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Competing Models of Journalism?
Political Affairs Coverage in U.S., British, German, Swiss, French and Italian Newspapers

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Abstract
A content analysis of 6525 randomly sampled political news stories from national, regional and weekly newspapers in six Western countries between 1960 and today examines to which degree discursively defined reporting styles correspond to conceptual typologies of media systems and historical classifications of journalistic traditions. Univariate and multivariate analyses of three key indicators (opinion-orientation, objectivity, negativity) reveal three approaches to newsmaking: a U.S.-led model of rational news analysis, an Italian-led model of polarized reporting, and a Germanic model of disseminating news with views. Merging a historically informed institutionalist approach with systematic content analysis, the study's main contribution to comparative communication research is to clarify our understanding of divergent models of journalism, contextualize existing media-system typologies, and revise assumptions about the affiliation of individual system to certain models.

Keywords
Political News, Models of Journalism, Cross-National Comparative Research, Quantitative Content Analysis
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Cross-national differences in how news journalism has developed can be explained by longstanding historical processes in the formation of news media as social institutions. Scholars who view news media as institutions argue that news outlets within a given society share similar sets of norms and practices (Cook, 1998; Sparrow, 1999). New Institutionalism holds that news organizations within various countries become more similar to one another as they, in a historical group process, seek to differentiate themselves from their political environments and gain independence (Benson, 2004). The news media develops into a trans-organizational institution, and in each nation various factors push those working in this institution toward similar practices. These factors include professional consensus, intermedia co-orientation, operating in the same political and regulatory environment, and orienting their products towards the same audience (Cook, 2006). From a comparative perspective it is argued that historically-rooted institutional conditions have served as nation-bound opportunity structures for the emergence of distinct profiles of journalism. These are defined here as patterns of news behavior identifiable across organizations that are seen (internally) by members of the profession and (externally) members of society as the collective output of the national news media institution (Benson, 2004; Benson et al., 2012; Cook, 1998; Humphreys, 2011). Such a historically informed institutionalist approach quietly underlies a fair amount of recent research on media systems and journalistic traditions. We follow this gradually-emerging approach and hope to make an informed contribution to its further development. In Western journalism, to which this study is confined, three historical-institutional ‘pathways’ can be distinguished (see Mancini, 2005; Polumbaum, 2010; Williams, 2005).

Traditions of Journalism

The first is the so-called Anglo-American pathway – sometimes called the “Liberal or Social Responsibility model” (Siebert et al., 1956) or “Professional model” (Tunstall, 1977). In a famous article titled “Journalism as an Anglo-American Invention” (Chalaby, 1996) describes it as ‘the’ modern conception of news. The Anglo-American model emphasizes the importance of being objective, detached and neutral in the recording of the news (Schudson, 2001). The emphasis on facts fits with the commercial needs of the Anglo-American press as it allows newspapers to sell...
their products to diverse readerships with differing political views and attitudes. Mancini (2005) identifies five main features of this model: (a) independence from political powers, (b) a control or watchdog function over political powers, (c) objectivity, (d) professional standards that reinforce the independence of journalism from other societal powers and professions, and (e) reporting functions that are distinct from those of comment and interpretation. Throughout the 20th century, it became the “dominant model of professional journalism” (Mancini, 2005: 78) and an influential reference model for measuring and judging journalistic behaviors in other countries. It was progressively imported and adapted in newsrooms throughout Continental Europe; however the extent to which it actually took hold depended heavily on the peculiarities of the social structures, political structures and media structures of the respective news systems. Journalists throughout Europe quickly learned to confess to the Anglo-American model because it lent an aura of legitimacy and professionalism to their actions; yet the extent to which their practical work actually follows these public testimonies is another matter (Mancini, 2000). Only a comprehensive cross-national content analysis could shed light on this question. Interestingly, the gap between expectation and practice also holds true for U.S. and British journalists where day-to-day news routines have often come to divert from the ‘pure’ model. Both U.S. and British newspapers are said to have expanded the Anglo-American model in reality to also include more sensational, negative and interpretative journalism (which under the specific conditions of the British market has led to a rather partisan national press; see Hallin and Mancini, 2004). This partisanship, in particular, makes Great Britain a mixed case that apparently incorporates elements from more than one historical-institutional pathway. Again only a comparative content analysis can help locate the British press in relation to other Western reporting traditions. An additional outcome of such an analysis may even be to reject the Anglo-American tradition as a homogenous empirical category in journalism research.¹

Whereas early researchers contrasted the Anglo-American tradition with a universal Continental European model, more recent accounts have differentiated a highly politicized, literary style of southern European journalism and a moderately politicized, corporatist style of central European journalism (Hallin and Mancini, 2004; Mancini, 2005). Typical representatives of the southern European pathway (which in this study we call the Polarized Mediterranean model) are France and Italy. Here, the chronically weak financial state of newspapers, their elite orientation and limited readership, and their deeply engrained literary roots have led to a greater emphasis on
interpretation and commentary than factual reporting (Mancini, 2000). According to many accounts, the Italian and French journalistic tradition has been to mix news and views and to prioritize opinion over reportage (Chalaby, 1996; Kuhn, 2007; Mancini, 2000, 2007). The greater dependence on state aid and political favoring, strong press-party ties and the late development of journalism as an independent profession have made scrutinizing watchdog reporting (i.e., media-initiated negativity) less likely. On the other hand the media’s intricate involvement with a polarized system that is characterized by internal conflicts and which uses the media as instruments in political disputes makes coverage of ideological confrontations (i.e. politician-initiated negativity) more likely.

The third European tradition refers to the Corporatist model, which spans the German-speaking, BeNeLux and Scandinavian countries, where different types of corporatism exist (for instance a more ‘social’ type in Norway or Denmark and a more ‘liberal’ type in Switzerland or Germany; see Katzenstein, 1985). Both types of Corporatist system are consensus democracies with an emphasis on compromise and power sharing (Lijphart, 1999). Democratic Corporatist systems are characterized by a wide range of political parties and organized groups which resolve their differences in partnership and come to collective decisions through bargaining and negotiation. This approach favors strong ties between newspapers, political parties and organized social forces, and thus a partisan reporting style. Although press partisanship has weakened over the past decades, this political structure – together with offshoots of the literary tradition stemming from the southern countries – has helped promote opinionated reporting (Mancini, 2000, 2005). The literary tradition here is less pronounced however than in the Polarized Mediterranean systems, and the connection to politics is not realized through instrumentalization but through a consensus around welfare state democracy. In summary, Corporatist news systems combine a diminishing tradition of political parallelism, a moderate degree of external pluralism, a legacy of commentary-oriented journalism, and a growing emphasis on neutral professionalism and information-oriented journalism (Hallin and Mancini, 2004). Typical representatives of corporatism (in the liberal fashion) are Switzerland and Germany. They occupy an intermediate position between the other two models, with close geographic links to neighboring France and Italy and close cultural links to the Anglo-American systems (whose journalistic principles were imported to Germany during the re-education period after World War II, for example). It is an open question, however, how news practices in these two Germanic Corporatist countries have developed with regard to objectivity,
opinion-orientation and negativism in relation to Anglo-American and Polarized Mediterranean news systems.

**Research Aims and Hypotheses**

These pathways or models are *ideal types* and the degree to which they fit empirically observable *real cases* is still largely unclear. This is acknowledged by Hallin and Mancini (2012a) who warn scholars explicitly not to thoughtlessly “apply” their typology but to test its usefulness and justify its application in each individual case. They complain specifically about a lack of information about media content, stating that “content analysis across systems, guided by comparative theory, is in our view one of the most fundamental needs in our field” (Hallin & Mancini, 2012a: 218). Norris (2011) agrees that “rigorous cross-national data, based on content analysis of a representative range of media outlets and a random sample of stories, is extremely scarce” (p. 218). This is the starting point of our own study. By offering a comparative content analysis across all three pathways of journalism we not only hope to shed light on the relationship between theoretical ideal types and empirical real types but also to address unresolved controversies in comparative media system research regarding the appropriate classification of Great Britain (for this controversy see Norris, 2009), the usefulness of the term Anglo-American journalism (introduced by Chalaby, 1996), and the degree of overlap between structure-based models of media systems (Hallin and Mancini, 2004) and discursively defined, content-based models (as investigated by our own study). The goal is to produce a classification of journalistic reporting styles that is based exclusively on content analysis and to assess how a combination of our results with existing typologies can further inform and advance our knowledge of comparative news system research.

The first theoretical dimension that is assumed to discriminate the reporting styles in the three models is *opinion-orientation* (see Benson and Hallin, 2007; Mancini, 2005). The greater proximity of the journalistic profession to intellectualism and the literary field on the one hand and the delayed differentiation of the journalistic field from the sphere of party politics on the other hand contributed to a greater emphasis on commentary and editorializing in Continental European journalism – particularly in the polarized south – than in the Anglo-American tradition. Despite a renaissance of opinionated journalism in the Anglo-American world (see Hallin, 2008), we expect mainstream news journalism in the U.S. and Britain to be more restrained in this regard. For instance, Benson and Hallin (2007) found “opinion” and “interpretation” to be more prevalent in the
French press than "reporting" and "background" when compared to the U.S. press. In Corporatist German and Swiss newspapers, opinion-orientation will be less common than in southern European newspapers, but due to a residual element of historical political parallelism and external pluralism, opinion-orientation will be higher than in Anglo-American newspapers (see also Wessler et al., 2010).

**H 1:** The degree of opinion-orientation will be highest in newspapers from Polarized Mediterranean systems and lowest in those from Anglo-American systems.

The second dimension is **objectivity** – declared as “the” defining characteristic of American journalism which “still today distinguishes U.S. journalism from the dominant model of Continental European journalism” (Schudson, 2001: 149). A survey by Donsbach and Klett (1993) found that U.S. journalists express higher support for objectivity than British journalists and that German and Italian journalists rank lowest. They also found that U.S. journalists rely more heavily on fact-gathering techniques and interviews with sources whereas German and Italian journalists rely more on their own values and ideas (Donsbach, 1995). This is not to say that Continental European reporters have not embraced the ideal of objectivity or do not observe its basic attributes. The difference according to Schudson (2001) is that in U.S. journalistic culture it amounts to a core professional code together with a set of accepted routines that serve to defend the reporting from critique. These routines (Tuchman, 1978) include the presentation of contrasting points of view and a hard-facts-first structure (inverted pyramid). Additionally, in order to separate fact from fiction, supporting facts are attributed to authoritative sources, and sources’ statements are set off in quotation marks. We thus stipulate:

**H2:** The use of professional routines demonstrating adherence to the ideal of objectivity will be highest in U.S. news stories and lowest in Polarized Mediterranean news stories. Great Britain and France will be borderline cases of their respective models.

We have added a qualification concerning Britain and France for the following reasons. In Britain, the objectivity norm is expected to be observed less rigidly than in the U.S. because the higher competitive nature of the British press market has led to segmentation by political affinities, and the history of interventionist owners and tabloid reporting has favored biased reporting (Hallin and Mancini, 2004: 214, 221). Among the Polarized Mediterranean systems, France is an exception in having a strong tradition of rational-legal authority, resulting in greater respect for
norms and standardized behavioral procedures (Hallin and Mancini 2004: 136). We expect this to be reflected in a greater appreciation for the value of objectivity than in Italy (with Italy being the more genuine representative of the Mediterranean model).

The third relevant dimension is negativity in the news, which can express itself in at least four ways (Lengauer et al., 2012). First, it can describe an overall negative tone toward politics at the story level, aggregating statements voiced by political actors, other sources and the journalist as creator of the story. Second, it can reflect the degree of confrontation, power struggles and mutual attacks present among political actors in a given system. Third, it can indicate the emphasis placed by journalists on the weaknesses, failings, incapability and problems of political actors. Fourth, it can frame weaknesses, failings or inabilities as symptoms of a lingering affair or scandal.

Due to greater commercial pressures on the press in Anglo-American systems (see Aalberg et al., 2010; Benson and Hallin, 2007) journalists may favor stories more that include negativity and lend themselves to more dramatic, conflict-emphasizing story-telling. In addition, the notion of the media as a watchdog or fourth branch of government is more deeply engraved in Anglo-American news culture, providing more incentives for journalists to uncover unpleasant aspects of the political process. The second-highest levels of negativity may be expected in Polarized Mediterranean systems which are characterized by deep cleavages, sharply opposed ideologies and open political conflicts (Hallin and Mancini, 2004; Sheafer and Wolfsfeld, 2009). In contrast, consensus democracies with a moderate polarization (e.g. SUI, GER) rely more on compromise and negotiations for political decision-making, thereby reducing the potential for conflict news (cf. Hallin and Mancini, 2004: 60).

H 3: The level of negativity in the news will be lower in the consensus-oriented Corporatist systems than in the Anglo-American systems (due to critical watchdog reporting and higher commercialization) or the southern European systems (due to polarized pluralism and coverage of attack politics).

Method

We conducted a quantitative content analysis of 18 news outlets from six national media systems. The relevant details can be seen on Table 1. The rationale of the country selection was to include two national cases per model. We picked one ‘prototypical’ representative of the Liberal (USA), Corporatist (SUI) and Polarized model (ITA) and added to each model a ‘borderline’ case.
including elements from one additional model (GBR, GER, FRA; for details see Hallin and Mancini 2004: 10-14, 69-71). This sample should enable us to draw conclusions about how distinct or how porous the borders of the news cultures within these three models are, and whether the three models of media system do indeed overlap with distinct sets of news practices as measured by manifest content features.

[TABLE 1 ABOUT HERE]

Data Gathering

We content-analyzed the political affairs coverage in randomly selected routine periods from the 1960s (the beginning of the so-called golden period of journalism; see Tunstall, 1996) to the late 2000s (the period of global, digital and commercial competition; see Tunstall, 2008). This also covers the recent history of the three pathways of Western journalism as outlined by Mancini (2005). We sampled political news stories from three news outlets per country in the years 1960/61, 1972/73, 1994/95 and 2006/07. The three outlets (see Table 1) come from different press sectors – national, regional and weekly – in which these outlets have a high circulation and a reputation for being typical. For instance, in the U.S. we selected the New York Times (national newspaper of record), the St. Louis Post Dispatch (large independent regional newspaper founded by Joseph Pulitzer) and Time magazine (the largest news weekly in U.S. history). We decided to include a regional instead of a tabloid newspaper because with the exception of Britain all other press markets have historically been shaped more by regional (and super-regional) than tabloid newspapers. Tabloids of the British sort are close to non-existent in France, Italy and the United States; Germany and Switzerland have produced no more than a single tabloid, each being relatively tame due to a monopoly position. As a compromise we selected in Britain the Birmingham Mail which was the largest regional newspaper in tabloid form between 1960/61 and 1994/95 (Franklin and Murphy, 1998) but has since – mirroring the general demise of the British regional press – lost its significance. Another noteworthy point is that news magazines in the tradition of Time could not gain a foothold in Britain because their function was always well-served by the Sunday newspapers of which the Observer was added to the British sample.

We categorized as “political” all news stories that discussed at least one regional, national or international political actor or institution and its actions. In every second month of the four time periods under investigation (1960/61, 1972/73, 1994/95 and 2006/07) one random issue of each
news outlet was examined. In line with common practice in comparative international news research (Benson, 2009, 2010; Benson et al., 2012; Strömbäck and Aalberg, 2008; Strömbäck and Dimitrova, 2006; Strömbäck and Luengo, 2008) we treated the front page as the main locus for observing relevant style and format features. Hence, in the selected issues all political articles starting on the front page (including those continued on inside pages) plus all those whose headlines were listed (but actually published on inside pages) were included in the analysis. This procedure had to be adapted for those weeklies that are published as news magazines. Here, in addition to all stories mentioned on the cover, we also included those stories highlighted in the table of contents, usually with bold letters or a picture.

The goal of the sampling strategy was to identify those articles that are given the greatest prominence and have maximum potential to reach the largest audience. This procedure yielded a total of N = 6525 news items, which form the universe of our analysis.

Coding Categories

The relevant style and format elements used to measure differences in news journalism were operationalized as follows. To tap opinion-orientation we expanded a classification introduced by Benson and Hallin (2007) and coded each article for its main journalistic function: whether it is “straight news” (descriptive, concise), “long news with background” (providing context), “interpretation and analysis” (explanation, speculation), “opinion” (unequivocal commentaries or stories mixing information with opinion), or “interview”. We are mainly interested in the “opinion” category, which captures editorials, personal columns, commentary plus those types of story that mingle information with subjective assessments and evaluations.

The degree to which journalists follow reporting techniques that the profession recognizes as indicators of objectivity (Tuchman, 1978) was measured by coding the presence or absence of five story features: the presentation of opposing “pros and cons” viewpoints; the use of “expert sources”; the use of “quotes and paraphrases”; a “hard-facts-first structure”; and formal “separation of facts and opinion”. Through these strategies, journalists signal the truthfulness and neutrality of their reporting. We construct an aggregate objectivity index for each story that sums up the five dichotomous sub-dimensions and ranges (based on a standardized formula) from 0 to 1.

We operationalize negativity with four indicators measured at the story level (Lengauer et al., 2012). “Negative tone” captures whether the tonality of a story is pessimistic irrespective of the
political topic covered; “conflict frame” is coded if a story centers around political struggles, disputes or disagreements; political “incompetence” captures skepticism toward capabilities and an emphasis on political weakness and shortcomings; and “political scandal” refers to intense public communication about a real or imagined defect or misbehavior in politics that meets widespread indignation or outrage. Again, a standardized aggregate index is constructed that sums up the four indicators and ranges from 0 to 1.

Coding Procedures

All coding was done with bilingual coders who were fluent in the project language and the additional languages required for the study. All coding instruments and all coder training were conducted in the project language; training and coding was closely supervised by the authors (observing the principles laid out for cross-national content analyses by Roessler, 2012). Training included detailed discussions of individual articles, cultural references, key concepts and our operationalizations. Successive intercoder reliability tests were run for all language groups based on the coding of at least 30 articles within each language group. We used Cohen’s kappa, which is a rather conservative measure that gives credit only to agreement beyond chance. The average Cohen’s kappa coefficients were calculated separately for all language groups and separately for format-based story elements (e.g., size, placement, genre) and content-based elements (e.g., topics, actors, frames). Landis and Koch (1977: 165) characterize values < 0 as indicating no agreement, 0-.20 as slight, .21-.40 as fair, .41-.60 as moderate, .61-.80 as substantial, and .81-1 as almost perfect agreement. For all format-based variables the average level of agreement was in the “almost perfect” range, while for the content-based variables it was in the “substantial” range (see Table 2). These values are fully in line with other kappa-tests in cross-nationally comparative news studies (see Dimitrova and Strömbäck, 2012; Brüggemann and Kleinen-von Königslöw, 2009).

Results

Following our theoretical argument about individual news outlets being components of a collective transorganizational field that within each society follows similar norms and practices (due to historically-developed professional consensus, intermedia co-orientation, embedding in the same political and economic system, and aligning products to the same national audience) we will
combine all three news outlets per system as one aggregate indicator of national journalistic style in our further analysis. Our empirical argument for combining the three papers per country is that for all concepts central to this study (opinion orientation, objectivity, negativity) the effect sizes are greater between press systems than between types of news outlets. This finding – revealed by partial eta squares in a preliminary one-factorial analysis of variance – confirms our decision to examine our results only at the system level. These system-level analyses capture journalistic practices as manifested in content across the three market sectors (national, regional, weekly) and over a five-decade period (1960s to 2000s). For lack of space we must refrain from considering changes over time; such developmental trends are discussed in Umbricht and Esser (2013). Despite the high level of aggregation the following analyses allow us to sketch out characteristic patterns of the various models of news reporting.

**Opinion-Oriention**

H1 expects the degree of opinion-orientation to be highest in news outlets embedded in Polarized Mediterranean systems and lowest in outlets from Anglo-American systems. As can be seen from Table 3, the French and Italian newspapers do share a pattern of publishing less "straight news" and more "opinion" items than Anglo-American newspapers. The lowest degree of opinion-orientation is found in the U.S. newspapers (10% opinionated articles) and the highest in the French (27%). Testing H1, a univariate analysis of variance yielded significant differences in the means for "opinion" between the six countries ($F(5, 6448) = 25.29, p< .001, R^2-adj. = .018$) although the R-square indicates only a small proportion of explained variance. A post-hoc test, which performs multiple t-tests in each pair of countries, denotes that the low mean for the U.S. newspapers is exceptional as it differs significantly from all other countries ($p< .001$).

Although the data in Table 3 lends support to H1 it is noteworthy that the distinction between the journalistic styles is less clear-cut than the theoretical models let us expect. This is mainly due to the fairly large shares of "long background news" and "analysis and interpretation" in most of the examined newspapers. In fact, the share of "analysis and interpretation" is largest in the U.S. newspapers – a feature that has already triggered an extensive academic debate: Whereas some see interpretive, contextualizing journalism as a welcome opportunity for a better informed public (Bennett, 2005), others see it as an improper departure from the ideal of descriptive journalism –
mainly reflecting the journalists' intention to gain control over the political communication process and insert their own critical expertise and judgment into the story (Patterson, 1993). We have tried to draw the following dividing line in the empirical operationalization. Articles with an emphasis on explanation, analysis, meaning, investigation, revelation or questioning were coded as "analysis and interpretation"; stories with an emphasis on subjective evaluation, commentary or expression of opinion were assigned to the “opinion” category.

**Objectivity**

In line with the findings of Donsbach and Klett (1993), our data identifies U.S. news coverage as containing the largest share of features signaling professional routines of objective reporting. As can be seen from Table 4, the U.S. newspapers under investigation reveal the largest amount of “pros and cons”, “expert sources” and “quotes and paraphrases.” The standardized objectivity index is highest for the U.S. newspapers (69%) and lowest for the Italian newspapers (48%). Differences across the six nations’ standardized objectivity indices are statistically highly significant ($F(5, 6204) = 110.99, p<.001, R^2-adj. = .081$) and go generally in the direction as predicted. H2 expected the use of objectivity rituals to be most visible in U.S. reports and least visible in Mediterranean news reports, and it expected Great Britain and France to be borderline cases of their respective models. This is pretty much what Table 4 shows. The British newspapers show fewer objectivity indicators and the French more than their partnering country in the same model, thus confirming the relevance of the historical traditions as outlined in the theory section.

Table 4 also reveals information on cross-national differences in the understanding of diversity. Here we build on Benson (2009) who argues that giving both sides of arguments in a debate is more likely in news systems with internal pluralism than external pluralism. The U.S. journalistic tradition has always been linked more to the ideal of internal pluralism (where each media outlet expresses a diversity of viewpoints) than external pluralism (where diversity is realized through a range of outlets with each promoting a different viewpoint; see Hallin and Mancini, 2004: 29). Our findings in Table 4 demonstrate that the inclusion of “pros and cons” is indeed highest in the U.S. newspapers (63%) and lowest in the Italian newspapers (25%), and the two values differ significantly from all other countries. This concurs with findings by Ferree et al. (2002: 240) according to which U.S. journalists are more likely to include speakers with opposing views in the
same article than their Continental European counterparts. Internal pluralism is typical for the Liberal media systems, with the important exception of Britain where external pluralism prevails (Hallin and Mancini, 2004: 208), which is again fully supported by our data (see the relatively low value of 44% for “pros and cons” in British newspapers; Table 4). In this regard the British press seems to align more with the Continental European reporting practice than with the U.S. practice.

Negativity

The amount of negativity in political affairs coverage across the six news systems varies substantially, as our findings in Table 5 show. The standardized negativity indices differ significantly between the countries ($F(5, 5287) = 58.92, p<.001, R^2-adj. = .052$). The news stories in the consensus democracies of Switzerland and Germany are least negative (SUI =36%, GER =38%) whereas political affairs reporting in the Polarized Mediterranean systems is most negative (ITA =57%, FRA =56%). This is in line with our hypothesis; the only deviation from H3 is that the negativity values for the southern European systems are higher than for the Anglo-American systems. We had expected that the effects of commercialization and watchdog orientation in Britain and the U.S. would produce at least similar (if not higher) levels of negativity than the effects of polarization and inter-party contestation in France and Italy. But it seems that the effects of the political systems are stronger than those of the media system.

Benson and Hallin (2007) and Benson (2010) had also found that negativity was higher in French than U.S. political affairs coverage. Drawing on Peter (2003) we explain this by the fact that journalists rely on cues they get from political elites, and if these elites are constantly implicated in mutual attacks and confrontations it will drive up the level of “negative tone”, “conflict frames” and allegations of “political incompetence” (see Table 5). This also ties in with Sheafer and Wolfsfeld’s (2009) comparative analysis. It established that polarized multi-party systems as found in France, Italy or Israel (see examples by Sheafer and Wolfsfeld, 2009: 161) are a crucial contingent condition (or mediating variable) for explaining negativity in the news. They give three reasons for this: First, polarized multi-party systems provide access to a broader range of oppositional voices to enter the political debate, some of them from radical parties or dissident non-elite sources that are simply too attractive from a media logic perspective to be left out of journalists’ news coverage. Second, audiences growing up in polarized multi-party systems expect a greater magnitude of
dissent from a wider range of viewpoints to be represented in the media. Third, journalists develop a wider understanding of the range of political dissent that is still within the confines of the “sphere of legitimate controversy” (Hallin, 1984). This may at times be combined with a feeling of being pressurized or instrumentalized which – according to findings by van Dalen, Albaek and de Vreese (2011) – has led to higher levels of political cynicism among journalists in Polarized Mediterranean systems than journalists from Anglo-American or Corporatist systems.

In sum our findings suggest that whereas negativity in the Anglo-American press is induced by trends towards commercialization and professional critique, the degree of negativity in the Mediterranean systems is influenced more by the southern European tradition of opinionated journalism and the high degree of polarization, ideological diversity and conflict.5

Mapping the Findings

The ultimate goal of this study has been to identify theoretically-grounded indicators that discriminate traditions of news reporting and explore whether these discursive, content-based models show resemblance with existing models in media systems research. To facilitate this mapping exercise we rely on a correspondence analysis whose results are depicted in Figure 1. Some words of explanation: Correspondence analysis is an inductive method used to reveal the structure of a complex data matrix and to represent it on a visual map, that is, as points within a space, thereby facilitating the interpretation of results (Clausen, 1998).6 Our correspondence analysis is based on a contingency table cross-classifying the six home systems of newspapers (USA, GBR, GER, SUI, FRA, ITA) by the content features found in these newspapers (type of article, objectivity indicators, negativity indicators). Press systems with similar distributions of news practices are represented as points that are close in space, and systems that have very dissimilar distributions are positioned furthest apart. The two-dimensional solution presented in Figure 1 explains 79.1% of the variance.

The first dimension (horizontal x-axis) explains 61.7% of total variance and represents a polarity between characteristics of objectivity and negativity. It is labeled “rational versus polarized information” and derived from Hallin and Mancini’s (2004: 57-61; 2012b: 291-292) discussion of divergent approaches toward professional newsmaking: one is tied to “rational-legal authority” (relying on empirically observed, systematically researched facts that are presented in a detached
manner) and the other to “polarization” (relying on fuzzy partisanship that follows the fights of one’s parallel party and is negative to the parties on the other side of the spectrum; see Poletti and Brants, 2010: 334). The second dimension (vertical y-axis) covers 17.4% of total variance and is labeled “dissemination versus analysis”. It reproduces the popularity of various article types. The much lower percentage of explained variance for the second dimension indicates that it is less important and also less coherent. It represents a preference for “disseminating” news and views (straight news, opinion, interviews) in the upper part of the matrix and “analyzing” information (in background articles and news analyses) in the lower part of the matrix. In the joint space between these dimensions, three models of news reporting shine through.

- The lower left corner of the emerging triangle is occupied by the three U.S. newspapers under study in which a “rational analysis” of news prevails, favoring critical yet fact-based interpretation of political affairs. Preferred reporting features are the inclusion of expert sources, opposing viewpoints and frequent quotations, whereas interviews with politicians and prominently featured commentaries are less common. This practice is reminiscent of the Anglo-American news tradition, but with a strong analytical angle.

- The right-hand corner of the triangle is represented by the Italian newspapers examined here; in them a negative, conflict-oriented and opinionated reporting style prevails. Atypical of this style is the consideration of all those elements that in the Anglo-Saxon understanding make up the ideal of objective journalism.

- The upper left corner is populated by the German and Swiss newspaper outlets where we find a characteristic coexistence of news and opinion. The emphasis on news is clearly more pronounced (but less scrutinizing than in the U.S. newspapers), and opinion is usually separated (although featured more prominently than in the U.S. newspapers).

- In between the three polar ends are the French and British newspapers which occupy middle positions because they combine elements from various traditions. The distance of the French from the Italian press can be well explained by the greater relative appreciation of “rational” standards of professional conduct in France (like systematic procedures and transparent norms in the workplace; see Hallin and Mancini, 2004: 136-137). The proximity of the British to the Corporatist press can be well explained by the greater relative
appreciation of the dual dissemination of “news and views” (as is readily recognizable by the

**Discussion**

Although our content analysis relies on a different empirical foundation, its theoretical
approach is compatible with the historical-institutional paradigm underlying the work of Hallin and
Mancini (2004). As stated in the Introduction of our paper (and reiterated at the beginning of the
Results section), our own neo-institutionalist approach has led us to combine all news
organizations embedded in the same system and consider them as components of one (loosely-
coupled, yet institutionally-integrated) national journalistic field. Neo-Institutionalism is of relevance
for comparative media research for two reasons. First, it provides a rationale for why news outlets
within a given system are pushed towards similar practices, thereby fulfilling important criteria of an
institution (Cook, 1998: 70). Second, cross-national differences in how media institutions developed
are explained by long-standing historical traditions and contemporary conditions, which shape news
discourse in characteristic directions (Benson, 2004: 281). In our analysis, we have examined
several theoretically relevant news practices – first separately, then cumulatively in a
correspondence analysis – and viewed them as representations of institutionally guided,
historically-developed pathways of journalism that we subjected to a comparative analysis. Not only
can the discursive models emerging from this procedure be compared among themselves, they can
also be related to existing typologies of media systems research. Based on a content analysis of
the use of three key indicators (opinion-orientation, objectivity, and negativity) we find in the U.S.
newspapers a coexistence of objective and interpretative journalism (allowing for a “rational
analysis” of news), in the Italian newspapers a coexistence of opinionated and negative news
(promoting the provision of “polarized” information), and in the German and Swiss newspapers a
coexistence of news and views (although with an emphasis on rational, factual and consensual
reporting). French and British newspapers occupy borderline positions which support, as indeed do
all other cases, our theoretical expectations to a very large extent. Hypotheses 1 to 3 have been
largely confirmed, and where there were discrepancies in detail, the contradictions were resolved in
the overall view of the findings (in the correspondence analysis) or could be plausibly explained by
extending existing assumptions about the models.
We believe our study contributes to the comparative communication research in several ways. So far, the comparative literature is influenced by conceptions of journalism which have arisen either from (potentially unreliable) self-declarations of news people or from understandings of media systems that focus on structure (but not content). Our models as presented here are based on an analysis of manifest news content reflecting actual production practices; they fill a serious gap in the literature and help validate but also rectify existing typologies in important ways.

Two possible rectifications may be mentioned here. The oft-encountered admission of journalists in Italy to adhering to the neutral ideal of objectivity, as Mancini (2000) already suspected, proved to be exaggerated. Furthermore, the ideal of Anglo-American journalism as a coherent benchmark – established by Chalaby (1996) and celebrated to this day (see Mancini, 2005) – turned out to be a category of limited and at most historical value. In current practice, American and British press journalists fulfill the ideal’s expectations remarkably differently and inconsistently. A longitudinal analysis of our data (see Umbricht and Esser, 2013) shows that over time British newspapers seem to be aligning more with continental European papers than with U.S. papers. It is particularly interesting to see that British newspapers seem to be absorbing more and more Polarized elements in their day-to-day coverage of politics (ibid.).

Taking into account the nuances and qualifications in the typology of Hallin and Mancini (2004), and also their comments on France and Great Britain as mixed cases, we find qualified support for their basic assumptions but also an opportunity for further development. Our study is subject to restrictions, of course, as no three news outlets can represent the entire news culture of a system. Replications with larger media samples are needed to provide more definite answers to the questions raised here. In addition, questions regarding organizational differences and temporal differences had to remain unaddressed. With regard to temporal differences we can state, however, that a follow-up analysis focusing specifically on the development over time found clear cross-national convergence in the preference for opinion-oriented reporting but persistent divergence in the use of objectivity-related and negativity-related reporting (Umbricht and Esser, 2013).
Acknowledgement

This study was supported by the National Center of Competence in Research on ‘Challenges to Democracy in the 21st Century’ (NCCR Democracy), funded by the Swiss National Science Foundation.
Notes

1 The usage of the term Anglo-American hints to the many shared characteristics of Great Britain and the United States (liberal democracies with little state intervention in the press, majoritarian political systems, two large catch-all parties and many catch-all newspapers, etc.) but should not mask important differences concerning the role of public broadcasting, press partisanship, tabloid news culture, and competition among many national newspapers.

2 An additional necessary adaptation concerned the front page of The Times. In 1960/61 this was reserved for advertisements and obituaries so for those years we coded political articles from the inside pages (only those half a page or larger, or accompanied by a picture or a very bold headline; n=124).

3 Some of our other publications use different differentiations. Some keep the sub-categories “unequivocal commentaries” and “stories mixing information with opinion” separate, some collapse “straight news” and “long background news” into one category depending on theoretical considerations.

4 To standardize the aggregate objectivity index, the sum total of the five sub-dimensions for each country is divided by the number of sub-dimensions as expressed in this formula: \((x_i - \text{min}_{\text{th}}) / (\text{max}_{\text{th}} - \text{min}_{\text{th}})\). Here \(x_i\) refers to the empirical value of the aggregate objectivity index \(x\), and \(\text{th}\) to the minimal (here 0) and maximal (here 5) theoretical value of the aggregate index.

5 However, contrary to Benson’s (2010) suggestion, this may not be a result of a more debate-oriented journalism that structures news around the arguments and counterarguments of competing groups because – particularly in the case of Italy – the share of “pros and cons”, the inclusion of knowledgeable “experts”, and the emphasis on “hard facts” is relatively underdeveloped (as reported in Table 4). In future analyses we will address this question more systematically.

6 The steps of correspondence analysis are as follows: category profiles (relative frequencies) and masses (marginal proportions) are computed, the distances between these points are calculated, and the best-fitting spaces of \(n\) dimensions are located. Rotation then occurs to maximize the inertia (variance) explained by each factor, as in principal components analysis.
References


### Table 1. Selection of Media Outlets

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Models</th>
<th>Countries</th>
<th>News Outlets</th>
<th>No. of articles</th>
<th>Article length (a)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Anglo-American</td>
<td>United States (USA)</td>
<td>New York Times</td>
<td>394</td>
<td>896</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>St. Louis Post-Dispatch</td>
<td>283</td>
<td>590</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Time Magazine</td>
<td>198</td>
<td>1056</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Great Britain (GBR)</td>
<td>The Times</td>
<td>420</td>
<td>607</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Birmingham Mail</td>
<td>206</td>
<td>198</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>The Observer</td>
<td>314</td>
<td>575</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corporatist Germanic</td>
<td>Germany (GER)</td>
<td>Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung</td>
<td>632</td>
<td>368</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Rheinische Post</td>
<td>517</td>
<td>199</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Spiegel</td>
<td>282</td>
<td>1299</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Switzerland (SUI)</td>
<td>Neue Zürcher Zeitung</td>
<td>306</td>
<td>522</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Berner Zeitung</td>
<td>338</td>
<td>256</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Weltwoche</td>
<td>264</td>
<td>1286</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Polarized Mediterranean</td>
<td>France (FRA)</td>
<td>Le Monde</td>
<td>469</td>
<td>621</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Ouest France</td>
<td>331</td>
<td>443</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>L’Express</td>
<td>244</td>
<td>1047</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Italy (ITA)</td>
<td>Corriere della Sera</td>
<td>547</td>
<td>620</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Resto del Carlino</td>
<td>482</td>
<td>490</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Espresso</td>
<td>298</td>
<td>1155</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Notes: Sample N = 6525 articles; articles per country: USA = 875, GBR = 940, GER = 1431, SUI = 908, FRA = 1044, ITA = 1327; (a) median words per article*
Table 2. Inter-Coder Reliability Tests (Cohen’s kappa coefficients)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Language groups</th>
<th>Format-based variables</th>
<th>Content-based variables</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>German</td>
<td>.83</td>
<td>.70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English</td>
<td>.83</td>
<td>.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>French</td>
<td>.91</td>
<td>.62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Italian</td>
<td>.89</td>
<td>.62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average</td>
<td>.87</td>
<td>.65</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3. Type of Article (in percentage)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>USA</th>
<th>GBR</th>
<th>GER</th>
<th>SUI</th>
<th>FRA</th>
<th>ITA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Straight News</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Long Background News</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Analysis &amp; Interpretation</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opinion</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interview</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total %</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total N=6454 articles</td>
<td>(n=873)</td>
<td>(n=940)</td>
<td>(n=1422)</td>
<td>(n=897)</td>
<td>(n=1014)</td>
<td>(n=1308)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes: Totals can be different from 100% due to rounding. Values with different superscript letters are significantly different; values with the same superscript are not statistically different (post-hoc Dunnett’s T3 test at p<.05 level).
Table 4. Objectivity in News Stories (means of dichotomous variables)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Inclusion of...</th>
<th>USA</th>
<th>GBR</th>
<th>GER</th>
<th>SUI</th>
<th>FRA</th>
<th>ITA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pros &amp; cons</td>
<td>.63</td>
<td>.44</td>
<td>.55</td>
<td>.48</td>
<td>.45</td>
<td>.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expert sources</td>
<td>.33</td>
<td>.14</td>
<td>.24</td>
<td>.29</td>
<td>.17</td>
<td>.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quotes &amp; paraphrases</td>
<td>.94</td>
<td>.73</td>
<td>.77</td>
<td>.79</td>
<td>.81</td>
<td>.82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A hard-facts-first structure</td>
<td>.74</td>
<td>.75</td>
<td>.75</td>
<td>.72</td>
<td>.63</td>
<td>.59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Separation of facts &amp; opinion</td>
<td>.81</td>
<td>.83</td>
<td>.89</td>
<td>.74</td>
<td>.80</td>
<td>.66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Std. Objectivity Index</strong></td>
<td><strong>.69^a</strong></td>
<td><strong>.57^c</strong></td>
<td><strong>.64^b</strong></td>
<td><strong>.59^c</strong></td>
<td><strong>.57^c</strong></td>
<td><strong>.48^d</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Total N=6210 articles* 870 914 1319 790 1012 1305

**Notes:** If one of the five dichotomous sub-variables was missing in an article, the article in question was excluded from the Standardized Objectivity Index. The mean scores of the index range from 0 to 1. Means with different superscript letters are significantly different; means with the same superscript are not statistically different (post-hoc Dunnett's T3 test at p<.05 level).
### Table 5. Negativity in News Stories (means of dichotomous variables)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Focus on...</th>
<th>USA</th>
<th>GBR</th>
<th>GER</th>
<th>SUI</th>
<th>FRA</th>
<th>ITA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Negative tone</td>
<td>.43</td>
<td>.48</td>
<td>.36</td>
<td>.34</td>
<td>.52</td>
<td>.54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conflict frame</td>
<td>.52</td>
<td>.67</td>
<td>.45</td>
<td>.51</td>
<td>.63</td>
<td>.69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political incompetence</td>
<td>.47</td>
<td>.52</td>
<td>.47</td>
<td>.40</td>
<td>.66</td>
<td>.74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political scandals</td>
<td>.23</td>
<td>.27</td>
<td>.18</td>
<td>.15</td>
<td>.30</td>
<td>.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Std. Negativity Index</strong></td>
<td>.42&lt;sup&gt;c&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>.49&lt;sup&gt;b&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>.38&lt;sup&gt;cd&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>.36&lt;sup&gt;d&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>.56&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>.57&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total N=5293 articles</strong></td>
<td>802</td>
<td>785</td>
<td>1139</td>
<td>758</td>
<td>649</td>
<td>1160</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Notes:** If one of the four dichotomous sub-variables was missing in an article, the article in question was excluded from the Standardized Negativity Index. The mean scores of the index range from 0 to 1. Means with different superscript letters are significantly different; means with the same superscript are not statistically different (post-hoc Dunnett’s T3 test at p<.05 level).
Figure 1. Correspondence Analysis: Mapping of Systems and Practices (symmetrical normalization)

$s_2^2 = 0.007 (17.4\%)$

$s_1^2 = 0.026 (61.7\%)$