Journalism and Social Media: Redistribution of Power?

Editors

Marcel Broersma and Scott Eldridge II

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Editorial

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Abstract

This thematic issue sets out to explore the power relationships between journalism and social media. The articles here examine these relationships as intersections between journalistic actors and their audiences, and between news media, their content, and the functions of social media platforms. As the articles in this issue show, the emergence of social media and their adoption by news media and other social actors have brought about a series of changes which have had an impact on how news is produced, how information is shared, how audiences consume news, and how publics are formed. In this introduction, we highlight the work in this issue in order to reflect on the emergence of social media as one which has been accompanied by shifts in power in journalism and its ancillary fields, shifts which have in turn surfaced new questions for scholars to confront.

Issue

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1. Introduction

Over the course of the last decade, social media and journalism have come to be featured more and more in the same academic conversations as scholars have sought to join up their understanding of a familiar communicative practice in journalism with new avenues for doing so found in social media. Studies have examined the ways social media platforms are used as sources for news (Broersma & Graham, 2013; Hermida, 2010; Paulussen & Harder, 2014), have been integrated into the dynamics of journalism practice (Beckers & Harder, 2016; Bossio, 2017), and woven into processes of communicating information, including news, to publics (Bruns, 2018; Skogerbø & Krumsvik, 2015). Social media feature prominently in terms of how publics are made aware of news, both in public (Fletcher & Kleis Nielsen, 2018) and in private (Swart, Peters, & Broersma, 2018a, 2018b). As we put forward when announcing this issue, they

have become so prevalent in conversations about journalism, social media are described as something 'normalized' and regularly fitted into the functions of journalism (Broersma & Graham, 2015; Lasorsa, Lewis, & Holton, 2012; Parmelee, 2013).

While we know, to some degree, this has occurred, the ways journalism and social media have intertwined have become more complex as actors at all levels—from the subjects of coverage, to journalists, to those consuming news—engage within these spaces. As much as we see social media as a largely normalized feature of news media, this normalization has not been entirely seamless. The dominant normalization framework and the prevalent focus in (digital) journalism studies on how the digital has been integrated into journalism (Eldridge, Hess, Tandoc, & Westlund, in press), might obscure our understanding of how journalistic norms, practices, and forms are changing more fundamentally (cf. Broersma, 2019). We see in the articles here how journalists are

increasingly engaging with the features of social media, including finding avenues on social media for reaching audiences. We also see a coming together of old power relationships and new ones, including those emerging with other agents in the networked ecology of news. These dynamics have been met with varying responses—sometimes enthusiastic, other times cautious, yet each nevertheless showing these intersecting spaces can no longer be discussed separately.

In this issue we have articles working to understand journalism and social media, and from that work surface new questions for media scholars to consider as we continue to examine the possible reorientations of power dynamics that have accompanied these developments. This includes the ways in which these shifts have moved from journalistic media towards social media, where new platforms have become 'normal' avenues for news to reach publics, and where these platforms have enabled movements away from journalism as a space for mediating between social actors and publics.

2. Contextualizing Social Media, Journalism and Power

While the term normalization makes salient how social media are commonplace in journalism, the textures of this coming together differ from other developments seen in the emergence of digital journalism (Eldridge, 2018; Eldridge & Franklin, 2019). With social media, the opportunities to engage online have at times been embraced enthusiastically (Posetti, 2018), but they have also brought about a "lingering unease" as the logics of social media and the logics of journalism clash, as Axel Bruns and Christian Nuernbergk (2019) argue in their article here. Indeed, the adoption of social media were less quickly normalized than their digital predecessors, such as blogs and websites around the turn of the century (Singer, 2005). In Bruns and Nuernbergk's (2019) comparison of Australian and German political journalists' Twitter use, they nevertheless find that despite unease, this has become more widespread, and so too has "the gradual but inexorable influence of social media logics on professional journalism". Their article and Kelly Fincham's (2019) both engage with these findings within a discussion of homophily.

Describing a tendency towards sameness in terms of the people journalists interact with, Kelly Fincham (2019) finds political journalists on Twitter replicate the "insular groups" of small offline journalism communities, now found in "virtual journalism packs". Her article examines this in the interactions among US and UK political journalists in 2016 and 2017, when each country had a nationwide election (a US Presidential election in 2016, and a UK General Election in 2017). Fincham (2019) finds in these interactions a "sustained homophily as journalists continue to normalize Twitter". In contrast to Bruns and Nuernbergk's (2019) results, but complementing their argument, homophily is reflected differently within the cultures in which journalists are practicing, whether more

pronounced as in the US and UK, or less so in Germany where the journalistic workforce, market structure, and cultures may have contributed to a slower adoption of new media opportunities. Thus, we see from these two studies that the ways in which social media and journalism intersect are not universally found, and the result of their emergence has not reflected one type of adoption, instead developing in many different forms.

Taking the way journalists engage on social media, and Twitter in particular, further, the article presented here by Chrysi Dagoula (2019), in line with discussions of homophily, finds a prevalence of in-group communication in a study on the nature of dialogue on Twitter. As a platform that, on paper, should engender openness, with the potential for a deliberative public sphere, discourse manifests quite differently in practice. On Twitter, Dagoula (2019) finds elite-centric discourses that fail to engage with a wider array of voices, pointing to more complex notions of exclusion and that any normative understanding of the public sphere must be evaluated based not only on the inclusivity of publics, but also of topics, and counter-publics and counter-topics accordingly.

What these discussions bring to the foreground when considering complex power shifts between those being spoken about, the subjects of journalism, and those spoken to—the audiences of both social and news media. They draw our attention to a complex interplay between the logics of journalism, which tend towards certain traditional news practices, and emerging social media logics which push towards different objectives, such as engagement. Among the latter is what Monika Djerf-Pierre, Mia Lindgren, and Mikayla Alexis Budinski (2019) refer to as a "blind chase to maximize low-level engagement", where in an effort to maximize shares, clicks, and other markers of attention found on social platforms, news media first sought to produce content which can garner such reactions. In a mixed-method study, focusing on YouTube videos reporting on an antibiotic resistant 'Superbug', they also found that beyond this 'blind chase', their journalistic content on YouTube, journalists can be successful at building greater engagement, including "generating audience discussions about social and political accountability" when producing contextualized, journalistic, content. While accompanied by expressions of anger, and resentment, audiences nevertheless engage with the journalistic YouTube material and the way it is framed. This type of study, and its findings, open doors to new ways of considering engagement within these spaces, including new ways of qualitatively examining what type of content is engaged with by audiences that move beyond the technological markers of engagement—shares, likes, and similar.

Some of these findings highlight differences rooted in the nature of journalism prior to social media, and as Stephen Jukes (2019) writes in his article here, it is worth considering how journalists steeped in journalism's traditions and newsroom structures see Twitter as both an

opportunity for self-promotion, and a platform that is incongruous with journalists' professional cultures, that "sits uneasily" with norms of detachment and distance. Jukes (2019) argues that, despite their reticence, journalists have nevertheless adopted the opportunity—and in doing so, crossed a previously distinct line between news work and the business of news. This is not something done unwittingly, or unaware of its implications. From interviews with journalists, Jukes finds that in response to the larger news industry crisis, and with an awareness of the opportunities which social media offer, these journalists are pragmatically engaging in these social opportunities.

Yet for news media, turning towards social media spaces for engagement can also result in a "dislocation" of news, shifting away from domains news media had more-or-less under their proprietary control on websites managed by news organizations, towards social media where this control is surrendered to large platform companies. As Oscar Westlund and Mats Ekström (2019) write, this has resulted in a "power redistribution from *the news media* to *platform companies*". This redistribution is in part a result of "dependencies", as news media rely on social media platforms for publishing their work and reaching audiences. Dislocation, however, also refers to a loss of power in terms of the ways the principles and contexts of news are presented, and not only a reallocation of content and revenue towards a new media space or company.

Such dislocation is also found, though quite differently, when attention is paid not to how social media have managed to secure control of news content and revenue, but in focusing on how other societal actors have been able to jump on social media platforms for their own ends in ways which may deprioritize journalism in the process. Scott Eldridge, Lucía García-Carretero, and Marcel Broersma (2019), consider politicians and political parties—traditionally the subject of media coverage, and not the makers of content—through Social Network Analysis to see how political actors construct publics in their own adoption of social media, finding this often elides journalistic actors and news media. This offers new ways of understanding publics in light of these dynamics, finding dynamics not of intersection, but of disintermediation as political actors bypass news media altogether in order to construct and speak to their own publics. While signaling new opportunities for political actors to reach their publics online, when it comes to understanding what this means for journalism and its relationship with its own publics, it raises key questions for their future.

3. Conclusion: Looking Forward

In the wake of a particularly tumultuous few years for news and journalism, where social media and their pervasive nature have been front and center and under public scrutiny, this thematic issue engages with this tumult

as an opportunity to consider anew the relationships between journalism, social media, and the mechanisms of power. The articles assembled here reflect on the complex interrelationships between different societal actors in the public spaces where communication takes place on social media, and each highlights ways in which we can consider these within our discussions of journalism. They also show how, at the intersections of logics of news media and logics of social media, our understanding of audiences, publics, journalists, news media, and social media corporations have changed. This highlights where a more complex set of media dynamics has developed, and new challenges for scholars have emerged. Now the news ecology has become a hybrid space in which various actors engage with each other in different ways and as a consequence new power structures are established (cf. Chadwick, 2017), the articles in this issue offer us ways of understanding these.

Within these articles, there are also critical points of reflection for future work to pick up upon, offering guides for making sense of these power dynamics and relationships. These include findings which might give us pause by highlighting the scope and scale of change and the nature of the relationships between journalism and social media, and those which problematize the ways we might have understood the first decades of social media and journalism coming together. As Stephen Jukes (2019) writes in his article, when we talk about social media and journalism, our attention naturally turns towards making sense of the "sweeping changes wrought by social media". These changes continue to have an impact on the norms, practices, and forms of journalism, and continue to affect the ways in which we see news media working sometimes with and sometimes against social media. These changes, by extension, also signal a change in journalism's relationships with other agents in the networked ecology of news, including with sources, social media platforms, technology companies, and the citizens their content reaches. While journalism studies in the past decades has mainly focused on "how the digital has been integrated in journalism in terms of technologies, platforms, and businesses", a shift to studying "how journalism has been integrated into the digital" would be fruitful (Broersma, 2019, p. 516). The nature of the relationships between journalism and other actors in the networked ecology for news, and the power dynamics they draw upon, warrants further consideration by media scholars as we continue to try and understand the impact these have on society.

Conflict of Interests

The authors declare no conflict of interests.

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Article

Political Journalists and Their Social Media Audiences: New Power Relations

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Abstract

Social media use is now commonplace across journalism, in spite of lingering unease about the impact the networked, real-time logic of leading social media platforms may have on the quality of journalistic coverage. As a result, distinct journalistic voices are forced to compete more directly with experts, commentators, sources, and other stakeholders within the same space. Such shifting power relations may be observed also in the interactions between political journalists and their audiences on major social media platforms. This article therefore pursues a cross-national comparison of interactions between political journalists and their audiences on Twitter in Germany and Australia, documenting how the differences in the status of Twitter in each country's media environment manifest in activities and network interactions. In each country, we observed Twitter interactions around the national parliamentary press corps (the Bundespressekonferenz and the Federal Press Gallery), gathering all public tweets by and directed at the journalists' accounts during 2017. We examine overall activity and engagement patterns and highlight significant differences between the two national groups; and we conduct further network analysis to examine the prevalent connections and engagement between press corps journalists themselves, and between journalists, their audiences, and other interlocutors on Twitter. New structures of information flows, of influence, and thus ultimately of power relations become evident in this analysis.

1. Introduction

In spite of considerable reluctance and even hostility towards social media at earlier stages, journalists have now broadly accepted tools such as Facebook and especially Twitter as part of their overall professional toolkit. Journalists have recognised the utility of social media especially as sources of live updates during breaking news situations (Bruno, 2011); many subjects of journalists' stories are present on and even notorious for their usage of social media (Ausserhofer & Maireder, 2013); journalists

have been actively encouraged to develop a social media presence by the social media 'evangelists' employed by their organisations (Tenore, 2010); and at a time of considerable industrial change and employment precarity, journalists also derive career benefits from developing a strong "personal brand" independent of the news organisation (Molyneux & Holton, 2015).

This gradual embrace of social media as platforms for monitoring, sourcing, disseminating, and discussing news stories also recognises broader, generational transformations: as the *Reuters Institute Digital News Report*

2017 shows, the use of print and broadcast news has declined precipitously in many nations, and especially younger audiences are now predominantly using online and social media as their main news sources (Newman, Fletcher, Kalogeropoulos, Levy, & Nielsen, 2017, p. 11). In becoming more active on social media, therefore, journalists are simply going where their audiences and potential sources are.

But in doing so they also expose themselves to new media logics: "with social media, journalism and audiences meet on uncommon ground" (Loosen & Schmidt, 2016, p. 7). Social media platforms are general-purpose spaces operated by third parties, rather than controlled by news outlets in the way that masthead websites (including the comment functionality on these sites) had been. Journalists, sources, audiences, and other stakeholders therefore now encounter each other in a "third space" (Wright, Graham, & Jackson, 2016), and must adapt to the rules of that space. But such rules are co-evolved between platform providers and users, influenced by the platforms' communicative affordances, the providers' explicit governance decisions, and the user community's implicit conventions. This has the potential to fundamentally affect and alter the power relations between the various participants in news and journalism.

In contrast to the gradual normalisation of previous medial disruptions—newsprint digitalisation, 24-hour news channels, blogging (Singer, 2005)—into standard journalistic practice, the tendency now may thus be not for social media to be adapted into established news production practices and logics, but rather for news and journalism to be normalised *into social media*, and subsumed by social media logics (Bruns, 2018). The pull of social media as spaces where news is disseminated and discussed may exceed the power of established journalistic practices and structures to resist this incorporation. In particular, the greater personal and interpersonal focus of leading social media spaces may weaken the boundaries of journalistic institutions.

Engagement through social media exposes the journalist as individual, even more than personality-driven formats like radio and television news. Hedman (2016, p. 11) asks, therefore, "does *journalism* now include not only the content but also the journalist herself?" Some journalists will regard this shift as liberating and empowering, but it may also have unintended and negative consequences: the greater public spotlight on the individual discourages journalists who are more likely to be subjected to personal attacks on social media—including women, as well as those representing minorities defined by their ethnic, religious, or sexual identity—and may perpetuate the overrepresentation of white, male, cisgendered staff in news organisations.

Following this increasing emphasis on the individual news practitioner, it therefore becomes necessary to closely analyse how journalistic practices and processes transform with the transition to social media as central platforms. Such transformations will vary as they unfold across different national and institutional contexts, in diverse thematic newsbeats, and over extended timeframes. This article addresses this challenge by observing the posting and interaction patterns of leading political journalists on Twitter in Germany and Australia throughout 2017. We focus on the national parliamentary press corps (the Bundespressekonferenz and the Federal Press Gallery), examining all public tweets by and directed at the journalists' accounts.

We follow two broad analytical approaches. First, we assess overall activity and engagement patterns for the two press corps: we develop key metrics that evaluate the journalists' own usage strategies, and highlight significant differences between the two national groups. We also assess how Twitter users approach and respond to the content provided by press corps journalists. Second, we conduct further network analyses to examine the prevalent interactions between press corps journalists themselves, and between journalists, their audiences, and other interlocutors. In combination, the quantitative data indicate starkly differing levels of social media take-up between political journalists and their audiences in Germany and Australia, as well as within the press corps in each country, while the network analyses provide possible explanations for these patterns and point variously to the persistence of old or emergence of new power relations between interactants.

2. Political Journalism and Social Media

Political journalism has been described as "'the most sacred part' of journalism" (Neveu, 2002, p. 23). Its prestigious position as an intermediary between the people and the political elite, generally producing highly visible news, comes with substantial societal and democratic expectations. Especially at the national level, leading political journalists often enjoy considerable influence and recognition both amongst the general public and in their own profession, yet the political newsbeat is also one of the most intensely critiqued and criticised (Albæk, van Dalen, Jebril, & de Vreese, 2014, p. 34). Notably, such influence also extends to communicative choices: for example, the successful use of Twitter by key political journalists during a 2009 leadership crisis in Australia led to widespread take-up of the then still novel medium amongst journalists and their followers, well beyond the politics beat itself (Posetti, 2010).

But in a multimodal and hybrid environment, the interconnection between journalists, politicians, and the public has become more complex (Chadwick, 2013): journalists and traditional news organisations can no longer claim a monopoly on public information, and have to deal with political sources that have themselves become media producers. In politics, the negotiation of meanings increasingly takes place in public, and social media—where politicians, journalists, and activists are present and observe each other contemporaneously—play an important role here (Ekman & Widholm, 2015). Encounters

between political journalists and politicians during routine periods remain especially under-researched (Albæk et al., 2014, p. 53).

While several studies examine the social media activities of politicians or journalists in general, few studies specifically survey *political* journalists on this issue or directly analyse concrete interactions between political journalists and politicians. Dutch research suggests that journalists on Twitter form tightly-knit networks: Vergeer (2015, p. 283) detected a strongly connected network of follower–followee relations between Dutch journalists; Verweij (2012, p. 687) found a highly connected network between Dutch politicians and political journalists. From surveys, Rogstad (2014) showed that Norwegian political journalists tend to use Twitter in an almost non-private manner: although journalists engage with social media, they exhibit differences in their self-promotion and expression of personal opinions. Similarly, using content analysis, Nuernbergk (2016) found that German political journalists very rarely tweeted messages of personal relevance: they mainly interacted with other journalists and politicians via @mentions in their tweets. Further exploring homophily, Hanusch and Nölleke (2018) report that Australian journalists interact in a journalism-centred bubble especially in their @mentions, while retweets show slightly more diversity. Patterns of homophily exist across different beats, especially amongst sports journalists and political journalists; due to gender or geographic proximity; and also between journalists at the same outlet.

The interactions of political journalists on Twitter also reveal some of the dynamics of an agenda-building and agenda-setting process that previously had been considerably less public (Parmelee, 2014; Russell, Hendricks, Choi, & Stephens, 2015). Journalists as well as politicians, experts, activists, and other stakeholders in policy-making processes interact to request information, make statements, correct perceived misrepresentations, or even engage in more phatic social communication. The more public nature of such exchanges can enable journalists to force politicians into providing a response they would not have offered in a non-public, one-on-one context; however, the ability to make public statements through social media has also enabled some politicians to withdraw altogether from the more intensive "negotiation-through-conversation" that is possible in interview contexts (Broersma & Graham, 2013, p. 449). In this article, we therefore also explore the network structure of leading political journalists' Twitter interactions, and examine what other accounts they predominantly engage with.

We compare Australia and Germany because the two countries differ markedly in the structure of their news media industries, as well as in the professional and popular take-up of Twitter and other social media platforms for news consumption, political debate, and other purposes. Demographic factors may play a role here: Australians are younger on average than Germans, and this holds true also for the journalism industry. According to *Worlds of Journalism*, German journalists ($M = 46$) are nearly ten years older on average than their Australian colleagues ($M = 37$) (Hanusch, 2013; Steindl, Laurerer, & Hanitzsch, 2017). This may explain Australia's greater adoption of social media at least in part.

Further, the Australian news media landscape is notoriously concentrated, with a few domestic media companies (News Corporation, Fairfax, and the public broadcaster ABC) dominating online marketshare (Young, 2010). The German news market is considerably more diverse, and features strong public service media alongside a wide range of national and regional print and broadcast offerings (Thomaß & Horz, 2018). Germany can be considered a "Democratic Corporatist" system because of its strong public service media, journalistic professionalisation, and (still) high press market reach (Brüggemann, Engesser, Büchel, Humprecht, & Castro, 2014; Hallin & Mancini, 2004). Australia is a more complicated case: its media system is an "outrider" amongst the Liberal group. Compared to the UK, the Australian media system is less regulated; compared to the US, it lacks a tradition of "widespread self-regulatory professionalism" (Jones & Pusey, 2010, p. 465). Here, the power of journalistic norms might be limited, and Australian journalists may be more ready to experiment with new tools and platforms.

Perhaps as a result of their rather limited choice of news outlets, Australians have been comparatively enthusiastic adopters of social media for news and other purposes, while Germans have remained significantly more reserved. According to the *Digital News Report*, only 31% of Germans use social media as a source of news; this compares to 52% in Australia, where social media have overtaken print sources (Newman, Fletcher, Kalogeropoulos, Levy, & Nielsen, 2018, pp. 81, 127). Of those who had used social media for news in the last week, 11% of the German respondents and 18% of the Australians were following a journalist via social media (Hölig & Hasebrink, 2018, p. 47; Park, Fisher, Fuller, & Lee, 2018, p. 99). These figures suggest that, on average, Australian journalists should be likely to have more followers and receive more engagement than their German colleagues.

We expect these differences to manifest in the uses of Twitter by, and the audience engagement with, journalists in the respective parliamentary press corps. We specifically chose not to examine press corps in countries such as the U.S. because journalists' social media activities there are already comparatively overrepresented in the scholarly literature, even though the idiosyncratic media and political system of the U.S. does not resemble any structures found in other democratic nations (Zuiderveen Borgesius et al., 2016, p. 11). Arguably, the Australian and German contexts are more representative of a wide range of other political and media environments, and our findings may therefore also translate more directly to other nations.

3. Methods and Data

This article builds on a comprehensive dataset of tweets by and directed at these journalists during 2017. We accessed the official registers of journalists accredited to the Australian Federal Press Gallery and German Bundespressekonferenz (2016/2017 period) to retrieve an up-to-date list of current members. We then searched Twitter for the journalists' profiles, if available, and manually reviewed these accounts in order to ensure that we had found the journalists' official profiles rather than those of namesakes, impostors, or parody accounts. For the 303 accredited Press Gallery members in Australia at the time, we identified 189 Twitter accounts (62%); for the 825 members of the Bundespressekonferenz, we identified 461 accounts (56%). This indicates a broadly comparable adoption rate amongst leading political journalists in Australia and Germany, in spite of differences in the size and diversity of the press corps and the general use of Twitter and other platforms in the two countries. Of these accounts, 115 (61%) Australian and 55 (12%) German accounts had received official verification (the 'blue tick') from Twitter; we see this as demonstrating the relatively greater attention paid to their Twitter presences by Australian press corps journalists and news outlets.

For these accounts, we used Twitter's Application Programming Interface (API) to retrieve their public profile information, and the *Twitter Capture and Analysis Toolkit* (TCAT; Borra & Rieder, 2014) to capture both any public tweets originating from these accounts, and any public tweets by other Twitter accounts that @mentioned or retweeted them. Data gathering commenced in 2016, and continues at the time of writing.

For the present article, we selected the tweets posted by and directed at press corps accounts in each country during 2017. We do so in order to observe longer-term patterns in tweeting activity around these journalists, beyond short-term events, debates, and crises. This does not mean that our data are unaffected by such events, of course: *inter alia*, 2017 included the inauguration and subsequent actions of U.S. President Donald Trump; continuing negotiations about the United Kingdom's exit from the European Union; a controversial G20 summit in Hamburg (involving Trump as well as the German and Australian leaders); continuing political leadership speculation in Australia; the German federal election on 24 September; and an Australian postal referendum on the legalisation of same-sex marriage in September to November 2017. Such events will inevitably affect social media engagement patterns around journalists, but over the course of the year our data show how journalists and their audiences use Twitter to address a broad range of political issues during this turbulent phase in national and international politics.

4. Findings

4.1. Activity by Journalists

We begin our analysis with a number of descriptive statistics (Table 1, Appendix). First, of the press corps accounts we identified, 182 (96%) Australian and 400 (87%) German accounts actively tweeted during 2017. The total volume of tweets generated by each group is broadly comparable, but given their different sizes this indicates a considerably more active use of Twitter by Australian political journalists: on average, they posted just over four tweets per day in 2017, while German journalists managed only 1.7 tweets. However, in each country a smaller group of particularly enthusiastic adopters is responsible for much of this tweeting: in Germany, the top decile of the 40 most active accounts posted some 62% of all tweets (5.3 tweets per day); in Australia, the top decile of 18 accounts contributed 50% of all tweets (19.7 tweets per day). The most active Australian accounts thus provide a steady running commentary about political events, while their German counterparts remain considerably more restrained.

Australian press corps journalists have also attracted far more followers. Unsurprisingly, however, the median figures indicate that such attention is again very unevenly distributed: a handful of journalists command far greater audiences than their colleagues. In each country, the most active tweeters also attract larger numbers of followers; however, activity levels are not the only or even the main criterion as Twitter users choose which political journalists to follow: the most followed journalists in Australia and Germany account for only 29% or 39% of all tweets, respectively, but have considerably larger audiences on Twitter than their more active colleagues. This discrepancy may be partly explained by personal or institutional brand recognition.

Across the entire press corps, in both countries, the median number of followees for journalists' accounts is roughly half the median number of followers; overall, this would mean there is a one-in-two chance that a user may be followed back by a journalist. However, these patterns break down for the most active and the most followed press gallery accounts: here, the chance of being followed back becomes considerably more remote.

In tweets, users can @mention or retweet other accounts, or make an original statement without reference to any other participants. The tweets by Australian press corps journalists are relatively evenly distributed across these three tweet types (Table 2, Appendix). This does not vary significantly for the most active accounts. In Germany, however, there is a substantially greater focus on interactive tweet types: only 23% of all tweets by Bundespressekonferenz journalists are original tweets (again, this is stable across the deciles). This may indicate a different understanding of the role of Twitter: while in Australia, Twitter and other social media are now clearly established as platforms for the dissemination of original,

first-hand information, in Germany they may still constitute secondary media for discussing and sharing the news rather than posting genuine news updates.

Collectively, each account population @mentions and retweets nearly 30,000 unique accounts. Again, the top decile of German journalists is chiefly responsible for this diversity of interlocutors. In Australia, the top decile is slightly more concentrated on a core of frequent interlocutors. More generally, as Australian press corps journalists are considerably more active overall, this also manifests in the volume of @mentions and retweets they post through the year: their number of such posts per account is considerably higher.

4.2. Activity Directed at Journalists

These tweeting activities by the German and Australian press corps are reciprocated in divergent ways by the broader Twitter audience. In total, the Australian journalists received some 1.9 million retweets and @mentions from 231,496 unique accounts during 2017; German journalists were @mentioned and retweeted only 714,206 times by 116,790 accounts (Table 3, Appendix). In each case, roughly one quarter of these interactions were retweets, and the remainder @mentions. Further, 48% of all Twitter accounts engaging with the German press corps retweeted at least one of their tweets; in Australia, only 36% of all accounts did so. Rather than simply passing on these leading political journalists' posts, therefore, Twitter users predominantly choose to talk to, at, or about them; in Australia, the focus on discourse over amplification is especially strong.

The significant variation in overall volume may have several explanations: first, while the Australian (social media) population is considerably smaller than the German, the international Anglophone community is substantially larger than that of German-speakers, and Australian journalists may therefore also have found a global audience for their accounts. However, as national politics may not attract substantial international audiences; it is equally possible that the significantly greater engagement with Australian journalists' accounts stems from the fundamentally different importance of Twitter—and social media more generally—as a source of news for Australian users (Newman et al., 2018).

Consequently, the mean and median metrics per journalistic account also vary substantially. On average, a German press corps journalist can expect some 548 retweets and 1,411 @mentions of the course of a year; their Australian counterpart will be retweeted 2,750 and @mentioned 8,348 times. Indeed, the averages for *ordinary* Australian political journalists are broadly comparable with those for the *most active* German press corps members.

However, in Germany 59% of all tweets from other users are directed at the top decile of most active journalists, and 63% of mentioning users engage especially with these leading accounts; in Australia, general user attention is more broadly distributed. This may serve to increase the diversity of public debate about domestic politics, as the discussion involves a wider range of journalistic voices: while engagement around the most active Australian press corps accounts is clearly very intense, it represents less than half of all engagement with press corps accounts.

4.3. Activity between Journalists

As noted, increased social media use in journalism may lead to a significant reshaping of power relationships between journalists, politicians, other stakeholders, and audiences. Social media engagement reduces the power of institutional authority, and places journalistic news reporting and discussion practices at risk of being subsumed into social media logics. This makes it especially important to examine whether—even within less controllable social media environments—journalists talk mainly amongst themselves, or allow other stakeholders to enter the conversation. Where journalists engage with each other, we may also explore whether such interactions follow institutional lines (colleague-to-colleague) or involve other members of the press corps (indicating a domestic equivalent of the notorious 'inside-the-beltway' bubble in U.S. politics).

We examine this, first, by analysing the mentions between the press corps accounts in our study. We acknowledge that the perspective this enables is necessarily somewhat limited: the journalists may also interact with journalists who are not themselves members of the press corps, and thus still remain within a broader professional 'bubble' rather than genuinely broadening their discussions to include a more diverse range of participants. Our observations of 'insider' conversations between press corps journalists on Twitter are therefore likely to systematically underestimate the extent of journalists' inward focus, but they nonetheless remain indicative of broader trends.

We focus here on @mentions rather than retweets: we expect the latter to primarily facilitate the endorsement and promotion of news stories published by the journalists' own outlets, as well as—to an extent that varies across news organisations, as shown in Bruns, Nuernbergk, and Schapals (2018)—by competitors, while the former constitute the primary vehicle of genuine conversation and debate on Twitter.

Of the more than 110,000 @mentions posted by each press corps during this year, some 13,358 @mentions by the German journalists (12%) were directed at fellow press corps members (Table 4, Appendix); for Australia, that number increases to 22,296 @mentions (22%). These percentages remain stable for the most active and most followed top deciles amongst each press corps. This suggests that members of the Australian Press Gallery are twice as inwardly focussed in their @mentioning: 'inside-the-beltway' tendencies amongst this group are more prominent in Australia than they are in Germany.

The relatively small percentages of in-group @mentions also indicate that these professional bubbles remain highly permeable, however. Countering the myth of a hermetically sealed "filter bubble" (Pariser, 2011), both press corps do engage with outside accounts substantially more than they do amongst themselves; such engagement could still be exclusive and lacking in diversity if it is directed mainly at politicians and other notable news actors rather than at ordinary Twitter users, of course, but on the evidence so far it does not give rise to an entirely homophilous network that is populated only by journalistic insiders.

In this context, it is also notable that engagement even within the press corps themselves is comparatively diverse: each one of the 162 Australian @mentioning journalists also received at least one @mention during 2017; in Germany, the 319 @mentioning journalists @mentioned 331 unique press corps members. Although the number of @mentions they received will vary considerably, few were left entirely unmentioned over the course of the year, therefore.

An exhaustive categorisation of the roughly 20,000 unique accounts @mentioned by each of the press corps during 2017 was well beyond the scope of the present study. However, we further explored the diversity of @mention targets in each country by examining the most consistently @mentioned accounts. We selected those accounts that were @mentioned by at least three different press corps journalists, and at least ten times in total by those three or more journalists. This left 170 @mentioned accounts for the German press corps and 223 for their Australian colleagues (Table 5, Appendix). Two coders sighted the profile information and recent tweeting history for each account, and assigned an actor type[1].

This exercise again revealed a somewhat greater insider focus amongst Australian press corps journalists: 48% of their most frequently @mentioned accounts belonged to journalists inside and outside the Press Gallery, and another 14% were institutional accounts operated by news organisations; in Germany, 31% of the accounts belonged to journalists, and 24% to news organisations. This suggests a greater institutional rather than individual focus amongst German political journalists, and supports the picture of a less advanced use of social media for personal branding, and of more persistent institutional loyalties, while in Australia Twitter is more strongly established as a public backchannel amongst the journalistic class, and institutional news outlets are now somewhat less prominent.

Further, German press corps accounts @mention key political actors more actively than their Australian counterparts; this could also be an indication of the greater range of political interlocutors available in Germany than in Australia. Other categories of Twitter ac-

counts constitute a considerably smaller subset in both countries: while the general Twitter public direct a substantial amount of tweets at press corps members, they only rarely become frequent and persistent conversation partners.

4.4. Network Analysis

We illustrate these patterns of interaction around press corps accounts through the final step in our analysis: the visualisation of the core interaction networks. Here, we reduce the total interaction network for each country in 2017 to those directed edges with a weight of at least 10 that originate from a journalist's account—in other words, we focus on the journalists, and on the accounts with which they chose to interact most consistently over the year. This leaves 1,352 Twitter accounts (including 213 press corps accounts, or 46%) for the German Bundespressekonferenz, and 1,349 accounts (including 125 press corps accounts, or 66%) for the Australian Press Gallery. Respectively, these networks contain 2,395 (Germany) and 2,918 (Australia) edges; in spite of their similar population size, therefore, the Australian network is significantly more dense.

We use the Force Atlas 2 algorithm (Jacomy, Venturini, Heymann, & Bastian, 2014) as implemented in *Gephi* (Bastian, Heymann, & Jacomy, 2009) to visualise these networks: each Twitter account is a node in the network, and each @mention an edge between two nodes. The force-directed visualisation then produces clusters amongst especially densely connected subsets of the network, and places these at greater distance from other nodes that are less closely connected. Further, we colour-code the nodes (accounts) according to the news outlet that each press corps journalist worked for, and size them to indicate the number of @mentions received over the course of the year. Using otherwise identical visualisation settings, the results document further structural differences between the German and Australian press corps networks (Figures 1 and 2). In addition to a higher network density, the Australian network also exhibits a shorter average geodesic distance between reachable pairs of nodes. On average, such shorter distances structurally enhance information flows.

The German network is characterised by a central core around a collection of frequently @mentioned non-press corps accounts including leading domestic politicians, political parties, and news outlets (but @realdonaldtrump also features here). Most major news outlets are represented in this network by at least one of their journalists, and there is a tendency for journalist accounts to cluster according to their employers; this indicates a greater propensity to @mention in-house colleagues than external competitors. Some news outlets and their most frequent interlocutors are located further

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[1] Possible actor types were domestic politicians/political organisations, individual journalists, news organisations, international accounts, and others (including ordinary citizens). An intercoder reliability test by the two coders on a randomly selected sample of accounts achieved satisfactory results (Krippendorf's $\alpha = 0.95$, 62 decisions).
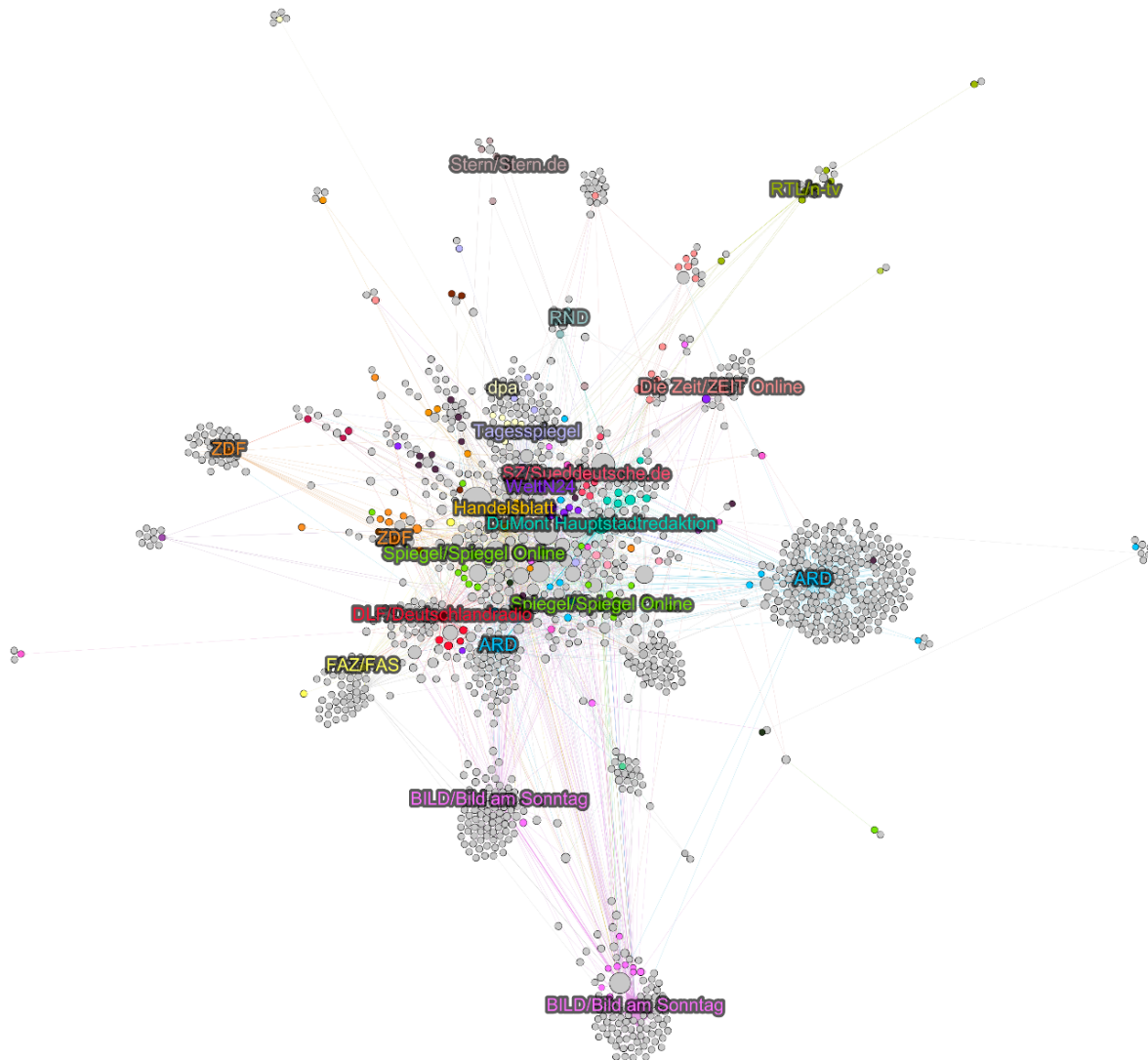
Figure 1. Bundespressekonferenz @mention network for accounts with degree >9 (2017). Network diameter: 9 (average geodesic distance: 4.147). Network density: 0.001[2].

from the network centre: this suggests that their press corps members engage mainly amongst themselves and with a distinct set of conversation partners outside the network core. Such groups include journalists from the tabloid *Bild*; commercial TV station *RTL* and its subsidiary *n-tv*; some but not all of the journalists working for public service network *ARD*; and many of the journalists for the weekly newspaper *Zeit*. Their subdivisions, especially amongst *ARD* personnel, tend to reflect distinctions between internal units: the prime-time news team are distinct from the current affairs team, for example.

By contrast, the Australian network shows far fewer obvious subdivisions: although here, too, the accounts of journalists tend to cluster by news outlet, this does not lead to significant scissions within the overall network.

An initial assumption that the networking patterns evident here might represent the news organisations' relative ideological positioning was also not confirmed: journalists working for Rupert Murdoch's staunchly conservative News Corporation outlets are surrounded by the centrist public broadcaster ABC and the broadly progressive Fairfax group. More likely, the positioning of press corps accounts in this graph simply indicates the relative prominence (at least on Twitter) of the respective news organisations, with NewsCorp, Fairfax, and ABC at the centre and more minor outlets (*Australian Financial Review*, *The Guardian*, *The West Australian*) closer to the periphery.

This reading would again support our underlying perspective on the respective roles of Twitter in Australia and Germany. Recall that the structure of these net-

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[2] The network density is the proportion of all possible edges (connections between nodes) that are actually present in the graph. It ranges from 0 (no edges present) to 1 (all possible edges between all pairs of nodes present). A geodesic path, or shortest path, is a path with the minimum number of edges between two nodes in a graph. Its length is called geodesic distance. Average distance is the average geodesic distance amongst reachable pairs. The diameter measures the length of the largest geodesic between any pair of nodes in a graph.
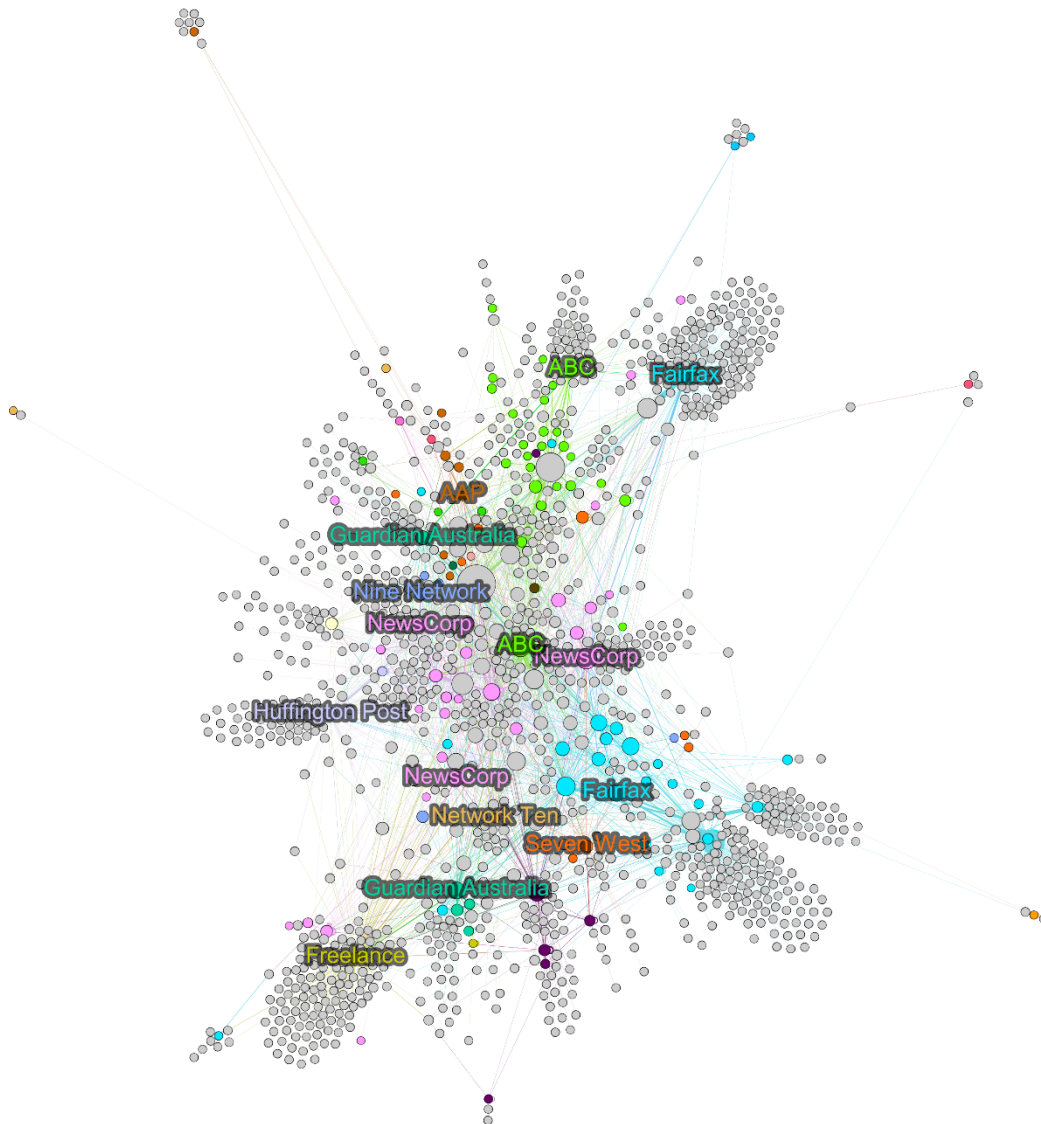
Figure 2. Press Gallery @mention network for accounts with degree >9 (2017). Network diameter: 6 (average geodesic distance: 3.129). Network density: 0.002.

5. Conclusion

work is determined by whom the journalists themselves choose to @mention, and how consistently. Therefore, in Germany, where the platform—and social media more generally—remain less central to the news, this active core of the journalistic Twittersphere at the national parliament still focusses much more strongly on an elite group of interlocutors surrounding the journalists, especially at their own outlets. In Australia, by contrast, social media are now key platforms for news engagement, and the network map indicates that press corps journalists themselves also engage in somewhat broader networks, including with highly engaged but otherwise ordinary Twitter users. As journalists from various outlets engage through @mention conversations with such ordinary users, this would serve to pull together Press Gallery members into one network of elite political journalists that shows comparatively limited tendencies towards clustering and stratification.

Cross-country comparisons that systematically investigate social media engagement by journalists, and audience responses to it, over longer periods remain rare. Our year-long comparison between Germany and Australia examined key metrics and network structures for such engagement, and has documented some strongly divergent patterns of activity and engagement. It shows that Twitter has infiltrated the field of political journalism in Australia more comprehensively than in Germany.

There are many reasons for these developments, but we suggest that overall patterns of media use and news consumption in each system are particularly influential. In Germany, forms of traditional media use still dominate; additionally, the journalistic workforce is older on average than in Australia. Other structural factors are also likely to influence how journalists embrace and

adapt to social media. Germany's journalistic culture is known to be comparatively shielded from market forces, and has been described as "more unitary and robust toward external influences" (Revers, 2017, p. 32). This may serve to slow Germany's adoption of new practices.

Our analysis has therefore confirmed the considerably different roles that Twitter plays as a platform for the sourcing, dissemination, and discussion of the news: while Australian press corps journalists are substantially more active, and also receive far more engagement from ordinary users in return, their German counterparts have proven considerably more reluctant to incorporate Twitter fully into their professional workflows.

Even so, in both countries the journalists' own conversational activities remain relatively elitist. On average, Australian press corps members tweet more, and also @mention a larger number of unique accounts—yet the range of accounts they @mention most frequently is, if anything, even more limited. In Germany, the Bundespressekonferenz members' inner circle comprises an elite of fellow journalists, news outlets, and politicians; journalists in the Australian Press Gallery communicate even more strongly amongst themselves, to the comparative exclusion even of political actors.

Although in both countries political journalists also interact with ordinary users, these occasional interactions appear important only in isolated cases. Future research should analyse the content of interactions between journalists and politicians, and between journalists and activists. Is there an "on-going discursive struggle" here (Ekman & Widholm, 2015)? How and when do political journalists respond to attempts by non-elite actors to shape the news? The influence of network structures—the extent to which relationships with journalists can be successfully activated—deserves particular attention in this context.

If the central core of conversations amongst political journalists remains relatively elitist, however, it nonetheless does not constitute a hermetically sealed bubble impenetrable to outside voices: though not as extensively as with their own peers, press corps members (especially in Australia) do also engage with a significant number of ordinary users. This is true particularly for the most actively tweeting journalists: Press Gallery members in the most active decile of Australian journalists sent an average of over 3,200 @mentions to nearly 1,200 unique accounts during the year; their German counterparts managed somewhat less than half of these averages.

We regard this as strong evidence of the gradual but inexorable influence of social media logics on professional journalism: the more news audiences adopt social media as news channels, the more will political journalists feel obliged—out of an intrinsic motivation to inform, or an extrinsic need to retain readers—to serve their audience through such platforms. But doing so necessarily also means adapting to their principles and conventions: on Twitter, engaging with others (through @mentions) rather than merely posting original information or shar-

ing on existing news (through retweets). From our one year of data, we are unable to assess the longitudinal dynamics of this potential power shift, but the comparative analysis across the Bundespressekonferenz and Federal Press Gallery shows that the transformation of relationships between journalists and news audiences through social media is strongly affected by domestic contexts.

Most likely there are at least two major forces at play. On the one hand, the diversity and resilience of professional journalism in a given country may act as a retardant of change, by enabling a conservative, risk-averse stance for news organisations. On the other, the market context—including especially overall social media take-up by news audiences—may create an incentive for individual journalists and news organisations to incorporate social media meaningfully into their newsroom practices. In Australia, therefore, we already see considerable advancement in the social-mediatisation of political journalism; in Germany, journalists and news organisations have so far sought to retain their power and independence to a rather greater extent. Any change to these forces has significant implications for the shifting power balance between political journalists and their audiences, especially as the authority of the masthead declines and individual journalists and news users encounter each other increasingly on the "uncommon ground" (Loosen & Schmidt, 2016, p. 7) of social media platforms.

Finally, any such transformations are also likely to be affected by the nature of the newsbeat. Leading political correspondents are regularly presented as prominent representatives of their news outlets, and we argue that this prestige positions them as important role models for other journalists and the general public, able to influence their social media use. However, the subject matter of different newsbeats necessarily affects social media practices: business journalists may speak to and with a considerably more exclusive in-group of experts and analysts, while sports reporters might engage more readily with ordinary fans. Our research therefore also points to two key avenues for the further extension of the approach we have employed here: first, there is considerable opportunity for a comparison of our results with equivalent parliamentary press corps in other nations, and for a cross-national comparison of similar well-defined journalistic corps in other specialist fields; second, there is a need to systematically compare the social media practices of journalists across diverse newsbeats to examine how the newsroom staff across these beats adjust to the logic of social media in their activities. This will enable us to further distinguish the various factors that affect the dynamics of social media adoption and adaptation in journalism.

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Appendix

Table 1. Overall metrics for press corps journalists (2017).

	BPK (Germany)		
	All	Top decile (most active journalists)	Top decile (most followed jounalists)
Number of tweets (sum)	243,431	151,354	95,253
in %	100%	62%	39%
M Tweets	609	3,784	2,381
Md Tweets	150	1,942	975
Number of active journalists	400	40	40
M Followers	2,436	7,007	16,135
Md Followers	633	3,333	8,722
M Followees (friend count)	525	1,198	1,112
Md Followees (friend count)	328	938	944
Number of verified accounts	55	10	19
	Press Gallery (Australia)		
	All	Top decile (most active journalists)	Top decile (most followed jounalists)
Number of tweets (sum)	274,201	136,826	80,797
in %	100%	50%	29%
M Tweets	1,507	7,601	4,489
Md Tweets	495	7,198	3,496
Number of active journalists	182	18	18
M Followers	13,280	39,030	84,597
Md Followers	3,483	15,597	92,835
M Followees (friend count)	1,793	4,040	2,320
Md Followees (friend count)	1,240	3,164	1,515
Number of verified accounts	115	14	17

Table 2. Tweeting metrics for press corps journalists (2017).

	Bundespressekonferenz (Germany)			
	All journalists		Top decile (most active journalists)	
	Tweets	Unique accounts	*Tweets*	Unique accounts
Total number of tweets (sum)	243,431	28,871	151,354	20,645
in %	100%	100%	62%	71%
Original tweets (sum)	54,891	—	29,672	—
in %	23%	—	20%	—
M Original tweets per sender	167	—	797	—
Md Original tweets per sender	51	—	540	—
Retweets (sum)	110,552	16,198	68,667	12,068
in %	45%	56%	45%	58%
M Retweets per sender	313	128	1,726	602
Md Retweets per sender	91	44	954	447
@mentions (sum)	112,474	20,319	70,020	14,704
in %	46%	70%	46%	71%
M @mentions per sender	292	144	1,756	695
Md @mentions per sender	60	49	958	475

	Press Gallery (Australia)			
	All journalists		Top decile (most active journalists)	
	Tweets	Unique accounts	*Tweets*	Unique accounts
Total number of tweets (sum)	274,201	29,520	136,826	18,454
in %	100%	100%	50%	63%
Original tweets (sum)	84,659	—	44,341	—
in %	31%	—	32%	—
M Original tweets per sender	498	—	2,377	—
Md Original tweets per sender	147	—	1,784	—
Retweets (sum)	100,823	15,207	48,049	10,598
in %	37%	52%	35%	57%
M Retweets per sender	591	236	2,741	990
Md Retweets per sender	196	107	2,720	914
@mentions (sum)	117,091	20,702	57,386	12,601
in %	43%	70%	42%	68%
M @mentions per sender	677	310	3,232	1,187
Md @mentions per sender	222	145	3,057	1,173

Note: As single tweets can contain both retweets and @mentions, metrics for tweet types can add up to move than 100%.

Table 3. Engagement metrics for press corps journalists (2017).

	Bundespressekonferenz (Germany)			
	All journalists		Top decile (most active journalists)	
	Tweets	Unique accounts	*Tweets*	Unique accounts
Total mentions received	714,206	116,790	423,150	73,464
in %	100%	100%	59%	63%
Retweets received	185,648	55,837	110,875	37,218
in %	26%	48%	26%	51%
M retweets per journalist	548	335	2,742	1,447
Md retweets per journalist	74	47	1,032	683
@mentions received	548,651	86,900	327,424	53,515
in %	77%	74%	77%	73%
M @mentions per journalist	1,411	583	8,512	2,675
Md @mentions per journalist	224	141	4,072	1,757
	Press Gallery (Australia)			
	All journalists		Top decile (most active journalists)	
	Tweets	Unique accounts	*Tweets*	Unique accounts
Total mentions received	1,904,700	231,496	920,635	92,635
in %	100%	100%	48%	40%
Retweets received	450,495	83,851	276,292	59,345
in %	24%	36%	30%	64%
M retweets per journalist	2,750	1,285	15,562	5,928
Md retweets per journalist	323	258	9,477	4,309
@mentions received	1,429,061	178,338	653,230	62,159
in %	75%	77%	71%	67%
M @mentions per journalist	8,348	2,717	36,574	8,395
Md @mentions per journalist	1,129	648	30,007	8,098

Table 4. Interaction metrics (@mentions only) for press corps journalists (2017).

		Bundespressekonferenz (Germany)	
	All	Top decile (most active journalists)	Top decile (most followed jounalists)
Total accounts @mentioned	19,751	13,934	11,777
Other press corps members @mentioned	331	262	216
Number of @mentioning journalists	319	40	40
Total @mentions posted	112,474	70,020	48,335
Number of @mentions of other press corps members	13,358	7,882	4,778
in %	12%	11%	10%
		Press Gallery (Australia)	
	All	Top decile (most active journalists)	Top decile (most followed jounalists)
Total accounts @mentioned	20,702	12,601	8,333
Other press corps members @mentioned	162	140	127
Number of @mentioning journalists	162	18	18
Total @mentions posted	117,091	57,836	32,454
Number of @mentions of other press corps members	26,296	12,578	6,155
in %	22%	22%	19%

Table 5. Most @mentioned types of accounts (2017).

	by Bundespressekonferenz accounts	in %	by Press Gallery accounts	in %
Journalists (individual profiles)	52	31%	107	48%
News organisations	40	24%	31	14%
Political actors	54	32%	47	21%
International accounts	4	2%	5	2%
Other	20	12%	31	14%
Total	170	100%	223*	100%

Notes: Accounts were only considered for analysis if mentioned by at least three different journalists with weight >9 during 2017. * Two accounts were deleted and thus not classified.

Article

Exploring Political Journalism Homophily on Twitter: A Comparative Analysis of US and UK Elections in 2016 and 2017

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Abstract
The tendency of political journalists to form insular groups or packs, chasing the same angles and quoting the same sources, is a well-documented issue in journalism studies and has long been criticized for its role in groupthink and homogenous news coverage. This groupthink attracted renewed criticism after the unexpected victory of Republican candidate Donald Trump in the 2016 US presidential election as the campaign coverage had indicated a likely win by the Democratic candidate Hillary Clinton. This pattern was repeated in the 2017 UK election when the Conservative party lost their majority after a campaign in which the news coverage had pointed to an overall Tory victory. Such groupthink is often attributed to homophily, the tendency of individuals to interact with those most like them, and while homophily in the legacy media system is well-studied, there is little research around homophily in the hybrid media system, even as social media platforms like Twitter facilitate the development—and analysis—of virtual political journalism packs. This study, which compares Twitter interactions among US and UK political reporters in the 2016 and 2017 national elections, shows that political journalists are overwhelmingly more likely to use Twitter to interact with other journalists, particularly political journalists, and that their offline tendencies to form homogenous networks have transferred online. There are some exceptions around factors such as gender, news organizations and types of news organization—and important distinctions between types of interactions—but overall the study provides evidence of sustained homophily as journalists continue to normalize Twitter.

Issue
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1. Introduction

The 2016 election of President Donald Trump in the US sent shock waves through the American political and media establishment. There were questions about journalism practice amid the "surprising election outcome" as the generally homogenous news coverage had long painted Clinton as the inevitable winner (Boydstun & Van Aelst, 2018, p. 672; Watts & Rothschild, 2017). The same questions arose in Britain some months later as the Conservative party lost their ruling majority to the surprise of much of the political media who were described as falling victim to "confirmation bias" in their reporting

(Enten & Silver, 2017). Such homogenous reporting is a hallmark of "pack journalism" where political journalists are more likely to aim for unanimity than dissent in their work processes and in doing so build echo chambers or filter bubbles, albeit unwittingly, by quoting from the same sources and focusing on the same issues and profoundly shaping news coverage as a result (Matusitz & Breen, 2012; Mourão, 2015; Usher, Holcomb, & Littman, 2018). Homophily, which describes the tendency of like-minded individuals to "flock together" around shared status or values (McPherson, Smith-Lovin, & Cook, 2001) can be seen as the cornerstone of such echo chambers as these groups of most-similar individuals build sustained

and persistent connections with those who most reflect their views, sharing and re-sharing similar information almost to the point of redundancy (Himelboim, Sweetser, Tinkham, Cameron, Danelo, & West, 2016). However, while pack journalism is well studied in the legacy media system, homophily or "virtual pack journalism," has not received the same attention (Kiernan, 2014) and, perhaps, more importantly, while several studies have explored social media homophily among individuals, there is a lack of research into social media homophily among elite groups such as political journalists, despite journalism's critical role in setting the news agenda (Wihbey, 2018). This study focuses on Twitter as it is widely considered the most important digital communication technology for journalists and "absolutely integral" to political journalists' work in the US and UK (Hanusch, 2018; Kreiss & McGregor, 2018, p. 326; Usher et al., 2018). The platform plays a key role in influencing journalists' news judgment (McGregor & Molyneux, 2018) and is so dominant in political journalism (Parmelee, 2013) that journalists' interactions there can be expected to affect news coverage and, by extension, the public agenda (Chadwick, 2013).

While the UK and US have been well studied individually in the past, a comparative study is instructive in this context as both countries, two of the largest journalism markets in the world, share enough similarities in their political and media systems to help limit uncontrollable variables (Deuze, 2002; Hallin & Mancini, 2004). This type of "most-similar-systems" design (Przeworski & Teune, 1970) is particularly useful in helping to identify shared characteristics or similar patterns around journalism interactions and can highlight the development, if any, of a nascent political journalism culture on Twitter, particularly around elections. As Hallin and Mancini noted in 2004, there are key differences between the two countries with public service broadcasting seen as much stronger in the UK than the US; and political neutrality stronger in all sectors except the UK newspaper segment; although, as the authors wrote in 2004, there were already clear signs of change in the US broadcasting segment with the then nine-year-old Fox News TV seen adopting "a distinctive, rightward tilt." Overall however, there is enough strength in the US and UK political and cultural ties, particularly around professionalism and styles of journalism, to create more similarities than differences, and the resulting comparisons provide a useful lens into drafting a framework of commonalities and contrasts around political journalists' Twitter activity during election campaigns in two major Western democracies. Election reporting is a special case in journalism studies because political journalists work under specific regulatory environments and are reporting on politicians and parties who are intensely active, and with a public that pays more attention to how politics is presented (Van Aelst & De Swert, 2009). While this may be rather narrow it does mean that a focus on this particular period increases the comparability of the results not only within

this study but outside of it. Indeed, the study of political news and journalists has traditionally focused on election campaign periods (Semetko, 1996) and research has already shown that increased Twitter activity can be expected in the closing weeks of an election offering a rich data seam of interactions for analysis (Enli & Skogerbø, 2013; Jungherr, 2016; Nuernbergk & Conrad, 2016).

This study, which is the first comparative analysis to specifically explore homophily within political journalists' Twitter networks during an election campaign, aims to fill the spaces in the literature on political journalists' activity noted by Broersma and Graham (2016) and Nuernbergk (2016). The analysis specifically focuses on retweets and replies as these "mutual discourse" tweets are considered the most interactive forms of engagement and are thus vital to understanding developing journalism practices on Twitter (Bruns & Burgess, 2012; Parmelee & Deeley, 2017). The over-arching research question is whether political journalists are using Twitter's potential to make a sustained effort to engage with new and diverse voices or instead using the platform to take cues from each other and generally participate in "water-cooler" conversations and migrate their legacy pack routines online (Kiernan, 2014; Molyneux & Mourão, 2019, p. 261). This question is explored by the analysis of retweets and replies and most-frequently-targeted users to determine evidence of homophily and also the impact of potential factors such as gender, news organization and types of news organization. The study begins with an overview of normalization, homophily, Twitter journalism, retweets and replies, and then explores those interactions from a total of 202 UK and US political journalists through a quantitative analysis of the retweets and replies produced in the run-up to the 2016 and 2017 US and UK national elections before turning to the discussion and conclusion.

2. Literature Review

From the telegraph to typewriters to television to Twitter, successive technological innovations have transformed the norms and practice of journalism (Lasorsa, Lewis, & Holton, 2012) and each new technology has arrived amid much fanfare about its potential impact on political communication, particularly around election campaigns (Stromer-Galley, 2014). Ultimately however, the expectations and concerns about these potential utopias and dystopias have never been fully realized as the power structures of journalism and politics have instead normalized each new "new media" into their own practice (Singer, 2005). The potential power of digital media in election campaigns was first seen in the US in the 2004 Presidential campaign when it rocketed the relatively unknown candidate Howard Dean into the political and media stratosphere (Stromer-Galley, 2014) but as Margolis and Resnick had already argued in 2000, any of the digital advantages accruing to early adopters like Dean were soon eclipsed as the political and journalism elite folded

these new technologies into existing practices when they recognized, and thereby normalized, the "new" new media (Margolis & Resnick, 2000).

Much of the research into Twitter journalism practice argues that journalists, seen as frequent, if not always skillful, Twitter users (Engesser & Humprecht, 2015) are well down the path of normalization, using Twitter in ways that conform to existing practice rather than using it to change journalism practice (see Lasorsa et al., 2012; Lawrence, Molyneux, Coddington, & Holton, 2014; Lewis, 2012; Molyneux & Mourão, 2019; Nuernbergk, 2016; Parmelee, 2013). This is especially evident in areas such as gatekeeping, where journalists have long controlled whose voices make it through the editorial "gates" (Lasorsa et al., 2012; Singer, 2005), and Twitter gatekeeping can be seen in the "insider talk" and "regurgitation" of information flowing across Twitter (Lawrence et al., 2014; Parmelee, Roman, Beasley, & Perkins, 2019, p. 161) as journalists more frequently engage with other journalists or newsmakers—and even themselves—rather than interest groups, academics or citizens (Carlson, 2017; Molyneux & Mourão, 2019). While journalists can, and do, challenge normalization in other areas of journalism practice (see Broersma & Graham 2016; Molyneux & Mourão, 2019), this study's sole concern is whether political journalists create homogenous packs on Twitter, thus supporting the idea of homophily, and by extension, normalization, even as the hybrid media system (Chadwick, 2013) theoretically presents alternatives to the pack model with a wider range of interaction partners and voices outside the bubbles. While some studies indicate more negotiation around normalization in newer affordances such as quote tweets or areas such as monitoring, sourcing, publishing, promoting and branding (Broersma & Graham, 2016; Molyneux & Mourão, 2019; Tandoc & Vos, 2016), the research overwhelmingly indicates that journalists' interactions are dominated by other journalists and that these homogenous online networks resemble those built by journalists offline (Hanusch & Nölleke, 2018).

However, despite the plethora of studies indicating that journalists' Twitter networks are so homogenous as to suggest homophily there has been little research so far specifically into homophily in those interactions even as journalists themselves report low levels of citizen engagement. For example, Gulyas (2017) found journalist/citizen interaction at 23 and 27 percent in the US and UK respectively, and Nuernbergk (2016) saw only rare interactions between German journalists and their Twitter followers, thus suggesting that political journalists still prefer to connect with each other in "journalism-centered bubbles" (Molyneux & Mourão, 2019; Mourão, 2015; Nuernbergk, 2016, p. 877). Additionally, researchers have noted evidence of bubbles within bubbles (Bentivegna & Marchetti, 2018) with political journalists seen as more likely to interact with other political journalists (Hanusch & Nölleke, 2018); self-segregating by gender (Artwick, 2013; Usher et al., 2018),

and focusing on those inside their own news organization (Bentivegna & Marchetti, 2018; Larsson, Kalsnes, & Christensen, 2017) with Vergeer (2015) reporting that regional reporters were more likely to do this than national journalists. While these studies were broad in nature, Hanusch and Nölleke (2018) specifically considered the potential impact of beat, gender, organizational context and geographic proximity in an extensive inquiry into homophily among Australian reporters and found a high degree of homophily across those four shared characteristics.

Homophily, or the tendency of individuals to form groups with those most similar to themselves (McPherson et al., 2001) was introduced as a concept in the 1950s when Lazarsfeld and Merton (1954) proposed that individuals were far more likely to build networks around shared values in areas like religion or sport or around shared status in areas such as race, ethnicity, sex, age, religion, education and occupation (Hanusch & Nölleke, 2018; McPherson et al., 2001). As an elite specialty within the wider occupational field of journalism, political journalists are perhaps more sensitive to the homophilous effects of these tight-knit groups as they seek validation from "those to whom we compare ourselves, those whose opinions we attend to, and simply those whom we are aware of and watch for signals about what is happening in our environment" (McPherson et al., 2001, p. 428). The tendency for political reporters to focus on each other was first labelled as "pack journalism" during the 1972 US presidential election when Rolling Stone reporter Tim Crouse noted that the journalists' intent focus on each other led to a shared groupthink about the day's most important stories and created a pack dynamic so strong that "almost all the reporters will take the same approach to the story", even though they were ostensibly competing against each other (Crouse, 1973). As former Newsweek Bureau Chief Karl Fleming said: "Their (the reporters') abiding interest is making sure that nobody else has got anything that they don't have—not getting something that nobody else has" (Crouse, 1973).

While Crouse observed the political journalism network and the resulting groupthink from his physical seat on the campaign bus, researchers can now observe virtual political journalism networks from afar through the analysis of publicly-visible Twitter conversations and the use of affordances such as retweets, replies, mentions and followings. Retweet and mention networks (which include both replies and indirect mentions) are often seen as the strongest interaction markers (Hanusch & Nölleke, 2018) and several studies have reported differences in the way journalists use retweets and mentions with more homophily seen in mentions than retweets (Hanusch & Nölleke 2018; Molyneux & Mourão, 2019; Nuernbergk, 2016). However, indirect mentions can be also be used as a "shout out" (Usher et al., 2018) thus diluting their effectiveness as a distinct measure of interactive intent. Retweets, despite

multiple Twitter disclaimers to the contrary (Hanusch & Nölleke, 2018), are most often viewed as an endorsement of *content* (Meraz & Papacharissi, 2013; Russell, Hendricks, Choi, & Stephens, 2015), but they also convey endorsement of the *user* and the link between the original and retweeting sender provides evidence of a pre-existing homophilous network of like-minded people (Bruns & Burgess, 2012; Hanusch & Nölleke, 2018). While some journalists use replies to thread longer posts together and circumvent Twitter's 280-character count (Molyneux & Mourão, 2019, p. 257), specific replies (as against indirect mentions) are more typically interactive with some research indicating potential heterophily with studies showing "public/citizen" users receiving as high as 48 percent of the journalists' replies (Brems, Temmerman, Graham, & Broersma, 2017). However, these studies don't mention if the accounts received more than one reply which would help us consider the nature and value of such interactions, a problem noted by Parmelee and Deeley in 2017, when they queried the use of simple counts arguing that such one-offs were inadequate ways to measure reciprocity. Such reciprocity is often absent in followings (Kiousis, 2002) and, as Ausserhoffer and Maireder reported in 2013, followings are not a reliable metric as they can be paid for or artificially enhanced by computer scripts. Subsequently, this study views the affordances of retweets and replies as more indicative of actual intent, highlighting the user's value to the journalist (Conover et al., 2011; Molyneux, 2015).

Frequency of interactions is also important. As McPherson et al. (2001) outlined, homophily can be seen in those whose "opinions we attend to" and given the concerns raised by Parmelee and Deeley (2017) around one-off replies, this study measures interactivity by focusing on the political journalists' most-frequent discussion partners in replies and retweets to see which voices the journalists most frequently attend to. This research builds on the developing work into Twitter journalism homophily (see particularly Hanusch & Nölleke, 2018) and is important as it is the first to examine this issue in the context of social media election coverage, specifically on Twitter, and takes the analysis further by looking at media practice in two similar media systems. The importance of studies such as this, which examine these "new" types of interactions on social media, cannot be overstated as the work done by political journalists remains essential to a citizen's ability to understand politics and election campaigns even in a digital and networked age (Harder, Paulussen, & Van Aelst, 2016; Kuhn & Nielsen, 2014).

3. Research Questions

This study explores retweets and replies as two distinct affordances and explores them separately for the presence of homophily by asking the following two research questions:

RQ1: To what extent can homophily be identified in political journalists' retweets on Twitter in an election campaign?
RQ2: To what extent can homophily be identified in political journalists' replies on Twitter in an election campaign?

Drawing from the categories devised in Hanusch and Nölleke's study (2018) the study then considers if organizational context, types of news organization or gender can be seen to play a role in homophily in political journalists' retweets and replies, which leads to these research questions:

RQ3: Do shared characteristics such as news organizations; type of news organizations and gender play a role in homophily in retweets?
RQ4: Do shared characteristics such as news organizations; type of news organizations and gender play a role in homophily in replies?

4. Data and Methods

The research questions are examined by comparative analysis of replies and retweets from a sample of some 202 political journalists working at the national level in the US and the UK. The data for this study were retrieved from a 2015 list of 183 UK Parliamentary Lobby Correspondents with Twitter accounts (Hanusch, 2018) which was filtered to focus on national political reporters and those who tweeted more than once a day. Unlike previous studies (see Lasorsa et al., 2012; Usher et al., 2018; Singer, 2005) this sample excluded commentators and columnists as their work is significantly different to that of political reporters (Rogstad, 2014). This UK list was then used to create a cross-national comparable sample of US political journalists by using Twitter's search function to identify people who publicly represented themselves as journalists by searching for keywords (such as "politics", "political", "politic"*, "correspondent", "campaign", "reporter", "journalist", etc.) in the user's profile and then cross-referencing those names against lists from the US White House Correspondents Association; the US Congressional Press Galleries; campaign embeds at the TV networks and media lists maintained by the US public relations firm Cision. This resulted in a list of 54 male and 43 female reporters from 26 outlets in the US and 75 male and 30 female reporters from 29 outlets in the UK (see Table 1).

The data were collected during the two weeks prior to each national election (October 22 to November 8, 2016 in the US; and May 22 to June 8, 2017 in the UK) and while content analysis is beyond the scope of this study, this period was chosen as it is the time when media coverage of elections can be expected to be intense (Van Aelst & De Swert, 2009). The tweets were collected on the cloud-based Discover Text Twitter archive service which returned 100 percent of the users' tweets. This

Table 1. US and UK news outlets in study.

US News Outlets			
Broadcast	**Digital**	**Print**	**Wire**
ABC	Bloomberg	Boston Globe	AP
CBS	Daily Beast	LA Times	Reuters
CNN	DC Examiner	National Review	
Fox	Fusion	New York Daily News	
NBC	Politico	The New York Times	
NPR	The Hill	USA Today	
	The IJR	Washington Post	
	Vox	Wall Street Journal	
	Wired		
	Yahoo News		
UK News Outlets			
Broadcast	**Digital**	**Print**	**Wire**
BBC	Business Insider	Daily Express	AP
Channel 4	Bloomberg	Daily Mail	PA
ITV	BuzzFeed	Daily Mirror	Reuters
Sky	Huffington Post	Daily Telegraph	
	inews	Evening Standard	
	PA	Financial Times	
	Parly	The Guardian	
	Politico	The Independent	
	Politics.co.uk	The Sun	
	The Independent	The Times	
	The Spoon		
	Total Politics		

search resulted in some 26,820 tweets from the US journalists and 30,992 tweets from the UK journalists which were then queried for reply and retweet users. The metadata provided by Discover Text included "retweet-link" and "reply-to-link" which ensured that the intended object of the reply or retweet was accurately retrieved even if the tweet featured one or more @mentions. This data formed four distinct user sets comprising total replies and retweets as follows:

US: 3,333 unique users in 12,562 retweets and 1,595 unique users in 2,919 replies.
UK: 3,556 unique users in 13,747 retweets and 3,104 users in 6,764 replies.

To better answer the questions about sustained interactivity, the data were then queried for the median number of times unique users featured in either a retweet or a reply to exclude any single retweets or replies. The query returned a median of 1 for retweets and replies for both countries' data which showed that at least half the users were of weak or limited value. This early finding supported the decision to focus only on the most prevalent users and to do so, this article adopted Meraz's "power law" (2009) which holds that the top 10 to 20 percent of users will attract the majority of attention, to identify the most-frequently-mentioned users. The unit of analy-

sis was the individual user and the four sets of data were then queried separately to locate the top 10 percent of accounts mentioned. These data sets were coded manually by the author according to the following categories using information from the user's Twitter profile and following Hanusch and Bruns (2017) the outlets were coded as broadcast (commercial, public, TV and radio), print, wire service, digital or freelance.

User type: political journalist; other journalist; news outlet or other user.
Gender: male or female (where applicable).
News organization: from user's Twitter biography profile.
Type of news organization: broadcast, print, wire or digital.

Later, the senders and users were labelled as same-to-same or same-to-different by gender, news organization and type of news organization. The coding for the mentioned users was primarily drawn from their Twitter biography profiles, where journalists typically identify their occupation and news organization (Ottovordemgentschenfelde, 2017), and this information was saved as a static record by Discover Text at the same time as the data collection. When the bio information was absent from the downloaded data (as in the case of quote retweets which comprised about 10 percent of the over-

all data), a careful Google search was implemented for both user and workplace information at the time of the relevant election. This two-pronged archiving method helped build a single static set of data and thus avoided the methodological issues associated with collating data from online profiles which, as Lewis et al. noted in 2013 (p. 45), are inherently malleable. The profile information was coded by the author, while another coder examined a total of 114 profiles of those mentioned in retweets and replies (10 percent) to test the validity of the data. Using Krippendorff's alpha test (Freelon, 2010) for nominal coding, the reliability was rated excellent with 0.85 for type of journalist; 0.95 for gender; 0.92 for news organization and 0.83 for type of news organization.

To answer RQ1 and RQ2 the article looks at the types of users in the retweets and replies as group-level percentages to identify the main discussion partners. To answer RQ3 and RQ4 the article looks at the political journalists' mean rates of interaction in retweets and replies with the other political journalists identified in the study and compares this data by news organization, type of news organization and gender across the two countries using Cohen's *d* to measure for effects. The results are presented below.

5. Results

5.1. RQ1: Homophily in Retweets

RQ1 investigated the presence of homophily in retweets in the US and the UK. Taking the US first, the power
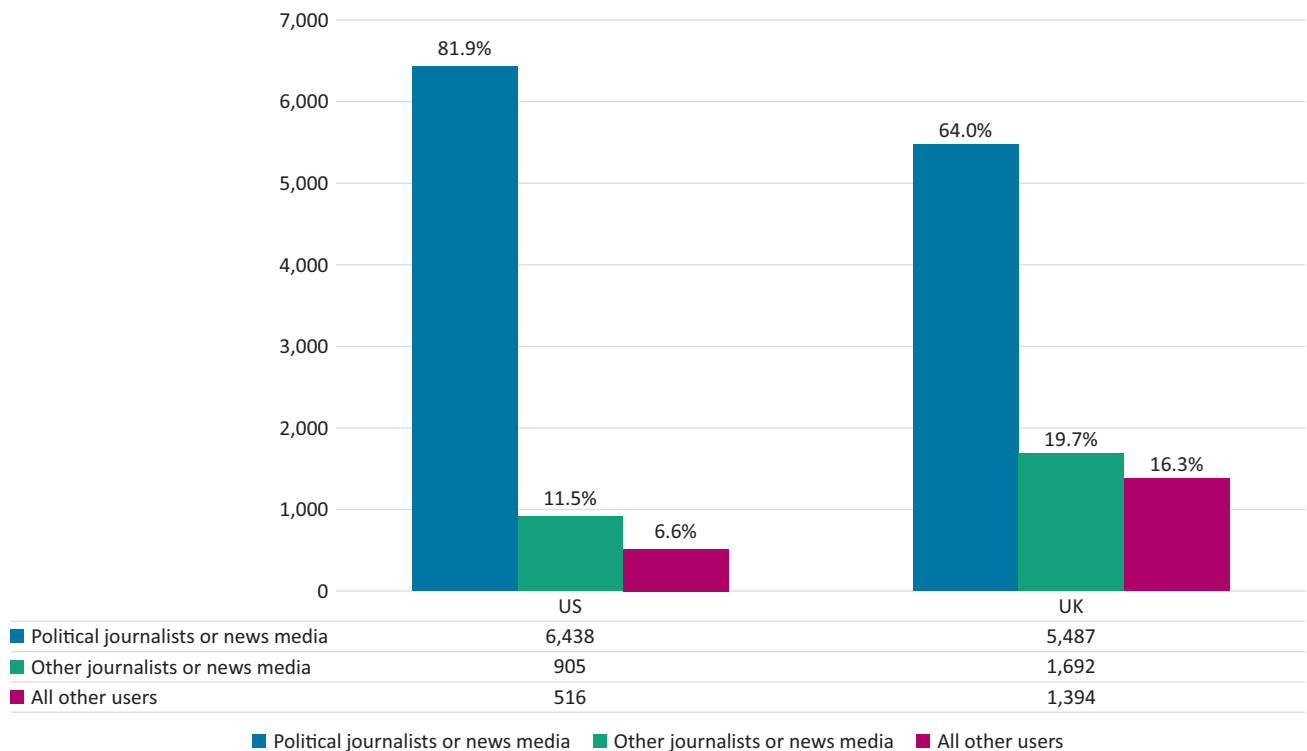
law showed that the top 10 percent of the unique 3,333 names, or 333 users, were responsible for 63 percent of the retweets or 7,859 of the 12,562 retweets. This pattern was almost identically repeated in the UK. There, the top 10 percent of the 3,556 unique names, or 356 accounts, were responsible for 62 percent of the retweets or 8,573 of the 13,747 retweets. The two sets of the top 10 percent of frequently-named users in retweets (7,859 in the US and 8,573 in the UK) form the retweet network dataset.

As can be seen in Figure 1 political journalists and political news media accounts comprised the largest group of retweets in both countries accounting for a total of 82 percent of the US sample (6,438 out of the 7,859 retweets) and 64 percent of the UK sample (5,487 of the 8,753 retweets). Altogether, journalists or news organizations comprised the majority of retweeted actors in both countries with 7,343 of the 7,859 retweets (93 percent) in the US and 7,179 of the 8,573 retweets (84 percent) in the UK. Some differences were immediately obvious as the UK political journalists retweeted a much higher percentage of non-journalists with 16 percent against 7 percent in the US.

The findings point to a large degree of homophily in political journalists' retweet networks in both the US and the UK with a greater focus on US political journalists in the US than the UK.

5.2. RQ2: Homophily in Replies

RQ2 investigated the presence of homophily in replies in the US and the UK. The power law for the US showed

	US	UK
■ Political journalists or news media	6,438	5,487
■ Other journalists or news media	905	1,692
■ All other users	516	1,394

■ Political journalists or news media ■ Other journalists or news media ■ All other users

Figure 1. Political journalists' preferred discussion partners in retweets.
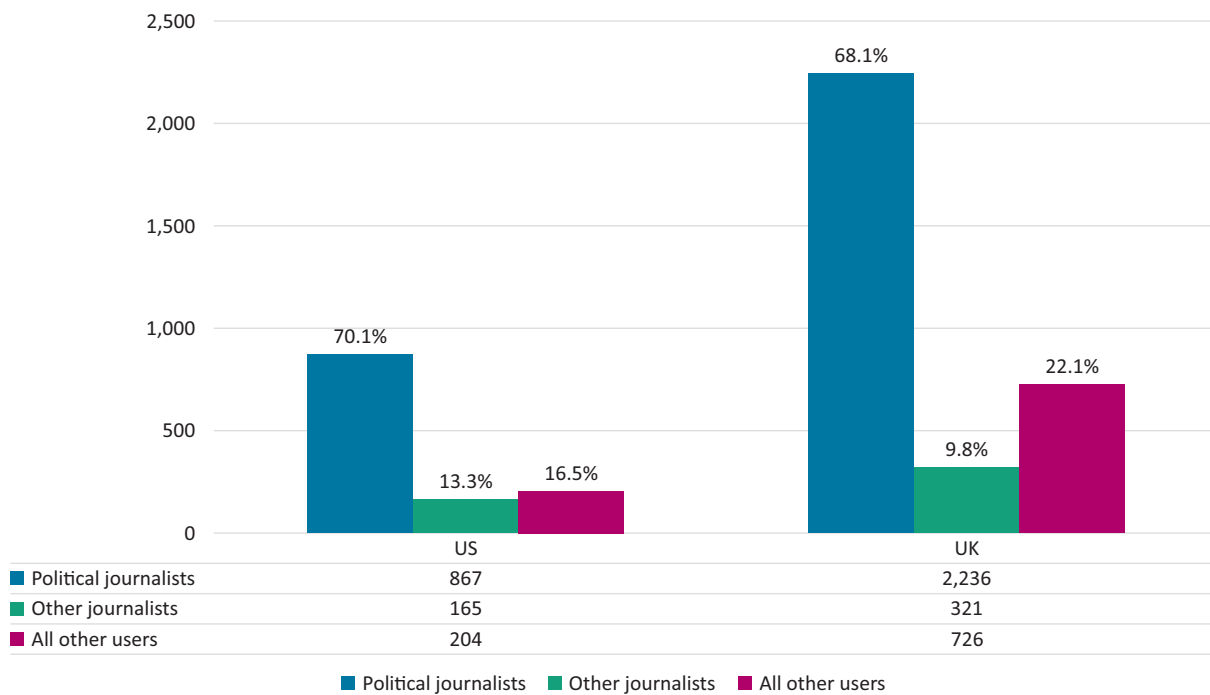
that the top 10 percent of the unique 1,595 names, or 159 users, were responsible for 42 percent of the replies, or 1,236 of the 2,919 replies. The power law for the UK showed that the top 10 percent, or 310 users, received 48 percent of the replies, or 3,283 replies of the 6,764 replies. These two sets of the top 10 percent of most frequently-named reply-to users (1,236 in the US and 3,283 in the UK) form the reply network dataset.

The findings show that the UK political journalists used replies far more frequently than the US indicating some differences in overall behavior patterns, but while the use of replies was far higher in the UK, the focus on political journalists is again consistent as can be seen in Figure 2 with both close to 70 percent. Overall, journalists comprised the largest group of users with 1,032 of the 1,236 replies (83.5 percent) in the US and 2,557 of the 3,283 replies (78 percent) in the UK. Unlike the retweet activity, all replies were sent to individual users and were never used to interact with news organizations or branded accounts. Also, both UK and US journalists included a wider range of non-journalist voices in replies than retweets with 22 percent in the UK and 16.5 percent in the US.

The findings point to a far greater usage of the reply function in the UK and a significant degree of homophily in political journalists' reply networks in both countries. The weaker power law in both countries suggests that the political reporters replied to a far larger number of people—which is indicative of homophily—but given the overall median (1), the findings could also suggest that the majority of replies were probably the one-off comments or thank-yous noted by Parmelee and Deeley (2017).

5.3. RQ3: Shared Characteristics in Retweets

The findings in RQ1 established the presence of homophily among political journalists in retweet networks and this section specifically looks at the interactions identified as political-journalist-to-political-journalist to consider if the criteria of news organization, types of news organization or gender can be seen to play a role. This question is explored through paired samples t-tests with effect sizes calculated using Cohen's d (Hanusch & Nölleke, 2018). In relation to the first criterion of news organization, the results show remarkably consistent patterns of behavior with both the UK and US journalists more likely to retweet outside their organization with the paired sample t-tests showing reasonably similar small-to-medium sized effects as can be seen in Table 2. Looking at types of news organizations, print and broadcast journalists in both countries are more likely to retweet within their own sectors with the results showing quite large effects, specifically in the US broadcast and UK newspaper segments. The results are more mixed in the newer digital sector with US journalists displaying more heterophily and UK journalists more homophily with the effect size small. The results for wire journalists again suggest US heterophily and UK homophily although with large effect size in the US and small effect in the UK. Turning to gender, the results (see Table 2) show that both US and UK male political reporters are far more likely to interact with other male political journalists with a large effect seen in both countries. In comparison, female political journalists are more likely to retweet male political journalists in both the US and the UK with a larger effect seen in the US pointing to homophily in the male

	US	UK
■ Political journalists	867	2,236
■ Other journalists	165	321
■ All other users	204	726

■ Political journalists ■ Other journalists ■ All other users

Figure 2. Political journalists' preferred discussion partners in replies.

Table 2. Shared characteristics in retweets.

		Retweets								
Characteristics		**US political journalists**					**UK political journalists**			
	N	Same M* (SD)	Other M* (SD)	Sig	Cohen's *d*	*N*	Same M* (SD)	Other M* (SD)	Sig	Cohen's *d*
News organization	6,438	26 (31)	40 (48)	***	0.35	5,487	21 (42)	32 (49)	***	0.24
News organization type										
Print	2,662	39 (45)	37 (45)	***	−0.04	2,112	33 (43)	18 (23)	***	−0.44
Broadcast	2,106	51 (49)	22 (27)	***	−0.73	1,299	20 (27)	16 (35)	***	−0.13
Digital	1,078	23 (30)	28 (39)	***	0.14	2,034	52 (90)	40 (51)	***	−0.16
Wire	592	17 (8)	32 (28)	***	0.73	42	7 (10)	4 (6)	***	−0.36
Overall	6,438	36 (42)	30 (37)	***	−0.15	5,487	31 (53)	21 (36)	***	−0.22
Gender**										
Female	2,243	21 (26)	31 (40)	***	0.30	884	8 (11)	23 (29)	***	0.68
Male	3,789	51 (59)	20 (21)	***	−0.70	4,132	48 (75)	9 (12)	***	−0.73
Overall	6,032	38 (49)	25 (31)	***	−0.32	5,016	37 (66)	13 (20)	***	−0.49

Note: M* (SD) = mean and standard deviations. ** These data include only journalist-to-journalist interactions.

networks and heterophily in the female networks. Comparing countries, the sectors most likely to see the most significant homophily are UK newspapers; US broadcasters; US and UK male reporters and UK female political reporters with US wire reporters and UK female journalists likely to see the most significant heterophily.

5.4. RQ4: Shared Characteristics in Replies

This section specifically looks at the replies identified as political-journalist-to-political-journalist in RQ2 to consider the impact of the same shared characteristics discussed above. While the findings around retweets in RQ3

were mixed, the evidence on replies is more clear-cut with more homophily than heterophily evident across the shared characteristics in the two countries as can be seen in Table 3. In relation to the first criteria of news organization, the results again showed similar activity by US and UK journalists although this time they were both seen as more likely to reply to colleagues *within* their own organization, with a larger effect size in the US. Looking at types of news organization, the results showed homophily was more likely in nearly all the sectors studied with just US wire reporters showing any evidence of heterophily, although the number of replies was extremely low. While the paired sample t-tests show small

Table 3. Shared characteristics in replies.

		Replies								
Characteristics		**US political journalists**					**UK political journalists**			
	N	Same M* (SD)	Other M* (SD)	Sig	Cohen's *d*	*N*	Same M* (SD)	Other M* (SD)	Sig	Cohen's *d*
News organization**	867	12 (24)	5 (7)	***	−0.40	2,235	16 (38)	11 (19)	***	−0.17
News organization type										
Print	271	9 (16)	3 (4)	***	−0.51	703	12 (17)	7 (12)	***	−0.34
Broadcast	306	17 (34)	2 (3)	***	−0.62	351	15 (40)	3 (3)	***	−0.42
Digital	275	21 (25)	4 (4)	***	−0.95	1,156	40 (65)	12 (16)	***	−0.59
Wire	15	2 (1)	3 (1)	***	1.00	25	3 (5)	3 (4)	***	0.00
Overall	867	14 (24)	3 (3)	***	−0.64	2,235	20 (41)	7 (12)	***	−0.43
Gender**										
Female	154	6 (10)	2 (3)	***	−0.54	469	13 (35)	8 (20)	***	−0.18
Male	713	20 (30)	2 (2)	***	−0.85	1,766	26 (46)	2 (4)	***	−0.74
Overall	867	15 (26)	2 (2)	***	−0.71	2,235	23 (43)	4 (11)	***	−0.61

Note: M* (SD) = mean and standard deviations. ** These data include only journalist-to-journalist interactions.

to medium-sized effects across types of sector, significant differences could be seen in the US digital, and to a lesser extent, the US broadcast sectors. In gender, the tendency towards homophily is more obvious than in the retweet networks with both genders seen as more likely to reply to their own gender with a larger effect seen for male reporters in both countries.

6. Discussion

The results of this study point to significant homophily throughout political journalists' interaction networks during the US and UK election campaigns, offering key insights into the emergence of common Twitter practices among political journalists in two of the "Liberal Media" countries (Hallin & Mancini, 2004); and providing further evidence of the continuing normalization of Twitter in the hybrid media environment. The results show that political journalists in both the US and the UK are significantly more likely to engage with other political journalists during election campaigns and that the extent of such homophily can be affected by factors like news organization, types of news organization (print; broadcast; digital or wire) and gender. However, while the findings point to overall homophily there are some marked differences between the two countries and between the two types of interactions as discussed below.

To answer the first two research questions, the study shows a pronounced degree of homophily in both countries in retweets and replies with higher rates of homophily in retweets. While the US journalists are more likely to be more homophilous overall, the political reporters in both countries formed distinct journalism-centered bubbles—with political journalists the single largest group—and "other" non-journalism voices significantly marginalized. Taking retweets first, the US political journalists paid more attention to other political reporters than their UK counterparts with 82 percent against 64 percent. However, the political reporters in both countries retweeted very high percentages of journalists overall with 93 percent in the US and 84 percent in the UK. The difference in *types* of journalists and the higher UK retweeting rates of non-journalist accounts (16 percent to 7 percent in the US) could be attributed to the suicide bombing in Manchester during the UK election campaign which caused 23 deaths and led to the 24-hour suspension of the campaign. While content analysis was beyond the scope of this article, examining the content of the retweets would help in determining if the difference around retweeted users could be explained by the effect of this major news story which dominated the news cycles for days in the UK. The findings on replies may also have been impacted by the May 22 suicide attack. The percentage of political-journalist-to-political-journalists replies in both countries were roughly similar (US: 70 percent; UK: 68 percent) which suggests some significant similarities in the cross-national trend, but there were also quite marked differences: UK reporters sent more than three times the number of replies than the US reporters and the higher number of replies were used to engage with a higher percentage of non-journalists with 22 percent against 16.5 percent in the US. Again, content analysis would be useful in understanding if the differences are linked to a major news story that disrupted the UK election campaign rather than emerging differences in journalism practice in two similar media systems.

The second two research questions explored the degree of homophily in retweets and replies across a set of shared characteristics and found that news organization, types of news organization (print, broadcast, digital or wire) and gender play a role in the homophily observed in both countries. The study shows similar patterns in both countries, particularly around gender, with significant levels of homophily in male political journalists' interactions. While both male and female journalists are more likely to use replies to interact with their own gender; the effects are small to medium-sized for females and more pronounced for males. The impact of gender in retweets is striking with both male and female political journalists in the UK and US more likely to retweet male political journalists than female political journalists. However, given that the amplification most often benefits male political journalists, the gender findings, while initially suggestive of homophily, may in fact be more reflective of the political journalism gender inequities highlighted by Usher et al. in 2018. Indeed, the findings here almost exactly mirror those from Hanusch and Nölleke (2018) whose work on Australian reporters found only mild gender-based heterophily within female retweet networks. The lack of gender diversity among political journalists, particularly in the UK parliamentary press lobby, has been highlighted in recent years (Tobitt, 2018) and these findings suggest that male political journalists' voices are amplified by Twitter journalism engagement practices in both countries.

Interestingly, the analysis of news organizations showed political journalists in both countries were more likely to retweet political journalists from *outside* their organizations than inside, echoing Vergeer's 2015 finding that Dutch national news journalists were more likely to connect with those outside their own news organizations. While news organization was not seen as a major factor in Twitter homophily, *types* of news organization did emerge as a significant factor, in particular the US broadcast sector and the UK newspaper sector, findings which may point to a linkage between political bias and Twitter homophily as these are the two media sectors generally regarded as more politically biased than other types of news organizations in their respective countries (Hallin & Mancini, 2004).

Overall, homophily is clearly visible in the political journalists' sustained Twitter interactions as they repeatedly train their attention on other political journalists in retweets and replies and re-create their legacy pack networks online. While homophily itself does not become more, or less, apparent during election campaigns, these

time-frames were chosen to explore the most frequent discussion partners chosen by political journalists during a period when the public is paying more attention to politics and to explore how journalists sort themselves into the kinds of homophilous groups, or filter bubbles, which can amplify the general consensus and shape the types of news that develop (Carlson, 2017). Much is known about homophily in legacy journalism practice but research into similar behavior on Twitter has been slow to emerge, even as studies have frequently pointed to high rates of journalist-to-journalist interactions on Twitter.

The very speed with which journalists have adopted Twitter and integrated it into their work routines may have helped create the kinds of homophilous macro processes revealed in this study, processes which are difficult to detect or prevent at the individual journalist level (Vergeer, 2015). Studies such as this can perhaps help educators and newsrooms alike in creating more education and awareness around engagement and interaction on platforms like Twitter, which offer a myriad of opportunities for journalists to interact with other information sources, and thus avoiding the intra-journalistic activity and pack journalism identified here.

The significant differences in gender warrant more research. It is beyond the scope of this article to determine whether or not the political journalists were deliberately or inadvertently focusing on male political journalists, but these interaction patterns deserve greater inquiry and the findings again speak to the pressing need for increased education around diversity in Twitter interactions.

Finally, while concerns have been raised around the propensity of citizens to receive information via filter bubbles on social media, the results of this study suggest that perhaps more attention should be focused on journalists rather than individuals as a journalist's filter bubble can have a far more powerful effect on the news agenda. This tendency of political journalists to form close-knit networks on Twitter is particularly worthy of scrutiny as political journalists are essential in explaining campaign policies and platforms and helping voters understand the issues under discussion. Moreover, the power to set the agenda remains concentrated with actors who "enjoy power and visibility both on and off Twitter," (Siapera, Boudourides, Lenis, & Suiter, 2018) and this study shows that political journalists, despite the almost limitless opportunities to do otherwise, continue to confer such power and visibility on other political journalists, particularly male political journalists, as they remain tethered, albeit virtually, to the journalism packs of the legacy media era.

6.1. Limitations

While the results show that US and UK political journalists restrict the range and diversity of voices chosen as discussion partners, there are limitations to this study. For example, while the journalists generated a sizeable number of tweets the population size itself was kept rel-atively small to allow for manual coding and analysis. A larger population size could have explored these issues in more detail, but this would have entailed more coders and/or machine analysis. Content analysis would have helped in exploring some of the issues, particularly the cross-national difference observed in replies.

Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest.

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Article

Mapping Political Discussions on Twitter: Where the Elites Remain Elites

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Abstract

This article compares digital arenas such as Twitter with the principles prescribed by the bourgeois public sphere, to examine how close or far these arenas are from Habermas' original concept. By focusing on one of the criteria, the current influence of elites on political debate, it discusses the Habermasian principles of general accessibility and non-dominance of the elites as prerequisites for a functioning public sphere. This study finds that even though there are few access restrictions on Twitter and despite the fact that no one, in principle, is excluded from the platform, there is no apparent elimination of privileges and the elites maintain their elite status within its borders. Methodologically, the article relies on empirical research of hashtagged exchanges on Twitter during the General Elections in the United Kingdom in 2015. Through the mapping of Twitter as a synthesis of dialogic arenas, it explores the elite-focused discourse and the vocal actors in the stream, underscoring that the presence of the elites, even in an indirect way. Drawing on these elements, the article argues for a reconceptualization of the normative perception of the public sphere, suggesting the notion of *exclusion* is a complex issue that includes expanding notions of *publics* to also include those *topics* being discussed. Finally, it focuses on the significance of journalism in relation to political dialogue and argues that the move towards less elite-centered arenas largely depends on journalism.

1. Introduction

The emergence of social media platforms was accompanied by "a fresh wave of technological optimism" (Loader & Mercea, 2011) that underlined the potential of these platforms having a democratizing effect on political dialogue, by providing open and accessible arenas. Such democratic promise also caused a renewed interest on public sphere theory, resulting in a polarized set of reactions, ranging from euphoric commentary on their potential to pessimistic predictions of its democraticizing force (Papacharissi, 2010, p. 10). Such approaches took Habermas' (1989) theory of the public sphere as a starting point, regarding it as a guiding map for successful deliberation, as it offers the normative basis to study the nature and the structure of the political debates within digital arenas. This article embraces the same starting point. In unpacking the principles of the bourgeois public sphere, and transforming them into measurable criteria, this work examines the extent to which current contemporary arenas are close to the Habermasian ideal, shifting the dialogue from questioning whether the Internet is a digital public sphere towards tracing manifestations of the public sphere online, addressing the extent to which certain arenas are closer or further from the vision of a bourgeois public sphere which Habermas proposed.

This article specifically focuses on the criteria of general access to the arenas of dialogue, on the multiplicity of topics discussed, and on the elimination of privileges, as the notion of exclusion is one of the most contested areas when it comes to the bourgeois public sphere. Drawing on this extensive criticism on the concept, set against the promises of inclusion which accompanied new digital participatory arenas, this work suggests that the is-

sue of exclusion and inclusion is far more complex than has been presented in the related academic literature. In other words, any discussion on the inclusive or exclusive character of digital arenas requires research not only to trace inclusiveness in terms of *who* participates (publics), but also in relation to *what* this participation is about, in terms of the nature of the topics and the quality of the dialogue. Finally, it focuses on the role of journalism and its power to not only affect how political dialogue is conducted within the digital arenas, but also to move these arenas closer to the bourgeois model.

Habermas' theory has been contested extensively, either by criticizing its flaws, or by dismissing the concept entirely as insufficient. Such criticism provides us with two options: either to heavily oppose to the concept by focusing on its lack of flexibility to adapt to different societal needs, or to regonize the value of the concept as "a site of information, discussion, contestation, political struggle, and organization" (Dahlgren, 2005, p. 148; Kellner, 2000, p. 12) that enables citizens to "remain plugged into the daily routines of democratic governance and public affairs" (Papacharissi, 2010, p. 114), and therefore to move forward on its reconstruction (Fraser, 1990), its reposition, and its redefinition (Allen, 2012; Dahgren, 2005; Kellner, 2000). Taking the second route, this study adheres to the normativity of Habermas' concept. However, it uses the normative aspect in order to consider a model of the *ideal* public sphere that is independent from the societal and historical context. In other words, in considering a normative model of political deliberation that builds on both Habermas' theory and on Fraser's criticism of the same, it becomes possible to derive from the normative model a means of comparison for the contemporary dialogic arenas.

As such, this research aims to offer a different conceptual approach from predecessors. First, it addresses the *potentiality* of digital media to revive democracy, a potential emphasized by both techno-optimists and techno-pessimists. To do so, it presupposes that the public sphere is an open, adaptable and flexible concept—"a metaphor, which when it is materialized, may take several shapes and forms and adopt multiple incarnations" (Papacharissi, 2010, p. 119). This shifts focus from the public sphere *per se* to its structural transformations and on the factors that led to the formation of the public sphere; in other words, that its structural transformation still exists and still causes structural transformations of the concept.

This article also builds an empirical approach that moves beyond those taken so far (Dahlgren, 2005; Papacharissi, 2002), and it contributes to the methodological approaches by tracing the pre-requisites of the ideal bourgeois public sphere on Twitter. Specifically, in mapping the presence of elites and arguing for the complexity of the aspects of exclusion and inclusion, this article proposes the following set of criteria in assessing the public sphere online: the openness of the social networking platform; the limitations on the discussed topics; and

the hierarchical form of interaction. It examines the presence of dominant elite actors, defined here as *governing* elites as a societal classification which points to "groups of people who either exercised directly or were in a position to influence very strongly the exercise of, political power" (Bottomore, 1993, p. 3). While theoretically the wider goal concerns the reconceptualization of the concept, empirically, each of the criteria offers insightful observations on political dialogue online.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Habermas, the Public Sphere and the Reconceptualization of the Concept: The Issue of Exclusion

Habermas' *ideal version* of the public sphere was a direct consequence of the emergence of radical new ideas that appeared in 18th century, characterized by Enlightenment values of equality, freedom, and justice. The bourgeois public sphere that formed in this context was conceived as an assemblage of private individuals who formed a public body—a new stratum of bourgeois people arose and occupied a central position within the "public" (Habermas, 1989). The institutions that constituted this public sphere varied in many ways: in size, the composition of the participants, the ways that the proceedings were conducted, and the climate for debates. However, the institutions shared some criteria as well, among which the preservation of some kind of social interchange that, "far from presupposing the equality of status, disregarded status at all" (Habermas, 1989, pp. 36–37). Among these institutions, the 18th century *coffeehouses* are particularly important: for Habermas they embodied the realization of his concept. These were the social spaces that offered the opportunity for social gatherings, for rational-critical debate, and ultimately for the formulation of public opinion. The notion of the coffeehouses is equally central to this article, as they emphasize the metaphoric essence of the concept, its flexibility, its contribution to the emergence of journalism and to the enhancement of the comprehension of how journalism is defined, even in contemporary times (Conboy, 2004, p. 50; Örnebring, 2010, p. 68). They are also a form of arena with specific premises, and these premises are the basis for the empirical study here.

According to Habermas, the bourgeois public sphere offered a guarantee of equal participation as there was a process of transformation from the "subjectum" (in a way, the subordinate) into "subject"—from the recipient of commands to the contradicting opponent (Habermas, 1996, p. 81). Habermas underlines in this process a model of norms and modes of behavior, including: a) general accessibility, b) elimination of all privileges, and c) discovery of general norms and rational legitimations (1974, p. 51). This model is evident across Habermas' work: for example, the German phrase he used (*Öffentlichkeit*) which has become defined as "the

public sphere" is partially consisted by the term *publicity* in the sense of openness and access. Webster (2006) similarly summarises the key features of the bourgeois public sphere as having open debate, critical scrutiny, full reportage, increased accessibility, independence of actors from economic interest and state control.

Turning to the topic of elites, Habermas' theory addresses these in terms of the feudal powers of the past, expressed through the notions of hierarchy, tradition, and respect for authority (McKee, 2005). These feudal elites were absent from the deliberative processes in the coffeehouses. Habermas referred to them as "governing elites"—a term that offers a societal classification, pointing to "groups of people who either exercised directly or were in a position to influence very strongly the exercise of political power" (Bottomore, 1993, p. 3). The connection with democracy here is telling: this approach to defining elites has as its main premise that, for a democratic dialogue to exist, it must be in accordance with the democratic principle that "power lies with the people" (Held, 2006, p. 2), where "all members are to be treated as if they were equally qualified to participate in the process of making decisions about the policies the association will pursue" (Dahl, 1998, p. 37). Within political arenas, past and present, this principle is expressed through the "empowerment of the people's voice" (Green, 2010), literally or metaphorically. In Dahl's words, this clearly indicates that "all members are to be treated as if they were equally qualified to participate in the process of making decisions about the policies the association will pursue" (1998, p. 37). From this, at least in principle, hierarchy should be non-existent amongst the members of a democratic society.

According to this line of reasoning, the dominance of elites in public dialogue has been regarded as a way to weaken and undermine the broader participation of the public. For example, the significant development that mass media underwent in the 20th century led the conventional political systems to embrace a media model where political communication was transmitted through elites within an "increasingly closed system" where the audience was largely a body of passive spectators (Bruns, 2008, p. 73). Considering present day circumstances, we could refer to the bourgeois property holders as existing in the form of bourgeois computer holders. As Papacharissi writes: "In this virtual sphere, several special interest publics coexist and flaunt their collective identities of dissent, thus reflecting the social dynamics of the real world", adding this vision of the true virtual sphere "consists of several spheres of counter publics that have been excluded from mainstream political discourse, yet employ virtual communication to restructure the mainstream that ousted them" (2002, p. 21). Herein we shift from speaking of a non-hierarchical ideal, towards something more fragmented, with boundaries between spheres of publics.

Along these lines, Habermas' work has been heavily criticized over the years, especially when it comes to the notion of *exclusion* and the perception of the public sphere as a singular sphere, which ignores the existence of a multiplicity of arenas and publics. Acknowledging this multiplicity of spheres and the need for their inclusion would have reflected a "recognition of social complexity and sociocultural diversity" (Asen, 2000, p. 425; Susen, 2011). In addition, by ignoring the multiplicity of arenas (and consequently of publics), Habermas' conceptualisation underestimates the sociological significance of the alternative (e.g., of publics). Fraser suggests Habermas' "single overarching universal public sphere that is necessary for a well-functioning democracy" (1990, p. 66), should be contrasted with a multiplicity of counter public spheres. She further argues that Habermas idealizes the liberal public sphere by excluding several parts of the general public and subsequently fails to examine the non-bourgeois public spheres and their conflicting relationships (between the so-called *counter-publics*), which were apparent not only in the 19th or 20th century, as Habermas supports, but from the first appearance of the bourgeois public sphere (Eley, 1992; Fraser, 1990).

Much of the criticism against Habermas followed Fraser's lead: Kellner (2000) for instance, underlines that while the public sphere is "a liberal and populist celebration of diversity, tolerance, debate and, consensus, in actuality, the bourgeois public sphere was dominated by white, property-owning males" (2000, p. 5). In a similar vein, Milioni divides exclusion into three categories: a) class exclusion b) exclusion of other forms of expression and c) gender exclusion (2006, p. 32). Milioni also underscores the self-refuting way in which Habermas perceives the public sphere because it violates the basic principle of the public sphere: that of general accessibility. Habermas, himself, engages with these criticisms and, with reference to exclusion, he underlines that "from the beginning a dominant bourgeois public collides with a plebeian one" and that "he underestimated the significance of oppositional and non-bourgeois public spheres" (1992, p. 430).

Despite the criticism, scholars disagree with the complete rejection of the public sphere concept—Fraser, for instance, argues that it is preferable to reformulate Habermas' bourgeois model and develop an alternative post-bourgeois conception (as cited in Allen, 2012). She further proposes areas for reconstruction of the original concept. Picking up on this line of thinking and by situating these discussions in a contemporary context, focusing especially on digital arenas, this article questions the extent to which new social spaces adhere to the same rules and norms as the *ideal version* of the public sphere that Habermas visualized, as well as the extent to which these comply with the criticisms on the exclusion (as well as the *type* of exclusion).

2.2. Twitter: An Opportunity for Inclusion?

Much of the debate on the democratizing effect of new platforms has been connected with their promises of in-

clusion, and of expanding participation. However, in this discussion the notion of *exclusion* has been shown to be much more complex. This turns our attention to Twitter. Twitter has presented itself as an open social networking space that enables Internet users to track breaking news on any occasion (Bruns, 2012), with profiles that can be public and unlocked and accessible to anyone, registered or non-registered (Huberman, Romero, & Wu, 2008). Likewise, Twitter's official website indicates that there are more than 302 million users per month and more than 500 million tweets posted per day. This is reinforced by its strong journalistic dynamic (Dagoula, 2017), and by the fact that Twitter could be considered an ambient news environment, an arena that always contains news, or an "awareness system" in which news information is received in the periphery of users' awareness and does not require their cognitive attention (Hermida, 2010, p. 301), that "creates social awareness streams that provide a constantly updated, live representation of the experiences, interests and opinions of users" (Hermida, 2014, p. 360). Taking into account the perception of the bourgeois sphere, in which the "circulation of information" was central to its existence (Fraser, 1990), it could be argued that Twitter fits in this description.

On Twitter there are only a few access restrictions and in principle no one is excluded. It is now considered as an increasingly integral element of new media information cycles (Nielsen & Schroder, 2014). As Chadwick points out, in the new political information cycles that exist within the current hybrid media system, Twitter offers opportunities for non-elites to affect news production through "timely interventions and sometimes direct, one-to-one, micro-level interactions with professional journalists" (2013, p. 89). Chadwick also notes that ordinary citizens are enabled, using digital technologies, to affect the meaning and flow of information (2013, p. 89), prompting a series of questions that concern not only the effect of the non-elite interventions on the agenda-setting, but also the presence of the elites (and the manifestations of this presence) in the political dialogue that takes place in networked platforms, such as Twitter.

To understand Twitter's significance as a digital political arena, new mediated spaces need to be regarded as internal parts of the non-digital world, which citizens use and inhabit (Chadwick, O'Loughlin, & Vaccari, 2017), and where digital and non-digital worlds are not dichotomized but interrelated. The full integration of digital arenas into non-digital ones indicates the existence of an expanded global arena, where time and space restrictions are nullified, in a way that the McLuhan's global village is partly realised as much in terms of connectedness, as in terms of awareness of those others in the village (Dagoula, 2017). In this context, technology is regarded as architecture—as the environment that enables users to become civically engaged (Papacharissi, 2011, p. 10). What is more, Twitter sits within a *polymedia* environment (Miller et al., 2016), where it is not an isolated platform, but part of a multiplicity of platforms. Madianou

and Miller employ the term "polymedia", an approach that highlights that none of these platforms can be properly understood if considered in isolation – the meaning of each one is relative to the others (2011; Miller et al., 2016, p. 4).

However, this coin has another side, and scholars have been arguing about the openness of the network since its emergence in 2006. Research has shown that there is a digital divide among Twitter users and suggests that especially in the United Kingdom and in the United States: "Twitter users are disproportionately members of elites in both countries", in the sense that they are young, wealthy and well educated (Blank, 2017). Young (2002) draws on Fraser and underlines that "in societies with social and economic inequalities, when there is a public sphere it tends to be dominated, both in action and ideas, by more privileged groups. Even though access may be the same for all, the greater resources of wealth, power, influence, and information make access easier for some than others. The interests, opinions, and perspectives more associated with the privileged social actors, then, tend to monopolize discourse in the public sphere" (Young, 2002, p. 171). Fuchs echoes this argument by discussing "the asymmetrical power of visibility on Twitter" (2014, p. 191), pointing to a dominance of the *elites* (in a more expansive sense of the term) not only in terms of followers, but also in terms of visibility of their tweets.

However, when regarding tweets as "opinion-rich sources", it becomes apparent that although they may not yet represent the society as a whole, they do give a glimpse of a specific influential sector of society (Lutz & du Toit, 2014). If perceiving social networking platforms as a miniature model of society, it could then be argued that the complete elimination of social inequalities is rather utopic. Therefore, any reconstructed model of the public sphere should seek as much inclusion as possible. Through the comparison of these platforms with the bourgeois public sphere it becomes possible to evaluate the extent to which these approach Habermas' normative requirements. However, the suggestion here is that inclusion should be assessed on another level as well—beyond actors to also consider the topics discussed. Asen similarly prompts scholars "to seek the counter of counter-publics", in "its articulation through alternative discourse practices and norms" (2000, p. 428), and Young suggests that counter-publics "can have dual functions. On the one hand, the counter-publics can provide sites and fora for members of the subordinated group to raise issues among themselves and discuss them, formulate analyses and positions, as well as develop aesthetic and discursive modes for expressing their social perspectives, autonomous from dominant discourses" (2002, p. 172). Going back to Habermas, he highlights that all sorts of topics were open to discussion as these institutions allowed the "problematization of areas that until then had not been questioned" (1989, pp. 36–37), pointing another perception of *general accessibility*.

Last but not least, the role of journalism remains crucial in this discussion as inclusion (or exclusion) of topics is connected with the quality of information, which inevitably leads to the role of the *press*. Fraser (1990) describes the public sphere as a place where information, ideas, and debate can circulate in society and where political opinion can be formed, an argument Curran advances by arguing that if by taking as a premise that "public opinion is to be formed in an arena of open debate", then "the effectiveness of this will be profoundly shaped by the quality, the availability and the communication of information" (Curran, 1991). As Webster (2006) adds, information is also at the core of the public sphere and the media are one of the most important contributors to its effective functioning.

3. Methodological Design

Turning to the empirical study, the methodological approach relies on the operationalization of Habermas' normative criteria into measurable qualities, so as to be able to test to what extent these criteria are met on Twitter and to further develop existing approaches to the evaluation of the public sphere. It looks specifically at openness from Habermas' theory in terms of the presence or absence of hierarchies (and therefore elites), as well as the openness of Twitter in terms of the same. It addresses these by examining the nature of publics and dialogues on Twitter, as will be layed out below, surrounding the 2015 UK General Election.

The starting point for this methodolgocial approach is Bruns and Moe's perception of Twitter as a synthesis of dialogic arenas at micro, meso and macro layers. The macro layer is defined by the hashtagged exchanges, the meso as delimited by follower/followee networks, and the micro layer represented by the reply function that includes personal exchanges (Bruns & Moe, 2014, pp. 16–20). For this article, the analysis focuses on the macro layer—and the hashtagged exhanges between Twitter users. Hashtags are an integral part of Twitter, as they manage to link conversations of strangers together. What is more, Twitter is "more of a stream, which is composed by a polyphony of voices all chiming in" (Murthy, 2013, p. 4), and hashtags act as "imaginary borders" that delimit certain dialogic arenas. As Marwick (2014) put it, Twitter research should be framed as a field site, to avoid losing focus due to its extensive nature. Moreover, hashtags not only provide a diachronic perspective, they are also useful for identifying key participants in a discussion (Bruns & Burgess, 2012, pp. 805–806)—in this case, they allow research to locate the most vocal actors in the stream.

The choice of hashtags is also important in purely Habermasian terms: both the macro and the meso layer constitute elements of the public dialogue, or as Bruns and Moe note "they encompass a certain degree of publicness" (2014, pp. 16-20). Moreover, the use of hashtags at the macro layer can "aid the rapid assembly of ad hoc

issue publics" (2014, p. 18), especially when tweets are marked by a topical hashtag, as "tweeting to a topical hashtag resembles a speech at a public gathering...of participants who do not necessarily know each other, but have been brought together by a shared theme, interest or concern" (Bruns & Moe, 2014, p. 18). Here attention to hashtags relates, in a sense, to social gatherings reminiscent of coffeehouses.

Focusing on the General Elections in the United Kingdom that took place on 7 May 2015, the Twitter data gathered includes tweets, using hashtags, posted from 30 March 2015 (the dissolution of Parliament) to 31 May 2015 (24 days after the elections). This focuses on the period of heightened political interest. Tweets using the two most popular hashtags were collected; these were #GE2015 and #GE15 (https://www.hanovercomms.com). After filtering and removing duplicates, the total sample for each hashtag and tweets consists of 149,287 and 95,629, respectively, collected using Tags 6.0 software. This software uses Twitter's Application Programming Interface (API), which can be used for tracking current activity by users or of specific keywords (Bruns & Burgess, 2012, p. 804). This research embraces Bruns and Burgess' argument that:

> The data [that emerge through the participation in hashtag conversations] must be understood as a reasonably representative sample rather than a comprehensive dataset of activities....Datasets in particular are weighted considerably towards the most engaged subset of Twitter users. (2012, p. 804)

The sample was analysed both textually as thematically. Drawing on Mason (2002), who suggested that the choice of documents is based on an acceptance of the fact that they are meaningful constituents of the social world, this research adjusts this claim to the Twitter platform. To map the presence of elites and to be able to trace the notions of exclusion and inclusion, this article focuses on three criteria:

- *The openness of the network*: to be a functioning digital sphere (or spheres) Twitter should be open to all citizens, without technological limitations. *Empirically*, analysis examines the diversity of users that participate in the discussion through the hashtags #ge2015, #ge15.
- *The restriction of the discussed topics*: for a functioning digital public sphere(s) there should be no restrictions in the choice of the discussed topics. *Empirically*, this is operationalized by qualitative thematic and textual analysis of the tweets, which facilitates the aggregation of reactions related to the elections.
- *The non-hierarchical form of interaction*: for a realized digital sphere(s), there should be a non-presence of prominent elite actors. *Empirically*, frequency analysis is employed, following previous

studies, to highlight which actors and terms dominate the dialogue (Papacharissi, 2014).

In terms of limitations, there are a few considerations. Even though tweets were gathered on a daily basis, they were collected in an asychronous manner, meaning that deleted tweets may be excluded. In addition, Twitter API restrictions set a strict limit for gathering of tweets, as these can only be collected in a short time frame with extra daily limitations (Puschmann & Gaffney, 2014). Lastly, even though the scope of the present article is limited to a specific national context, the focus on elections does not act in a restrictive way: electoral periods are not only periods with high political interest, especially from a journalistic perspective, but in contemporary societies where representative democracies prevail they can also be considered the epitome of democracy—they are those specific occasions that offer the opportunity for participation in democratic processes. As such, the choice to examine political dialogue, on Twitter, during an electoral period, lies primarily in their significance as a democratic condition. As Maireder and Ausserhofer note, within social networking sites such as Twitter "a public negotiation of the meaning of the political events" is witnessed (2014, p. 316), providing a clear connection with the Habermasian public debate and the principle of publicity.

4. Findings and Discussion

4.1. The 'Publics'

Drawing from the analysis of the accounts using these hashtags, we can first look at who makes up the 'publics', including dominant actors and the ways in which they position themselves in the dialogue. The openness of the network allows for a variety of actors to participate in the streams. However, the presence of Twitter users is massively overshadowed by the presence of bots. The frequency analysis on the collected material as well as the sampling and filtering of the top 100 accounts show that both streams are dominated by 'the bots' (e.g., @ge2015bot). Bots, as automated information transactions, feed Twitter streams with automated tweets, without any human intervention (Larsson & Moe, 2015). The following examples showcase the format of these tweets, however, during the time of the analysis, the accounts were no longer available:

- ge2015bot: vmg456: RT C9J: Tomorrow we have the chance to make Scotland's voice heard like never before. #GE15 #Voâ€¦
- ge2015bot: BigTfromHalfway: RT theSNP: #GE15: AlynSmithMEP highlights that the SNP will work with others to be a pâ€¦

In the case of the first hashtag (#GE2015), the number of posted tweets sent by a bot account was 13.4% of the total amount of the collected tweets (19,985 tweets). Likewise, in the #GE15, bot-tweets, 10.5% of the material (10,075 tweets) are from bots. In the first stream, two other bots are also feed the stream with automated information: the @UKElection and @Election2015, which primarily retweet already posted material. In all these occasions, the accounts were deleted from Twitter at the time of the study.

Turning to the most vocal Twitter users using these hashtages, these account for only 0.3% of overall dialogue, a significant difference when compared to the space bots cover. Qualitatively analyzing these accounts, this echoes Gottfried's argument that while Twitter is populated by a rather larger audience, its most active users are mostly of those who are politically interested (Gottfried, 2014). For example, on the #GE15 stream, 63.2% of the fifty studied accounts belong to individual users. These individuals, however, also promote that they are interested in politics in their Twitter biographies, and/or that they support a specific political party. This mirrors the normative discussion of Habermasian coffeehouses, and the preference for openness of standpoint, the consistency of which was primarily by political interested citizens—the *bourgeiois stratum* (Habermas, 1989).

The most striking finding, though, concerns the absence among these active, political, users of politicians, political parties, and formal political actors, particularly those who were contestants in the 2015 General Elections. Also striking was the degree to which journalists and media are absent, with the exception of @politicshour and @ConversationUK, on the #GE2015 stream.

These results suggest the platform users have a clear way to communicate through the network and to politically express themselves without engaging such actors. This demonstrates as well how the potential for participating in political discussions on Twitter is open—where, in principle, no one is excluded—and that there is no direct dominance of the *governing elites* in the streams. However, it does not indicate a low presence of such actors—as they are present in an indirect way. For example, elite accounts are not only popular in terms of followers (active audience), but also in terms of retweets they receive (passive audience). These two indicators suggest that the are in a central place in the platform.

4.2. The 'Topics'

Another way of understanding publics is through making sense of the topics discussed. Through the thematic analysis of the collected tweets, that demonstrates an elite-focused tweeting, especially when it comes to the power or governing elites. As expected, tweets analyzed mostly included words related to the General Election. However, the thematic analysis demonstrates a low variety of themes, which mostly concentrate on media and political actors, pointing to the question of inclusiveness on the platform, when considered in terms of *discussed topics*.

For instance, under the #GE2015 hashtag, David Cameron is mentioned 4,999 times, the Conservative Party is mentioned 17,786 times, the Labour Party 14,922 times, and the Scottish National Party 10,076 times. These findings point to a preference to elite-central discussions, focused on politicians and political parties, showcasing an indirect (i.e., without specific @mentions), yet significant, presence of elites. As examples:

- 36% of people who voted, voted Tory. That's less than a quarter of public as a whole. This is not democracy. #GE2015
- Look, the Tories won: it's called a democracy. I don't like it either but violence and vandalism is inexcusable. #GE2015
- Well done Prime Minister #DavidCameron. You fought a good battle. #GE2015
- Nigel Farage says new #Ukip voter is young and working class. But will he resign? #GE2015
- WOW. Even the exit poll underestimated the Tories chances! UKIP got only one seat, without Farage. What a great night for Cameron. #GE2015
- For those who blame #Sturgeon on #Cameron's victory: it's called #FirstPastthePost You are welcome. #GE2015
- #Election2015: UK wakes up to Tory majority #GE2015
- These protests against the final results of the General Election- it was a clear win- the Conservatives won fair and square #GE2015
- Wow. Three party leaders facing exits today. #GE2015 #GE15 @UKIP @UKLabour @LibDems who will be missed?

Journalistic actors are also not included in the most popular mentioned words, apart from BBC's accounts, which are mentioned 12,458 times, primarily in relation to the BBC Debate, reinforcing the argument of "dual screening" (Vaccari, Chadwick, & O' Loughlin, 2015), where Twitter acts as a real-time platform that feeds comments and reactions into the coverage of political events, broadcasted by other media platforms. In a similar vein, Jungherr (2014, p. 242) notes that Twitter appears very receptive to media events, as the volume of the messages rises sharply in reaction to a scheduled event, such as the debate of the leading candidates—echoing the argument that the Twitter acts as a platform where elite-focused debate is taking place.

Twitter users, however, mention individual journalists as an attempt to engage in dialogue with them. However, more often than not, these prompts are made without a response, as journalists' use of the *reply* function is very low; when used, it is used to engage in conversation with specific *actors*: politicians, journalists, other media actors, in a form of *intra-elite* conversation. Such an elitist approach has also been observed when studying the tweets of media organiza-

tions: in the context of General Elections 2015, BBC, Daily Mail, Guardian and Telegraph mention almost exclusively other accounts belonging to their organization (e.g., @BBCElectionbot, @BBCr4today, @FeMail, @GuardianWitness, @guardianworld), journalists working for the medium, and rarely politicians (e.g., David Cameron, Ed Miliband, Nigel Farage) (Dagoula, 2017, p. 157).

Going further, a large number of tweets are presented in the format of political commentary, with users presenting their comments in line with traditional, if not exclusive journalistic functions; these include bearing witness or holding power to account (Picard, 2014, p. 278). This *journalistic* use of the medium reveals users' willingness to provide information or criticism on the elites, on policies, and on processes like the elections. This underlines a form of political expression, with Twitter users commenting, opposing, and adding their voices to Twitter's political commentary stream, as shown by these examples:

- 3) I argued beginning of April that a majority CON/LAB needed to face down SNP in House of Commons. Now CON listen to @PaulGoodmanCH #GE2015
- @David_Cameron 0 hour contracts? I'm guaranteed 0 hours, how am I meant to build a future for myself? It was easier on the dole. #ge2015
- This is David Cameron-The man who forced a Hospital to open a food bank for sick children #GE2015
- 24% of the voting population voted Conservative (37% of 66% turnout). Maintaining the current system is morally bankrupt politics. #GE2015
- #BBC Forecasting Conservatives will finish with 331 seats! #Wow #GE2015 A huge victory for common sense.
- Lots saying 'I don't even know u anymore Britain'...u clearly didnt know it before, or ud know its basically a Conservative country #GE2015

This *indirect impact* or *indirect involvement* of the elites, and notably *governing* elites, indicates a shift on the discussion on the democratic dynamic of Twitter. While primarily the emphasis was placed on issues of inclusion of different publics, it is now moved to the inclusion of discussed themes. Twitter is arguably an open network and in principle access is guaranteed to everyone and no one is excluded, however, when observing closer, hierarchy (or, hierarchical classification) is still present within its borders. Likewise, if the presence of the elites is *directly* minimized (in terms of their actual participation in the dialogue), this could not be translated to a complete absence. Elites are not dominating as actors, but they do as themes of discussion.

5. Conclusive Remarks

Young writes that "one of the purposes of advocating inclusion is to allow transformation of the style and terms

of public debate and thereby open the possibility for significant change in outcomes" (2002, p. 12). This article discusses the notions of exclusion and inclusion in digital political dialogue in the context of the public sphere theory. It argues that for functioning digital political arenas it is not only necessary to apply Habermas principle of general accessibility and non-dominance of the governing elites, but it is also crucial that this openness is reflected in the discussed themes—despite the simultaneous existence of particular thematic debates within and across broader domains (Bruns & Highfield, 2016). Twitter is considered an open network, acting in a way on what Arendt describes as environment that "the *insider* and the *outsider* alike have the ability to appear and speak for themselves in political public spheres" (as cited in Breese, 2011, p. 137).

The overall aim is to consider reconceptualization of public sphere theory through the lens of normativity and the development of a model that will offer criteria which can be tested within current arenas to measure the degree to which these adhere to the *ideal public sphere* (Dagoula, 2017). Therefore, this research argues for the reconstruction of the normative model, embracing Arendt's appreciation that political public spheres could be reinvigorated in the contemporary world (Zerilli, 2005). This discussion comes through the focus on the structural transformations, which directly affect the consistency and the structure of the current arenas. It also comes through the analysis of public sphere's dimensions that allow the ideal model to act as a measure for comparison.

This normative perception should also take into account the extensive criticism the Habermasian public sphere has endured, and notably those critiques which concern the notion of exclusion, and juxtapose these to the digital promises of inclusion made by new social networking platforms. Regarding exclusion specifically, even though the complete elimination of social inequalities is rather utopic, the normativity of the model allows scholars to aim towards considering as much inclusion as possible. As such, an inclusive normative model should include not only *the publics* but also *the topics* in its evaluation of a public sphere, both in terms of it nature and in the quality of the discourse, which (contra Habermas) is emotionally charged with a low degree of rationality, as the examples in the findings show. What is more, the research while focused on Twitter, considers its findings as possibly contributing to a larger media ecology, where Twitter is only one of many available arenas. As such, any understanding, or revision of the public sphere concept, should refer to *public spheres*, rather than to the *public sphere*, taking into account the multiplicity of overlapping, unequal publics (Breese, 2011). Furthermore, it should also reflect the "range of institutions, groups, and media, that form public spheres of discourse, action, representation, and criticism" (Breese, 2011, p. 134). Likewise, the elite-focused debate, even when in alignment with the bourgeois version of the public sphere and its

attention on current affairs, should also reflect the multiplicity of publics and its interests. Naturally, this implies that, for an inclusion of *counter-topics*, the inclusion of *counter-publics* is presupposed. However, the findings here highlight that the notion of exclusion is a far more complex issue.

At this point, the role of journalism becomes very important. A more sophisticated use of Twitter by various media actors would greatly benefit the political functions of the new mediated arenas. To return to Habermas, he put the *press* at the center of his concept, by highlighting its unique explosive power (1989) that nourished the debate by presenting critical reporting and by submitting political issues to critical discussion. The press was a catalyst for the circulation of information and for Habermas was the "most eminent institution of the public sphere" (Peters, 1993). In previous work, I argue that Twitter offers the opportunity to the journalistic actors to have an essential role, either by echoing these voices in their other journalistic channels off Twitter, by filtering the information and promoting important topics on the platform, or by positioning themselves in the discussion and performing their journalistic practices (Dagoula, 2017, p. 167). Or, in Dahlgren's words, it is necessary to explore "to what extent the media, by performing their journalistic role, can inform citizens adequately, put their responses into public debate, and encourage them to reach informed decisions about what courses of action to adopt" (Dahlgren, 2005). Putting this within Habermas' theory of the public sphere, the press is the force that should encourage the public(s) to act on their conscience and capacity as citizens and not as consumers, but also part of the machinery that could lead to meaningful democratic societies, the premise of which is an informed electorate (Papathanasopoulos, 2011). As such, and to add to Fraser's (1990) proposal for a reconstructed normative theory of the public sphere, any new approach should have journalism in a central position.

Conflict of Interests

The author declares no conflict of interests.

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Article

The Role of Journalism on YouTube: Audience Engagement with 'Superbug' Reporting

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Abstract
Journalism has gradually become 'normalized into social media', and most journalists use social media platforms to publish their work (Bruns, 2018). YouTube is an influential social media platform, reaching over a billion users worldwide. Its extensive reach attracts professional and amateur video producers who turn to YouTube to inform, entertain and engage global publics. Focusing on YouTube, this study explores the place for journalism within this media ecology. This study uses a mixed-method approach to examine forms of audience engagement to YouTube videos about antimicrobial resistance (AMR), or so called "superbugs", caused by overuse and misuse of antibiotics. The analysis focuses on the most viewed YouTube videos about AMR between 2016 and 2018, and compares engagement themes expressed in comments to journalistic videos with popular science videos. The most viewed videos about AMR on YouTube are professionally produced educational popular science videos. The qualitative analysis of 3,049 comments identifies seven main forms of high-level engagement, including expressions of emotions, blame and calls for action. This study shows that journalism plays an important role on YouTube by generating audience discussions about social and political accountability. Our findings demonstrate that journalism videos were associated with propositions for political, economic and social/lifestyle actions, while popular science videos were associated with medicines, scientific or pseudo-scientific, and medical practice changes.

1. Introduction—The Place for Journalism in the Current Media Ecology

Journalism has gradually become normalized into social media, and journalists and media companies actively publish and promote their material on social media platforms (Bruns, 2018). Journalists are active on both Facebook and Twitter, and their journalistic content, such as news and current affairs programs, is also frequently published on YouTube. The aim of this study is to explore the place for journalism within this media ecology. The focus is on journalism on YouTube, examining how journalistic content engages audiences around important societal issues by comparing journalism videos with popular science videos on YouTube.

Audience engagement, demonstrated via shares, likes and comments online, has become a buzzword in the media industry. The economic strain coupled with an uncertain digital media landscape has turned media's focus on audience behaviour and preferences to inform

business models for online news (Cherubini & Nielsen, 2016; Ksiazek, Peer, & Zivic, 2015; Mersey, Malthouse, & Calder, 2010; Peters & Broersma, 2017; Powers, 2015). Editors track figures on a story-by-story basis to try to determine what particular elements of journalistic practices, including story selection, content design, writing style and timing of the publication generate greater or less engagement in terms of views.

The blind chase to maximize low-level engagement such as 'views' fuelled by business imperatives may not only result in journalists and editors neglecting the normative functions or institutional values of journalism, but be at its expense (Couldry, 2015; Steel, 2017). These classic and enduring functions and values of journalism as an institution include its role as disseminator of information of common interest, acting as a watchdog against the powerful, and stimulating and hosting public deliberation on matters of importance (Braun & Gillespie, 2011; Couldry, 2017; Meyer & Carey, 2014; Peters & Broersma, 2017; Tenenboim & Cohen, 2015; Wolfgang, 2018).

Indeed, further to comments used to inform business models in the media industry, online comments platforms have the potential to serve as spaces where audiences/users express attitudes not only towards the specifics of the journalistic content in question, but broader social and political issues, thereby constituting a public sphere which facilitates the expression of opinion and deliberation of important issues (Ben-David & Soffer, 2018; Ksiazek, Peer & Zivic, 2015; McDermott, 2018; Santana, 2015).

However, the quantity of comments does not convey the nature and quality of audience engagement in the public sphere. Instead of being civil and respectful (Ksiazek et al., 2015; Rowe, 2015; Santana, 2015), online debates are often uncivil, and sometimes even overtly racists (Richardson & Stanyer, 2011; Santana, 2015). Measures of low-level engagement such as 'views' also fail to capture how deeply stories affect audiences and the impact the story may have had on their subsequent behavior (Stroud, Steiner, Alibhai, Lang, & Purcell, 2017). Peters and Broersma (2017) thus argue for a 'bottom-up', audience-centric investigation of engagement. This means examining how the audience actually engages with journalistic content independent of any preconceived notions of journalism's normative functions.

This study examines how audiences use comments to express engagement to YouTube videos focused on so called "superbugs", or antimicrobial resistance (AMR). AMR is one of the greatest global challenges in the 21st century, caused by the overuse and misuse of antibiotics in human medicine and food production (World Health Organization, 2015). YouTube is an influential social media platform, and its extensive reach attracts public health communicators to turn to YouTube to educate and influence global publics. Indeed, the most viewed videos about AMR on YouTube are popular science videos with clear educational purposes, explaining the biological processes involved in the evolution of resis-

tant bacteria. In contrast, journalism videos about AMR on YouTube mainly consist of investigative reports clearly engaging with the societal causes and consequences of AMR (Lindgren & Djerf-Pierre, 2017).

The present study aims to place itself apart from both the fixed normative approaches to engagement and the market-driven approaches directed by news outlets' business imperatives. Using the AMR issue as a case study, we present an audience-centric, bottom-up study of user comments to YouTube videos focused on the following research questions:

- How do audiences express engagement in user comments to YouTube videos about AMR?
- Do the expressions of engagement differ between journalism videos and popular science videos?

We examine the various expressions of engagement that emerge in the comments to videos about AMR resistance. Drawing on differences found in audience's responses to journalism and the popular science videos, we discuss the specific role journalism occupies on YouTube.

We begin the study with an overview of the variety of definitions used by scholars for the concept of engagement within relevant literature. This is followed by a section outlining the mixed-methods approach generating results which point to the differences between audience engagement with journalistic content and other genres on YouTube. The result section describes and compares the engagement themes to the journalism videos with the popular science videos. The article closes with a concluding discussion.

2. Engaging Audiences with Journalism

Despite the term 'engagement' being commonly used in countless studies in journalism research, few attempts to define it concretely. Those that do, define it in numerous ways without universal consensus (Chan-Olmsted & Wolter, 2018; Nelson, 2018). Nelson (2018) characterizes the concept as 'fraught' (p. 531) and confusing across the news industry, despite its status as a 'media industry buzzword' (Lawrence, Radcliffe, & Schmidt, 2018, p. 1220). Many concepts are related and are sometimes used interchangeably, such as participation and interactivity. Some definitions focus on mental states and emotional involvement among individual media users (Chan-Olmsted & Wolter, 2018; Oliphant, 2013), others encompass broader notions of collective and individual experiences with media (Hill & Steemers, 2017; Mersey et al., 2010). Swart, Peters and Broersma (2017, p. 186) define engagement as the 'specific ways and means by which people connect [to public life] through news.' The broadest possible definition of audience engagement would be to include all audience responses to media 'beyond the level of attention' (Couldry, Livingstone, & Markham, 2010). However, in the context of "online en-

gagement", which is the focus of this study, one key theme of interaction appears in many definitions. Further unpacked, online engagement as "interactivity" has two main attributes of interaction: first, that between the user and producer, and second, interaction between users (Boczkowski & Mitchelstein, 2012; Ksiazek, Peer, & Lessard, 2016). Our study encompasses both aspects of interactivity however it is not possible to determine exactly who the viewer is engaging with as we do not examine comment threads. The comments can be directed at the producers, other viewers of the videos or anyone in the vast YouTube audience.

Kim, Hou, Han and Himelboim (2016) argue that different levels of cognitive engagement is what separates less from more engagement online. Engagement is conceptualised as a spectrum with lower, or less active engagement at one end, such as viewing or 'liking' content, and higher level and more active engagement such as commenting on content or other comments occurring at the other, with medium level engagement such as 'sharing' falling at various places in-between. When audiences interact with a medium by commenting in a public forum online it is therefore considered to represent a high-level form of engagement. Still, the specific expressions (quality and content) of engagement that are expressed in each comment may vary quite significantly.

In response to the lack of a unitary definition, we opted for a very broad perspective when looking for expressions of audience engagement online. This includes both measures of low-level engagements such as views and likes and a close examination of high-level forms of engagement demonstrated by comments expressing how audiences feel, think and act in response to having viewed a video about AMR on YouTube.

3. Journalism on YouTube

This study of the role of journalism is located on one of the most wide-reaching social media platforms, YouTube, an influential and transnational video-sharing platform. YouTube is the second largest search engine in the world, with over 80 percent of users located outside the US. Every day, one billion hours of YouTube video content is watched (Aslam, 2018). It has been described by various sources as a platform, an archive, a library, a medium, a laboratory, a modern-day bard, a storyteller for the digital age, and a source of modern-day mythology (Kavoori, 2015). Burgess and Green describe YouTube as an 'almost incomprehensibly large and highly diverse archive of video content' (2018, p. 14). They define YouTube as mainstream media which has helped redefine what "professional media" looks like—a platform for amateur and professional production and distribution which is experienced in diverse ways by 'different users' (p. 22).

As a global platform for journalism, YouTube offers a plethora of content and news channels (Sumiala & Tikka, 2013). In addition to providing diverse news content, it suggests videos for viewers to watch based on subject topic relating to previously watched materials. YouTube also plays a role in mediating video content through its algorithm ranking of top results. As Rieder, Matamoros-Fernandez and Coromina (2018) demonstrate in their study of visibility of YouTube search results, YouTube's search function is designed to highlight what the authors call "'newsy' moments" (p. 63), thereby changing search results from day to day. They also point to how recommendations and subscriptions influence search ranking, with the platform privileging 'channel subscriptions as a means for content creators to build and address an audience' (p. 63).

Briones, Nan, Madden and Waks (2012) study of HPV vaccine coverage on YouTube, shows how the YouTube discourse on controversial subjects can shift relatively quickly, demonstrated by an increasingly negative tone in both user generated videos and viewer responses. However, while YouTube is often conceived of as a place for non-professional producers, that is, amateurs or "ordinary users", to create and upload their own content, Burgess and Green's (2009) study of the most popular videos on YouTube revealed that a large amount of content originates from corporate users ("big media" companies in film, music or television, or web-TV companies). Welbourne and Grant's (2015) study of the characteristics of the most viewed videos about science on YouTube also concludes that professionally generated content is superior in number.

In many cases, the journalistic material published on YouTube is repurposed from traditional media news sites. Television news and current affairs production follows conventions with long-standing expectation of high production values and aesthetics. Peer and Ksiazek's (2011) content analysis of 882 journalistic news videos on YouTube showed that approximately half of the examined videos were repurposed from traditional news media sites. It also showed that the news videos produced specifically for YouTube adhered to traditional journalistic production practices (picture and sound quality, editing techniques, etc.) but diverted from 'common content standards' (p. 45), for example how they used sources and/or in their approach to fairness. In short, their study demonstrated that repurposed news videos from other mediums (such as television news and current affairs programs) adhered to traditional and institutionalised journalism standards in both production approach and content elements. As such, those videos can be considered in a similar way to video journalism published on traditional news channels.

4. Making Sense of AMR: Comparing Journalism with Other YouTube Genres

The five journalistic videos analysed for this study are all long-form current affairs productions, repurposed from online or broadcast news organisations, including VICE, The Guardian PBS Frontline (US), and ABC (Australia). To identify what these bring to the table in terms

of audience responses and engagement, we contrast it with another YouTube genre. As a platform for content, YouTube facilitates comparative studies of different types of videos genres, production approaches and content. YouTube hosts videos from different types of producers with different communicative purposes. In a previous study (Lindgren & Djerf-Pierre, 2017) examining the most viewed videos about AMR on YouTube, we identified two distinctly different ways of communicating and making sense of AMR on YouTube: investigative long-form journalism and popular science videos providing educational content focused on science and health. Since they afford two distinctly different ways of making sense of the AMR issue, we decided to compare the audience responses to journalism videos with the popular science category.

The journalistic videos emphasize the human and societal impact of AMR, and uncover the social causes and consequences of the spread of resistant bacteria. The journalistic investigations involve on-location reporting with in-depth probing of specific cases; a prevalent use of personal stories of individuals infected by resistant bacteria or plagued by industrial pollution to promote empathy and identification; and accountability interviews, that is, were politicians or industry representatives are held to account.

The popular science videos, on the other hand, generally focus on promoting expert health knowledge, heralding warnings about the general overuse and misuse of antibiotics, and explaining the biological processes that causes bacteria to become resistant to antibiotics, often in great and graphic detail. To make the science concrete and more entertaining to a lay audience the producers draw on familiar storytelling formulas from video games, cartoons, and superhero and monster movies, including an abundant use of cartoons and animations, featuring 'evil' anthropomorphized bacteria fighting antibiotic pills portrayed with human appearances, intentions and behaviours. Although the social causes and consequences, such as the problem with factory farming and pharmaceutical waste are discussed they are rarely the focus of the videos. The five popular science videos in our sample are typical examples of this approach and they are produced by a mix of professional companies such as TED (Ed and Talks) and independent subscription-based producers (GROSS Science, Kurzgesagt, SciShow).

5. Methodology

A mixed methods research approach was employed, following Burke, Johnson and Onwuegbuzie's (2004) definition. While the analysis is primarily qualitative, a quantification of engagement was included to supplement the qualitative analysis. Additionally, guided by the audience-centric 'bottom-up' approach to examining engagement advocated by Peters and Broersma (2017), we adopted an inductive rather than deductive approach to the qualitative analysis.

The sample consisted of the five most viewed journalism and five most viewed popular science videos covering the subject of AMR published on YouTube between 2016 and 2018 (Table 1). The videos were found by searching for the videos with most views, using the keywords "antibiotic resistance", "antimicrobial resistance", and "superbugs".

All user comments to the ten videos were downloaded and saved. Sorted by date, the 200 most recent and 200 oldest comments, excluding replies to other comments, posted on each of these videos formed the data set for examination. If the total number of comments were less than 400 then all original comments were included in the data set. This resulted in a total of $n = 3,049$ comments which qualified for analysis.

An initial inductive analysis identified seven major reoccurring themes of engagement which assisted in organizing the analysis: (1) Expressing sentiment to video production, (2) Sharing emotions, (3) Sharing personal experiences with AMR, (4) Sharing AMR information and ideas, (5) Assigning blame, (6) Proposing action, and (7) Other (linguistic and rhetorical expressions). All themes included further levels of analysis. For example, within the theme of proposing action, commenters engaged by expressing particular ideas for courses of action, which we defined as "sub-themes".

Engagement themes were operationalized by defining the unit of analysis as the textual expression made by users via comments which conveyed a specific thought or idea. The unit of analysis could range from a single word to the comment as a whole. Furthermore, engagement themes were not mutually exclusive in that a single unit of analysis could be coded as two or more themes simultaneously.

The dataset of qualifying comments was imported into NVivo for systematic coding in two phases following a codebook developed by the researchers. New themes generated by further inductive analyses were added to the codebook. In the second phase of analysis, the entire data set was once again systemically coded and clustered according to the parameters of the final updated codebook.

The compilation of comments sorted by themes and sub-themes of engagement provided the data for the qualitative analysis of engagement. To supplement the qualitative analysis, a quantification of the qualitative data was also provided by calculating the frequency of themes and sub-themes which occurred across all comments, comments in each category of video (journalism vs popular science) and comments per specific video in each category.

6. Results: Expressions of Engagement in YouTube Comments

We start by looking at low-level indicators of engagement, such as views and likes (Table 2). This part of the analysis only allows us to assess the popularity of

Table 1. Sample of videos.

VIDEO	Views March 2016	Views Feb 2018	Producer/ Publisher	Category
POPULAR SCIENCE				
The Antibiotic Apocalypse Explained	772K	3.7M	Kurzgesagt	Popular science (animation)
Attack of the Superbugs	476K	593K	SciShow	Popular science (science show)
What Causes Antibiotic Resistance? —Kevin Wu	425K	1.3M	TED-Ed	Popular science (animation)
Rise of the Superbugs	196K	418K	It's Okay to Be Smart, GROSS Science	Popular science (science show)
Maryn McKenna: What Do We Do When Antibiotics Don't Work Any More?	80K	139K	TED Talks	Popular science (live lecture)
JOURNALISM				
The Virus That Kills Drug-Resistant Superbugs	—	653K	Motherboard (related to VICE)	Documentary
Pig MRSA Superbug Spreading to Humans through Pork	443K	NA (republished with new title)	Journeyman Pictures, Guardian	Documentary, investigative journalism
Superbugs: The Dark Side of India's Drug Boom	174K	344K	VICE News	Documentary, investigative journalism
The Rise of The Superbugs Resistant to Antibiotics	70K	42K	Journeyman Pictures, ABC	Documentary, investigative journalism
Hunting the Nightmare Bacteria —PBS Frontline	—	145K	Wandering Planet	Documentary

Table 2. Comparison of conventional measures of engagement for "Journalism" and "Popular Science" videos about AMR on YouTube.

	"Journalism" (J) videos	"Popular Science" (S) videos	RATIO (J/S)
Average number of views	359,241	1,258,553	0.29
Likes per 1,000 views	9.99	22.09	0.45
Dislikes per 1,000 views	0.29	0.25	1.17
Comments per 1,000 views	2.28	2.28	1.00

Note: Number of views at time of capture. Ratio (J/S) was calculated by dividing the frequency of engagement themes for 'Journalism' videos by that of 'Popular Science' videos. A Ratio of 1.00 indicates that the frequency of engagement for a particular category was equal for 'Journalism' and 'Popular Science' videos. A ratio above 1.00 indicates that the engagement category was exhibited more frequently in 'Journalism' videos, while a ratio below 1.00 that the engagement category was exhibited more frequently in 'Popular Science' videos.

the two different video genres. While both attracted quite a significant number of views, the popular science videos were viewed approximately three times more than journalism videos and had twice as many likes per 1,000 views. The popular science videos were more "popular"—and scored higher on a low-level engagement scale. However, much of the difference can be explained by one of the popular science videos (*The Antibiotic Apocalypse Explained*) having 3.75 million views and over 10,000 comments. Further, when we look

at the prevalence of comments, a high-level indicator of engagement, it is exactly the same for both categories of videos: 2.28 comments per 1,000 views.

This finding is in line with the points made in the introduction of this article about the limitation of using quantitative measures of engagement, supporting the rational for this study to drill deeper into the content and quality of comments to examine the place for journalism reporting about AMR on YouTube. The thematic analysis of engagement below begins with an analysis of the

journalism videos before comparing them with the popular science videos. A quantitative summary of engagement themes and frequency in the journalism and popular science videos, respectively, is presented as overview in Table 3.

6.1. Expressing Sentiments about the Video Production

The first engagement theme dealt with audience sentiment to the production and framing of the video. This theme addressed the viewers' evaluations of the video and its elements, rather than viewers' sentiments or attitudes to science, government, society or people in general. Three types of overall sentiment were identified: positive, negative, and neutral.

In positive sentiments, audience members commended the journalists for quality reporting (example 1). They also commented positively on the reporters' performances and appearances.

(1) 'We have been losing this battle and there has not really been much coverage. Thanks Journeyman for shining some light on this unheard of epidemic. If this was covered like Ebola the people would know the risks and dangers.' *(Pig MRSA)*

Equally, the journalism videos attracted negative comments criticising both the video and the journalists on a range of issues, including accusations of sensationalism (2), bias, presentations of inaccurate or misleading facts, reporter incompetency, and a lack of journalistic social responsibility.

(2) 'I didn't make it through more than the first few minutes of this video–it was mostly sensationalized, with gross oversimplifications of the science (and they got the science of Gram-negative bacteria all wrong)' *(Hunting the Nightmare Bacteria)*

However, most comments did not display a clear negative or positive attitude to the videos. Instead, viewers remarked on a specific element or section of the video without being explicitly critical or laudatory. Key examples are comments including a time code pointing to an exact part of the video ('32:22'), in order to either draw attention to something the commenter found particularly noteworthy (3) or to highlight the section of the video that triggered a personal association or reflection (4).

(3) 'on a lighter note...is it me or is this guy trying too hard to look shocked and interested at the same time 32:22 lol' *(Hunting the Nightmare Bacteria)*

(4) 'The lady at 7:33 sounds like Dexter' *(The Virus that Kills Drug-Resistant Superbugs)*

In the latter case, viewers commonly made references to various popular culture phenomena such as film, videogames, TV-series etc. Almost four out of 100 comments to the journalism videos referenced popular culture (4–5). Another noticeable and frequent feature of audience engagement with the YouTube videos were displays of humour, where comments included sarcastic remarks or linguistic expressions indicating that viewers found the content amusing or funny (e.g. writing "LOL").

(5) 'I thought this was about some new Ubisoft videogame.' *(The Rise of Superbugs Resistant to Antibiotics)*

A comparison of the journalism and popular science videos showed that for both categories, positive sentiments were more often expressed than negative. Secondly, neutral comments were more frequently expressed than both positive and negative comments combined. Overall, popular science videos had more positive comments, and comments that expressed humour and referenced popular culture.

6.2. Sharing Emotions

The second engagement theme involved comments from viewers expressing an emotional response to the video content. Two sub-themes, "empathy" (6) and "hope/optimism" were identified and included under "positive emotions" while "negative emotions" comprised of "anger/resentment" (7), "defeatism/pessimism" and "worry/anxiety" sub-themes.

(6) 'it ALWAYS causes me too well-up to see a grown man cry' *(The Dark Side of India's Drug Boom)*

(7) 'Big Pharma won't spend money developing medicine that we can only take for 7–14 days! They want long-term meds in use—all about the money! Fucking Greedy Bastards may they all get the superbug and die a slow death.' *(Hunting the Nightmare Bacteria)*

Emotional responses were relatively common, with 16 of 100 comments to the journalism videos including some kind of emotional display. However, the negative emotions clearly outnumbered the positive. The negative emotions to journalism videos ranged from provoking anger, to pessimism and worry. The anger was mostly directed at the actors and institutions that were the targets of journalistic scrutiny in the respective program, e.g. the pharmaceutical industry ("big pharma" and "capitalism"), or factory farming (but also "meat eater"). In response to the current affairs videos focusing on AMR in India and China, viewers' anger was also directed at the country's government or (with clear xenophobic overtones) the country's culture at large. The display of anger in comments thus closely corresponds to the engagement theme assigning blame and accountability, which we discuss below.

Table 3. Frequency of themes of engagement per 100 comments for journalism and popular science videos about AMR on YouTube.

Engagement themes per 100 comments	Engagement theme categories		RATIO (J/S)
	"Journalism" (J) videos	"Popular Science" (S) videos	
EXPRESSES SENTIMENT TO VIDEO PRODUCTION	**21.9**	**34.6**	**0.63**
Positive sentiment to video	6.1	12.1	0.50
Negative sentiment to video	4.4	6.8	0.65
Neutral/other remark about video production	11.4	15.7	0.73
SHARES EMOTIONS—TOTAL	**16.4**	**13.4**	**1.22**
NEGATIVE EMOTIONS—SUB TOTAL	**11.7**	**10.8**	**1.08**
Anger/Resentment	4.6	1.2	3.83
Pessimism/Defeatism	3.4	3.8	0.89
Worry/Anxiety	3.7	5.8	0.64
POSITIVE EMOTIONS—SUB TOTAL	**4.6**	**2.7**	**1.70**
Empathy	3.4	0.2	17.00
Hope/Optimism	1.2	2.5	0.48
SHARES PERSONAL EXPERIENCE WITH AMR—TOTAL	**5.1**	**5.8**	**0.88**
Personal experience of infections	2.6	3.8	0.68
Taking personal action	2.3	1.7	1.35
SHARES AMR INFORMATION AND IDEAS—TOTAL	**49.8**	**32.3**	**1.54**
Probes the AMR issue	46.8	29.4	1.59
Puts forward conspiracy theory	2.6	0.3	8.67
ASSIGNS BLAME—TOTAL	**28.6**	**11.7**	**2.44**
Industrial farming	3.9	1.6	2.44
Capitalism	3.3	1.1	3.00
Other countries or cultures	3.3	1.4	2.36
Government	3.0	0.3	10.00
Pharmaceutical industry	2.6	0.5	5.20
Individual greed	2.2	0.3	7.33
Lack of hygiene	1.7	0.1	17.00
Abuse of antibiotics	1.2	1.6	0.75
Meat eaters	1.5	0.2	7.50
Ignorant people	1.4	1.1	1.27
Religion	1.3	0.1	13.00
PROPOSES ACTIONS—TOTAL	**21.5**	**19.1**	**1.13**
New science	2.3	6.9	0.33
Boycotting	4.0	0.1	40.00
Adopt vegetarianism or veganism	3.3	1.3	2.54
Political action	3.3	0.6	5.50
Alternative medicine	2.8	2.8	1.00
Stop overuse of antibiotics	0.8	2.7	0.30
Better hygiene	2.0	0.2	10.00
OTHER THEMES			
Comment includes humour, sarcasm, satire, LOL	2.9	6.6	0.44
Comment includes popular culture reference	3.6	10.6	0.34
"Hateful comment"	2.8	0.8	3.50

Note: A single comment may contain multiple analytical units (engagement themes). Only engagement themes where the frequency of themes per 100 comments were greater than 1 for either "Journalism" or "Popular Science" videos were included. See Table 2 for description of Ratio. Qualifying comments $n = 3,049$ ("Journalism'" = 1,320, "Popular Science" = 1,729).

The journalism videos generated positive emotions where the primary feelings were expressed as empathy. After seeing personal stories of people infected by resistant bacteria or plagued by pollution from the pharmaceutical industry, YouTube viewers engaged by expressing their empathy for people involved. This was particularly prevalent in one report about the state-of-play of AMR in India. Other journalistic videos also generated expressions of empathic feelings with the animals, after exposing appalling living conditions for farm animals, such as the pigs that suffer in the food factories.

Comparing journalism with popular science, both exhibited a similar amount of emotional responses and for both video categories, negative emotions outnumber positive. For journalism, the negative emotions were mainly anger/resentment whereas comments to the popular science videos expressed worry/anxiety. When it came to audience engagement through expressions of empathy, the journalism videos clearly have the upper hand. In the popular science videos, empathy was almost absent from the comments.

6.3. Sharing Personal Experience

The audience also used comments to share their own experiences with AMR. In the first of two identified sub-themes, viewers engaged with journalism videos by sharing their stories of getting infections or living with resistant bacteria (8).

> (8) 'I just had a staph infection but was lucky standard antibiotics killed it i [sic] think i [sic] feel fine no more littles sores bern [sic] 1 month i [sic] feel fine...thank god... i [sic] would of [sic] swapped with that little girl ...poor family...' *(Hunting the Nightmare Bacteria)*

The second sub-theme focused on what personal actions people have taken to avoid or prevent infection or mitigate the worsening of AMR, including "vegetarianism" (9), "alternative medicine" (10) and "avoiding excessive antibiotic drug use". Many of the proposed actions were, however, not at all in accordance with existing scientific knowledge or what health professionals would consider proven effective and recommend. There were various references to the use of natural remedies and herbs but also to "alternative medicine" such as colloidal silver, or even avoiding taking vaccinations.

> (9) 'This is why I'm vegetarian, the meat industry is out of control.' *(Pig MRSA)*

> (10) 'Go back to pre antibiotic treatments through herbs, foods, and silver, i [sic] use them, they work!' *(Hunting the Nightmare Bacteria)*

The sharing of personal experience as a form of high-level engagement occurred at a similar rate for journalism and popular science videos. Although sharing personal experience of infection occurred at a slightly greater rate with popular science videos and sharing personal experience of taking action appeared more frequently with the journalism videos, the difference was small and suggests that journalism videos were not unique in providing a space for engaging through sharing personal experiences.

6.4. Sharing Information and Ideas about AMR: Discussing the AMR Issue

The analysis of YouTube comments showed that sharing information and ideas about the issue at hand was the most common expression of audience engagement identified in the corpus. It was the top theme with most engagement per 100 comments in the list of seven engagement categories (see Table 3).

Almost half of the analysed comments to the journalism videos involved different forms of sharing information about AMR. This high-level engagement demonstrated that viewers choose to engage by discussing, elaborating and further probing topics relating to AMR. It had several identified sub-themes: viewers posing questions in the comments, asking for clarification, and expressing their ideas and opinions on the issue (11) including sharing scientific information and experience.

> (11) 'But it's the people that materialize animals and make them into a nasty shit infected hunk of meat. I think it's very unhealthy and those company's [sic] should look at the bigger picture and be smarter about their animals.' *(Pig MRSA)*

While the vast majority of the viewers commenting appeared to engage with AMR in an authentic and concerned manner, the factual accuracy of the comments was not always in agreement with established AMR science or expert health knowledge (12).

> (12) 'The weaker the magnetic field becomes, the more likely it is to mutate virus' all over the world. the question is...what is it doing to your brain?' *(Hunting the Nightmare Bacteria)*

Most of the inaccuracies seem to stem from common misunderstandings and misconceptions about health and science, with quite a few also include xenophobic or racist sentiments. About three in 100 comments displayed an overt "AMR scepticism", downplaying or outright denying the problem. Almost as many put forward some version of "conspiracy theory" concerning the causes and consequences of AMR, framing the AMR as a purposefully created problem by a conspiring group of social actors including the Muslims, liberals and/or the 'globalists' (13).

> (13) 'Liberals never give up lying to push their agenda. When the vegan/anti-meat crowd realized

they couldn't get people to stop eating meat just by lying that vegan was healthier, they decided to try a different tactic: SCARE people into thinking they might get sick and DIE from it. Thus, this "pigs and MRSA" story came along.' *(Pig MRSA)*

Discussing the AMR topic was the most common form of engagement identified for both categories of videos. Considering that the journalism videos are current affairs investigations that attempt to explain and scrutinize antibiotic resistance as a serious and urgent social issue, this was an expected outcome. The journalism videos featured confronting materials of animals suffering in factory farming and people whose health was affected AMR, which might stir viewers to comment. However, while higher in journalism than popular science videos (49 versus 32 per 100 comments) it is contestable whether this difference is large enough to conclude that journalism videos served as a unique place for this form of engagement, encouraging public debate about the issue. One major difference uncovered in this study, that is arguably more significant, is that conspiracy theories were more than seven times more likely to be advocated in YouTube comments on journalism than popular science.

6.5. Assigns Blame

A significant portion of comments debating AMR also ascribed blame, responsibility and accountability for causing or exacerbating the AMR problem. In total, we identified 21 categories of blame (sub-themes) of which 11 are listed in Table 3. The five which most commonly occurred in comments to journalism videos were, starting with the most frequent, "Industrial farming" (14), "Capitalism" (15), "Other countries/cultures" (16), "Government" (17), and "Pharmaceutical industry" (18).

(14) 'Antibiotics resistance is the issue, due to farmers misusing antibiotics to fatten up their lifestock, not pork. It could happen to any type of lifestock.' *(Pig MRSA)*

(15) 'Truth is—it's poverty & capitalism.' *(Hunting the Nightmare Bacteria)*

(16) 'Thank you india [sic], for continuing to be one of the worst shitholes on this planet. They need birth restriction so bad.' *(Dark Side of India's Drug Boom)*

(17) 'Sad and Tragic. It's the Indian Government's fault. Corruption is a big problem there! So, for few ppl to get rich all those poor people should suffer, right? SHAME ON YOU ALL, who are RESPONSIBLE for this situation.' *(Dark Side of India's Drug Boom)*

(18) 'Big Pharma is one of the most evil operations going on today.' *(Dark Side of India's Drug Boom)*

Some of the blaming comments were clearly derogatory of specific ethnic or religious groups. In the analysis, we attempted to identify comments that were "hateful". This is when a commenter attacks an individual or group with hateful expressions, wishing them harm or making derogatory statements. An important distinction to qualify if the comment is hateful, is when the attack was directed at an individual or group of individuals, not at an idea or ideology. All in all, approximately three of 100 comments were defined as hateful, including those that are clearly misogynist, xenophobic or even explicitly racist.

In comparison, the journalism videos exhibited blame as a form of engagement at a rate of almost 2.5 times more than popular science videos. Indeed, assigning blame was the second most common theme of engagement for the journalism videos. Given the normative role of journalism to scrutinize and investigate, this result is not surprising. Three of the top-five categories of blame were shared by both genres: "Industrial farming", "Capitalism" and "Other countries/cultures". This was somewhat surprising, since only the journalism videos focused explicitly on the negative effects of pharmaceutical industries and industrial farming and their contribution to the AMR crisis. The top categories of blame that differed between journalism and popular science videos were: "Government" and "Pharmaceutical industry" for the journalism videos; and "Abuse of antibiotics" and "Ignorant people" for the popular science videos. That lead us to conclude that journalism content appears to be associated with assigning more blame to social and economic structures, whereas comments related to popular science direct more blame to the negligence, recklessness and ignorance of individuals.

6.6. Proposing Actions

The final theme of audience engagement with the YouTube videos related to where viewers put forward proposed actions to combat the AMR issue. We identified 18 sub-theme categories of action of which seven are listed in Table 3, including: "political action" (15), "boycotting" (16), "adopt veganism or vegetarianism/stop eating meat" (17), "developing new science" (18), "alternative medicine" (19), "stopping the overuse of antibiotics in general" (20), and "promoting better hygiene" (21).

(15) 'I THINK EVERYONE SHOULD WATCH THIS VIDEO THEN CALL YOUR CONGRESSMAN AND GET THEM WORKING.' *(The virus that kills drug-resistant bacteria)*

(16) 'And from Denmark, who is feeding their animals with GMO soya beans...don't buy Danish meat!!' *(Pig MRSA)*

(17) 'No, go vegan. That would eliminate the spread of super bugs altogether.' *(Pig MRSA)*

(18) 'I thinks [sic] this is all good and all but Crisper 9 is a better approach to any virus or bacteria.' *(The Virus that Kills Drug-Resistant Bacteria)*

(19) 'It's all about drugs that don't really work, when they all just needed colloidal silver via IV.' *(Hunting the Nightmare Bacteria)*

(20) 'Stop using vancomycin to treat the common cold people!!! If you have absolutely 0 idea of what the hell you are doing then please don't fucking do it.... You all have caused this basically.' *(Hunting the Nightmare Bacteria)*

(21) 'Simple solution....Have a good hygiene.' *(Pig MRSA)*

Proposing some form of action was the third most popular form of engagement and occurred equally frequently for both journalism and popular science videos. However, the repertoire of suggested actions (action categories) revealed significant differences amongst the two. For journalism videos, "boycotting" (calls for people to stop buying certain products such as Danish pork), "political action" (modifying, creating or removing policies, departments, regulations), and advocating that people refrain from eating meat (veganism or vegetarianism) were the most prevalent. In contrast, the three most frequent action proposals for popular science videos were the development of "new science" (new scientific solutions such as 'phage therapy', 'CRISPR', 'Nanobots', 'Genetic therapy', or alteration of current methods), "alternative medicine" (all alternative treatments or natural remedies, such as 'turmeric', 'cinnamon', or 'colloidal silver'), and stopping the overuse of antibiotics in general. This suggests that journalism videos were associated with political, economic and social/lifestyle actions, while popular science videos were associated with medicines, scientific or pseudo-scientific, and medical practice changes.

7. Conclusions and Discussion

This study explored the role journalism plays on YouTube, examining audience engagement in user comments to YouTube videos about AMR, also called "superbugs". Using a qualitative, inductive approach, we identified seven main engagement themes in the comments. Audiences expressed positive, negative or neutral *sentiments about the video production*, and *shared their emotions*, including positive emotions such as empathy and negative emotions such as anger and worry/anxiety. Commenters also *shared their personal experiences* with AMR by telling stories of getting infections or living with resistant bacteria. A fourth, and quantitatively dominant, engagement theme was to *share information and ideas about AMR* such as posing questions, asking for clarification, and expressing their ideas and opinions about the issue. YouTube users also *ascribed blame, responsibility and accountability* for causing or exacerbating the AMR problem, such as blaming industrial farming or capitalism. Finally, YouTube users *proposed a variety of actions to mitigate the AMR problem*, such as developing new science, boycotting, or adopting a vegan or vegetarian diet. (A seventh engagement theme was coded as "*other themes*".)

The comparison of user comments to the journalism and popular science videos displayed different patterns of engagement. Although all seven engagement themes were present for both categories of videos, the relative emphasis varied significantly. The societal causes and the political, economic and social ramifications of AMR were much more prominent in the comments to the journalism videos. They also included more frequent calls for political action and social activism (boycotting), whereas the audience responses to the popular science videos were dominated by calls for renewed efforts to find medical and scientific solutions and general appeals to stop overusing antibiotics.

Blame assignment and accountability issues were generally more prominent in comments to the journalism videos. In particular, the comments engaged with political responsibility and accountability, something that was almost invisible in comments to the popular science videos. Hateful comments and conspiracy theories were also more frequently expressed with journalism videos, albeit less prevalent than we expected considering contemporary discussions about toxic social media environments, with frequent criticism of individual journalists and media organisations.

It is evident that the content and quality of the user comments to the videos resonates with the framing and storytelling practices of the two categories of media productions. The journalism videos are long-form current affairs productions that attempted to explain and scrutinize antibiotic resistance as a serious and urgent societal issue. Popular science videos, on the other hand, focuses on explaining the science, often using humorous cartoons in a style familiar from videogames and superhero movies to emphasise the risk associated with overusing antibiotics. This "fictionalization" of the AMR issue in popular science videos thus seems to have the (unintended and distracting) side effects of diverting the interest from the issue in focus to storytelling devises used in the video. This provides a cautionary finding for health communicators wanting to get a targeted health messaged across. The journalism videos, on the other hand, appear to stimulate political and civic engagement responses, which supports the (anticipated) democratic function of journalism in ensuring social and democratic accountability. Journalism videos also generated more empathy responses, suggesting that journalism on YouTube has a role to play telling stories about human experience that can evoke empathy amongst viewers for people affected by AMR. In the popular science videos focused on biological and scientific processes, empathy was almost absent from the comments.

In conclusion, the study shows that there is a specific place for journalism—particularly long-form, investigative journalism—in the social media ecology. Journalism videos about AMR play an important role on YouTube by focusing on societal causes and consequences of "superbugs", thereby generating audience discussions about social and political accountability. The flipside is that this engagement also entails demonstrations of anger, hate and resentment.

The study of engagement through online comments is but one way of learning and understanding how audiences respond to journalism. Evidently, comments on YouTube are not representative of the population or even people who watches videos on YouTube. We cannot know for sure how audiences end up clicking and viewing a video on YouTube, or why some individuals decide to engage by commenting on what they see. There are possibly multiple routes to engagement. Individuals can encounter AMR content on YouTube by finding a video shared by friends, by YouTube recommendation or linked to from other websites (which seems to be quite common with the popular science videos). These multiple pathways to videos also provide an important blending of journalistic content and popular science content about important societal issues through YouTube. The present study put forward one method of revealing what engagement as 'audiences' responses to media beyond attention' may entail.

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Conflict of interests

The authors declare no conflict of interests.

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Article

Crossing the Line between News and the Business of News: Exploring Journalists' Use of Twitter

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Abstract

Anglo-American journalism has typically drawn a firm dividing line between those who report the news and those who run the business of news. This boundary, often referred to in the West as a 'Chinese Wall', is designed to uphold the independence of journalists from commercial interests or the whims of news proprietors. But does this separation still exist in today's age of social media and at a time when news revenues are under unprecedented pressure? This article focuses on Twitter, now a widely used tool in the newsroom, analysing the Twitter output of 10 UK political correspondents during the busy party conference season. It examines how they promote their own stories or 'personal brand' and whether they are stepping over a once forbidden line, blurring the boundary between news and the business. The research is complemented by interviews with political correspondents and analysis of editorial codes of practice on the use of social media. It draws on a conceptual framework of boundary work (Carlson & Lewis, 2015) to pose the question whether such practice has now become accepted and normalised. The findings suggest that the 10 political correspondents are highly individualistic in their use of Twitter but all have embraced its use to promote their own work plus that of colleagues both inside their own organisation and those working for rival news outlets. Their acceptance of Twitter as a tool for self-promotion and branding suggests that in this area of reporting the practice has become normalised and the wall has been breached.

1. Introduction

Back in the old days of journalism, in the era before social media when newspapers enjoyed rich earnings, few reporters would spend time thinking about profitability or their employer's business. As Alan Rusbridger, the former editor of *The Guardian*, remarked in his autobiography (2018), there was simply no need to talk about business models when he started out in the mid-1970s. The Anglo-American norms of journalism that evolved on both sides of the Atlantic in the late 19th century were still intact and prescribed a strict separation between news and the business of news. The goal was very simple: to uphold the editorial integrity of independent journalism, untarnished by considerations of advertising rev-

enues, the bottom line or the personal whims of news proprietors. In the jargon of the newsroom, this boundary was called a 'Chinese Wall.'

Throughout North America, Europe and many other parts of the world, that separation held good for more than a century as a fundamental norm of journalism (Cornia, Sehl, & Nielsen, 2018, p. 20). But does it still exist today when many news organisations are struggling to survive and adapt to the sweeping changes wrought by social media? This article explores one specific part of the equation, namely the use of Twitter which has rapidly become a ubiquitous tool in the newsroom. It examines the Twitter output of 10 seasoned UK political correspondents during the annual party conference season in September 2018, a time of frantic political ac-

tivity and infighting as Britain entered the final stages of negotiations to exit the European Union, commonly known as 'Brexit'. The analysis is complemented by interviews with political journalists and an examination of their news organisations' codes of practice on the use of social media. Previous research has focused on the way journalistic norms are evolving in this period of disruption when pressures of the market become stronger (Hanusch & Tandoc, 2017, p. 4). Several studies have explored journalists' use of social media to brand themselves and their organisations (Barthel, Moon, & Mari, 2015; Brems, Temmerman, Graham, & Broersma, 2017; Lough, Molyneux, & Holton, 2017; Molyneux, 2015; Molyneux & Holton, 2015; Molyneux, Holton, & Lewis, 2018) while others have focused on the ways journalists present their personal and professional identities online (Bossio & Sacco, 2017; Olausson, 2017). But few have directly addressed the issue of the Chinese Wall, journalists' perceptions of whether this norm is under attack and what they feel about it today. How do the political journalists, working in the 'lobby' system of parliament at Westminster, promote their own stories or those of their respective news organisations at a time when audience engagement is increasingly important? Do they feel that they are stepping over a forbidden line and blurring the boundary between news and the business? Or is it now viewed as an acceptable practice? The article draws on a conceptual framework of boundary work (Carlson & Lewis, 2015) and seeks to contribute to the debate about how what it means to be a journalist is being redefined. The results of the research suggest that the 10 political correspondents, although all covering the same story, are highly individualistic in their use of Twitter as a branding tool. All have embraced its use to promote their own work plus that of colleagues and those working for rival news outlets. The acceptance of Twitter as a tool for self-promotion and branding by senior journalists who are by no means 'digital natives' suggests that in this narrow field of British reporting the practice has become normalised and the wall has been quietly breached.

2. How Separation Became the Norm

Many professions erect boundaries around their activity to protect themselves from intruders and journalism is no exception. But unlike, for example, Law or Medicine, Journalism does not require exams or membership of an industry association. Instead, the boundaries are defined through practice, discourse and values, with journalists engaging in 'boundary work' to cultivate a distinct logic that sets them apart from other fields (Waisbord, 2013, p. 10). The concept stems from the U.S. sociologist Thomas Gieryn (1983) and has recently gained a foothold in Journalism Studies in the light of the decline of legacy media outlets and the rise of social media (Carlson & Lewis, 2015). The emergence and growth of new media forms throughout the 20th century repeatedly generated defensive responses, couched in normative

terms loosely grouped under the term 'objectivity', from many of the established practitioners of the day (Singer, 2015, p. 23).

One of the key tenets of that consensual occupational ideology is journalistic independence or autonomy. For Coddington, the separation of the business of news from news itself is so fundamental that it is simply known as 'the wall' (2015, p. 67). And as long as newspapers prospered, journalists were able to believe that they had succeeded in building a wall between 'church and state' (2015, p. 70). This often manifested itself through physical separation: the newsroom and business sides of a newspaper were on separate floors. But today, 'native advertising' has become a regular feature of the media landscape. Critics call such content advertising wearing the uniform of journalism (Coddington, 2015, p. 76). But as Richards observes, while the journalist may be the essential unit of ethical agency, he or she does not operate in a vacuum—many are employees of large corporations, the primary aim of which is to maximise the return to shareholders (2004, p. 119). In other words, journalists are now feeling the pressure of participating in the market for audience clicks and adopting the role of marketer (Tandoc & Vos, 2016, p. 960). This poses the question whether the 'wall' is ripe for renegotiation (Artemas, Vos, & Duffy, 2018, p. 1004). As more and more journalists set out on their own, or work for start-ups, they might wear multiple hats, producing content but also being a marketer, advertising executive and business manager (Singer, 2015, p. 30). Cornia et al. argue that both editors and managers are working to foster a cultural change to ensure commercial sustainability (2018, p. 2).

3. Twitter—Not Just a News Gathering Tool

One of the catalysts for the challenging of boundaries has been Twitter. It now has 335 million active users worldwide; within the UK, there are 13 million users while some 500 million tweets are sent each day worldwide. Since its launch in 2006, Twitter has become the most widely used social media tool by journalists (Parmelee, 2013), developing into an essential mechanism for the distribution of breaking news and as a tool to solicit story ideas, sources and facts (Hermida, 2010, p. 299). In fact, it has taken on the character of a convenient, cheap and effective 'beat' for journalists, offering a large range of sources who would otherwise be hard to approach (Broersma & Graham, 2013, p. 447). This is essential in an environment in which newsgathering resources have often been cut and in which reporters are expected to write more stories (Broersma & Graham, 2013). Hermida calls Twitter an 'awareness system' that can alert journalists to breaking news and trends (2010, p. 304). At the same time, news organisations have adopted Twitter as a means of distributing short, rapid updates on news they are producing and, sometimes, on that from third parties. This has led to fears that tweets are being indiscriminately incorporated into stories without fact check-

ing. Failure to contact the person tweeting erodes journalism as a practice of verification (Broersma & Graham, 2013, p. 461).

It is also now common for journalists to leverage such tools to show a human face to their audience or readers, especially in the online environment (Barnard, 2016, p. 198). As a result, research has focused on how roles, values and norms are evolving (Bossio & Sacco, 2017). A consistent theme is the incorporation of journalists' own opinion in tweets, at odds with the classic definition of objectivity. In her study of two London-based journalists using Twitter to disseminate breaking news on inner-city rioting in 2011, Vis concluded that more than one fifth of the tweets sent by a *New York Times* journalist contained his own opinion (2013, p. 42). Equally, Brems et al. found that a sample of Dutch and Flemish journalists were quite willing to voice their own opinion on Twitter (2017, p. 452). The use of retweets additionally provides an opportunity for journalists to pass on opinions without the threat to their objectivity if they stated the same words themselves (Molyneux, 2015, p. 928). Twitter also sits uneasily with another norm, the traditional detachment from journalists' sources and the audience (Molyneux, 2015, p. 922). But all this comes at a time when newsrooms are recognising an increasing need to engage with their audiences and be responsive to communities (Mayer, 2011). This, Mayer adds, means journalists have to build connections and personalise their brand.

In the light of such overt challenges established news organisations have updated internal editorial guidelines to incorporate social media. Duffy and Knight analysed codes at 17 news organisations and found the use of social media was generally embraced but with the cautionary message that it was also risky (2018, p. 8). Codes differed in the crucial area of the journalist's identity. The majority, 11 out of 17, made it clear the news organisation expected the professional identity to take precedence over, even subsume, any personal identity. Others required journalists to keep these personae separate and avoid any blurring of lines. Such codes of conduct have not always found favour among journalists. A study of Flemish journalists showed that some considered codes a curtailment of individual freedom and resisted a requirement to use only one Twitter account (Opgenhaffen & Scheerlinck, 2014, p. 726). Some guidelines tended to treat Twitter as a branding and promotional opportunity (Bloom, Cleary, & North, 2016, p. 352); a study of news managers at U.S. network affiliate television stations found they also viewed Twitter as a valuable promotional tool (Lysak, Cremedas, & Wolf, 2012, p. 203).

It is widely recognised that social media allow individuals to construct and re-imagine the self (Siapera, 2018), a concept that has been called 'presencing' or 'sustaining a public presence' (Couldry, 2012). When it comes to journalists, Barthel et al. argue that Twitter provides an ideal platform to gain visibility, credibility and prestige (2015, p. 2). This enables them to increase their market value or, in the case of freelancers, advertise their skills (Brems et al., 2017, p. 445). Some specialised groups of journalists such as health reporters have been particularly active in developing a digital identity as 'early adopters' (Molyneux & Holton, 2015, p. 226). Molyneux et al. argue that journalists engage in three levels of 'branding'[1] through their use of Twitter: promoting the self, their employer's news organisation and the institution of journalism at large (2018, p. 1386). As a result, journalistic branding is a product of several pressures that journalists, their organisation and their occupation are facing (Molyneux et. al, 2018, p. 1391). Their study of U.S. journalists found that 58% of their tweets included elements of branding. Some studies based on interviews with journalists have also highlighted journalists' concerns about a growing emphasis by employers on personal branding (Chadha & Wells, 2016, p. 1028). While they recognised the value in raising their profile and status in a newsroom, they expressed reservations that a personal brand could outstrip that of the news organisation, running counter to the normative ideology discouraging the development of a journalist's individual public persona (Chadha & Wells, 2016, p. 1029). Similarly, Sacco and Bossio identified in their study of Australian newsrooms a culture clash between traditional journalistic values and management attempts to integrate social media (2017, p. 187).

Political journalists enjoy a unique position as a mediator of power in the relationship between politicians and the public and depend on trust and credibility (Ottovordemgentschenfelde, 2017, p. 68). They often work on a narrowly focused beat and in a bounded space outside the main newsroom, for example in the House of Commons 'lobby'. Such environments are known for their intense, close-knit journalistic communities with the ability to engage in off-the-record conversations with politicians. A study of reporters working in the State Capitol Building in Albany, New York, found the use of Twitter generated intense news-breaking pressure (Revers, 2015, p. 8). One reporter called it a "huge classroom" where everyone was able to monitor everyone else (Revers, 2015). An analysis of tweets during the 2016 U.S. election by political correspondents found they tended to interact mostly with each other, banding together as a community to shore up a profession they see as under threat (Molyneux & Mourão, 2017, p. 15). The close-knit nature of political reporting suggests that such reporters tend to retweet others who are working in the same arena. Barthel et al. found that 'traditional' journalists overwhelmingly retweeted those from other traditional news organisations and rarely ones working in the digital-only sector (2015, p. 13).

4. Research Questions and Methodology

This study seeks to make a contribution to the understanding of how one group of political journalists in the

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[1] Branding is understood as the action of differentiating an individual, entity or product from others (Murphy, 1987).

UK uses Twitter as a means of branding and whether they feel there are tensions with the norm of separation between their news reporting and the business of news. In such a context, it is important to explore how journalists are changing practice *alongside* how they conceive their role (Tandoc & Vos, 2016, p. 954). The study thus seeks to construct a holistic picture of their branding activity and addresses three interlinked research questions:

> RQ1: How do UK political correspondents brand themselves, their news organisation or the profession of journalism through their use of Twitter?
>
> RQ2: What guidelines are political correspondents subject to from their employers when they use social media tools such as Twitter?
>
> RQ3: Do UK political correspondents feel their activity is consistent with the traditional norm of separation between news and the business of news?

The study is based on a quantitative and qualitative analysis of the Twitter activity of 10 top UK political correspondents in September 2018 and the first days of October. This is supplemented by an analysis of their Twitter profiles, codes of practice and semi-structured interviews. This was a time of turmoil in British politics, with Brexit negotiations at a critical stage. September is also the conference season when the main parties gather to debate their policy agendas. The period of 33 days covers the time from the end of the summer break until the final day of the Conservative Party conference on October 3.

These correspondents are part of what in the UK is known as the lobby system. Their accreditation gives them special access to daily briefings by the government's spokesman and to the Houses of Parliament, a system in place since the 1870s. Today, it is still a closed environment in which reporters work closely alongside each other and politicians. Twitter is deeply embedded in that culture and has been attacked by *Guardian* journalist Rafael Behr for distorting and corrupting the political process (2018). Behr considers Twitter to be ideally suited to the political hothouse of Westminster and while individual journalists are looking for their own scoop, there are times when they operate as a 'pack' (2018, p. 22): "Journalists and commentators 'follow' each other, gathering at the virtual water cooler. This exacerbates the tendency to form cartels of information."

The 10 journalists were selected in order to obtain a cross section of lobby reporting from broadcasters and print media. Each had an active Twitter feed and was covering the main political and Brexit story dominating British headlines. Most of those chosen were the news organisation's senior political reporter, some of them household names on evening television news bulletins. Three were chosen from the BBC given the organisation's blanket coverage of Westminster, plus the chief political correspondent of each of the other three main news broadcasters—ITV, Sky and Channel 4. In addition, the lead political correspondents from four daily newspapers were chosen, ensuring a broad spectrum in terms of political outlook and editorial stance on Brexit. The broadcasters were Laura Kuenssberg, John Pienaar and Chris Mason of the BBC, Robert Peston, ITV, Faisal Islam, Sky, and Gary Gibbon, Channel 4. The newspaper journalists were: Heather Stewart of *The Guardian*, Francis Elliott, *The Times*, Gordon Rayner, *The Telegraph*, and Jason Groves, *The Daily Mail*.

All their tweets from September 1 to October 3 were captured to conduct the content analysis which included a quantitative assessment of their output and a qualitative analysis of their actual tweets and retweets. A codebook was created which drew on the categorisation used by Molyneux et al. (2018). It collated the total number of tweets and retweets during the period for each journalist and two sets of data. The first focused on the nature of the tweet or retweet—whether the subject matter was political or events outside Westminster, e.g., references to sport, humour, entertainment, etc. The second categorised tweets and retweets for branding—elements of individual branding (referring to or promoting the journalist's own work), elements of organisational branding (referring to or promoting the work of a colleague), and institutional branding (referring to or promoting the work of journalists at another news outlet or an issue about journalism). The first category did not include tweets where correspondents were reporting breaking news in snippets, often the case during conference speeches.

This breakdown was supplemented by an analysis of the correspondent's Twitter profile and their organisation's code on the use of social media. The analysis of the Twitter profile focused on whether the journalist stated his or her affiliation, the actual Twitter 'handle' (whether it contained the news organisation or not), whether there was any form of disclaimer about personal opinion offered and whether additional personal information was given beyond the reporter's 'beat'. The disclaimer is particularly relevant in connection with retweets and any public perception that retweeting information implies endorsement of that person's views, or, in the case of politicians, their party's views. Editorial guidelines for six of the eight news organisations were publicly available through their websites[2].

Semi-structured interviews were conducted during the same time period with seven broadcast and newspaper journalists about their Twitter activity and their views on editorial policy. These were conducted in person or over the phone and for pragmatic reasons of availability included some journalists outside the group of 10 whose Tweets were analysed. All the journalists were, however, closely involved in covering the Westminster story. Critically, all were senior and had been working as journal-

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[2] These were: the BBC, ITV, Channel 4, Sky, *The Guardian* and *The Telegraph*. *The Times* refers to the Editors' Code of Practice as drawn up by the Independent Press Standards Organisation (IPSO).

ists well before the introduction of Twitter in 2006 or other social media tools. The discussion of findings uses the names of the 10 correspondents whose tweets were tracked but the data and quotes from those interviewed were anonymised.

5. Findings and Discussion

5.1. Lobby Correspondent Profiles

The starting point for how the lobby correspondents brand themselves is their profile on Twitter. It is, by definition, a form of branding (Molyneux et al., 2018, p. 1395).

All 10 begin their profile with a designation of their role and news affiliation (see Table 1). Two of the BBC journalists, Laura Kuenssberg and Chris Mason, use the BBC handle (e.g., @bbclaurak) in line with the organisation's guidelines, thus making it clear that tweets are part of their work for the BBC and not a personal account. John Pienaar, the deputy political editor of BBC News, uses @JPonpolitics, a handle that promotes his weekly political podcast Pienaar's Politics. Two of the newspaper correspondents also use a formulation to highlight their affiliation, *The Guardian* and *The Times* (@GuardianHeather and @ElliottTimes). All three BBC correspondents highlight their beat by featuring a picture of the Houses of Parliament or Big Ben in their profile as does Channel 4's Gary Gibbon and the *Telegraph's* Gordon Rayner. The banner picture on Kuenssberg's profile features a scrum of photographers with her standing out in blue against the predominantly grey sea of the others. ITV's political editor uses a picture of his recently published book on the current political climate, together with a banner promoting it featuring a positive review in the *Financial Times* "Richly argued and brilliantly written." With the exception of the BBC correspondents and Channel 4's Gary Gibbon, the others are casually dressed, projecting an informal identity. By way of comparison, Lough et al. analysed the Twitter profiles of 384 journalists in the United States and found that 67% were in professional attire (2017 p. 1284).

Table 1. Twitter profiles.

Element in profile	No/10
Name of employer and role	10
Employer name in Twitter handle	6
Picture of parliament	5
Professional attire	4
Disclaimer on views	2
Personal interests outside beat mentioned	5

Only two of the 10 use a disclaimer. Jason Groves of *The Daily Mail* writes: "Views my own, I am afraid," typical of the self-deprecating humour often found in the group's tweets. Kuenssberg states: "Retweets not my own or BBC's view." This clearly reflects an awareness of the inherent danger in retweeting in the political arena and

the BBC's Editorial Guidelines (2018) on micro-blogging which, in reference to Twitter, state: "When forwarding or 'retweeting' messages, care should be taken that it does not appear that the BBC is endorsing a particular opinion."

When it comes to personal interests, the BBC's Chris Mason mentions that he is a "Yorkshire Dalesman" (several personal tweets revolve around Yorkshire) while Robert Peston cites his support for the Arsenal football team. In a similar vein, Gordon Rayner laments the poor performance of the team he supports, calling himself a "long-suffering" Newcastle United fan. In this way, these journalists were blurring the line between their personal and professional identity.

5.2. Editorial Guidelines

The editorial guidelines issued by the lobby correspondents' news organisations strike a consistent tone, treading a fine line between embracing the benefits of social media and warning of potential pitfalls. Typical of this is the BBC (2015):

> Social media is now critical to our work, allowing us to more easily connect with people….But social media easily blurs the line between the personal and professional, and the simplest misstep could lead you to undermine the credibility of yourself, your colleagues, and BBC News as a whole.

The BBC makes it clear that the social media activity of its editors, presenters and correspondents should be viewed as 'official,' with the same status as their mainstream TV, radio or digital output. At the same time, the guidelines attempt to give correspondents scope to express themselves outside their 'beat', saying such discussion is actually encouraged (giving free rein to Chris Mason to sing the praises of his native Yorkshire). "Social media," the BBC guidelines say, "is all about personality and being human" (2015).

While these guidelines tread a narrow line, they bring social media tools like Twitter within the normative framework of their editorial codes. This theme necessarily runs through guidelines drawn up by all the news broadcasters which are overseen by the regulator Ofcom. Channel 4 News states that when a journalist is using Twitter with a designated account, postings are subject to Channel 4's normal controls, such as standards of due impartiality, editorial independence and accuracy (2018). ITV guidelines specifically reference Ofcom; Sky's guidelines make clear that nothing should be tweeted or retweeted that the broadcaster would not be prepared to put on any of its platforms (2017). The lobby correspondents' respective newspapers show very little difference in attitude in this respect. *The Telegraph* states that editorial independence must be maintained and must not be influenced by commercial staff or the interests of advertisers. But it also suggests a subtle shift, saying

(2018): "It is entirely appropriate, and indeed essential, that editorial staff understand and contribute to the commercial success of the Telegraph."

5.3. Twitter Activity

The level of the lobby correspondents' Twitter activity varied widely but generally peaked as the Labour and Conservative parties held their conferences. Many of the correspondents were reporting—and tweeting—live from the conferences in the cities of Brighton, Liverpool and Birmingham, often uploading pictures of the proceedings.

The raw data (see Table 2) show that the most prolific 'tweeters' were in equal measure the BBC's Laura Kuenssberg and Chris Mason, both with around 440 tweets and retweets during the September 1–October 3 period, followed by *The Guardian's* Heather Stewart with a total 392. Almost all used Twitter as a means of personal branding, often promoting their own stories, television shows or podcasts. In addition, they frequently referred to work by their colleagues covering the same field of Westminster politics, sometimes praising their stories and sometimes promoting their news organisation directly. Occasionally, they would act in concert and retweet and credit a scoop by one of their rivals in the lobby. When Francis Elliott of *The Times* broke an exclusive Brexit story, it was widely retweeted. The correspondents' personal branding took several different forms: some used their posts to build up a picture of their lives outside politics (Mason), others uploaded numerous photographs of themselves (Peston), while others restricted their activity almost entirely to their coverage of the political story.

Kuenssberg has 831,000 Twitter followers and is one of the best known BBC reporters. But earlier in the year, she was quoted as saying that she was close to leaving social media because of the vitriol levelled at her (Thorpe, 2018). In a panel discussion about online abuse, she said:

The way that some online sites have given a megaphone to people who want to cause trouble, given the oxygen for that kind of thing, has actually in a way shut it down, and that is a shame.

But as the conference season progressed, Kuenssberg stepped up activity and promoted her own interviews with senior politicians such as Theresa May and her main challenger for the Conservative leadership Boris Johnson (5.9% of her total tweets promoted directly her own interviews or online stories) At times her rapid-fire tweeting of live events was like that of a news agency. This was accompanied by frequent retweets of BBC news stories by colleagues, particularly those working in Europe on Brexit. In this fashion, Kuenssberg was using her Twitter feed as an additional online distribution channel for the BBC. Rarely did she tweet on matters outside the realm of politics.

Her BBC colleague Chris Mason was equally prolific but showed a more diverse and humorous range of interests beyond the political scene, giving his 66,000 Twitter followers a glimpse of his personal life. These ranged from complaining about workmen outside his home at 8 a.m. on a Sunday morning to Yorkshire pudding and crack-of-dawn starts. Mason used Twitter to promote heavily the BBC's 'Brexitcast' podcast, which he hosts with two colleagues, plus his appearances on BBC Breakfast television. He frequently cited his BBC colleagues, sometimes retweeting their work and sometimes commenting on personal issues. A large number of tweets were dedicated to a BBC colleague who had just died of cancer, while other tweets were humorous, featuring goldfish named after correspondents and the difficulties of moving house. In contrast, the BBC's John Pienaar was far less diverse in his posts. He used his Twitter feed predominantly to promote his own programme Pienaar's Politics. His tweets featured video live from outside locations or party conference venues and gave a run-down of his guest line-up.

Table 2. Twitter activity.

| Journalist | Followers | Tweet | Retweet | Total | Non-political tweets | Branding (% of total tweets/retweets) | | | | | |
						Self		Colleague		Other news outlets	
C Mason	66,000	264	178	442	31	52	11.8%	83	18.8%	10	2.3%
L Kuenssberg	831,000	300	141	441	2	26	5.9%	102	23.1%	20	4.5%
H Stewart	22,500	126	266	392	0	4	1.0%	120	30.6%	44	11.2%
F Islam	261,000	239	80	319	0	19	6.0%	82	25.7%	18	5.6%
R Peston	909,000	199	23	222	8	62	27.9%	0	—	17	7.7%
F Elliott	11,400	40	94	134	4	8	6.0%	24	17.9%	16	11.9%
J Groves	8,300	59	6	65	1	0	—	2	3.1%	27	41.5%
G Rayner	9,100	36	3	39	3	0	—	10	25.6%	4	10.3%
J Pienaar	66,000	32	4	36	0	31	86.1%	1	2.8%	0	—
G Gibbon	40,000	22	0	22	0	22	100%	0	—	0	—

Kuenssberg's chief broadcast rival is ITV's Robert Peston, a former colleague who shot to fame with a series of scoops for the BBC during the 2008 financial crisis. Peston has 909,000 followers on Twitter and even a separate account called 'Robert Peston's Hair' (only 1,311 followers), emphasising the cult of personality around him. He routinely commented on the news, injecting his own opinion. In one tweet, he said: "Our economy has failed in its fundamental purpose of giving hope of a better life for most of us." He used his feed to hit back at critics who accused him of attacking the Labour Party leader Jeremy Corbyn after a summer in which the politician became embroiled in a bitter anti-Semitism row. When it came to analysing politics, Peston skirted the character limit on Twitter by posing a political question and then linking to a longer comment piece hosted on Facebook. He leveraged the potential of linked social media accounts more than some other correspondents and routinely tweeted to promote his television show 'Peston' or his recently published book. The shifting of his television slot to a Wednesday evening from Sundays was accompanied by the launch of his own Twitter emoji which appears automatically when '#Peston' is typed by users. He often made fun of himself, uploading a video of himself presenting outside No. 10 Downing Street where he repeatedly dropped his earpiece. Almost 28% of his tweets promoted either his television programme, his appearances in news bulletins or linked to his commentaries. In the period he posted 22 pictures of himself to Twitter.

When it came to the other broadcasters, Sky's Political Editor Faisal Islam engaged mainly in tweeting breaking news from politicians and sometimes used multiple, numbered tweets (up to 10 in a stream)—a thread—to explore detail on a story. One of the *Telegraph* correspondents with a reputation for detailed knowledge of Brexit, Europe Editor Peter Foster[3], has developed this further, posting a 20-tweet thread on talks in a way that allowed complex analysis. The tone of Islam's tweets was analytical and often attempted to contextualise the shifting political stances around the Brexit debate. He promoted his own scoop on BMW's decision to close down its Mini factory near Oxford for a month after Brexit plus an interview with Theresa May. He retweeted content and a promotional video for Sophy Ridge on Sunday, his Sky colleague's political talk show. He also leveraged Sky's name by tweeting programmes or news reports from his colleagues. In addition, he retweeted a campaign by Sky News to make TV debates a permanent feature of UK general elections. Channel 4's political editor Gary Gibbon took the most conservative approach to Twitter, linking to his blog and footage from the broadcaster's flagship 7 p.m. news programme. The tweets came with a full-size picture, often of Theresa May, and once of himself as a correspondent standing outside parliament.

The data showed that newspaper journalists tended to focus on recycling and promoting stories by their own colleagues or others working in Westminster, supporting the assertion by Behr that the Twitter culture can lead to a collaborative view of events (2018, p. 22). *The Guardian*'s joint political editor Heather Stewart was by far the most active. She tweeted live breaking news from the weekly parliamentary questions session and from some of the party conferences. A large proportion of her activity (31.6%) was made up of tweets or retweets which either cited her own stories or, in the majority of cases, featured the work of her colleagues or those on the sister newspaper *The Observer*. In one tweet, Stewart, who attended the Labour Party conference in Liverpool, wrote:

> I am bloody proud to work for the paper that exposed the Windrush[4] scandal, which Jeremy Corbyn spoke about so movingly in his conference speech yesterday. Just saying.

Unlike others, she frequently retweeted job adverts, both within journalism and also at political think tanks and other similar organisations. The *Daily Mail*'s political editor Jason Groves tended to tweet breaking news from politicians, often drawing on interviews on Britain's Sunday television chat shows, either hosted by the BBC journalist Andrew Marr or Sky's Sophy Ridge. Gordon Rayner, *The Telegraph*'s political editor, also used Twitter sparingly, sometimes posting breaking news (five tweets as Theresa May made her conference speech) but more often tweeting links to *Telegraph* stories by his colleagues. In one tweet, he congratulated a colleague at the newspaper on her front page 'splash' on Brexit, saying "Great work." Francis Elliott, *The Times*' political editor, was also on the lower end of the activity scale. Some 23.9% of his activity was in the form of tweets, retweets or links to articles by himself or his colleagues on the newspaper; he sometimes linked to the day's front page, at one stage praising its layout. He also promoted his own scoop on Brexit (and retweeted coverage of it by rivals). Through links and retweets, he paid tribute to journalists working in Kabul, showing solidarity with them by linking to a CNN story that detailed how they are being targeted by the Taliban. When Behr wrote his scathing article about how Twitter is poisoning politics, Elliott tweeted: "fwiw[5] trying to build Twitter free hours into my day."

5.4. What Lobby Correspondents Felt about Branding on Twitter

The lobby correspondents interviewed all felt that Twitter had become an integral part of their daily practice, particularly as a news gathering and 'tip-off' mecha-

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[3] Peter Foster is not one of the 10 political correspondents tracked for this research but also works on the mainstream Brexit story.
[4] *The Guardian* broke the story of the UK government's mistreatment of the so-called 'Windrush' immigrants to Britain who had arrived from the Caribbean in the years after World War Two. Windrush referred to the name of one of the ships that arrived in London from Jamaica in 1948.
[5] Fwiw—for what it's worth.

nism. They used Tweetdeck[6], alongside wire services as standard. Twitter, said one, is a very good 'radar screen' in the competitive environment of the political lobby. This clearly echoed research which has focused on Twitter's use as a reporting tool and how it has become a valuable 'beat' (Broersma & Graham, 2013, p. 447). At the same time, they were acutely aware of potential pitfalls, not least the possibility for Twitter in the closed lobby environment to exacerbate the tendency to form what Behr calls "cartels of information" (2018, p. 22). One experienced lobby correspondent said:

> It can bring with it a slavery of confirmation bias and group think and you have to be careful to separate out the reputable from the disreputable, the polemic from the fact-based—they all get mixed together into a sort of sludge.

The correspondents were accepting of the guidelines drawn up by their editorial managers and felt the relationship with social media had become more relaxed than when Twitter was new. The "corporate panic" of the early days had faded, said one. One broadcaster said the clear rule was nothing should be tweeted that you wouldn't say live on air and it made sense to be held to the same standard. They identified the biggest potential problem around retweeting third party content, one noting that journalists are being called out all the time for bias. This trend, he said, had become exacerbated in the past few years, with some people just wanting to shout at journalists. Several of the interviewees remarked that the political parties they report on are closely watching retweets for any sign of bias.

Several of the journalists interviewed said they felt under pressure to tweet from their employer. None had quotas but one suggested this pressure might explain the rush of retweets seen each morning, adding there were increasing expectations that he and his colleagues should promote themselves and encourage followers to click through to underlying stories. When questioned about how they tweeted, there was a wide spectrum of practices, from the very cautious to those who enthusiastically embraced the opportunity to brand themselves. One broadcast journalist said it clearly came more naturally to those who worked in television and radio since they tended in any case "to show more of themselves on air." He added:

> I suppose I saw it as a chance to build your brand and that is a key part of its role...using Twitter is a way of gaining a visibility...a way of getting known by the people you want to talk to.

Their techniques varied widely. One said he used a "scattergun" approach, dropping material into his Twitter feed that he was interested in and he felt his followers might not otherwise see. All of them linked to longer news sto-

ries and valued the ability to cross promote programmes, podcasts or panel discussions they or their colleagues were involved in. Some were happy to tweet information about their private lives, arguing it helped build their identity online and made them human. Others felt it was better to keep strictly to the political agenda and as such had a far more conservative approach to brand building. The practice of live tweeting breaking news also divided opinion. Some saw it as part of their job and a way of building their presence; others felt it was not their role to replicate a news agency. Despite the inherent dangers of Twitter, all those interviewed saw advantages beyond newsgathering. They believed a strong online profile would make them more marketable for any future career move and, for those working on newspapers, Twitter gave some the freedom to distance themselves from highly partisan and extreme editorial stances over Brexit.

While some of the lobby correspondents were more comfortable with the idea of branding themselves than others, all were accepting of it despite having started their careers in a traditional style of journalism. None felt they were crossing a line into commercial territory. One said he saw no ethical dilemma; another said it was natural given the importance of gaining online traction. One newspaper journalist thought it was only sensible given the competitive pressures faced in the news market:

> We are all in a war for ears, a war for eyeballs, we are all trying to make our pieces more attractive and persuasive and it is therefore my job. I am not measured by how many clicks I get but the company is trying to build subscriptions....I feel it is my job to get people to look at my stuff and to promote the work of the paper—that's what pays my bills.

6. Conclusion

In this age of populism, polarised opinion and fake news, it comes as no surprise that Twitter should have become so deeply embedded in Britain's lobby reporting at Westminster. It may have started out as another reporting aid, but it is now an integrated part of the culture and identity of those who operate in it, accepted as a means of audience engagement and as a promotional tool.

The first research question (RQ1) asked how political correspondents brand themselves, their news organisation and the profession of journalism through Twitter. The activity of the 10 lobby correspondents followed showed that they all engage in building their own identity and brand but to very different degrees and by adopting different approaches. The broadcasters clearly felt more comfortable given the fact that they already receive considerable public exposure on air and routinely posted tweets to promote their own programmes or those of colleagues. Reflecting that on-air presence, their tweets often featured pictures of themselves, either preparing in studios or conducting interviews with politicians.

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[6] Tweetdeck is a dashboard allowing multiple 'timelines' to be monitored at once.

They were quite willing to make fun of their own on-air mishaps by using a form of self-deprecating humour, underscoring Molyneux's findings on the use of humour as a means of fostering journalists' relationship with their audience (2015, p. 932). By contrast, the newspaper journalists were generally less active and tended to promote the work of their colleagues. As such, the broadcasters blurred the lines between the professional and personal far more than the newspaper journalists. All of the correspondents gave credit to those working in other organisations if they had a scoop but those journalists were usually covering the same political story, reinforcing the impression that the lobby is an echo chamber. exuding a 'clubby' atmosphere in which journalists co-operate closely with each other despite competitive rivalries. Twitter allows them to monitor each other's stories and at the same time reinforces a conformity in their output.

All those interviewed were aware of their news organisation's code of conduct for social media and were cautious when retweeting (RQ2). The broadcasters were also acutely aware of oversight by the regulator Ofcom. While outside the scope of this article, the analysis of the 10 Twitter feeds shows that few of the lobby correspondents routinely expressed overt opinions although some sailed close to the wind and were able to do so mainly through their retweets. Those who were interviewed recognised the normative professional ideology of the separation between news and the business of news but none felt their activity on Twitter undermined this, illustrating a dissonance between stated values and actual practice. In effect, their branding activity had become quietly but clearly absorbed within the boundaries of what is considered to be acceptable journalism and normalised (RQ3). Despite a stated adherence to normative ideology, their actual practice bore the hallmarks of what, in a previous era, might have been called marketing. Their links to news stories increased their organisation's distribution channels, while their links to programming at times represented a classic promotional activity that might previously have been carried out by the business side of the operation. There was a strong suggestion from those interviewed that it made pragmatic sense to promote one's employer given the difficult financial state of the industry. This would suggest that news organisations are succeeding in drawing on Twitter as a tool to engage audiences and bolster their business without overt opposition even from senior journalists. While the discourse of normative values of separation remained intact, in practice the lobby correspondents were engaging in creating, developing and maintaining their brand while cross promoting that of their colleagues, their news organisations and, at times, their campaigns. In this environment of UK political reporting such branding has become normalised as part of daily journalistic practice and in this respect the boundary has been quietly breached. As one broadcast journalist said: "If there is a line I have crossed, I have not noticed crossing it."

Conflict of Interests

The author declares no conflict of interests.

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Article

The Dislocation of News Journalism: A Conceptual Framework for the Study of Epistemologies of Digital Journalism

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Abstract

This article focuses on news journalism, social media platforms and power, and key implications for epistemology. The conceptual framework presented is intended to inspire and guide future studies relating to the emerging sub-field of journalism research that we refer to as "Epistemologies of Digital Journalism". The article discusses the dependencies between news media and social media platforms (non-proprietary to the news media). The authority and democratic role of news journalism pivot on claims that it regularly provides accurate and verified public knowledge. However, how are the epistemic claims of news journalism and the practices of justifications affected by news journalism's increased dependency on social media platforms? This is the overall question discussed in this article. It focuses on the intricate power dependencies between news media and social media platforms and proceeds to discuss implications for epistemology. It presents a three-fold approach differentiating between (1) articulated knowledge and truth claims, (2) justification in the journalism practices and (3) the acceptance/rejections of knowledge claims in audience activities. This approach facilitates a systematic analysis of how diverse aspects of epistemology interrelate with, and are sometimes conditioned by, the transformations of news and social media.

Issue

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1. Introduction: Epistemologies of Digital Journalism

This conceptual article focuses on the relationships between news journalism, social media platforms, power dependencies and epistemology. It aims to conceptualize and critically discuss *dislocation of news journalism*, and key implications for epistemology of a disrupted 'established order' surrounding news. *Dislocation of news journalism* comprises a series of parallel developments regarding shifting power dependencies between the *news media* and *platform companies*.

A platform is a digital infrastructure with affordances offering diverse kinds of information and communication, as well as opportunities to produce, publish and engage with content. Platform companies do not produce and publish content themselves, and thus do not define themselves as publishers. Instead they operate with a business model in which they provide a digital platform on which individuals and institutions can communicate and publish information (e.g., Gillespie, 2018). They are oftentimes referred to as digital intermediaries because they succeed in establishing themselves

between citizens/consumers/producers and diverse organizations. More specifically, dislocation of news journalism includes a displacement of power for news producers having less control over publishing contexts when news stories are detached from the context in which they were originally embedded by the news organization (Carlson, 2017, p. 65). The article acknowledges the crucial importance of more general shifts in revenue from news media firms to platform companies, and more specific shifts such as distinct actors having gained power concerning gathering, analyzing and selling data and analytics that become interwoven with how editorial decisions are made (cf. Carlson, 2018a; Zamith, 2018). However, we will focus exclusively on aspects of dislocation with key implications for news epistemology.

By introducing this conceptual framework we intend to make a scholarly contribution to research in journalism studies (Carlson, Robinson, Lewis, & Berkowitz, 2018; Steensen & Ahva, 2015), and more specifically to the emerging field of digital journalism studies (e.g., Eldridge & Franklin, 2017, 2019; Robinson, Lewis, & Carlson, in press). This could bridge continuums involving "change" and "continuity" as well as "digital" and "journalism" in engaging the field (Eldridge, Hess, Tandoc, & Westlund, in press; Steensen, Larsen, Hågvar, & Fonn, in press). Moreover, we contribute to research on epistemology (cf. Ekström & Westlund, 2019). While there are examples of thematic coordination of such research (e.g., Van Leuven, Kruikemeier, Lecheler, & Hermans, 2018), research contributing to contemporary knowledge about epistemology sometimes presents its contribution in other terms. We argue there is good reason to consider much of this research as contributing to an emerging subfield of research which we call: "Epistemologies of Digital Journalism".

We write "epistemologies" with the explicit intention to connote plurality; there are several different epistemologies for different genres and forms of journalism. Classic TV-broadcasting journalism has its epistemologies (Ekström, 2002), as does live blogging (Matheson & Wahl-Jorgensen, in press; Thorsen & Jackson, 2018), participatory journalism (Anderson & Revers, 2018; Kligler-Vilenchik & Tenenboim, in press), data journalism (Lewis & Westlund, 2015a), the more distinct structured journalism (Graves & Anderson, in press), and emerging forms of automated journalism (Carlson, 2018b). Having said this, journalism also comes with important similarities across its genres and forms, in working towards reporting worthwhile and verified information about important events.

In line with classical works on power and dependence (Emerson, 1962), we distance ourselves from exercises treating power as an attribute of a person or company. We share the view that "power is a property of the social relation, instead of an attribute of the actor" (Emerson, 1962, p. 32). Emerson has proposed a theory of power-dependence relations, originally growing out of relationships between social actors and groups, which can be applied to how we understand industry actors (i.e., companies). Emerson argues that a salient indicator of power concerns how *actor I* depends on *actor II* for achieving their set goals. This article brings similar attention to the more general dependencies between news media organizations and their proprietary platforms on the one hand, and social media companies and their platforms (non-proprietary to the news media) on the other (cf. Westlund & Ekström, 2018). Such dependencies relate to audience reach and revenue, and to the epistemic goals and claims news journalism tries to achieve. Thus, it is essential to study contemporary processes of dislocation from publishers to platform companies, alongside publishers' attempts to counterbalance those processes by strategic initiatives intended for regaining control and power.

Research into epistemologies of digital journalism over the past decade has suggested that the authority and democratic role of news journalism pivot on claims that it regularly provides accurate and verified public knowledge (Carlson, 2017). Truth claims are manifest in the professional norms of truth-telling (Karlsson, 2011) and in the discursive constructions of factuality in news texts (Montgomery, 2007). Truth claims are justified in practices of professional news production and evaluated, accepted or rejected in the practices of news consumption. Yet, how are the epistemic claims of news journalism and the practices of justifications affected by news journalism's increased dependency on social media platforms?

The democratic role and authority of news journalism depends on being able to reach out to citizens who engage in news consumption to become informed. However, transformations within professional journalism and how news organizations and consumers depend on social media have resulted in an increasingly complex situation; social media have exercised complementary, displacing and even replacing effects on various aspects of journalism. This has affected diverse aspects of journalism, notably business and epistemology. Ultimately, different forms of power gained by social media platforms extend far beyond securing a strong position in global markets, towards becoming a "normalized" part of the operations of diverse companies and the everyday life of citizens worldwide. Social media platforms have indeed gained significant influence as to the overall role journalism and news play in democracy. They have converged with news media's digital platforms and operations, and are both partners and catalysts to the news media (enabling new epistemic practices such as sourcing, new distribution techniques and analytics, and new context for audiences' verification and authorization of news), as well as fierce and harmful competitors (encroaching on "attention time", data, and advertising expenditures).

Over the past decade, the intersection of social media and journalism has been amply studied. Studies argued that the web and social media enabled the production of news that may contribute to richer knowledge and more diverse perspectives, while providing distributed fact checking. Others have argued that social media will be a "net positive" that "reflects real-

ity" and "matters over and above other factors" (Lewis & Molyneux, 2018). Such work approached social media platforms in positive ways, uncritically associating success with achieving traffic and engagement on social media platforms, and possibly routing some of this engagement success back to their proprietary digital platforms (e.g., websites, or apps). While research initially approached the web and social media with a high level of optimism about its potential for participation and enhancing democracy (Borger, van Hoof, Costera Meijer, & Sanders, 2013), many have taken a sharp turn since, now emphasizing "dark participation", as misinformation and manipulation have gained prominence (Quandt, 2018). Taking this turn, scholars have been encouraged to study how social media platforms disrupt and challenge the news media industries (e.g., Westlund & Ekström, 2018), and how journalists may develop distinct speech acts and rhetorical strategies in publishing news on social media such as Facebook (Hågvar, 2019). The next section further discusses and problematizes such dislocation from news media to platform companies, addressing production, distribution and consumption aspects.

2. Dislocation of News Journalism: Shifting Dependency on Platform Companies

Dislocation refers to a fundamental transformation and disruption of an established order. This article posits the *dislocation of news journalism*, as involving parallel processes of power redistribution from *the news media* to *platform companies*. Power dependencies form the key issue in the transforming relationship between these two industry actors, each of which represent many discrete companies. In the previous mass media era, journalists in few news media organizations produced and published news material in a medium the news publisher they worked for owned and controlled (i.e., proprietary to the news media), for a wide audience. The web has disrupted the media industry, substantially reducing barriers for new entrants to publish themselves (albeit few manage to become significant players). The contemporary digital mediascape involves numerous news producers. Some of them switch between human and computational production and distribution of personalized news content for their own platforms (Lewis & Westlund, 2015b; Westlund, 2011), and algorithmic-oriented curation on non-proprietary (to the news media) platforms such as Facebook (DeVito, 2017). As Bell, Owen, Brown, Hauka and Rashidian (2017, p. 9) note, "technology platforms have become publishers in a short space of time, leaving news organizations confused about their own future." Many news publishers have since long broadened their portfolio of proprietary platforms, and extended to non-proprietary platforms like mobile ecosystems and social media platforms (Westlund, 2011). Digital innovation takes place continuously, but also because of critical incidents that challenge news practices (Konow-Lund, Hågvar, & Olsson, 2018).

This signals a general shift from a monopolistic situation involving institutional news producers, to a situation in which news and other forms of information are produced and distributed by a larger diversity of actors, including ordinary citizens (Deuze & Witschge, 2017). Journalism and its boundaries are being contested in different ways, and defended through professional control (Lewis, 2012), various forms of boundary work (Carlson & Lewis, 2015) and meta-journalistic discourse (Carlson, 2016). Some "news" producers deliberately skew the news according to specific political and/or economic interests (Tandoc, Lim, & Ling, 2018). There are also diverse sets of "alternative media" applying somewhat similar and somewhat dissimilar news production routines (Holt, 2018). Such social actors do not depend on being published within the realms of news publishers, and the way they control and restrict participatory journalism. They have their own publishing channels. In contrary, we focus exclusively on news media producers organized as a company, employing several journalists, producing and publishing news on a daily basis, taking legal and editorial responsibility for the news content, and operating with at least one proprietary platform (i.e., television, radio, newspaper, news site, news application, which they control).

Social media companies are known as platform companies because they have developed a computing architecture that sets the stage for different social actors to communicate, exchange information, conduct business, etc. Most powerful is Facebook, which also owns Instagram and WhatsApp, and acts as an intermediary between its massive user bases and a plethora of companies which have become increasingly dependent on it. A Tow center report eloquently writes of news media having become a "platform press", as platform companies "have evolved beyond their role as distribution channels, and now control what audiences see and who gets paid for their attention, and even what format and type of journalism flourishes" (Bell et al., 2017, p. 9).

Platform companies operate with a different business model and technological architecture than news media. Social media platforms offer a multitude of affordances, including different forms of one-to-one and one-to-many communication, as well as producing, publishing, accessing, sharing, and engaging with different kinds of information and news such as text, video, audio or data. They typically offer these without a monetary charge. Instead, their revenue model builds on collecting and analyzing data on users' digital footprints and subsequently selling this to advertisers. News publishers also engage in such practices, using data for data-driven journalism. Their dependency on platform companies is evident in their use of algorithms to facilitate personalized news delivery, as news is increasingly distributed in social media platforms that employ algorithms to personalize story selections within users' news feeds (DeVito, 2017).

Social media platforms have built a successful business model; altogether, they have attracted billions of

people to visit their platforms, securing highly desired attention spans and pulling advertising expenditures from their competitors, including news media companies. The shift in revenue streams is a disruptive and central aspect of the existing power dependencies as news media industries have lost tremendous revenues competing with platform companies, mostly to Facebook and Google. With superior skills, methods and systems for measuring their massive user bases, including for personalizing advertising, platform companies have outcompeted the news media in the advertising market, and have also started competing in the classifieds market which previously benefited news media. News publishers are, as a result, struggling with the business of journalism (Ohlsson & Facht, 2017; Picard, 2014). Myllylahti (2018) concludes that Facebook has created an "attention economy trap" in which it generates traffic, but not revenue.

There are many ways in which the power-dependence between news media and platform companies has become salient—in the Apple ecosystem, Apple both controls applications and takes nearly one-third of revenues, or with Facebook, with Instant articles in the past, and building paywalls for news publishers inside Facebook in the present. Research into how news publishers relate to and depend on platform companies have begun emerging in recent years. A case study by Nielsen and Ganter (2018) found publishers struggling to balance operation opportunities offered in the short-term, and becoming too dependent on digital intermediaries (i.e., platform companies) in the long-term. In another qualitative study involving case studies from Finland, France, Germany, Italy, Poland, and the United Kingdom, Sehl, Cornia and Nielsen (2018) find public service broadcasters all have dedicated yet small teams working on increasing their reach via social media platforms to drive traffic to their own proprietary news sites, focusing especially on reaching hard-to-reach audiences (especially youth). Some also work towards stimulating user participation. These PSBs have begun consolidating what social media platforms they actively work with. By comparison, the report on the platform press by Bell et al. (2017) shows how some news publishers share news content across a very large number of non-proprietary platforms. Moreover, a longitudinal study of how media workers in two Singaporean news publishers have approached, and made sense of, emerging technologies found "platform counterbalancing", a strategic response where publishers seek to reduce overreliance on non-proprietary social media platforms by instead developing their own portfolio of platforms (Chua & Westlund, 2019). Acknowledging the tremendous power platform companies have gained, scholars of so-called platform studies have developed a critical and quickly growing body of research on the role of platforms and their logics and economics (Andersson Schwarz, 2017).

Ultimately, the social and networked infrastructures of some platform companies have become interwoven with the operations of news media (Bell et al., 2017;

Bruns, 2018). Although their approaches vary, many news media have felt pressured to develop a social media presence (Chua & Westlund, 2019; Nielsen & Ganter, 2018), in some cases resulting in disruption (Wu, 2018). Bruns (2018) argues that professional journalism nowadays is being normalized into social media platforms (controlling the numerous ways in which the public can engage with the news) instead of the other way around. News media firms have turned to platform companies to increase their overall traffic, have appropriated functions that enable users to share news on social media platforms and interact with the news, and have engaged in social media optimization (SMO)—similar to search engine optimization for search—for generating as much traffic volume as possible. Furthermore, news organizations have hired social media editors who actively adapt their news content to publish it on a diverse set of non-proprietary social media platforms. These editors continuously oversee the flow of news being published, and then select, edit, and publish what they consider appropriate (read 'sharable') for publishing on the news media's social media accounts on non-proprietary platforms.

The volume of referral traffic comprises a strong indicator of the role platform companies play. For many years, Facebook gained significance as a source of referral traffic to the news media. However, since mid-2017 and in early 2018 the company has shifted its strategy and instead tried to offer a platform that keeps its users on their site and applications. Consequently, the relative proportion of referral traffic from Facebook has decreased substantially (Benton, 2018). What does this reveal concerning dislocation and power dependency? For several years, the news media developed activities aimed at achieving increasingly more traffic (referrals) via social media platforms. A mutual dependency evolved, albeit increasingly marked by tens of thousands of publishers becoming more dependent on one platform company (i.e., Facebook). For Facebook the dependency is salient in cases where users expect news on their platform, and when other forms of similarly appreciated content do not flow in. With these changes Facebook has reduced their already relatively small dependency on news publishers even further, which came as a massive blow to the news industry. As a result, news media firms need to reconfigure their business model and work towards becoming less dependent on non-proprietary platforms, yet maintaining a balanced presence.

The shifting power dependencies for distribution naturally extend to news consumption. Over the past decade, a handful of platform companies have gained significance as key gateways for how people access the news (Newman, Fletcher, Kalogeropoulos, Levy, & Nielsen, 2018). So-called incidental news discovery via social media has become a salient characteristic of the public´s contemporary news consumption (Kim, Chen, & Gil De Zúñiga, 2013; Newman et. al 2018), although patterns naturally vary between different groups in society.

However, different news consumption patterns mean very different dependencies on social media. Individuals may stumble upon a relevant news article on the news feed, and digest what is immediately available on their platform. They may click on a link and be directed to a news site, and then immediately return. A third scenario involves the user being redirected from social media to a proprietary news site, where the individual discovers other relevant news articles, and thus becomes more engaged with proprietary news content. When people are gratified from their experiences with a news site, they are presumably also more likely to return to that site to further discover and digest news. This can result in building loyalty and an inclination towards paying for news, whilst reducing dependency on platform companies.

Yet Emerson (1962) argues that a critical aspect of power concerns actors' dependency on another actor for achieving their goals. Facebook and the news media have developed this sort of dependence on each other in building traffic around news content. As many citizens have developed routines of accessing their news via social media, this has displaced some of their former routines. Then, as Facebook diversifies its news feeds, it further reduces its dependency on news content and publishers. Consequently, news publishers who depended significantly on social media for their content to be widely accessed now face problems, and members of the public counting on being fed news via their Facebook feed will also be less exposed to news in such a way.

3. Dislocation of News Journalism: Epistemic Implications

The dislocation of news has considerable implications for news epistemology; that is, the forms of knowledge news journalism claims to provide, and how such knowledge is produced, validated and justified (Ekström & Westlund, 2019). To discuss how news, as relatively authoritative knowledge about the world, is changing in the context of social media, we hereby propose and discuss three central dimensions of news epistemology. The first dimension focuses on the articulation of truth claims in news texts and meta-discourse, the second on how news is produced, validated and justified by journalists, and the third on how news is received and validated by audiences. Related distinctions have been suggested in the literature on journalism culture and epistemology (Hanitzsch, 2007). Our conceptualization of epistemologies is distinctive in its discursive and sociological foundation, focusing on the actual articulation of truth claims in news discourses and the validation of news in social practices, rather than general ideas and philosophical debates such as the one on objectivity.

3.1. The Articulation of Truth Claims

A significant aspect of news as a form of knowledge is the articulation of truth claims. The claims of provid-ing verified and reliable news on a daily basis have discerned professional journalism from other forms of public information. This is what most news organizations promise to achieve. Such epistemic claims are articulated in meta-discourses as well as in the conventional forms and language of news (Ekström, 2002). As Carlson (2017, p. 73) argues, "news forms are laden with epistemological premises that shape the type of knowledge they communicate and, by extension, contain an argument for their legitimation." In news discourse, truth-telling is typically shaped by the discursive constructions of factuality, constructions of out-there-ness, disguise of uncertainties, visuals indexing a reality to be taken for granted, the representation of reliable sources of information, forms of quoting and the formal neutral voice of news presenters (Ekström & Westlund, 2019; Montgomery, 2007, pp. 33, 64). This is not to suggest that the epistemic claims of news are homogenous. They vary across subgenres of news journalism. Interpretive, speculative and explicitly partisan news reporting—challenging the restrictions of impartiality—have, for example, been analyzed in several studies (Hutchby, 2011; Salgado & Strömbäck, 2012). Ultimately, how do the processes of dislocation affect the articulated truth claims of news journalism? Without claiming to be exhaustive, we identify three significant ways.

First, the knowledge and truth claims of news are *refashioned* in the context of online and social media. A key mechanism concerns the speed with which news is distributed, sometimes going viral via social media, often in the form of "decontextualized snippets of information" (Nielsen, 2017, p. 93). This puts pressure on journalists and the news media to continuously keep apprised as to how events are unfolding. Typically, they consider it important to quickly publish the first version reporting on the news, and to distribute this on both proprietary and non-proprietary platforms. The general claims in news journalism of being fast and first are thus adapted to the temporalities of online and social media (Usher, 2018). Furthermore, social media have enabled the entry of new forms of journalism articulating different knowledge claims. In live blogging, the authoritative voice of the journalist is, for example, reformulated into the role of a "curator" prioritizing and disseminating "bite-sized" and frequently updated information from different sources (Thurman & Walters, 2013). To some extent, the dislocation of news in social media platforms might contribute to a shift in truth-telling towards more provisional, corrected and even contradictory facts. However, so too is the renewal of evidence and constructions of factuality, such as when screenshots of Twitter and Facebook accounts are provided to show what actors actually say and do, instead of the news referring to sources in quotes and reported speech ("The president said that…"). How these various tendencies manifest in different cultural contexts remains to be investigated in systematic comparative research. This distribution of news in social media, characterized by, not only, a diversity of genres and voices, but

a crossing and blurring of boundaries between marketing, personal opinions, professional commentaries and impartial news (Lewis & Molyneaux, 2018), can result in role conflicts for news journalists articulating opinions on personal profiles, adapting to the discursive norms in social media. However, this also likely results in truth claims articulated in the reporting and commenting on specific news events becoming increasingly mixed.

Second, there is a tendency towards *obscuring* truth claims. Claims refer to the authority of the principal source behind the news and the context of production indicated through diverse institutional markers. The *dislocation of news journalism*, however, means less control for news producers over the publishing context as news becomes increasingly detached from the original principle and context of production. To explicate, when institutional news media firms publish news for their proprietary platforms, they can set the context of specific information through markers, such as their overall brand. They also determine whether it is analysis, breaking news, editorial, chronicle, and so forth. Such contextual information may be lost when news is published or redistributed on social media platforms. What the news claims to provide in terms of verified knowledge risks being obscured. Many researchers, practitioners and managers have dismissed the plain repurposing of news content between different proprietary platforms, stressing journalism must be developed and customized in harmony with the affordances of the distinct medium or platform for which it will be published (Westlund, 2013).

Contemporary news producers face the possibilities of publishing for a multitude of both proprietary and non-proprietary platforms. However large investments are required to successfully customize news content and services for all platforms, and thus it can make sense to step back and produce platform-agnostic news. This means that content produced is not dedicated to one specific platform, but instead harmonizes with as many platforms as possible: from proprietary news sites and apps, to voice-driven smart speakers, car instrument panels, and so forth. Few have the resources to do so. Yet, publishing news for non-proprietary platforms involves a loss of control. With social media, news producers cannot control the publishing context: how the news material is presented, the type and quality of potential adjacent information, and the potential engagement that develops around it (i.e., clicks, comments, re-tweets, sharing). Consequently, anyone or anything producing news for social media may want to embed meta-communication indicating original principles: truth claims, information on the nature of the material, the journalistic process, and who the producer is (company, journalist, robot, etc.). With increasingly sophisticated methods and tools for creating and publishing mock news, it is important for producers of journalistic news to embed clearly recognizable meta-communication, including font, angles, introductory music, watermarks, logotypes, etc. in video, or embedding key clarification in headline or preamble in texts.

Third, while social media facilitate the communication of opinions, personal voices, or even speculation, they also contribute to the effective dissemination of "fake" or "mock news", and the related *deception* of truth claims (Tandoc, Lim, et al., 2018). Mock is a concept connoting artifice, mimicry, imitation, as well as being fake and bad; thus, the practice of imitating the tone and appearance of news material, comprised of intentionally fake content. Characteristic of these is the exploitation of the conventionalized forms of news and the related discourse of factuality to disseminate fabricated news and false information. The principle behind the information is masked. The purpose of doing so is often linked to political and/or economic interests. Since "fake news" simply connotes something being fake, we therefore propose the concept of "mock news" because of its two-fold meaning also involving the imitation of how news material is presented. Metaphorically, mock news is like a chameleon, successful in camouflaging and blending into their context through skin coloration that imitates their surroundings. So-called "deep fakes" have emerged quite explicitly doing this by technically manipulating voices and faces, giving the impression that a specific person says something they did not. Thus, the dislocation of news in social media and the traveling of decontextualized news between different platforms involve a refashioning as well as obscured and pure fraud regarding truth claims. This implies a destabilization concerning the authority of journalism and news as a form of knowledge (Carlson, 2017), which creates challenges for professional journalists and news organizations promising to provide reliable news, as well as for audiences who ultimately have to decide what to trust.

3.2. Production of Knowledge and the 'Contexts of Justification'

The *dislocation of news journalism* in social media has significant implications for the knowledge-producing practices within journalism and related processes of justification (Ekström & Westlund, 2019). It is critical for research to reopen the critical epistemological questions of "how journalists know what they know" and what qualifies as justified facts in particular contexts (Ettema & Glasser, 1985). Adopting a sociological approach, epistemology refers to knowledge-producing practices, the norms, standards, methods and classifications enacted in the processing of facts and the justifications of truth claims (Ekström, 2002). The primary question posed is therefore not whether particular news is true or not, but what characterizes the practical ways of dealing with knowledge and facts in news production (Godler & Reich, 2013). How do journalists decide what is sufficiently justified to publish in concrete situations?

This sociological approach understands the processing of facts and the justification of news as practical matters handled through norms and standards developed within a particular context; this has been defined as "the

context of justification" (Ettema & Glasser, 1985). This social constructivist position does not imply a radical form or constructivism and relativism (Ekström & Westlund, 2019; Godler & Reich, 2013, p. 674). It is a moderate form of constructivism (Elder-Vass, 2012, pp. 8, 230). News is dependent on how journalists collectively understand and produce knowledge about a world, one which exists independent of journalism. All news accounts are not equally true or fallible, and collective norms and standards become important objects of inquiry solely because they effect news journalists´ validations of facts and their justifications of truth claims.

With the transformations of news production in online and social media, the contexts of justification, and related norms and standards, are changing and vary far more than seminal studies on daily news and investigative reporting captured. There has been much hope and hype around the potential of social media for how journalists can further develop news work, for instance, by turning to a much larger pool of sources (for a critical review, see Lewis & Molyneaux, 2018). A critical aspect concerns the processing (selections, evaluations and authorization) of sources, as established journalist-source relationships and the relatively shared understanding of sources within newsrooms are central to the epistemology of news. With numerous social media platforms readily available, journalists now engage in the practice of lurking in personal accounts, groups, pages and so forth. Sometimes they utilize the information found in the news. On other occasions, journalists may identify relevant sources or ideas for investigations through social media, and then take this with them into their subsequent news work. With the regular use of social media sources, routines in the assessment of sources, and the categorizations of sources providing either pre-justified facts or facts that require careful cross-checking are potentially destabilized. Journalists have to update their standards and skills in assessing different voices in social media. It is a particular challenge for journalists to verify the identity and credibility of the voices behind potentially newsworthy information.

While journalists in some contexts publish tweets without any forms of verification, there are also contexts in which journalists are generally reluctant to use social media sources (Broersma & Graham, 2013, p. 461). The dominance of elite sources, and the related hierarchy of authorized sources in news journalism (Belair-Gagnon, 2015; Lecheler & Kruikemeier, 2016; van Leuven et al., 2018), is reproduced in the more frequent use of Twitter (compared to Facebook), the platform typically used by politicians, celebrities, etc. Thus, they provide a constant stream of newsworthy and quotable utterances (von Nordheim, Boczek, & Kroppers, 2018). As Duffy and Tan Rui Si (2018) note, there is a contradiction in journalism between the potential benefits of using the diversity of non-elite voices in online and social media to enrich journalism, and the "practicalities of the demand for speed, accuracy and validation". This can lead to a

tendency of favoring official elite sources, as the identity of non-elite voices is considered more demanding and time-consuming to verify within an ever-faster news cycle where the risk of incorrect data being published increases (Karlsson, Clerwall, & Nord, 2017). This also necessitates an adjustment of shared verification standards, and the validation of news tends to be reduced to the accuracy of bits of information, individual facts and quotes (Undurraga, 2017). The expectations of fast publishing also shape the already challenging sourcing practices (Eldridge & Bødker, 2018), and reduces the time for cross-checking. Some exceptions occur, such as with live blogging, in which journalists turn to a larger and more diverse set of sources (Thorsen & Jackson, 2018). Moreover, journalists may also engage in mobile sourcing via chat apps (Belair-Gagnon, Agur, & Frisch, 2018), and messaging apps like WhatsApp to successfully invite people to participate in the news production processes (Kligler-Vilenchik & Tenenboim, in press).

While at the selection and filtering stage, journalists have typically maintained control, rarely allowing others to participate in or influence the news production processes, the *dislocation of news* does have significant implications regarding the context of justification *external* to the newsroom and news journalism. As news is increasingly distributed in the form of decontextualized pieces of information (Nielsen, 2017), it is both detached from its original context of production *and* justified in a new context: what is published in authorized media or by authorized voices is sufficiently true to be distributed, if there are no obvious reasons for not doing so. In these republishing processes, the responsibility for verifications is reallocated and the risk of problematic truths being circulated increases, not least because this circulation often occurs at a fast speed.

Platform companies, thus, house the distribution of news of various quality and truthfulness. Various actors can produce and publish news on a recurrent basis, or as random acts of journalism. The varied platform companies do not take the same responsibility for the content published as news media companies do. It has been widely acknowledged that Facebook has significant power and control over what people see and are influenced by, thus, acting in an editorial manner. Yet, Facebook has largely avoided the expenses of manual editing and curation, only tweaking its algorithms, and invited external and public fact-checking to counter scandals. To what extent this process of accountability will result in any changes of significant implications for the validation and justification of news in social media is still an open question.

3.3. Audiences' Acceptance/Rejections of Knowledge Claims

In the examination of news as knowledge and justified beliefs, one must also ask what makes particular forms of news justified from the audience's point of view. The jus-

tification of news as valid knowledge includes audience activities on three aspects: *general trust*, *patterns of consumption* and *critical evaluations*. Audiences attribute different levels of trust/distrust to different news providers, with implications for their news consumption as well as their inclination to accept the truth claims of individual news items. News consumption is typically embedded in everyday practices. Forms of news are accepted or rejected as valid knowledge about current events in the way they are actually consumed and prioritized. The patterns of clicking and sharing digital news, for example, validate particular forms of news, whether intentional or not. How news organizations understand their authority as truth-tellers, and more specifically, the relevance of individual news items, is dependent on audience feedback increasingly measured through audience metrics (Zamith, 2018). Taken together, audiences' preunderstandings of the principles behind the news and their habitual forms of news consumption mean they do not need to critically assess individual news, if they do not have particular reasons to doubt its veracity (Tandoc, Ling, et al., 2018, pp. 3–4). How the three aspects of *trust*, *patterns of consumption* and *critical evaluations* are interrelated is a key issue in current research (e.g., Fletcher & Park, 2017). Schwarzenegger (in press) propose the concept "personal epistemologies" to analyze how individuals navigate their media use and interact with the news based on perceived credibility and conceptions of knowledge and knowing.

Critical evaluations include more specific activities of assessing the veracity of news and identifying biases and misinformation. The critical evaluations of news in social media have been explained in relation to internal activities based on people's own knowledge and interpretation of the news, and external activities of checking with trusted people and sources (Tandoc, Ling, et al., 2018; see also Edgerly, 2017). Not surprisingly, audiences' perceptions of, and abilities to detect, fake or mock news in social media have attracted increasing scholarly interest (Newman et. al. 2018; Schwarzenegger, in press). Zubiaga and Ji (2014) suggest that the verification of information in social media and the identification of fake news is dependent on interpretations of the authority of the author behind the information, plausibility, how information is presented, as well as the processes of independent corroboration. Audiences' critical evaluations are conditioned by several aspects of dislocated news, such as the sometimes-obscured principle behind the news and the diversity of actors producing news with both sincere and dark intentions (Quandt, 2018). When news is detached from its original context, it may become more difficult, and sometimes even impossible, for audiences to evaluate it based on the trust and authority of the original producer. Clearly, many news publishers do their best to ensure their brand remains visible in conjunction to how a piece of news is published. However, they are not in control of how social media platforms choose to display content and brands, and may have little influence over this unless they pay them.

Important to note, audiences' justification of news—acceptance or rejection of knowledge claims—involves cognitive, discursive and social dimensions. Regarding the latter, the dislocation of news has significant implications for the social context and practices in which news is justified. Research has analyzed mechanisms with potentially counteracting effects on the critical reading of news. Mechanisms for the selective exposure of news in social media, on the one hand, tend to increase the effects of well-known biases in justifications related to beliefs and values. News is authorized as relatively reliable and valuable knowledge in peer networks, political groups, etc. On the other hand, social media platforms have contributed to more distributed and collaborative processes of justification in which audiences can compare information from different sources; produce and share supplementary and corrective information, critical readings and knowledge about false messages, to some extent also functioning as constructive feedback for news journalism (Hermida, 2012).

The role of audiences in the justification of news is not restricted to the assessment of individual news items. News is also accepted or rejected in the acts of sharing on personal networks, sometimes with the effect that news goes viral. Social media platforms have enabled and spurred audiences to actively participate in different ways such as linking news articles to their Facebook news feeds or tweeting about the news. Audiences also use social media platforms to engage in discussions, by commenting on news articles and responding to other people's comments. Consequently, interpersonal relationships have become increasingly important in the validation of news. "Personal influence" (Katz & Lazarsfeld, 1955) of the individuals publishing or sharing news is increasingly integrated into the news as a form of authoritative knowledge, worth listening to and trusting in.

4. Conclusion

Institutional news publishers have long comprised the producers of journalism. They published and distributed their news via proprietary platforms. Social media platforms now act as intermediaries. Consequently, they have caused disruption, increasingly dislocating the news producers and their news production processes from the platforms onto which the news material is published and where it is accessed. Ultimately, a *dislocation of news journalism* is occurring in which news publishers have become dependent, to varying degrees, on platforms nonproprietary to themselves, provided by social media companies. As discussed, building off of the argument forward by Emerson (1962), finding a situation in which actor I (e.g., news media) depend on actor II (e.g., platform companies) for achieving the goals they have set is a strong indicator of power. It plays out in many ways; for gaining wide reach and engagement with news, building and sustaining revenue, implementing analytics to gain metrics that are useful or improving different forms

of digital journalism. While *dislocation of news journalism* mainly involves a process of dislocation from news media organizations towards platform companies, this conceptualization also covers processes in which news organizations work towards reducing their dependence and developing the significance of their proprietary platforms again (Chua & Westlund, 2019; Newman, 2019). It is worth considering news organizations struggling to finance their operations may establish fruitful partnerships if they can offer digital platforms of their own. These can also serve as the most important appeal for potential buyers who may have to come to their rescue in the future.

The *dislocation of news journalism* has important implications for how news journalism achieves the epistemic goals of providing reliable public information. Challenges and disruption of the truth claims of news and the authority of news journalism have been discussed most intensively in relation to the discourse of so-called fake news. However, the transformation of news in the context of social media has also spurred research focusing on epistemology related issues. Researchers have, for example, analyzed the competing and obscured knowledge claims in the distribution of news in social media, the shifting processing and justifications of sources in journalism, and the role of social media in restructuring the social contexts in which audiences assess, interpret and validate the news.

With ambitions toward contributing to this emerging sub-field of "epistemologies of digital journalism", this article has presented a broad perspective of the epistemological implications regarding the dislocation of news journalism. The approach proposed differentiates between (1) articulated knowledge and truth claims, (2) the production and justification of knowledge in journalism (3) the acceptance/rejection of knowledge claims in audience activities. This approach helps to systematically analyze key aspects of epistemology, and integrate current research on various epistemological practices.

A general argument proposed in this article concerns how truth claims and practices of justification, and ultimately the authority of news and journalistic knowledge, must be understood in relation to how non-proprietary social media platforms disrupt the distribution, production and consumption of proprietary news. What also becomes clear is that existing mechanisms pull in different directions, resulting in upgraded *and* downgraded truth claims; increased transparency *and* obfuscation of production principles; sophisticated *and* limited practices of justification in news production; collaborative activities that shape audiences' critical assessments of news *and* network-based audience activities that uncritically reproduce unverified and false news. However, the dislocation of news journalism seems to indicate that the justification of journalistic truth and knowledge claims is increasingly dependent on activities beyond the control of the news media. An important challenge for future research is to investigate how the various epistemological practices in news production and news consumption are related to the more general authority and legitimacy of news journalism as forms of knowledge, in the context of the ongoing transformations of digital journalism and platforms.

Conflict of Interests

The authors declare no conflict of interests.

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Article

Disintermediation in Social Networks: Conceptualizing Political Actors' Construction of Publics on Twitter

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Abstract

While often treated as distinct, both politics and journalism share in their histories a need for a public that is not naturally assembled and needs instead to be 'constructed'. In earlier times the role of mediating politics to publics often fell to news media, which were also dependent on constructing a 'public' for their own viability. It is hardly notable to say this has changed in a digital age, and in the way social media have allowed politicians and political movements to speak to their own publics bypassing news voices is a clear example of this. We show how both established politics and emerging political movements now activate and intensify certain publics through their media messages, and how this differs in the UK, Spain and the Netherlands. When considering journalism and social media, emphasis on their prominence can mask more complex shifts they ushered in, including cross-national differences, where they have pushed journalism towards social media to communicate news, and where political actors now use these spaces for their own communicative ends. Building upon this research, this article revisits conceptualizations of the ways political actors construct publics and argues that we see processes of disintermediation taking place in political actors' social networks on Twitter.

Issue

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1. Introduction

Politicians tweet massively. Of this, we are fairly well assured. Yet whether we follow the news, or scrutinize the bevy of research examining political actors' social media use, we continue to benefit from improving the ways we think about political actors' social media practices, and their hitherto unexplored implications. In this article we therefore shift the gaze slightly to the receiving end, looking not just at how political actors' use Twitter, but for the implications of such use on the recipients—their publics. Building upon an empirical analysis of the Twitter networks of political actors in the UK, the Netherlands, and Spain, via Twitter, we explore in this article a conceptual argument for how publics are constructed through the relationships between political actors' Twitter accounts and those within their networks. This places a critical lens on how we understand the interrelation between the public, the press, and political power centers as they continue to evolve in a digital age.

Specifically, this article aims to address discrepancies in our fulsome understanding of the political-public relationship by exploring the implications of the direct communicative practice of political actors on Twitter. We show how this is not only a development in the way political speech manifests in contemporary societies, but also

a potential wresting away of this role from the previous intermediaries of political affairs and public concerns—the news media (Broersma & Graham, 2015). This considers how political actors' tweets may be narrowly aimed at their more engaged publics as an evolution in the conceptualization of a 'constructed public', achieved through messages directed towards particular audiences, based on the perceived expectations those publics hold (Conboy & Eldridge, 2018, p. 172). In studying the networks within which political actors speak to members of the public, we argue the ways in which political actors have seized on the opportunities of Twitter may signal a power shift in who is the primary constructor of publics. We theorize this as the appropriation of socio-functional roles of public construction which were previously associated with a journalistic field; in other words, away from those who used to have full control over these roles. This article is a first step towards approaching such questions in larger studies, including those using network analyses and longitudinal approaches.

As a way to assess the implications for the ways we understand political actors' ability to construct their publics, we bring into dialogue research on the evolving relationship between the press, public, and political actors, to conceptualize the constituted public within the mediated public sphere. We then offer a social network analysis (SNA) of politicians' and parties' Twitter activities in the UK, the Netherlands, and Spain to explore specifically how political actors construct publics through Twitter and if this differs between media systems. From this analysis, we offer insights into how publics are being constructed on Twitter and ask whether, by employing network analysis, we can identify ways in which publics are assembled. Where politicians succeed in such construction, in our findings we point to potential implications for journalism's erstwhile role as conduit between the political and the public within more dynamic and complex media systems. We situate this discussion as a conceptual argument in order to offer directions for future work which would then consider the content within these networks.

While it has become altogether clear that social media offer a set of media spaces and practices which have been adopted by politicians, in light of a concern that politicians' Twitter use reflects not an enhancement of communication but rather the fragmentation of societies and the dissolution of a normative public sphere, the questions explored become critical for situating such dynamics within the function of Western societies (Batorski & Grzywińska, 2018; Colleoni, Rozza, & Arvidsson, 2014). Drawing from a body of work which examines how politicians use online opportunities to connect to the wider populace (Gurevitch, Coleman, & Blumler, 2009), how social media and Twitter in particular offer avenues for members of the public to lobby their political actors (Graham, Broersma, Hazelhoff, & van't Haar, 2013; Tromble, 2018), and how the press has been stepped over when this occurs (Graham, Jackson, & Broersma,

2018), this article looks at the construction of the public alongside the conceptualization of a mediated public sphere, evident within these practices.

Empirically, this article looks to Twitter to examine an active space of public construction for politicians and political movements in a random non-election period in 2018. This allows us to analyze the day-to-day practices of politicians and their ongoing effects on the construction of publics, while the majority of research focuses on politician's online behavior during a short-term peak in election times. Through a comparative analysis of the main accounts of both established and movement politics, we offer an initial assessment of how the construction of publics on social media differs cross-nationally and where this may signal a reorientation of power within the increased commonality of political communication on social media. By comparing movement politics and established politics engaged in the construction of publics, we are able to offer a more holistic snapshot of the use of social media for political speech. Drawing from a conceptual approach to public construction, we offer insights into the broader implications of such a development for the relationships between political actors' and publics, including the role of journalism within such a dynamic.

In doing so, findings contribute to the ongoing discussion of the shifts between media and political actors by looking not only at the presence of social media use by political actors, i.e., the adoption of media logics by political actors (Hepp, 2013), but where this may signal the activation and intensification of *specific* publics and the extent to which this mode of constructing a public may differ from past findings. Using SNA to assess how publics are constituted in social media, their formations can be understood in terms of the history of imagined, constructed, and addressed publics within western democracies. This article now proceeds on two fronts, first revisiting the conceptual bases for understand the relationships between political actors and their publics, and the intermediation between the two, then exploring where SNA offers methodological opportunities for examining this relationship.

2. The Political–Press–Public Axes

How are publics then constructed on Twitter, and specifically by political actors in Europe? In this section we highlight where an idealized vision of democratic society, predicated on an exchange of information and political views between social actors, underpins both scholarly awareness of and concerns about how these communicative practices now take place. In doing so, we draw on familiar themes, from the Habermasian public sphere supposing a rational deliberative space of democratic dialogue from a socio-historical lens (1989) and the role of communicative action in that constitution (1981), to the contestation over how publics should be addressed from Lippmann and Dewey questioning the agency of 'the pub-

lic' in such dialogue (Marres, 2005), to a range of scholarship which takes into its discussion the nature, strength, and effectiveness of considering a public sphere as a guiding understanding of democratic societies (Couldry, Livingstone, & Markham, 2007).

However, we find the greatest allegiance with public sphere research where it has developed an understanding *not* of one broad public, but of many publics. Such work has moved our discussions towards considering publics more complexly and as multiple (Fraser, 1990), including alternative publics (Marx Ferree, Gamson, Gerhards, & Rucht, 2002), counter-publics (Warner, 2002), and where these have been drawn together in theorizing a digital public sphere online (Dahlgren, 2005; Papacharissi, 2004). In considering how (and whether) politics within Europe have become more fragmented, as both recent elections and recent research has suggested (Bennett & Pfetsch, 2018), this is a relevant point of departure for our discussion, and all the more critical when considering public formation by political actors for any conception of a public sphere.

While a thorough dialogue between scholars of the public sphere would be beyond the scope of this article, we nevertheless need to highlight where a critical examination of the nature of publics in particular can benefit our examination of the nature of *constructed publics*. As a starting point for understanding the outward-facing communication of political actors, Warner (2002) offers a useful distinction between *the public* as the broad, assumptive, and undifferentiated populace within a particular territory or space, and *specific publics*, as smaller subsets of this larger public which exist based on discrete commonalities, formed by and through communication reinforcing such commonalities. As he argues, such "a public is a space of discourse organized by nothing other than discourse itself....It exists *by virtue of being addressed*" (2002, p. 50). In line with Warner (2002) we conceptualize the idea of *specific publics* as groups which are constructed within communicative spaces when addressed, adding that these specific publics can be marshalled towards political ends. In other words, such a public is activated when messages salient to it are amplified within a network (Papacharissi, 2014).

For political actors, understanding 'their' specific public has allowed actors to focus on what types of communication best reinforce their position as it regards their specific publics, refining and tailoring political speech based on this assumption in order to 'tactically' appeal to that public (Ross, Fountaine, & Comrie, 2015). Inversely, for members of the public an assumption about what constitutes their belonging to a specific public allows individuals to imagine themselves within a group of like-minded individuals, who furthermore share some stake in being seen through such an association (Anderson, 1983; cf. Broersma & Koopmans, 2010 for examples of 'imagined communities' beyond the nation state). For both political actors and members of the public, specific publics are further constructed when this

sense of belonging is made salient through the way that public is addressed—on both levels; this includes being addressed by political actors within campaigning and political speech, but also between members of that public within 'everyday' political talk (Graham, Jackson, & Wright, 2015). Dahlgren (2005, p. 149) speaks of these as "discursive interactional processes", though he sees greater benefit in moving away from narrow specific publics, arguing broader interactions *between* specific groups are a key aspect of public formation, enriching civic cultures when members of publics find shared points of interaction beyond their own specific concerns. While this may be ideal, and reflects one way of understanding public formation, it is nevertheless not exclusively the case as we also see publics constituted around an even narrower construction, including as *issue publics*, also constructed through communicative acts (Poor, 2005).

Taken together, these discussions allow us to approach the construction of publics through the ways members of society are spoken of as a group, and spoken to as a group with a vested interest in certain dialogues within society. When we turn to social media in general and Twitter in particular, we can see this formation of the public as one which "comes into being only in relation to texts and their circulation" (Warner, 2002, p. 50). This involves looking not only to the nature of the communicative content—e.g., political speech, mediated on Twitter—but also the communicative network within which that communication takes place as a reflection of that construction, seeing the formation of these networks through the affordances of the platform as a type of communicative act (Marwick & boyd, 2010, p. 115). This allows us to both understand network formation as a discourse, and therefore a form of public construction whereby publics are 'coming into being', and the breadth or narrowness of that construction. Breadth is apparent when we think of political actors speaking to audiences of citizens as a collective group in order to reinforce their coherence (Bennett, 2012), and narrowness when we think of these same actors speaking to audiences of potential voters in ways which differentiate one public from another (Bruns & Burgess, 2011). This is reflected in our first research question:

RQ1: How do different political actors, operating in different political contexts, address the publics they intend to construct on Twitter?

Thus, publics are not seen here as inherent or essentialist, but as constructed when social actors make certain assumptions about *their* public and when these assumptions are reflected in the ways political actors speak, including how they construct their social media networks. This includes assumptions about what is relevant, or not, to a public, and what would be of interest, or not, to a public. This also considers speech both in terms of the contents of political speech and the organization of com-

municative networks (i.e., social networks) within which messages are conveyed. This returns our attention to the nature of 'being addressed' for understanding the construction publics through political actors' speaking to members of publics, including where that speech takes place—whether indirectly through journalistic media or directly through political actors' own use of media.

2.1. Shifting Media Power: From Intermediary to Interlocutor

From seeing the construction of publics in the ways outlined above, we argue that networks of publics and political actors can be considered as engaged in a process of 'relational construction'. In doing so, we argue, paying attention to the ways these are constructed through communication, between actors, measured in the nodes and edges of a network, is a useful avenue for understanding. Conceptually, we see this as drawing our attention to the shifting roles of news media within the mediated dynamics of political communication. In this section, we consider the publicness of political actors' communication within specific political-journalistic-public axes which have traditionally underpinned a theoretical and normative understanding of the public sphere as discursive, engaged in deliberation of important topics for society, and benefiting from the mediation of these deliberations within society. This is broadly described as the mediated public sphere, wherein media act as key intermediaries between those in power and the wider public within societies (Brands & Voltmer, 2011; Couldry et al., 2007).

Placing media within the construction of publics for politics begins as a socio-historical question, considering an 'imagined' public and the role news media played previously in shaping an understanding of the public. Benedict Anderson's (1983) and Jürgen Habermas' (1989) theses offer resonant starting points, as each offers a compelling account of the mediation of information as a constructive force for societies, and this force is associated with news media in the traditional sense. From Anderson, we see news as the serialization of our shared narratives which reinforce our sense of communitarian belonging (to a nation). From the Habermasian public sphere where a public seeks to engage in deliberative democratic processes, media provide the public with the information necessary to do so. In each version of understanding the nature of constructed communities (as publics), societies benefited from the mediation of public deliberation towards public understanding throughout history. As Nerone writes, this was a role 'the press'—as a collective institution in western democracies—adopted while promoting their idealized role of informing the citizenry of the affairs of the day (Nerone, 2015, p. 143).

Returning to Dahlgren's emphasis on civic culture, he argues that even within a fractured political environment we can look to see the public sphere and its specific publics more broadly than specific audiences being catered to by specific messages. He sees publics forming based on "minimal shared commitments" (2005, p. 158), of which Dahlgren identifies: values, affinity, knowledge, identities, and practices. In sharing, interaction becomes key in constituting a public, arguing that for the formation of publics, interaction rests on two dimensions:

> First, it has to do with the citizens' encounters with the media—the communicative processes of making sense, interpreting, and using the output. The second aspect of interaction is that between citizens themselves, which can include anything from two—person conversations to large meetings. (2005, p. 149)

Moving from Dahlgren's conceptualization to exploring how these are taking place, we can highlight two points of critical divergence: the shift in the nature of 'the media' in this dynamic, and the nature of 'interaction' between political actors and citizens. When Dahlgren raises the idea of "citizens' encounters with the media" as interaction, he points at least obliquely to a view of the media as a consolidated profession (Waisbord, 2013), and as a distinct set of social actors committed to sharing fact-based information with a public in their interest, harkening back to the development of 'the press' within democracies (Nerone, 2015). As a substantive member of the public sphere, 'the media' (or 'the press') held a vaunted position within the democratic process, indebted to informing citizenries as an intermediary between the public members of a space—most often a nation—and the powerful within that space—most often political actors. With the increased adoption of media logics by political actors in a digital era, scholars increasingly ask where that may be worth reconsidering by first unpacking how this initially took shape.

To begin with, in these visions of the press intermediating between the public and those in power, there are explanatory challenges. For one, the imagined community version of a public Anderson (1983) offers was predicated in part on the ritualized shared consumption of news content, a dynamic that has been surpassed by the repertoires and individualized practices of social media use (Hasebrink, 2017). Furthermore, the public sphere of Habermas emphasizing deliberation and rationality, has likewise been confronted by the way it negated alternative publics (Fraser, 1990). Upon further scrutiny it struggles to reflect the ways in which publics engage differently (and divergently) in discourse which is neither deliberative nor rational (Boyte, 1992, p. 344; Richards, 2018). That there was an institution committed to idealized informative functions like 'the press' in the first place is also vulnerable to critique, not least in the histories of the news media in the countries we explore here where pillarization in the Dutch context (Wijfjes, 2017), informal political allegiances between parties and news media in the UK (Curran & Seaton, 2009), and a recent history with authoritarian control in Spain (Siebert, Peterson, & Schramm, 1956), each offers specific counternarratives to such a vision.

Within these dynamics, we also see where news media have been shown to be far from neutral arbiters of information for an idealized public good, as they are *also* invested in constituting specific publics which they imagine, speak to, and strive to maintain—particularly from the early twentieth century onward, as an increasingly literate populace and an increasingly industrial press saw the need to understand, address, and grow a public (Steel & Broersma, 2016). As Conboy and Eldridge (2018) have argued, news media while often wedded to democratic inclinations nevertheless benefit from imagining publics they can assume, address, and in ideal circumstances rely on for economic support through ongoing readership. News publics historically, however, were rarely truly *known*; in line with Anderson (1983), they were at best 'imagined' as consolidated groups of social actors (sometimes imagined with the benefit of market research which gave some measure of their interests).

Once we accept that publics are imagined, and we begin to consider how they are addressed as such through what the newspapers identified as important for that public, we can see as well where members of the public could hold at least some expectation that the press would speak up on their behalf. While in reality this picture has also struggled in its idealism (Hampton, 2010), we nevertheless see in it how publics are constructed within the discursive spaces where they are addressed. As news media 'interacted' with their specific publics, employing language which activated the communities they spoke to and making salient the topics which they saw as importance (cf. Conboy, 2006 for an illustrative discussion of this dynamic with British tabloids), in a parallel construction to the ways political actors imagine, speak to, and make salient issues relevant to a public, thereby constructing that specific public.

As above, whether disaggregating a public into publics, or critiquing the ability of the press to genuinely speak for the public and not just against the powerful (Steel, 2017), cracks in the normative picture of journalism as serving democratic ends *through* constructing this public have been made evident (Eldridge & Steel, 2016). This is where we find ourselves in this article, emerging from the first two decades of the twenty-first century with new questions to be explored about the relationship between publics, the press, and political actors who, as the arguments from theory allow, warrant reimagining within ever-evolving communicative relationships. This brings us to a point of seeing the construction of a public not only as a political exercise, outlined above, but as an exercise endeavored by media interested in securing audiences. This points to our second research question:

RQ2: Do political actors' Twitter networks reflect a power shift in terms of the construction of a public?

Taking this as an entree towards reflecting the relationships constructed within democratic spaces, the conception of a *constructed* public offers us a path towards ex-

amining how communication between groups of social actors can lead to the *mediated construction* not of the public, but of *certain publics*. In line with Griffin (1996), and Fraser (1990), this takes a view within democratic societies of publics as multiple—coexisting in differentiated public spheres within societies—where multiple constructions may emerge.

2.2. Towards Reimagining the Constructed Public: Shifting Power

Some of the questions posed above have initial hypotheses which we can consider, pointing us toward scholarship on the mediatization of politics as a broad set of literature which explores one aspect of this reimagining (cf. Hepp, Hjarvard, & Lundby, 2015, as a starting point). From work on mediatization, we no longer look to the press as *the* intermediary between political actors and the publics they speak to, and now recognize political actors doing this on their own accord, and as the discursive spaces of political activities as more hybrid (Chadwick, 2017). To the extent mediatization speaks to the ways in which political actors in particular have embraced media logics to achieve political ends, we see this initially as mapping political communication onto the expectations of a political journalistic class (Strömbäck, 2008, p. 236). However, as social media took hold, politicians could step past journalists altogether and directly address their public audience (Broersma & Graham, 2015). In recent years, this ability of political actors to reach beyond news media has not only left journalistic actors outside the mediation of politics, it has also resulted in journalists acting more as interlocutor than intermediary. They are resigned at times to an outsider position, reacting to rather than establishing the salient discussions of politics (Eldridge & Bødker, 2018).

Where the concept of mediatization speaks at length to the shifting of media and political logics between media and political actors, as Broersma and Graham (2015) write, with social media this is not merely an adaptation of media forms for campaign or political speech. Such shifts also reflect a push to consolidate power within the communicative spaces of online media, overtaking others who previously held such control. Broersma and Graham describe processes of adaptation, as politicians adopting Twitter as a means of communicating directly with publics, thereby mollifying the initial challenge posed by social media which emerged as alternative communicative venues, outside their and journalism's traditional routines. Lest journalists cry foul at such developments, their own adoption of Twitter also moved towards muting the challenge social media posed to their own practices (Lasorsa, Lewis, & Holton, 2012; Parmelee, 2013). This does, however, highlight where aspects of mediatization as the adoption of media logic by political actors, may have now developed further towards disintermediation—or the specific absenting of journalistic actors from their traditional role as communicators

between publics and politics (Katz, 1988; Katz & Dayan, 1994). To the extent this emerges within networks of political and public actors, the implications for journalism within democratic societies warrant renewed consideration within the context of our third research question.

RQ3: What are the broader implications of this power shift for the socio-functional roles of journalistic actors?

3. A Network Approach to Public Construction

The approach of using social networks as an analytical frame focuses on the different kinds of relationships between actors which form the social system, including between political actors and their publics (Borgatti, Everet, & Johnson, 2013). Social networks are operationalized as empirical phenomena of social relations in a concrete social or cultural context which have their own characteristics (Belloti, 2015; Borgatti et al., 2013). Critical for this understanding is seeing online networks as one manifestation of social networks, recognizing such networks provide structure to society and exist beyond the digital spaces where they are perhaps most visible.

Focusing first on the online space and digital networks, key authors who have developed SNA point out the relevance of the social networks in the discussions or conversations taking place among different actors. Through analysis, we can see where these conversations are bidirectional and where they are multidirectional (Aragón, Gómez, García, & Kaltenbrunner, 2017), and how the social space is formed by different actors (as nodes) and the communication exchange between them—so-called links or edges (Borgatti et al., 2013). These actors—in our study, political parties and politicians—have their own characteristics; so-called attributes, through which it is possible to categorize, define, and differentiate each node (Borgatti et al., 2013).

When looking at the relationship between nodes, we are focused on 'relational events' (Atkin, 1977). Relational events are not a permanent relationship established between actors, rather they are relationships established for particular ends or during particular moments—in our case non-campaigns, as off-peak political moments. This kind of digital network relationship is formed by interactions and flows, where flows are outcomes of the different interactions and the interactions are part of the medium or context of these nodes (Borgatti et al., 2013).

There are two kinds of SNA. First is the analysis of the whole network; second is the analysis of the nodes, or actors, which form the network. For the whole network analysis, we use cohesion indicators (including density, reciprocity, and transitivity). For the nodes analysis, we use degree centrality (including in-degree and out-degree), as well as measures of between, eigenvector, and closeness centrality. According to Freeman (1979) in his research on offline social networks, the degree

value is understood as the number of connections between nodes or vertices and it is possible to differentiate between the connections that a node receives (in-degree) and the connections that a node sends (out-degree). This concept is especially relevant because it allows researchers to identify the role each node plays within a network, including social media networks.

In this approach, there are two kind of nodes which can be categorized according to the value of in-degree and out-degree centrality. On the one hand there are *programmers*, which have a high in-degree value. These are the nodes that set the message and define the framework of the conversation within a network of actors. Second in such a network are *mobilizer* nodes. These have a high out-degree value, and are primarily involved in disseminating the message within the social network (Padovani & Pavan, 2016).

3.1. The Cases

This article examines the tweets of political actors (parties and politicians) in the UK, the Netherlands, and Spain and the ways they use Twitter. Using SNA approaches, we examine within the network activities of such actors the ways in which publics are being constructed; a finding of this would reinforce the supposition that political actors have further shifted power from journalistic actors. As an approach towards identifying where specific publics may or may not be addressed, it further takes into consideration the nature of that construction, how dynamic the resultant publics are, and whether the perception of fragmented publics has been realized or, alternatively, where it may be overstated.

By selecting three countries with different media systems—Liberal (UK), Democratic Corporatist (the Netherlands), and Polarized Pluralist (Spain)—we can see where different patterns of public construction relate to the historical nature of these countries media systems, and the closer or further connection between media and political actors in each (Hallin & Mancini, 2004). This addresses a (largely) two-party political system and liberal, very competitive media system in the UK, a corporatist system in the Netherlands where many parties compete in such a way where ruling coalitions are the norm, and a media system which has (historically) reflected this and has a strong public ethos, and the polarized pluralist Spain, where media and politics both reflect a dynamic, multi-party, system. Using these examples and this approach, this article offers a study of the supposed emergence of narrow political publics, being catered to by specific political actors to the exclusion of others.

We analyze the Twitter accounts of seat-holding parties in parliament and their leaders. All accounts were gathered through Twitter's REST API, using the software package COSMO, developed by the University of Groningen. Unfortunately, not all accounts returned data in the given period. However, this approach provided us with enough material to further theoretically explore how

publics are constructed on social media, the aim of our article. We chose the period of 9 June till 7 July 2018 to avoid any specific political campaign or election period in any of the three countries. In such cases more heightened activity and more specific types of construction—the construction of an electorate, rather than a public, geared towards voting, promoting a platform, etc.—would be anticipated. For each of the countries we have studied, this timespan also follows periods of particular political tumult, from the June 2017 General Election in the UK under the cloud of carrying out Brexit, to the March 2017 General Election in the Netherlands, which was followed by more than 200 days of negotiations to form a governing coalition, to the Spanish General Election in June 2016, and more pointedly the Catalan independence referendum in October of 2017. By choosing a period of relatively low formal political activity, we hope to gain a fuller picture of the construction of publics outside of the more persuasive activities of such periods (i.e., to see the construction of publics, rather than merely the appeal for potential votes). The total number of tweets per country are highlighted below (Table 1). Thus, it is possible to identify the number of tweets (N tweets), and accounts media, journalists, and citizens (N actors analyzed) with whom politicians and political parties interact (the edges column).

3.2. Nodes Analysis: Findings

From this point, by examining the so-called ego networks of these accounts (Borgatti et al., 2013; Pérez-Altable, 2015), we work in line with Elisa Bellotti's thesis that "network science starts from the observation of actors entangled in meaningful relations in contextualized environments" (2015, p. 3). SNA allows us to focus on the official Twitter accounts of the 18 political parties and the 22 accounts of politicians as nodes, allowing us to better know how centralized the political networks and engagement of these actors through the ways they act, interact, and connect with other nodes (Table 2). We generated the three node lists from our dataset using UCINET software, indicating the name of the node (the political party or politician's Twitter handle) that is 'sending' a tie (a tweet or message) and how many ('N tweets') are sent (Borgatti et al., 2013).

3.3. Whole Network Analysis: Findings

The whole network analysis is based on cohesion measures; in other words, the connections between the nodes (actors) that form networks. Cohesion is understood as the structure of the network according to the relation in terms of proximity or distance between the

Table 1. Total number of tweets analyzed, per country.

Country	N tweets	N actors analyzed	Edges
Spain	7746	1534	9307
The Netherlands	975	408	789
United Kingdom	5135	1694	5637

Table 2. Accounts analyzed, per country.

Spanish Twitter accounts	N tweets	Dutch Twitter accounts	N tweets	United Kingdom Twitter accounts	N tweets
@marianorajoy	16	@vvd	23	@10downingstreet	91
@Rafa_Hernando	229	@dijkhoff	12	@theresa_may	58
@PSOE	750	@groenlinks	78	@UKLabour	223
@sanchezcastejon	76	@jesseklaver	14	@jeremycorbyn	258
@ahorapodemos	816	@MarijnissenL	47	@theSNP	834
@Pablo_Iglesias_	360	@pvda	92	@NicolaSturgeon	295
@CiudadanosCs	1898	@LodewijkA	138	@LibDems	269
@Albert_Rivera	303	@christenunie	64	@vincecable	80
@Esquerra_ERC	1927	@50pluspartij	97	@duponline	129
@JoanTarda	153	@HenkKrol	89	@DUPleader	52
@ehbildu	818	@keesvdstaaij	52	@sinnfeinireland	918
@oskarmatute	400	@F_azarkan	105	@MaryLouMcDonald	225
		@fvdemocratie	164	@Plaid_Cymru	1030
				@thegreenparty	234
				@CarolineLucas	263
				@jon_bartley	176
Total	*7746*	**Total**	*975*	**Total**	*5135*

actors, and the structure of the network according to the connections or exchanges between nodes. If the network of a political party is not cohesive, this would show little to no relationship between party members. In considering the sociality of networks, this would indicate a negative structure to the party when it comes to decision-making. Table 3 reveals the density and transitivity values which contribute to the overall cohesion of the three whole networks analyzed. Density is understood as the relationships within a network regarding the potential number of connections. According to the density value, a high density means a trusted network with an important communication exchange (where 0 is no cohesion and 1 is completely cohesive). Thus, big networks formed by a large number of nodes often have a low density, and inversely smaller networks are often denser and more cohesive (Coleman, 1988, as cited in Kane, Alavi, Labianca, & Borgatti, 2014).

Transitivity, on the other hand, measures the probability that two nodes have a relationship if both have a third node in common. The more nodes that are related, the more likely it is that third node will also be related to the first ones, resulting in a homogeneous network (e.g. my friends' friends are my friends; Kane et al., 2014). As Table 3 shows, the cohesion of each of the three networks is not significant, which reflects perhaps the nature of discord between political actors or the diversity of leaders and accounts examined, and may further reflect the breadth of these networks.

From the second level of analysis—the characteristics of the nodes within each network, the degree centrality (in-degree and out-degree)—we can differentiate between programmers (Table 4) and mobilizers (Table 5). This distinguishes between actors which are able to set the message more than any other accounts (programmers), and those which mostly respond to these 'programmer' messages through the affordances of Twitter, including retweets, likes, or quoting, as 'mobilizers'. Eigenvalue centrality ranges from zero to infinity. Therefore, the higher the value, the greater the in-degree or the out-degree. Looking at the degree centrality of each type of actor, we can see the extent to which different actors are effectively using communicative acts in ways which help to establish publics, either through being prominent or establishing their voices as prominent, and second where they are effective at being further amplified by their followers and those who interact with them.

3.3.1. Spain

In the Spanish case, Figure 1 shows @sanchezcastrejon, @PSOE, @CiudadanosCs and @ahorapodemos in green; @Esquerra_ERC, in orange; and @Alber_Rivera, in blue. The different colors reflect different kinds of nodes according to the modularity of the network, where modularity is understood as the diverse groups of nodes. This figure reflects how groups of nodes (those with the same color) have strong connections on Twitter between themselves. The size of the labels is based on the in-degree centrality; in other words, which actor sends the message in the Spanish network we explore.

Table 3. Network cohesion, by country.

Network	Spain		United Kingdom		The Netherlands	
Density	0.1%	0.001	0.3%	0.003	6.7%	0.067
Transitivity	11.6%	0.116	0.9%	0.009	7.9%	0.079

Table 4. Programmers, by country.

Spain Programmers		United Kingdom Programmers		The Netherlands Programmers	
@marianorajoy	1000	@10downingstreet	0	@vvd	2000
@Rafa_Hernando	0	@theresa_may	7000	@dijkhoff	1000
@PSOE	6000	@UKLabour	4000	@groenlinks	1000
@sanchezcastejon	7000	@jeremycorbyn	4000	@jesseklaver	3000
@ahorapodemos	3000	@theSNP	4000	@MarijnissenL	1000
@Pablo_Iglesias_	2000	@NicolaSturgeon	1000	@pvda	0
@CiudadanosCs	3000	@LibDems	2000	@LodewijkA	2000
@Albert_Rivera	3000	@vincecable	2000	@christenunie	1000
@Esquerra_ERC	4000	@duponline	2000	@50pluspartij	1000
@JoanTarda	1000	@DUPleader	1000	@HenkKrol	1000
@ehbildu	1000	@sinnfeinireland	1000	@keesvdstaaij	2000
@oskarmatute	1000	@MaryLouMcDonald	1000	@F_azarkan	0
		@Plaid_Cymru	1000	@fvdemocratie	1000
		@thegreenparty	1000		
		@CarolineLucas	4000		
		@jon_bartley	2000		

Table 5. Mobilizers, by country.

Spain Mobilizers		United Kingdom Mobilizers		The Netherlands Mobilizers	
@marianorajoy	6000	@10downingstreet	24000	@vvd	5000
@Rafa_Hernando	46000	@theresa_may	18000	@dijkhoff	10000
@PSOE	226000	@UKLabour	99000	@groenlinks	33000
@sanchezcastejon	29000	@jeremycorbyn	102000	@jesseklaver	1000
@ahorapodemos	189000	@theSNP	343000	@MarijnissenL	23000
@Pablo_Iglesias_	162000	@NicolaSturgeon	244000	@pvda	38000
@CiudadanosCs	257000	@LibDems	68000	@LodewijkA	87000
@Albert_Rivera	115000	@vincecable	45000	@christenunie	43000
@Esquerra_ERC	428000	@duponline	69000	@50pluspartij	37000
@JoanTarda	103000	@DUPleader	29000	@HenkKrol	29000
@ehbildu	198000	@sinnfeinireland	214000	@keesvdstaaij	31000
@oskarmatute	184000	@MaryLouMcDonald	158000	@F_azarkan	68000
		@Plaid_Cymru	269000	@fvdemocratie	61000
		@thegreenparty	85000		
		@CarolineLucas	125000		
		@jon_bartley	71000		
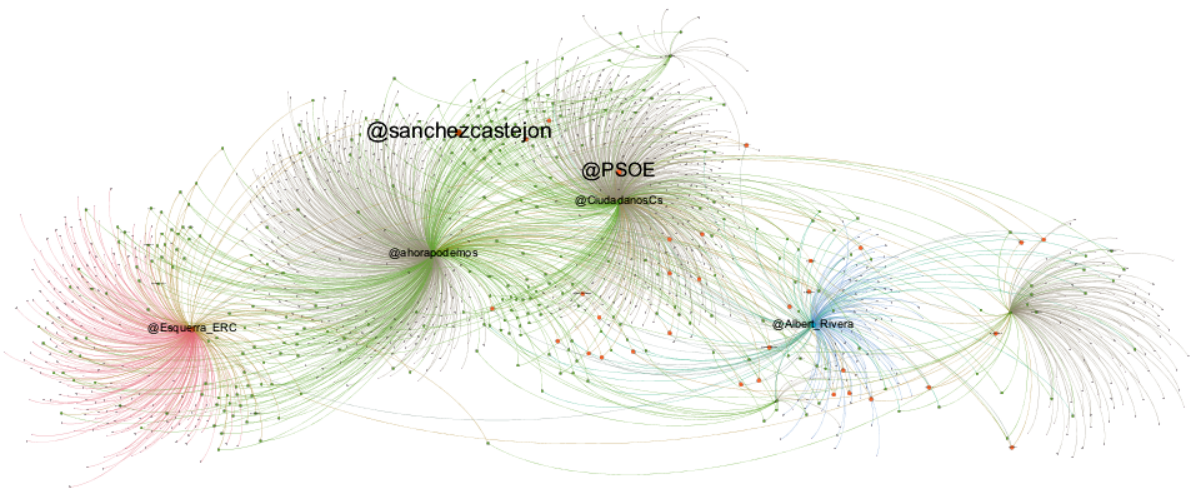
Figure 1. Twitter network, Spanish case.

In such a network, we can see that the @PSOE account (Spanish Socialist Workers' Party, the traditional center-left wing party) and its candidate @sanchezcastrejon are the primary programmers within the network, able to disseminate political messages effectively. Then, we find @Esquerra_ECR (*Esquerra Republicana de Catalunya*), @ahorapodemos (a new left party), @CiudadanosCs (centre-right party) and @Albert_Rivera (Ciudadanos' party leader). In contrast, we find that @Rafa_Hernando (*Partido Popular* political leader) is not a programmer, but rather he spreads the message in the Spanish network—a mobilizer role. The density (0.01) and transitivity (0.116) values suggest that the Spanish network is not cohesive—which is common in big networks—though this also reflects this is a hierarchical network. As regards media, we also see that media Twitter accounts are mentioned by the political parties and politicians, including @rtve, @europapress, @elprogramaAR, @telecinco or @tve_tve. However, the

main purposes of these mentions are related to appearances of the politicians in the media and, in these cases, the message remains set by parties and politicians and not media.

3.3.2. United Kingdom

Within the UK results, the account that stands out above all is that of Conservative party leader and Prime Minister Theresa May. The in-degree value for her account is notably higher than the others, followed by the parties' accounts @uklabour (UK Labour party) and @theSNP (Scottish National Party) and by the politicians @jeremycorbyn (Labour Party Leader) and @CarolineLucas (former Green Party leader). Figure 2 shows the actors which set the message—programmers—with purple nodes and larger labels. In this case, we want to highlight the role played by @Plaid_cymru (Party of Wales) and @sinnfeinireland (Sinn Fein; the Irish Republican party) ac-
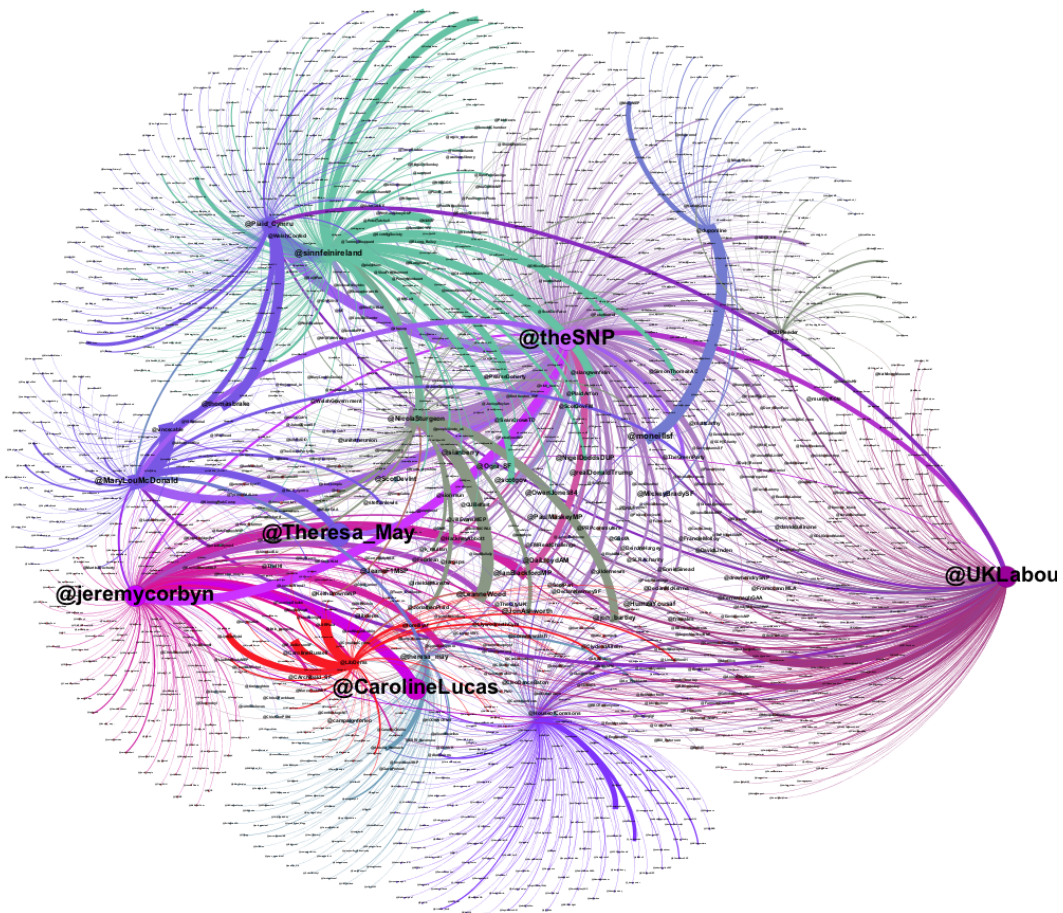
Figure 2. Twitter network, UK case.

counts. During the period of analysis, these Twitter accounts were active in spreading the message which programmers set, acting as mobilizers. In addition, while media and journalism accounts were found, such as @thetimes or the festival account @TWT_Now, the degree values are not significant, reflecting little interaction with these accounts. Based on cohesion values, similar to the Spanish case, the British network is also not cohesive and is also a hierarchical network, based on the density (0.003) and transitivity (0.009) values.

3.3.3. The Netherlands

Finally, our analysis of the Dutch case is based on the smallest network, which (as shown in in Figure 3) allows us to address clearly which political actors set the message as programmers (big labels, red nodes) and which nodes spread the message as mobilizers. In this sense, we are able to gain clearer insights into how publics are being constructed and the nature of these publics. In Figure 3, there is an equilibrium or kind of competition to set the message. The account of Groen Links leader Jesse Klaver has the highest value and overall, this account and those of the @vvd (Conservative party), @LodewijkA (PvdA leader) and @keesvdstaaij (SPG leader), are the primary programmers; with the exception of the VVD, we therefore see the message within the network being set by politicians' accounts instead of by political party accounts.

Despite the fact that the Dutch network is smaller than those previously analyzed—which could be supposed to be more cohesive, and less hierarchical—the results of density (0.067) and transitivity (0.079) discard this thesis.

4. Discussion: An Initial Prognosis for Considering Publics

In closing, we want to point to what the SNA approach offers us in terms of insights into the construction of publics within these three discrete national contexts, and what the activities on Twitter of political actors and parties in each case indicate for our understanding of publics in Western democracies. When considered against the theoretical understanding of public construction we posed at the outset, we will unpack our data as a reflection of that dynamic. However, we want to first highlight a specific challenge in understanding 'publics' in these contexts encountered within social media research. We tactically chose a discrete sample of seat-holding prominent news actors, which limits the scope of our empirical analysis. As we looked at a non-campaign period, these are, first, the most active voices once elec-
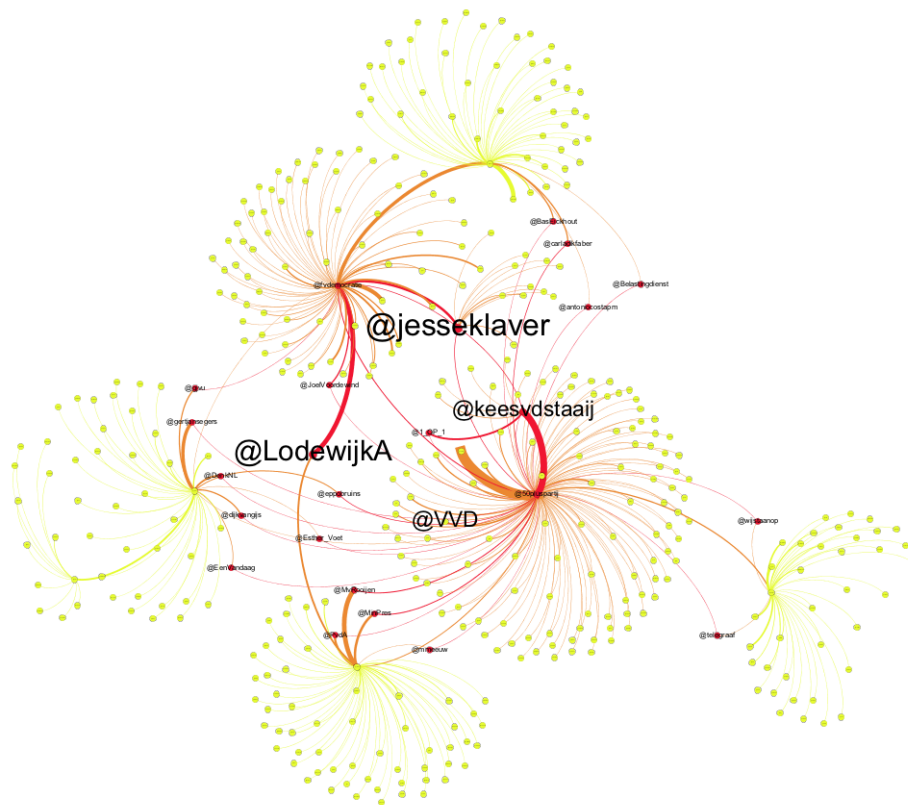
Figure 3. Twitter network, Dutch case.

tions have closed, and their followers are more likely to be highly engaged. It would also be interesting for further research to trace the construction of publics over time to understand how publics might be continuously reassembled. Second, it would be difficult if not impossible to capture the diversity of accounts which may also be engaging in political speech beyond established parties and actors, such as journalists and news organizations, through alternative approaches within the scope of this article.

Nevertheless, we can draw on empirical and methodological insights from our SNA approach to return to the conceptual debates we outlined above. These offer us a view into how publics are being constructed on Twitter outside election periods. First, we do not see a bidirectional or multidirectional communicative media. Instead, within whole networks and the analysis of political actors we overwhelmingly see the absence of cohesion, this is the case in both large and smaller networks. In other words, we are able to observe that while it is possible to differentiate among groups of nodes corresponding to the different parties and their candidates, we do not see indications of an active exchange or conversation among them. Secondly, through the nodes analysis we are able to conclude that in the case of the UK and Spain there are fewer nodes which set the message—fewer programmers—than there are nodes which spread the message. By contrast, in the Netherlands, the message is set and spread by a higher number of political actors and this takes place in in a more balanced way. Here we

find that from the networks we analyzed we are able to rethink how public construction is taking place and the familiar tripartite framework of news media, public, and political actors, with an awareness of the limitations of such an approach and within our specific study (for instance, it focuses on one social media, which is just one locus of public construction). This addresses our first research question.

We also see reflected in our analysis some extant understanding of political parties' and actors' construction of publics from this analysis—in that it is actively engaged in doing so—and we can see where this is varied across national contexts. Within the British network, for instance, we are unsurprised when we see the Prime Minister, Theresa May, as both a political agenda setter and a prominent public figure within the mediated discourse of politics. It is unsurprising her Twitter account is also prominent within this network. However, despite there being a number of seat-holding parties in the UK, within the structure of the network we do not see other parties which have pronounced specific target publics (e.g., Plaid Cymru and Wales) also reflecting programmer roles. Instead, we see they are more inclined to interact with tweets from May. This may reflect the overwhelming prominence of Britain's top two parties, contra the Dutch case where coalition governments are the norm and where we see more actors in programmer roles. Similarly, in the Spanish case the network analysis shows the highly fragmented nature of politics

at a time when elections and referenda have widened, rather than smoothed over, political differences (Esteve del Valle & Borge Bravo, 2018). While in the Spanish and UK networks this might suggest some tendency towards the Habermasian ideal of a unified public sphere (one in which everyone can take note of issues and these are addressed and discussed with the public at large) we are wary to conclude such a space, as this fails to account for the elite dominance we also witness in terms of network hierarchies. In the Netherlands, however, we certainly seem to observe more of a fragmentation of the public sphere, something past findings and research would allow us to anticipate. This finding responds to our second research question.

We would like to now turn to our final research question—*What are the broader implications of this power shift for the socio-functional roles of journalistic actors?*—to advocate, in closing, for a renewed agenda for exploring the orientation of power between news media, political actors, and publics. What we argue here is that beyond politicians eliding gatekeepers as they actively construct publics online (Broersma & Graham, 2015), or journalists soliciting from Twitter public and political commentary (Harder & Paulussen, 2016), we see an elision of journalistic roles in the *construction* of publics by politicians on Twitter. The work here shows a circumventing of the previous politician/public orientation which was predicated on a role for news media (Strömbäck & Esser, 2017), and rather we see in the Twitter activity from and by political actors the specific constitution of their publics.

Thus, we look from these discussions to ask where the dynamics have shifted from a Habermasian intermediary towards a discourse possibly between politicians and the public, where news media are otherwise exempted. As Strömbäck and Esser (2017) and Van Aelst and Walgrave (2017) reflect in conversation with each other, we may be able to transport the 'information' and 'arena' functions of media onto networks of Twitter—in particular considering how politicians use media as a resource for public appeal, and for political message transmission. This is mirrored in the assessment of 'programmers' and 'mobilizers'. Such findings give us some latitude to suppose that the mediated politics occurring on Twitter is not only according to an informative function (to disseminate political messages, or garner feedback) but also to consider where the platforms now acts as a discrete media arena of politics; in other words, where the network reflects not merely discourse acts which construct publics (Warner, 2002), but as constituting the space within which public construction occurs, including who is involved in that construction.

From these discussions, we note that within Western democracies there is a prevalent set of expectations of political actors to speak (in some fashion) to publics (of some fashion) in order to convey their messages—be it through a dominant press, or through other mechanisms. From this, in lively political climates online, with vari-

ous stakeholders committed to various political agendas, the salience of Fraser's (1990) critique that there is no one public and rather many publics has only intensified. Within a mediated public sphere, we can expect to see this reflected also in communicative networks on Twitter. Thus, while we have had some cause to expect more media savvy political activity as the field of politics has increasingly embraced a media logic, the minimal presence of an active engagement with news media within these networks suggest this has moved towards a wholesale adoption of the opportunities of social media for political actors to get their messages out, independent of any intermediating journalistic class on the platform.

The larger questions this raises are intensified by the apparent disintermediation that has emerged in recent years as political actors have availed themselves of the affordances of social media to 'mediatize' their political communication. We see this in our own analysis as well, as news media actors are nearly absent from the networks of political actors, and when they appear they are used instrumentally for promotion. In response to such trends, we ask 'whither journalism?', particularly as we consider journalism's historic role in constructing publics among nations and their near-absence within the networks of major political actors and parties. Consequently, while it seems a rather 'normal' practice nowadays for political actors to approach their publics directly through these social means, this nevertheless opens new questions for the axes that connect political actors, the publics they address, and the role of critical voices in any such engagement.

This article centered its arguments around the direct communication by politicians with their perceived publics as an alternative avenue for understanding the role—or absence of a role—for journalism in these contexts, and in doing so it primarily offers a conceptual discussion of the shifting power center in the political-press-public triangle. As a field in Western societies which developed in part on speaking to, and in part on speaking for a public, any eliding of the journalistic voice in the construction of political publics has implications for how we speak of the press, politics, and publics within our societies, as each continues to find its footing in a digital age. From the discussions we have outlined here, we argue for a renewed research agenda to continue assessing these dynamics.

Conflict of Interests

The authors declare no conflict of interests.

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