an additional 14.30% of the variance in fashion involvement. Results showed markedly similar patterns in the predictive structure across the two variables (see Table 5). Fashion website surfing registered a slightly higher impact on fashion involvement than magazine reading did ($\beta_{magazine}$= .21, p < .001; $\beta_{website}$= .25, p < .001). Given the high correlation between website and magazine exposure (r = .52, p < .001), it appeared as if individuals paid more attention to fashion information than to the channel on which information was disseminated.

Table 5.Predicting Fashion Involvement.

Factors	*r*	β
Demographics		
Gender	.15***	.17***
Age	−.02	.03
Education	−.06	−.07
Marital status	−.05	−.10*
Income	.02	.05
R^2(%)	3.60	
Lifestyles		
Strivers	.44***	.41***
Experiencers	.17***	.12**
Survivors	−.06	−.09
Thinkers	.06	.04
Incremental R^2(%)	18.90	
Social Comparison	.32***	.32***
Incremental R^2 (%)	10.50	
Media exposure		
Magazine	.32***	.21***
Website	.34***	.25***
Incremental R^2(%)	14.30	

Note. Entries are standardized OLS regression beta coefficients (N = 500). All figures controlled for demographics. # all values without * mean p< .10. *p< .05.**p< .01.***p< .001.

Social comparison was the third strongest predictor (β = .32, p< .001), accounting for 10.50% of the variance in fashion involvement. Individuals followed upward with high standard and tried best to get close to the standard through wearing fashion clothes.

Research Question 2

RQ2 is mainly concerned with the possibility of a moderation effect. Moderation is the examination of the statistical interaction between two independent variables in predicting a dependent variable (Jose, 2013). Figure 1 shows a graphical depiction.

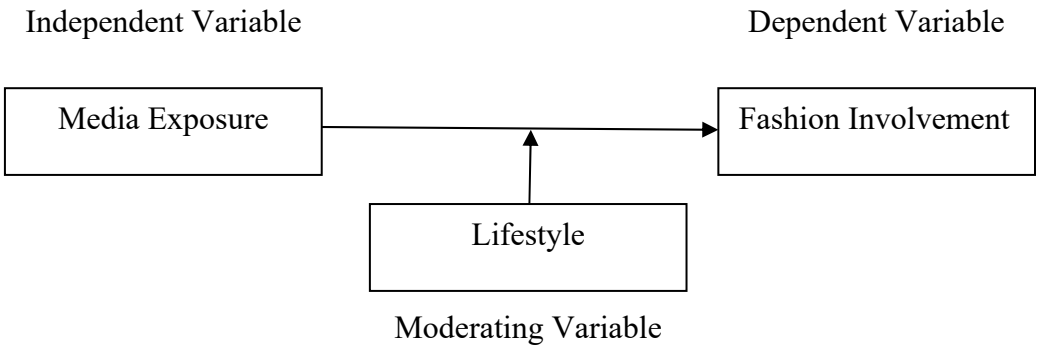

Figure 1.Moderation effect.

A multiple regression model was performed to investigate whether the association between media exposure and fashion involvement depends on the two aspects of lifestyle (Striver and Experiencer). In the process, an interaction term was created by multiplying the Striver and Experiencer component of the lifestyle factors with magazine and website exposure, respectively. Then media exposure, lifestyle, and the interaction were entered into a simultaneous regression model. Regression analysis betas controlling for demographics for the four interaction terms were identical (β= .41, p < .001 for Striver and magazine; β= .39, p < .001 for Striver and website; β = .204, p < .001 for Experiencer and magazine; and β= .201, p < .001 for Experiencer and website), suggesting that the effect of media exposure on fashion involvement depended on the two lifestyle factors (see Table 6).

Findings implied at least two plausible explanations: (1) Consistent with Table 5, exposure to the two forms of media did not seem to show discriminant validity in terms of exhibiting distinct paths of influence. Although they were conceptually unique, fashion magazines and websites appeared to be interchangeable empirically; and (2) this was because, as the data pattern suggested, the two were subsumed under some broader concept, such as fashion information or fashion image.

Table 6.OLS Regression: Joint Effect of Striver Lifestyle and Media Exposure on Fashion Involvement.

Factors	**β**
Demographics	
R^2(%)	3.60**
Striver lifestyle	
Incremental R^2(%)	17.30***
Experiencer lifestyle	
Incremental R^2 (%)	3.90***
Media exposure	
Incremental R^2 (%)	14.30***
Interaction term	
Striver × Magazine	.41***
Incremental R^2(%)	16.30***
Striver × Website	.39***
Incremental R^2 (%)	15.00***
Experiencer × Magazine	.204***
Incremental R^2(%)	3.90***
Experiencer × Website	.201***
Incremental R^2 (%)	3.80***

Note. Entries are standardized OLS regression beta coefficients (N = 500). All figures controlled for demographics.
all values without * mean $p < .10$.*$p < .05$.**$p < .01$.***$p < .001$.

Research Question 3

Again, several regression analyses were conducted to examine the impact of particular kinds of lifestyle on social comparison. Controlling for demographics, Striver turned out to be the strongest predictor (β= .42, $p < .001$). Experiencer ranked second (β= .09, $p < .05$). Neither Survivor nor Thinker had much to do with social comparison (see Table 7). Thinkers would like to keep their eyes on abstract or psychological issues instead of social comparison. Survivors were excluded in social comparison because of the limitation of economic and social resources.

Table 7. Predicting Social Comparison.

Factors	*r*	β
Demographics		
Gender	−.014	−.002
Age	.041	.044
Education	.048	.045
Marital status	.006	−.002
Income	.069	.063
R^2(%)	0.8	
Lifestyles		
Strivers	.416***	.393***
Experiencers	.228***	.094*
Survivors	.031	.035
Thinkers	.096*	.014
Incremental R^2(%)	19.60	

Note. Entries are standardized OLS regression beta coefficients (*N* = 500). All figures controlled for demographics.
all values without * mean *p*< .10.**p*< .05. ** *p*< .01. ***p*< .001.

Research Question 4 (Mediated Moderation Effect)

Research Question 4 is concerned with the mediation of a moderated effect. According to Jose (2013), this mediated moderation analysis essentially involves an interaction term in a path model. We adopted the original and classic approaches outlined by previous studies (e.g., Baron & Kenny, 1986; Judd & Kenny, 1981; Muller, Judd, & Yzerbyt, 2005) with the following theoretical model (see Figure 2).

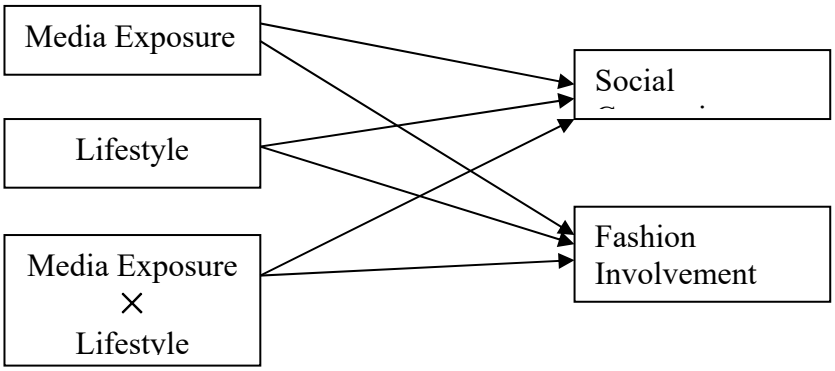

Figure 2. A mediated moderation model.

Regression analyses were conducted to examine whether social comparison mediated the moderation of lifestyles motivated by achievement and self-expression in the relationship between media exposure and fashion involvement.

Step 1 was a simple 2 × 2 ANOVA on fashion involvement. Controlling for demographics, followed by media exposure, the two lifestyle variables (Striver and Experiencer), and the Media Exposure × Lifestyle interaction term. The interaction effect was significant. In Step 2, social comparison was regressed on media exposure, lifestyle, and the Media Exposure × Lifestyle interaction. In Step 3, fashion involvement was regressed on media exposure, lifestyle, the Media Exposure × Lifestyle interaction, social comparison, and the Social Comparison × Lifestyle interaction.

The Media Exposure × Lifestyle interaction significantly affected fashion involvement (β= .41, p < .001 for magazine and Striver factor; β= .21, p < .001 for magazine and Experiencer factor; β= .39, p < .001 for website and Striver factor; and β= .20, p < .001 for website and Experiencer factor), indicating a moderation effect. In Steps 2 and 3, the moderation of the residual treatment effect, the interaction (β_{33}) was not significant (see Table 8a–8b). On the whole, results were consistent with expectations: (1) media exposure was a positive predictor of both social comparison and fashion involvement; (2) lifestyle was a positive predictor of both social comparison and fashion involvement; and (3) social comparison was a positive predictor of fashion involvement. Together, the findings converge on a mediated moderation effect (e.g., Baron & Kenny, 1986; Jose, 2013).

It is clear that the interaction term explains a significant amount of variance in fashion involvement through social comparison. For individuals with high levels of self-expression and achievement aspiration, a stronger relationship between media exposure and fashion involvement has been found. In other words, the effect of media exposure on fashion involvement is largely a function of self-expression and achievement aspiration. And this relationship is found to be mediated by social comparison.

Table 8a.Regression Results for Mediated Moderation Effect (X = Magazine Exposure).

	Step 1		Step 2		Step 3	
Predictor	*b*	*t*	*b*	*t*	*b*	*t*
X: Magazine exposure	.197	4.703***	.111	2.560*	.182	4.330***
Mo: Lifestyle						
Striver	.363	8.660**	.419	2.753**	.363	2.358*
Experiencer	.170	3.947***	.100	.594	−.013	−.081
X × *Mo*: Magazine Exposure × Lifestyle						
Magazine × Striver	.410	9.992***	−.022	−.146	−.064	−.415
Magazine × Experiencer	.204	4.577***	.128	.767	.132	.828
Me: Social comparison					.152	3.493**
MeMo: Social Comparison × Lifestyle						
Compare × Striver					.029	.698
Compare × Experiencer					.015	.356

Note. *Me*=Mediator; *Mo*=Moderator; *MeMo*=Mediated Moderation. All figures controlled for demographics (N = 500). *p < .05.**p < .01.***p < .001

Table 8b.Regression Results for Mediated Moderation Effect (X = Website Exposure).

	Step 1		Step 2		Step 3	
Predictor	*b*	*t*	*b*	*t*	*b*	*t*
X: Website exposure	.213	5.072***	.142	3.296**	.193	4.579***
Mo: Lifestyle						
Striver	.355	8.459***	.448	3.260**	.401	2.850**
Experiencer	.157	3.638***	.116	.765	.038	.253
X × *Mo*: Website Exposure × Lifestyle						
Website × Striver	.393	9.518***	−.066	−.483	−.107	−.772
Website × Experiencer	.201	4.491***	.100	.660	.072	.482
Me: Social comparison					.142	3.244**
MeMo: Social Comparison × Lifestyle						
Compare × Striver					.045	1.085
Compare × Experiencer					.011	.249

Note. *Me*=Mediator; *Mo*=Moderator; *MeMo*=Mediated Moderation. All figures controlled for demographics(*N* = 500).
*$p < .05$.**$p < .01$.***$p < .001$.

Conclusion and Discussion

A visible pattern has emerged from data analyses: Chinese young people's fashion involvement is interwoven with achievement and self-expression-oriented lifestyles, social comparison motives, and fashion media exposure. The complexity of the model can be more easily understood when findings are decomposed into subsets. Apparently, those in search of fashion information do not discriminate between forms of media or sources of information. In part this may be because considerable degrees of content uniformity exist in the world of fashion media.

Taken together, attention to fashion clothing is a likely result of a part of an individual's lifestyle that is either achievement (i.e., the Striver mentality) or self-expression motivated (i.e., Experiencer). The strength of the relationship is increased when the latter is combined with media exposure. Among all the antecedents of fashion involvement, social comparison stands out to be the strongest predictor. Under pressure of social comparison, young Chinese exhibit an intensely positive attitude toward changing their body image through fashion and vogue (Sun & Guo, 2013).

This study advances and tests an interactive model that incorporates a chain of mediation, moderation, and mediated moderation effects. The positive correlation between exposure to fashion contents and involvement being the main effect, social comparison enters the relationship as a mediator, and two of the lifestyle factors (Striver and Experiencer) moderate the relationship. Highly motivated individuals (i.e., achievement and self-expression) in other aspects of everyday life are also highly involved in fashion.

It came as no surprise that women are much more conscious (and self-conscious) of body-related issues than men are. However, variance in involvement accounted for by gender is much weaker in comparison with that produced by achievement and self-expression-motivated lifestyles. Enjoyment of self-exposing, using fashion media and fashion involvement as a whole, tend to be augmented by motivation variables. Of particular importance are the two aspects of lifestyle (Striver and Experiencer) that significantly predict social comparison beyond controls of demographics and other variables. Social comparison, in turn, mediates the moderation effect of lifestyle, a complex process that integrates micromental activities and macrosocial environmental forces. Our study is among the first attempts at testing these cross-level relationships. Individuals such as Strivers and Experiencers usually pay more attention to fashion information and are highly involved in fashion. Furthermore, we find that comparisons with fashion images are positively correlated with fashion clothing consciousness. On the flip side, findings show that high levels of motivations are likely to lead to worsened mood from comparing oneself with image norms or iconic idols than are low levels of motivations. The results suggest that the uneasiness felt by individuals who are highly motivated is more easily exacerbated by exposure to media that promote a strong desire for goods with symbolic values.

Research results from this study have yielded multiple theoretical implications: First, attention may be more profitably paid to interaction effects in fashion involvement. Based on what we have found in this study, fashion involvement is the consequence of not only individual factors but also of variables in concerted effects. The earliest test of moderated mediation and mediated moderation was conducted in the 1980s, when psychologists distinguished the properties of moderator from mediator variables at different levels and provided specific analytic procedures to help researchers make effective use of these distinctions (Baron & Kenny, 1986). Nearly 30 years of research have yet to fill the gap left in our understanding of the possible hybrid effects in fashion communication studies.

Second, different forms and patterns of media use may interact with one another to produce various possible effects. Interactions between exposure to fashion magazines and websites may show a diminishing return in the power of explanation. When content is identical across different platforms of information, a likely scenario is that "the whole is less than the sum of its parts" (Shen & Eveland, 2010, p. 378).

Third, individuals may mainly rely on websites for information and regard other forms of media as either supplementary or competitive. When sources of information clash, users may be forced to make a choice, in which case the exposure–content–platform interaction would be significantly reduced (Holbert, 2005). We therefore suggest that future studies may look into intramedia effects and their influence on fashion-related behaviors in various communication settings.

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Understanding the Images of Alan Kurdi With "Small Data": A Qualitative, Comparative Analysis of Tweets About Refugees in Turkey and Flanders (Belgium)

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One of the peak moments of the debate on the European refugee crisis was caused by the circulation of images of Alan Kurdi, a three-year-old Syrian boy who drowned in the Aegean Sea on September 2, 2015. The images triggered worldwide reactions from politicians, nongovernmental organizations, and citizens. This article analyzes these reactions through a qualitative study of 961 tweets from Turkey and Flanders (Belgium), contextualizing them into the framing and representation of refugees before and after the images were released. Our study finds that, despite their iconic qualities and potential to mobilize Twitter users around refugee issues, the images did not cause a major shift in common discourses and representations. Instead, references to Kurdi were incorporated into preexisting discourses on and representations of refugees, thus offering different actors in the public debate on refugees with new symbols and motifs to construct meaning.

Keywords: Twitter, social media, refugees, Alan Kurdi, qualitative content analysis, Turkey, Belgium, Flanders

The so-called European refugee crisis refers to the notable rise in the number of refugees and migrants coming to the European Union (EU) since 2015 to seek asylum. Although they constitute a diverse population, many of the refugees originate from Syria, Iraq, and Afghanistan. Eurostat (2016) states that, in 2015, more than 1.2 million first-time asylum seekers were registered in the EU, more than the double the number in 2014. Coinciding with an ongoing EU polity crisis, the influx of refugees caused highly mediatized public debates. Some pivotal points in these debates were the sinking of five boats in the Mediterranean Sea, causing the death of an estimated 1,200 people in April 2015; Hungary's construction of a barrier at its Serbian and Croatian borders; and the circulation of photographs of Alan

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Kurdi,[2] a three-year-old Syrian boy who drowned near the Turkish coast in September 2015 (see Figure 1). This article examines the latter event and explores how images of the boy were embedded in the discourses on the social media service Twitter. Our analysis focuses on Turkey and Flanders (Belgium) between June 2015 and July 2016.

Figure 1. Alan Kurdi, photographed by Nilüfer Demir, September 2, 2015.

Since the circulation of the photographs of Kurdi's washed-ashore body, taken by Turkish journalist Nilüfer Demir, their transformative power and iconic potential have been emphasized by many (Chouliaraki & Zaborowski, 2017; De Andrés, Nos Aldás, & García Matilla, 2016; Fehrenbach & Rodogno, 2016; Ibrahim & Howarth, 2016; Mortensen, 2017). The images, made and released on September 2, 2015, made global headlines, circulating massively across media platforms. A report by the Visual Social Media Lab (Vis & Goriunova, 2015) based on a study conducted in the days after the release of the photographs states that the images circulated to the screens of almost 20 million people around the world within 12 hours, reaching more than 30,000 tweets (Vis & Goriunova, 2015, p. 10). Analyses reveal that the images generated a massive increase in tweets about migration and refugees, spreading across the globe via the Middle East (D'Orazio, 2015). Based on Google search data, Rodgers (2015) demonstrates that, as the images went viral, they shifted popular interest in the topic of immigration and refugees, leading to a changing agenda. Chouliaraki and Zaborowski (2017), moreover, find that, following Kurdi's death, there was an increase in humanitarian and more personalized reporting on refugees in newspapers.

The photographs of Kurdi have been described as "iconic," comparable to photographs of children in times of humanitarian crises, such as Nick Ut's 1973 photograph of Phan Thi Kim Phúc taken during a napalm attack in the Vietnam War or Kevin Carter's 1993 photograph of a starving Sudanese child stalked by a vulture. Scholars have also noted the impact of the images—for instance, on the Canadian elections (Carlier, 2016) and on mobilization among citizens (Koca, 2016; Vis, 2016). The scholarly attention on the

[2] The name Aylan Kurdi also circulates widely, supposedly after Turkish authorities misspelled his name.

images should be understood within the broader expansion of literature on photography and public culture, driven by the work of authors such as Hariman and Lucaites (2016).

While recognizing the iconic qualities and the viral, global circulation of the images, we seek to investigate them from the empirical viewpoint of national contexts. By approaching the phenomenon through "small data," we reveal the variety of responses to and appropriations of the images on Twitter. Moreover, we put the often-assumed impact of the "icon" into perspective by contextualizing it within distinct political contexts. We argue that, despite their iconic qualities, the images of Kurdi did not cause a shift in discourses on refugees; rather, they were incorporated into preexisting discourses. The study also exposes national, social, and political contexts that further demythologize the global impact of the iconic images.

Social Media, Twitter, and Images

Social media create diverse communication spaces in which users can debate social issues among "networked audiences" (Marwick & boyd, 2011, p. 122). Thus, social media, especially Twitter, which has evolved from "a medium for small-talk" based on personal updates (Rogers, 2014, p. xiv) to a medium for news sharing and "event-following" (Rogers, 2014, p. xvi), became key sources for studying how various social issues are perceived.

The various users of Twitter "all participate in a shared media technology with particular functionalities and communicative architecture" (Schmidt, 2013, p. 3). This shared communicative space is shaped not only by technological affordances but social textual relationships and shared rules and expectations. Bruns and Moe (2014, p. 16) suggest a threefold conceptual model for understanding this communication space, including the microlevel of interpersonal communication between Twitter users; the mesolevel of follower-followee networks, and the macrolevel of hashtag-based exchanges. This three-layered communication space enables Twitter to be used for different communicative purposes (Bruns & Moe, 2014, p. 15). The spontaneity of communication at the macrolevel gives Twitter users flexibility for creating "ad hoc publics" around certain topics. These various levels of "public-ness" are arguably what makes Twitter so attractive for researchers (Bruns & Moe, 2014, p. 20). It is Twitter's potential to create ad hoc publics that attracts our attention to this platform for understanding the social impacts of the images of Kurdi, which reverberated at the international scale on Twitter and other social media (Vis & Goriunova, 2015).

Images on social media, including Twitter, receive increased attention, partly due to the prominence of visual forms that are tightly connected to social media, such as selfies (Adami & Jewitt, 2016). Twitter made direct preview of pictures in the time line possible in 2014. The significance of images on social media becomes particularly evident in times of crisis, as Vis, Faulkner, Parry, Manyukhina, and Evans (2013) note:

> Crisis events like natural disasters and civil disobedience can be intensely visual, and it is often through images that we come to know and remember them. . . . With the popularization of digital cameras in combination with the development of social media,

> large amounts of user-generated imagery is typically produced in response to crisis events and circulated within wider media ecologies. (p. 386)

More recently, Bruns and Hanusch (2017) have also noted Twitter's affordances that make affective audiovisual content circulate during crisis events. While the images of Kurdi were made by a professional journalist, their remediations and digital reverberations (Mortensen, 2017) constitute a rich visual realm for a study in the context of Twitter. Our aim is not to study these images in isolation, but rather to position them within representations of and discourses on refugees more broadly.

Representations of Refugees

Media representations not only "reflect the events that are happening and views that are already 'out there'" but actively contribute to the construction of the meaning of the events (Berry, Garcia-Blanco, & Moore, 2015, p. 13). Therefore, the representation of refugees constitutes an important subject in media studies.[3] Previous research has especially focused on the representation of immigrants in the press and on television and on issues such as framing patterns, bias, and stereotyping (Bleiker, Campbell, Hutchison, & Nicholson, 2013; Caviedes, 2015; KhosraviNik, 2010; Lawlor & Tolley, 2017; Yaylaci & Karakus, 2015).

News reporting about refugees often tends to be framed negatively, as a problem rather than a benefit to hosting societies (Berry et al., 2015, p. 5; Elsamni, 2016, p. 8; Esses, Medianu, & Lawson, 2013, p. 522). Of course, this does not mean that there is a single mode of depiction in the representation of refugees; rather, there are "multiple viable narratives" that interweave with one another (Caviedes, 2015, p. 912). Various studies demonstrate common frames in the news portrayals of immigrants and refugees in different contexts. These can be clustered as the danger/securitization/control framework, referring to portrayals as security threats and calling for policies of securitization; the economy/social costs framework, discussing the economic harms and utilities refugees bring along; the culture/integration framework focusing on cultural issues and integration policies; and the humanitarian framework, considering migration in the framework of human rights. As revealed in various studies, the most typical representation of refugees within these frames is that of threat or victimhood (Figenschou & Thorbjornsrud, 2015, p. 795; Horsti, 2013, p. 79). Earlier studies have found that Syrian refugees are often portrayed in news reporting as victims, burdens, or threats (Elsamni, 2016, p. 8; Erdogan, 2015, p. 149; Rettberg & Gajjala, 2016, p. 179; Yaylaci & Karakus, 2015, p. 247). The way in which refugees are portrayed links to the broader discussion of the ethics of visibility of vulnerable others, as Chouliaraki and Stolic (2017) remind us.

In addition to these commonly shared frameworks, collectivization—meaning that refugees and immigrants are often constructed as a unanimous group with shared characteristics, backgrounds, intentions, motivations, and statuses—appears as a common strategy that is used for the negative or

[3] The studies cited in this section mainly focus on representations of refugees, although in some studies *asylum seekers* or *migrants* is used as a more appropriate term. It is important to consider the specific national and historical contexts of the empirical studies mentioned here.

positive portrayal of refugees in news media (KhosraviNik, 2010, p. 12). For example, refugees can be collectively represented as victims, "humanizing" their situation (KhosraviNik, 2010, p. 17), or as collective threats, "dehumanizing" them (Bleiker et al., 2013; Esses et al., 2013, p. 524). Individual representations of immigrants, on the other hand, can offer a more humanitarian framework aiming to create empathy, but they can also be used for negative framing (KhosraviNik, 2010, pp. 15, 19). These patterns have a long history, as described in Mannik's (2012) study of historical photographs of refugees.

Although studies on the representation of refugees predominantly focus on mass media, an increasing number of studies on social media are seen as actively contributing to the construction of meanings of the refugee flows (Mortensen, 2017; Rettberg & Gajjala, 2016; Yıldırım & Yurtdaş, 2016). While some claim that social media offer a space for alternative discourses to mainstream mass media, others, such as Rettberg and Gajjala (2016, p. 179), argue that frames in social media users' posts also contribute to the distribution of stereotypical discourses and are not always divergent from those of the news media (Yıldırım & Yurtdaş, 2016).

We argue that, despite growing interest in the role of social media in shaping public discourse about refugees, there is still a lack of empirical research, in particular qualitative and comparative studies. Although some previous studies have examined Turkey or Flanders as case studies (De Cleen, Zienkowski, Smets, Dekie, & Vandevoordt, 2017; Van Gorp, 2005, Yıldırım & Yurtdaş, 2016), ours originally combines both regions and delves into representations on social media over a longer period. Moreover, while many studies analyze either textual or visual representations, the current study recognizes the synergies between textual and visual representations in a social medium such as Twitter.

Methods and Research Design

Research Focus and Case Studies

The main research questions of this study are:

RQ1: How are refugees represented by Twitter users in Flanders and Turkey?

RQ2: How is the refugee issue, as a phenomenon, framed, understood, and explained by Twitter users in Flanders and Turkey?

RQ3: What is the role of the images of Alan Kurdi in the representations of refugees and the refugee issue on Twitter?

Flanders and Turkey constitute the two case studies for the comparative analysis, one representing a neighboring country of Syria and one a more distant West European region.[4] Since the

[4] Flanders is the largely Dutch-speaking northern region of Belgium. It enjoys considerable political autonomy. The reasons for focusing on Flanders in particular rather than on Belgium are twofold. It allows us to include tweets in only one language (Dutch) rather than three (Belgium has three official languages:

beginning of the civil war, Turkey has received the highest number of Syrian refugees, currently about 2.8 million people (Turkish Ministry of Interior, Directorate General of Migration Management, 2016). Although, in comparison, Flanders has not received such high numbers, the influx of Syrians, Iraqis, and Afghan refugees has been debated widely in the public sphere due Belgium's role in the EU (its capital, Brussels, hosting many of the EU's institutions), its history with migration and multiculturalism, and the traditionally vocal right-wing political parties (see De Cleen et al., 2017).[5] The comparison enables us to not only understand the shared international dynamics of the refugee issue but focus on the local/national dynamics that shape the perception of the issue at the microlevel.

Toward a Qualitative Study of Tweets

We focus on Twitter because it has become an important platform for public debate, creating ad hoc publics around specific social issues and understanding the resonance of key issues in the society as discussed earlier. Given the amounts of data that can be scraped from Twitter and the possibilities of automated analysis, Twitter is very attractive for big data analysis. In fact, most research on Twitter adopts a quantitative design (Marwick, 2014, p. 110). Although often presented as if it makes research more complete, objective, and accurate, big data analysis also has its limitations (boyd & Crawford, 2012, p. 667; Busch, 2014). Having large amounts of data does not disburden researchers from methodological challenges in sampling strategies (boyd & Crawford, 2012, p. 670) or from ethical responsibilities vis-à-vis marginalized subjects (Leurs & Shepherd, 2017). Despite the growing interest in big data, many emphasize the continued importance of "small data." Depending on the research question, a closer analysis of a limited number of cases can provide information that cannot be gained by the study of millions of cases (boyd & Crawford, 2012). Such analysis can enable us to go beyond the "well-behaved confines of macro-layer hashtag studies," which provides a challenge for quantitative analysis (Bruns & Moe, 2014, p. 25), to understand the contexts in which the communication takes place (boyd & Crawford, 2012, p. 671; Marwick, 2014, p. 110), to focus on a particular user group and understand the relations between them (Marwick, 2014, p. 110), and to look more closely at the connections between the macro- and mesolevels of communication on Twitter. Moreover, as Boellstorff (2013) argues, "we cannot cede more generalized theorizing to only some disciplines and methodological approaches" (para. 55)—that is, those working with big data.

Few guiding examples exist for conducting qualitative research on Twitter. Therefore, we adopt an exploratory research design based on principles of qualitative research and purposeful sampling to map the chosen research field on the basis of in-depth analyses of selected cases, which are "exemplary" or

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Dutch, French, and German), thus making the study more feasible. Moreover, the country's division into a Flemish and Walloon political landscape has resulted in different public debates (see De Cleen et al., 2017).

[5] In 2016, a record of more than 15,000 asylum seekers (mainly Syrians, Iraqis, and Afghans) were recognized in Belgium. A total of 18,710 people applied for asylum in 2016, less than half of the number of applications in the previous year, at the peak of the refugee crisis. Recent statistics can be consulted via the Office of the Commissioner General for Refugees and Stateless People: http://www.cgvs.be/nl/cijfers#.

"information-rich" for this field (Patton, 2002, p. 234). The main steps of our research process are represented in Figure 2.

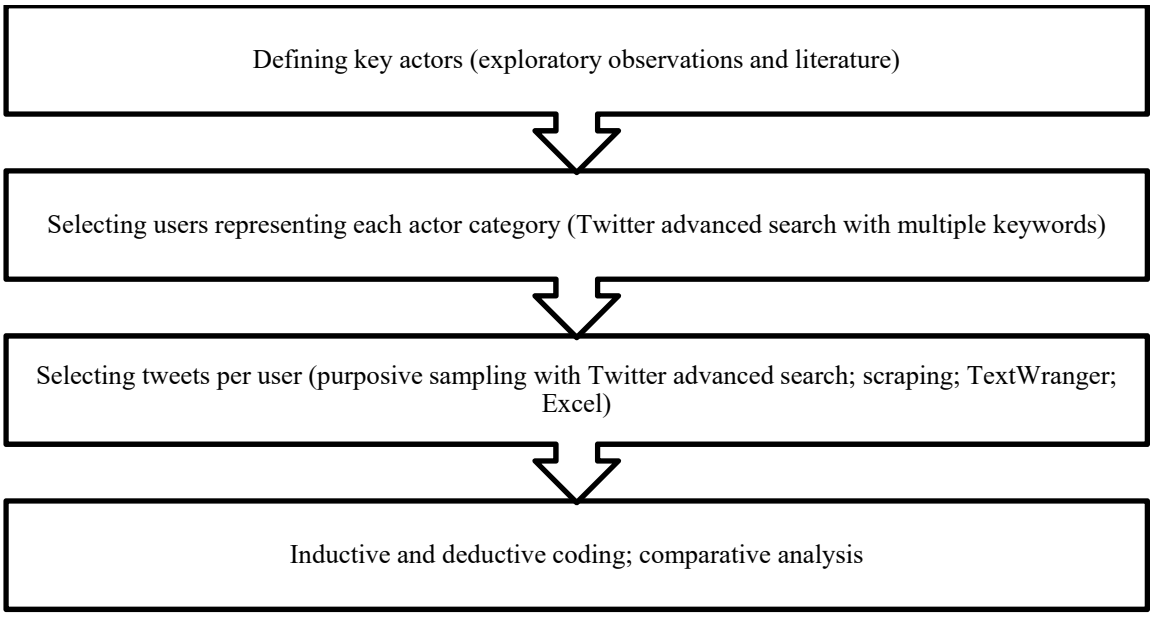

Figure 2. Main methodological steps in the research design.

Sampling and Analysis

In each step of our analysis, we used purposeful sampling for selecting users and their tweets. The first step in sampling with the aim of maximum variation, according to Patton (2002, p. 235), is to "identify diverse characteristics or criteria for constructing the sample." For this purpose, we first made observations about users who were tweeting about the images of Kurdi in September 2015. We used Twitter's advanced search function to search for the keywords "Syrians," "Aylan,"[6] "refugees," "migrants," and "humanity"[7] (Turkish and Dutch equivalents). Instead of focusing on popular hashtags throughout this period, such as #AylanKurdi or #KiyiyaVuranInsanlik ("HumanityWashedAshore"), we focused on keywords because tweets with hashtags represent only a limited part of the communication on Twitter (Bruns & Moe, 2013, p. 24).

On the basis of our search and observations, we identified citizens, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), politicians, and professional media outlets as the four major groups that were tweeting about the issue. We decided to focus on the first three as the most relevant actor groups. Our

[6] The name was initially circulated as Aylan; hence, this was the most relevant keyword.

[7] One of the most commonly used hashtags in relation to Alan Kurdi in Turkish was #KiyiyaVuranInsanlik, meaning "humanity washed ashore." In addition to this hashtag, many tweets made references to the crisis, guilt, or end of humanity, and, therefore, this keyword was included.

analysis focused on how different actor groups position themselves in relation to the refugee issue and whether these positions changed after the circulation of the images of Kurdi. Since the professional media accounts in Turkey and Flanders report developments without taking an outspoken position about the refugee issue, we decided to exclude them from our analysis. In a second step, we chose users in each country as examples for the specific actor group and aimed for maximum variation in terms of discursive positions and the user's relation to the refugee issue, number of followers, and activity level on Twitter. For the NGOs, we also included users who were not tweeting about Kurdi but who are active in refugee issues. For politicians, we selected the leaders of the five big national parties in Turkey and leaders of the federal and Flemish governments, leaders of Flemish political parties, and one of the main extreme-right politicians, Filip Dewinter, who is no longer the party leader but has been an influential figure in the public debate about migration since the 1990s. The citizen users were more challenging to select since the variety in this group is larger than in the other two. For this group, we identified different types of users in relation to their positions about the refugee issue (e.g., users who are clear government supporters, users with different tweet frequency about the refugee issue, etc.). Then we chose two to three typical users for each category.

Although we focused on September 2015 to choose the users for our analysis, the whole analysis examines the period between June 1, 2015, and July 30, 2016, because we are interested in not only what people tweeted about Kurdi but whether their positions toward refugees in their tweets changed over time after the images circulated.

Once we identified the analysis period and the actors, we downloaded all their tweets using a Python script and the Twitter API.[8] We used the program TextWrangler to navigate within all the tweets and selected tweets of each user that were related to the refugee issue by using the same keywords as in the beginning of the analysis; then we copied all the related tweets to an Excel file.[9] We also collected additional information about the users, providing valuable background for our analysis, such as the follower/followee numbers, profile description, and the year the user joined Twitter. In case a user tweeted a lot about the refugee issue, we selected tweets that were typical for each month. We included retweets and replies to tweets of the selected users and reconstructed conversations that took place among them. We concluded our material collection with 961 tweets from 72 users: 42 users and 434 tweets in the Flemish case and 30 users and 527 tweets in the Turkish case (see Table 1). The appendix[10] contains a detailed list and brief descriptions of all selected users. Citizens' user names have been anonymized to protect their privacy, since they may not be aware that their tweets are being highlighted beyond the context of their original post.

[8] The script was a tweaked version of this one: https://gist.github.com/yanofsky/5436496.

[9] The tool used to download tweets was limited to 3,200 tweets per user, so in some cases, when users had a high number of tweets in the selected time period, we searched for refugee-related tweets through the Advanced search function of Twitter and added them manually to the excel sheet.

[10] The appendix can be accessed at https://www.dropbox.com/s/4ihx9lqigsw8pub/Appendix-Bozdag-Smets-2017-Understanding%20Alan%20Kurdi%20Images.docx?dl=0.

Table 1. Sample Composition.

	Citizens	Politicians	Nongovernmental organizations	Total
Flanders (Belgium)				
Users per actor group	23	11	8	**42**
Number of tweets per actor group	202	115	117	**434**
Turkey				
Users per actor group	15	6	9	**30**
Number of tweets per actor group	285	15	227	**527**
Total Flanders and Turkey				**961**

After the data collection, we started analyzing the material more systematically using a mixed code scheme, consisting of inductive and deductive codes. Based on the literature, we identified categories that were relevant for the representation of migrants and refugees on media, especially mainstream mass media. For example, research shows that refugees are often represented from a threat or victim perspective (Figenschou & Thorbjornsrud, 2015, p. 795; Horsti, 2013, p. 79). We included description of refugees in the tweets as an analysis category and threat and victim perspectives as subcategories. We also added the opportunity and agency perspectives to this category (see Table 2), which are scarcely mentioned in the literature but are present in our material in a few instances. The opportunity perspective represents refugees as an economic, political, or demographic opportunity. The agency perspective criticizes the victim and the threat perspectives and emphasizes the fact that one should see refugees as powerful individuals and encourage them to realize their goals.

Table 2. Coding Categories and Their Description.

Category	Description or subcategories
Account and tweet information	Date, username, follower/followee numbers, profile description
Used links and visuals	Content of the link and visuals
Representation of refugees	Threat, victim, opportunity, agents (Berry et al., 2015; Figenschou & Thorbjornsrud, 2015; Horsti, 2013; KhosraviNik, 2010; Mannik, 2012)
Perspective of representation	Individual vs. collective (KhosraviNik, 2010; Mannik, 2012)
Reasons for the refugee crisis	Reasons, explanations, people to blame (Figenschou & Thorbjornsrud, 2015)
Solutions to the refugee crisis	Solutions offered to the current situation (Figenschou & Thorbjornsrud, 2015)
References to Alan Kurdi	References to Kurdi in September 2015 and afterward

In addition to the representation of refugees, we included the perspective of representation in relation to strategies of individualization versus collectivization in the representation as a deductive category. Three further inductive categories that we developed on the basis of the tweets in the data corpus and in relation to our research questions are reasons provided by the users for the refugee crisis, the solutions offered, and references to Kurdi. The materials were coded in MS Excel.

Our research design has some limitations. Focusing on Twitter users only, we cannot generalize at the level of the society (boyd & Crawford, 2012, p. 669). Furthermore, the shortness of the tweets makes it challenging to understand the content of the messages without context information. We dealt with this challenge by collecting information about the time of the tweets (for example, if there was a prominent event at that time) and by looking at the user's previous and following tweets and conversations. Another limitation of the study is the lack of detailed background information about the actors, which confines our analysis to representations on Twitter rather than appropriation by the users. Despite these limitations and challenges, the research design proves to be fruitful for not only mapping different actor groups and discursive positions about the refugees but analyzing the changes and continuities in different users' positions about the issue.

Findings

Stylistic Varieties, Frequencies, and Intertextualities

Before turning to the specific findings for the three actor groups, it is worthwhile to discuss the overall characteristics of the tweets. First, the style and tone of tweets vary greatly across the data set. Emotions and affect play a key role in the collected tweets, particularly those explicitly referring to Kurdi. The range of emotions varies from sadness and benevolence to shame, anger, and pleasure along with a varying tonality of tweets from a sympathetic to an angry and hateful one. At the same time, however, we also observe a more factual, detached style in other tweets, which mainly "report" on refugee-related issues rather than "commenting" on them, and are most often observed among NGOs and politicians. Especially challenging was to interpret tweets that make use of a humorous register, such as ironic and absurd remarks or cartoons.

Second, there are vast differences in terms of tweet frequencies, although our limited data set did not allow investigating this in depth. Moreover, our data include users who tweet about refugees on a regular basis as well as users who rarely or never tweet about refugees. The latter group includes citizens and politicians whose refugee-related tweet frequency clearly correlates with particular events. In both Flanders and Turkey, these events included Kurdi's drowning (September 2015) as well as terrorist attacks in Istanbul's Sultanahmet district (January 2016) and in the Brussels metro and airport (March 2016). In Flanders, the circulation of the images also coincided with a crisis in the asylum application management, which led to the installment of an improvised camp in a park near the asylum authorities in Brussels in September 2015 and an intensified public debate (De Cleen et al., 2017). In Turkey, refugee-related tweets increased after the controversial EU-Turkey refugee deal (March 2016) and after President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's proposal to grant prospective citizenship to Syrian refugees (July 2016).

Third, it is important to emphasize the multimodality of the data. As noted above, the tweets consist of not only written text but URLs, embedded images, and videos, hashtags, emoticons, and tags. Especially the links are very typical, as 512 of the analyzed 961 tweets contain a link to news websites, campaign Web pages, or other social media platforms. This demonstrates that Twitter is not an isolated platform when it comes to discussions about refugees; rather, it is highly interlinked with other online environments.

Citizens

Public perceptions of immigrants developed within specific contexts in Turkey and Flanders. Whereas immigration in Turkey is a relatively new phenomenon, with a steep increase in the number of (forced) immigrants in recent years, Flanders has been an immigration region for decades. Furthermore, public perceptions of immigration take shape in a broader context of societal polarization in Turkey (in relation to ethnicity, religion, and politics), whereas in Flanders, there is a rather dominant antimigration and anti-Islam discourse, nourished by decades of polarization of the extreme right (De Cleen et al., 2017).

Among citizens, victim and threat representations are common, while representations of refugees as an opportunity for society or refugees as active agents are virtually absent. When represented as victims, refugees are mostly described as voiceless victims of politicians. Strong pro- and antigovernment positions occur in both countries but are most explicit in Turkey. Refugees are also often represented as the victims of instrumentalization by mass media, politicians, and NGOs, who are claimed to use them to gain attention. The moral discontent with the wide sharing of the photographs of Kurdi among Twitter users sparked many comments in that regard. A Flemish user, for instance, posted the following: "I loathe the way in which media use the photo of Aylan for clicks and likes. Jeez. Use another picture of that child."[11] Some users also visualized this in their tweets—for instance, in the tweet shown in Figure 3.

[11] Unless stated otherwise, all quotes are translated by the authors from Dutch or Turkish. The tweets of citizens have been anonymized to protect privacy.

Figure 3. Tweet by an (anonymized) Flemish citizen: "Editorial offices that denounce abuse of washed ashore child. Self-reflexivity washed up lifelessly #Aylan."

The threat frame was also present in citizens' tweets generally referring to refugees as a threat to the economy, security, or social welfare system in both countries. In Turkey, the threat representation intensified during discussions on citizenship for Syrians or right after the terror attacks in the Sultanahmet district in Istanbul (January 12, 2016). Moreover, the publication of the images sparked the threat to take on a distinctly ethnic and political character, in reference to Kurdi's Syrian-Kurdish roots. Given the importance of the Kurdish issue in Turkish politics, this aspect was highlighted and led to sharp tweets. One of the harshest examples of hate speech against Kurds and Kurdi was deleted by its poster, but it was quoted by another user: "#AylanKurdi Best Kurd is the dead Kurd."

Our analysis of reasons and solutions for the increased flow of refugees shows the diverging ways citizens frame the refugee issue. Among Turkish citizens, the policies of the ruling AKP government are discussed in a very polarized way. While oppositional users blame AKP as the party in power, the progovernment users point at the opposition or the EU. An example here is posted by a user who has been writing regularly about the refugee crisis, holding the government responsible for the Syrian war: "You will use the opportunity to boil your eggs in your neighbor's fire. Then, you will say the humanity

takes refuge in Turkey." Some citizens in Turkey also blame the EU for the refugee crisis—for example, the user whose tweet is shown in Figure 4 implies that Kurdi's death reveals the EU's incompetence.

Figure 4. Tweet by a Turkish citizen: "The French media indicate that not Aylan's body, but the humanity and the EU is washed ashore."

In Flanders, the division is rather between victim and threat representations. The latter users refer to a range of specific reasons: mostly economic pull factors (jobs, social welfare) and, accordingly, propose specific and strict solutions, such as closing borders, cutting benefits, or limiting the number of incoming refugees. Within this category of tweets, we also come across hateful content referring to the deportation or extermination of unwanted refugees—for example, in this user's tweet from June 2016: "Bring #refugees to islands instead of giving them access to the #milkandhoney of Europe, like #Australia." Conversely, users who represent refugees as victims are much less consistent or specific in their framing of the issue. They rarely situate the problem (referring to, for instance, a crisis of "humanity" and "solidarity" or the "deplorable state of the world") and remain vague when formulating solutions ("someone" should do "something"). The following tweet from September 2, 2015, which included a photograph of Kurdi, intensifying the representation of the refugee as a victim, illustrates this vagueness: "Something has to happen. So poignant. This cannot leave anyone unmoved #AylanKurdi."

Politicians

The use of social media by politicians in Turkey and Flanders differs significantly. In general, politicians in Turkey seem to be less active on social media than their Belgian colleagues, especially in relation to refugees. In recent years, the political agenda of Turkey has been dominated by other topics, such as authoritarian tendencies, press freedom, and the Kurdish issue. Although the refugee issue started to become a key social question in Turkey, it has not yet become a central topic in political debates. President Erdogan sent several notable tweets in June 2016, emphasizing Turkey's efforts in the refugee crisis. One tweet, in English, for example, stated that: "Turkey is the world's most generous country. Yet a handful of nations can't solve the problem if the world fails to take necessary steps," most likely referring to the EU. In Flanders, on the other hand, immigration and integration have been prominent on the political agenda for decades (see De Cleen et al., 2017). Interestingly, while politicians in Flanders generally tweeted frequently about refugees, one of the most influential and popular politicians, Bart De Wever, did not tweet about it at all. He defended his migration-skeptic viewpoints in television and newspaper interviews, which were then circulated on social media by others. Theo Francken, the federal state secretary responsible for asylum policy and migration and a member of the rightist and nationalist N-VA, is one of the most prominent and polarizing voices in the debate.

Among the tweets by Belgian and Flemish politicians, we notice more diversity in terms of representations and frames. The most common representation of refugees among both the leftist opposition and majority politicians is that of victims. Theo Francken, a key proponent of strict migration policies (De Cleen et al., 2017), mainly represents refugees as victims, supposedly to emphasize the achievements of himself and the federal government. The threat representation is most noticeable among the (extreme) right politicians, who describe refugees as either an economic threat (undermining the welfare system) or a cultural threat (referring to the supposed incompatibility of "Western" values and Islam—for instance, when it comes to gender equality). In the political center are a couple of politicians who represent refugees as an opportunity for the country. Wouter Beke, for example, the chairman of the Flemish Christian-Democrats, emphasizes in several tweets that refugees constitute an opportunity for the Flemish job market. As one of the few politicians, he also represents refugees as active agents—for instance, by sharing success stories of "well-integrated" refugees who are supposed to serve as role models.

Politicians frame the refugee crisis along majority-opposition lines. Again, there are few tweets by politicians in Turkey, who suggest that European countries should take responsibility. In Flanders, only politicians of the opposition mention distinct reasons for the refugee crisis—namely, economic pull factors (in the case of extreme right politicians) and particular policies of (EU) politicians in power. Some also refer to the Gulf countries that do not accept sufficient numbers of refugees. Interestingly, politicians rarely mentioned civil war or the Islamic State as reasons for the refugee crisis. When it comes to solutions, tweets by politicians are rather specific and either mention the achievements of the government (in the case of majority politicians) or demand more political action (in the case of opposition). Politicians across the political spectrum also refer to the integration of refugees into Flemish society as a key solution to the perceived refugee crisis.

NGOs

Our analysis includes NGOs that focus on not only refugees but other issues as well. Due to distinctly structured civil societies, there are some key differences between the Turkish and the Flemish NGOs. In Flanders, almost all analyzed NGOs are highly professionalized and internationally well connected, but this is the case for only some NGOs in Turkey. Furthermore, the polarization in Turkish society influences the NGOs, some of which are very critical and others that are very supportive of the government's actions.

Despite these contextual differences, the NGOs in Flanders and Turkey also share some patterns. For example, almost all of them regularly post information about their activities to support refugees. Furthermore, they often make use of humanitarian photography, especially focusing on images of children (see also Fehrenbach & Rodogno, 2016, p. 1126). They emphasize the vulnerability of refugee children or the solace found through their aid campaigns, as, for instance, implied in a post of the Ankara-based Association for Solidarity with Asylum Seekers and Migrants shown in Figure 5.

Figure 5. Tweet by the Association for Solidarity with Asylum Seekers and Migrants showing a child participating in one of its activities.

Despite the wide use of children's images in their posts, most analyzed NGOs avoided the direct use of images of Kurdi and used this moment to legitimize and advocate their causes. NGOs are generally more advanced than other actor groups in their Twitter use, employing well-designed infographics and quote cards in addition to images (see, e.g., Figure 6). There are, however, some differences in this respect between smaller, local NGOs and larger, international NGOs, the latter having a more consistent and well-developed social media strategy.

Figure 6. Tweet by the Turkish NGO Support2Life: "You can follow our accounts, share them and help us to reach more people [to help] refugees."

Typically, NGOs tweet about the refugee issue to inform others about their activities and campaigns, often representing refugees as victims of war and bad living conditions in the host countries, and NGOs help them to improve their situation by providing food, legal counseling, education, housing support, and so on. NGOs also call for solidarity with refugees through their campaigns. For instance, Vluchtelingenwerk Vlaanderen (a Flemish NGO supporting refugees and asylum seekers) tweeted news reports about its campaign in train stations on the occasion of World Refugee Day (June 19, 2015).

One additional form of portrayal, rarely observed in other actor groups, emphasized the fact that refugees should not be seen as victims, but simply as humans. This kind of framing is commonly used by a couple of NGOs that criticize the victim and the (economic) opportunity perspectives, and give refugees agency by portraying them as powerful individuals with rights. The Turkish Human Rights Organization,

for instance, claimed that the refugees are instrumentalized in the EU-Turkey refugee deal and tweeted: "Refugees must be seen as individuals with #humanrights not as objects to be negotiated with #europeanunion for no visa 2 #Europe. Aegean Sea." The agency perspective was a consistent frame used by this particular NGO.

Depending on their focus, NGOs frame the refugee issue in different ways. In the Turkish case, the political positioning of NGOs plays a role in how they perceive the refugee crisis and the responsible actors. Different from other actor groups, NGOs often speak of more specific problems caused by the refugee issue, such as problems faced in a certain migration route or acts of discrimination in a specific city. They also suggest concrete solutions to these problems with solidarity campaigns that they carry out and/or by addressing concrete actors, who cause or can solve problems, such as Amnesty International Turkey blaming the EU in one of its tweets for increasing the risk of human rights violations of refugees in Libya.

Discussion

Having discussed the results of our analysis for the three actor groups, we now discuss the findings more generally. We first compare the two main research questions (regarding representations and framings) across the actor groups. Then we compare the findings temporally and geographically.

First of all, the analysis shows that representations are dominantly constructed around self-explanatory *victimization* logics (522 of 961 tweets). This finding is largely in line with studies on media representations of refugees and asylum seekers on mainstream mass media (Berry et al., 2015; KhosraviNik, 2010). In their posts, users rarely specify *what* or *who* refugees are the victims of. The opposing *threat* representation occurs less, but it is often very explicit (118 of 961 tweets). It is particularly observed among Flemish right-wing politicians and among some Turkish and Flemish citizens. Those representations refer to economic and cultural-religious threats and "otherness" and thus tap into preexisting xenophobic discourses. In addition to these two main forms of representation, refugees are sometimes represented as an opportunity or as active agents, mostly by NGOs or politicians. Two dynamics occur across most analyzed tweets: Refugees are collectivized (in about 624 of 961 tweets), and users with outspoken political positions generally formulate much clearer (simpler) reasons and solutions for the refugee crisis.

One of the key aims in this research was to discover whether representations and framings changed over time, particularly given the iconic qualities of the images of Kurdi. It is true that tweets about refugees form cycles in relation to certain (national) events. As we have seen, the publication of the photographs of Kurdi constituted a much more global moment of intense public engagement with the topic of refugees. However, we argue that there is more consistency and continuity in the representations and framings about refugees on Twitter than one might expect. Rather than altering different actor groups' representations and framings about refugees and the refugee crisis, references to Kurdi are integrated into their preexisting discourses. Kurdi became an individual example that serves as evidence of already established ideas about refugees, about the (in)competence of certain politicians, about the state of the world, about Islam, about the work of NGOs, and so on. Moreover, we notice a shift from general refugee

issues to the issue of the fate of children or boat refugees, possibly as a result of the images of Kurdi. This was also expressed visually, particularly by several citizen users who posted creative interpretations of the images (see Figure 7).

Figure 7. Drawing by a Flemish citizen inspired by the images of Kurdi. The tweet reads: "Finally I decided to make a drawing of Aylan #refugees #aylan #refugee."

This effect vanished after a few weeks for most users, but (subtle) references to Kurdi occurred throughout the studied period—for instance, in cartoons where young refugees wear blue pants and red T-shirts similar to his.

Two remarks should be made. First, one category of citizens, labeled "one-time tweeters," challenges this emphasis on continuity. This is a small group of users, both in Turkey and Flanders, who never post about refugees or migration but posted about Kurdi on September 2, 2015, or the days after. Those tweets were usually very emotional (using words such as "sadness" or "disgust") and often used visuals. Second, although discourses persist in the long-term perspective of the study, there was an awareness of an "Alan Kurdi moment" among many users. This became particularly clear in discussions about the (mis)use of the images by mainstream media or by other social media users for reasons of sensationalism.

The comparison of tweets from Turkey and Flanders draws attention to the different national contexts in which public discussions about global issues take place. The character and intensity of discussions about refugees on Twitter in both countries are different in the sense that there are many fewer intra-actor engagements (e.g., retweets, tags, and conversations among different actors, such as citizens or NGOs addressing politicians) in Turkey than in Flanders. Tweets are also much more polarized in the former. Another notable difference is the way in which Islam is mobilized. When reference is made to Islam in Turkey, it serves as a vehicle for solidarity and a religious obligation to help other Muslims. In Flanders, Islam is mentioned by certain politicians and citizens who explain it as the source of cultural differences. While there is significant mutual blaming for the refugee crisis (Flemish users blaming Turkey for using refugees as political leverage, Turkish users blaming EU politicians for not doing anything), there is also a common outsider: the Gulf countries, which are accused of not contributing anything to alleviate the suffering of refugees and even of meddling in the war in Syria. Interestingly, there is nearly no reference to the Islamic State in both countries.

One particular aspect of the Turkish tweets has to do with the fact that Alan Kurdi was of Kurdish-Syrian origin. The boy's ethnic origins are of particular relevance in the Turkish context, where the long-standing conflict between the Turkish state and Kurdish movements has flared up partly because of the war in Syria. Twitter users in Turkey (sometimes implicitly) referred to ethnicity either to express support for the fate of Kurds (as a kind of pan-Kurdish expression of solidarity) or to make Turkish nationalist statements. We argue that this dimension in the Turkish context deserves more attention in future research. References to the ethnicity of refugees were completely absent in the Flemish tweets.

Conclusions

Rather than reproducing the notion of a global visual icon, our study reveals that the meanings of the images of Alan Kurdi diverge significantly when looking at specific national contexts. Although we do observe shared patterns of representation across the actor groups in both Turkey and Flanders (for instance, regarding the economic, cultural, and security threats posed by refugees), tweets about Kurdi—and refugees more generally—only garner meaning when they take into account the national contexts, mainly at three levels. First, distinct national political landscapes, with particular divisions, make for highly diverging debates on refugees, especially when it comes to pointing out reasons and solutions for the influx of refugees and the death of children like Kurdi. Second, religion, and Islam in particular, plays a central role throughout the tweets, either as a marker for cultural proximity, and thus a reason to express solidarity (in the case of many Turkish tweets), or as an indicator of cultural otherness and security threat (an underlying aspect in many Flemish tweets). Third, national migration history has a profound impact: Whereas the discourses in Flanders should mainly be seen as an extension and intensification of much older debates on the immigration of non-Europeans (De Cleen et al., 2017), the high number of refugees in Turkey is unprecedented and thus transforms debates in a more profound way.

Although much debate revolves around the idea of the refugee crisis, our study in fact deconstructs this notion by revealing a multitude of underlying, connected, contradicting, and changing meanings of "the refugee" and "a crisis." Refugees and the influx of refugees to Europe become a container for many other discussions about cultural values, economic developments, and (border)

security. These discussions are only meaningful in relation to national and local historical developments. We untangled some of these developments and relations through a qualitative, comparative analysis, which allowed the data to emerge within context.

Our study makes a claim for more qualitative research on Twitter. We have noted some challenges of quantitative and big data–driven research (on social media) and believe there is a need for a broader epistemological debate on methodology in social media research—and on Twitter in particular. To widen the range of methods and to open up the analytical space for social media research, we developed a methodology that guarantees a broad overview of a phenomenon (and some level of generalizability) while allowing for more in-depth and contextual interpretation of the data. Future research could further develop this framework, for instance, by including more actor groups (e.g., journalists, volunteers, activists) and by analyzing the extent to which different actor groups interact or form networks.

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The Contingency of Meaning to the Party of God: Carnivalesque Humor in Revolutionary Times

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The events in the Arab Spring have previously been examined by journalistic and academic sources. Arguments surrounding the series of social movements that swept through the Middle East have shifted focus over time to assessing the success of revolutions in unseating political regimes, resulting in an inordinate amount of attention paid to "successful revolutions," and the devalorization of "unsuccessful" ones. In the case of Syria, the 2011 Revolution has been linguistically relegated from *revolution* to *crisis* and finally to *civil war*. This article draws from the conviction that long-term change is required to unsettle long-standing and stable dictatorships such as the one in Syria. Thus, this visual analysis of the Hezbollah logo parodies that emerged following the party's military support of the Syrian regime recognizes the carnivalesque ability of revolution to suspend existing *régimes de savoir* and break the fear to widen the discursive space toward uncrowning hitherto uncontested political authority. Thus, this study suggests a novel perspective for when revolutions conclude, and when assessments of their results may be made.

Keywords: political parody, social movement, humor, dissent, Arab Spring

Hezbollah, a militant political party that emerged in the mid-1980s as a response to the Israeli invasion of Lebanon in 1982 (Lamloum, 2009) has drawn international attention from media outlets, governments, and academics. Notwithstanding the geopolitical importance of the party to the environment of the region, the party has become a powerful semiotic symbol in the register of circulated visual and textual communication in the region, and particularly in Syria (Azani, 2009). Notably, the refusal of the party to relinquish its arms allowed it to present itself to the Arab public as an armed anticolonialist resistance project and a military deterrent to Israeli aggression under the banner of the "Party of God." Admittedly, the decision to remain armed motivated the international condemnation of the party as a terrorist organization, thereby establishing from inception the contradictory meaning of the party across contexts.

However, the reception of the party within the Arab-speaking Middle East throughout the 1980s and 1990s demonstrates that only the earlier narrative of the party gained resonance with the public. This is in part because of the party's unique attention to political communication and political branding in the

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region. From inception, Hezbollah's the strategy entailed an unprecedented openness to all media aimed at controlling the narrative surrounding the party. Even before the declaration of the party's creation, one of its leaders, Ibrahim Said al-Amin, held an interview with a Lebanese magazine to anticipate and counter accusations of terrorism the party may face (Lamloum, 2009). In its nascent stage, the party afforded intense efforts into the maintenance of its political image, creating a centralized system of media institutions that controlled its public image, a goal outlined in the first Media Congress of the party in 1985 (Maasri, 2009). Consequently, Hezbollah's institutional framework guarantees a degree of control over its political image. In parallel, Hezbollah's activities also sustained the former narrative successfully for several decades, most notably during the 2006 war with Israel, which resolidified Israel as the primary enemy of the party and valorized Hezbollah's efforts through its relative successes during the war.

Yet, the narratives that govern the public perception of Hezbollah have been fractured since the outbreak of the Syrian conflict. Since the Syrian Revolution, the controversial involvement of Hezbollah to defend its Syrian ally, most prominently in the battle of al-Qusayr, has put the party under scrutiny, as it pitted the party against the popular movement and thus repositioned the party as a force of oppression of people's will rather than of resistance. On another front, the revolution undermined Hezbollah's agenda of Islamic resistance because of its inconsistency with the party's military suppression of the civil rebellion of a Muslim-majority population. Accordingly, the Syrian revolution provided the backdrop to a series of parodic reinterpretations of the Hezbollah logo created by opposition figures and circulated on Facebook, *tansiqiyyat* websites,[1] and in traditional news outlets, contrasting the political brand of Hezbollah, the "Party of God," with the changed reality of the party's involvement in Syria.

Drawing on Mikhail Bakhtin's (1984) theorization of humor as a form of political resistance, I argue that these parodies erode the credibility of Hezbollah's agenda through visual departures from original representations of the party image. They erode the party's political authority, question its autonomy, and dismantle the menacing image of the party through ridicule. In turn, because of the alignment of Hezbollah with the Syrian regime, the proliferation of such parodies indicate the erosion of the regime's control over the narratives of the revolution and its main actors. The parodies of Hezbollah's logo exemplify the gradual and less visible politics of delegitimation and the undermining of authority that emerges in resistance movements. In turn, the humor they contribute offers opportunities for the empowerment of the public vis-à-vis the object of ridicule. As Bakhtin demonstrates, laughter, particularly when it is prompted by grotesque parodies, liberates the public by allowing them to laugh at what "at another time they would shed tears" (D'israeli, 1834 as cited by Young, E. 2008, p. 116). In turn, this laughter brings powerful figures "down to earth" (Bakhtin, 1984, p. 20). As a result, I argue that these parodies point to the significance of the Syrian Revolution in introducing an enduring counternarrative of both Hezbollah in Syria and the region and of the Syrian regime, suggesting the continuing character of revolutions and presenting alternative measures of their success. As such, this article presents examples of the Hezbollah parodies to draw scholarly attention to everyday forms of resistance and away from the current focus on "revolutions," particularly ones deemed successful because of their ability to unseat political power.

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[1] *Tansiqiyyat* are the Protest Organization Committees in each province and city that organize demonstrations and offer citizen-journalist coverage of casualties.

Before embarking on a visual analysis of the parodic reproductions, the following section affords a space to understand the appearance of the original logo and its importance in framing the narrative of fear and political authority of the party. Here, a brief introduction into the organization's logo elucidates the visual and textual elements of the brand.

Hezbollah's Political Brand

The original Hezbollah logo first appeared with the party's emergence on the political scene in the 1980s. The brand was fashioned in an angular Kufi font,[2] alluding to the fonts of the Abbasid Caliphate, an era when the cultural and political center of the Islamic Umma lay in present-day Iraq rather than in present-day Saudi Arabia (el-Deen, n.d.). The choice of font therefore shifts the geopolitical center of gravity of the Middle East eastward toward the party's Shiite ally and patron, Iran (Khatib, 2012). Beginning with the birth of the party in 1982, Hezbollah's raison d'être lies in its self-professed agenda of Islamic resistance against Israeli occupation (Lamloum, 2009). This vision is reflected most effectively in the party's political brand "Hezbollah," or "The Party of God."

Figure 1. The Hezbollah logo.

Hezbollah's political image relies on an amalgamation of attractive and menacing symbols to attract new audiences, reassure constituents, and alarm enemies (Khatib, 2012). This strategy can be ascertained from the visual elements of the logo, shown in Figure 1. Below the "Hezbollah" text at the center, the party defines itself as "the Islamic resistance in Lebanon," a statement that situates the party ideologically, geographically, and politically, binding religiosity and nationalism to grant Hezbollah a

[2] The Kufi font is the earliest Islamic font, dating back to the 8th to 10th centuries and developed in al-Kufa, an early Islamic cultural center. The font was one of the early calligraphy traditions used to publish the earliest version of the written Qur'an. For a brief description of the script, see the entry "Kufic script" in *Encyclopædia Britannica Online* at http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/324418/Kufic-script.

sacrosanct legitimacy. The most poignant aspect of the logo is the extended fist emerging from the word *God* in the logo, raising the AK-47 rifle and the accompanying text from the horizontal plane. The rifle denotes Hezbollah's military capability and its source of power, and the accompanying motto, "For it is the Party of God that shall prevail," atop the rifle suggests, through the parallel orientation of the two elements, a conceptual link between military capability and the promise of deliverance and victory.

Besides the menacing symbols of the party, positive visual symbols reinforce its public image: Emerging from the center of the text is a blade of wheat, signifying the social services the party provides. The symbol also alludes to the party's history of providing agricultural advice to farmers in the Beqaa' valley (Jaber, 1997). From its inception, the organization's agenda equally emphasized the importance of religious and pragmatic assistance to maintaining a "resistance community" (H. Nasrallah, 2008). Finally, the logo features a globe, signifying Hezbollah's presence and geopolitical importance.

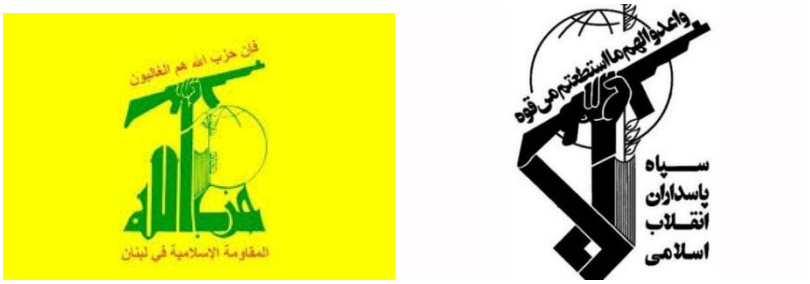

Figure 2. Hezbollah (left) and the Iranian Revolutionary Guard (right).

In fact, Hezbollah's history is intricately tied to its global reach, as the party emerged from various efforts of the Iranian Revolutionary Guard to export the Iranian Revolution globally (Jaber, 1997). Hezbollah's logo also points to the proximity of the party to its Iranian ally, the Iranian Revolutionary Guard, whose logo is shown in Figure 2. The visual elements of the brand borrowed from the Hezbollah logo (rifle, wheat, globe, fist) have also been noted in partisan news coverage ("Iranian official hails," 2013) and academic research (Khatib, 2012).

Remixing the Political Brand

Here, the conceptual model of the medieval carnival is particularly relevant to the parodies of the Hezbollah logo. Bakhtin (1984) argues that carnival offers a "temporary liberation from the prevailing truth and from the established order" (p. 11). Thus, a carnival may act as a prism through which to view revolution because the two phenomena represent similar moments of suspension in the political and social systems that enable the emergence of alternate narratives. In revolution, as in carnival, societies experience a temporary social leveling of government and rebel forces, external and internal actors, state and nonstate actors, parties and the people. This social leveling allows for communication that creates "new forms of speech or [gives] new meaning to old forms" (p. 16). Such practices may also undermine the claim of any one party to the truth.

Moreover, Bakhtin argues that carnival is "the people's second life, organized on the basis of laughter" (p. 8). Thus, laughter is a crucial element of the communication of carnival and critique, and laughter that is permissible during the carnival is not possible outside of it. A similar sentiment can be found in the commentary of the cartoonist Aiham VAN Syria, the creator of one parody examined in this article, who remarked that had he made a similar cartoon parody of Hezbollah's logo before the revolution in 2011, "people would have spilled my blood, and my family would have been the first to do so" (personal communication, October 1, 2013). Since the revolution, he has created several parodies that have been distributed both online and offline. Thusly, the revolution opened opportunities for oppositional views to gain representation in the public sphere. Moreover, after decades of government control of television, print media, radio, and even the websites available inside Syria (Baiazy, 2012; Pies & Madanat, 2011; Rugh, 2004), the revolution saw the creation of opposition television stations broadcasting from neighboring countries and oppositional news websites and social media pages (Khamis, Gold, & Vaughn, 2012). This analysis reveals several parallels between the concept of carnival and the conditions of revolution in this case study. Just as Bakhtin theorized, laughter during revolution assumes a liberating dimension, enabling victory over fear and subjective empowerment through the reappropriation and ridicule of all symbols of power and authority. All in all, the convergence of the literature can provide a window through which to view the parodies as revelatory of the dynamic of cultural production during social movements, in Syria and across the globe. As I apply Bakhtin's model to the parodies at hand, the questions that emerge are: To what extent do these spoofs become emblematic of carnivalesque humor that turns authority on its head? Moreover, to what extent can the context of the revolution mimic the medieval politics of Rabelais's carnival, and finally, what are the consequences of these dynamics to our understanding of what constitutes success in a social movement?

Uncrowning

According to Bakhtin (1984), carnival enables an "uncrowning" or unseating of political authority through regenerative reversal of its sources of legitimacy. Parody here represents a communicative technique of duplication that both accompanies and goes beyond and against a discourse. It places language beside itself, exposing its presuppositions and contradictions (Hariman, 2008). As such, each of the logo's reproductions exhibits a close adherence to the original text. However, these parodies are unique in their capacity to blur distinctions between actors and spectators, a characteristic that is equally symptomatic of Bakhtin's carnival and revolution. Thus, as these parodies were created by rebel fighters, Syrian opposition groups, and even cartoonists in the region and internationally, they included initiators and late adopters, creators, and onlookers in a process of imitation and derision that fractured the Hezbollah image both because of the military action the party was undertaking and because of the distribution of these parodies.

Throughout this process, the parodies call into question the tenets that support Hezbollah's agenda, chief among which is its religious legitimacy. A notable example of this process can be seen in the rebranding of the "Party of God" as *Hezbollāt*, the "Party of pre-Islamic deity *Al-Lāt*" (Arabian deity), and *Hezb al-Shaytan*, "Satan's Party" (Abuzaid, 2013) in Figure 3. In the former, a simple play on words transforms the party from the "Party of God" to the "Party of the pre-Islamic deity *Al-Lat*"; in the latter the juxtaposition of God and Satan shatters the organization's Islamic image.

Figure 3. From God's party to Satan's party.

Moreover, the visual elements parallel the this reversal of Hezbollah's source of religious legitimacy by reversing the directionality of Hezbollah's rifle inward, toward itself and its home country, Lebanon, symbolized by the burning cedar tree in the center. This example symbolizes what Rancière (2013) characterizes as a metaphorical image that "displace[s] the representations of imagery" (p. 27), for the rifle that previously signified a menacing threat for enemies has become a source of weakness directed toward the party's homeland. The result is a carnivalesque art form that depicts a world *à l'envers*, where reality and fiction collide and where mimicry turns official narratives on their heads (Bakhtin, 1984).

Figure 4. Bashar's thugs.

In another parody, shown in Figure 4, the undermining of the party's religious legitimacy is taken further as the name "Hezbollah," the "Party of God," is erased. Here, the divine legitimacy of the party is replaced by "Bashar's *Shabbiha*." The label reduces the party's authority from one derived from God to one derived from President Bashar al-Assad. Moreover, the cartoonist, Hajjaj, brands the organization as "*Shabbiha,"* a term for extramilitary thugs loyal to Bashar al-Assad, reducing the institutional framework that encompasses civic, military, and political activities into a mere grouping of paramilitary criminals. In parallel to the textual uncrowning performed by the spoof, the visual alteration of the brand achieves a third level of political uncrowning that magnifies the effect of the text. Finally, the rifle in this re-creation is grasped by the letter *A* in the name Bashar, suggesting the relinquishing of the party's military capabilities to the control of Bashar al-Assad, and undermining yet again the party's military might and menacing presence in the region. Another parody, published by caricaturist Jihad Ortani (2013) that appeared in *Al Watan* newspaper and *Veto* online on September 18, 2013, provides a similar subservient disarming theme. In this parody, shown in Figure 5, Iran's supreme leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, grasps Hezbollah's rifle and moves it.

Figure 5. Iran's right hand.

In both Figure 4 and Figure 5, the disappearance of the complimentary elements of the Hezbollah image deprives the party of control over the format and context of its public image. For example, the disappearance of the symbolic shaft of wheat from both the *Shabbiha* and the Khamenei logos dispels the social outreach image cultivated by the party. Equally, the disappearance of the globe foregrounding the logo reduce the party's geopolitical importance to mere subservience to its regional allies: Iran and Bashar al-Assad. These images also evoke notions of proxy parties established to further the aim of larger players. Finally, Hezbollah's motto, "Islamic resistance in Lebanon," is equally absent, amounting to an accusation of the un-Islamic aspects of the party's involvement in the Syrian conflict against a predominantly Muslim Syrian population. All in all, these spoofs achieve what Bakhtin (1984) terms an "uncrowning," or delegitimation, of Hezbollah as a political actor by undermining of the party's independence and self-government, and its military power and threatening presence.

The Language of the Marketplace

In their scathing criticism, the parodies do not embody a deliberative, civil form of political contestation and argumentation (Hariman, 2008). Instead, they are most similar to the grotesque, profane humor symptomatic of Rabelais's carnival. As a result, such carnivalesque humor achieves a leveling of social hierarchies whereby the language of the marketplace enables the treatment of the "exalted and the lowly . . . within the same dance" (Bakhtin, 1984, p. 160). Moreover, the duplication elicits laughter through the "cognitive gap" between the political brand and the political reality, which in turn adds comic relief to the political criticism, unsettling the narrative Hezbollah has constructed about itself (Bal, Berthon, Pitt, & DesAutels, 2009, p. 232). As the logo parodies contrast Hezbollah's logo and its recreation, they also contrast Hezbollah's conceptual public agenda and its application during the Syrian conflict. Comic theory's understanding of cognitive gaps provides a compelling dimension to logo modifications. However, the conception of cognitive gaps fails to capture the liberating, democratizing value of laughter that Bakhtin elucidates as a mechanism to introduce unofficial truth. Further, Bakhtin's notion of grotesque realism is perfectly suited to the understanding of parody's ability to highlight incongruence, for the definition of *grotesque* (Merriam-Webster.com) denotes the representation of the absurd and incongruent. Thus, the parodies are humorous not only because of their profanity but also because they are "popular." The "popular" conceptions of these parodies can be confirmed through the Arabic colloquial language employed emphasizing its "belonging to the people" and their language.

Further, the parodies allow the "bringing down to earth" of the sacred through crude bodily mockery (Bakhtin, 1984, p. 20). In *Rabelais and His World*, Bakhtin argues that the

> unofficial speech of medieval clerics as well as the speech of the simple folk was deeply infused with images of the lower stratum—with obscenities and curses, profanities and swearing . . . everything that was absorbed by that speech was to submit to the degrading power of the mighty lower stratum. (p. 87).

To Bakhtin, the culture of folk humor was defined by its adherence to grotesque realism. A common theme within these spoofs is manifested in the use of grotesque imagery, language, and text.The grotesque parody of Hezbollah strips the party of its ideological godlike image, reducing it to that of the erroneous, frequently degenerate, and repulsive human body. The most poignant example of the grotesque trend of the parody humor can be seen in the *Akalna Khara*, or "We ate shit," parody that first appeared in May 2013 attached to leaked radio recordings of Hezbollah fighters in al-Qusayr calling for help ("Hezbollah flag/video," 2013). The meme was then redistributed by the online publication of the Lebanese Freedom Foundation, an organization dedicated to late Druze president Bashir Gemayel. The cartoon, shown in Figure 6, depicts the Hezbollah logo using an identical font, color, and format to spell out the words, "We just ate shit," in reference to the al-Qusayr fighting.

Figure 6. We ate shit (*Akalna Khara*).

The crude conceptual metaphor drawn by the text is cemented through the visual image of the fly-infested fecal matter that accompanies it, reversing the sentence-image associated with Hezbollah's brand. Here, the scatological humor of the image serves as a metonymy between eating feces and incurring losses, heightening the crude carnivalesque nature of the parody. The feces link the official rhetoric of the party with the "degrading and renewing power of the mighty lower stratum" (Bakhtin, 1984, p. 87). To Rabelais, the belly is the core of human existence, source of degradation and renewal, of gluttony and excess, but also of maternity and paternity. The image of feces, however, points to the degenerate nature of the belly, to the multiple levels of degradation manifested through the ingestion of the products of defecation. The cycle of degradation is anchored in grotesque imagery suggesting a spiraling process of degradation. In addition, the image replaces Hezbollah's claim to power through its military capabilities, the rifle, with a spoon, an instrument of Hezbollah's degradation: its "eating shit." The replacement implicitly couples the absent image of the rifle with the spoon, arguing that Hezbollah's military capabilities provided the instrument of its degradation. More significantly, the image of Hezbollah's secretary general, Hassan Nasrallah, carrying the spoon concretely visualizes of the concept of the colloquial expression and restores the significance of the expression *eating shit* from mundane colloquialism to the graphic metaphor it signifies. Flies compound this effect, shown zipping upward and outward, denoting a spreading of the party's decomposition and moral degradation. Finally, an elusive half-bust of Secretary General Hassan Nasrallah is attached to the word "eating," and particularly the extended letter *a*, which transforms into the arm holding the spoon. The image depicts Nasrallah propping up the spoon (the ultimate active form of degradation) while looking away from the process, and the visual image suggests his lack of active participation in the process, endorsement of the downfall of the party, and most importantly, his responsibility for the process.

Yet, carnivalesque humor does not reference the grotesque merely to undermine the authority of a single political actor, whether Hezbollah or its leader. Instead, the profane and grotesque are not only destructive to existing power but are also generative of new discourses. They are thus sources of both life and death (Bakhtin, 1984). In the same fashion that each of these spoofs couples an official and an unofficial narrative, they also couple a narrative of degradation with a narrative of renewal customary to

medieval humor. More concretely, the parodies studied in this article dispel or announce the death of uncontested public images by introducing multiple narratives. The references to the grotesque and profane serve to debase the authoritative subject parodied. Most importantly, however, the logos demonstrate a medieval devotion to the binary of death and birth, for as Bakhtin noted, the language of excrement is closely tied to fertility and rebirth. Bakhtin highlights the importance of dialogism in parodical replication of discourse.

Returning to the notion of semiotic binaries created by these parodies, I believe that the dialogism employed by the spoofs enables a coupling of official and oppositional discourse. This coupling can be seen in the republication of the "resistance" spoof alongside several articles that provide political commentary of Hezbollah's involvement in the Syrian crisis. The significance of these republications stems from precisely the metonymical function these spoofs come to represent, wherein their simplistic visual images reduce the problematic nature of Hezbollah's strategic decisions to visual metaphors. In doing so, and in their reproduction alongside analyses of Hezbollah's agenda in the news, these cartoons provide a visual trope that is consequently reproduced in a testament to its persistence. The metonymical function of the spoofs in representing the conflict can be evidenced by not only their reproduction in cartoons and blogs but also their reproduction alongside analyses of the political environment of al-Qusayr.

The dialogism of official and oppositional narratives is also exemplified by "Hezbollah's Two Guns," a cartoon by Jihad Ortani published in *Al Watan Online* (2013; Figure 7). Here, the Hezbollah logo sports a wooden gun pointed toward Hezbollah's official enemy and a live gun pointed toward neighboring Syria. The significance of live guns in "Hezbollah's Two Guns" is to highlight the incongruence of Hezbollah's military action against an ally, despite Hezbollah's official rhetoric.

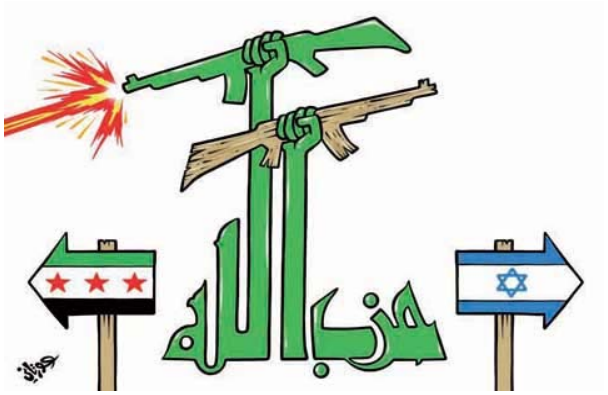

Figure 7. "Hezbollah's Two Guns."

"Hezbollah's Two Guns" also shows Hezbollah fighting on two fronts: Israel and Syria. The opposite directions of the two arms combined with the divergent directions of the flag-covered arrows show a party about to be ripped apart to head in two directions. Meanwhile, the parody contrasts the official and the oppositional, the real and the theoretical agendas of the party. In the cartoon, Hezbollah's live rifle fires at Syria, while a dummy rifle points toward Hezbollah's official enemy, Israel. The parody

achieves a destruction of the party, its agenda, its narrative, and its opponents, while signaling the possibility offered by this destruction to be a form of birth and renewal.

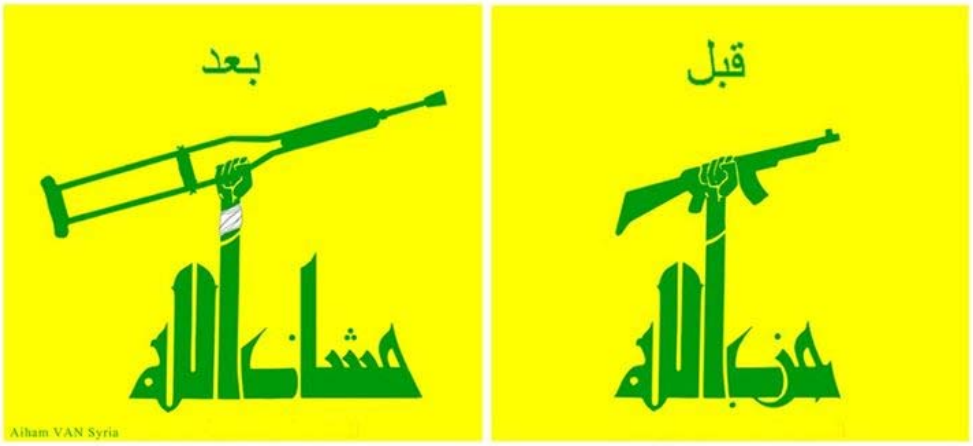

Figure 8. "For God's Sake" by Aiham VAN Syria.

Themes of rupture and renewal can also be seen in another parody by Syrian opposition cartoonist Aiham VAN Syria (Figure 8). In Aiham's parody, the word "Hezbollah" disappears from the text and is replaced by "For God's sake." In parallel, the strong arm carrying the weapon is replaced with a bandaged arm carrying a crutch, denoting not only Hezbollah's casualties and wounded but also the ideological weakness of the party. Seen through Bakhtin's lens, the parody offers a visual metonymy of rupture and death, the waning of established official truths and the emergence of renewed horizons of discourse. The parodies contrast logos with counterlogos, official texts with their subversive counterparts, which become inextricably bound. The parodies also document the emergence of new realities, as the rupture forecast of Ortani's parody came alive in September 2013, when a delegation made up of the families of fallen or injured Hezbollah fighters reportedly called an end to the Syrian intervention because of the cost paid in human life (Hashem, 2013). Finally, the orientation of the frames strengthens the content. As Arabic reads from right to left, the transformation of the right frame "Hezbollah" into the left "For God's sake" parody presents a visual narrative of the unraveling of the political party alongside the unraveling of its image.

Conclusion

In *Weapons of the Weak*, James Scott (1985) lamented the imbalance of attention accorded to large-scale revolutions vis-à-vis everyday acts of resistance and dissent. In addition, even in the cases of large-scale revolutions, there is an imbalance in the perception of the legitimacy and success of a revolution, measured through the effectiveness with which political authority has been unseated. This is evident in the case of the Syrian Revolution, whose mention in media and academic discourse has descended into discussions of civil war rather than revolt.

Yet, the visual and textual analysis of these parodies presents a twofold argument for daily acts of resistance. First, it suggests that the notion of political authority as it applies to the study of social movements should be reconsidered as one that is not purely represented in the binary of maintaining or dissolving absolute political control. Rather, authority is manifested in multiple areas, including the degree of control over an actor's political image and the degree of control over the forms of discourse represented in the public sphere. Moreover, authority derives its legitimacy from various religious, moral, cultural, ethnic, and other discourses. As such, the contestation of authority through the introduction of counterdiscourses and the undermining of sources of legitimacy can be seen as successful forms of contestation, even as these contestations do not culminate in the reorganization of the political system. Furthermore, societies writ large do not exist in binary states of revolution or political stability; rather, sophisticated political systems consist of daily forms of opposition and critical discourse that require breaking the fear in addressing authority. Through the visual analysis of these parodies, this article has shown that "failed" revolutions may yet reveal broader and widely overlooked opportunities for the public to break the fear and to introduce opportunities for continuous everyday resistance.

Such everyday forms of resistance, which Asef Bayat (2013) characterized as "nonmovements," or daily forms of fragmented and individual resistance, were precursors to the Arab Spring. Bayat's vision of Arab social movements suggests that everyday forms of resistance such as these parodies cultivate a culture of subversive practices that may foment into revolution yet again. Thus, these parodies ridicule and deride, undermining political authority in ways that may not unseat it in the present but certainly suggest an unsettling of the stability with which oppression and dictatorship is practiced. This accomplishment may remain overlooked in part because of its fragmented character, which does not conform to a normative vision of discourse in the public sphere in democratic contexts or to visions of revolution as social movements. Indeed, the profane linguistic and visual presentation of these logos allows an unveiling of an unofficial truth that is closer to public perception because of both its crudeness and its popular perceived audience. The parodies speak the vernacular of the street and the crude language of the marketplace, further enhancing their reach.

Most importantly, the power of such parody stems from the duality it creates, because it uses the very same images and language of the party to critique it, introducing counterdiscourse to the original narratives of the political actor. Thus, it becomes impossible, for example, to hear Hezbollah's name mentioned without the cognitive association of "Hezbollah" with "Hezbollat," or the association of the "Party of God" with the "Party of the Devil." Through this duality, the parodies become binaries, which represent both the party's official discourse (logo) and oppositional perspectives. More importantly, the dualities created by these texts rupture existing sentence-image binaries in favor of a new multiplicity of perspectives into the *doxa* of the political realm, contributing the liberating power of emerging from single narratives, or even the opposition of a narrative and its counterpart. Instead, we are witnesses to both a narrative and its infinite counterparts, corresponding to the numerous individuals whose personal contributions and sacrifices to revolution are reflected in the expanded discourse.

My argument aspires not to direct this form of criticism to one actor but to acknowledge the capacity of parody to enrich political discourse during revolution by coupling narratives with their intellectual opposites. Similar to the revolutionary environment that surrounded Rabelais and Bakhtin's

work, these spoofs are the product of revolutionary times that foster a form of humor that is universal, creative, and liberating. It is important to foster this form of humor not only to prevent future configurations of power that exclude alternate narratives from public discourse but also to introduce new ways to define revolution, including when revolutions begin and end.

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Environmental Orientations and News Coverage: Examining the Impact of Individual Differences and Narrative News

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This study examined the impact of narrative environmental news on issue and message attitudes, and the extent to which such attitudes might be moderated by individuals' environmental orientations. We conducted an experiment in which we asked participants to read either a narrative or informational newspaper article on the environmental consequences of shale gas drilling. Individuals' environmental orientations were measured a week before the experiment. Results indicated significant interaction effects between news formats and individuals' environmental orientations on transportation, positive cognitive responses, sympathy, and issue attitudes. Those who were more concerned about the environment were more affected by narrative news than those less concerned. These findings suggest that news narratives have stronger effects when they resonate with individuals' predispositions.

Keywords: narrative news, news framing, environmental values

In recent years, researchers in both communications and psychology have investigated the impact of narratives on individuals in various areas such as news and health communication (see Green, 2006; Mazzocco, Green, Sasota, & Jones, 2010; Shen, Sheer, & Li, 2015). Narratives are essentially the stories that we hear and read almost every day. The use of narratives permeates our daily lives. Within news reporting, journalists routinely use narratives in covering today's social and political issues. There is a general belief that compared with informational or hard news, narrative news is more engaging and therefore more likely to draw audience interest (Knobloch, Patzig, Mende, & Hastall, 2004; Kramer, 2001). Researchers have found that narratives affected individuals by transporting them into the narrative world and involving them cognitively and emotionally (Green, 2006). The impact of narratives, as some have

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argued, can be stronger and more enduring than that of traditional message formats, such as fact-based information or rhetorical arguments (Dal Cin, Zanna, & Fong, 2004; Green, 2006).

This study contributes to existing research by examining the effects of narrative news about the environmental impact of gas drilling on issue and message attitudes and evaluating how such impact might be moderated by individuals' environmental orientations. Evidence from prior research has shown that in processing media messages, individuals often bring their own predispositions and value orientations to the interpretive process (see Domke, Shah, & Wackman, 1998; Schemer, Wirth, & Matthes, 2012; Shen, 2004). However, more research is needed to understand the extent to which individuals' predispositions will moderate the effects of news narratives. With that in mind, we conducted an experiment whereby we measured individuals' environmental orientations and then exposed participants to news reports—narrative or informational—on the environmental consequences of drilling. Our goal was to explore whether individual differences in environmental orientations—between those with high or low environmental concerns—would affect news narratives' impact on issue attitudes, cognitive responses, sympathy, and transportation. In the sections below, we will provide the conceptual background and rationale for our research. We will then present the details of our experiment. This will be followed by our analyses of the results and a discussion of the implications of our research findings.

Conceptual Background

According to Green and Brock (2000), a narrative is "a story that raises unanswered questions, presents unresolved conflicts, or depicts not yet completed activity; characters may encounter and then resolve a crisis or crises" (p. 701). Stories often contain characters, plots, and causal relationships, thus making them distinct from exemplars and other messages. Exemplars, for instance, are usually descriptions of events or issues without the necessary plots or causal relationships that are typical of narratives (Green, 2006; Zillman, Gibson, Sundar, & Perkins, 1996). Narratives often describe the experience of others for entertainment or information. As a result, their persuasive intention is often implicit. In contrast, nonnarratives typically use rhetorical arguments and informational messages with the explicit intention to either persuade or inform (Dal Cin et al., 2004). Narratives' unique features thus make them potentially more effective in communicating information than other messages. In recent years, researchers have found that narratives can affect individuals both emotionally and cognitively (Green & Brock, 2000; Hinyard & Kreuter, 2007). They have been found to be more effective than nonnarrative messages in changing attitudes and opinions on several issues. For example, Mazzocco et al. (2010) examined the impact of narratives in describing two political issues—tolerance of gay people and the success of affirmative action. They found that compared with rhetorical articles, narratives had a greater impact on individuals' attitudes toward both issues (Mazzocco et al., 2010). Similarly, Oliver, Dillard, Bae, and Tamul (2012) demonstrated that compared with nonnarratives, narrative news had a greater impact on readers' attitudes.

The primary mechanisms underlying narrative persuasion are transportation and identification. Transportation has been conceptualized as a mental state where one's "attention, imagery, and feelings are focused on story events" (Green, 2006, p. 164). It is similar to absorption or immersion in a story. Green and Brock (2000) showed that transportation into a written narrative led to narrative-consistent

beliefs and attitudes. Oliver et al. (2012) provided similar results in their study on the effects of news narratives on attitudes toward stigmatized groups. Narratives can also have an impact on individuals via identification with story characters. While transportation can be viewed as a "general experience" of being immersed in a narrative and attention to its plot, identification is the reader's involvement with specific characters (Tal-Or & Cohen, 2010). When readers identify with a narrative, they are likely to be emotionally involved with the characters. Escalas and Stern (2003) identified empathy and sympathy as two related emotional constructs in response to narratives. Whereas sympathy is "one's feeling of sorrow or concern" (Escalas & Stern, 2003, p. 567) for someone else's welfare, empathy is one's ability to share in or absorb another's feeling. In a study of a television drama's effects on behavioral intentions, Bae (2008) demonstrated that exposure to a narrative-based show had significant effects on viewers' empathy and sympathy responses, which in turn predicted issue involvement and other persuasion outcomes. Similarly, prior research in narrative persuasion has also suggested that by involving readers or viewers in the storylines, narratives can overcome resistance and reduce the motivation to engage in counterarguing (Green, 2006; Moyer-Gusé & Nabi, 2010).

The evidence of narratives' effectiveness has been substantial, and researchers in the recent years have found that narratives' impacts on attitudes and other persuasive outcomes may also be moderated by individual differences in dispositional traits. Appel and Richter's (2010) study provided evidence suggesting that individuals' need for affect, as a disposition, moderated the effect of a fictional narrative on beliefs. In a similar vein, Thompson and Haddock (2012) found that narratives' impacts on individuals differed significantly as a result of their need for affect and for cognition. Other individual difference variables that have been found to moderate the effects of narratives include transportability and the ability for mental imagery (see Zheng, 2014). To extend the prior research on individual traits and narratives, we aim to examine whether individuals' issue-relevant value orientations might enhance or diminish a news narrative's influence. From the early days of media effects research to the more recent scholarship in news framing and priming, scholars have found that the mass media's influence tends to be contingent upon audiences' preexisting attitudes and values (see Domke et al., 1998; Schemer et al., 2012; Severin & Tankard, 2001; Shen & Edwards, 2005; Zaller, 1992). This is because individuals are not merely passive recipients of media messages. The influence of media messages will therefore depend on how they interact with individuals' prior knowledge and predispositions (Ho, Brossard, & Scheufele, 2008; Zaller, 1992). In fact, research in social psychology has indicated that individual differences in schemata and prior attitudes may act as cognitive filters that percolate the information we receive and digest, resulting in what is known as biased information process (Higgins, Bargh, & Lombardi, 1985).

Because of their chronic accessibility, predispositions can be easily activated and can influence our decision making and information processing as a result. Indeed, in examining the impact of media framing of the issue of welfare reform, Shen and Edwards (2005) found that individuals' value orientations on individualism and humanitarianism—two core American values—significantly moderated responses to media framing messages on the issue. Similarly, Ho et al. (2008) found that value predispositions such as religiosity and deference to authority were significant factors in shaping public attitudes toward stem cell research.

Based on these findings, we expect that narrative news reports and individuals' environmental orientations will have an impact on attitudes toward the issue of gas drilling in the Marcellus Shale, a controversial issue that has divided the public in recent years. While gas drilling brings significant economic benefits, its environmental impact has drawn considerable public attention. A significant part of the media coverage of the environmental implications of drilling focuses on two formats: stories about how people's lives have been changed by drilling and informational reports regarding the environmental impact of drilling. Based on our analysis of media coverage of the issue, we put together two news reports for the present study: a news narrative report and an informational report. Our goal is to see whether the news narrative's impact on individuals' responses will be moderated by individuals' environmental orientations.

Research Questions

Prior research has provided evidence that narratives can be more effective than nonnarrative messages in both health messages and news coverage of issues (Green & Brock, 2000; Oliver et al., 2012). Scholars have also found that individuals' predispositions are likely to bias information processing, thus making messages consistent with prior values and attitudes more salient and accessible (Shen & Edwards, 2005; Zaller, 1992). Cumulative evidence from media effects research thus suggests that media messages that resonate with one's values and predispositions are often more positively evaluated and more effective. Although some scholars have suggested that there are significant variations in narratives' impact (see Zebregs, van den Putte, Neijens, & de Graaf, 2015), others have found that overall narratives, when compared with nonnarratives, could lead to attitude changes, increase empathy with characters, and reduce counterarguing (Green & Brock, 2000; Mazzocco et al., 2010; Van Laer, Ruyter, Visconti, & Wetzels, 2014). However, we do not know whether the effects of news narratives on the environmental consequences of drilling will interact with individuals' environmental orientations. An interaction will exist if those who have high environmental orientations or are more concerned about the environment find the news narratives more effective than the informational news reports. Our first research question therefore focuses on the interaction between narratives and predispositions. In other words, we ask whether, after reading the narrative news, those with high environmental values are more likely to oppose drilling for gas and to report more positive cognitive responses, more sympathy, and more transportation.

RQ1: Will there be an interaction between news report format and environmental orientations such that individuals with high environmental orientations will respond more positively to narrative news than those with low environmental orientations?

Another purpose of the present study is to explore the mechanisms underlying the impact of news narratives and environmental orientations. Prior research has identified several variables that mediate the impact of narratives, including transportation (Green & Brock, 2000), sympathy (Escalas & Stern, 2003), empathy (Bae, 2008), identification (Tal-Or & Cohen, 2010), and reduced counterarguing (Green, 2006; Moyer-Gusé & Nabi, 2010). Mazzocco et al. (2010) found that empathy, not cognitive responses, mediated narratives' impact on issue attitudes. In her study, Escalas (2004) found that transportation's impact on ad and brand attitudes were mediated by both affective and cognitive responses. Part of the purpose of this study is to test whether the impact of narrative news on individuals'

attitudes will be mediated by transportation, sympathy, or cognitive responses. Because limited prior research has explored the interaction between news narratives and value orientations, we formulate our second research question as follows:

RQ2. Will transportation, sympathy, or cognitive responses mediate the effect of narrative news and environmental orientations on issue attitudes?

Method

Design and Participants

The study used a 2 × 2 between-subjects factorial design with the two factors being news formats (narrative vs. informational) and environmental orientations (high vs. low). Data were collected among undergraduate students in a major public university as part of a large project on news effects (see Shen, Ahern, & Baker, 2014). We used a subset of the data collected from 88 undergraduate students[1].

Participants were recruited from several communication classes and received a small amount of course credit for their participation. A majority of the participants were female (80%) and the average age was 20. They were randomly assigned to two news report conditions. Based on their pretest responses, participants were classified, using a median split, into two groups with either high or low environmental orientations.

Procedure

We conducted the experiment in a regular classroom with traditional paper-and-pencil stimuli and instruments. At the beginning of the sessions, we informed the participants that they were to participate in a news reading experiment and that the newspaper articles were selected from a local newspaper. After they read the articles, we asked them to complete a questionnaire assessing their reactions to the articles and their attitudes toward the issue of shale gas drilling.

Manipulations

We manipulated message formats by creating narrative and informational newspaper articles on the issue of drilling for gas in the Marcellus Shale. Both articles focused on the health and environmental consequences of drilling on ground-water pollution. For the informational news report, we used the standard news format that begins with an introductory paragraph to establish the issue as a contentious point of policy with people on both sides and then provides relevant facts. The narrative news story was created using the structure of initiating event, conflicts confronted by the characters, and a resolution or outcome at the end (Knobloch et al., 2004; see details in Shen et al., 2014).

[1] We disclosed this information to the editor during the submission process. The research questions examined in the present study are conceptually different from those by Shen et al. (2014).

To check the manipulation of the stimuli, we asked participants to rate the newspaper articles on a scale from 1 (*based on a story*) to 7 (*based on factual information*). Results indicated that those reading the narrative news indeed perceived the narratives to be more story-based than those reading the factual news (M = 4.05 vs. 5.74, t = 4.84, p < .001).

Measurements

Environmental orientation was measured in a pretest a week prior to the experiment using select items adopted from prior studies (e.g., Dunlap, Van Liere, Mertig, & Jones, 2000; Lee & Holden, 1999). Participants indicated on a scale from 1 (*disagree*) to 7 (*agree*) their agreement with four statements: "The balance of nature is very delicate and easily upset," "I am worried about the environmental situation," "When humans interfere with nature, it often produces disastrous consequences," and "Humans are severely abusing the environment." The scale has an acceptable reliability of α = .77. We used a median split to create groups of high and low environmental orientation. As the items suggest, individuals with high (or low) environmental orientations are highly (or not highly) concerned about the environment.

We measured transportation using a 12-item scale (Green & Brock, 2000). Participants answered each item on a scale of 1 (*not at all*) to 7 (*very much*; α = .83). Examples of these items are "I could easily picture the events in it taking place" and "I was mentally involved in the article."

To measure sympathy, we asked respondents the extent to which they were concerned, compassionate, and sympathetic for the individuals affected by the issue of drilling. The three items were measured on a scale from 1 (*not at all*) to 7 (*very much*).

To measure positive cognitive responses, we asked respondents to list up to eight thoughts after reading the reports. They were given two minutes to write their thoughts as concisely as possible, using key words or short phrases. After listing each thought, respondents were instructed to code them by indicating whether they were favorable or unfavorable to the major themes or arguments in the articles (see Cacioppo & Petty, 1981; Mazzocco et al., 2010). We then subtracted negative thoughts from positive thoughts and created a positive cognitive response index ranging from −8 to +8.

Respondents' issue attitudes were measured in a follow-up questionnaire. A single item was measured on a scale from 1 (*strongly opposed*) to 7 (*strongly in favor*) for "Marcellus Shale gas drilling in the region."

In addition, we measured respondents' prior exposure to media coverage of the issue. In particular, we asked how often they had either read or watched news related to the issue shale gas drilling in recent days. These two media-use variables were then used as control variables in our analysis.

Results

RQ1 focuses on the possible interaction between news report format and environmental orientation. In particular, it asks whether narrative news will have a greater impact on transportation,

sympathy, positive cognitive responses, and issue attitudes among individuals with high environmental orientations than it will on those with low environmental orientations. To explore the research question, we ran a MANCOVA analysis with news formats and environmental orientations as independent variables and transportation, sympathy, positive cognitive responses, and issue attitudes as dependent variables. Exposure to print and broadcast news coverage of the issue were the control variables. Means and standard deviations of the dependent variables across the experimental conditions are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Means and Standard Deviations of Dependent Variables by Experimental Condition.

	Narrative News		Informational News	
	High EO	Low EO	High EO	Low EO
Dependent Variable	*n* = 19	*n* = 20	*n* = 18	*n* = 21
Cognitive responses	4.05	2.95	1.33	2.86
	(2.39)	(3.78)	(2.20)	(2.82)
Attitudes	2.58	3.85	3.56	3.38
	(1.26)	(1.23)	(1.58)	(1.60)
Transportation	4.75	4.22	4.19	3.51
	(.97)	(.61)	(.85)	(1.07)
Sympathy	6.05	5.07	4.89	4.83
	(.77)	(.90)	(.98)	(1.25)

Note. Numbers without parentheses are means and those in parenthesis are standard deviations. EO = environmental orientations.

Results from our MANCOVA analysis showed that after controlling for prior exposure to media coverage of the issues, for both news formats, Wilks's $\Lambda = .83$, $F(4, 69) = 4.00$, $p = .01$, partial $\eta^2 = .17$, and environmental values, Wilks's $\Lambda = .85$, $F(4, 69) = 3.04$, $p = .02$, partial $\eta^2 = .15$, had significant main effects on the dependent variables (see Table 2). The interaction between news formats and environmental values was also significant: Wilks's $\Lambda = .86$, $F(4, 69) = 2.91$, $p = .027$, partial $\eta^2 = .15$.

Table 2. MANCOVA Analysis of Main and Interaction Effects.

		Cognitive Responses	Attitudes	Transportation	Sympathy
Main Effects	*df*	*F*	*F*	*F*	*F*
News formats (NF)	1	4.44*	.44	8.51**	8.33**
Environmental orientations (EO)	1	.01	5.07**	7.23**	5.43*
NF × EO	1	4.18*	4.44**	.68	6.17*
Error	74				

*$p < .05$, **$p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

Analysis of the simple effects indicated that after reading the narrative news, respondents reported more transportation, M = 4.48 versus 3.83, p = .005; more sympathy, M = 5.55 versus 4.85, p = .005; and more favorable cognitive responses, M = 3.49 versus 2.15, p = .039, than those reading the informational news. However, the narrative news report did not lead to significantly less favorable attitudes to drilling than the informational news report, M = 3.23 versus 3.46, p = .51. The significant main effects of narrative news on positive cognitive responses, transportation, and sympathy are consistent with findings in prior research on narratives (Mazzocco et al., 2010). Individuals with high environmental orientations reported more transportation, M = 4.47 versus 3.86, p = .009; more sympathy, M = 5.49 versus 4.94, p = .023; and more negative attitudes toward drilling, M = 3.05 versus 3.61, p = .027, than individuals with low environmental orientations. Environmental orientation did not have a significant impact on positive cognitive responses, M = 2.69 versus 2.90, p = .935.

The MANCOVA analysis also indicated a significant interaction effect between news formats and environmental orientations on sympathy, $F(1, 72) = 4.44$, p = .039; positive cognitive responses, $F(1, 72) = 4.18$, p = .045; and issue attitudes, $F(1, 72) = 6.17$, p = .015, but not on transportation, $F(1, 72) = .07$, p = .795. The significance of these interaction effects is mostly due to the response differences for individuals with high environmental orientations who read the narrative news. Specifically, for high individuals with environmental orientations, those reading the narrative news had significantly more positive cognitive responses, M = 4.05 versus 1.33; more negative issue attitudes, M = 2.58 versus 3.56; more sympathy, M = 6.05 versus 4.89; and more transportation, M = 4.75 versus 4.19, than those reading the informational news. However, among individuals with low environmental orientations, those reading the narrative news reported more transportation, M = 4.22 versus 3.51, than those reading the informal news. News formats had no significant effect on the other three dependent variables for those low on the environmental orientation scale. These results suggest that although both environmental orientations and news formats had significant effects on some of the key variables, their impact was largely due to a combination of high environmental values and narrative news. As can be seen in Table 1, after reading the narrative story, those with high environmental orientations reported more positive cognitive responses, more transportation, more sympathy, and more negative issue attitudes than all the other conditions. In other words, narrative news affected individuals with high environmental values more than any other individuals.

For those with high environmental orientations, is narrative's impact on issue attitudes mediated by sympathy, positive cognitive responses, or transportation? To answer RQ2, we first created an interaction term by multiplying news formats (coded 1 for the narrative condition and 0 for the information condition) and environmental orientations using the original continuous scale. We then used structural equation modeling to evaluate the impact of the interaction term on issue attitudes and used sympathy, positive cognitive responses, and transportation as the intervening variables. We assessed model fit by using the chi-square statistic, comparative fit index (CFI), and root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA).

Our initial analysis suggested the conceptual model (see Figure 1) did not fit the data well: $\chi^2(4) = 23.98$, $p < .001$, CFI = .78, RMSEA = .24. Because the path from transportation to issue attitudes was not significant, we followed similar research (see Oliver et al., 2012) and respecified the model by placing

transportation before sympathy. The respecified model (see Figure 2) resulted in a good fit for the data: $\chi^2(4) = 9.79$, $p = .081$; CFI = .94, RMSEA = .10 (Hu & Bentler, 1999; Kline, 2016).

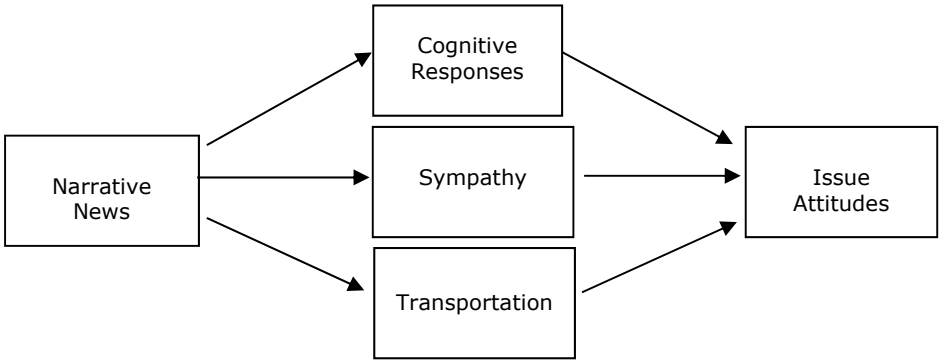

Figure 1. Conceptual path model.

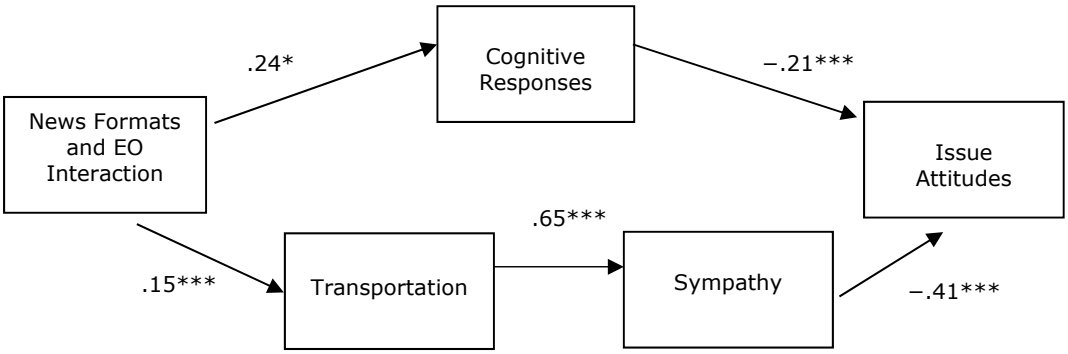

Figure 2. Final path model. Interaction term is the product of news formats and environmental orientations (EO). News reports were coded 1 for narrative news/high environmental orientation, and 0 for all information news conditions. *p < .05, **p < .01, ***p < .001.

The respecified model thus suggests that the interaction term had a significant direct effect on favorable cognitive responses, $\beta = .24$, $p = .042$, and transportation, $\beta = .15$, $p < .001$, with transportation in turn having a direct effect on sympathy, $\beta = .65$, $p < .001$. Cognitive responses, $\beta = -.21$, $p < .001$, and sympathy, $\beta = -.41$, $p < .001$, in turn had significant effects on issue attitudes. These results indicate that when individuals with high environmental orientations were exposed to the narrative story, they reported more supportive cognitive thoughts and were more likely to be transported by the story and to develop sympathy for the characters. As a result, these individuals were more likely to have negative attitudes toward drilling.

Conclusion

This study was designed to explore the interaction between news narratives and environmental orientations on issue attitudes. Another goal was to investigate the extent to which such an impact might be mediated by transportation, sympathy, and positive cognitive responses. To do that, we conducted an experiment in which participants read either a narrative or an informational news report on the environmental consequences of gas drilling in the Marcellus Shale. Results suggested that both news reports and environmental orientations had some effects. While the interaction between the two had significant effects on positive cognitive responses, sympathy, and issue attitudes, the significant interaction effects were largely due to narrative news having a stronger impact on those high on the environmental concern scale than on those low on the scale. In other words, the more concerned individuals were about the environment, the more likely they were to be affected by environmentally related news narratives.

Before we discuss the study's implications, it is important to recognize its limitations. First, this study was based on an experiment that had a relative small sample. Future studies should consider testing our findings with larger sample sizes for greater statistical power. Second, this study focused on the single issue of shale gas drilling. Although we have demonstrated the importance of environmental orientations as a significant moderator, it is not known whether this extends to other individual predispositions or values. Future research should therefore continue to explore the effects of news narratives on various social and political issues, as this will further strengthen the external validity of the research findings. Furthermore, our measures for the manipulation check and issue attitudes need to be improved. The former could be misinterpreted in multiple ways, whereas the latter used a single item. Future research on narrative news effects should improve the wordings of both items.

These limitations notwithstanding, our study has several practical and theoretical implications. First, it extends the research on news effects. We showed that narrative news reports and informative news reports might have different implications for the audience, with the former exerting stronger influences. Prior research on news framing of social issues had not considered the nature of news formats such as narratives and nonnarratives. As such, this study's results suggest that as an approach to framing environmental issues, the use of narratives is worthy of additional research. Second, our study showed that although narrative news had significant impact on individuals, it may not necessarily affect everyone similarly. Instead, individuals' predispositions or prior beliefs (e.g., environmental orientations in the present study) can significantly moderate the impact of narratives. We also found that narrative news did not have a significant main effect on issue attitudes. This might be because attitudes among those with low environmental values did not change much in our study. However, environmental orientations did have a main effect on issue attitudes. Thus, understanding individual differences is critical to examining the impact of news narratives for researchers. Prior research has shown that attitudes toward issues may be partially determined by other characteristics of individuals, including their predispositions. Mazzocco et al. (2010), for instance, reported that individuals' attitudes toward issues differed between those who are high and those who are low in transportability, defined as the tendency to be transported into narratives. This suggests the importance of individual differences in predispositions, knowledge, and values in understanding individuals' responses to media messages, as found in prior research (see Ho et al., 2008;

Shen & Edwards, 2005). Our findings indicated that readers who were less concerned with the environment were more likely to resist the impacts of narratives, and that those who placed high value on conservation and environmental protection were more likely to be persuaded by narratives in environmental reporting. These results provide additional evidence that although narratives work well in reducing counterarguing in general, this impact may be limited by audiences' prior attitudes. This diverges from the assumption of narrative persuasion, as scholars in the past have argued that narratives work especially well in overcoming resistance and counterarguing (e.g., Green & Brock, 2000; Moyer-Gusé, 2008).

Finally, our research explored the mediational mechanisms underlying the interaction of narrative and individual differences. We found that when narratives resonated with people's value orientations, such reports would increase transportation, positive cognitive responses, and sympathy. These variables in turn mediated the interactive effects of narrative news and environmental orientations. This is consistent with the conclusion of several scholars that a narrative's impact is a result of the interplay of cognitive responses and emotional reactions (Mazzocco et al., 2010).

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