

**IS THE INTERNET A CONVERGED SPACE? A HISTORICAL
INSTITUTIONALIST APPROACH TO STUDYING THE AMERICAN
AND BRITISH MEDIA SYSTEMS**

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EVAN P. VELLIS

School of Social Sciences

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Table of Contents

Table of Contents	1
<i>Figures</i>	4
<i>Tables</i>	4
<i>Abstract</i>	5
<i>Declaration</i>	6
<i>Copyright Statement</i>	7
<i>The Author</i>	8
<i>Acknowledgements</i>	9
1. Why Study Online News?	10
1.1: <i>Historical institutionalism and media policy: A natural fit?</i>	14
1.2: <i>What about the Press?</i>	15
1.3: <i>Research Design and Hypotheses</i>	21
1.4: <i>Data Collection and Analysis</i>	24
1.5: <i>Thesis Structure</i>	28
1.6: <i>Conclusion</i>	30
2. Academic Approaches to Media System Analysis	32
2.1: <i>Political Congruence from Four Theories of the Press to Comparing Media Systems</i>	35
2.1.1: Exploring Comparing Media Systems and convergence	39
2.1.2: Critiquing Hallin and Mancini – What have others said?	42
2.1.3: The other problem with Comparing Media Systems: blind convergence?	47
2.1.4: Political Congruence – Strengths and Weaknesses	50
2.2: <i>Convergence, Globalisation, and the Americanisation Thesis</i>	51
2.3: <i>The Internet as a Revolutionary Tool: Celebrants and Sceptics</i>	57
2.3.1: The Celebrants	58
2.3.2: The Sceptics	63
2.4: <i>Historical institutionalism: a sensitive approach to measuring systemic change over time</i>	71
2.4.1: Foundations of New Institutionalism	72
2.4.2: Defining historical institutionalism	74
2.5: <i>Conclusion</i>	77
3. Path Dependency and Media Systems	79
3.1: <i>Early Broadcasting Technology and Regionalism in the United States and United Kingdom</i>	81
3.2: <i>Media Ownership and the Public Interest</i>	85
3.2.1: Diversity in (Corporate) Ownership in the United States	85
3.2.2: Ownership Regulation in the United Kingdom – Public ownership for a public good	97
3.3: <i>Domestic Approaches to Neutrality</i>	104
3.3.1: Market-based Neutrality in American Broadcasting	105
3.3.2: Collectivism and the British Approach to Neutrality	117
3.4: <i>Measuring the Impact of Offline Media Institutions on Online Consumption Habits</i>	124
3.4.1: Licensing, Ownership, and Public Service Broadcasting	127
3.4.2: Local and Regional News	129
3.4.3: Balance and Neutrality	131

3.5: <i>Path Dependency in Online News</i>	133
4: Data Collection and Methodology	134
4.1: <i>The Dataset</i>	139
4.1.1: Sampling	140
4.1.2: Understanding the Long Tail	142
4.1.3: Developing a Dataset	145
4.2: <i>Diverse Consumption habits, Diverse Data Collection</i>	147
4.2.1: Search Engines	149
4.2.2: Social Networks	154
4.2.3: News Aggregators	158
4.3: <i>Offline Data</i>	162
4.3.1: United States	162
4.3.2: United Kingdom	164
4.4: <i>Measurements</i>	167
4.4.1: Source Volume	167
4.4.2: Public and Private Ownership	169
4.4.3: Regionalism of Source and Subject	170
4.4.4: Editorial Content	171
4.4.5: Source Bias and Neutrality	173
4.5: <i>Complex Phenomena, Complex Methods</i>	177
5. Where Does Internet News Come From? Analysing Source	178
5.1 <i>Source Frequency</i>	181
5.1.1: News Aggregators	182
5.1.2: Search Engines	187
5.1.3: Social Media	192
5.1.4: Evaluating Path Dependency – Source Frequency	198
5.2: <i>Public Broadcasting</i>	199
5.3: <i>Native Medium</i>	204
5.4: <i>Geographical Distribution</i>	208
5.5: <i>Path Dependency and Convergence in Source Data</i>	213
6. Measuring Content and Source Bias in internet News	217
6.1: <i>Geographical Distribution of Subject</i>	218
6.2: <i>Opinion and Editorial Content in Online News</i>	221
6.2.1: Frequency of Op-Ed Content - Unweighted	221
6.2.2: Frequency of Op-Ed Content – CTR and Velocity Weighted	223
6.2.3: Who Produces Opinion Content Online?	226
6.2.4: Opinion Content and Path Dependency	229
6.3: <i>Source Bias</i>	231
6.3.1: Expert Survey	231
6.3.2: Mapping Survey Results	232
6.4: <i>Path Dependency and Online News Content</i>	243
7. Making Sense of internet News Consumption – Convergence or Path Dependency?	246
7.1: <i>Plurality and PSBs in internet news – persistent themes</i>	248
7.2: <i>Localism in online media content, not source</i>	250
7.3: <i>Opinion content and neutrality online</i>	253
7.4: <i>Who is missing?</i>	255
7.5: <i>How do you get your news?</i>	257
7.6: <i>A revolutionary internet, or a resurgent offline media? A historical institutionalist's response</i>	259

Works Cited	262
Appendix 1: Directory of Electronic Appendices	279
Appendix 2: Frequency Tables	280
Appendix 3: Expert Surveys	283

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Figures

2.1	Typologies from <i>Four Theories of the Press</i>	37
2.2	Typologies from <i>Comparing Media Systems</i>	37
2.3	Americanisation – A Diagram of Influence	52
2.4	Globalisation – An Alternative Diagram of Influence	55
4.1	Inequality in Average Google CTR	153
4.2	Inequality in Average UK Velocity Scores	157
4.3	Inequality in Average US Velocity Scores	158
4.4	Leading Offline News Brands in the United States	163
4.5	Leading Offline News Brands in the United Kingdom	165
5.2	News360 Source Frequency Comparison	185
5.3	Unweighted Google Source Frequency Comparison	186
5.4	CTR Weighted Google Source Frequency Comparison	187
5.7	Unweighted NewsWhip Source Frequency Comparison	196
5.8	Velocity Weighted NewsWhip Source Frequency Comparison	197
5.12	Unweighted Source Distribution by Native Medium	205
5.13	Weighted and Unweighted Native Medium Frequency Comparison	207
5.14	Geographical Distribution by Article Source	211
6.1	Geographical Distribution by Article Subject	219
6.2	Opinion and Editorial Content in Online News, Unweighted	223
6.3	Opinion and Editorial Content in Online News, Weighted	224
6.4	Opinion and Editorial Content by Native Medium, Unweighted	227
6.5	Opinion and Editorial Content by Native Medium, Weighted	229
6.6	Source Distributions by Neutrality Score, News360	233
6.7	Source Distributions by Neutrality Score, UK Google	236
6.8	Source Distributions by Neutrality Score, US Google	238
6.9	Source Distributions by Neutrality Score, UK NewsWhip	239
6.10	Source Distributions by Neutrality Score, US NewsWhip	241

Tables

5.1	Top 20 News360 Sources	183
5.5	Top 20 Google Sources	191
5.6	Top 20 NewsWhip Sources	194
5.9	Profile of Public Broadcasters – Social Media	201
5.10	Profile of Public Broadcasters – Search Engines	202
5.11	Profile of Public Broadcasters – News Aggregators	203
6.11	Mean Neutrality Scores and Standard Deviations	242
A.1	Native Medium Frequency Distribution Table	280
A.2	Geographical Source Distribution Table	281
A.3	Geographical Subject Distribution Table	281
A.4	Opinion and Editorial Content Frequency Distribution Table	282

Abstract

In the last twenty years, the way in which individuals consume news about politics has changed. As the internet becomes increasingly accessible, convenient, and inexpensive, more consumers than ever before choose to get their news online. As this migration continues, an understanding of online news consumption becomes increasingly important to the study of media systems. There are several ways in which the internet can be truly transformative – this thesis investigates some of these claims as they pertain to the comparative study of media systems. The primary dimension of analysis presented here investigates the internet's role in facilitating the homogenisation, or convergence of domestic media systems.

Using a historical institutionalist approach, this thesis examines internet news in the United States and the United Kingdom, two cases at the centre of this debate. To adequately reflect the diversity present in online news consumption, this project uses a dataset comprised of news stories about two national election campaigns accessed via search engines, news aggregators, and social media. The analysis presented here demonstrates the complexity of the online news environment, highlighting key areas like source distribution and regional news content where path dependency has persisted despite the transition to online news, and those areas such as regional news sources where distinguishing between the two cases is more difficult. Where this is the case, the thesis explores alternative the explanations of Americanisation and technological determinism. Variance between Google, News360, and NewsWhip data collected for this thesis demonstrates how the way in which consumers get their news influences how converged or path dependent the media system appears.

Declaration

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The Author

Evan Vellis

PhD Candidate, Politics, *University of Manchester*

MSc, European Union Politics, *Royal Holloway, University of London*

BA, Politics, The College of New Jersey

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1. Why Study Online News?

Often assumed, but never adequately substantiated, the phenomenon of convergence, or homogenisation, of domestic media systems demands renewed interest in the Internet Age. This thesis investigates claims of media system convergence put forward by academics like Hallin and Mancini (2004b; 2004a) by using historical institutionalist theory to determine if the online news environment is substantially different from the offline news environment. Using data collected from two national legislative elections in the United States and the United Kingdom, the analysis presented here focuses on the two cases most commonly associated with convergence. Informed by the literature on media systems and the historical trajectories of these two media systems, it weighs the merits of convergence arguments alongside an alternative argument for path dependency, using a new set of key institutional variables. In doing so, this project offers unique insight into the complex relationships between online and offline media institutions and more importantly, between these online institutions and consumers.

Central to the question of media system convergence is globalisation. While difficult to define (Sorensen (2011) offers several different perspectives), many globalisation theorists argue that developments in communications technology have profound effects on the daily lives of citizens and consumers. Some claim that as this interconnectedness increases, the formerly rigid cultural, economic, and political borders between states blur or erode. Normative assertions about the benefits of this interconnectedness aside, there is considerable debate about how far this globalisation, as a process, has reached. While few would assert that society has reached the extreme of a truly global citizenry, assertions of lesser degrees of global homogenisation are commonplace both in academia and political discourse. Just as the definition of globalisation itself is contested (Marsh et al. 2006), so is the extent of its reach.

Individual disciplines have used the academic debate surrounding globalisation as an opportunity to examine its manifestations in more targeted, measurable ways. Political Communications and Media Studies research are at the forefront of this movement, and have made considerable progress in understanding what the economic, social, and cultural effects of globalisation have been. These two fields are particularly well positioned to study the innovations in communications technology that facilitate this interconnectedness. Among these innovations is the internet – a simultaneously universal and nebulous amalgamation of servers, electronic content, and the infrastructure (both wired and wireless) that connect users to them. Singled out by many early adopters as globalism’s wedge to breach and destroy these borders for good, the internet represents a comprehensive shift in the way people communicate. Still, an important question remains: has it fulfilled this global democratic promise?

Like globalisation, the internet escapes simple classification, and this makes answering the previous question more difficult. Simultaneously, the internet acts as a medium of person to person communication and a medium of mass communication – where messages have the potential to reach far beyond the ‘old’ mass media of television and radio broadcasting. While the single sender to single receiver model has surely made it easier to communicate across borders, this thesis focuses on the internet’s transformative role as a mass medium; positioning the internet alongside other mass media, cumulatively forming a media system.¹ The media system serves many functions, and while uses and gratifications theorists highlight the many reasons for engaging with the mass media,² this thesis focuses on the role of the media system in the political process, at the expense of, for example, entertainment.

¹ Chadwick conceptualizes another type of convergence (between different news media) in his discussion of the hybridized media system, arguing that “it consists of a sometimes contradictory, sometimes integrated mixture of old, new, and what Hoskins and O’Loughlin term ‘renewed media’” (2010, p.5). This approach to media systems is useful because it does a good job of explaining the state of multimedia competition between legacy or offline media actors and new, internet native actors. Schrøder and Larsen (2010) also discuss the idea of “cross-media news landscape” using a survey of consumers to better understand the changing dynamics of news consumption.

² Some recent U & G theory has focused on internet-based consumption (Stafford & Stafford 2001; Diddi & LaRose 2006; Meiling Luo & Remus 2014).

This thesis focuses on the media system's role in news provision. In the developed, democratic world, the mass media, including the internet, plays two important roles in contemporary political life. The first role of the media, as a conduit, is fundamental to maintaining an informed citizenry; providing the electorate with the information they need to make informed choices about their elected leaders. A second, more controversial way of conceptualising the media system sees news organisations as agents who actively try to manipulate political discourse. Historically, the way in which these two functions manifest themselves depends on domestic experience.

Until recently, a confluence of economic, technological, and geographical limitations described in this thesis acted as frontiers between domestic and foreign media. As a result, media systems have traditionally been as diverse as the states they operated within. Free from these limitations and the regulatory apparatus built up around an offline media largely sheltered from foreign influence, the internet represents an important and potentially transformative change. For this reason, the research project presented here argues that if media convergence is occurring, the locus of this convergence will be the internet. However, this is not a foregone conclusion. Even if the characteristics of the internet make it an ideal arena for convergence, researchers must differentiate between the *potential* for convergence and *evidence* of it.

The research presented here demonstrates how important it is to avoid approaching the subject of media system convergence this kind of deterministic way. Such an approach ignores the way in which societies comprehend and adapt to new experiences. The findings of this thesis argue that academics must weigh the revolutionary promise of the internet alongside the cumulative inertia of other media institutions and preferences. Historical institutionalism is an approach that assumes institutions are embedded and path dependent. Media institutions, developed in a sheltered domestic environment, have proven resistant and adaptive in the Internet Age. As with the transition from radio to television, key offline actors can adapt to new technology – resulting in a new media environment that is technologically distinct from its predecessors but more of the same in terms of both what is being said and who says it.

When institutions define the rules of the game, societal feedbacks reinforce these institutions, making them even more difficult to overcome. This is especially true with the mass media. Before the internet, consumer preferences for content were developed within certain institutional parameters – broadcasters like BBC, NBC, and CBS, for example, are all beneficiaries of their institutional environment. Their organisations, and crucially their online operations, enjoy considerable economies of scale and scope thanks to the offline media environment that nurtured them. They also benefit from cross promotion and established reputations. In these ways, even in the absence of formal regulatory structure, media institutions still shape the consumption and provision of media content on the internet.

Understanding how offline institutions can manifest themselves online, path dependency offers an innovative way to evaluate the extent to which media system convergence has occurred. Identifying evidence that domestic norms persist online, researchers can rightly assert that the internet is not necessarily the globalising force that hyperglobalists see. Likewise, if there is no evidence of path dependency, if the institutional fingerprints of a domestic system are absent, convergence has occurred. The two case studies chosen for this thesis, the United States and the United Kingdom, were deliberately chosen for two reasons. The first reason concerns the literature (which identifies these two states as likely candidates for convergence), but the second concerns their divergent institutional histories regarding the electronic mass media. Using path dependency as a theoretical framework, there are two main dimensions of comparative analysis in this thesis. The first dimension involves comparing the offline news environment to its online counterpart for each case. This should determine if domestic institutions persist online. The second dimension of analysis compares the data from the United States and the United Kingdom, providing insight into the kind of convergence that is occurring. A third dimension of analysis, explored more thoroughly in Chapter 4, involves comparing different means of consuming news online.

1.1: Historical institutionalism and media policy: A natural fit?

Although historical institutionalism is generally thought of as an approach to political research, it is uniquely well suited to the study of the mass media. Peters' book discussing new institutionalism explains the principles of the approach: "the basic, and deceptively simple, idea is that the policy choices made when an institution is being formed, or when a policy is initiated, will have a continuing and largely determinate influence over the policy far into the future" (2005, p.71). In other words, the trajectory of institutions is path dependent, "meaning that when a government programme or organization embarks upon a path there is an inertial tendency for those initial policy choices to persist" (2005, p.71).

Arguing that the offline news media is path dependent is hardly controversial; manifestations of this phenomenon are prevalent and undeniable. For example, a moratorium on paid campaign advertising in the United Kingdom makes it unique in comparison to other states with no such rules. This thesis takes path dependency in the media one step further, arguing that path dependency also persists online, even in the absence of any coordinated regulatory apparatus specific to the internet. Historical institutionalism uses an inclusive approach to classifying institutions, which move beyond traditional, tangible institutions like regulations or laws to include "amorphous social institutions" (Peters 2005, p.74). This thesis highlights two such social institutions, liberalism and collectivism, as the key philosophical drivers of divergence between the United States and the United Kingdom.

For an industry that has grown so rapidly and undergone such drastic technological change, focusing on institutions might seem at first like a counterintuitive approach. In the past century, electronic mass media has reinvented itself again and again, from AM to FM, radio to television, analogue to digital, and terrestrial to satellite. The internet represents the latest and most profound of these reinventions, how can older institutions remain relevant? Historical institutionalism reconciles path dependency and change by focusing on critical junctures – opportunities for an institutional change of direction. This thesis traces path dependency along these critical junctures, and concludes that

institutional inertia is strong when it comes to media systems. At these moments, the policymakers and media stakeholders that comprise part of the institutional fabric of the media system, demonstrate an ability to adapt to the rapid and comprehensive change they are faced with – shaping these new environments in ways that reflect what came before.

Using path dependency, historical institutionalism has broad explanatory power. Comparing the offline news media with its online counterpart, this thesis tests this explanatory power by developing a series of hypotheses designed to predict the form that online news media will take based on characteristics of the offline media. These hypotheses differentiate this research project from other, more descriptive projects more interested in telling the history of the news media rather than understanding how this past can influence both present and future. This approach is a response to Peters, who debates “whether the explanations [proposed by historical institutionalism] can be falsified” (2005, p.84). In contrast to what Peters would see as subjective work that uses hindsight to confirm the researcher’s suspicions, this work examines whether these institutions, established offline, can be applied to the online news environment, confirming or rejecting convergence.

1.2: What about the Press?

One important area to discuss in this introduction is to identify areas that are not included in the theoretical or methodological framework of this thesis. One criticism of the main argument presented here might be that it only tells one side of the story – that of the electronic media at the expense of print media. At the outset, it is important to recognize this criticism and explain exactly why this thesis focuses so much on broadcast and electronic media and so little on print media when establishing the path dependency that persists on the internet. There are three main reasons for this. First, the limited time and resources available for this project preclude a thorough and empirically novel study of press culture. Other projects, concerning the evolution of press culture in the United States and the

United Kingdom are available.³ The second reason that the press is not covered in great detail is a theoretical one – an historical institutionalist analysis of the news media struggles to find key changes in print media regulation in the 20th century. The third concerns functional equivalence – even though broadcast regulation doesn't directly apply to the internet, the broadcasting models of mass mediated communication (radio and television) more closely reflect the realities of internet than the newspapers and magazines do.

Even a cursory study of modern press regulation in the United States and the United Kingdom demonstrates that both systems share similar traditions of liberalism, with government intervention in the printed press limited to very specific, narrow circumstances. The next few paragraphs detail exactly what those circumstances are, but not much has changed in terms of regulating the printed word in the last century. As such, any thesis which focuses on path dependency and critical junctures must focus on those areas where comprehensive institutional change has occurred. For the mass media, the 20th century was about broadcasting. Although these changes have exclusively occurred in broadcasting, academics should understand them as critical junctures not just for the electronic media, but for the entire mass media. While concerns about spectrum scarcity and neutrality have not had a direct impact on the press, it has indirectly influenced the dynamics of cross-media competition. The decision to establish a monopoly broadcaster in the United Kingdom, for example, has had important knock-on effects, both in the way that the print media are received, and the way in which they produce content. Measuring and explaining this drift (or convergence as authors like Chadwick (2010), Chadwick Vaccari and O'Loughlin (2015), and Meikle and Young (2012) use the term) towards broadcasting would demand its own research project, and would shift the focus of this work from comparing media systems and measuring homogenization. Although the findings of this thesis suggest that the print news is still influential in the new online news environment for both cases, it is divergent broadcast regulation which differentiates the two

³ Fenton's edited volume *New Media, Old News* (2009) focuses on journalism on the web, as does Gillmor's (2006) reflective first-hand account of newsgathering in the digital era.

systems. The next two paragraphs, which describe print news regulation in each of the two cases, demonstrate that if differences between the two states emerge online, it would not be a product of print tradition.

In the United Kingdom, the press is regulated by the Independent Press Standards Organisation (IPSO), which operates not according to formal legislation, but an 'Editors' Code of Practice' (2016). This system of 'voluntary self-regulation' primarily concerns professional standards and accountability for journalists, focusing on the newsgathering process rather than defining the sources or content that comprise the news media. The closest that the IPSO code comes to controlling content is its first clause, which concerns accuracy. It states that "The Press, while free to editorialise and campaign, must distinguish clearly between comment, conjecture, and fact" (Independent Press Standards Organisation 2016). Although this regulatory organization is a recent development, a lack of editorial restrictions in print news is hardly anything new – predating the rise of electronic media.

In the United States, the First Amendment grants broad protections to the press. As with IPSO's code in the United Kingdom, the only substantive legal restriction on content concerns libel. Organisations like the Society of Professional Journalists have a similar Code of Ethics, which again guide journalists in the newsgathering process. As with the United Kingdom, journalists are advised to "Label advocacy and commentary" (2017) but so long as the content does not constitute libel, journalists and editors can publish whatever they like. One area where the United States does differentiate itself from the United Kingdom concerns media consolidation. While the FCC has no jurisdiction over the print media, cross ownership rules which include print restrict broadcast media ownership in important, regionally focused ways (Federal Communications Commission 2016).

Some may argue that the lack of a meaningful regulatory apparatus or other form of state intervention is precisely why print news serves as a better point of comparison when trying to understand internet news. The implications of this argument, however, are not entirely different from the convergence argument put forward by Hallin and Mancini (2004b). How should researchers interpret a similar lack of meaningful regulation in both cases, if not homogeneity? While their

research looks mainly at homogeneity as convergence around their North Atlantic Model, another interpretation of this argument might be that the internet has prompted a return to a *laissez-faire* regulatory regime that was present in the print news era. An argument using the regulation and institutions of broadcast news provision to establish path dependency online is a response to both perspectives.

Considering the similarity between established regulatory norms in the United States and the United Kingdom, the start of the broadcast era was a radical departure from the unregulated, purely capitalist endeavour of print news in both states. In other words, the status quo prior to broadcast regulation was already converged. Although the United States and the United Kingdom approached the question of who should broadcast and what should be broadcast very differently, they both acknowledged the broadcast spectrum as a public good that demanded protection in the form of regulatory oversight or control. In this way, broadcast media serves as an important point of divergence from the unregulated print era. The United States still favours plurality and liberalism in broadcasting, but uses licensing to decide which sources can compete, this still represents a considerable expansion of state control in the media and, specifically, news provision. The United Kingdom historically takes an entirely different approach. Even though the news media existed earlier, it is this point which represents the first meaningful attempts at state intervention in the news media.

Since this thesis focuses primarily on government intervention in the production and delivery of news and its effects, focusing on the electronic media is methodologically necessary. While the print media are obviously subject to some oversight (recent cases in the British news media concerning both phone hacking and libel are useful illustrations of the role that the state can play), neither Washington nor Westminster have any meaningful input in determining who can publish a newspaper or the content that it might contain. If the publisher can afford the costs associated with providing content to consumers, the state can do little to prevent a print publication from operating. As this has been the case for a long time, an historical institutionalist would argue that broadcasting, and not print, has been the driver of institutional change in the mass media.

Another reason for focusing on electronic media's institutions instead of print institutions, is that broadcast and the internet have much in common, both in terms of access and in terms of technology. Although they are both considered mass media, access to print and broadcast work very differently. Like the internet, broadcasters' content is always available to those with access to the spectrum, allowing individual consumers to choose instantly between a wide variety of content, while consumers do not have the same free, unfettered access to a plurality of newspapers offline.

As the analysis contained in this thesis demonstrates, print journalism still plays a significant role in election coverage and in the media system. While this would seem to complicate the path dependency narrative, it's crucial to distinguish between a general institutional history of the media in the United States and the United Kingdom and the more narrowly defined research conducted in this thesis that investigates the systemic consequences of divergent approaches to electronic media regulation. As the previous paragraphs demonstrate, major intrinsic differences between print and electronic media necessitated two distinct regulatory approaches.

When comparing the substance of these different approaches, it is clear why state interventions in electronic media markets drive the path dependency of media systems over the past century. On one hand, print media (specifically newspapers and magazines) in the United States and the United Kingdom have traditionally been (and remain) private enterprises protected from government intervention by established legal frameworks of press freedom (Freedom House 2017a; Freedom House 2017b). Regarding the areas of analysis identified in this thesis, these frameworks place important limits on state intervention in print journalism. Exploring these areas in more depth can provide more insight into the decision to exclude print media from the path dependency narrative presented in the following chapters.

When considering public ownership and the distinction between regional and local news content, the state is clearly limited in the ways that it can intervene in the market. In the United States and United Kingdom, there are no public or state-owned newspapers or magazines. In this area, regulatory intervention is

exclusive to the electronic media – taking the form of public broadcasting in the United States and the United Kingdom. One area where states can intervene involves direct and indirect subsidy. While these subsidies can take many forms, they have not been selectively applied to favour any particular source over another. For example, tax incentives benefit all news organisations within a jurisdiction regardless of their editorial perspective. Where these subsidies are provided by state or local governments, there's no evidence to suggest that these subsidies would systematically favour local sources over national ones – if the subsidies are provided to attract new print media organisations, states have no economic incentive to include some and exclude others. In other words, media subsidies are a form of intervention, but one that doesn't favour one kind of source over another.

The third area of research addressed in this thesis concerns how state intervention impacts news sources' impartiality. Here, the distinction between how the state regulates the print media and electronic media is at its clearest. In spite of politicians' recent assertions of the established press' willingness to peddle 'fake news,' editorial and journalistic independence from state intervention in the print sector is well documented in both the United States and United Kingdom. Although domestic differences emerged in the 20th century regarding the regulation of broadcast content, state intervention in print news content, actually restricting the way that news is reported, has been and remains exclusive to regulation of the electronic media.

It is the absence of this kind of intervention that best explains this thesis' focus on electronic media. In contrast with the print media, policymakers determined that broadcasters' use of the broadcast spectrum (a public good) necessitates a more robust state intervention. This thesis demonstrates that these interventions helped to shape the media system and its content. The roots of broadcasting regulation in spectrum scarcity are explored in more detail later, however there are important technological similarities that broadcasting and the internet share that the press does not. Most importantly, consumers have constant access to much of the web in the same way that they have constant

access to broadcasts. Despite robust debate around the future of net neutrality,⁴ consumption of specific internet content does not yet cost more than the contract itself. While these prices are driven by the market, the single price of access to a multitude of sources is more similar to the license fee in the United Kingdom or cable contracts in both states. The only exception to this rule are those sources which use a paywall model where readers must pay a separate subscription fee to access content. Regarding these sources, the data present here suggests that these sources are not as popular as their free-to-access counterparts – this idea is revisited in the conclusion.

1.3: Research Design and Hypotheses

The comparison put forward in this thesis is based on the comparative model put forward by Kleinsteuber (2004), which specifically addresses mass communication systems. The next chapter addresses why the historical institutionalist approach is the most appropriate lens through which to do this comparison, but an introduction to this comparative approach here will help to contextualise the research contained in the rest of the thesis. As with other comparative works in this field this model uses a sample of news stories to test hypotheses and develop generalisations based on them. While Kleinsteuber notes many of the challenges of this kind of comparison,⁵ a robust comparison which identifies its own limitations can overcome many of these.

This thesis uses a mixture of quantitative and qualitative methods to identify and characterise patterns in internet news consumption in the United

⁴ Perhaps the most important policy issue facing the media today, net neutrality has gained the attention of academics and content producers alike. Reicher quotes McChesney and Lessig, whose definition of net neutrality is a good introduction to the topic, claiming that it “refers to a bundle of open access principles enforced in a variety of legal and technical ways. According to one common definition, ‘net neutrality means simply that all like internet content must be treated alike and move at the same speed over the network’” (2011, p.734).

⁵ One of the most significant challenges that faces this comparison concerns multilevel governance. The United Kingdom’s membership of the EU is problematic regarding competition policy within the single market. Brevini (2010; 2013) highlights the EU role in regulating what commercial media institutions see as the anticompetitive practices of public service broadcasters. On the other hand, so long as public service broadcasters remain within their remit, set out in the United Kingdom by a public value test, they are free to continue receiving subsidy.

States and the United Kingdom. The goal of this research is to determine what the role of the internet has been in facilitating a homogenisation (or convergence) of domestic media systems. The historical institutionalist framework taken here is an alternative one, establishing three key characteristics of offline media systems not previously (or in some cases, adequately) addressed by academic research in the field thus far. In choosing areas where domestic differences persist offline, the homogenising effect of the internet will be at its most pronounced and measurable. By examining two cases, this thesis also provides useful insight into the kind of convergence that is occurring. In terms of normative approach, the hypotheses presented here all take a position that path dependency persists online and that there will be no support for convergence, but the motivation behind this decision is not a normative one. This approach allows concrete, binary answers to emerge from the data analysis. If there is no evidence of path dependence or the expansion of it,⁶ then there must be evidence for some form of convergence.

The first characteristic introduced here concerns the distribution of offline media ownership. Media ownership looks very different in the United States and the United Kingdom – especially regarding the prominence of publicly funded, public service broadcasters. To understand what the impact of the internet has been on the established offline hierarchy of news sources, special attention must be paid to both macro level (entire systems) and micro level (individual sources) units of analysis. Based on the historical institutional analysis of the British and American news media presented in the third chapter, this project derives a few hypotheses about path dependency as it concerns media ownership:

H₁: Online, consumers will pursue a smaller variety of news sources in Britain than in the United States.

H₂: A greater percentage of online news will be from established print and broadcast news sources in the United Kingdom than in the United States, where internet native news sources will make up a comparatively larger portion of the media diet.

⁶ This refers to instances where domestic idiosyncrasy might be augmented online. For example, if the already popular BBC enjoyed an even larger market share than it does offline, it would suggest that institutional inertia has made online news even more concentrated around the PSB than before.

H₃: The BBC will continue to be the preferred choice for online news consumers in the United Kingdom, even in the absence of regulation protecting its position.

H₄: Publicly funded news sources will be more prevalent in the United Kingdom than in the United States.

The second key area of offline divergence is regionalism in news provision. This thesis demonstrates how domestic differences persist offline (and in some cases online) on the issue of how the news is divided between regional and local news on the one hand, and national news on the other. Chapter 3 discusses how the geography and networked structure of broadcasting in the United States leads to a more decentralised news media, and how the geography of broadcasting technology and a Westminster-based politics in the United Kingdom yields a comparatively centralised news provision. Such path dependency offline would yield the following hypotheses about online news:

H₅: Regional and local news sources will feature more prominently in the data from the United States than the United Kingdom

H₆: Regional and local news content will feature more prominently in the data from the United States than the United Kingdom

Both Chapters 5 and 6 address the issue of regionalism – Chapter 5 approaches it from the perspective of local sources, focusing on where news comes from. Chapter 6 uses content analysis to determine what portion of stories are regional or local in terms of what the news is about. The subtle difference between these two hypotheses emerges as an important one, which is reflected upon in detail in the final chapter of this thesis.

The final area that this project considers is the role of opinion content and domestic approaches to neutrality in news content. This is perhaps the area where path dependency is most concrete offline, as rules around neutrality and impartiality in each state have been enshrined into law. Here, a shared culture of economic liberalism in the United States and United Kingdom, thought of as salient by political symmetry advocates like Hallin and Mancini, conceals very divergent approaches to neutrality in broadcasting. This thesis argues that the First Amendment and the Reagan-era repeal of the ‘Fairness Doctrine’ reflect a market-based approach to neutrality in the United States, resembling what liberal theorists

might refer to as a marketplace of ideas. In comparison, offline broadcasting in the United Kingdom is characterised by a rigid, agency based approach to the issue of neutrality, as evidenced by language in the BBC's Royal Charter, and most recently the Communications Act of 2003. Such differences have wide ranging effects on domestic media systems and specifically the internet. Here, the thesis hypothesises that:

H₇: When distributed along an ideological continuum, sources in the United States should be distributed more evenly, while the most popular sources in the United Kingdom should be more tightly focused around the ideological centre ground.

H₈: Content appearing the United Kingdom dataset should contain less opinion or editorial content when compared to the United States.

H₉: News from internet natives in the United States will contain more opinion content than internet natives in the United Kingdom.

Regarding the ideological position of individual sources, the thesis summarises the results of an expert survey which scores domestic and international news sources in a series of graphs. To measure the last two hypotheses, content analysis is used to classify sources as containing opinion or editorial content.

1.4: Data Collection and Analysis

There are two reasons to focus on the online news environment. First, this thesis is specifically interested in online news consumption and how it differs from offline consumption, and what the implications of path dependency or convergence online are for the media system. Second, reports from organizations like Pew (2012; 2016) and Ofcom (2015a; 2015c) suggest that internet use, and specifically internet use for news, continues to grow. As it continues to grow in prominence alongside the offline media, researchers should continue to pay the internet close attention. In the United States and the United Kingdom at least, the internet can be a viable alternative to broadcast and print news to those with access to it.

The data collection simulated, based on established patterns of internet use, the habits of an average citizen or consumer and the news stories they would

be exposed to. Systemic or macro level analysis on this medium scale is scarce, perhaps because data collection has been overly resource intensive or time consuming. Measuring online news is tricky - if the internet is an inherently individualistic medium, driven by personal preferences instead of broadcast schedules, how can any dataset allow researchers to generalize about what people do online?

Online news consumption is as diverse as the individuals who consume it. If this research claims to address online news consumption broadly, it must reflect this diversity. To do so, this focuses on three different ways to consume news, using search engines, news aggregators, and social media as representative of internet-mediated news consumption. Social media has grown so quickly as a research area in recent years that it has eclipsed (at least, for the time being) the more established academic interest in search engines. Likewise, the growth of news aggregators as a source for content online has resulted in increased academic interest in them (Chowdhury & Landoni 2006; Isbell 2010). While the methodology explores these three tools in more detail, they represent some of the most recognizable and widely researched ways to get news online.

Using a precedent from media studies and economics, the research presented here uses indexing to describe online news. Hindman uses power-law distributions, methodologically similar to indexing, in his book *The Myth of Digital Democracy*, when he explores what the skew of internet traffic means for the internet as a democratizing force. He highlights some interdisciplinary uses for power laws, and defines the concept neatly. "Data follow a power law distribution when the size of an observation is inversely and exponentially proportional to its frequency" (Hindman 2009, 41). Using frequency as an indicator for influence, this thesis focuses on the most influential news sources at the expense of a long tail of smaller news sources which fail to appear among the highest-ranking sources. Chapter 4 discusses the sampling processes in more detail and explains why limiting the analysis to the top sources is both necessary (it is simply impossible to include every online source involved in news provision) and beneficial to the strength of the comparison – understanding the relationship between the BBC and *The Guardian*, for example, is of more practical political importance than the

difference between the BBC and a source with no meaningful exposure on the three outlets considered here.

For search engines and social media, the relationship between frequency and influence only tells part of the story. For example, appearing at the top of a list of search results yields considerably more clicks (and visits) than appearing second, third, tenth, or twentieth.⁷ The most conservative model suggests that when consumers search using Google, 18% of them click on a link located on the first page of results; a model presented by America Online had this figure at 42.3% (Kenyon 2013). Thanks to variance in method and dataset, the truth probably lies somewhere between these two extremes. Likewise, stories that are shared on social media are not necessarily shared equally. Some stories achieve great viral success – a phenomenon where shares lead to exponentially more shares over a short period of time – while others are shared in small numbers but never really ‘take off.’ Where relevant, this thesis uses two models to describe the online news environment. One is raw, unweighted frequency. The other weighs sources according to estimated click through rate (CTR) and virality based on their position in the search engine and social media rankings, respectively.

The data was collected over two 60 day windows, corresponding with two electoral campaigns; one in the United States, and the other in the United Kingdom. During this window, the top 20 stories appearing in the search results for the search engine Google, the aggregator News360, and the social media analytics tool NewsWhip were recorded (resulting in 60 stories per day, divided into three datasets). The analysis conducted in this thesis uses this data to better understand the online news environment and test a set of hypotheses. It uses several statistical methods including indexing to better understand the online news environment. Deriving coordinates based on index position and both weighted and unweighted frequency, this thesis describes the relationship between different

⁷ Search Engine Optimisation (SEO) is the marketing practice which manipulates web content to maximise exposure via search engines. One market professional who blogs about this practice, Geoff Kenyon, offers a good summary of the many different estimations that SEO consultants use to approximate the click through rate of a given search query (2013). Academic sources have also addressed the phenomenon of SEO, noting that the process is used to “outwit the search algorithm” (Granka 2010) (see also Elmer 2009; Yalçın & Köse 2010).

online news sources. The models presented in chapters 5 and 6 provide useful, graphical representations of the online news environment.

In addition to showing the similarity of offline and online consumption habits, this method should also provide insight about the extent to which different consumption methods (search engines, social networks, and news aggregators) overlap with (and differ from) each other. Any variance here could have potentially significant political consequences. If the data finds that those who use news aggregators are exposed to more diversity in terms of news source, the discipline can begin to make more informed normative judgements (i.e., they might be better informed about key political issues come election time). On the other hand, if there is a high degree of similarity between the different methods, it would support the argument that online consumption habits are not determined by the way users find news.

With the independent analysis of each case complete, this project turns its attention to another dimension of comparison to test claims made by academics like Hallin and Mancini (2004b) about media system convergence. The internet's position as a dynamic and evolving player in the media system, along with its near-universality in the developed West, suggests that the data collected in this thesis could be used as a way to measure growing similarity between the two systems. In the same way that this project can chart differences between online and offline consumption habits, it can compare domestic systems.

Similarities between the datasets and results would suggest that the United States and the United Kingdom are converging on a centralized model as per Hallin and Mancini, while differences would suggest that domestic, institutional differences persist even in an increasingly globalized world (Humphreys 2011). To this end, path dependency would suggest little similarity between the two case studies. If offline institutions continue to shape online consumption habits, differences in domestic legislation and regulation (institutions) would, in theory, yield unique consumption habits.

1.5: Thesis Structure

Examining the impact of the internet on convergence demands a large scale, detailed study. The rest of the thesis is divided into 6 chapters, with each designed to address different components of the argument put forward here. They are grouped into three themes. After this introduction, chapters 2 and 3 concern research design. They establish the theoretical framework for the project while Chapter 4 focuses on the methods used for both data collection and analysis. Chapters 5 and 6 present the findings of that analysis. The conclusion that follows includes a more thematic discussion of the findings, identifying and reflecting on some of the more significant results. The next few paragraphs explore each of these themes in more detail.

The next chapter samples the current literature on media systems, and it develops a case for applying the historical institutionalist perspective to the study of internet news. It reviews several alternatives to this perspective including the political congruence approach, which states that media systems mimic the political systems that they operate within. Another approach discussed here is the technological determinism thesis, advocated by the internet's celebrants, which argues that the form that news media takes is shaped by the very channels that comprise it. The final alternative approach addressed here is the globalisation (and specifically the Americanisation) approach, which asserts that media systems around the world are all converging around the United States' model. It also introduces new institutionalist theory, and explains why historical institutionalism is the most appropriate of all the new institutionalist approaches for the study of media systems.

Chapter 3 responds to the previous chapter's critique of convergence theories and establishes the path dependency tested in this research project. This chapter highlights key institutional differences between United States and the United Kingdom, and emphasises why it is so important to consider the institutional trajectory of the news media. Once this historical narrative has been established, and the status quo of the offline media adequately explained, a set of expectations for the new, online news media can be established. The end of this

chapter contextualises the hypotheses presented in this chapter based on the three institutional differences highlighted earlier in the chapter: the prominence of public broadcasting, the relationship between national and local news content, and approaches to neutrality.

The analysis section begins with a chapter addressing the methods and data used for this project. This starts with a discussion of the different means of internet news consumption, and their measurability. Most importantly, it justifies the decision to include search engines, news aggregators, and social media as channels for analysis, and excludes direct web traffic. This chapter also details the major considerations of the data collection process, including the sources used, timescale, search terms, and the offline ratings and survey data that best serve as predictors for studying online news. In terms of data analysis, a section on measurement operationalises key concepts identified in the previous chapter, including source volume, public and private ownership, regionalism, and bias. This is also where unweighted and weighted frequency models are introduced. Regarding bias, the end of this chapter sets out the parameters of the expert survey conducted for this study.

Chapter 5, the first of two analysis chapters, examines the sources that comprise the dataset, and engages in three distinct levels of comparative analysis. Evaluating the validity of the path dependency argument, each section first compares offline indicators highlighted in the last chapter with the data observed during the two election cycles. The second dimension of comparison, between the two case studies, measures the degree of convergence or homogenisation that has occurred. The third and final dimension of comparison considers how the way in which individuals consume news online shapes the content they are exposed to. The chapter begins by considering source from a systemic perspective, looking at how influence is distributed from the most popular sources to the least. Next, it also explores the prevalence of public broadcasting in the United States and the United Kingdom. The chapter ends by examining the distribution of sources both in terms of regional and national sources, as well as native medium. If the first analysis chapter is focused on identifying sources, Chapter 6 is focused on identifying trends in content. It first engages with regional and national content.

This chapter also uses some basic content analysis to identify and measure the prominence of opinion and editorial content online. The final piece of analysis in this thesis is the results of an expert survey designed to measure source's editorial bias.

In addition to summarising the findings presented in the previous two chapters and addressing the research questions posed here directly, the final chapter of this thesis highlights what the author feels are the key insights uncovered by this project. It discusses the complexities of online news consumption, particularly the variance present between different consumption methods or channels. Reflecting on the differences between this project and its predecessors, it emphasises how important it is to include granular, historically sensitive, and data driven analysis in projects that address media systems. This chapter also elaborates on what the unique data provided by search engines, news aggregators, and social media, means – singling out social media data the closest approximation of true consumer preference, and acknowledging the growing gatekeeping power that organisations like Google and News360 possess. This chapter also identifies some of the shortcomings of this research project, and offers avenues for further, more informed research.

1.6: Conclusion

What is the impact of the internet on media system convergence? The data provided here argues that it is limited, and that other institutional factors allow domestic differences observed offline to persist online in most circumstances, at least for now. While the question is straightforward, this answer has wide ranging implications for the discipline. The question itself exists at the crossroads of two fields of study that continue to grow in importance. The first involves the revolutionary potential of the internet, and the second addresses media system convergence and path dependency. Chapter 3 evaluates the trajectory of the offline media – identifying important differences between the two cases along the way. In simple terms, the research that follows aims to determine whether these key domestic differences persist online. One fair criticism of this approach

concerns subjectivity – why are the variables presented here more important or more fundamental to the media system than others? As the next chapter shows, the same criticism could (and should) be made against other works in the field, including Hallin and Mancini’s foundational study.

While this project might seem like a critique, this project was developed primarily as a response or alternative perspective to the current literature on media systems, which has been dominated by typologies and qualitative research. In a field that has lacked methodological diversity this project is needed. Too often, this thesis argues, this literature has been focused on grouping states together for the sake of simplicity, either taking convergence for granted or knowingly suggesting that states with key, substantial differences between them are still part of some larger homogenous group. While this is especially true for the United States and the United Kingdom, the need for more granular comparative studies is great, both to increase the quality of the academic debate and to inform the policymaking process.

One of the main strengths of this project is its timely data. Politics and the news media’s coverage of it has changed considerably in recent years. Even since this project began in 2013, changes in the way that the news media cover elections have been equally rapid and substantial. While increasing polarization in American and British politics may be partly to blame for this change, it is hard to establish a line of causation between this phenomenon and the rise of internet news. Is contemporary news coverage a product of candidates like Donald Trump, or is Trump himself a product of a new, ideologically driven news media? While not directly focused on this question, this thesis can offer useful insight. Even if the data included here provides only a snapshot of the state of these systems, it predates both the contentious Brexit referendum and Presidential election of 2016.

2. Academic Approaches to Media System Analysis

Over the last century, liberal democratic states have seen two revolutions in the way news is both produced and consumed. Now, after the emergence and proliferation of broadcast technology, the second revolution (still underway) concerns the integration of internet-based news consumption into the broader media diet of consumers. In response to these systemic changes, and the news media's continued importance in shaping civil and political discourse, the academic study of media systems has emerged as a key area of interdisciplinary research that focuses on the sociological, political, and economic dimensions of this revolution. This thesis is inspired by and situated around this innovative research, which bridges the gap between politics, communication studies, and more recently, computer science.

As the last chapter emphasised, one key issue facing media systems concerns growing homogeneity in news provision in an increasingly globalised world. Phenomena like the rise of transnational news media corporations like News Corp and the proliferation of broadband internet access prompt researchers to ask both practical and normative questions about these globalising trends. Are domestic media systems becoming more similar thanks to changes in the way people communicate? Should the news media resist this trend, or are there certain situations where it may be appropriate or beneficial for domestic news media to adopt the form of another domestic system? If researchers are to answer the first question, they must be prepared to challenge, and ultimately reject tacit assumptions about the triumph of globalisation if the empirical evidence does not support them. Academics must also be prepared to develop alternative explanations or theories about the news media so that they might be better equipped to understand and contextualise new developments in media systems or provide a fuller, more useful, and empirically and theoretically grounded analysis of the contemporary news media environment.

The last section proposes an updated comparative framework that is designed to overcome some of these challenges and build on the current body of media systems research. Just as the methodology outlines later, this framework is informed by the many theoretical contributions of the social scientists, historians, and political theorists who have led the academic study of media systems. This chapter has two main functions. First, it provides a review of the key literature on media systems. This review is based primarily on an analysis and critique of foundational approaches such as *Four Theories of the Press* (Siebert et al. 1984) and *Comparing Media Systems* (Hallin & Mancini 2004b), but the chapter as a whole is divided into a few key academic approaches to reflect the complexity of the field. The first theme, grounded in political communication, focuses on the political circumstances in which the modern news media exists. The second theme in the literature review regards media system convergence, globalisation and the Americanisation hypothesis. The third theme examines the correlation between advances in technology and changes in the news media.

The second purpose of this chapter is to frame this research in the context of two key questions facing the field; questions which are intimately linked with these themes. First, it asks if internet based news represents incremental change or a more revolutionary departure from what came before. Second, this section asks: have innovations on the internet facilitated an institutional convergence between the American and British media systems? The end of this chapter explores why historical institutionalism is well suited to answering these questions by exploring the origins and applications of the approach.

At the outset, it is important to identify one area that this thesis does not address. While this chapter provides the conceptual framework for studying the institutions that constrain consumer choice, a considerable amount of research identifies who consumes news on the internet already exists. Before focusing on the historical institutionalist framework used in this thesis, this literature review should also include a short reflection on this research in order to better understand consumer behaviour online and the individual's migration from offline news consumption to online news consumption. While this helps to demonstrate who consumes, this area of research is less useful in determining consumer preferences.

In their review of the field, Mitchelstein and Boczkowski argue that “online news consumers have not behaved radically differently from traditional media audiences” and that “although changes have occurred, they have not drastically altered the news consumption landscape” (2010, p.1086). This is consistent with data that they present in their work from Pew and others regarding displacement (decreasing offline consumption accompanied by increasing online consumption) and the complementary notion of dual-screening, respectively (2010; Vaccari et al. 2015). Still, research suggests that “current users of online news services not only have greater access to and familiarity with technology [...] but they also have very different demographic and attitudinal characteristics than the general adult population” (Althaus & Tewksbury 2000, p.22). While some of the findings of this early research may be mitigated by the proliferation of broadband and the increased availability of training, it remains clear that access and training are important in determining internet use – factors which skew online news consumption demographics both in terms of age and economic circumstance (Ofcom 2015a).

An area where change may have occurred concerns audience fragmentation. Margolis and Resnick (2000) are among those who identified this phenomenon early, leading to a growing scholarship on partisanship and the concepts of the ‘filter bubble’ (Pariser 2011; Yom-Tov et al. 2014) and the ‘echo chamber’ (Sunstein 2007; Baum & Groeling 2008). Althaus and Tewksbury summarise the complexity of the problem, debating “whether the burgeoning number of Internet news outlets is a response to or a stimulus for popular demand” (2000, p.22). Explanations for what individuals choose to consume online are tied closely to uses and gratifications theory, and while there is no specific profile for the ‘online news consumer,’ some have suggested that consumption is linked to political engagement or interest (Althaus & Tewksbury 2000; Althaus et al. 2017). Trilling and Schoenbach’s work usefully separates those who consume news online, and those who avoid it, finding that factors such as education and the consumers’ sense of civic duty are influential in determining who consumes news online (2013, p.44).

2.1: Political Congruence from *Four Theories of the Press* to *Comparing Media Systems*

Politics and the news media have a complex and symbiotic relationship. In Western democracies like the United States and the United Kingdom, a free news media plays a key role in shaping political discourse. It is not surprising that a recurring theme in the study of politics concerns how the news media is shaped by the political system that it operates within. This is the approach taken in one of the foundational texts in Political Communication, *Four Theories of the Press* by Siebert, Peterson and Schramm.

While their approach is somewhat dated (much of their work is focused on the model employed by the Soviet Union), the authors' thesis that "the press always takes on the form and coloration of the social and political structures within which it operates" (1984, p.1) remains a foundational approach to media studies. Of the four approaches they propose, Authoritarian, Libertarian, Social Responsibility, and Soviet-Totalitarian, only the second and third models really apply to the Western, liberal democratic world that this thesis is focused on. Regarding states which adopt liberal principles in the social and political spheres, "the press, like other institutions, is conditioned by the principles underlying the society in which it has a part" (Siebert et al. 1984, p.39). With four such distinct typologies, most states (modern and historic) do fall neatly within one category. While it may be a useful way to both categorise the media in global context, and to help those unfamiliar with media systems to approach the subject, their classification provides little detail. The political and societal principles highlighted by Siebert et al. seem to explain the very basic contours of the media system, but they fail to account for the complexity and diversity that exists within each of these models.

Four Theories of the Press is an important work, but this thesis argues that the observation that media systems resemble political systems and the methodology presented by Siebert, Peterson, and Schramm should represent the starting point

for analysis, not the conclusion. Their approach, which clearly inspired Hallin and Mancini's later work, was to develop broad, large-N typologies. While this method of classification is appropriate for a basic understanding of the media system from a politics researcher's perspective, there are three key weaknesses that prevent the typological approach from achieving more practical use in the study of the news media. First, it reduces media systems to the point of oversimplification. The validity of these typologies depends on the scale of comparison: of course, the British media system resembled its libertarian counterpart, the United States, more closely than it resembled the Soviet model. However, knowing the important differences in these two liberal systems (especially considering that one system featured a publicly funded, monopoly broadcaster while the interests of free market capitalism dominated the other) is of equal, if not greater importance to the study of media systems. The liberal political philosophy of Locke and Mill has defined the relationship between the Western states and their media systems, but the diverse manifestations of this relationship demand further classification and analysis. In this regard, the research presented here challenges the practice of conflating the American and British systems by default using typologies.

The second reason that the field should move beyond *Four Theories of the Press* is that the conclusions that it draws are based almost exclusively on observations of print news. Since it was first published, there has been a remarkable shift in terms of news consumption from print to broadcast radio and television, to 24-hour cable news networks, and even a new generation of news sources native to the internet. While the traditional press certainly has a place in the contemporary media system, its primacy has been challenged. Print has clearly been forced to adapt to and compete in a new multimedia environment. A crucial weakness, then, of contemporary application of *Four Theories of the Press* is that it fails to incorporate the unique domestic regulatory frameworks and institutions of the electronic media in its analysis. Hallin and Mancini address this by incorporating the broadcast media when developing their typologies, but, even their conclusions emphasize print journalism and struggle to adequately explain the robust differences between media systems.

If one reason to move on from *Four Theories of the Press* is that the news media has moved beyond print as the primary source of consumption, then another reason to develop a more sophisticated approach is that print itself has changed in response to competition from broadcast and more recently the internet. Perhaps the most illustrative example of the print media's ability to adapt to this new media environment is the success of popular British newspaper *The Guardian*. While its roots as a print publication are still evident, *The Guardian's* online presence is robust, featuring audio, video, and interactive elements found traditionally in newer media. With such meaningful change in mind, it is difficult to advocate for the continued use of the models presented in *Four Theories of the Press*.

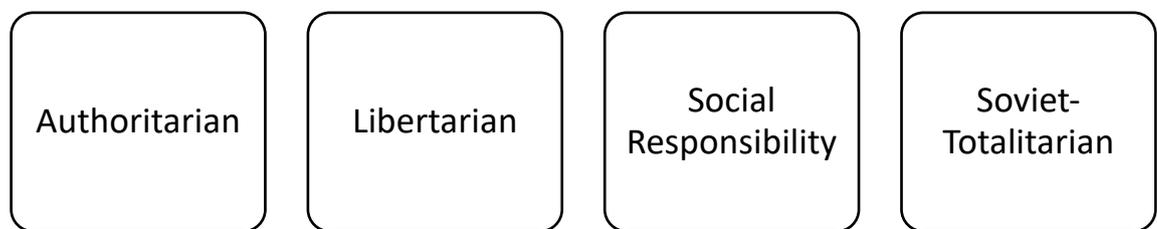


Figure 2.1: Typologies from Four Theories of the Press (Siebert et al. 1984)

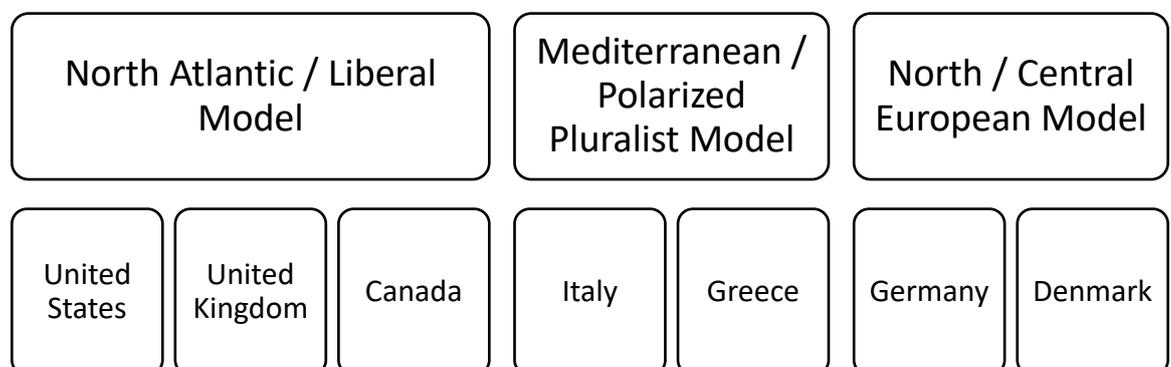


Figure 2.2: Typologies from Comparing Media Systems (Hallin & Mancini 2004b)

Since *Four Theories of the Press's* original publication in 1956, the world has changed considerably. While they discuss the electronic media to some degree, their emphasis on the print media reflects a simpler time. The libertarian model, which they apply to the United States and the United Kingdom, groups states which have social and political systems based in liberalism and the political philosophy of theorists like Mill. Their approach assumes the existence of a free market

(arguably present in the print media and on the internet in both states, but much more problematic when considering the broadcast media, particularly in the UK). At best, this shows that their model's reliance on the print media is dated, but it may also reflect a degree of ethnocentrism (Merrill & Nerone 2002, p.133) which limits its applicability to all of the states they cite as falling within this category. As the following chapter argues, broadcasting is the medium which best reflects the diversity between the American and British systems: a simplistic view of broadcasting (which is excusable; broadcasting was still in its adolescence when the research for the book was conducted) could lead modern academics to misleading conclusions about actual domestic experience. The authors' inability to address how liberalism can both inform the broadcasting experiences of libertarian societies like France, the United States, the United Kingdom, and Canada, and simultaneously explain why such diversity in broadcasting can exist within liberal states reflects the limitations of their theoretical approach (1984, p.65). Their work succeeds in proving their thesis, but it is limited when trying to explain the intricacies of the modern news media, and when trying to compare liberal democratic states.

In the footsteps of Siebert, Peterson, and Schramm, other communications and politics scholars have tried to achieve the same systemic analysis of media systems, using a diverse set of theoretical approaches. Esser and Pfetsch's (2004) edited volume provides several different perspectives, including a chapter by Kleinsteuber (2004) which surveys the different methods available to comparative social scientists interested in the media. Kleinsteuber's chapter is relevant for this thesis, both methodologically and conceptually. He discusses the value of typologies like the ones presented in *Four Theories of the Press* and *Comparing Media Systems* as a useful tool for comparison, which provide researchers with a "systematic order of phenomena" (Kleinsteuber 2004). Esser and Pfetsch's volume also includes a chapter by Hallin and Mancini, which addresses the subject of media system convergence directly. This is discussed later in the chapter.

In many ways, the work by Christians et al. (2009) is the spiritual successor to *Four Theories of the Press*. In their introduction, the authors provide a thorough review of the academic responses to Siebert, Peterson and Schramm's work.

Among the most important of these was Altschull, who developed a new typology during the end of the Cold War era, based around the “traditional lines of First, Second, and Third World” nations (Christians et al. 2009, p.7). Martin and Chaudhary develop a similar model based around “Western, Communist, and Third World” systems (2009, p.7). These models are clearly products of the dominant and now somewhat outdated economic frames of last century. As politics has moved on from this model, so must media studies and political communication.

2.1.1: Exploring Comparing Media Systems and convergence

Hallin and Mancini’s transformative *Comparing Media Systems* is the most recent attempt at a macro-level understanding of the press. This thesis is, in some ways, a response to some of the findings and conclusions that they arrive at during their book. In one important way, their work is a considerable improvement on their predecessors’ work. The model they present is limited in focus, studying western democracies at the expense of the developing world. Broadly, their research develops three different ideal types based on the political and media systems of these states – the Mediterranean, North/Central European, and North Atlantic models (see section 2.2) – to facilitate the easy comparison of media systems. A classification project of such magnitude has considerable implications. While most of this thesis focuses on the North Atlantic, or Liberal model, some of the discussion here (and some of the conclusions made in this work about path dependency) should apply to all three models that they present. Given how important this work is to the discipline and how much it has shaped this project’s approach, it is important to explore *Comparing Media Systems* in more detail.

The system of classification that they develop is based on a few key characteristics, divided into what the authors refer to as “Media System Characteristics” and “Political System Characteristics” (Hallin & Mancini 2004b, pp.67–68). Of these media system characteristics, the first is the prevalence or health of the newspaper industry, operationalised in terms of circulation and clientele. The second, “political parallelism,” is a specific designation about “the extent to which different media reflect distinct political orientations in their news and current affairs reporting” (2004b, p.28). Parallelism is also manifested in the

“organisational connections between media and political parties or other kinds of organisations,” and the perceived role of journalists in society (2004b, p.28). In some systems, journalists are oriented towards public opinion, while in others the same profession may be more concerned with providing “neutral information” (2004b, p.29).

Third, Hallin and Mancini identify the level of professionalization in journalism as fundamental to media systems. Here, media systems are populated by journalists who range from weakly professional instruments of the political apparatus in the Mediterranean model to highly professional, self-regulated journalists in the North Atlantic model. The fourth characteristic, referred to as the “role of the state in the media system” categorises states in terms of state intervention in both print and broadcast. This is one of the few areas that mention broadcast specifically, but this is focused exclusively on the state’s role in shaping public broadcasting content (2004b, p.32).⁸ This characteristic also includes press subsidy, advertising, and legal considerations including “libel, defamation, [...] hate speech [and] professional secrecy laws for journalists” (2004b, p.43). More relevant for broadcasting, laws are also mentioned here regarding “media concentration, ownership, and competition” and “broadcast licensing laws and laws regulating broadcasting content, including those dealing with political pluralism, language, and domestic content” (2004b, p.44).

The political characteristics which determine the classification of states make clear the political science background of the authors, and make a compelling pitch for the political congruency argument put forward first in *Four Theories of the Press*. The first characteristic they highlight is the role of the state, this time in the context of the state in society and markets, rather than the state in the news media. The second, which articulates the effect of majoritarian versus consensus democracy on the media, argues that “the same institutional arrangements for broadcast governance produce different political results in consensus and majoritarian systems” (2004b, p.52). While the next sections explain why this is

⁸ While this thesis agrees with Hallin and Mancini since they also highlight the importance of state intervention and PSBs, it challenges the conclusions drawn from their analysis.

problematic for an historical institutionalist, they cite Humphreys' earlier work on media policy as evidence in support of their argument. The third, concerning rational-legal authority, Hallin and Mancini argue that "formal rules of procedure" and constitutionalism have profound effects on the news media. Focusing on Weberian bureaucracy and the concepts of autonomy, they claim that these rules influence how "instrumental[ized]" a system's journalists and public service broadcasters behave (2004b, p.57). Other distinctions made here are between moderate and polarised pluralism and the historical roots of the political systems considered.

Using these characteristics as a guide, the authors classify states according to three ideal types. The Mediterranean Polarised Pluralist model, characterised in part by strong state involvement and partisanship, includes states like "France, Greece, Italy, Portugal [and] Spain" (2004b, p.68). States like Germany, Denmark, and Belgium are included in the Democratic Corporatist model, characterised by strong, consensus based states, with strongly partisan yet professional press. The final group, which is perhaps most problematic, is characterised by market forces, limited state intervention, and majoritarian politics and includes states like the United Kingdom, the United States, and Canada.

The crux of the Hallin and Mancini model is political congruence; the way in which the media system manifests itself is shaped by the political system and institutions within which it operates. The Polarised Pluralist Model, for example, argues that the press is sharply polarised because the politics of states like Greece and Spain have traditionally been sharply polarised. The result of this polarisation is a high degree of political parallelism with a partisan, instrumentalised press. In this model, instrumentalisation is both a symptom of the close relationship between politicians and the media and an intensifier of it. The Liberal Model, on the other hand, is characterised by more marketised, professional media, and a smaller role for the state. Here, Hallin and Mancini argue that the political parallelism relationship is low – even when considering the comparatively more

centrist politics of each state.⁹ The North European Model reflects a third, more consensual system where the degree of political parallelism lies somewhere between the two extremes of a highly partisan press closely linked to the political parties which often patronise them, and a market based press like in the United States where no single political party directly controls any media publications.

One of the most important findings of *Comparing Media Systems* comes in the final chapter of their book. In discussing the future of these models, Hallin and Mancini discuss the phenomenon of media system convergence, arguing that global convergence is occurring specifically around the North Atlantic model that they propose. Based on their typologies, this conclusion is entirely rational – for example, changes in global media ownership structure could lead to an increased professionalization of the media in parts of Europe where this was not the case. However, as with *Four Theories of the Press*, it is the typologies themselves which threaten to invalidate the conclusions that they reach.

2.1.2: Critiquing Hallin and Mancini – What have others said?

Despite the far-reaching impact of *Comparing Media Systems*, or perhaps because of it, the academic community has offered robust criticism of the work. Among the most prominent of these critics is Humphreys, whose work in media policy both predates and is cited by Hallin and Mancini in their work. He argues that a “serious weakness is the highly questionable validity of Hallin and Mancini’s attribution of some countries to a certain model. The British media system, for example with the marked partisanship of its national press and its distinctive approach towards strong public service broadcasting, obviously differs greatly from the North Atlantic liberal model” (2011, p.145). This highlights an important problem with the political symmetry approach. Focusing on the political systems of the United States and the United Kingdom, it is reasonable to assume that the media systems might be the same; Hallin and Mancini demonstrate how

⁹ In the time since *Comparing Media Systems* was published, some have argued that the American news media has become increasingly partisan. This partisanship has only increased in the decade since Brownstein’s (2007) popular work on the subject, with more recent works like Arlie Hochschild’s *Strangers In Their Own Land* (2016) chronicling this growing divide. This end of consensus politics emphasises the need to revisit Hallin and Mancini’s model.

compelling this argument can be. However, Humphreys rightly argues that the reality about media systems is far more idiosyncratic – despite similarities in political systems, domestic media systems can have profound differences which evade simple classification. He advocates for case studies at the expense of large-N research in the field, because the former “allows the researcher to fully capture the context and complexities of each system” while the typologies of the latter invite questions of validity and subjectivity during the process of “attribution of some countries to a certain model” (Humphreys 2011, pp.143–146).

Humphreys’ second criticism comes from an historical institutionalist perspective. He claims that besides “triumph of the market” that their work fails to address “what might cause change in the character of the media-politics relationship” (2011, p.146). A disproportionate focus on print journalism in their model of political symmetry feels anachronistic for a contemporary study, and betrays the sensitivity they display towards change in other areas. Although the book was released in 2004, which was a transformative year for the internet, this work’s emphasis on circulation figures seems dated in 2017. The most striking example of this is their discussion of how the American media reflects political groups (2004, p.208). They rightly note the legacy of professionalism and dedication to impartiality of most American newspapers, but they make no mention of broadcasting after the abolition of the Fairness Doctrine. The reputations of cable news outlets like Fox News and MSNBC, not to mention internet natives like the Tea Party News Network, The Blaze, and Think Progress, are fiercely partisan. Likewise, the discussion of the partisan press in the United Kingdom makes no mention of the BBC, usually considered to be the international standard in impartiality (2004b, pp.212-214).

Humphreys highlights the somewhat arbitrary classification of several states based on one period of history at the expense of another. Hallin and Mancini also emphasize the importance of history, saying that “media institutions evolve over time; at each step of their evolution past events and institutional patterns inherited from earlier periods influence the direction they take” (2004b, p.12). If each media system is the product of a unique, domestic experience, of what practical use are typologies? This may be a case of “stereotyping,” although again this thesis argues

that it is a matter of perspective rather than one of methodological weakness. The third, and most important criticism, concerning Hallin and Mancini's analysis of global trends in media system convergence, is a more fundamental criticism, taken up in the next section.

Gibbons and Humphreys (2012) also discuss the models used by Hallin and Mancini, articulating a few different weaknesses not addressed in Humphreys' previous article. The first, more fundamental criticism is of typologies in general. Hallin and Mancini's use of typologies is betrayed by their constant acknowledgement of exceptions to the rule. If media systems are unique, both a product of and contributor to the domestic experience of each corresponding state, what is the usefulness of such an approach? The most obvious examples of this are the two cases studies in this thesis. Attempting to group media systems after asserting that they are unique is problematic theoretically and empirically. The authors go to great lengths to qualify their decision to use models, but their qualification is essentially an argument against what they have set out to do.

Regarding the British and American cases, Hallin and Mancini say that the models:

“are ideal types, and the media systems of individual countries fit them only roughly. There is considerable variation among countries that we will be grouping together in our discussion of these models. The British and American media systems (which we will discuss as examples of the Liberal Model) are in fact quite different in many ways, even though it is common to talk about the Anglo-American model of journalism as though it were singular” (2012, p.11).

Hallin and Mancini claim that their intention in using these models was “not classification of individual systems, but the identification of characteristic patterns of relationship between system characteristics,” but as mentioned earlier, questions about subjectivity arise when identifying these characteristics (2004b, p.11). What characteristics of media systems are the most salient, and how is this determined? With so many methodological qualifications, the selection process for choosing the variables that comprise the models is inherently subjective. Looking at the same data (the characteristics of domestic media systems), one could develop several different typologies that link media systems together in different ways. For example, if a project develops a typology based on the liberal ideal of an

independent press, it might group the United States and the United Kingdom together because of the high standard of objective journalism that they produce, in comparison to other Western democracies. However, if a typology is based around content regulation, linking the American and British media systems becomes much more difficult due to the gulf in regulatory philosophy between the two states. Most importantly, as this thesis demonstrates, the same can be said for Public Service Broadcasting.

Pippa Norris' evaluation of the field of comparative political communication research also contains a thorough review and critique of Hallin and Mancini's work. Her main criticism of *Comparing Media Systems* involves issues associated with classification. She argues that "misleading conceptual classifications can provide culturally stereotypical blinkers that hinder rather than help, by obscuring the real commonalities and contrasts in the cases under study" (2009, pp.328–329). She continues, arguing that "it is not apparent whether the four dimensions identified by Hallin and Mancini are indeed the critical ones that define the major contrasts today among contemporary media systems" (2009, p.331). Perhaps the most damning criticism, however, is her claim that "the categorization proposed by Hallin and Mancini remains fuzzy, impressionistic, and unscientific" (Norris 2009, p.334). While this thesis stops short of describing their work as 'unscientific,' it shares many of the same concerns raised in the review. In response to her questioning whether the dimensions used in the book are the critical ones this thesis offers another set of dimensions, arguing not that Hallin and Mancini are wrong, but that their criteria reflect one of many potential perspectives that can be used when comparing media systems.

The work of Brüggemann et al (2014) is an important recent addition to the debate surrounding the classification used in *Comparing Media Systems* because it operationalizes and measures many of the variables or factors relevant to Hallin and Mancini's classification, effectively testing the validity of what was originally a qualitative study in quantitative terms. Their findings are generally consistent with the three models, but they argue that one factor, conceptualized as "the role of the state" needs to be defined in more detail (2014, p.1053). This operationalization and testing is a straightforward response to one of the key criticisms of Norris, but

it fails to adequately address several others, primarily the exclusion of digital media in the conceptual framework and the lack of justification in choosing relevant dimensions for analysis.

Brevini's (2013) research on PSBs adds a factor for convergence to Hallin and Mancini's work, although she comes to the opposite conclusion of this thesis. By focusing on Europe, she highlights the importance of the institutions of the European Union, and the peculiarities of regulating the single market. She argues that while path dependency has held for now, new EU-level regulatory frameworks challenge the role of PSBs, both online and over the airwaves. EU competition rules restrict state support for broadcasters like the BBC and RAI, so "a process of marketization could gradually bring more uniformity of PSB online policies around Europe" (2013, p.151). This would challenge Hallin and Mancini's model, where Europe is divided into several distinct groups. This Europeanisation explanation for convergence is unique in that it links the political congruence approach (PSBs' online presence in the EU will reflect EU's prioritisation of the market) and the globalisation approach (as PSBs in EU member states adopt approaches like the BBC, as Brevini argues throughout her book that the EU are adopting the BBC's policy framework) (2013).

In a response to their critics, Hallin and Mancini (2010) address some of the major concerns about their book highlighted here, including those identified by Humphreys (2011) and Norris (2009). They argue that criticisms surrounding the classification of the United States and the United Kingdom are justified but not unexpected. They claim that these critics ignore their "plea" that the grouping of these two states under the liberal model is not a "substitute for the more complex discussion" that occurs later in the book, and that the Liberal Model was never meant to be a heterogenous group (Hallin & Mancini 2010, p.58). This response also emphasises that variations in ideological diversity do not discount the presence of the commercial media, which the authors identify as the central characteristic of the model (2010, p.58). This specific criticism is representative of a broader set of responses aimed at the usefulness of typologies and employing the three models presented in Hallin and Mancini's book in future academic research. To this end, the authors concede that they "are not happy in important ways with

the use that has been made of our three models” and that they “certainly do not advocate that comparative analysis be built primarily around such typologies” (2010, pp.59–60). In this context, this thesis represents a return to a more traditional comparative research design and case selection built around specific cases rather than using one case representative of all three ideal types.

While Hallin and Mancini’s response addresses some of the major concerns raised by their critics, their choice of relevant variables for comparison remains highly controversial. Their argument for emphasizing a set of political characteristics of states at the expense of other characteristics is presented alongside several disclaimers that offer insight into this choice. For example, Hallin and Mancini’s background in political science may have informed a framework for comparison that emphasizes the importance of political systems to the media. This isn’t necessarily right or wrong - as mentioned earlier in this thesis’ critique of *Comparing Media Systems*, such decisions reflect one of many possible perspectives that can be used to compare media systems. In their own words, “we proposed our three ideal types as a way of pointing out what seemed to us broad patterns in the development of the relation between media and political systems. [...] We suspect that other scholars are likely to propose other such ideal types that prove useful in identifying other patterns that may characterize significant numbers of cases” (2010, p.59).

2.1.3: The other problem with *Comparing Media Systems*: blind convergence?

For all its weaknesses, there is still much to be said in praise of the classifications which define Hallin and Mancini’s work. The evidence they provide and the arguments they make regarding these variables are compelling. In identifying these variables as important or relevant to defining systems, Hallin and Mancini provide their perspective on what defines contemporary media systems. For this reason, it is important to emphasise that while their research is objective, the framework – choosing which factors matter, and those that do not – is necessarily subjective. If researchers interpret the contribution of *Comparing*

Media Systems as one perspective in the academic understanding of media systems, it remains a valuable contribution.

If the political or ideological orientations of the news are important in describing a media system, as Hallin and Mancini argue, a Liberal Model which represents both the United States and the United Kingdom is illogical. The usefulness of this model depends largely on the terms of comparative analysis. To their credit, as with most other political science research, they make sure at the outset that readers are clear about the limits of their research. They remind the reader that “it is important to keep in mind, however, that the relationships [between political and media system variables] are only rough, and [they] are not proposing any kind of one-to-one correspondence between political and media-system characteristics” (2004b, p.47). In terms of the validity of their findings, this is problematic.

With these ideal types established, along with all the caveats necessary to justify them, the conclusions that they draw about convergence are counterintuitive. Hallin and Mancini describe a trend towards the North Atlantic model, the model with the most contradictions. In spite of “significant countertendencies that limit the spread of the Liberal Model” they still argue that the “Liberal Model has clearly become increasingly dominant across Europe as well as North America” (Hallin & Mancini 2004b, p.251). This conclusion is justified so long as research remains focused on those variables they determine to be most relevant. Identifying trends in press circulation and the commercialisation of broadcasting, as well as growing political and economic homogeneity across the traditionally western world in the form of EU integration and trade, this is a logical, if subjective conclusion.

While subjectivity in their variables is inevitable and understandable from a methodological standpoint, it also conceals important countervailing trends which are not included or adequately weighted in the model. Their conclusion of convergence around the Liberal model denies continued evidence of domestic path dependency. This is true when looking at the United States and the United Kingdom – two ‘liberal’ states. Discussions about the declining partisan press are contradicted in this thesis by evidence suggesting that domestic patterns regarding

ideologically biased content are persistent. Similarly, concluding that the two states have similar media systems based on patterns of print circulation ignores the utterly dominant position of the BBC, both in broadcasting and the provision of online news. The provision and popularity of local and regional news content also features little in their analysis – a distinction between states which persists in the Internet Age.

How can states be converging on a model when such little homogeneity exists within it? This level of divergence within the Liberal Model itself limits the value or use of arguments about convergence towards such a model. If a new project moves beyond the variables outlined by the authors and considers all of the ways that media systems are changing, convergence towards a liberal model, as defined by the United States would look wholly different than convergence towards a liberal model exemplified by the United Kingdom. While the three models presented by Hallin and Mancini do offer a very good starting place for discussion, their conclusions about convergence demonstrate their limitations. Choosing to focus on a few variables at the expense of others, and many cases instead of a few, little room remains in analysis for measuring both change and domestic idiosyncrasy. This is crucially important for the study of the mass media as a domain with such divergent domestic approaches to broadcasting (which is at least as important as print as a mass medium), and technological innovation. This leads to a conclusion about approach which comprises the bedrock of the research presented in this thesis – change is best measured and understood when focusing on a small number of states in historical context.

Although Hallin and Mancini also address the subject of media system convergence in their response to critics, important criticisms articulated in this thesis still remain. Specifically, their conclusion that the emergence of market forces in European media systems justifies their argument that convergence had occurred around the Liberal Model (Hallin & Mancini 2010, p.63) remains flawed for two reasons. One of these has been highlighted in the previous paragraph: with such diversity present within the Liberal Model, of what practical use is a discussion of convergence around it? The second criticism is that their conclusions are myopic in scope, overly focused on trends leading up to publication of the book. Part of

the problem here again concerns the variables that they use, with many focused on 20th century phenomena. This thesis attempts to update this debate by linking the convergence debate with other more technologically focused debates around the transformative potential of the internet, identifying this emergent new medium as a potentially significant contributor to media system convergence. Even though the research presented here is a snapshot of a comparatively new medium, it attempts to update a literature that remains preoccupied with circulation and political party membership statistics. If Hallin and Mancini's research occurred a decade later, their book would undoubtedly need to engage more with the transformative potential of the internet.

2.1.4: Political Congruence – Strengths and Weaknesses

In a field with such complexity, a real strength of the political congruence approach is that it provides a useful framework for comparison. This framework offers a straightforward explanation as to why the media system 'is the way it is' – it is shaped and restricted by the values which dominate politics and society. However, the link between politics, society, and the news media is not always straightforward and experience has proven that between societies that share similar political values (like liberalism or social responsibility) there can be great variation even in the broad contours of the news media. Acknowledging that the American and British media systems exist within a state founded on liberalism does little to describe the unique domestic media experiences of these two states.

Is it an approach that necessarily paints in broad strokes? Siebert et al. and Hallin and Mancini acknowledge that even though "most nations at least theoretically have based their social and political organisations on the theories of liberalism[,] with such a wide cultural and geographical dispersal of these doctrines, it is not surprising that there should have developed significant variations in the practical workings of [...] the mass media of communication" (1984, p.39). The problem arises in how to provide an analysis which accounts for these variations, while still using political symmetry. One major contribution of this thesis to this debate is its focus not on broad principles like liberalism or social responsibility, or on political institutions like party pluralism, but on how this

regulatory culture, in all its intricacy, has manifested itself *specifically* in domestic media policy.

The major drawback of this approach is that it depends on a much subtler understanding of the domestic regulatory environment than research that produces typologies generally allows for. So, while the principles of this approach and the method used here should be applicable throughout the liberal democratic world, the findings regarding the domestic systems explored here are not generalizable precisely because each system is so unique. The key factors highlighted in this work offer another perspective, but a comparative study like the one conducted here tells the reader little about other cases in comparison to the broader, higher impact work in texts like *Comparing Media Systems*. In terms of generalisability, this study clearly exists on the opposite end of the spectrum to Hallin and Mancini's work, but without more depth in analysis, researchers risk losing sight of the rich diversity present in the news media.

2.2: Convergence, Globalisation, and the Americanisation Thesis

In their book, Hallin and Mancini offer a few causes for convergence, including Americanisation, technological convergence, and commercialization. This section explores convergence theories, samples the literature to identify key developments, and returns to Hallin and Mancini's *Comparing Media Systems* to discuss their views on media system convergence in more depth. After introducing the idea of convergence as a product of globalization, this section first samples the Americanisation research, and discusses its weaknesses and situates it within a broader globalization based approach to studying convergence.

As states and societies become more interconnected, new ties allow actors in both the public and private sector to operate with more information and in more new spaces than ever before. The implications of this increased interconnectedness for the news media are enormous. The most obvious manifestation of this globalization, foreign investment, is a significant and potentially homogenizing force for the news media. In the United Kingdom, the presence of global brands like

NewsCorp, CNN, The New York Times, Al Jazeera, and Euronews in the available media diet necessarily mean that the offline British system, for example, looks more global than ever before. The internet exponentially increases the opportunity for consumers to have a globalized news experience. However, an opportunity to consume this global content tells the researcher little about consumer preference for it.

One important manifestation of this increased globalization is Americanisation. This process “positions the USA as the centre of global mass culture, and as the focus of a worldwide quest for success” (Kroes 2003, p.236). For better or worse, Americanisation “can be defined as a powerful one-directional process that tends to overwhelm competing processes (e.g. Japanization) as well as the strength of local forces that might resist, modify, and/or transform American models into hybrid forms” (Ritzer & Stillman 2003, p.35). It revolves around comparisons between the United States, which is a lender of best practice, and states like the United Kingdom which borrow campaign techniques, journalism practice, and even key personnel (Stratton 2013; Mason 2014) so that the borrower’s politics and news media could reflect more closely the successes of the American model. While the study of Americanisation of the media and political communication continues to grow, the study of Americanisation in politics has been more robust.

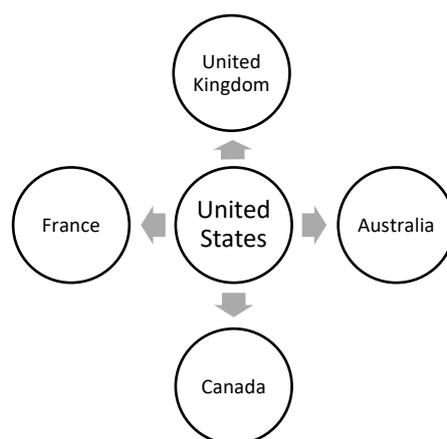


Figure 2.3: Americanisation – A Diagram of Influence

Social scientists have studied the spread of American culture and political practice for decades. Some of the work is relatively narrow in scope; the work of Knuckney, Lilleker, and Lees-Marshment (2005; 2005) is focused on political

marketing – a quintessentially American practice. Hyun (2012) and more notably Gibson (2012; 2013; 2016) study web-based campaigning, an area of research that also originated in the United States due to its popularity there. Other work considers Americanisation as a process of “Presidentialization” (Mughan 2000). Scholars are keenly aware of the influence of American political practice and culture, but the degree to which it shapes other states’ media practices is contested.

Ralph Negrine’s (Negrine 1996; Negrine & Papathanassopoulos 1996) work studies the convergence of political communication and elections from a comparative perspective. He argues: “Comparative research allows us [...] to view domestic practices not in isolation but as a set of practices which may have similarities with sets of practices in other countries. We can then begin to explore how such similarities have come about, why they have come about, and the meaning of this convergence for the future social and political development of the societies themselves” (1996, p.149). Hallin and Mancini reflect Fukuyama’s (1992) work as they discuss Americanisation in the context of post-war initiatives to spread the American value of freedom of the press to the post-Fascist world, primarily to contain the spread of the Soviet model. The clearest manifestation of this is the World Association of Newspapers, which was “heavily influenced by American newspaper publishers in its early years” (2004b, p.258). This American influence on specifically European media culture, Hallin and Mancini argue, might contribute to the blurring of the lines between their three models since the 1970s. Humphreys and Simpson’s study of telecommunications regulation, citing Schiller, identifies the US as the font of change, arguing that “telecommunications liberalization is an excellent example of globalization by imitative state action; pioneering liberalization in the Anglo-Saxon world stimulated a global bandwagon effect” (2005, p.6).

In their chapter in Esser and Pfetsch’s *Comparing Political Communication*, Hallin and Mancini focus exclusively on the concept of Americanisation, arguing that “the idea that media system change can be understood as a process of Americanisation is still very much alive, and there is obviously much truth to it” (2004a, p.26). For this thesis, they claim that “it is reasonable to say that homogenization is to a significant degree a convergence of world media toward forms that first evolved in the United States” (2004a, p.26). They argue that as

individuals secularise, they become more dependent on journalists and news media as their way to connect “to the wider social and political world,” (2004a, p.34) an Americanisation of journalistic practices and culture necessarily yields homogenisation or convergence around the American model.

Writing in 2004, as a wave of social and cultural globalisation was at its peak, it would have been difficult for Hallin and Mancini, as well as their peers, to anticipate the geopolitical context of the following decade and beyond. As this thesis was written, political phenomena like the 2008 financial crisis, as well as more recent events such as the Brexit referendum and the Presidential election of 2016 indicate that this wave has slowed or receded politically. In their discussion of modernisation, they note that one of the weaknesses of the theory is that it assumes that progress is “necessary and unilinear” (2004a, p.28). Perhaps the same critique could be made for their assumptions about globalisation and Americanisation. While institutional learning still occurs across borders, nationalist resistance against cultural imperialism and homogenisation have been well documented from the earliest days of radio broadcasting. Famously, the Reithian BBC worked to specifically to avoid the American model – setting the two states on radically divergent paths (Barnouw 1966, p.248).

Negrine acknowledged the weaknesses of the Americanisation thesis earlier, noting that “Although the Americanisation thesis strongly implies that it is a one-way flow of influences, in reality we may be observing a more complicated process” (1996, p.164). He continues, arguing that “It may be more appropriate to view contemporary change as a product of technological, political, social change etc. – and American (and other) influences” (1996, p.165). It is an important critique – how can a researcher know, with any precision, how Americanised a system has become? For that matter, how can he or she prove that this influence is only one directional? If technology exists that allows the British system to adopt American techniques, could that same technology not also allow Americans to learn from the successes of the British system? Ritzer and Stillman argue that “no subscriber to a globalisation standpoint would ever deny that the USA is a dominant force in the world. Thus, the issue becomes a matter of relative

emphasis, first, and then a question of effect. The thrust of globalisation theory asserts that Americanisation is only one of many global forces” (2003, p.42).

For media systems to converge whether it is around the American or other globalised model, technology is necessarily key. One potential explanation for why media systems might be starting to converge concerns a technological tipping point – at a certain stage, the process of communicating over great distances became simple enough to justify a boom in communication and learning between different states. Here, the borderless internet is perhaps the biggest challenge to maintaining domestic norms – competition online between not just the BBC and *The Daily Mail*, but between these domestic providers in the UK and *The New York Times*, *NBC News*, and *The Chicago Tribune*. This new competition between different models in an entirely unregulated, global media market, is likely to provoke a response from competitors.

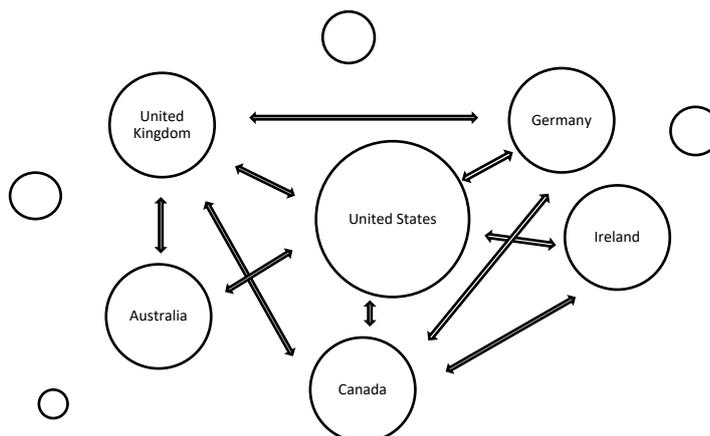


Figure 2.4: Globalisation - An Alternative Diagram of Influence

This might manifest itself behaviourally as emulation of successful models, or a raising (or lowering) of editorial standards, or some standardisation of format. Diagram 2.4 suggests an alternative diagram to Americanisation where convergence is still occurring. While the United States may be an important lender of practices to other states, this model suggests that they are not the only lender. It also improves on a purely Americanisation-based convergence model by suggesting that the flow of influence is not one directional. In practical terms, this means a domestic system can act as both lender and borrower to many states at

the same time. While this model uses only a few states for simplicity, an improved model would also include other globalising factors like technology.

Hallin and Mancini rightly acknowledge that “we should not exaggerate the standardising effects of technologies of mass communication” (2004b, p.260). Driven by the capitalist motives of market share and profit, adapting to the online news environment is likely a process of both globalisation and modernisation. According to this convergence-by-globalisation view, convergence is a product of competition, and unlike Americanisation, the lender-borrower dynamic between states is determined not by American hegemony but by leadership and a market-dictated excellence in news provision. As the diagram above suggests, no state has a monopoly on the lender role – rather, individual companies adopt certain practices of their competitors in an increasingly global market.

A third potential cause for convergence, commercialisation and concentration, is worth addressing here as well. The emergence of transnational corporations (TNCs) in the second half of the twentieth century has included a more recent proliferation of international media conglomerates. Without question, singular, transnational ownership of broadcast and print news networks can yield a more homogenous global media environment. Beyond the normative and democratic implications of such concentration, the continued growth of these global media organisations is worth studying, but it is important not to assume that changes in ownership necessarily translate into changes in business practice. The evidence presented in this thesis challenges this assumption. From an historical institutionalist perspective, the data suggests that academics should not underestimate the importance or influence of domestic regulatory regimes on the business practices of transnational news organisations. Perhaps the best examples of this phenomenon are Fox News in the United States and Sky News in the United Kingdom, two radically different news broadcasters defined not by their owner but by the institutional framework present in each state.

2.3: The Internet as a Revolutionary Tool: Celebrants and Sceptics

So far, this chapter has addressed both how political scientists have used political institutions as a means for understanding the media, and how academics are also focused on how media systems relate to each other. The most important of these technologies to the specific question of news media convergence is the internet. The focus for a lot of researchers over the past two decades has been evaluating what the impact of this technology has been on the news media. For the internet to have a tangible impact on the process of convergence, it must represent a significant departure from the status quo. In effect, that means that the World Wide Web must not only provide consumers with new opportunities to listen, watch, and read new content that they would not have been exposed to in the offline world, there must be evidence that this content is being consumed. Few can deny the internet's potential (in terms of the growth in options) thanks to the rapid evolution (if not revolution) of innovations in communication technology and data storage. It is true that with a reliable internet connection, it is easier to access news and other information faster than ever before, but has this translated into any meaningful change in the production or consumption of news? If so, is this change iterative or revolutionary?

Research on the social and political impact of internet-based communication has traditionally fallen into one of two camps. On one hand are the celebrants, who believe that the internet is a revolutionary force in society, politics, and the media. On the other hand are sceptics, whose critical work (often in response to the work of the celebrants) urges researchers to use caution when making generalizations about the internet, and entertain the idea that the internet actually reinforces the norms present in society, politics, and the media; They argue, in other words, that the internet has failed to live up to its revolutionary potential. The limited scope of the average research project means that both sides often have strong empirical support for their claims, but taken cumulatively, the literature suggests that the real answer probably lies somewhere in the middle ground. It is probably about time to reject this dichotomy, and to accept that most individual pieces of academic work are part of a greater mosaic, with diverse

perspectives, methods, and data. However, since this celebrant/sceptic divide persists in the contemporary literature, it is perhaps the most useful way to organize a discussion of the original question: is the internet a revolutionary force?

For some, the nature of this debate has been cause for concern. Scott Wright addresses the negative consequences of two distinct schools of thought regarding the internet's potential. He argues that much of the academic research conducted thus far on the subject falls into the two schools of cyber-optimist and cyber-realist, and that this trend has resulted in important limitations in research design and the discourse on the topic more broadly. He rejects the determinist arguments put forward by members of the cyber-optimist (or celebrant) school, arguing that "technology does not determine human behavior" even though "it can influence and constrain political action" (2011, p.246). Citing academic interpretations of Margolis and Resnick's work (2000), Wright also argues that cyber-realists also get it wrong, accepting optimists' "terms of the debate [...] their frame of analysis"(2011, p.248).

The decision to separate the following two sections according to these two perspectives serves not as an endorsement of this divide, but as Wright would argue, a realistic portrayal of the state of the discipline. As these sections present some of the major contributions made thus far in this area, it is important to keep Wright's critique in mind, specifically his three suggestions: "Revolutions can occur on myriad scales from the local to the global [...] time is less important than the significance of change [...] revolutions can take time, and involve a variety of technologies and applications. Thus, we should not look to the latest technology in isolation" (2011, p.252). Much like the deterministic language used by the optimists, the debate presented below is also limited by a focus either on the internet as a whole or one specific facet of internet based communication (social media, for example). In considering several different ways of consuming online news, this thesis tries to move beyond these limitations.

2.3.1: *The Celebrants*

A quote by Rupert Murdoch in Curran, Fenton, and Freedman's work *Misunderstanding the Internet* is illustrative of the celebrants' perspective, even

though Murdoch might not count himself among them: “Power is moving away [...] from the old elite in our industry” (2012, p.17). Curran summarises this perspective further, claiming that “the dethroning of traditional news controllers and the renewal of journalism are thus the two central themes of this forecast” (2012, p.18). The pool of celebrants is predictably diverse. From public intellectuals to academics and professionals from journalism and political campaigning, many not only see the potential of the internet to change the way individuals engage with politics and consume news and entertainment, they argue that it already fulfils this promise.

Starting with Negroponte’s *Being Digital* (1995), many academics have been enamoured with the potential of the internet and the World Wide Web as a force for democracy. His work, while clearly prophetic, it is also blissfully optimistic about the new medium. This passage is representative of this hopeful view:

“Imagine an electronic newspaper delivered to your home as bits. Assume it is sent to a magical, paper-thin, flexible, waterproof, wireless, lightweight, bright display. The interface solution is likely to call upon mankind’s years of experience with headlining and layout, typographic landmarks, images, and a host of techniques to assist browsing. Done well, this is likely to be a magnificent news medium. Done badly, it will be hell.” (Negroponte 1995, pp.152–153)

Negroponte’s caveat at the end of this passage has more to do with the technical business of delivering content than the potential negative cultural and political consequences of consuming online news. The sentiment of the passage, and his book, is a hopeful one regarding the news media. Whether it is his predictions about e-readers and tablet computing (as seen in the previous quote) or his famous valuation of *The Daily Me* (1995, p.153), his optimistic tone is representative of the first wave of social science research on the subject. A study commissioned by the BBC around the same time more clearly articulates the democratizing potential that celebrants looked to. Graham and Davies argue that “the characteristics of production, content, and delivery all suggest strong underlying pressures towards concentration and monopolization. However, [the internet] appears to offer a counter example” (1997, p.15).

The optimism of Negroponte's generation of researchers quickly became more focused and empirical as internet penetration and connection speed has grown in the last twenty years. There are two major threads of research, linked to this thesis, that contemporary celebrants use to convey the benefits of the internet. The first concerns the globalizing potential of the internet. This research focuses on the internet as a boundless media landscape, a blank canvas where content production is cheap, and access to this content is universal. The second, which involves the more recent explosion of social media and the shift to what Tim O'Reilly refers to as Web 2.0. Here, academics argue that an increased emphasis on "leveraging the long tail" and "sources that get richer as people use them" has resulted in a more democratic public sphere (2005, p.15).

Internet celebrants argue that this new communication technology has had a revolutionary impact on society and politics. Manuel Castells was one of the first academics who considered the socio-political consequences of what he refers to as the "Information Technology Revolution" (1997, p.7). Implicit within his work on the "Network Society" is the assumption that the internet has the potential to cause wholesale change in society and, by extension, the political world, by facilitating the growth of networks (Castells 2000; 1997). In some of his more recent work, he argues that "new information and communication technologies, including rapid long-distance transportation and computer networks, allow global networks to selectively connect anyone and anything throughout the world" (2008, p.81). Advances in communication technology are essential in achieving a homogenized, global society, with a "global media" representing an key constituent part of it (2008, p.81). Castells' work is relevant here not just because he argues that these communication technologies have revolutionized society, but that the new, Network Society is a global one, unrestricted by domestic institutional constraints.

One central claim of the celebrants is that more people can take part in the news making process than ever before. With a finite broadcast spectrum and high financial barriers to entry in print and broadcast, the internet offers a comparatively cheap and accessible alternative for new competition. While this work revisits the validity of these claims when looking at the sceptical response,

the explosion in popularity of blogging websites (Meyers 2012) and the microblogging site Twitter (Hargittai & Litt 2011) have unquestionably led to a democratization of content production even if this hasn't necessarily translated to a democratization of consumption.

Starkman, whose work is detailed in the next section, refers to one group of cyber-optimists as the "Future of News consensus," a group that predicts (and in many cases, advocates for) a networked future where "old institutions must wither to make room" (2011). Gillmor (2006) wrote about how grassroots journalism has forced traditional newsrooms to adapt to a more connected world. In his book, he neatly refers to the internet as the "first many-to-many medium" (2006, p.209). Referring directly to the news, he argues that "we will be blessed with new kinds of perspective in this emergent system, and we will learn how to make it work for everyone" (2006, p.237). More recently, the phenomenon of citizen journalism, or citizen-aided journalism has turned the traditional relationship between producers and consumers upside down (Thurman 2008; Paulussen & Ugille 2008).

Following on from Dan Gillmor's work, Jeff Jarvis also writes from the perspective of the media professional-turned-academic, but his work focuses on how the news media has failed to (and potentially can) harness the power of the internet to rather than the ways that the internet has already transformed journalistic practice. In his most recent book, he advocates for a radical transformation both in the ways that news organisations produce and deliver content, and in the ways that these organisations should measure success and generate revenue. He chronicles the transition to "digital first" news, arguing that news organisations will need to "Start by reducing costs to their most essential and efficient level [...] then maximise digital revenue" (2014, pp.105–7). By identifying a few online success stories, he offers an explanation for a question also addressed in this thesis: What sources are the most successful in the online news environment? While Jarvis identifies many relevant characteristics of these success stories, this thesis argues that quite often, the decisions that enable success are often only available to those organisations institutionally best-positioned to do so. For example, Jarvis praises *The Guardian* for its digital strategy but he does not adequately reflect on the institutional advantages this kind of source enjoys. This

shortcoming is clearest when applying Jarvis' logic to the BBC – a public organisation not driven by profit whose leadership advocated for bold investment in the new medium.

When Tim O'Reilly and his colleagues coined the term Web 2.0, they probably didn't anticipate that it would become a key buzzword for internet startups. For the news media, the term implies a shift in focus from the traditional sender-receiver model (perfected in the print and broadcast media) to a model where content production is democratized, feedback is robust and instant, and users play a much more active role (O'Reilly 2005). A key manifestation of Web 2.0 technologies is the online social network. Websites like Facebook and Twitter drive a considerable amount of overall weekly web traffic. Experian Hitwise data regularly confirms that Facebook is second only to Google (another Web 2.0 success story) in terms of total weekly traffic in the United States – for the week ending 28 Feb 2015, Facebook had 2,029,159,181 total visits (Experian Marketing Services 2015). Over the last decade, the popularity of these websites has exploded and, for younger generations, online social networking has become an important part of everyday life.

Curran and Seaton articulate the importance of this shift: "Seventy-year-old audience habits have changed. The impact of these developments will go far beyond what people do with their leisure" (2010, p.189). Writing in 2010, they argue that "as yet, we can only speculate about the likely effects [of these technologies]: but they will clearly influence the future of democracy" (Curran & Seaton 2010, p.189). For this reason, researchers in politics and communication studies have paid very close attention to different uses of this technology, from political campaigning and netroots organizations that aim to start social movements, to creating new forums for deliberative democracy and media consumption.¹⁰ For the purposes of this research, however, this section has focused on research that studies how this

¹⁰ The work of Stephanie Wojcik and others (2007; Talpin & Wojcik 2010; Vedel & Wojcik 2008) focuses on deliberative democracy initiatives in continental Europe. While more exposition about internet-based deliberation isn't necessarily relevant to this thesis, her research is a valuable source for further reading concerning how new technology is changing the policymaking process, as opposed to the news media.

technology has challenged traditional understandings of how news is produced and consumed.

Many of the internet celebrants tend to focus on technology, and democratic potential, rather than content. Its focus on the future rather than the present is evidence of the both the key strengths and weaknesses of the approach. At its most basic, the celebrant's approach to the internet's revolutionary potential is a structural one – built on the assumption that if circumstances are right (the creation of a global communications infrastructure and the emergence of Web 2.0 are examples of such structural change), then the systemic change they predict can occur eventually. In other words, they argue that society is moving towards an internet that can support a democratized, global web structurally, even if users haven't used it to its full potential yet. While this open-endedness is one of the key criticisms levelled against celebrants by the sceptics, perhaps rushing to judgement on the transformative impact of the internet is premature. Looking to historical precedent of radio, perhaps the adolescent web of 2016 may look very different from the mature web of 2066.

2.3.2: *The Sceptics*

Many of those who do not believe that the internet has revolutionized politics, the media system, or the world (the sceptics) see the World Wide Web as just another medium in which other societal ills have manifested themselves. The optimism of the celebrants is tempered with a cynicism that often extends beyond media and communication to more general normative complaints about American political economy. It is not that the internet has no revolutionary potential, many sceptics would argue, it is just that this new technology has been co-opted by the forces of corporate capitalism or liberalism. This is the most coherent and compelling argument against the internet as a revolutionary force, but because most of the academic and intellectual legwork on this topic has been done in the United States, it is unfortunately limited in scope.

Robert McChesney is one of the most prolific critics of the American media system, and his work on the internet reflects his critical approach. His work *Rich Media, Poor Democracy* (1999) provides a critical history of American media and

broadcasting, and his more recent book *Digital Disconnect* (2013) focuses exclusively on the internet, its potential, and its many shortcomings. In both books, his focus is on the political economy of communication and *Digital Disconnect* summarizes his earlier work when it explains why the two issues are intertwined:

“The policies, structures, subsidies, and institutions that are created to control, direct, and regulate the media will be responsible for the logic and nature of the media system. Understood this way, the manner in which a society decides *how* to structure the media system, how it elects to solve the problem of the media, becomes of paramount importance.” (McChesney 2013, p.65)

According to McChesney, this process of solving the problem of the media is a product of domestic political economy. He argues: “A society does not approach the problem with a blank page; the range of options is influenced by the political economic structure, cultural traditions, and the available communication technologies, among other things” (2013, p.65). The problems of capitalist society (the promotion of corporatism, vertical integration, and oligarchy) are projected onto the media system. This is echoed by Thomas Streeter in his book *Selling the Air* as “corporate liberalism” (1996).

As the newest addition to a crowded media system, McChesney argues that capitalist approaches to the regulation and use of the internet in the United States are no different from the rest of the media system. The process of policymaking is constantly undermined by “the powerful media and telecommunications giants and their army of overpaid lobbyists” to favour the oligopolistic and exploitative practices of the corporate elite at the expense of consumer protection and democratic values (2013, p.107). Many academics fear that this subversion has manifested itself in the pivotal policymaking debate of the century for the news media; the fight for net neutrality.

While neutrality advocates argue that internet service providers (ISPs) should not be able to prioritize or manage certain kinds of traffic, the EU has identified areas where ISPs are already taking steps in this direction, from “slow[ing] traffic above a ‘fair use cap’” and “paying options to enable functionalities” (Trainar 2011, pp.121–122). In the United States, where ISPs often

install and maintain their own network infrastructure, some politicians have been sympathetic to ISPs. If these lobbying efforts succeed, it would make several corporations even more powerful players in the media system than they already are. Organisations like Comcast and Verizon in the United States provide both cable television and internet services – in the same way that their television packages indicate which sources they deem to be suitable for their clients' consumption, similar behaviour on the internet which restricts users' access to certain content will have important implications for the academic debate about the internet as a democratising force.

The criticisms levied by political economists are substantial, but they aren't without fault. As mentioned earlier, the biggest fault is the America-centric perspective; the lack of any robust comparative dimension prompts serious questions about how generalizable these findings are. Have other states succeeded where the United States has failed? The narrow scope of most political economy critiques of the internet implies that these problems are an exclusively American phenomenon, and that the American media system is either (a) the benchmark that all other media systems attempt to emulate and are measured against, or (b) the only media system worth studying. A more detailed, preferably comparative study that considers the diversity of media systems and domestic political economy would be necessary to confirm the argument that domestic political economy is a predictor of the internet's ability to fulfil its potential as a revolutionary medium.

Political economy isn't the only avenue of critique; many other academics have used a variety of methods and case studies to prove that the internet is not the revolutionary force that celebrants argue that it is. Another major criticism of the digital world is the 'digital divide,' a social inequality or class based critique that claims that the internet is far from a level playing field, and excludes many (often underprivileged) groups from consuming and producing content online. Fuchs explains it more eloquently:

“The digital divide refers to unequal patterns of material access to, usage capabilities of, and benefits from computer-based information and communication technologies that are caused by certain stratification processes that produce classes of winners and losers of

the information society, and of participation in institutions governing information and communication technologies” (Fuchs 2008, p.46).

The result of this digital divide is an internet which does not reflect the diversity present in society, and underserves many of the groups who are less likely to use it. At the centre of this argument is the question of access; who has the resources (financial and otherwise) to purchase a computer, pay a monthly fee for service, and has the free time to use the internet? It has become increasingly clear that access isn't the only source of the digital divide. Fuchs argues that “it has been stressed that the digital divide concerns not only the availability of computers, but also the required skills for using it and what users do with computers” (Fuchs 2008, p.46). On the content production side of the market, even fewer have the skills or resources to develop alternatives to compete with the online offerings of the traditional corporate media giants.

Kim takes this discussion one step further, demonstrating through quantitative analysis exactly how uneven internet use is around the world (2005). This conforms with Goldsmith and Wu's analysis of the debate, which rejects the notion of a borderless world, and instead discusses how the internet both establishes new borders (based on access, and connection speed), and reinforces old ones traditionally associated with the nation-state, like language (2006). Leung's work focuses on ethnicity and describes the internet as multifaceted, quoting Costigan who argues that “[t]he internet is more a networked schizophrenic, with multiple personalities that often have no idea that the others exist” (2005, p.10).

Returning to the concepts of oligarchy and corporatism, there are two democratic problems with the digital divide; online news production that is dominated by established corporations and the elite, and an online consumer base that doesn't adequately reflect the diversity of the general population. When considering content production and specifically political content production, Karpf's research on the blogosphere (considered by many celebrants as a way to democratize the news media) confirms that “the lion's share of top political bloggers held advanced graduate degrees,” and that “a new internet elite seemed

to mirror the same demographic disparities prevalent in offline society” (2009, p.68). In other words, “Blogs have served as an alternative venue for political reporting and engagement, but not one that necessarily replaces or challenges existing elite structures” (2009, p.68). The second problem identifies a deficit between democratic politics and contemporary American capitalism; that even if the corporate news sources wanted to respond to market forces (which they have no incentive to do in an oligopolistic system), they wouldn’t be responding to a representative sample and some groups would still be underserved.

Although much more comparative research has been conducted regarding the digital divide, there are still important weaknesses to this critique as well. The most important of these weaknesses is how quickly research on this subject can age. In an era where rapid innovations continue to occur, making internet use cheaper, simpler, and faster than ever, the digital divide may be shrinking rather than expanding. Likewise, since most of the literature on the digital divide focuses on states like America with great income inequality, it is hard to articulate exactly why the internet has failed to live up to its potential. Academics cannot be sure whether the internet that hasn’t lived up to its potential by being inherently exclusionary, or if society itself (through wage inequality or otherwise) has just let the internet celebrants down.

Another area of critique focuses less on individuals, and more on normative assertions about the internet as a force for ‘good,’ often defined in democratic terms. Morozov’s (2011) work summarises the optimists’ view of the internet’s potential as a democratizing force: “at first sight it seems like a brilliant idea. It’s like Radio Free Europe on steroids” (2011, p.xii). While his book focuses on this question of democratization and less on the subject of the news media, his perspective is a compelling rebuttal of both Fukuyama and many of the optimists referenced in the previous section. In this way, his work is simultaneously critical of Western policymakers’ naiveté regarding the internet and deeply sceptical of assumptions regarding convergence around a Western or American ideal type of internet use. Indeed, he argues that the internet can, in many ways, serve the interests of authoritarians – through the expansion of censorship and surveillance (2011). This critique has some important implications for the research presented

here, and perhaps demonstrates a limitation of it: by focusing on how the news media has changed over the last few decades, it does not engage with this important normative debate.

Some of Clay Shirky's more recent research addresses a similar question to that of Morozov, asking "How does the ubiquity of social media affect U.S. interests, and how should U.S. policy respond to it?" (2011, p.29). While he argues that "these increased freedoms" created by social media "can help loosely coordinated publics demand change," he also asserts that these movements are not necessarily successful (2011, p.29). Again, this critical research has a slightly different focus to this thesis - focusing on the impact of social media on states' capacity to govern and activists' ability to engage each other, as opposed to the news media's use of new media. For this thesis, Morozov and Shirky's focus on American efforts to use the internet to promote and maintain democracy is slightly too broad.

Shirky's earlier work (2009) reflects a more realistic appraisal of the internet than the first wave of research, but it still uses the language of transformation, which is a problem for critics like Starkman, who argues that this "certitude" is representative of the "Future of News" or "FON" school of thought (2011). The research here specifically focuses on the internet's contribution towards plurality in news provision – while changes in the media system toward a globalised or Americanised norm may be a product of these coordinated efforts, their explanations fail to explain how this happens in more practical terms. For example, Shirky's work does not adequately address which media organisations might be best positioned to capitalise on a "networked public sphere" and why such actors might be able to do so (2011, p.41). One facet of Starkman's critique of the FON school is an institutional one – he rejects Shirky and Jarvis' claims that internet institutions will come to replace offline ones, and that the practice of journalism will (and perhaps should) change. Instead, he argues that "the cruel truth of the emerging networked news environment is that reporters are as disempowered as they have ever been, writing more often, under more pressure, with less autonomy, about more trivial things than under the previous monopolistic regime" (2011).

Curran, Fenton, and Freedman's book *Misunderstanding the Internet* is perhaps the most articulate piece of internet scepticism from the United Kingdom. A foundational part of the second, critical wave of internet research, their work addresses the views of many of the celebrants identified in the previous section, and evaluates how these expectations have been met – in most cases a decade after the first, more optimistic wave. They argue:

“Leading news organisations colonised the news segment of cyberspace. To pre-empt competition, they set up satellite news websites. These quickly became dominant because they were heavily cross-subsidised; and exploited the news-gathering resources and established reputations of their powerful parent companies. Thus, Pew found that in 2010, 80 per cent of the internet traffic to news and information sites was concentrated on the top 7 per cent of sites” (2012, p.19).

The research presented in this thesis confirms this hegemonic control, with online news sources dominated by established offline news organisations in both cases – giving credence to the sceptics' argument. The next chapter articulates some of the institutional factors which allowed this colonisation to occur. While their research is compelling, some of their conclusions regarding the role of the internet can also be misleading. For example, they accurately cite an Ofcom study which asserted in 2010 that “more respondents said that they relied on television than the internet,” but they fail to reconcile this with how this has been changing over time – indeed the focus of a separate Pew article they cite is how the dynamics of media consumption are changing in favour of the internet. (Curran et al. 2012, pp.18–19, 32).

Christians et al. highlight a list of “facts of social behaviour, media structure, and media use habits” that they feel can mitigate (and have mitigated) the revolutionary potential of the internet (2009, p.230). Pointing to some social institutions like the digital divide and the problem of “the salience of politics” suggest some awareness of the societal institutions which limit the new medium's transformative effect (2009, p.230). They also make some reference to media institutions, arguing that “multimedia businesses or governments are extending

control over the gateways and uses of the internet, neutralising much of the hoped-for liberating potential” (2009, p.230).

Hindman (whose work is revisited in the methodology chapter) finds that online institutions like search engines only reinforce the democratic problem of media concentration (2009). Far from a democratizing force, he argues that power and influence on the internet is highly concentrated; specifically in the hands of those who yielded power offline. This suggests a digital divide in terms of production, which may be linked to institutional factors like education, or economies of scale enjoyed by larger news organizations. For the purposes of this thesis, Hindman’s research challenges researchers to think about how an online news environment dominated by domestic offline powers could be considered a globalizing or democratizing force. On the contrary, he argues that offline trends towards concentration at the top of the media system continues at the expense of the emergence of a new media system, driven by smaller scale, ‘long tail’ news producers.

It is important to keep the perspective of internet sceptics in temporal context – this wave of research is perhaps best seen as a response to the initial optimism of the celebrants. The public’s understanding of the internet, and internet news, has grown considerably as internet-based communication overcomes its growing pains. For this reason, it is perhaps too soon to suggest that either the celebrants or the sceptics are entirely right. Even since some of these works were published, small but noticeable changes in news provision and consumption online indicate that the parameters of the internet news environment are far from settled. Instead, it is useful to ask more direct, specific questions about the internet’s transformative potential. For example, this thesis aims to contribute to this debate by studying the internet’s transformative power in the context of media system convergence, or homogenisation. Answering this more direct question, a level of empiricism (and crucially, reproducibility) can provide some greater certainty than many of the conceptual works which have characterised the first two waves of this research.

2.4: Historical institutionalism: a sensitive approach to measuring systemic change over time

Based on the preceding review of the literature, any research that endeavours to gain a lasting and detailed understanding of the differences between media systems requires two things: first, it needs a small-N, case study approach, and second, a method that uses sensitivity when measuring change over time, and in the case of this project, across media.¹¹ A small-N approach to media systems is preferable to the large-N alternative because the former encourages researchers to take adequate time and care to understand the nuance and unique socioeconomic and political circumstance of domestic systems. This chapter demonstrates that the latter approach yields typologies, where key areas of divergence are either explained away as acknowledged weakness of the research design or ignored completely. The importance of using an approach which is sensitive about measuring change is clear – the continuity of news institutions across time and medium necessitates an approach that is sensitive to what came before. To make sense of the contemporary media system, it is essential that the researcher considers these institutions not as part of an isolated, ahistorical snapshot but as living, breathing structures that develop over time in response to both external and internal pressures.

When it comes to communications policy and regulation, there are several reasons to be confident in an application of the historical institutionalist (HI) approach. This section explores the origins of the approach, and its application in the study of political communication and media studies. This section shows how new institutionalism is a response to the discipline's focus on behaviouralism, and considers the alternatives within the bigger umbrella of new institutionalism. Making these arguments requires a review of the institutionalist literature, and through exploring the theory and its alternatives, the reader should come away

¹¹ This reflects the 'emic' approach articulated by Wirth and Kolb (2004). Using this approach, measurement tools used in the analysis presented in this thesis are "developed nationally, to provide for a highly adequate, culturally specific national instrument" wherever possible (2004, p.94).

from this section with two things: a good understanding of the historical institutionalist approach and what distinguishes it from its alternatives, and a degree of clarity as to why an HI approach to media policymaking is an appropriate and exciting one.

2.4.1: Foundations of New Institutionalism

Thelen and Steinmo argue that the first institutional scholarship on politics was primarily “configurative studies of different administrative, legal, and political structures” (1998, p.3). When compared to contemporary political science, this kind of scholarship seems inadequate and descriptive, but it is important to remember that systemic study and analysis of governmental structure did not exist until that point, and that this work was a solution to a key deficiency. The behaviouralist critique of the ‘old’ institutionalist approach was relatively simple: “It was obvious that the formal laws, rules, and administrative structures did not explain actual political behaviour or policy outcomes” (1998, pp.3–4).

If students of the media and politics are interested in understanding how the state functions, then it seems obvious that an understanding of institutions and structure (in the form of procedural rules, regulations, and laws) is a good place to start. The descriptive old institutionalism was less interested in the analytical ‘how’ or ‘why,’ and more preoccupied answering the ‘what.’ The biggest problem with this approach was stagnation; once the field had adequately described all the variations of political institution, where could it go next?

In their seminal 1984 article, March and Olsen argue that “historically, political scientists and political philosophers have tended to treat political institutions, particularly the state, as independent factors, important to the ordering and understanding of collective life” (1984, p.735). Behaviouralists, through an approach that the authors refer to as “contextual, [...] reductionist, [...] utilitarian, [...] functionalist, [and] instrumentalist,” moved away from this idea and towards agency-based explanations of political phenomena (1984, p.735). In their work, March and Olsen summarize the weaknesses of a purely behavioralist approach. Two criticisms they offer are relevant to media policy and regulation. Behavioralism, functionalism, and utilitarianism assume that in politics, “the

preferences and powers of the actors are exogenous to the political system” and that “institutions and behavior are thought to evolve through some form of efficient historical process, [...] one that moves rapidly to a unique solution, conditional on current environmental conditions, thus independent of the historical path” (1984, p.735, 737).

There are two problems with the behavioural approach regarding media regulation, the institutional focus of this thesis. First, when faced with a new politically relevant phenomenon like broadcast radio, it may be true that the western state (through democratic process) has an opportunity to create a unique exogenous solution. Unfortunately, the processes of regulation and policymaking rarely stops there. After the initial regulatory foundation for broadcast communication was established through the agency or behaviour of policymakers, consumer preferences were made endogenous through spectrum allocation, and production practice was made endogenous through licensing criteria and favouritism. For this reason, behavioralists need to make an important concession: the rational choice championed by liberal economic theory becomes a rational choice of the institutionally-acceptable alternatives.

Their second criticism targets functionalism in particular. They challenge an “assumption of historical efficiency” by arguing that institutions are “relatively resilient to the idiosyncratic preferences and expectations of individuals” (1984, 741). In regulatory practice, this means that institutional time scales often outlast comparatively short political ones, and that rules of the game can't stray far from existing rules and regulations: March and Olsen argue that “some alternatives are excluded from the agenda even before politics begins” (1984, 740). This was certainly true regarding the regulation of broadcast television in the United States and the United Kingdom, where regulation of the new technology was essentially an extension of previous regulatory practices.

March and Olson’s institutionalism came to be known as “normative institutionalism,” (Peters 2005, p.26) but other academics would explore alternatives. Peters’ (2005) catalogue of new institutionalism differentiates between the approach’s subdivisions in an effective way, and rightly emphasizes their similarities. Historical institutionalism, for instance, has much in common

with normative institutionalism but differs from it in its more empirical approach and emphasis on path dependency (2005). Similarly, rational choice institutionalism and historical institutionalism share a common definition of institutions, but these approaches differ on the durability and influence of institutions. These subdivisions reflect a more nuanced understanding of what actually constitutes an ‘institution,’ and how they work.

Among the subdivisions of new institutionalism, it is no surprise that historical institutionalism is growing in popularity as an approach to studying media systems. Two recent publications employ this approach, and although their findings vary in terms of their relevance to the literature, they demonstrate the value of studying the news media and media regulation in terms of path dependence and critical junctures. The first work, by Benedetta Brevini, examines how public service broadcasters in Europe operate online. She argues that “the online expansion of the PSBs follows a path-dependent model” and that “the long-term established ethos of each PSB framework constrains policy trajectories regarding PSB development online” (2013, pp.145–146). While the work focuses solely on PSBs, her book demonstrates the value of the historical institutionalist approach in this research area.

Humphreys and Simpson also discuss media regulation in the global context, but come to a similar conclusion, demonstrating that “Historically rooted national institutional and cultural differences and ‘policy styles’ may explain the continuance of a degree of national idiosyncrasy in regulation” (2005, p.12). Humphreys’ (2011) separate response to Hallin and Mancini’s *Comparing Media Systems* is the historical institutionalist critique that inspired this research project, establishing the need for new framework of analysis that avoids typologies and gives national peculiarities and historical context due prominence in analysis.

2.4.2: Defining historical institutionalism

Historical institutionalism distinguished itself as a unique approach in politics during the late 1980s and early 1990s, thanks to the work of authors like Steinmo, Hall, Immergut, Pierson, Skocpol, and Genschel. For the most part, early historical institutionalist scholarship was focused around political economy. To

date, the volume edited by Steinmo, Thelen and Longstreth (1992) represents the most concentrated academic effort at understanding the intricacies of the theory, and is often the text that contemporary historical institutionalist analysis builds from. In Thelen and Steinmo's chapter in that work, they introduce the roots of the theory, and discussing its application in comparative politics. "At its broadest," they argue, "historical institutionalism represents an attempt to illuminate how political struggles 'are mediated by the institutional setting in which they take place'" (Thelen & Steinmo 1998, p.2). Since it is within and under the supervision of these institutions that the media system exists and evolves, these institutions necessarily restrict the possible forms that the news media, and the media system more generally, might take. Thelen and Steinmo cite Hall, who articulates this point more clearly. He says that "institutional factors play two fundamental roles in this model. On the one hand, the organization of policy-making affects the degree of power that any one set of actors has over the policy outcomes. ... On the other hand, organizational position also influences an actor's definition of his own interests" (1998, p.3). Their analysis of Hall's argument articulates the importance of institutions, while acknowledging that change is generally a product of not just institutional setting (as the old institutionalists would argue) or agency (as behavioralists claim), but of both:

"What is implicit but crucial in this and most other conceptions of historical institutionalism is that institutions constrain and refract politics but they are never the sole 'cause' of outcomes. Institutional analyses do not deny the broad political forces that animate various theories of politics [...]. Instead, they point to the ways that institutions structure these battles and in so doing, influence their outcomes." (1998, p.3)

Stopping short of an institutional determinism, historical institutionalists argue that institutions play a significant role because they constrain the alternatives available to key policymakers and stakeholders when they are faced with new challenges. Over time, as institutions become embedded in both the public and private sector and new institutions that adhere to the rules of the old institutions are built atop them, it becomes more difficult for agents to overcome these institutional constraints and future policy trajectories become more predictable. This concept,

known as path dependency, is a foundational part of contemporary historical institutionalist work. A common critique of the historical institutionalist approach (Peters 2005) is its emphasis on explanation rather than prediction, but as institutions become embedded and layered, and the path becomes more constrained, it is possible for the researcher to hypothesize about what comes next.

Another consideration when choosing the historical institutionalist approach concerns “how broad a conceptual net to cast in defining institutions” (Thelen & Steinmo 1998, p.11). This thesis focuses on regulatory regimes, broadcast network structure, and broadcasters’ internal regulations and structures; all of which Thelen and Steinmo might refer to as “intermediate level institutions” (1998, p.11). While much of the discussion in the next chapter is related to macro-level institutions like Streecher’s corporate liberalism (1996) or turn of the century collectivism in the United Kingdom, the analysis is focused on manifestations of these macro level trends on intermediate institutions. This allows for the greatest possible analytical flexibility; as “this focus on how macrostructures [...] are magnified or mitigated by intermediate-level institutions allows us to explore the effects of such overarching structures on political outcomes, [while] avoiding the structural determinism that often characterizes broader and more abstract Marxist, functionalist, and systems-theory approaches” (1998, p.11).

Critics of the approach argue that even though institutions become embedded and change becomes more difficult, broad and systemic change sometimes occurs. Thelen and Steinmo articulate this criticism: “The problem with this model is that institutions explain everything until they explain nothing [...] Put somewhat differently, at the moment of institutional breakdown, the logic of the argument is reversed from ‘Institutions shape politics’ to ‘politics shape institutions’” (1998, p.15). When the circumstances are right, they argue, agents can overcome these institutional constraints and make meaningful changes to the ‘rules of the game.’ By accounting for the continued importance of agency, and defining institutions broadly, historical institutionalists can overcome this critique. HI theorists account for these moments of rapid and comprehensive change by

incorporating critical junctures and “institutional dynamism” into their broader analytical schema (1998, p.16).

2.5: Conclusion

Academic approaches to media systems are as diverse as the consumers that those systems are meant to serve. To better understand these approaches and to establish the theoretical framework from which this research project begins, this chapter has provided a review of the literature, and explored the benefits of historical institutionalist analysis. It has argued that if researchers are to measure a convergence of media systems, they need to have an approach that is sensitive to measuring change. Importantly, this chapter has demonstrated that any attempt to make sense of the contemporary news media must be informed by the strengths and weaknesses of previous research. To do this, this thesis argues that new research must choose those institutions which are most relevant to the phenomenon they aim to make sense of at the expense of other institutional factors that are further removed from it. In the spirit of this need for institutional proximity, this chapter has emphasised the importance of using media institutions as the starting point for any research on media system convergence. The next chapter identifies which of these institutions are most salient or proximate to this phenomenon, and develops a narrative of path dependency.

Historical institutionalism offers an attractive alternative to the typologies of large-N studies, and allows the researcher to take a deeper look at domestic systems to understand the unique circumstances that differentiate each one from the next. In this chapter’s critique of Hallin and Mancini’s work, a key point of contention with their typologies here is the equivalence of both the United States and the United Kingdom. This thesis investigates online news in these two states to evaluate their similarities and to provide a full historical institutionalist response to their foundational work.

Conceptually, a theme which emerges from this chapter concerns communications technology’s role in both the evolution and convergence of media systems. However, the literature cautions the reader to avoid confusing

technological progress with wholesale changes in terms of what individuals consume. Media system convergence simply cannot occur without it, but data suggests that if it is occurring, this process is far from complete. This presents a problem for academics. How can researchers articulate exactly how similar or how dissimilar media systems are? Without any point of comparison, it is simply not possible. Historical institutionalism offers an alternative. By defining the domestic experience of the offline media in Britain and the United States, researchers can establish that point of comparison. They can develop a set of hypotheses based on path dependency, and test how closely the online news environment reflects these offline expectations to determine if the online news in the United States and the United Kingdom is more homogenous than offline news is in these two states.

3. Path Dependency and Media Systems

The United States and the United Kingdom are both societies that value the principles of liberalism and democracy. Some of the literature presented in the last chapter uses this truth to develop a framework for understanding the collective institutions and actors of domestic media systems. The principle that these values yield certain media systems represents a good start to the academic discussion, but this truth conceals important, persistent differences between these two states. This research project presents an alternative framework for studying media systems that focuses not just on broad, macro-level institutions or values like liberalism, but on the intermediate-level manifestations of these values. It also uses an historical understanding of electronic media to challenge some of the homogenising assumptions made by other research projects – emphasising the path dependency of collectivism (starting with the Keynesian reforms of consecutive Liberal governments) in the United Kingdom.

The previous chapter contextualises the two research questions presented in the introduction to this thesis. It demonstrates how the first question, which concerns the internet's role in transforming the media, is intricately tied with the second, which addresses the phenomenon of media system convergence. This chapter aims to establish the first part of the historical institutionalist response to these questions by identifying several fundamental institutional differences between the United States and the United Kingdom that are relevant to online news. In lieu of typologies offered by other approaches, it highlights several idiosyncratic characteristics of the two media systems in question that researchers can use to compare domestic news media, and to predict how these media systems will respond to innovations in technology or consumers' use of it. Using primary and secondary sources, it sets out the historical institutionalist background for the hypotheses tested in Chapters 5 and 6.

This chapter contains several themes, which correspond to three key offline points of divergence between the United States and the United Kingdom. First, it

outlines the geographical and technological circumstances which contributed to regional broadcasting in the United States and national broadcasting in the United Kingdom. The analysis and discussion that follows in subsequent chapters evaluates predictions made here about the possibility of an online resurgence of local news media in the two states. Second, it explores the domestic experience of these two states in terms of ownership structure – focusing on the states' divergent approaches to public service broadcasting. The third and final theme presented here concerns domestic approaches to neutrality in news content. This section demonstrates how partisanship varies in the American and British media systems, and again path dependency offers insight into what researchers should expect when it comes to online political news.

Each section of this chapter follows a general pattern. First, they establish the offline status quo by tracing the evolution of relevant media institutions, from concrete ones like infrastructure and its technological limitations to more figurative institutions like broadcasting policy and regulatory culture. While some overlapping themes emerge, clarity demands that the historical institutionalist paths established here are presented separately. Second, with an understanding of this offline status quo, each section provides some justification as to why one might expect this status quo to continue.

This historical institutionalist framework focuses on the peculiarities of domestic media systems in historical context rather than domestic political institutions. The previous chapter highlighted a weakness of the political congruence approach to comparing media systems, arguing that it focuses too much on political institutions and too little on those institutions which comprise and influence the news media. By focusing on media ownership, regionalism and centrality, and domestic approaches to neutrality as key factors to distinguish media systems, the comparative framework presented here will provide a new perspective to the ongoing debate on media systems.

One consequence of this historically sensitive and focused approach to comparing media systems is that media systems evade simple classification. This approach recognises the contemporary news media environment as a complex system, favouring a more traditional, in depth comparison of specific cases. Ease of

classification was one of the main benefits of Hallin and Mancini's approach, but like its predecessors, its typologies often simplified or ignored key elements of the domestic experience, limiting the usefulness of its findings. Still, the alternative framework presented here is complementary to the work presented in *Comparing Media Systems* – it represents an alternative approach that attempts to supplement rather than reject the findings of its predecessor.

3.1: Early Broadcasting Technology and Regionalism in the United States and United Kingdom

Domestic approaches to regional news in the United States and the United Kingdom vary wildly. This section highlights three fundamental reasons for this - First, it examines the varying demand for local news coverage from a political congruence perspective, arguing that even before the broadcast era began, a market for regional print news had emerged in the United States. The second reason, which concerns the capabilities of early broadcasting infrastructure, is that the technological standards of the early broadcasting made the prospect of a highly-centralised broadcast possible in the United Kingdom, and financially prohibitive in the United States. Instead, the United States would become a networked system of local broadcasters that worked with NBC, CBS, and later ABC to provide content. The third area of divergence, which is explored in much more detail in the section that follows, is difference in early regulatory philosophy. These factors established an offline status quo, where the role of domestic news producers and content in the media system and the preferences of consumers are well defined. If the same roles persist online, there is little evidence of media system convergence.

The need for local and regional news provision before the broadcast era was remedied through a robust and competitive market for regional or city-based newspapers. While some papers like *The New York Times* and *The Washington Post* would eventually reach national and international audiences, the geographical ties of many of the United States' leading newspapers to regions or cities persists. Data from 2013 supplied by the Alliance for Audited Media indicates that 18 (or 20

including the two papers mentioned before) of the top 25 newspapers in the United States identify with a specific region in their title (2013). Advocates of the political congruence approach might logically argue that one of the main drivers of consumer demand for local news in the United States is interest in state and local politics.¹² A rigid constitutional division of powers between the role of states and the federal government ensures that state politics and elections are central to civic life just like federal elections. Regional news producers (first in print, then broadcast) emerged to meet this demand.

This legacy of local media markets in the United States continues today with the FCC's implementation of cross-ownership rules which prevent media consolidation on a market-by-market basis (Federal Communications Commission 2016). Even though zooming out from these local markets might highlight larger problems with systemic media consolidation,¹³ cross ownership rules prevent monopoly or duopoly, which is increasingly important in a post-Fairness Doctrine media environment. While Gibbons and Humphreys note that the 1996 Telecommunications Act "had a strong deregulatory effect" (2012, p.28), it still uses the language of local media markets in addition to national ownership.

One of the most foundational institutions of electronic media is the cumulative set of technologies and infrastructure that make broadcasting possible. Surprisingly, regionalism in news production is one of the few areas where the print and early broadcasting are structurally similar. This section argues that this regional market structure has made an indelible mark on the production and consumption of news in the United States. In contrast, broadcasting monopoly in the United Kingdom yielded a media system that has yet to fully shake criticisms of being overly London and Westminster-centric. By tracing the development of these institutions, this section demonstrates how each system favours some and disadvantages others in terms of online news provision.

¹² The arguments put forward by Hallin and Mancini fail to adequately address federalism in their research – contributing to the somewhat dubious conclusion that the United States and the United Kingdom fit the same model based on political congruence. Information about the demand for local news, and a report on its current state is included in a recent FCC report (Waldman 2010).

¹³ Noam (2009) examines the issue of systemic consolidation across all American media in outstanding detail.

If local media markets emerged during the print era, broadcast technology reinforced them, shaping the contemporary provision and consumption of news in important ways. The effect of early broadcasting, so geographically and technologically restrictive at such a critical juncture, on the complexion of the media system of the United Kingdom and the United States has been profound. Alongside the monopolistic practices of the early BBC (developed in the next section), technology played a central function in determining the role of regional news in the two systems throughout the last 100 years. Understanding the limitations of this technology, this project can identify the sources favoured by these domestic regulatory regimes.

The large transmission range afforded by broadcast technology is perhaps the medium's greatest innovation. AM (amplitude modulated) transmitters used in early longwave broadcasting were able to reach across the Atlantic Ocean (Barnouw 1966, p.78). However, the practicalities of radio meant that medium wave broadcasting (open to consumer use) had, and continue to have, limits – receivers beyond a few hundred miles of the most powerful commercial transmitters would struggle to get a clear, reliable signal.¹⁴ Spectrum allocation, and later the development of FM (frequency modulated) transmission addressed quality, but both introduced further regulatory and technological restrictions geographically. While the technology behind FM meant necessarily that transmitters could broadcast shorter distances, spectrum allocation set out in the United States' Radio Act of 1927 established the Federal Radio Commission's mandate to establish the geographical broadcasting markets in which local and regional sources and content would flourish (1966, p.302).

Despite this large range, poor sound quality and interference associated with early radio broadcasting necessitated the need for broadcast relay stations to boost signal range by retransmitting original signals (either over the same

¹⁴ This scale is indicative of the major differences regarding broadcasting infrastructure in the United Kingdom, where the entire state could be covered by a few transmitters, and the United States, which spans the width of an entire continent. Reception problems for medium wave, AM frequency stations persist to this day within the United Kingdom, over a much smaller geographic area than the United States (BBC n.d.).

frequency or an entirely new one). Even though the signals would be sent through the air, the cost of developing a new network of broadcasting infrastructure is tied to the geographical area that it is intended to cover – the larger the area, the more expensive the infrastructure investment. In the United Kingdom, a small number of relay stations allowed the BBC to consolidate much of the production and programming decisions in London. On the other hand, the technological limitations of early broadcasting meant that a single American broadcast, from New York, Los Angeles, or elsewhere, was logistically unfeasible until adequate network infrastructure was in place. Instead, a series of regional electronic media markets would emerge that mimicked the already robust regional press.

Although this theme is developed in more detail in the next section while discussing spectrum allocation and public service monopoly, the United Kingdom serves as an example of how the broadcasting environment develops in the absence of market forces. A radically different environment than the market driven development of the United States, broadcast monopoly actively prevented the emergence of local and regional alternatives to the BBC for decades – offering the public service broadcaster a distinct economic and cultural advantage when competition began. While the BBC may have provided regional content across its network, advocates of the United States' market liberal approach would dispute whether this satisfies demand. More fundamentally, the market for regional news may be fundamentally and permanently distorted by BBC monopoly.

Regionalism in news also involves content. While many news organisations in both states are not regional broadcasters, some provide news content with a regional or local focus. For example, despite its history of London-focused organisation, the BBC provides some local news coverage on television, radio, and online. A key challenge to studying regionalism in the context of media system convergence is deciding what to focus on. Choosing between studying either content or source, this project risks falling into the same generalisation trap as Hallin and Mancini. To combat this, this thesis examines both source and content when considering the regional orientation of online news – with very interesting and significant results for the debate around media system convergence.

Online, the performance of internet native sources is critical in determining the extent to which media system convergence has occurred in terms of regional news. If consumer demand for this kind of content in the United Kingdom is as great as the United States, internet sources can potentially fill a gap in the market for certain kinds of news provision if the BBC and other broadcasters have failed to provide such content. Likewise, if internet-based sources in the United States focus more on national news coverage, it could suggest convergence around a globalised model more like the United Kingdom.

3.2: Media Ownership and the Public Interest

In the United States and the United Kingdom, the development of broadcasting technology was a transformative moment. In historical institutionalist terms, it is a critical juncture and a key point of divergence between the two cases. This section illustrates how corporate liberalism and anti-trust populism in the United States at the turn of the century led to a commercial, market driven, and license-based (if oligopolistic) approach to broadcasting which favoured pluralism. A very different regulatory culture in the United Kingdom, based on a paternalism embodied by John Reith led to the public service monopoly of the British Broadcasting Corporation. This section explores the roots of these regulatory philosophies, and demonstrates how contemporary approaches to broadcast regulation are shaped (and, to some degree, predetermined) by this history.

3.2.1: Diversity in (Corporate) Ownership in the United States

The American news media, in all its iterations and complexity, has traditionally stood out from its Western (and non-Western) peers in important ways. For better or worse, American broadcast journalism, for example has had a profound impact on the way that news is covered across the world. Understanding some of the key structural and regulatory characteristics that yield such a media system is crucial when measuring how successful the United States news media has been in shaping the way that the world creates and consumes political content.

A key institutional and regulatory factor that is essential to consider when comparing two media systems is the offline distribution of media ownership. Grasping exactly who wields power in the broadcast and print news media can distinguish a media system from its alternatives. Looking at the history of the United States news media, the government has closely regulated media ownership, mainly to maintain diversity in the market. This regulation promotes competition and maintains quality standards, and indirectly preserves a plurality of editorial perspectives. In comparison to the United Kingdom, which placed its faith in a monopoly public broadcaster to provide quality content, the United States has come to rely on diverse media ownership to ensure that the public has adequate access to the best possible content.

This section is organised around three critical junctures in US media history. First, it explores the circumstances that informed the first regulatory interventions in radio broadcasting. Perhaps more than any other critical juncture, the regulatory policy developed during this time would determine the future shape of the media system. Using Pickard's work, this part of the thesis illustrates the futility of organised efforts to influence the policymaking process or to reform broadcast licensing policy after it had been implemented. The main regulatory legacy of this critical juncture is a devotion to commercial (more specifically corporate) competition. The second critical juncture focuses on the transition from radio to television, and the creation of the Corporation for Public Broadcasting (CPB). President Johnson's advocacy for a publicly funded public service broadcaster was instrumental in the establishment of the CPB and the Public Broadcasting Service (PBS), but this section demonstrates that the same corporate liberal interests which dominated the radio era continued to yield influence in the policymaking process. The third critical juncture, the transition to cable and the subsequent growth of 24-hour news networks, represents a uniquely American explosion of new, often partisan voices.

3.2.1.1: An American approach to spectrum scarcity

The later part of this chapter, devoted to examining British media ownership, notes that a unique set of geographical, political, and economic

circumstances existed in Britain during the 1920s, and that this led to a similarly unique regulatory response to the problem of spectrum scarcity. The next few paragraphs define the equivalent geographical, political and economic circumstances that dominated in 1920s America. Specifically, this section explains how the American solution to protecting the public interest in broadcasting was to issue licenses to for-profit companies, rather than establishing a single non-profit public broadcaster. It also addresses regulators' efforts to promote competition, even if it was only between private corporations at first.

In contrast to the United Kingdom, the geographical vastness of the continental United States ensured that (with few exceptions) spectrum scarcity was a strictly domestic (rather than international) issue. Since early regulators were not subjected to the same constraints as their British counterparts, their main priority was to bring order to the broadcast spectrum, rather than carve a portion of it for exclusively domestic use. American regulators licensed the use of frequencies to applicants in order to protect both broadcasters and the public interest. These licences would provide stability to the ether mainly by preventing two networks within broadcast range of each other from interfering with each other's broadcasts, either intentionally or unintentionally. It is difficult to overstate how important this difference in geographical circumstance was – external limitations on the prospect of 'clear channel' broadcasting are a major argument in favour of the kind of monopoly broadcasting that the British government enlisted the British Broadcasting Company to provide.

If the regulatory culture of the United Kingdom during the 1920s was sympathetic to the idea of public ownership, then the culture present in the United States at the time could be characterised as "corporate liberalism" (Streeter 1996). Understanding this concept, and its implications for broadcast regulation both underlines just how distinct the American approach to regulation has been, and helps to predict how the American news media adapt to the online news environment. Streeter (1996) provides a good account of the values that drove government and corporate interests during four key Radio Conferences of the 1920s. "The liberal values of business, private property, and the market" underpinned the Conference's proposals, and "the general purpose [of any new

regulatory framework] was to encourage the development of broadcasting on a for-profit basis with maximum autonomy for capital and minimal government interference” (1996, pp.89–90).

This corporate liberalism was the approach taken by many stakeholders, but a vocal minority stood up (with little success) against the commercialisation of the media at the time. Contrary to the entrepreneurs who would dominate the medium, amateurs advocated for an anarchic lack of regulation, while others advocated for a system that resembled the fledgling BBC. Herbert Hoover, acting as Secretary of Commerce, ruled that out, arguing that:

“We should not imitate some of our foreign colleagues with governmentally controlled broadcasting supported by a tax upon the listener ... [private broadcasting] has secured for us a far greater variety of programs and excellence in service free of cost to the listener. This decision has ... preserved free speech to this medium” (Streeter 1996, p.90).

In addition to arguments about freedom of speech and plurality, the market-driven excellence position presented by Hoover could also be applied to news by liberal advocates. With government as the only party with no direct interest in private sector broadcasting (it had been guaranteed spectrum space for the military), its decision to side with one group of stakeholders (entrepreneurs and corporate interests) rather than the alternatives (amateurs and educators) proved to be pivotal in determining the future shape of the media system.

The 1927 Radio Act was the legal manifestation of the values that dominated the Radio Conferences, and a regulatory apparatus was set up that issued commercial licenses. “Congress took pains to describe radio channels not as property but as something analogous to public waterways” (1996, p.97) and a license for their use was contingent on service of some (traditionally ill-defined) public interest. This was a key justification for the legitimation and expansion of the commercial, for-profit media. The Federal Radio Commission (the forerunner of the FCC) stated that “It is better that there should be a few less broadcasters than that the listening public should suffer from undue interference,” with the implication being that those networks with the most powerful technological capabilities should be prioritized over others (Streeter 1996, p.100). Here, the FRC

crucially preserved competition between corporate broadcasters who could more easily afford powerful equipment and effectively marginalised not-for-profit broadcasting.

Critics like Pickard (2011; 2015) and McChesney (see 2.3.2) might argue that this systematic phasing out of the smallest broadcasters is antidemocratic and anything but traditional market liberalism, but it does adhere closely to Streeter's notion of corporate liberalism. Hardly the free market advocated for by amateurs, the post-1927 broadcasting world has been and continues to be dominated by corporate interests. However, within the context of this corporate oligopoly, competition was fierce, and the government played a key role in making sure it was fair (for the stakeholders involved). In the tradition of the antitrust crusaders at the turn of the century, the state monitored broadcast competition carefully and intervened at key moments. In one of the most important examples of this interventionist approach, the FCC began an investigation that culminated in the 1941 Report on Chain Broadcasting, and ultimately the divestment of NBC's Blue network. While the report both condemned and restricted the monopolistic practices of the two major networks (NBC and CBS), In Gomery's words, "[NBC Chief] Sarnoff bitterly denounced the new regulations, but FDR's Department of Justice was on an antitrust crusade. On May 10, 1943, the United States Supreme Court ruled that NBC had to sell either Red or Blue. [...] Blue was thus disposed of and a new NBC radio was created, with only one network rather than the two that had existed since January 1, 1927" (2008, p.22).

The key ideas to take away from the United States' early approaches to regulation, specifically licensing policy and the FCC and DOJ antitrust efforts, are that regulators had a preference for commercial broadcasting, and an interest in maintaining a marketplace of ideas through active regulatory oversight. From an historical institutionalist perspective these values, embedded in the regulatory fabric of the American media for a century, continue to have a profound influence on subsequent regulatory action. Regarding contemporary internet news, this early regulation has also shaped consumers' consumption habits in important ways. For example, two of the 'winners' in early broadcast regulation remain influential today – NBC and CBS.

3.2.1.2: US public broadcasting – an afterthought, or addressing market failure?

The assumption that for-profit broadcasting corporations could adequately serve the public interest hindered the development of a cohesive and competitive publicly funded broadcaster in the United States. In fact, the creation of the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, which provides federal funding for the previously marginalised educational stations (who would become the Public Broadcasting System), occurred 40 years after the Royal Charter that created the British Broadcasting Corporation was published. While the CPB guarantees federal funding for PBS programming, it is important for this thesis to consider whether public broadcasting has been competitive with its private counterparts in the media system. If it has not been competitive, identifying the reasons for this should help to establish some expectations concerning the popularity of publicly funded internet news content. This section argues that the cultural progressivism of the 1960s yielded quickly to neoliberalism, and this ensured that public funding for public broadcasting was the subject of fierce ideological and budgetary contestation.

Created by progressives to address perceived market failure in broadcasting, the CPB is a product of a unique stage in the history of the United States. Pickard argues that the 1940s represents a critical juncture not just for broadcasting, but also for American media history. He argues that a “number of potential trajectories opened before policy makers during fundamental debates about the relationships among media institutions, the state, and various publics” (2015, p.190). Most importantly, Pickard’s work details the publishing of and subsequent backlash surrounding an FCC Blue Book titled *Public Service Responsibility of Broadcast Licensees*, which established a set of standards to which commercial broadcasters would struggle to meet – providing the regulatory justification for public broadcasting in the United States.

At the time the Blue Book was published, much like the 1960s, there was a strong opposition to commercial broadcasting in post-war America. The Blue Book was a “confrontation between social democratic and corporate libertarian visions of media” (Pickard 2015, p.63). The social democratic critique of the commercial

media was founded upon “growing public concerns about commercial excesses in mainstream mass news media, especially radio” (2015, p.64). While the character of those excesses are discussed in another part of this chapter, those in power at the FCC “tried to leverage their regulatory power over a recalcitrant broadcasting industry by shifting from a strategy of fostering competition to one that involved directly regulating content” (2015, p.64). Overcoming the broadcasting industry’s commercial interests would prove to be difficult though, and many of the recommendations of the report would not be adopted.

While the efforts of reformers in the 1940s may have not yielded much in terms of policy and regulatory outcomes, the criticisms they made of for-profit corporate broadcasting endured. Once a more favourable political climate presented itself, these criticisms were addressed. The creation of the CPB, in many ways, was an embodiment of growing resentment towards network broadcasting, as well as the values behind President Johnson’s Great Society – a set of government initiatives that sought to address racial and economic inequality. Considering that the people behind this program brought America as close as it would come to the collectivist policymaking environment that yielded the BBC in 1920s Britain, perhaps it is not a surprise that Johnson’s team saw a place for a public, not-for-profit broadcaster in the media system. Ledbetter describes this climate concisely: “Following the recommendations of the Carnegie Commission on Educational Television, Congress passed the Public Broadcasting Act of 1967 with the understanding that public television was needed precisely because commercial television was the ‘vast wasteland’ once denounced by Newton Minow” (1998, p.2).

Minow’s quote suggests that after four decades of corporate broadcasting, profit driven broadcasting did not always yield high quality content. A public service crusader, “he noted that ‘the squandering of our airwaves is no less important than the lavish waste of any precious natural resource’” and that “the people own the air. They own it as much in prime evening time as they do at six o’clock Sunday Morning. For every hour that the people give you, you owe them something” (Barsamian 2001, p.9). Rather than serving the people, progressives argued that commercial broadcasting led to poor “program performance” in terms

of the public interest (Gomery 2008, p.220). This was true regarding news – Ledbetter cites an FCC employee who discusses the deleterious effects of competition on the broadcast of news:

“A public affairs program or a news analysis sometimes will deteriorate as it passes through the various stages of production [...] because the producer is seeking desperately for some device to increase its rating ... In the end, commercial television remains true to its own purposes. It permits itself to be distracted as little as possible from its prime goal of maximising audience” (1998, p.21).

Most of the Great Society projects would constitute government overreach by the neoliberal standards of today, and the CPB is no exception. Ledbetter’s book charts what he refers to as the *‘Death of Public Broadcasting in the United States,’* which begins with interference in CPB organisation and funding during the Nixon administration. Barsamian (2001, pp.25–26) notes how controversial political content, aired just three years after the Broadcasting Act that created the CPB was passed, resulted in President Nixon vetoing the bill which funded the CPB until three PBS executives resigned. Political criticism of CPB, PBS, and NPR through the 1990s had to do with accusations of bias, and often resulted in a lack of adequate funding. One of the most vociferous detractors of American public broadcasting was Speaker of the House Newt Gingrich, who perceived a liberal bias in public broadcasting and resented that such a network would be subsidised by the taxpayer (De Witt 1994).

During this time period, only a few decades after the CPB was created, several authors including Tracey (1998) and Ledbetter (1998) argue that a confluence of factors have yielded a decline, or to use Ledbetter’s term, a death of public service broadcasting. Among them, Tracey argues, was a lack of widespread public recognition of the need for non-commercial public service broadcasting. He argues that “Trailing as a consequence of the implicit Reithian patricianism of American public service television is the brute reality that for most Americans most of the time there is no felt ‘need’ for public television” (1998, p.248).

In addition to the funding problems associated with the CPB’s politically contingent purse strings (the CPB’s appropriations requests are generally not met, based on the data provided on their website (2017)), other problems arose as

communication technology developed in the 1980s and 1990s. Struggling to compete with the major over-the-air networks, growing competition via cable hurt PBS's already anaemic ratings. "The average prime-time rating for public television in all TV households remained steady for many years at only 2.6-2.8 per cent. In the mid-1980s the growth of basic and pay cable began to undermine even this small base" (Tracey 1998, p.251). Tracey predicted that new services, like those present at the time of writing this work, would 'only further decimate the already small public broadcasting audience' (1998, p.253).

3.2.1.3: Cable news – new voices and the Balkanisation of American political news

Focusing on the first 50 years of broadcasting certainly would not leave modern commentators with the impression that the United States broadcasting environment was a very diverse one, even if some competition existed then. The corporate stranglehold on broadcast licenses, and the prolonged political co-optation of the FCC would suggest, to some, the complete opposite – a plutocracy of the media. However, this section has shown that given these restraints, the regulatory apparatus did work to try and preserve some plurality. In some important ways, like antitrust investigation and restrictions on monopoly ownership in local media markets, the FCC and its allies could create a kind of plurality of corporations. Until the 1980s, the small number of voices in the broadcast media had less to do with seemingly high barriers to entry into the market, and more to do with a lack of spectrum space to accommodate all the corporate voices ready to be heard. The development of cable and satellite television changed this.

A combination of these technological innovations and the Reagan Administration's abolition of the FCC's Fairness Doctrine, opened the floodgates to many new corporate voices, who would speak their mind in an unprecedented way. This transition from the corporate duopoly of NBC and CBS to a cable news environment with dozens of alternatives – given the American tradition of promoting corporate competition - illustrates the United States' regulatory path dependence. With this path dependence in mind, this thesis argues that as consumers continue the transition to internet-based news consumption, they will

continue to pursue a more diverse news diet and consume more sources than they previously had.

The transition from analogue broadcasting to cable and satellite corresponds with the shift from Keynesianism to neoliberalism. While the impact of this wave of deregulation is explored in more detail while exploring the American approach to neutrality, it is important to recognize how they are linked: the FCC could no longer hold broadcast licensees accountable to a Fairness Doctrine which was based on spectrum scarcity. The result of this synchronicity has been evident – a proliferation of new, unique voices in the news media.

Technologically, two key developments provided an opportunity for new voices to emerge in the news media. The first development, the transition from traditional, over-the-air broadcasting to cable broadcasting was important because it eliminated any restrictions that this old technology placed on the market. While still finite, cable provides a much higher limit in terms of the total number of distinct channels (in lieu of broadcast frequencies) available to broadcasters. While barriers to entry were still high – cable remains dominated by corporations even today – there was room for new actors, so long as they could afford to produce their own content and their content was popular enough that cable service providers would carry it. In addition to using cable to overcome the structural limitations of the medium, new actors were also able to circumvent the exclusive infrastructure relationship between AT&T and the major networks. The second key development, satellite distribution, was also key to the proliferation of television news sources. Gomery (2008) emphasises the importance of this technology because telephone lines (owned by AT&T and used only by NBC, CBS, and ABC) represented another limit on the growth of the medium. Using this cable and satellite technology, Ted Turner launched CNN, the first of what would be many 24-hour news networks (1998, p.253).

Cable's challenge to network oligarchy quickly gained momentum. C-SPAN was another early entrant, which is collectively funded by cable broadcasters. The National Cable Television Association "figured that cable leaders needed a tool to approach the United States Congress in order to lobby for favourable rules governing cable," a tactic which was largely successful (Gomery 2008, p.307).

Gomery notes the importance of C-SPAN in the market for news: “C-SPAN was unique – to say the least – in a United States in which commercial over-the-air television still dominated. Now the news junkies who wanted to know what was up in Washington, DC could see for themselves” (2008, p.307). Using the favourable cable regulations developed in the 1980s and 1990s to his advantage, Rupert Murdoch created a fourth network – FOX.

NBC also capitalised on the cable boom, seeing it as an opportunity to reach new, niche demographics. CNBC and MSNBC, two 24-hour cable networks, remain relevant today in broadcasting and compete with Murdoch’s Fox News both for ratings and political influence. HBO, a pay service which was created to broadcast feature films, has waded into the market with original and opinionated politics programming, including *Real Time with Bill Maher*, and *Last Week Tonight with John Oliver*. Today, these national cable and broadcast networks compete offline not only with each other, but with international sources as well. Many cable providers carry British programming including BBC America and BBC News, along with a growing number of international news sources, including Al Jazeera America, RT, and Euronews.

In many ways, then, cable is the clearest manifestation of the regulatory approach that the United States has employed for almost a century. If the American public interest is maintained by qualified, private competition, then the media of the cable era should protect and promote this public interest better than ever before. While the American interpretation of what it means to be ‘qualified’ might cause a Reithian broadcaster some anxiety, the corporate liberal interpretation that has dominated American broadcasting closely reflects the unique and complex historical, political, and economic circumstances of twentieth century America. The sequence of regulatory decisions taken in the United States, first by the FRC in the 1920s and later by the FCC and Congress, demonstrates a commitment to expanding commercial competition, and embracing (corporate) diversity. In America, PBS, NPR and C-SPAN compete in a media market that reflects pluralism in corporate ownership, where viewers choose winners and losers. In this system, quality broadcasting that appeals to consumers yields

favourable ratings, and these ratings fuel networks' competition for advertising revenue.

The internet represents an even larger, theoretically limitless market. New news websites and blogs emerge every day, and although the medium has changed and the scale of news organizations varies more than ever before, the rules remain the same. Commercial and political success online is still driven by consumption. Quality and efficiency in content production remain the keys to success online. In this regard, researchers can expect an even more diverse online news media environment since the corporate advantages present offline (consider the huge amount of resources needed to create a broadcast network and maintain its licenses, or the amount of connections required to lobby regulators or legislators) disappear online. Today, smaller news organisations can coexist and compete with the established giants so long as they create quality content that consumers enjoy and remain solvent. For bloggers and other internet natives, this is easily done – web-hosting fees are small, and the amateur journalism and opinion content on these websites are inexpensive in comparison to the payroll expenses of a major network news apparatus. For these new low-cost sources, the small amount of revenue generated by web advertising could be enough to sustain this new kind of entrepreneurial news production.

An American news consumer, whose diet is further explored later in this chapter while discussing neutrality, is already accustomed to pursuing news that reflects his or her political interests on the television or the radio. The historical institutionalist would expect that this will not only continue online, but also that this familiarity with a broad diet will encourage consumers to refine their consumption habits even further. As a result, this thesis predicts that the American consumer will navigate this diverse market readily. While some will continue to use broadcasters and established print sources for news content online, the phenomenon of narrowcasting – brought about by cable and expanded by the internet – will continue to divide the attention of American consumers.

3.2.2: Ownership Regulation in the United Kingdom – Public ownership for a public good

If private interests dominated the discourse surrounding early broadcast media ownership in the United States, historians might argue that the very same discourse was dominated by public interests in the United Kingdom. Even when competition was introduced, entrusting only those broadcasters who would protect a more well defined public interest (as the BBC had done during its time as a monopoly broadcaster) with valuable spectrum space and the legal right to use it, regulators ensured that ownership of the broadcast media in the United Kingdom would be a unique commitment suited to only a few that shared the same vision. Through historical institutionalist analysis, this section makes two claims about the ownership structure of the British media. First, path dependency based on interwar collectivism restricted plurality in broadcast media ownership in comparison to the USA. Second, because of this minimal (or lack of) competition, a license fee funded public service broadcaster dominates the media landscape in Britain.

3.2.2.1: Establishing a public service monopoly

Early broadcast regulation in the United Kingdom was a response to the very same problem that forced the United States into regulatory action – spectrum scarcity. While the competition of domestic, amateur, and professional radio broadcasts necessitated intervention in both systems, Curran and Seaton argue that the problem was even worse in the United Kingdom, where much of the domestic airwaves were interfered with by broadcasts originating across the English Channel in mainland Europe. Since the demand for a frequency on the spectrum was so high, “The Postmaster General solved the problems of radio interference by persuading rival manufacturers to invest jointly in one small and initially speculative broadcasting station: The British Broadcasting Company” (Curran & Seaton 2010, p.104).

While this first iteration of the BBC was owned privately (with each manufacturer owning a share), it still represents a key area of difference between the two states – an acknowledgement that the broadcast spectrum and the

programming that takes place on it as a public good. Along with the decision to appoint John Reith as the first Managing Director, this move paved the way for both public ownership and monopoly broadcasting during what Asa Briggs refers to as the 'Golden Age' of broadcasting (2000). The combination of a unique political environment defined by advocacy and support for the nationalisation of public services, and the equally British problem of additional spectrum scarcity (brought about by geographical proximity to European markets) yielded an appropriately British solution. It was at this critical juncture where the American and British media systems began to diverge.

Burns offers an alternative explanation for early monopoly, by arguing that "the very fear of monopoly may well have been the operative cause of the setting up of the British Broadcasting Company" (1977, p.8). He claims throughout the book that the Postmaster General (in charge of issuing licenses and distributing spectrum space) and the press were reluctant to establish a monopoly broadcasting system, but doing so became necessary because a certain stakeholder, the Marconi Company, would establish an unsatisfactory one if left alone. Marconi's ownership of key patents and vast resources placed the firm at a distinct advantage if the broadcasting spectrum were to be opened to commercial interests. (1977)

In creating what Burns refers to as a 'cartel' of broadcast hardware manufacturers, and including Marconi in it, none would be left out of the process (1977, p.9). "So the creation of the BBC, the first of the 'Morrisonite' nationalised industries, is visible as a superb example of accommodatory politics, spreading satisfactions and dissatisfactions fairly evenly among the interest groups concerned" (Burns 1977, p.9). While both approaches suggest alternative motivations for creating a public monopoly broadcaster, the process of finding a solution in both cases reflects a key characteristic of the British system – openness towards and appreciation for the potential benefits of establishing a public monopoly that is designed to preserve the best interests of the public. Without any political support for a collectivist solution, it is likely that the Marconi Company would have been successful in establishing a monopoly, following the example of the National Broadcasting Company in the United States.

This negotiated approach described by Burns, where public monopoly is merely a solution to the prevention of private monopoly, is problematic because while it may offer some explanation for the establishment of the British Broadcasting Company, it does little to explain the motivations behind the transition from private to public ownership. The Crawford Committee, set up in 1926 to study the future of broadcasting, “unquestioningly accepted the idea of a broadcasting monopoly, and recommended that the private company be replaced by a ‘Public Commission operating in the National Interest’” (Curran & Seaton 2010, p.105). This decision, which resulted in the establishment of the publicly funded British Broadcasting Corporation in 1926, was both a practical solution to the spectrum scarcity question, and a product of the domestic regulatory philosophy of the time. Where market liberalism led policymakers in the United States to create a regulatory apparatus aimed at maintaining a free market, a post-World War I collectivism in the United Kingdom, advocated by John Reith and accepted by members of the pivotal Crawford Committee and other key witnesses such as the Postmaster General (Briggs 1995, p.329), led to a solution that entrusted broadcasting to a public entity. Curran and Seaton (2010, p.106) discuss the foundations of this approach, arguing that after the war “despite bitter opposition, the centralised control of health, insurance, coal, and ultimately the rationing of food had been introduced. [...] By the 1920s, however, a generation of reformers who had been civil servants during the war were experienced in organising the centralised distribution of resources” (2010).

The use of the term collectivism throughout this thesis is the product of the regulatory climate of 1920s Britain. Asa Briggs’ history of the Crawford Committee makes this clear:

“Only one man could have effectively challenged this view [that ‘there shall be a single broadcasting authority subject not to trade but to public control’] – Reith himself. Had he urged that the future of broadcasting should remain in trade hands, with the BBC being governed by a similar constitution to that then in being, he might well have won his case. [...] But instead he was categorically in favour of a public constitution, and there was no one – least of all the members of his own Board – who would or could effectively challenge him. Even the handful of his critics in the radio industry

were as adamant as he or Sir Evelyn Murray about the need to perpetuate monopoly authority” (Briggs 1995, p.329).

The BBC’s first Managing Director, John Reith, embodied the social attitudes that dominated political discourse during the interwar period, and his role as a champion for the company was integral. Briggs cites Reith’s words in *Broadcast Over Britain*, which provide useful insight into the political atmosphere of the 1920s: “In these days, when efforts are being made towards the nationalisation of the public services and of certain essential industries of the country, the progress of broadcasting has been cited as the most outstanding example of the potentiality of a combination of private enterprise and of public control” (1995, p.216). After his representation during the Crawford Committee, the committee members “endorsed the moral case for monopoly. Parliament did not demur. Conservatives liked authority; Labour disliked private enterprise” (McIntyre 1993, p.140).

3.2.2.2: *Introducing Qualified Competition*

Government support for public service monopoly broadcasting led to its early success, but support for the BBC was far from universal. As the political climate began to shift and technology advanced, the calls for competition became louder and more difficult to ignore. While a change in the political climate of the United Kingdom during the 1950s resulted in commercial competition for the BBC, it did little to change the public service ethos in broadcast ownership that the Corporation had practiced and created as monopoly broadcaster. After decades of monopoly, both the institution of the BBC and its guiding principles had become part of the broader institutional framework of broadcasting in the United Kingdom. As a result of this path dependency, the introduction of commercial broadcasting was far from free and unfettered. On the contrary, commercial broadcasters in the United Kingdom are bound by strict public service obligations, not dissimilar to the language present in the BBC’s Royal Charter. The ITA (and later, the IBA, ITC, and Ofcom) strictly controlled the content broadcast on the ITV network. In this way, despite the privatisation of ITV, broadcasters in the United Kingdom serve public interests. Channel 4 remains a publicly owned, non-profit corporation with specific public service mandates, even though it is funded commercially (Channel 4 n.d.).

Burns offers a different perspective on the introduction of competition, suggesting that Independent Television ‘destroyed not only the monopoly of the BBC in the economic and political sense but also its special relationship with the nation’ (1977, p.43). However, his suggestion that there was a “disintegration of the BBC ethos” (p.43) doesn’t conform to reality for two reasons. The first reason is that when ITV began recruiting employees for the first commercial television station, the British candidates with any hands-on experience in broadcasting worked at the BBC. Along with their skills and knowledge, commercial television acquired a workforce trained to value the BBC brand of public service. The second reason involves some hindsight, as the author (writing in the 1970s) could not have anticipated the future state of the British media. In the absence of monopoly, the BBC has remained a perennially dominant force in the media. Ratings and survey data (Kantar Media 2012; Ofcom 2015a; Ofcom 2015c) demonstrate that the Reithian ethos is not only still relevant regarding news provision, its dedication to intellectualism and high quality, impartial journalism establishes the BBC as a trendsetter that others major players in the news media continue to emulate, not least in the provision of news.

3.2.2.3: UK Broadcasting in Transition: 1980 – Present

With the development and subsequent proliferation of the internet, different offline news media approached multi-platforming in different ways. Doyle’s work includes interviews with those involved in this transition, who describe “their transition to multi-platform as being ‘a defensive move’ – a necessary strategy to defend their market position at a time when the behaviour of audiences and advertisers is changing” (2010, p.436). Each broadcaster’s approach to making this transition is different and informed by many different factors. For example, “there are, of course, differences between how commercial players and public service operators explain their need to adopt a multi-platform approach” (Doyle 2010, p.436). This section explores how key actors in each case went about providing content online as the medium grew. While a good amount of research has been written about strategies regarding this transition from broadcast to

internet, including the hybridization literature mentioned in the introduction, less has been done specifically on news provision.

Political change in 1979 heralded a new era for the BBC, characterised by ongoing antagonism between the independent public service broadcaster and the Thatcher government. The BBC posed a unique challenge for the Conservative government, on the one hand public service provider of immense popularity, and on the other a taxpayer-subsidized institution in an age of privatisation and New Public Management. Such an institution had no place in neoliberal governance. Works by Barnett and Curry (1994) and O'Malley (1994) trace the contentious and, at times, precarious position of the BBC during the Thatcher years. Among the most important events of this period were the Peacock committee, which crucially did not “recommend that the Corporation take advertising” (Barnett & Curry 1994, p.121) and the development of a commercially funded public service broadcaster – Channel 4. The Major government’s Green Paper on charter renewal and the BBC’s response, called *Extending Choice*, “set out the blueprint for ‘The BBC’s role in the new broadcasting age’” and “outlined the four roles which would form the framework for the BBC of the future,” including the provision of “news and information” (1994, p.177).

The BBC’s role during the 1990s was hugely influential, not only because of its privileged position within the system but also because of its role as innovator. British broadcasting is unique to its American counterpart for several reasons, but this also includes a broadcasting climate where the major broadcasters (BBC, ITV, STV, UTV, Channel 4, and Channel 5) all have public service mandates at their core. While “economies of scale and scope are often thought to be the main incentive for multi-platform diversification,” certain broadcasters and particularly the BBC have additional “motives” (Doyle 2010, pp.436–437). Born notes in her volume on the Birt and Dyke-era BBC, “what is striking, when we look at the range of the BBC’s [...] initiatives, is the sophistication of the conception, buttressed by the new possibilities given by interactive, cross- and multi-media” (2004, p.515).

Under Birt’s Chairmanship, “The BBC decided that they needed a public service online effort” (Born 2004, p.219). The BBC, with its mandate for the provision of public service content, led the charge with BBC Online, sometimes at

the expense of the broadcasting budget (2004, p.128). In 2001, an executive describes the reality of online news provision in terms of economies of scale: “The bulk of what we do at News Online draws on agency material or existing BBC news material from TV and radio, which we reversion. Our other main source is Newsgathering [a production division of the BBC] – reports and live feeds” (Born 2004, p.406). They also speculate about what the future of the BBC’s online content might look like, arguing that “there is a complaint that we do too much regurgitating [...] and that we should do more value-added stuff – the expert forum, the clickable guide, the ‘send us your views’. It is a debate we need to have: should we do fewer stories and put more into interactive features?” (2004, p.406).

As Greg Dyke replaced Lord Birt at the BBC, Born argues that he benefitted from inheriting “the outlines of an ambitious digital strategy, its roots established by the rapid flourishing of BBC Online” (2004, p.468). He was similarly ambitious to provide PSB content on digital platforms. “To the Reithian mission to inform, educate and entertain, he added ‘connect’” (2004, p.486). In practical terms, innovation here still meant integrating multiple channels and media of communication – “crucial is the way new media extend the variety and range of the BBC’s mode of address to its audiences and publics, inviting participation” (2004, p.489).

Other broadcasters followed the lead of the BBC, but as the analysis that follows this chapter demonstrates, the approach that worked for the BBC does not work for every content producer. Channel 4, a commercially-funded station with a government-mandated commitment to public service since its inception, also approached the cross-platform age as it did the transition to digital – as an “opportunity to experiment” (Born 2003, p.784). Born notes that one of C4’s greatest successes, *Big Brother*, was a means of creating revenue across different media, arguing that “C4 strategists are articulate about the desired economic and technological synergies between the main channel, subscription channels, and internet and interactive services” (Born 2003, p.784).

The contemporary online strategy of the BBC is a product of the old, Reithian commitment to public service, and the new; embracing technological change and delivering innovative content. A representative of the BBC argues that

it “should, we believe, be an innovative organisation but we also need to remain relevant,” (Doyle 2010, p.436). Birt and Dyke’s interpretation of the BBC’s public service mandate involved an *obligation* to operate in the new medium – as it had done decades earlier, moving from the familiarity of radio to television. Doyle argues that for “PSB operators, multi-platform diversification is also about trying to keep in step with evolving and, arguably, much more demanding conceptions of the key purposes public service provision ought to fulfil in the digital era” (Doyle 2010, p.437). Born advocates for the BBC’s online presence in an ambiguous medium:

“The online presence of the BBC in such a context has a critical function, for its long-established ethos of accuracy and impartiality merits at least a reasonable degree of trust and provides an anchor of veracity. In this way the BBC, along with other authoritative news providers, helps strenuously to shape what can otherwise be, for many users, simply the noise of the net” (2004, p.514).

In response to pressures from both commercial broadcasters and the European Commission, Brevini notes that the BBC did have to restrict its online content (2013, pp.73–74). However, online news provision wasn’t on the chopping block, as this part of the BBC’s online content predated (and would likely pass) the public value test carried out by the BBC Trust.¹⁵ She found that overall, in spite of its central role, “the BBC may not have limited the growth of the market – contrary to the concerns of its critics” (Brevini 2013, p.123). As online news provision by the BBC online expands, the mathematics between public value delivered and market impact continues to favour the public service broadcaster.

3.3: Domestic Approaches to Neutrality

As the last section approached media ownership, this section argues that domestic approaches to maintaining neutrality are similarly divergent, with differences again lying in two distinct regulatory philosophies. It demonstrates how initial similarities in domestic approaches to neutrality in the earliest days of

¹⁵ Further demonstrating the embeddedness and path dependency of media institutions, the principles of this public value test are reflected in EU competition policy regarding the media and public service broadcasting (Brevini 2013).

broadcasting were short-lived, with influential commercial interests in the United States advocating against rules forcing broadcasters to maintain neutrality. This environment, sympathetic to commercial interests, led to the successful abolition of individual broadcasters' obligation to individual neutrality in the United States. Meanwhile, the commitment to neutrality enshrined in the BBC's Royal Charter would be transposed into law for commercial broadcasters in the United Kingdom, remaining a key piece of the current 2005 Communications Act. Understanding these differences, two clear domestic paths emerge regarding neutrality – paths that have had important political and economic implications for news providers both offline and online.

In political communication and media studies, the term neutrality has many meanings. This thesis focuses exclusively on neutrality in political or ideological terms – measuring impartiality and the extent to which sources and stories demonstrate a coherent position on the news being reported. Among the many democratic roles of the mass media, this involves the relationship between the diametrically opposed roles of conduit and advocate. Another interpretation of neutrality, which involves independence from the state control, is another important theme, especially when addressing the role of public service broadcasters. The work of Robinson, Goddard, and Parry (2009) reflects this alternative notion of neutrality using the context of the Iraq War, where the authors argue that the British news media failed to adequately challenge government narratives. While this work is crucially important, it is beyond the narrow scope of this research project.¹⁶

3.3.1: Market-based Neutrality in American Broadcasting

Much like the John Reith in the United Kingdom, policymakers and early regulators in the United States saw the broadcast spectrum as a public good.

¹⁶ Throughout its history, the BBC fought to establish its independence from state control. At certain points, including the General Strike of 1926 and World War II, Briggs (1995; 2000) Crisell (2002) and Higgins (2015) describe how the fledgling broadcaster managed to establish a news provision largely free from the influence of both newspapers and the state. The nature of the relationship between the BBC and the state remains complex, with Higgins claiming that the two “will always dance a curious dance together – a delicate waltz that might slide into a sparring match, a grapple, or, occasionally, a death grip” (2015, p.147).

Streeter again cites Herbert Hoover, a pivotal figure in early broadcasting history as Commerce Secretary, who argued that “the ether is a public medium, and its use must be for public benefit. [...] The dominant element for consideration in the radio field is, and always will be, the great body of the listening public” (1996, p.93). While these key figures came to the same conclusion about the medium of broadcast – that it should serve the public interest – their proposals about the best way to ensure this varied considerably (McChesney & Nichols 2010, p.144).

Founded upon a belief in classical liberal values like the freedom of speech, the American regulatory approach to broadcast neutrality is dominated by private interests. Contemporary American broadcast regulation reflects a belief in the market’s ability to successfully deliver a sufficiently balanced portrayal of the political world without government intervention. This approach to neutrality, radically different from the British approach presented in the next part of this chapter, is the product of decades of regulatory reform negotiations between corporate liberals, and progressives who advocated for more active regulatory intervention. This section focuses on a few of these battles, and specifically the institutional inertia that led to the abolition of the Fairness Doctrine. Reflecting on the proliferation and success of ideologically diverse cable news networks in the 1980s and 1990s, this thesis argues that both news producers’ editorial strategies and consumers’ preferences are informed or shaped by this regulatory approach. The hypotheses presented in this thesis are designed, in part, to determine if these path dependencies have manifested themselves online.

This analysis is divided into three parts, which correspond with critical junctures in American broadcasting policy. First, this section discusses how early broadcast regulation contributed to notions of impartiality, focussing on the Radio Act of 1927 as a compromise between progressives and market liberals – a compromise that favoured the latter. The second section addresses another critical juncture: the replacement of the Mayflower Doctrine with the Fairness Doctrine. Contrary to its name, this section on the roots of the Fairness Doctrine represents the end of progressive influence in broadcast regulation. The third critical juncture revolves around the abolition of the Fairness Doctrine during the Reagan administration, a moment of regulatory and legislative capture that

solidified neoliberal control of broadcast regulation. The central argument throughout this section is simple – despite varying strengths of opposition over time, corporate interests have continually dominated the regulatory process with regards to impartiality, leading to a point of regulatory capture.

3.3.1.1: Early American approaches to Neutrality in Broadcasting

While Reagan’s neoliberal crusade against the Fairness Doctrine represents arguably the most significant moment in the history of American media regulation, a “fairness criterion can be traced to earlier legislative doctrine” (Pickard 2015, p.104). Understanding these earlier regulatory efforts at impartiality, and how they influenced the creation of and subsequent challenges to the Fairness Doctrine, can provide insight into how embedded the corporate liberal perspective has been in domestic policymaking. The first twenty years of broadcasting, at a time of great political and economic turmoil, were characterised by technological growth and a rapid expansion of household radio use.

The conferences and policymaking process surrounding the Radio Act of 1927 represented the first real governmental intervention into the new world of broadcasting, and the laws that emerged from this process would shape the medium for almost a century. The provisions of the law that concerned neutrality represented some degree of compromise between corporate and progressive interests. On the one hand, “the commission was directed not to ‘interfere with the right of free speech by means of radio communication’” while on the other hand, “broadcasters were prohibited from showing favouritism towards particular candidates during electoral campaigns” (Streeter 1996, p.98). However, the interests of progressives and non-profits were marginalised over time.

The FRC’s main regulatory tool in the 1920s and 1930s was the authority to issue licences, and the regulator’s interpretation of licensing criteria was crucially important in determining not only the winners and losers of the time, but also the trajectory of future media policy. As the section of this chapter on American media ownership notes, licensing was justified as a solution to spectrum scarcity. McChesney argues that “since broadcasting plays such a dominant role in a nation’s media culture, and since broadcasters are licensed to use scarce channels,

the public had a right to demand that commercial broadcasters do that which is socially valuable but would not be commercially attractive otherwise” (2000, p.68). While the government could shape the media system however it liked, the 1927 Radio Act represented little more than a continuation of the status quo before state intervention. Considering impartiality in news broadcasting, perhaps the most important legacy of the 1927 act was, as Streeter argues, “not because it created anything new, but because it legitimated and solidified the established order” (1996, p.96).

The language was plain - licences were issued based on a broadcaster’s ability to serve the “public interest, convenience, or necessity,” but individual interpretations of what constitutes the public interest varied wildly (McChesney 2000, p.192). Educators and non-profit broadcasters lobbied regulators to interpret this public interest mandate in the same way that the British regulated its monopoly broadcaster – creating a public body that would actively regulate news content and programming in the public interest. Corporate interests, on the other hand, argued that licenses could be awarded to stations on the bases of costing the consumer nothing (they were funded by advertising) and providing the strongest signal (Streeter 1996, pp.94, 99–100). While the BBC’s operating principles set out by the Crawford Committee (Anon 1925) included language that tied public service to impartiality, American licensing criteria had no explicit tie to impartiality. For this reason, the Radio Act of 1927 represented a victory for corporate interests and the First Amendment rights of broadcasters.

The other major contribution of this early era of broadcasting to the question of neutrality is the emergence of broadcast news commentary. The relationship between broadcasters and opinion content was initially very complex. Barnouw’s (1966) first volume on broadcasting in the United States provides a useful example of this relationship. He identifies Hans von Kaltenborn as an early radio commentator whose criticism of US foreign relations caused tension between the state and the two key private actors in early broadcasting – the licensed network, WEA, and AT&T, the carrier (Barnouw 1966, p.141). While the move to remove Kaltenborn as a speaker could be better viewed as private interests in an emerging market attempting to stay on the good side of those in charge of the

regulatory apparatus rather than an effort to remove opinion content from the airwaves, it is also indicative of early broadcasters' willingness to restrict a commentator's access to the technology. To illustrate this point, he quotes WEAFF operator William Harkness, who confirms that "we used the blue pencil quite freely in the early days" (1966, p.141).

Despite the state's displeasure and resistance from key broadcasting executives (see the two quotes below), market forces prevailed and commentary persisted. Within nine years, Kaltenborn was an employee of CBS, although this relationship was also strained. In the public debate leading up to the Second World War, "every expression seemed to arouse fury. [CBS executive William] Paley had reached the conclusion that opinion should be confined as much as possible to round tables and other programs providing balanced discussion" (Barnouw 1968, p.135). The author continues: "Paley felt that the broadcaster should also refrain from publishing its own opinions. 'We must never have an editorial page,' he said as early as 1937. 'We must never try to further either side of any debateable opinion.' By the same token, he had reached the conclusion that a radio newsman should not push opinions" (1968, p.135). Paley's vision was to have "*analysts*, not *commentators*. A news analyst, in CBS doctrine, was a newsman who analysed the news but promoted no view. A commentator was an opinion-pusher – not wanted on CBS" (1968, p.135). While Paley's position might lead to the hasty conflation of the American and British system, it's important to emphasise that his views represent a commercial broadcasters' prerogative, rather than a regulatory or legal mandate.

3.3.1.2: The Mayflower Decision and the Fairness Doctrine

If early broadcasting through World War II represented voluntary editorial restraint, the 1940s represented a critical juncture, characterised by Roosevelt progressivism at the Federal Communications Commission. At this time, progressive interests enacted regulations to formalise or institutionalise principles of impartiality. The Mayflower Doctrine (or Decision as the FCC ruling was known) closely reflected the language present in the BBC's Royal Charter, forbidding

station owners from editorialising the news (Pickard 2015, p.103). Its roots even predate the FCC as an institution – Pickard notes that:

“A fairness criterion can be traced to earlier legislative doctrine such as the 1927 Federal Radio Commission’s public interest standard. However, throughout much of the 1930s, a de facto libertarian ethos governed radio speech as radio programming largely accorded with broadcasters’ commercial imperatives. Although disenfranchised groups had often decried bias, concerns about fairness and balance became more pronounced as fears of fascism spiked in the early years of World War II. Even the 1939 NAB code encouraged broadcasters to avoid overt politicking, and many stations adopted no-editorializing policies” (2015, p.104).

The FCC’s 1941 Mayflower Decision reflected this wartime attitude about opinion content. The FCC’s ruling against partisan editorialising was based on spectrum scarcity, arguing that to preserve the public interest, “A truly free radio cannot be used to advocate the causes of the licensee” (Barnouw 1968, p.137) and crucially, that “the broadcaster cannot be advocate” (Pickard 2015, p.104). Since the National Association of Broadcasters’ official position at the time was to encourage broadcasters to avoid editorializing, progressive regulators met with little resistance in the immediate aftermath of the Mayflower ruling. However, as a regulatory ruling rather than federal legislation, it was vulnerable to legislative challenge as soon as the corporate media, led by the NAB, moved on from wartime news provision and changed its collective mind about the evils of editorialising.

By the end of the decade the progressive wave led by FDR had receded and broadcasters, with a renewed desire to assert their first amendment rights, saw an opportunity to challenge this ruling. Their efforts resulted in congressional action, which replaced the Mayflower Doctrine with the Fairness Doctrine. Unlike the Mayflower ruling, this new rule allowed editorialising but attempted to maintain impartiality in news by requiring broadcasters to devote time to opposing viewpoints (Simmons 1978, p.43). While this seems like a ‘fair’ compromise between the regulators who wanted to restrict editorialising to protect the public interest and the broadcasters who looked to preserve their freedom of speech, it is representative of NAB’s opposition to state intervention and the discursive dominance of corporate liberalism in general.

In spite of fears that the repeal of the Mayflower Doctrine would turn broadcasting into something resembling the partisan press, where “biases and misinformation” were prevalent (Pickard 2015, p.108), the Fairness Doctrine replaced it on June 2, 1949. For historical institutionalists establishing a path dependency narrative, the establishment of the Mayflower Doctrine and the Fairness Doctrine represent critical junctures - important and potentially transformative moments in American media history. The first represents temporary progressive triumph, and the second represents a return to the path of corporate liberalism and non-intervention. Understood together, these two critical junctures demonstrate how overwhelming institutional inertia can be, how embedded corporate liberal values in the policymaking process, and how easily path dependency can overcome short term changes or trends.

The subtle change in language between the two rules – from a rule preventing the broadcaster from editorialising (a mandate of objectivity) and the other being that broadcasters can editorialise but must make provisions for alternative points of view – represents a considerable, if incomplete victory for corporate liberal interests and a return to pre-war norms (Federal Communications Commission 1959, p.52). A clear success in terms of negative liberty (freedom from external constraints on speech), the Fairness Doctrine was created to “maintain what the Supreme Court calls ‘an uninhibited marketplace of ideas in which truth will ultimately prevail’” (Streeter 1996, p.129). Market liberalism was so embedded in the discourse that both advocates and critics of the Fairness Doctrine used the language of liberalism (focusing specifically on the freedom of speech guaranteed in the First Amendment) in their arguments for or against the policy.

In addition to the Fairness Doctrine, “two right of reply rules were introduced in 1967, one dealing with personal attacks, the other with features in political editorials” (Gibbons & Humphreys 2012, p.21). The legality of the Fairness Doctrine and its legislative mandate was the subject of the 1969 Supreme Court Case, *Red Lion Broadcasting Co. v FCC*. The case revolved around a broadcaster’s refusal to provide an author air time to reply to on air personal attacks from one of their radio personalities. *Red Lion* was a confirmation of the constitutionality of the Fairness Doctrine as well as a turning point, mainly because it established the

need to balance broadcasters' negative freedom to editorialise (hitherto unrecognised by the *Mayflower* decision) along with the public's positive freedom to information (Simmons 1978, pp.52–53). Streeter notes the Supreme Court's argument - "If treated as absolutes, one set of rights proves fatal to the other" - and its conclusion that "if the Fairness Doctrine does interfere somewhat with broadcasters' free speech rights, such marginal interference is justified when empirically calculated against the rights of the audience" (1996, p.130). *Red Lion's* importance lies in its confirmation of broadcasters' rights, and its failure to establish (or compel the FCC or Congress to establish) a reasonable test that could be applied to Fairness-related complaints.

The Fairness Doctrine's vague language, as noted by Simmons (1978), was representative of the progressive FCC's often self-inflicted harm. The poor wording of the Doctrine would have two important consequences. First, the language left broadcasters unsure of what kind of content would be subjected to Fairness complaints, and what would not. Their claim was that this environment would lead to a chilling effect, where broadcasters would intentionally avoid controversial subjects to escape expensive legal entanglements.¹⁷ Second, immediately after the court decision was made, the language of the Doctrine had already limited its effectiveness by allowing broadcasters to sort out the key details of (1) who would respond to a broadcasters' editorial, (2) when that response would be broadcast, and (3) what the duration of the response would be.

The balancing act suggested in the *Red Lion* ruling lasted just under two decades, until a shift in political climate enabled Reagan's neoliberal cohort to successfully repeal the Fairness Doctrine. Before this next section examines this third critical juncture, it is important to reflect on the impact of the doctrine on the news media at the time. One positive facet of the Fairness Doctrine that a pamphlet published by the NCCB highlighted is that it codified "A positive duty [for broadcasters] to seek out and air programming which addresses 'controversial issues of public importance' [...] In other words, the broadcaster must address

¹⁷ It's difficult to demonstrate this chilling effect empirically. A more useful interpretation of this language for historical institutionalists is that the chilling effect, whether real or contrived, served as valuable ammunition for both corporate and neoliberal political advocates in arguments for repeal.

important issues and must address them in a balanced way” (National Citizens Committee for Broadcasting 1982). While it was being enforced, the Fairness Doctrine obligated broadcasters to make a commitment to covering public affairs content, even if it was not as lucrative as other types of content.

Another key moment that may have contributed to the end of the Fairness Doctrine was the Vietnam War. During the conflict, networks like National Educational Television were accused by members of Congress of broadcasting ‘communist propaganda’ (Barnouw 1970, p.292). One broadcast, called *Inside North Vietnam*, signified both the demand for controversial and opinionated content, and institutional forces that tried to intervene in the market (1970). The tension between this desire to delegitimise those voices that disagreed with the state or military action and the protections established in the First Amendment was key in the late 1960s and 1970s, as the pendulum began to swing from post-war calls for additional state control to a commercially friendly, neoliberal approach to this relationship.

3.3.1.3: *Repealing the Fairness Doctrine – neoliberal triumph*

For the corporate broadcasters and neoliberals, the Fairness Doctrine’s acknowledgement of broadcasters’ rights as addressed in the *Red Lion* case was not enough. For a market to be truly uninhibited, as the Supreme Court argued that it should be, neoliberal advocates (including the National Association of Broadcasters) argued that any government control over broadcast content was necessarily excessive (Simmons 1978, p.41). Through the first Reagan administration, broadcasting policy was generally a product of compromise. Prior to that, a progressive bloc of legislators, FCC chairmen, and non-profit broadcasters negotiated several key concessions in legislation that otherwise favoured the interests of corporate broadcasting – even affirmed by the Supreme Court in the *Red Lion* case. Reagan’s reelection in 1984 represented the completion of a shift in economic and regulatory philosophy from wartime and post-war collectivism to small government neoliberalism. The results of this shift throughout the political world are well documented, including a marginalisation of the progressive,

interventionist agenda. With this ideological shift, a form of legislative and regulatory capture by corporate liberal interests began to occur in American politics. For the news media, the moment of capture was clear – the February 1985 inquiries held by FCC Chairman Mark Fowler.

When the call for this inquiry was made in 1984, new policy outcomes and influential legal decisions since the Fairness Doctrine's adoption already reflected a renewed emphasis on the First Amendment rights of all speakers, including broadcasters (Simmons 1978, pp.208–211). Changes in technological capability, combined with the rise of neoliberalism and its supporters resulted in an opportunity to “reconsider the Fairness Doctrine” since “First Amendment law had shifted dramatically to broadcasters' advantage” (Donahue 1989, p.159). Technologically, broadcasting was advancing faster than ever. Considering the proliferation of broadcast stations and the rise of cable as a means for transmitting television signals, justifying the Fairness Doctrine using spectrum scarcity logic had become increasingly untenable for progressive regulators and advocates. The fact that spectrum scarcity was the key justification for the Fairness Doctrine in the *Red Lion* case was indisputable, and many including Supreme Court Justice William Brennan openly argued that “reconsideration of the Fairness Doctrine may now be appropriate” (Donahue 1989, p.158). While a review may have been justified in the Supreme Court's eyes, the institutional inertia of the media sector was also against the Fairness Doctrine from the moment it was passed. While other outcomes were possible – Donahue (1989) notes many different motivations in American jurisprudence for curtailing an individual's free speech rights in favour of the public good – the dominant neoliberal wisdom during the 1980s was that any government intervention which restricted a news organisation's free speech rights was unwelcome interference in the free market. This philosophy was so dominant that the Fairness Doctrine was abandoned before the Supreme Court was never able to define the constitutionality of it in the cable and satellite television era. Before a legal challenge could make its way through the federal court system, the FCC decided to abandon enforcing the rule.

The end of the Doctrine was the product of a Fairness complaint and the favourable political climate mentioned above. A complaint about broadcast station

WTVH-TV “which broadcast a series of advertisements advocating construction of the Niagara Mohawk Power Company’s Nine Mile 2 nuclear power plant” was filed “because the network had not broadcast contrasting views” (Hershey Jr 1987). FCC General Counsel Diane S. Killory’s argument for its repeal had two parts: first, she argued that the doctrine had a chilling effect on broadcasters. A *New York Times* article published in response to the ruling quotes Killory: “the inquiry that resulted in the 1985 report showed that the doctrine had caused many broadcasters to adopt policies ‘under which they have shied away from covering controversial issues in news, documentaries, and editorial advertisements.’ She added that these “completely frustrate the goal of the Doctrine to foster robust debate and diversity of views” (Hershey Jr 1987). Neoliberal academic research at the time informed this perspective, with authors like Barrow (1975) arguing for the abolition of the Doctrine in favour of protecting the first amendment rights of broadcasters.

Considering that the FCC itself had enacted the Fairness Doctrine and its predecessor decades earlier, Killroy’s position, both in terms of her negative views on the Doctrine as well as her appointed office, is a significant manifestation of this shift in American regulatory culture. The transition – from the New Deal/Mayflower progressive, activist approach of the Fly-era FCC, to the self-sabotaging Fowler FCC that saw regulation as a hindrance to free market competition – was complete. Another perspective on this transition, which takes the entirety of broadcast media regulation into account, contextualises FCC activism as an anomaly, sandwiched between long phases dominated by the non-interventionist, corporate liberal agenda.

In the aftermath of Reagan’s presidency, the content of corporate news media quickly began to move rightward, adopting the neoliberal philosophy of broadcast media ownership. McChesney (1999, p.62) argues: “As commercial journalism almost always stays within the parameter of mainstream opinion, the tenor of journalism has become less conciliatory toward ideas critical of capitalism and the ‘free market’ and less receptive of ideas laudatory of social spending, poor people’s social movements, and regulation of business”. The pursuit of the corporate neoliberal agenda has reinforced itself – media corporations systematically exclude anti-capitalists from public debate, while simultaneously

promoting “the view that [corporations] are the natural democratic stewards of the airwaves and the media” and that they are “selflessly ‘giving the people what they want’ and battling to protect the First Amendment” (2000, p.65).

Contemporary cable and satellite broadcasting is representative of this shift: a proliferation of new networks with diverse editorial perspectives has corresponded with the systematic defunding of the CPB. Networks like Fox News, MSNBC, and newcomers like The Blaze (founded by conservative pundit Glenn Beck) demonstrate, in corporate liberal eyes, a manifestation of the uninhibited marketplace of ideas that cumulatively serves the public interest and meets demand for a plurality of ideological perspectives. This claim is controversial, and critical scholars like McChesney argue that the public service credentials of any marketplace dominated by corporate or commercial interests are necessarily compromised. In his words, “the end result [of hypercommercialism] is that the integrity of the editorial fare produced by the media giants is greatly compromised, and it has become increasingly difficult to distinguish editorial from explicitly commercial fare, even from advertising” (2000, p.34). This section demonstrates that the contemporary broadcasting environment is a product of corporate liberal success in policymaking, from the 1927 Radio Act to the Fairness Doctrine and its repeal.

The internet first became a tool for news consumption in this post-Fairness world, and as the media critics highlighted here and the data presented in this thesis suggest, internet news in the United States is both a product of and response to post-Fairness news environment. Although the format may have changed, key offline actors in domestic news now exist on the internet; very often enjoying a similar position of prominence in the online news market to the position they enjoyed offline. While some new actors have proven to be competitive with these offline giants (from *Huffington Post* to *Breitbart News* and *Think Progress*) and innovative, they still exhibit many characteristics of the offline media regarding editorial content. With many newcomers behaving in a way that reflects the offline giants, there is little reason to believe that the online news media in the United States is substantively different from the American offline news experience.

3.3.2: Collectivism and the British Approach to Neutrality

In terms of path dependency, if media regulation in the United States is an example of punctuated or evolutionary reform, the United Kingdom represents a system that has remained resistant to change, even in the face of similar political and cultural pressures. Historical institutionalists would argue that both states experienced similar critical junctures, so exploring the social, political, and economic forces that shaped the divergent outcomes of these critical policymaking moments is the first step in using this theory to predict how the internet news media will look and behave. Ideally, this exploration should identify a few key characteristics of the British media, which will provide qualitative and quantitative predictions about political content on the internet.

Of the many regulatory differences between the American and British media systems, the one that most progressive American commentators (and even academics) envy is the British approach to maintaining ideological neutrality of content and specifically content about politics. This section explores the origins of the British approach, starting again from the beginning of the 20th century. From here, the discussion continues by focusing on the early history of the BBC and its attempts to both establish itself as producer of news content and define its role as a public service broadcaster that informs rather than persuades.

3.3.2.1: Neutrality and the Press

The emergence of broadcast, and the subsequent establishment of the BBC, represents one of the first key points of divergence between the American and British media systems. Prior to this critical juncture, the British news media was characterised by a press with robust and diverse editorial perspectives, much like the United States. Without a well-defined public good to protect (like the broadcast spectrum), the government had little motivation or means to advocate for impartial reporting of the news. Much like the United States, any notion of balance in the British press of the time would be linked to some market-based approach to neutrality – where liberal voices balanced conservative voices out, and consumers were free to choose from this plurality of sources exactly what news to

consume. If a perspective or voice wasn't well represented, private actors were generally free to fill this void by entering the market with their own business.

As mentioned in the introduction, the British approach to print regulation is similar to print regulation in the United States. In the absence of a public good like the broadcast spectrum to consider, state regulation of the British print media is limited to preventing monopoly and legal protections against libel. Instead, the United Kingdom's press practices self-regulation through the Independent Press Standards Organisation (prior to the Leveson Inquiry, it was the Press Complaints Commission). In its Editors' Code of Practice, IPSO talks directly about neutrality in news production, stating that "the press, whilst free to editorialise and campaign, must distinguish clearly between comment, conjecture, and fact" (2016). Complaints about violations to this code are sent to the IPSO rather than Ofcom, and this independent regulator investigates them, and obliges publications to print corrections if a violation has occurred.

3.3.2.2: Reithian Public Service and Impartiality

Early news provision on the BBC was a product of compromise. As part of an agreement struck between daily newspapers (who saw the BBC as a threat to circulation and sales) and the Post Office, the early BBC was embargoed from broadcasting news content until evening editions were sold. Even then, another provision of the agreement stipulated that the evening news bulletin could only use content provided by wire services (Higgins 2015, p.141). Industrial action provided the BBC with a key opportunity to act as the primary information source for the public and as a reflection of the debate. Andrew Crisell's (2002, p.24) account of the BBC's behaviour during the General Strike of 1926 illustrates the balancing act that took place. The strike meant that the BBC had the opportunity and perilous responsibility to report the news "since most of the press was affected" by it. If the BBC broadcasted news sympathetic to the unions "the old political fears about the seditious effects of the media would revive," but if it was seen "as being simply pro-government, its editorial independence would be compromised and it would no longer command universal trust" (p.24-25). Perhaps its critics best illustrate the BBC's success – both Government ministers and

protesters alike accused the organisation of favouring the opposition. Despite these criticisms Crisell argues, “by the end millions had come to depend on the accuracy of this information” provided by the BBC (p.25).

Despite the antagonism between broadcast and the press, Reith saw the two facets of the media system as complementary, rather than competitive. In *Broadcast over Britain*, he uses an anecdote to describe the relationship between broadcasters and the press:

“For example, suppose a speech of first-rate importance on some vital and highly controversial subject is delivered. It may be agreeable to the policy of half the newspapers of the nation, and distasteful to that of the other half. To a large part of the country it may be represented as indicating the way of salvation; another large part may hardly have their attention drawn to it at all. Today, however, the whole country can hear it, and hear it directly from the lips of the exponent. [...] People are no doubt very glad to have advice given to them, and usually need it badly. What they want still more is to have all the facts of the case presented to them, in such a way that it is possible for them to make up their own minds on the subject, guided no doubt by the advice which is appended to the presentation of the facts.” (Reith 1924, pp.111–112)

As soon as the BBC had established itself as independent from the press, it began to define its approach to editorial control. Briggs cites a paper written by one of the fledgling BBC Education Department’s staffers, which demonstrates an editorial ethos that would be attributed to John Reith:

“News should be ‘what those in control of the BBC think listeners *should* hear (a responsibility greater than that has arisen since Adam’s fateful choice)’. The BBC need not compete with the press. If it chose above all to guarantee accuracy, it need not pander to sensationalism. Nor if it developed a proper news service would it reduce demand for newspapers” (Briggs 1995, 243).

Prior to 1926, Reith had already acknowledged the importance of solidifying broadcast as a public service: his first book *Broadcast over Britain* outlined his vision for the BBC, informed by his personal and professional life. His approach to broadcasting was very pastoral in nature – seeing the public service broadcaster’s primary role as a tool to educate (and morally and culturally enrich) the masses rather than entertain them. The BBC’s monopoly position enabled it to resist the dumbing down of content that Reith saw as inevitable with free markets and the

populist content that advertisers adored. To illustrate this point, McIntyre cites a speech Reith gave in Manchester:

“In the early days, it was said that the Broadcasting Company ought to take showmen and super-showmen into its service because they knew what the public wanted ... Did the public know what it wanted? Look at the [cinema], what it gave and what the public took from it. Those responsible for the control of broadcasting set themselves the task of being a little ahead of the public. They were criticised for it, told they were dictators, and accused of things which were far from their intention” (McIntyre 1993, p.159).

Before the Sykes and Crawford Committees, the Broadcasting Company was little more than an experimental solution to spectrum scarcity, and even Reith and those who appointed him confessed to knowing very little about the science and business of broadcasting (McIntyre 1993). Even so, Reith was given almost complete autonomy to run the BBC as he saw fit. The Chairman of the Company, Sir William Noble, said “we’re leaving it all to you. You’ll be reporting at our monthly meetings and we’ll see how you’re getting on” (1993, p.119). Such autonomy, concentrated in the hands of one man, led to a broadcasting schedule that conformed to a vision of public service that was often so specific that content was tremendously unpopular. It was during Reith’s reign, specifically during the 1926 General Strike that the BBC first established itself as a player in both news and politics.

In *Broadcast over Britain*, Reith outlines the public service values that have come to define the BBC as an institution. Speaking about the private partners of the British Broadcasting Company (radio manufacturers) and the threat that they may pose to the public service commitments of the Company, he claims that “they have all come to the conclusion that, since the Broadcasting Company regards itself as a public service, and is catering for the public interest, it behoves the trade to adapt their manufacturing and selling policy to the requirements of the public as reflected in B.B.C. policy” (1924, p.57). To Reith, the role of broadcasting was to be educative. While the current BBC’s earlier iteration, the British Broadcasting Company, was not as directly involved in the news production process as its successor would become, the principle of maintaining neutrality in broadcasting

were woven into the fabric of the institution at an early stage. Again, Reith played a key role. He argued that:

“[Broadcasting] carries direct information on a hundred subjects to innumerable men and women, who thereby will be enabled not only to take more interest in events which were formerly outside their ken, but who will after a short time be in a position to make up their own minds on many matters of vital moment, matters which formerly they had either to receive according to the dictated and partial versions and opinions of others, or to ignore altogether. A new and mighty weight of opinion is being formed, and an intelligent concern on many subjects will be manifested in quarters now overlooked” (1924, pp.18–19).

Reith also articulates the link between public service and impartiality: “It is necessary to be cautious, and we shall, I trust, be very cautious indeed. It will not be easy to persuade the public of an absolute impartiality, but impartiality is essential” (1924, p.112). This public service ethos is reflected in every Royal Charter and corresponding Committee report since the first one that established the British Broadcasting Corporation was published in 1927. The Royal Charter itself establishes the BBC’s mandate to “collect news of and information relating to current events in any part of the world and in any manner that may be thought fit” (Anon 1927). The corresponding findings of the Crawford Committee, addressed the broadcasting of “controversial matter’ by arguing that it should be “distributed with scrupulous fairness” (Anon 1925).

In its contemporary editorial guidelines, the BBC’s Reithian traditions are still alive and well. It states that: “We must give due weight to the many and diverse areas of an argument. Breadth and diversity of opinion may require not just a political and cultural range, but, on occasions, reflection of the variations between urban and rural, older and younger, poorer wealthier, the innovative and the status quo, etc.” (BBC 2014, 25). The BBC Editorial Guidelines goes one step further, effectively prohibiting BBC employees from publishing or broadcasting their own opinions. It states, “Our audiences should not be able to tell from BBC output the personal prejudices of our journalists or news and current affairs presenters on matters of public policy, political or industrial controversy, or on ‘controversial subjects’ in any other area.” (BBC 2014, 28).

3.3.2.3: Maintaining Regulatory Standards in the Face of Neoliberalism

In the face of political pressure, commercial competition, and international crisis, the BBC maintains that neutrality is still very much at the heart of its corporate ethos. Charlotte Higgins cites Tony Hall, Director General of the BBC, regarding the BBC's continued commitment to impartiality: "I think the reason that the vast majority of people in this country support the BBC is because we are independent, we are impartial" (2015, p.144). This dedication continues to be well received by the public, since "eighty per cent of Britons receive their news from the BBC, and it is more trusted than any other news provider" (Higgins 2015, p.145).

As discussed earlier in the context of American broadcast regulation, the rise of neoliberalism manifested itself in Anglo-American politics as a wave of deregulation and privatisation, beginning with Reagan's presidency in the United States and Thatcher's premiership in the United Kingdom and continuing to the present day. In the United States, the Fairness Doctrine was a casualty of this neoliberal reform. However, despite wholesale deregulation in other sectors, the Thatcher government was either unable or unwilling to alter or remove the impartiality regulations that had been in place. The political and economic circumstances suggested that the news media was ripe for comprehensive reform, but neither the broadcasting cartel of the BBC, ITV and Channel 4, nor the impartiality rules that governed them fundamentally challenged during this time.

How did broadcasting emerge unscathed? One approach might be that there simply wasn't enough political will to change the status quo. Privatising the BBC, or abolishing impartiality could have cost the Thatcher government too much political capital because the relevant institutions were so culturally and politically embedded. Another product of path dependency, many of the stakeholders and experts involved in the policymaking process were predisposed to a favourable view of the BBC, and its corporate ethos. The British broadcasting professionals who would consult in the policymaking process would have either come directly from the BBC or from ITV, whose staff were either poached directly from the BBC or trained by earlier transplants. Likewise, Members of the House of Commons during the Thatcher regime grew up with BBC independence and impartiality. At

each subsequent Royal Charter renewal, parliamentary committees continue to ask many of the same questions – regarding finance, privatisation, plurality, and the evolving role of public service broadcasting – but little has changed. If there is a consensus between the BBC’s directors and government ministers that the BBC’s role does more good for the public than harm to the market, the two organisations can continue to work together.

Competition in the form of commercial broadcasting in the United Kingdom didn’t have the same impact in terms of neutrality as it did in the United States. Despite self-censorship exhibited by some of the major broadcasters, the First Amendment and corporate liberal stakeholders protected opinion content in American broadcasting. With the emergence of ITV in the 1950s and Channel 4 in the 1980s, impartiality has been a fundamental part of the commercial broadcaster’s remit. Ofcom’s current broadcasting code, established in the Communications Act 2003, retains similar language about impartiality set out first by its predecessors - the Independent Television Authority (ITA), and later the Independent Television Commission (ITC). On the question of impartiality, Ofcom’s regulatory principles are clear: “To ensure that news, in whatever form, is reported with due accuracy and presented with due impartiality” (Ofcom 2017, p.28).

ITV’s most recent “Producers Handbook” also reflects the leadership of the BBC and path dependency regarding neutrality in broadcasting. It highlights the need to adhere to “statutory requirements for impartiality in news reports,” emphasising that news must be “Reported with due accuracy [and] due impartiality” (ITV 2017, p.47). This indicates that ITV adhere to the same Reithian standards as the BBC in news provision, and that all commercial broadcasters are legally obliged to do so. By banning editorialising in broadcasting, this language (used in 2017) is most easily compared with the American Mayflower Doctrine. This policy was abandoned – in the United States around the time that ITV started broadcasting in the United Kingdom – in favour of the now unenforced Fairness Doctrine. This is a fundamental point of divergence between the two systems.

The impartiality language present in the Ofcom Broadcasting Code and the corresponding legislation (specifically the Communications Act 2003 and its more recent iterations), is a product of historical experience; specifically, the practices

(and popularity) of the early BBC and the impartiality language included in the committee reports preceding each Royal Charter. Histories of broadcasting in the United Kingdom all point to the experience of the BBC as crucial when discussing the introduction of competition. Among the most important considerations at the time was the need to ensure that an advertising-funded commercial broadcast service would not provide a service of inferior quality. That individual broadcasters in the United Kingdom are obliged to provide “an appropriately wide range of significant views” in programmes is compelling evidence of path dependency in UK broadcasting, and crucially, divergence with the US’ market based approach to neutrality (Communications Act 2003). This thesis argues that as these broadcasters continue a transition to online news provision, this impartiality will continue, and should also influence those sources not subject to Ofcom’s regulatory oversight.

3.4: Measuring the Impact of Offline Media Institutions on Online Consumption Habits

The hypotheses this research project tests are divided into groups based on the offline institutions that they are linked to. While the three themes presented in this chapter are by no means an exhaustive list of the institutions that have shaped consumption habits online, they are significant for a few reasons. First, these institutions are perhaps the most conspicuous in their influence on offline consumption habits. Based on the path dependency identified here, regulatory philosophy plays a large role, both in developing initial media institutions and constraining the outcomes of future critical junctures in policymaking. In broadcast regulation, corporate liberalism and collectivism in the United States and United Kingdom, respectively, yielded vastly different approaches to early broadcasting – approaches that contemporary broadcast media are still tied to in terms of media ownership, the provision of local news, and neutrality or impartiality in broadcasting.

This chapter portrays the domestic broadcast media environments of these two cases in very different ways to highlight their unique approaches to electronic

media regulation. In the United States, regional media markets are dominated by robust ideological and commercial competition between an oligopoly¹⁸ of powerful corporate broadcast networks. In the United Kingdom, decades of public monopoly have led to a broadcast media market with even fewer voices, all legally obliged to follow the impartial norms set out by the BBC.¹⁹ The role of the British Broadcasting Corporation is particularly illustrative of these divergent domestic approaches. Considering the central discursive role of the BBC in contemporary British society, and the comparative obscurity of PBS, NPR, and other local PSBs in the United States, this historical institutionalist analysis emphasises the need for nuanced comparison in lieu of the broad typologies presented in the last chapter.

Such domestic diversity in regulatory approach makes these variables relevant for international comparison and for the measurement of media system convergence. Although Brevini (2013; 2010) and Humphreys (2006; 2005) have identified the growing role of the European Union in regulating PSBs, regulatory interpretations of public service in broadcast licensing, ownership rules, and balance and neutrality regulation are the product of domestic history and internal policymaking processes that predate the European Union. Although the policymaking process may be informed by the trial and error of foreign experience, domestic representatives have traditionally made the key decisions regarding the news media.

If these characteristics demonstrate that the offline news media is a product of a domestic experience, a comparatively unregulated and theoretically borderless internet has great potential to upset these norms and revolutionise academic understandings of mass mediated communication. Online, there are no institutions that correspond with offline institutions regarding the provision of regional content, the role of public service broadcasters, or neutrality. In the absence of high economic (and professional) barriers to entry offline, anyone can provide news content or commentary on the internet. There are no restrictions on

¹⁸ See Noam (2009) for a comprehensive account of these rules in the United States.

¹⁹ Sharon White's recent speech to the Nations & Regions Media Conference claims that "One in five rely exclusively on the BBC for news" (2017).

ownership, and individuals or groups can basically say anything they want (short of libel) online.

Based on the research presented in this chapter, the hypotheses below are designed to measure how closely online news consumption reflects offline consumption. They provide a direct response to Hallin and Mancini's three models and their theory of convergence, as well as the argument put forward by the optimists introduced in the previous chapter by measuring the extent to which the internet has transformed or revolutionised the news media. Despite this lack of institutions online, an historical institutionalist analysis of these areas suggests that both consumption habits and news production standards should persist online. While this thesis does argue that the use of the internet for news represents a critical juncture in the regulatory history of these two states (and the world), an absence of new regulatory regimes leaves consumers and producers to rationalise their roles in this new medium using the same set of preferences and practices that they used to navigate the offline media environment. The hypotheses presented here reflect this reality - that while the online news media exists outside of most mass media regulation, consumption still takes place within the 'shadow' of offline institutions.

How can researchers tell if online news media operates within this shadow? While the next chapter discusses the specific methods used to do this, the hypotheses below are statements that help to operationalise this phenomenon in terms of the three areas highlighted in this chapter. Using two dimensions of analysis, between offline and online news consumption patterns, and between the two case studies, these hypotheses allow the researcher to measure the extent to which path dependency or convergence is occurring online. This section concludes the chapter by revisiting the hypotheses proposed in the introduction and summarising the historical institutional analysis conducted here. It provides valuable context, both for the methodology presented in the next chapter, and the analysis that follows in the rest of the thesis.

3.4.1: Licensing, Ownership, and Public Service Broadcasting

Through license or charter allocation and the renewal process, the regulatory agencies of the United States and the United Kingdom took two distinct approaches to spectrum scarcity, and in doing so, decided who the media giants in each system would be. In each case, broadcast licensing is pivotal in this analysis because it represents the most direct and unprecedented moment of regulatory intervention in the history of the mass media. Focusing on the first days of radio broadcasting, this chapter explored how regulatory agencies in America favoured commercial broadcasters like NBC and CBS who quickly went on to consolidate their power via a network of affiliate and wholly owned stations. Lawmakers also facilitated pluralism through restrictions on what media outlets a single entity could own as a means of protection against monopoly: in the traditional trust-busting sense as a correction for market failure, as well as the democratic or discursive sense to prevent one monopolistic voice from dominating the media. Deregulation, as most casual observers of contemporary politics might anticipate, is rationalized in the language of liberalism, releasing free enterprise from the excessive and unnecessary shackles of government control.

Meanwhile, the United Kingdom decided to create a publically funded consortium called the British Broadcasting Company (later renamed the British Broadcasting Corporation) that would enjoy a broadcasting monopoly for decades. It highlighted how problems of spectrum scarcity unique to the United Kingdom and a regulatory culture that was open to public ownership during the inter-war period led to a dominant, publicly funded, public service broadcaster in the United Kingdom and its obscurity in the United States. This thesis hypothesises that this divergence manifests itself both offline and online. Competition (in the form of commercial PSBs) was introduced decades only after the BBC had decades to consolidate its position as the exclusive broadcaster. Even when competition was introduced, broadcast ownership in the United Kingdom is even more concentrated than the United States, with two key broadcasters (BBC and Channel 4) publicly owned.

What do these licensing practices mean for online news media? The economic and cultural repercussions of these early regulatory decisions have been instrumental in shaping both consumer habits and the plurality of voices online. By establishing a set of winners and protecting economic growth of these early license holders, regulators ensured that media organizations like NBC, CBS, and BBC could benefit from the same economies of scale and scope, consumer trust, and name recognition online that reinforced their position at the top of television and radio ratings. Although there is no licensing process for new websites, these legacies of broadcast licensing do translate readily into the online news environment.

What does this look like in the United States and the United Kingdom? For both cases, the historical institutionalist approach argues that the offline status quo should persist online, but this needs to be operationalised. First, regarding plurality in broadcast licensing, the divergent approaches taken by the two cases would suggest more plurality in terms of source online in the United States. If ownership in the United Kingdom was constrained by the allocation of only one license, it was restricted in the United States using more commercially friendly regulatory means that predictably favoured those companies that could lobby policymakers. Ranking sources and charting them based on source frequency allows researchers to visualise if this has manifested itself online usefully. Second, more plurality offline in the United States should result in an increased consumption of internet-based sources in comparison to the United Kingdom. In Chapter 5, source distributions by native medium demonstrate that while viable alternatives to offline media giants exist, consumers' internet news consumption habits are still influenced by the same news media outlets they watch on television and listen to the radio.

H₁: Online, consumers will pursue a smaller variety of news sources in the United Kingdom than in the United States.

H₂: A greater percentage of online news will be from established print and broadcast news sources in the United Kingdom than in the United States, where internet native news sources will make up a comparatively larger portion of the media diet.

H₃: The BBC will continue to be the preferred choice for online news consumers in the United Kingdom, even in the absence of regulation protecting its position.

H₄: Publicly funded news sources will be more prevalent in the United Kingdom than in the United States.

Lastly, if path dependency applies to online consumption habits, this thesis expects that consumers visit the websites of public broadcasters at a rate that is proportionally similar to figures regarding offline news consumption. The most considerable difference between these two states, publicly funded broadcasting in the United Kingdom is characterised as the market leader, while public broadcasters that rely on the Corporation for Public Broadcasting have been chronically underfunded and struggle to compete with commercial alternatives. The expected consumption of the BBC should place it among the top sources in the United Kingdom, while the expected consumption of PBS and NPR should place American PSBs in the long tail of source frequency distributions.

3.4.2: Local and Regional News

The second institution that has played a key role in the formulation of online and offline consumption habits is the provision of local and regional news. As with licensing, traditional media ownership rules do not necessarily apply on the internet, yet they have had a profound impact on the choices available to the consumer offline. Path dependency argues that contemporary news consumers formed their media preferences within this environment, and that these preferences don't miraculously change when they move from broadcast and print to the internet. In the United States and the United Kingdom, radically different technological, geographical, and political circumstances during the initial regulatory advance in radio broadcasting led to two distinct systems – one focused more on national politics, and another that split news provision more equitably between national news and local news.

Geography is among the most important features that shaped early broadcast regulation in both states. The comparative sizes of the United States and the United Kingdom have a role in the growth of both regional print and broadcast media in each state. Just as the daily printing and distribution of daily newspapers

was, initially, at least, geographically restrictive, so was the technology used for early commercial broadcasting. This was a much bigger problem in the comparatively vast United States than in the United Kingdom. In terms of news provision, the federal system outlined in the Constitution of the United States, which grants state governments considerable power in the everyday lives of citizens, may yield increased demand for the local and regional content in comparison to the United Kingdom, where devolution is a comparatively recent phenomenon.

Regulation may also play a role in the prominence of sources that identify with a region, state, or locality. In the United States, restrictions about how many major broadcast networks or what mixture of print and broadcast media can be owned by a single entity in a market have been the subject of intense lobbying during for the duration of the Broadcasting Age. In addition to definitions of regional monopoly, another important difference between these two cases is the intricate relationship between broadcast networks, owned-and-operated stations, and affiliates in the United States. Understanding the relationship between local and national ratings and ownership regulation is instrumental in determining how corporate actors behave in the United States. Their actions, as much as the actions of the regulator itself, shape the media system within which preferences are formed.

H₅: Regional and local news sources will feature more prominently in the data from the United States than the United Kingdom

H₆: Regional and local news content will feature more prominently in the data from the United States than the United Kingdom

The two hypotheses above are based on these domestic differences, arguing that American audiences are more likely to be exposed to and consume regional news. This familiarity should manifest itself in two ways. First, regional sources should be more prevalent in the United States than in the United Kingdom. Network broadcasting structure, alongside emerging provision of local news via cable broadcasting services, should manifest itself, both in terms of those established sources providing quality content, and in consumer familiarity or preference for local news. Since broadcast media ownership in the United

Kingdom is so closely linked with the traditionally exclusive licensing process, few opportunities for diversity in broadcasting have presented themselves. Dedication to a paternalistic, Reithian public service standard for broadcasting has resulted in a 'quality over quantity' approach in United Kingdom. The second hypothesis contains an important but subtle difference, as the analysis presented later also addresses consumer preference for regional content, regardless of whether it is provided by regionally or nationally-based sources.

3.4.3: Balance and Neutrality

In addition to institutions like licensing and ownership regulations that shape media consumption habits by limiting the choices that consumers have, some regulatory institutions shape individuals' preferences for certain types of content. These institutions shape consumption habits in a different way, reflecting a struggle not just for advertising revenue but for control of political discourse through commentary. For broadcasting, regulations about balance and neutrality in content do this by establishing standards for what type of content is suitable to air. Regulators in the United States and the United Kingdom have traditionally paid special attention to political content in the media, which can take the form of campaign advertisements, electoral debates, party conferences, or interviews. This chapter has demonstrated that the way each regulator approaches balance and fairness, and impartiality in broadcasting has a profound impact on what consumers are exposed to, and what kind of content they prefer.

In the privately-owned print media, rules for balance and fairness (apart from laws prohibiting libel) do not exist. Rules about balance and fairness remain exclusive to broadcasting. In this way, the unregulated internet is a return to form. The question is; if the researcher is to anticipate or predict the impact of balance and fairness rules, what should he or she expect to find? In the United States, a liberal or market-based approach to balance and fairness has prevailed in broadcasting. The abandonment of the so called 'Fairness Doctrine' at the end of the Reagan administration served as a final affirmation that the American government was satisfied by the media system's ability to provide a cumulatively balanced product, and that the new technologies of cable and satellite effectively

solved the spectrum scarcity problem that was the legal foundation for the rule. If consumers want a balanced understanding of political issues they can pursue one through the ideologically diverse broadcast media environment, or for that matter, any other medium. The first of these hypotheses is designed to test whether the systemic approach to ideological balance manifests itself online in the United States; and if the broadcaster agency approach taken by the United Kingdom yields an online news environment concentrated around the ideological centre ground.

H₇: When distributed along an ideological continuum, sources in the United States should be distributed more evenly, while the most popular sources in the United Kingdom should be more tightly focused around the ideological centre ground.

H₈: Content appearing from the United Kingdom dataset should contain less opinion or editorial content when compared to the United States.

H₉: News from internet natives in the United States will contain more opinion content than internet natives in the United Kingdom.

The United Kingdom uses an alternative strategy based on active state intervention and agency. This chapter has traced the origins of the British commitment to neutrality on a station-by-station basis. The results of these path dependent policy decisions on content are evident during news broadcasts and even in popular culture. Although it is difficult to differentiate between state regulatory policy and the policies of the publicly funded state broadcaster, the BBC's longstanding commitment to the concepts of balance and neutrality has positioned the public broadcaster as a vanguard or standard setter for the rest of the British media.²⁰ This standard, developed by the BBC and applied to each broadcaster, has certainly influenced a British media where opinion content falls almost exclusively within the purview of the traditional print media. Path dependency suggests that opinion and analysis content should remain an unpopular choice for British broadcasters online.

²⁰ This is true even for the print media. McChesney and Nichols cite *The Guardian's* Chris Elliot who argues that "We have to be aggressive and cover more things in more creative ways because we aren't just competing with other newspapers, we are competing with a BBC that is serious about journalism" (2010, p.162)

3.5: Path Dependency in Online News

This chapter has emphasised the importance of three institutional factors (ownership, regionalism, and approaches to neutrality) as foundational to any understanding of media systems. It began by exploring the structural (technological, geographical, and political) reasons that early broadcasting took different forms – characterised by regional broadcast markets in the United States and a national, Westminster focused on in the United Kingdom – which remain relevant today. It has also demonstrated how early approaches to broadcast ownership regulation set the United States and the United Kingdom on divergent paths, one shaped by corporate liberalism and markets, and the other dominated by public service monopoly. Finally, it shows how there have been two different approaches to neutrality and balance in the last century, namely a market based neutrality in the United States and an agency based neutrality in the United Kingdom. With the development of cable, this has resulted in two different kinds of news media, where American news sources are ideologically diverse while British news sources are more tightly concentrated around an impartial middle ground.

Crucially, this chapter also argues that the policy frameworks and media institutions discussed here remain relevant today, not only in the offline domain they were originally designed to regulate, but in the unregulated online news environment as well. The previous section develops this idea in greater detail, presenting the logic that links the historical institutional analysis presented here with the hypotheses that are tested in the next three chapters. The analysis proposed in this thesis encourages researchers to look at the online news media through a lens informed by offline institutions. With these divergent offline institutions in mind it's possible to determine if the internet news environment represents either a departure from these norms. If there are large differences between offline expectations and online observations, additional analysis could confirm media system convergence and the form it takes.

4: Data Collection and Methodology

The primary aim of this research project is to evaluate the transformative impact of the internet on media system convergence. The last twenty years, which represent the start of the Internet Age, represent a critical juncture in the history of the news media. The preceding chapters raised two specific questions to develop an understanding of this new era in mediated communication. The first asks about the phenomenon of internet news, and whether it represents an incremental or a revolutionary change in terms of what people consume. The second seeks to determine if innovations in online news have facilitated convergence between the American and British media systems. Answering these questions, this thesis aims to understand both how the media system has responded to these technological changes, and what to expect moving forward. The previous chapter provides a narrative of path dependency which has come to define the offline status quo; this chapter explores the methods and data used to determine whether internet news is subject to path dependency.

So far, this thesis has explained how a historical approach to studying key media institutions suggests that the media systems of the United States and the United Kingdom are on two unique, divergent paths. The end of the previous chapter outlined several hypotheses designed to evaluate the validity of this claim, providing useful insight into the question of media system convergence. In response to authors like Hallin and Mancini, who apply their understanding of the political world when trying to characterize media systems, these hypotheses are based on a set of three key institutional characteristics of media systems. By focusing on media institutions, a more accurate account of media systems can be developed here; an account which highlights domestic idiosyncrasy in a way that others have traditionally failed to adequately address in their models.

The previous chapter argues that three factors, namely the ways in which media ownership is organised, the prominence of regional content, and domestic approaches to neutrality, have led to substantially different offline media systems

in the United States and the United Kingdom. With this offline status quo established, the method presented in this chapter tests these three areas of path dependency in the internet news – an arena of regulatory and institutional uncertainty. Evaluating the internet’s role in democratizing the news production process and ownership structure, weighted and unweighted models²¹ provide a way to measure the amount of influence that news sources have in shaping the election discourse online. Regarding the changing dynamics between public and privately owned news media, this indexing can also tell the researcher about public service broadcasters. For example, this technique can demonstrate if the BBC has retained its primacy in the British news media, and if PBS and NPR (the American public service broadcasters) can perform better online than they have offline.

The development of new internet communication technologies has implications for regionalism in the news as well. This has traditionally been a major difference between the American and British media, and coding the news stories that appeared in the dataset makes analysis simpler. Both regional news sources and regional news content can be studied in this way. If the internet has the potential to be a democratizing force in terms of content, this thesis must also evaluate how editorial perspective changes as consumers transition from offline to online news. Again, there are two important dimensions to consider: First, content analysis can show whether consumers’ appetite for editorial or opinion content has changed in the Internet Age. Second, the method presented here includes an expert survey that determines the extent to which the internet has upset the ideological equilibrium present offline. In each case, it will also clarify if this change reflects a convergence – either upon the American model (Castles & Mair 1984) or towards something entirely new.

The last chapter demonstrated how the hypotheses tested in this thesis are informed by a qualitative, historical institutionalist analysis of a few key domestic

²¹ Using both unweighted and weighted frequency data provides two distinct perspectives on the media system. The unweighted data focuses on how many times a source appears in the dataset. The weighted data considers where news stories appear in search results on Google and NewsWhip. Using an average of established click through rate (CTR) models for search engines and average velocity score for each position of the NewsWhip results, this project assigns weighted values based on each position.

media institutions that have defined mass communication in the last century. The next two chapters test these hypotheses using a quantitative and qualitative analysis of a sample of contemporary internet news. The purpose of this chapter is to bridge the gap between these two parts of the thesis by exploring and justifying the methods used in the next two analysis chapters. After the brief overview that follows, each section presented here explores one facet of the data collection process and analysis in more detail. The next section focuses on data collection, beginning with a discussion about sampling and specifically why random sampling is not a viable or useful research strategy when it comes to studying internet news. It addresses how most alternatives to random sampling present subjectivity problems, and how the sampling technique used here attempts to overcome these problems. After addressing the question of what data to collect, the data collection section concludes by presenting three different archetypal internet news consumers, and three corresponding sources that were used for data collection.

Addressed in Section 4.4.5, the second phase of the data collection involves an expert survey that deserves its own methodological attention. Again, this section discusses sampling in the context of the survey. After exploring the methodological precedent for this kind of research (Hallin & Mancini 2004a; Negrine & Papathanassopoulos 1996), it identifies several potential populations, and the subtle yet important differences in what a survey targeted at each population would tell the reader about the media system. After explaining why a survey of media scholars is the best fit for the current project, this chapter details the sample selection process, survey construction, and the administration of the questionnaire itself. The chapter ends with a clear operationalization of the hypotheses detailed at the end of the previous chapter, and a detailed discussion about what path dependency and convergence would look like based on these methods.

The analysis of the data collected for this project is relatively straightforward and fits comparative frameworks established by both new institutionalists and, more recently, media studies scholars. There are two primary

dimensions of comparative analysis. The first is similar to a temporal dimension,²² measuring path dependency by establishing how closely the online data reflects offline expectations for each case. Wherever possible, this comparison is made using comparable data. Although these comparisons are not perfect – the format of the online data makes any comparison challenging – they still provide the best possible comparison between offline and online media habits. The second dimension, which addresses the issue of media system convergence directly, is a spatial comparison between the two case studies identified in the last two chapters. Comparing the online results for the United States and the United Kingdom, it's possible to determine how converged their media systems have become. With these two dimensions of comparison, it is possible to determine if the online media is more converged, less converged, or near the same level of convergence as offline media, thus answering the main research question posed in the thesis. This two-dimensional comparison should yield valuable insight into the way that domestic media systems are evolving in the internet age, and identify the unique contribution that this new medium has had on the process of convergence. A third dimension of analysis, which compares the different methods of data consumption – search engines, news aggregators, and social media – provides an additional level of nuance to this analysis. This dimension of analysis acknowledges how technological gatekeepers can affect how converged (or not converged) a consumer's experience is.

Before discussing the method used in this project in more detail, it is important to reflect briefly about the scope of this research. Like many other doctoral research projects, the method employed here is a product of compromise between the researcher's desire to be both comprehensive and ambitious and the limited resources available for an early career project. Two specific areas – namely the offline preference data (using survey data provided by Ofcom and Statista rather than more precise yet expensive ratings data) and the expert survey (where two large N, national surveys could overcome subjectivity issues that arise with a

²²Rather than comparing the media system over two different eras, comparing offline data with online data performance reflects two different forms of media consumption, where one emerged after the other.

population of academic experts) - could benefit from alternative, more resource intensive approaches that were simply beyond the financial limitations of this project.

Determining the appropriate time frame, data sources, and data collection method to suit such a project deserves special consideration and it is appropriate to share this decision-making process with the reader. To adequately capture the trends present in an election news cycle, the data collection phase of this research project began on 6 September 2014, 60 days before the November election of that year in the United States. From this date, every effort was made to ensure near-experimental conditions for data collection. In addition to saving the data in PDF form so that it can be referred to if needed, the data was coded and recorded in a spreadsheet. The data collected for each story includes: the article's title; web address, the article's source (e.g. *The New York Times*), the geographical orientation of the source, the geographical orientation of the article's content, the presence of editorial content, the political orientation of the subject, and the tone of the article. The data recorded for each story helps to directly answer the research questions outlined in the research design and theoretical framework.

Why conduct this research now? The goal of this project is to demonstrate the contribution that the internet has made to the process of convergence between media systems. Since the focus of this thesis is to study political news content, campaign coverage of the 2014 Congressional elections in the United States and the 2015 Parliamentary elections in the United Kingdom represents an ideal opportunity to collect data on two temporally proximate events. Two factors contributed to this decision. These two elections are timely and fit neatly within the timescale of a PhD project. Proximity, however, is the main benefit to using these two events, which occurred less than a year apart.

When the project began, the next clear opportunity to study election news while comparing these two states was expected to be 2020 (the Brexit referendum, alongside the 2017 snap election in the United Kingdom, was a surprise), and with the rate that technology has advanced (even in the previous 5 years), the news media environment of the future may be very different from how consumers

experience it today,²³ so it is vital that researchers begin studying this topic as soon as possible. The second factor that played an important role in choosing these elections is political similarity. The nature of the British executive, being determined by a majority in the legislature rather than a separate federal election, means that the British election format is less comparable to elections in the United States during a Presidential election year, and more suited to the Congressional midterm elections. Authors like Mughan (2000) suggest that a Presidentialization of British politics has actually shifted more attention to the party leaders during elections, so the modern British election campaign may actually be somewhere between the two extremes of Presidential and midterm American politics.

4.1: The Dataset

Identifying and collecting a dataset for this project demands considerable methodological attention, and much of this chapter is dedicated to the logic behind the choices that led to method prescribed here. The goal of the thesis is to identify the contribution that the internet has made towards the ongoing process of media system convergence between the United States and the United Kingdom, articulated most clearly by Hallin and Mancini's convergence thesis and critiqued fundamentally by Humphreys (Hallin & Mancini 2004a; Hallin & Mancini 2004b; Humphreys 2011)²⁴. This thesis uses historical institutionalist theory both to identify key characteristics of the American and British media systems, and to develop hypotheses about what to expect when the data collected about these characteristics is analysed. The data collected for this project demonstrates how individual online news stories can inform the researcher about the system's

²³ It's important to distinguish between the methodological urgency of studying online news in its current iteration and an assertion that the internet will necessarily transform media communication. The latter claim is overly deterministic, and implies an answer to the questions posed by this thesis that has little support in the analysis that follows. Instead, this statement suggests that the longer researchers wait to grapple with this phenomenon, the more difficult it will become to make this kind of comparison.

²⁴ As Chapter 2 notes, Humphreys criticises them for underplaying the significance of public service in the UK, notably (but not only) reflected in the prominence of the BBC, a standard setter for other media, and also for ignoring the importance of the centralisation/decentralisation variable as a very important structural media system characteristic. To some extent, these critiques inform the hypotheses adopted in this thesis. (2011)

ownership structure (both in terms of PSBs and regional news) and its approach to neutrality.

4.1.1: Sampling

When deciding from which sources to collect the data, a few important questions about sampling arise. Fundamentally, what type of sampling should be used? Is a random sample the most desirable method of sampling internet news stories? With most statistical analysis, random sampling of the largest population possible is superior in terms of objectivity and inclusivity. In practical terms, this kind of sampling would take the form of a random sample of news stories about the elections published on the internet. In a medium as vast and diverse as the internet, is it possible to have a truly random sample of online news stories? The prospect of identifying every website that would qualify as a news source would be daunting.

Beyond the old media, which comprise most of the online news market in terms of web traffic and hyperlinks, and the first generation of internet natives like Huffington Post and Politico who compete with them, there is a huge number of other sites that report or comment on political events. Some of them are obviously more credible or influential than others, but where should academics draw the line? Even if one were to overcome all the considerable logistical problems of conducting a random sample of internet news stories that might inform a person's political decisions, it is still hard to imagine what that sample would look like. Striking the right balance between measurability and inclusivity is an important challenge.

Beyond the logistical problems, there is another problem associated with using 'random' sampling to study internet news. As the next section demonstrates, the internet is far from a level playing field where each story receives the same amount of attention. Academics like Hindman (2009) and the sceptics presented in Section 2.3.2 would argue against the use of random sampling when studying internet news, and for a method that takes into account the imbalance of influence present on the web. For example, the identification of online content as 'news' or 'not news' is rife with subjectivity problems, and while the method used here shifts

this burden from the researcher (see Hong, 2012) to Google, News360, and NewsWhip, it makes the subjective standards they employ relevant to the analysis. Considering both problems, the aim of creating a dataset that is representative of the average consumer's online experience conflicts with the prospect of random sampling. As a result, another sampling method should be used.

If random sampling is both methodologically unfeasible and conceptually inadequate, what alternatives are there for researchers who want to examine the online news environment? One solution would be to identify a specific set of news sources (for example, legacy print sources) and to focus exclusively on them. Gentzkow and Shapiro (2010) take this approach in their study of media bias in U.S. newspapers. They emphasize that in previous attempts to measure media bias, the number of sources used to collect data is generally small or exclusive. Identifying a lack of inclusivity as a problem, their conclusion here is that sample size is shaped primarily by the resource limitations of research projects. In other words, researchers thus far have had to be selective in deciding sample size, and this selection process is driven by funding rather than how representative a sample is of a larger population. If this is the case for the authors' study of newspapers (where financial barriers to entry are high enough that the population is comparatively small), then the problem is magnified online since the pool of potential sources online to include is considerably larger. Rather than simply choosing which sources to include, a method that raises obvious subjectivity problems, social scientists must find a way to be as inclusive as possible when determining the limitations of their research.

Academics cannot simply choose which sources to include arbitrarily, because selection bias would certainly skew results. While this project has similar resource limitations to those referenced by Gentzkow and Shapiro, an alternative to the precedent set by the offline media exists that can distance the researcher from the sample selection process. This alternative sampling method chooses a representative sample based on the most popular or highest ranked news as defined by a third party. In this case – the sources included in this dataset are the highest ranked sources according to Google, News360, and NewsWhip. This approach also has problems with subjectivity – choosing Google, rather than other

search engines, for example, raises questions about representativeness and objectivity. Also, the researcher must be careful in choosing where to draw the line between stories that are included in the dataset and those that are excluded. Thankfully, research about inequality on the internet is well established, with authors like Hindman (2009) offer empirically driven insight here. This alternative approach minimises subjectivity problems because the sources included are determined by consumption habits and gatekeeping processes rather than arbitrary expectation and limited resources.

4.1.2: Understanding the Long Tail

This approach to data collection argues that researchers should differentiate between the many who *produce* content online and the comparatively little content that is *consumed*, and that they should use the latter in analysis of internet news. In *The Myth of Digital Democracy*, Hindman (2009) addresses the debate about the internet as a democratising political force directly and, in doing so, offers an alternative to random sampling. While the book is ground-breaking for many reasons, it makes two key points that are critical for understanding the methods employed in this thesis. Perhaps most importantly, he argues that researchers should be “careful to consider who speaks and who gets heard as two separate questions” and that “on the internet, the link between the two is weaker than it is in almost any other area of political life” (2009, p.16). In the offline media, especially broadcast television and radio where high barriers to entry keep the market for news comparatively small, study of the media system can reasonably be focused on who speaks. On the internet, in the absence of many of these barriers to production, anyone can ‘speak’ (ignoring the digital divide for a moment) but only a few are listened to. For his project, he identifies internet infrastructure, and link structure (p.14) as the main reason for this. Conceptually, this is important for this thesis: it encourages the researcher to concentrate on who is heard, rather than who is speaking, because the former contribute more significantly to mainstream political discourse and the latter’s influence on this discourse is comparatively small. One may speak online, but this is no guarantee

that anyone will listen – so a representative dataset focuses on those who are heard, at the expense of those who are not.

The second key idea to take away from Hindman’s book when considering this research project concerns how to differentiate between these two groups, describing the relationship between them in economic terms. He identifies a power-law relationship when observing internet content through the lens of link structure – this power-law relationship is a very useful model when describing inequality in online news content, and the data presented in this thesis conforms, at times, very closely to it. “Data,” Hindman explains, “follow a power law distribution when the size of an observation is inversely and exponentially proportional to its frequency” (2009, p.41). He uses the following example to illustrate how a power law distribution “leads to starkly inegalitarian outcomes” (p.41):

“Imagine a hypothetical community where wealth is distributed according to a power law. At one end of the spectrum, there is one millionaire, ten individuals worth at least a hundred thousand dollars, a hundred people worth ten thousand dollars, and a thousand people worth at least a thousand dollars. At the opposite end, one million people have a net worth of one dollar. In this hypothetical community, wealth is distributed in proportion to the function $K^{-\alpha}$, where $\alpha = 1$. In the context of the web, studies have found the online environment to be far more concentrated even than the hypothetical example above, generating values of $\alpha \approx 2.1$ for inbound hyperlinks and $\alpha \approx 2.7$ for outbound hyperlinks” (Hindman 2009, p.41-2).

Hindman’s central argument is that thanks to the web’s networked structure, the websites with the most hyperlinks receive the highest volume of internet traffic. As alluded to in the second chapter (see section 2.3.2), this book explains the important negative implications that this has for the internet’s reputation as a democratizing force in political discourse. The lesson to take away from this relationship is that stories are divided into two sides of a power law distribution – a tall head and a long tail.

What does this mean in practical terms? The very infrastructure of the internet, and specifically its continued reliance on link structure results in a dominant, mainstream online news comprised of a select few, and a much vaster,

yet less frequently visited online news that is composed of many small online news sources. With this basic architecture in mind, it is justifiable to divide academic efforts to understand the online news media environment into two streams – one that focuses on sources in the mainstream, and another which concentrates on those sources which fail to gain viral traction, get caught by aggregators, or appear at the top of search results. This research project doesn't entirely dismiss the influence of 'small' sources, as some have the capacity to transform debate, but it has chosen not to study those which have not had such a transformative effect.

Other academics have come to the same conclusion of Hindman in their own research. In Hong's (2012) discussion of market share and online media institutions,²⁵ the author links web traffic (being heard or seen online) with media concentration. One problem with their study, however, is the preselection of 337 newspapers, therefore excluding both broadcast and internet natives from the data collection. This is an important omission as the data only reflects one of many constituent parts of the online media environment, newspapers' websites. The research uses monthly datasets based on ComScore data. While this macro-level approach to data collection is appropriate for their research goals (which are broadly similar to Hindman's), such an approach is not appropriate for this study because it does not provide the level of detail that is required – it only shows which websites are being visited, rather than what stories and content people are consuming.

Still, Hong's research confirms Hindman's power law hypothesis in a compelling way; arguing that media inequality is great even when it comes to direct traffic – a few sources enjoy most traffic, while a larger number of sources share a small percentage of it overall. However, Hong's research focus on newspapers and direct traffic may paint an image that is even bleaker than reality because it is not exhaustive – this kind of producer and method of accessing content isn't necessarily representative of all internet news consumption. The approach taken here goes one step further to provide a clearer portrait of online

²⁵ Hong's study also identifies social media, news aggregators, and search engines as key institutions that drive online news consumption – the same three institutions that this thesis uses for data collection.

news by relying on daily, systemic snapshots instead of one subset of sources over a longer period. For example, a well-written or even controversial news articles from smaller local or niche news outlets are more likely to compete meaningfully against the mainstream media for a share of the market or discourse when the period is smaller. When examining trends by month (rather than 24 hours), and entire domains (rather than individual articles), these influential articles from smaller sources may be lost because their success is not sustained throughout the entire month.

Beyond academia, the growing field of Search Engine Optimization (SEO) is similarly built around the assumption that click through rates (web traffic) on search engines are unequally distributed and that it is in a firm's best interest to appear first (or, at the very least, on the first page) in the list of results for a given search query. The marketing firm Digital Relevance recently published a report that attempts to synthesise and build on previous attempts to measure click through rates for the two of the most popular search engines, Google and Bing. They found that over half of all users click an organic link (not advertisements) on the first page of the search (Digital Relevance 2011). As anticipated by power-law advocates, these click through rates decay quickly as users browse through the second page, and on to the third. Introna and Nissenbaum (2000b) make this point clearly: "Because most search engines display the 10 most relevant hits on the first page of the search results, Web designers jealously covet those 10 or 20 top slots" (p.174).

4.1.3: Developing a Dataset

How can academics use this information when determining an appropriate sample? Most importantly, how large should the sample be? If web traffic and search engine behaviour reflects Hindman's power law (and observations made thus far in both academia and the private sector confirm this), there are ways to draw the line between what should and what should not be included. One way of doing this would be to use annual data from Pew, Experian, or Nielsen to create a list of the most popular websites from which the research could sample stories randomly. While this would be informative, focusing on websites and overall news

trends rather than individual news stories or political coverage can be problematic. This annual/aggregate approach would discount the relevance of key websites that emerge at times during the campaign cycle, and the ability of a more obscure website (perhaps a local news site) to make an important, if not necessarily long lasting (in terms of web traffic) contribution to the political discourse.²⁶ Such major, if fleeting, contributions to campaign news coverage would be lost if this macro level approach is used.

For this reason, researchers must look beyond annual web traffic data provided by Pew, Nielsen, and comScore if they are to understand how the media system is changing politically. The alternative is a dataset comprised of relevant *political* news content that is not based on yearly aggregate data. This thesis proposes an article-based (as opposed to source-based) data collection scheme designed to collect content relevant to the two elections mentioned earlier. This approach involves collecting data about the twenty highest ranked news stories each day throughout an election campaign. Focusing on twenty stories, which represent the first two pages of search engine results – a critical point noted in terms of click-through decay – removes any arbitrary restrictions on the number of sources that can be included and rewards influential smaller sources that might not otherwise appear in a list of the most visited political news sites. Using an article-focused approach, any website that hosts an article which makes the top twenty results for each day is included in the study. Even though power laws might suggest that the first ten results on a search engine are representative of at least fifty percent of overall search engine clicks (Kenyon 2013), this top twenty approach is much more inclusive, representative of well over half of internet news consumption.

²⁶ For example, sources like Breitbart News might not appear in Pew or Experian data, but their influence on political campaign coverage is disproportionately large during elections and when focusing on political content. The level of granularity provided by research organisations isn't small enough to differentiate between political content and other kinds of news. Pew (2014) emphasises the continued presence of weather-related news (i.e. forecasts) as a significant driver of web traffic to news sites. While no one would dispute the importance of this service, it does not really match the *political* role of the news media that forms the basis of political communication or media studies research.

The decision to focus on the most visible or most highly ranked stories at the expense of the many sources that fall below this threshold is not meant to entirely discount the truly revolutionary explosion in citizen journalism and blogging brought about by advances in internet communication technology. David Karpf (2009; 2008; 2005) has made considerable academic progress in understanding the blogosphere, and Hyun (2012) uses domestic blogospheres to study Americanisation. Rather than denying this revolution, the decision to exclude sources with less traffic is meant to keep the research project narrowly focused, as the discourse present in the mainstream media that shapes election narratives is not necessarily the same as the discourse that goes on in certain niches of the blogosphere.

4.2: Diverse Consumption habits, Diverse Data Collection

This thesis focuses on the top twenty sources collected from three different news consumption tools each day. The last section demonstrated the benefit of using the highest rated sources, and this section explores the reasons behind choosing these tools as sources for data collection. Search engines provide a naturally convenient method of data collection, with articles readily ranked. While many use search engines to get their news (Ofcom 2015a, p.105), other new techniques for finding news content are growing in prominence. In addition to search engines, this thesis also focuses on two of these new techniques - social media and news aggregators. Research suggests that social media plays an increasingly important role in of a consumer's news diet (Beheshti-kashi & Makki 2013; Hermida et al. 2012; Ofcom 2012). Likewise, news aggregators like Circa, News 360, or more recently Apple News have fundamentally changed the way that some consume news (Lee & Chyi 2015; Chowdhury & Landoni 2006).

The logic behind studying these tools together is straightforward: any study that attempts to understand how the internet has transformed the news media should reflect the diverse consumption habits of internet users. As the data presented in the next two chapters demonstrate, variability in the way in which an individual gets their news produces considerably different outcomes. Focusing on

three common means of consuming news (search engines, social media, and news aggregators), this project addresses this need by reflecting more diversity in the way in which people get their news. Using this method, the data provides a more realistic portrait of the state of media system convergence. It also allows comparison between the three different sources, which should provide valuable insight into how news on the web is changing in response to innovation and technological advancement. Comparing the relationship between these three sources in the United States with the United Kingdom, this thesis provides a detailed picture of how these new institutions have (or have not) facilitated convergence.

The one most important omission to discuss in the context of the data collection is web traffic by those who consume news by visiting a specific website directly. While this is undoubtedly a very common way of consuming the news, there are a couple of conceptual challenges that factored in to the decision to exclude this consumption method from this research project. The first challenge is differentiating this behaviour from the offline experience. The focus of this project is to identify, specifically, what the unique contribution of the internet is to the process of news consumption. While one could argue that the expansion of the media system to include the internet does represent a revolutionary change in how news is distributed, claiming that this expansion necessarily results in a broader change in consumer habits is more problematic. The transition of a habitual *Independent* reader from a print subscriber to one that consumes the same paper online does not represent a substantive challenge to individuals' content preferences. While this case does represent a technological change, the reader remains an *Independent* reader and is not exposed to content from alternative sources. This is an important distinction to make; there is academic and popular consensus that the internet is the manifestation of a technological revolution, but there is no consensus about how this technological change has influenced what individuals consume. This thesis aims to make sense of why individuals consume some sources, and not others, online.

This problem is enough to deter this research project from pursuing an analysis of direct web traffic. As mentioned earlier, Hong's research explores direct

web traffic but its monthly time scale and data source prevent the researcher from knowing which stories were consumed. The second problem is a methodological one. In many cases, it is simply not possible or feasible to gain regular and reliable data on organic (i.e., not from another source), direct internet traffic. Compiling the relevant statistics would be expensive and unwieldy: such a project would need the resources to identify and compile all direct means of accessing news content. This would include identifying all the pages that people access directly (through bookmarks, email newsletters, RSS feeds, and by typing in the web address). It would be even more complicated to include those who use search engines to search for specific content providers (i.e. BBC) rather than content (i.e. election coverage).

4.2.1: Search Engines

In the last two decades, a significant amount of social science research has been dedicated to search engines. It is easy to understand why; a huge amount of overall web traffic is directed to websites like Yahoo! and Google. This market power means that search engines profoundly shape the internet user's experience. Academics have been as interested in search engines for their social and political value as they are in their technological sophistication. Spink and Jansen (2004; 2006) research involves the basic principles behind search, and serves as an informative introduction to this area of research. While understanding the technology behind them is beyond the scope of a politics thesis, Introna and Nissenbaum (2000a; 2000b) explore how search engines work from a more familiar political perspective, and identify their crucial political role as a gatekeeper of information and intermediary between content producers and consumers. Their early research on search engines provides a good primer for how they work behind the scenes, from indexing to algorithms and heuristics. Although the technology behind search has become more sophisticated and some of the references that they use can feel somewhat outdated, the description and analysis in their work is still applicable today. They raise important questions about inclusivity, equality, and the democratic role of search engines (2000b, p.176-8).

For many internet users, search engines are the first port of call when seeking information. Hindman's research, which cites five search engines (Google, Yahoo!, MSN, AOL, and Ask.com) in the top 50 websites by traffic in 2007, confirms this (2009, p.62). Since then, the field may have narrowed but weekly data from Experian Hitwise regularly confirms that Google remains not only the largest search engine, but the most frequently visited website on the internet in any given week (Experian Marketing Services 2015). Google News, a more recent addition to Google's suite of search tools, attempts to aim the algorithms and computing power that make Google the most successful search engine specifically at the news media. "Traditionally, when reading the news, you first pick a publication and then look for headlines that interest you. With Google News, you can discover and read [and] access news articles in a different way, with more personalization options and a wider variety of perspectives from which to choose" (Google 2015). They go on to explain how it works:

"Our articles and multimedia content are selected and ranked by computers that evaluate, among other factors, how often and on what sites a story appears online. We also rank based on certain characteristics of news content such as freshness, location, relevance, and diversity. As a result, stories are sorted without regard to political viewpoint or ideology, and you can choose from a wide variety of perspectives on any given story." (Google, 2015)

The search engine news consumer's role in determining what news he or she will consume (or at the very least, be exposed to) is an active one; the experience begins with a search query designed exclusively by the user, which is then fed into a complex set of algorithms, designed by the web developer to retrieve and rank results based on relevance. While most of these algorithms are trade secrets, Google's most well recognized tool is PageRank (Page et al. 1998). This ranking process, while developed by humans, is entirely automated. Crucially, this means that it is not edited or curated, as offline newspapers or online news aggregators are. The user chooses a search engine, based on a set of personal preferences, and conducts a search based on their own search terms.

To collect data from Google News, the project used a traditional Boolean search query to retrieve the highest-ranking news about the upcoming election for

each case. To control for personal party affiliation, word choice, or interest which might cause people to choose different keywords in the search, it included several clauses in the search request, connected by the Boolean operator [OR]. The result was a catchall search that looked like this for the United States:

**2014 Midterm Elections Race OR Campaign OR Congressional
OR Senatorial OR Republican OR Democrat**

This is how the search looked for the United Kingdom:

**2015 British General Election OR "House of Commons" OR Parliament
OR United Kingdom OR UK**

While it is very unlikely that an average consumer would use such a complex search to find content about an upcoming election, the use of the search operator ‘OR’ allows Google to include relevant results that include from just one to these keywords, making it the most effective way to get a representative example of Google searches about the election. This set of search terms was the result of several attempts to filter out content that didn’t relate to the election campaigns in question, all of which were less effective at isolating election news coverage at the expense of content that would have been irrelevant. The goal was to use the fewest search terms possible to access search results that were exclusively political in terms of content. In the British case, the descriptor British was required to filter content, as content about several other contemporary election campaigns appeared as well.

These search terms matter – they are a compromise between representativeness (a dataset that reflects campaign news) and objectivity. In this way, the reason for variance in search terms here is a *functional*, rather than a purely *subjective* choice that is intended to cast the widest net possible while focusing on election content. Two points reinforce this; first, the inclusion of both major parties, connected to the other terms of the search and separated from each other by the search operator ‘OR’ means that content did not need to contain the names of either party to appear on in the search. This is supported in the dataset – there are many articles containing nonpartisan content about foreign policy, independent candidates, polling data, and even finding the nearest polling station. In this way, the search operator is a way of *including* more election content without

compromising objectivity.²⁷ The addition of more search terms allows search engine to filter all the news content that it crawls more efficiently; articles containing more of the search terms specified are ranked higher.

The more fundamental reason that this was a functional choice is that the goal of the data collection was to collect a dataset comprised of stories about a particular event (in this case, an election campaign). It was essential to use a search query that consistently filtered out stories with no relevance to the campaign (or, at the very least, American politics), and prioritized a result of twenty relevant stories for each consumption method each day. The inclusion of the two major parties in the United States data collection was in response to a simpler (with less key terms, as in the United Kingdom) search's inability to filter out both apolitical content (about sport or entertainment, for example) and news content about other elections occurring simultaneously in other states (Nigeria, the Philippines had election campaigns simultaneously). An additional reason to include these search terms involves maintaining consistency with the News360 data, which demanded these additional filtering criteria to achieve a more representative dataset.

²⁷ The alternative, more restrictive choice would be using the operator "AND" which would limit results to those stories containing all the key words used in the search.

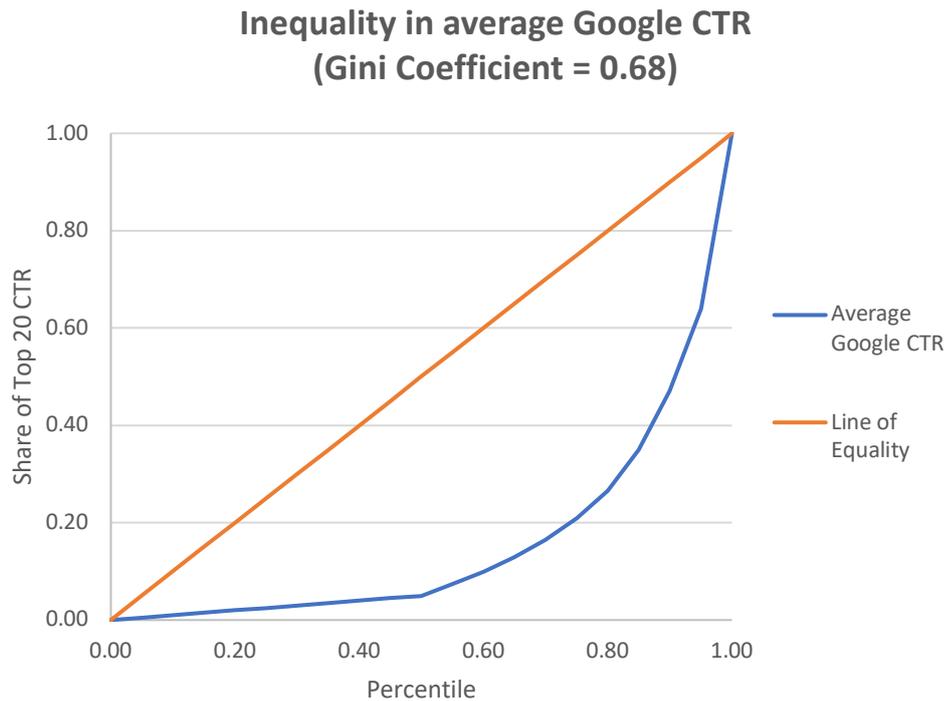


Figure 4.1: Inequality in Average Google CTR, First Two Pages of Results

The data collected from search engines for this project is analysed in the following chapter using unweighted and weighted models. The former model considers how many times a source appears, while the latter model scores stories based on their position in the search results. Both models create an index which can be graphically represented, and described by a trend line. As mentioned earlier in this chapter, the weight given to a story is based on average click through rate for that story's position in the rankings, calculated by taking the mean of several CTR studies' findings (Advanced Web Ranking 2014, pp.14–25). Figure 4.1 describes the results of this calculation – where the coordinates (1,1) represent the top search ranking, and (0,0) represent the end of the second page of search results.²⁸ The weighted index scores stories based on the coordinates (x,y) of the blue line. Here, variable x represents an article's position in the search results, and variable y represents relative click through rate.

²⁸ See Electronic Appendix E2 for CTR calculations.

4.2.2: Social Networks

Another driver of news consumption on the internet is the rapid growth of, and investment in, social media websites like Facebook and Twitter (Glynn et al. 2012). Although both methods utilize the same technology and protocols to transfer information, there are important differences between social media and search engines when considering news consumption. While control over what subject matter to consume lies squarely with the user dictating the search query in search engines, the social media news consumer's exposure to content is determined primarily by the consumer's social networking ability, as well as the willingness of his or her network of friends and followers to 'like' or 'share' news stories. In comparison to search engines and news aggregators, academic attention to social media has been similarly robust. Here, much more work has been done to understand the motivations and practices of news production, dissemination, and consumption exclusive to user-driven social media websites (Gil de Zúñiga 2012; Halpern & Gibbs 2012; Lee & Ma 2012). In addition to indicating its perceived importance in the evolving media landscape, the wealth of literature on the subject also indicates that academics must understand social media news as a complex process. It is clear by the offline media's substantial social media presence that social media represents a revolutionary new frontier for news, at least in terms of technology. In terms of dissemination, it is certainly a departure from the status quo: "In such [social media] platforms, news stories can be distributed and discussed *by people* globally within minutes" (Lee et al. 2011, p.129).

Most academic work on social media and the news has concerned how and why social media users share content. In doing so, this research uncovers what differentiates social media from other channels or online institutions for news. Pentina and Tarafdar rightly articulate that social networks are unique because "consumers curate news for their social networks, selecting and sharing those most worthy of attention, and filtering out irrelevant (or not conforming to their views) stories and items" (2014, p.211). Hermida et al. confirm that users value this, as they see "their personal network as a way to filter the news, rather than solely

relying on the professional judgement of a news organization or journalist” (2012, pp.815–6). Lee, Ma, and Goh provide a good review of relevant political social media literature and offer a uses and gratifications based analysis of the factors that “influence user’s news sharing intention in social media” (2011, p.130). Their regression analysis identifies informativeness, socializing, and status seeking as the gratifications or reasons that drive the sharing of news on social media websites (Lee et al. 2011, p.136).

Others have examined social media news from the perspective of content production. Hong asks the fundamental question: “whether, and to what extent, the adoption of social media tools is associated with measurable benefits for the adopters, for instance, the number of online audiences in the online news industry (2012, p.70). The results of this study are important, if unsurprising, as it proves a positive statistical relationship between social network adoption and online readership (2012, p.72). Hermida et al. reference Singer et al. (2011) when stating that “news organizations have sought to facilitate the dissemination of content by adding social networking functionality to websites, encouraging users to ‘like’ or ‘tweet’ a story” (2012, p.817).

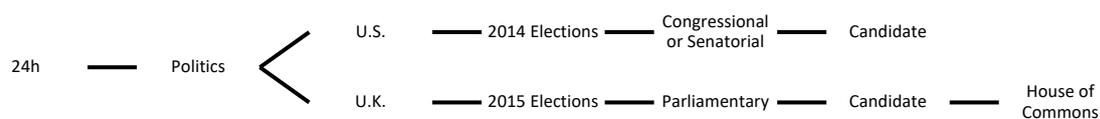
Social media has prompted meaningful change in terms of how and why news is consumed. However, comparatively little research has been done on how social media is changing what news is being consumed. Hong approaches the question by providing an important anecdote concerning social media news concentration:

“For instance, even though you are only following your local, regional newspaper on Twitter, and not *The New York Times*, people whom you follow are more likely to recommend to you an article from *The New York Times* compared to an article from your local newspaper. In this case, even though you are not directly following *The New York Times*, you are likely to click on the *New York Times* article” (2012, p.73).

Lee and Ma expand on their body of research by identifying status seeking as a factor that determines what kind of news social media users share. Their finding “indicates that sharing news in social media can enhance one’s status within the virtual community” (2012, p.337). They continue: “If the content that they share

turns out to be credible, they in turn will appear to be credible and be seen as an opinion leader within the community (Rogers, 2003), which will then allow them to attain the desired status within that social network” (Lee & Ma 2012, p.337). Their conclusions paint an undoubtedly positive image of the social media news space, where sharing news content involves putting your reputation on the line. If this is true, there should be a higher quality social media news in comparison to the content presented by the Google search, which does not have the same human touch.

As with search engines, the dataset for social media news is comprised of the top twenty news stories each day according to social media technology company NewsWhip’s viral velocity metrics. The company’s Spike service (2015b) is designed to identify and predict what stories are (or will be) trending on social media. Using this measurement provides a more detailed picture that differentiates between sources that enjoy the highest social media traffic and those that are shaping popular discourse than using raw Facebook ‘likes’ or Twitter ‘retweets’. In their words, “We track the ‘social velocity’ of every story - how much new attention it gets each minute, on every network” (NewsWhip 2015a). In addition to this precise measure, the Spike service also allows the user to filter trending content based on geographical location, time frame, and subject matter. NewsWhip was much better at filtering out stories that did not concern the election campaigns in question. This data collection applied two distinct sets of filters, like the ones applied to search engines, in order tailor the results narrowly (and filter out stories with no relevance to politics). Again, the careful use of Boolean search operators produced a delicate balance between being specific enough to filter out irrelevant content, and inclusive enough to not skew results. Each ‘newsroom’ contained the following parameters:



The list is compiled by using these filters, and ranked according to the frequency of shares over time. Although NewsWhip declined (politely) when asked about the exact equation that they use to determine velocity on the basis that it was a trade secret, their response pointed out an article from their blog, that stops just short of the actual equation, suggesting that more shares over a shorter period would result in higher velocity, while the same number of shares over a larger time scale would result in a lower velocity score. This velocity or “shares per hour” approach to predicting a story’s long term popularity is supported by empirical testing (Quigley 2014).

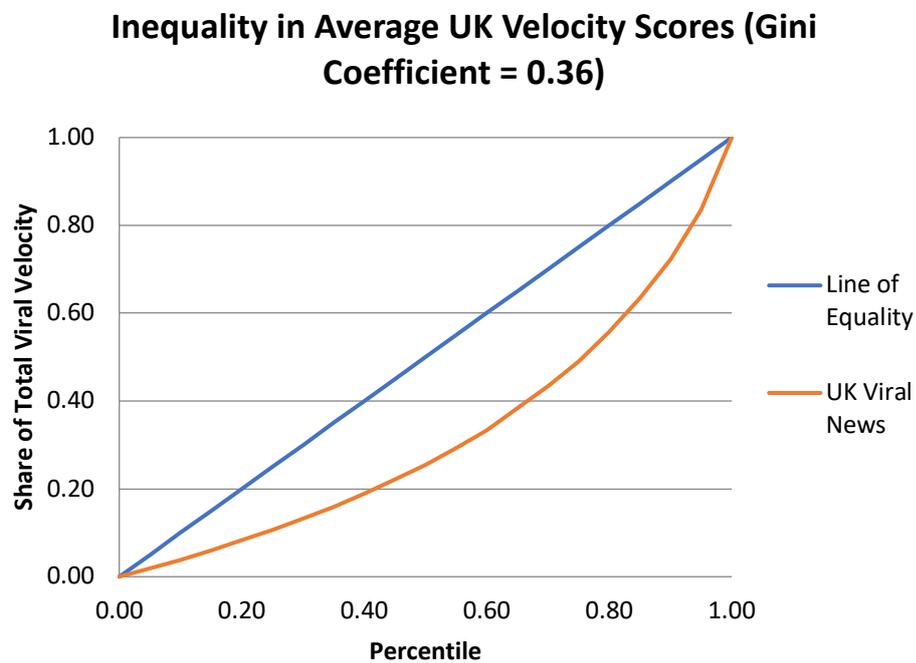


Figure 4.2: Inequality in Average UK Velocity Scores, Top 20 Stories

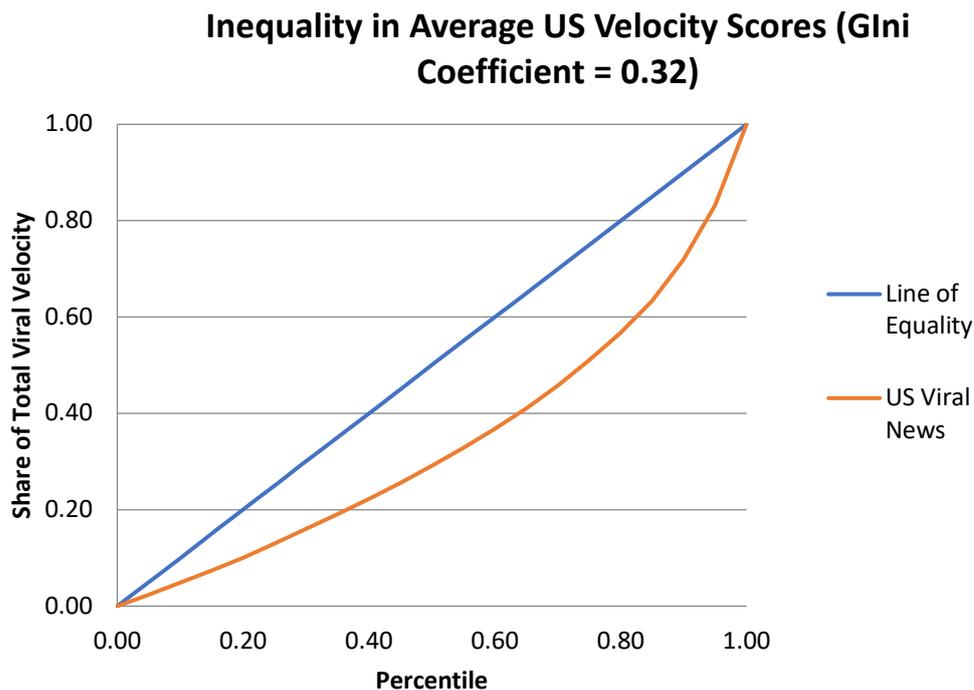


Figure 4.3: Inequality in Average US Velocity Scores, Top 20 Stories

Like the CTR data for Google, an average of virality scores provided by NewsWhip can deliver a dataset weighted according to how influential (in this case, how viral) a story is. Figures 4.2 and 4.3 indicate that influence is distributed among the top 20 viral news stories more equitably than among the first two pages of Google search results. This is not confirmation that social media is a more equitable source for news overall – as section 4.1 demonstrated, the data here only reflects the top 20 sources, and the next chapter demonstrates how unequal it can become when a single source occupies many of the positions along the Lorenz curve each day. Again, Appendix E2 details these calculations more specifically.

4.2.3: News Aggregators

Beyond using search engines and social networks, news aggregators provide an alternative way of getting news from several sources delivered to the user. Isbell’s definition of a news aggregator is “a website that takes information from multiple sources and displays it in a single place” (Isbell 2010, p.2). In their paper about RSS filtering, a key service that most news aggregators provide, Garcia and Ng (2006) articulate that the problem faced by internet users is no longer the lack

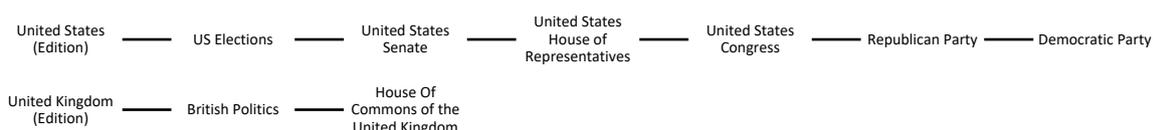
of online news articles, “but being overwhelmed by them” (p.1). They argue “due to the large number of online news portals and huge amount of RSS feeds, the user’s challenge now is to process news articles in a timely manner” (2006, p.1). So far, news aggregators have provided the best solutions to these problems, giving users a sample of the day’s news from a variety of sources, in an easily digestible and convenient format. In short, the news aggregator is a purpose-built destination for consuming internet news.

The academic understanding of these aggregators has grown in the last five years. Lee and Chyi (2015) use uses and gratifications theory to predict who consumes news via aggregators, and also confirm the importance and competitiveness of these aggregators by reflecting on their comScore rankings within key demographics (p.8). They found that key factors like age and ethnicity were significant predictors with regards to aggregator use, with “those who are younger and non-White [being] more likely to be news aggregator users” (Lee & Chyi 2015, pp.16–18). Isbell (2010) explores the important question of content ownership and the legality of news aggregation in greater detail, but focuses less on usage trends and political consequences of increased aggregator consumption. Bakker has also explored the rise of news aggregation, and speaks specifically about News360’s “curated” style (2012, p.631). While Bakker’s work focuses on low- and no-profit models and the financial future of journalism, he also attempts to define the somewhat nebulous practice of aggregation: “Websites that do little more than finding news and publishing it, either in full, as a digest or as a heading with a link to the original source, are usually called aggregators” (Bakker 2012, p.635). George and Hogendorn (2013; 2012) offer a broader sample of academic research on aggregators, and their research provides valuable insight on what introducing more local content in an aggregator (they use Google’s aggregator) means for web traffic to local sites.

Visually, news aggregators most closely resemble print and the other offline media in terms of user experience. The user’s homepage (or Home Feed) on News360 closely resembles the format that the public has come to expect from the front page of most newspapers: each article includes an image, a title, and a summary. News360 makes two notable additions to this format; the first is the

source of the piece, and the second is the presence of certain tags (which represent different potential or predetermined areas of interest of the user). The user clicks on the title or the image, and is redirected to another webpage that retains a News360 frame. The entire webpage of the source (say, *The New York Times*) is contained within a News360 frame, which allows the user to return quickly to the homepage, or to visit related articles or alternative sources suggested by the aggregator.

If search engines are an active experience for the user and social networks similarly rely on a user's engagement and networking ability to define their experience, news aggregators provide a more curated, somewhat passive experience that gives the user less choice in the content that they are presented with. While each aggregator attempts to offer something unique, some provide the user with a basic amount of control over what they consume. News360 offers the user two things: an opportunity to choose from a predetermined list of interests of varying specificity (e.g. politics, music, street art), and the power to decide which geographical 'edition' to use (I used the United States and the United Kingdom editions for each corresponding case, but an International edition is also available). The filters used for data collection are as follows:



As with search engines, two important qualifications should be made about these search terms. First, the inclusion of search terms is not exclusive; the home page is curated to be representative of all interests, and does not prioritize stories that fit a greater number. Second, the search terms are once again a product of functionality. In the US, the use of additional search terms is intended to filter out stories irrelevant to the elections in question. While this process was very successful in search engines (there were very few stories with no relevance to American politics) the persistence of false positives in the News360 data illustrates the importance of this step. Even with these filters added, the News360 algorithms

did not catch and filter out as many irrelevant stories. Some of these had to do with elections occurring in other countries (especially those states with a Congress).

The addition of these search terms made the results as precise as possible. Concerning the UK case, not all major parties were represented with their own 'topics,' so it was not possible to include them in the filters. Quite simply, there were not as many relevant filters to apply. Somewhat fortunately, the three filters used in the UK case were better at preventing false positives than the seven filters used in the United States. With that said, it seems that the UK filters were weak at distinguishing between British, Australian, and Canadian Parliamentary business. As mentioned before, these false positives have been included in the raw data. Overall, this basic filtering serves its function, which is to provide the user with the ability to tailor their experience in terms of subject matter, and it does well to not preclude any sources. Some interests that customers can include on their home feed would filter content based on ideological preference ('News From the Left' and 'News From the Right' are obvious examples) but the filters used during data collection do not isolate any particular set of stories.

While the other two modes of consumption have corresponding weighted models, News360 does not. Unlike the data from NewsWhip or Google, the News360 data has one important limitation concerning presentation – its results are presented in either a random or quasi-random order. Even though the results are often the same, the order of the results changes each time the user refreshes the landing page. For this reason, a weighted ranking system based on the News360 data would say very little about the distribution of readership or influence on news aggregators in comparison to the unweighted frequency data. At worst, such a system could lead to false positives – weighting a News360 story based on the order it appears on the page has little meaning when the order changes as the page is reloaded in a web browser. As such, a weighted system can't be used to reliably test the hypotheses proposed in this thesis.

4.3: Offline Data

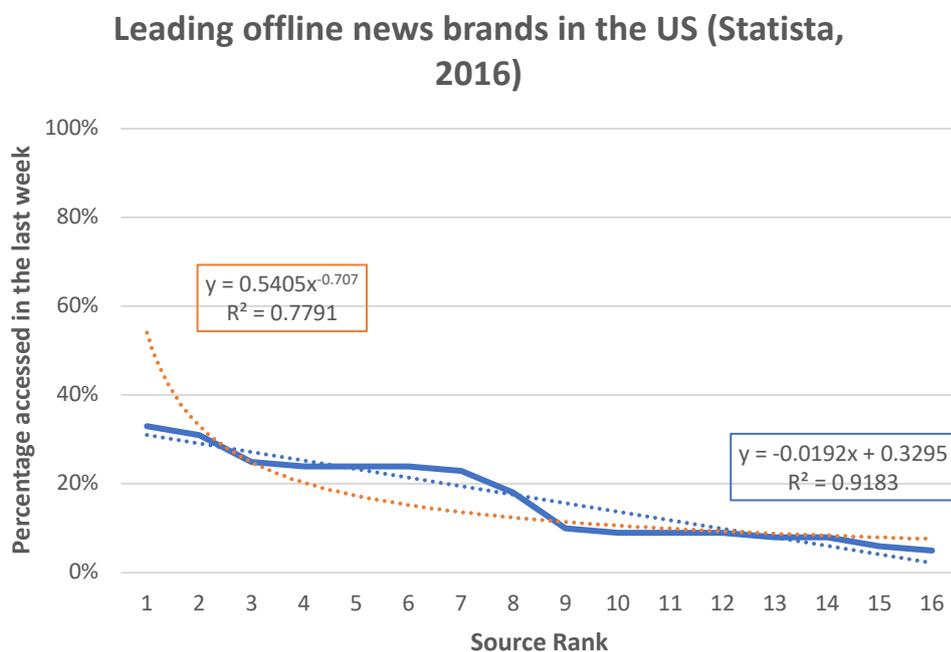
Before presenting and analysing the online news consumption data collected specifically for this research project, it's also important to reflect on which other, readily available data sources are most appropriate for this kind of comparison. Broadly speaking, there are two distinctly different sources from which researchers can learn about media use – ratings and survey data. The former, represented by firms like Nielsen and the Alliance for Audited Media, provide detailed ratings data reports for marketing purposes. The latter, large scale surveys are carried out by universities, regulators, and private polling companies like YouGov and are more focused on measuring consumer preference. While they might not be as exhaustive or specific as ratings data, they may be a better point of comparison for online news consumption. Both sources of data can contribute meaningfully to the comparison proposed in this thesis. The challenge here is choosing which data sources are most relevant for testing the hypotheses set out earlier. The next two sections are the results of that search for each case study, along with the reasoning behind these decisions.

4.3.1: *United States*

There are several relevant sources for offline news consumption data in the United States, but only a few are specific enough to address the research questions proposed here. Greater funding from this project could have yielded a custom report from Nielsen, containing the ratings figures for every news program on television, but there are quality alternatives to this at a considerably lower cost. Another potential alternative is the annual State of the News Media report released by Pew Research Center. Each year, Pew produces an exhaustive report which examines trends in macro-level readership and viewership figures, usefully divided by medium. Unfortunately, much of the Pew analysis of news consumption stops above source-level specificity, using metrics like average daytime viewership and total yearly revenue for newspaper companies (2016, pp.13–23). While this does tell the researcher about the overall growth or shrinkage of news

consumption for the offline media, it tells them little about which sources people are choosing to consume or the motivations behind this decision.

An alternative report by Statista (2015), which contains data from both Nielsen and Pew, along with relevant survey data from other projects, provides a detailed and comprehensive view of the American media. Unlike the other sources, this report offers a level of granularity and specificity in its analysis that enables strong and suitable comparisons. In addition to ratings data, Statista compiles data from a survey conducted by YouGov and the Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism which asks respondents “Which offline news brands have you accessed in the last week?” This data, which includes responses from broadcast television, radio, and print, perhaps best reflect the complex nature of news consumption in a multimedia environment. This is more easily compared to the online data, which is an equally complex system comprised of two groups - traditional broadcasters and print media like those studied in the Statista report, and internet natives.



4.4: Leading Offline News Brands in the United States (Statista Inc. 2015; Statista. 2015)

The chart above demonstrates inequality in offline consumption of top print and broadcast media sources in the United States. In comparison with the

corresponding chart in the United Kingdom, it clearly demonstrates a gentler, more egalitarian slope. By ignoring the ideological perspectives of these sources and focusing exclusively on the consumption of these sources, this chart shows that the relationship between the two variables in the United States is linear. The two trend lines added to the chart, which represent a linear and power-law relationship illustrate this. The linear relationship (expressed as a blue dotted line and expressed by the equation in the blue box) reflects a more equal distribution is a better fit for the US data, while the power law relationship (shown by the red dotted line and expressed by the equation in the red box) is less effective at describing the offline status quo. The R-squared values for each model (0.91 and 0.78, respectively) demonstrate this closeness of fit.

4.3.2: *United Kingdom*

For the United Kingdom, Nielsen and other marketing firms also produce ratings data, but the same two factors (funding restrictions and the availability of quality alternatives) were prohibitive. Unlike the United States, where ratings are beyond the remit of the Federal Communications Commission, Ofcom's annual reports are the most useful source for analysing offline habits in Britain. The 2015 "News Consumption in the UK" report looks at trends across all traditional media, and provides key data for offline (and increasingly, online) news consumption. In addition to the raw data, these reports provide an in depth look at how news consumption is distributed in broadcast television, print newspapers, and radio. While comparable FCC data might be much broader, Ofcom's analysis is very granular, perhaps because there are fewer total channels that offer news content. For those interested in offline content, it also offers year-to-year comparisons as well, providing the reader with useful context so that aggregate trends concerning viewership and readership of the news can be understood more clearly. The report breaks down news viewership and readership by source.

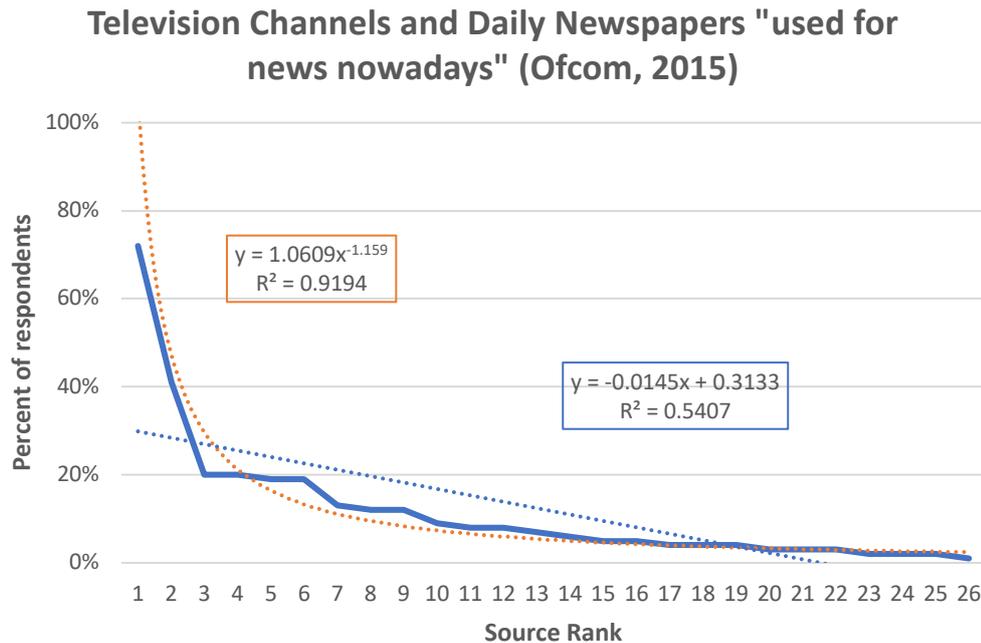


Figure 4.5: Leading Offline News Brands in the United Kingdom(Ofcom 2015a)

Using the Ofcom data, this chart illustrates how offline audiences use television channels and daily newspapers. Interpreting this graph, there are a few sources with very high readership/viewership but this quickly decays, turning a flatter long tail. This demonstrates a much greater amount of inequality in offline news consumption in the United Kingdom. Using the same two models to explain this data, the power-law relationship between source rank and consumption fits the data much better (with an R^2 value of 0.92) than the linear model ($R^2 = 0.54$). Both charts clearly demonstrate a key difference between offline news consumption in the United States and United Kingdom. When examining use of a source in terms of percentage of the total population, the United Kingdom data is more unevenly distributed or unequal than the United States' data.

Hindman notes that the online news environment is even more concentrated than its offline counterpart – how can researchers reconcile this conclusion with the offline expectations set out here? In terms of the two charts presented above, Hindman's argument would manifest itself in online news if power law models are the best approximation of the online data. This is already the case with the United Kingdom, but it should be the case for the United States as well. Hindman's argument suggests convergence in the form of technological

determinism – noting that it is internet communications technology (and specifically link structure), rather than domestic experience that shapes the online media experience. As the analysis presented in the next chapter confirms, this is the case but the picture that the data presents is more complex than that – with domestic idiosyncrasies continuing to manifest themselves in important ways. For this reason, a key focus of the analysis in the next chapter concerns the areas where the graphs fail to conform to the power-law trend lines.

One recurring problem with these metrics (in both the United States and the United Kingdom) is how the researchers behind the survey choose to operationalise a concept as nebulous as news. While these figures are a very good indicator for offline news consumption broadly defined, it's important to note that this thesis looks specifically at political content and neither the Statista data nor the Ofcom data differentiates between types of news content (weather reports, celebrity news, and campaign coverage, for example) in their source distribution statistics. Ofcom compensates for this shortfall later in their study, during an entirely different question specifically targeted at consumers' "reasons for following news" (Ofcom 2015b, pp.67–68), but stops short before making the link between the independent variable, motivation for consuming news, and its dependent variable, the source. However, even here there is some considerable conceptual bleed, as many of the potential responses are somewhat vague and several could feasibly include a desire for political content. So, while readers of the report have both a good idea of where people choose to consume news and why they consume it, there's no causal link between the reason for seeking news content and the source that they choose to fulfil that need. Aware of this report's limitations, this thesis argues that it still provides the best comparison with the online data – surprisingly little research has been done concerning what a consumer's 'go to' source for political news is, as opposed to their preferred source for entertainment news or weather, for example.

4.4: Measurements

To compare media systems, the next two chapters compare data collected on news collected during the 2014 United States Congressional elections and the 2015 United Kingdom Parliamentary elections. Specifically, it demonstrates important similarities and differences about (1) source volume, (2) public/private ownership, (3) regionality of source, (4) regionality of subject, (5) editorial content, and (6) source bias. These different areas reflect the research questions presented earlier in the theoretical framework for this project. The size of the dataset (≈ 3600 stories for each case) should provide compelling evidence either for or against convergence. This section explains exactly what analysis of the data should look like.

This analysis here follows the comparative model put forward by Kleinsteuber (2004), who contextualises the use of the comparative method for the study of media systems. Using a mixture of content analysis, evaluation of statistical data, and the use of an expert opinion survey, the thesis develops “value judgements” about the media systems of the United States and the United Kingdom (2004, p.70). Using the language of his “comparative procedures,” this thesis is focused on identifying areas of “concordance” and “difference” when it comes to media system homogenisation (2004, p.70). It uses the perspective of path dependency to develop hypotheses that suggest difference, but the data is independent of these hypotheses and may well demonstrate concordance instead. Concerning the concepts of Americanisation and globalisation presented earlier during a discussion about theoretical approaches, the thesis is addressing Hallin and Mancini’s convergence argument – an argument that could be best classified as either a “diffusion” or “temporality” approach (2004, p.71-72).

4.4.1: Source Volume

An historical institutionalist interpretation of the media system argues that, in spite of a high degree of concentration in media ownership identified by McChesney (1993; 1999; 2004; 2013), Streeter (1996), and Noam (2009), the

offline media is more ideologically and geographically diverse in the United States than it is in the United Kingdom. The market liberal approach taken by the United States in pursuing antitrust cases (Pickard 2015), along with the a high degree of autonomy awarded to papers within media holdings groups like Gannett and McClatchy, suggests that there are just more sources to choose from in America than there is in Britain; even when controlling for population size.

This is perhaps the most straightforward analysis present in the thesis; section 5.1 creates a list or index of every source that appears in the data collection phase, and compares the weighted and unweighted frequencies of sources for the United States and the United Kingdom. To make it easier to identify those areas where the two media systems differ, these indices are graphed according to source rank and frequency. In addition to visualising the online news environment in a detailed, easily comparable format, the source frequency data also speaks directly to the first hypothesis proposed in the introduction to this thesis. When looking at these source distributions, special attention will be paid to both the height of the head of the curve, which reflects how popular the most popular sources are, and the length of the curve along the horizontal axis. This second area is important because it defines how many total sources were included in the dataset – this metric will determine if there is support for H_1 .

The evidence presented in the next two chapters makes a compelling contribution to an understanding of media system convergence and more generally the unique contribution of the internet on news consumption, but it is also important to move beyond numbers and look at the data more closely. One area of importance is the evolving relationship between print, broadcast, and internet based sources for news. Gillmor's *We the Media* (2006) articulates both an acknowledgement of the end of the traditional print newsroom and a cautious optimism when looking at the potential for the internet to revitalize modern journalism. A decade later, the analysis presented in this thesis should help to determine if there is a future for print newsrooms online, even when their offline subscriptions and newsstand sales falter. While differentiating between print and broadcast or regional and local content is crucially important to identify any changes brought about by the internet (the latter is so important that it merits

independent consideration below), another important distinction to consider in this analysis is the dichotomy between offline actors and internet natives. Those that argue for the internet as a democratizing force in news expect websites like The Huffington Post, Politico, and Daily Kos to continue to emerge and compete with the traditional, offline mainstream media.

4.4.2: Public and Private Ownership

Since the advent of broadcast, the BBC has been predominant in broadcast and even non-broadcast news media (Ofcom 2013, p.9; Ofcom 2012, p.8). In the United States, progressives, academics, and media critics (Streeter 1996; McChesney 1999; Pickard 2011; Pickard 2015) criticize the American media system's dominance by private corporations. This public/private dichotomy persists offline, but this study investigates whether the internet has changed established consumption habits. Has the growth of internet news consumption led to a revival of publicly funded news in the United States, or have those in Britain began to look beyond the BBC for content? This is something that most convergence theorists (especially Hallin and Mancini) have missed out on. The stark contrast between the robust public service broadcasting of the United Kingdom and the comparatively anaemic public service news provision in the United States suggests that these states are far from convergence and may actually be on divergent paths (Crisell 2002; Ledbetter 1998; Barsamian 2001).

The analysis that follows pays attention not only to the frequency of public service broadcasters in the dataset (i.e. how many times they appear), but to their prominence in searches, social networks, and news aggregators. Using unweighted and weighted indices to map the position of each source, the role of public broadcasters in the broader context of online news becomes clear. Comparing the frequency and rankings of American public service news outlets (specifically PBS or NPR) with the British counterpart (the BBC), and comparing those results with relevant offline data, the thesis can argue that the British system is becoming more Americanized if the BBC's frequency and indexed score does not reflect its offline ratings. It can also argue that the American system is becoming more like the

British system if PBS and NPR's scores suggest that these outlets are performing more favourably online than they are offline.

4.4.3: Regionalism of Source and Subject

As mentioned earlier when discussing source volume, the media environment of the United States is diverse. While a big contributor to this diversity is a deep-rooted commitment to market liberalism, an equally big contributor is geography. Unlike the United Kingdom, there are important logistical and technological challenges to distributing national newspapers and broadcasting centrally. The vastness of the continental United States has led to a press that is dominated by regional newspapers and broadcast networks that closely reflects the federal political system. The British press similarly reflects its political system and geography, with many national newsrooms based in London and the South East.

This thesis operationalises regionalism or localism in two ways, in terms of source and subject. Regionalism in terms of source is fairly straightforward – sources that are associated with a particular region (be it state, county, city, or in the case of the United Kingdom, Wales, Scotland, or Northern Ireland) are coded as regional sources. Sources with no clear local or regional focus (many online sources, and the national press and broadcast media) are coded as national sources. Three notable exceptions to this rule emerged in the United States, with *The New York Times*, *The Wall Street Journal*, and *The Washington Post* classified as national, rather than local news sources due to the disproportionate circulation figures in comparison to other local news sources of the first two (Statista Inc. 2018) and their focus on national news.

Similar to measuring regionalism by source, the text of a news item is another way to measure the prevalence or preference for regional news online. The difference between these two metrics is subtle, but important when considering path dependency. In addition to articles that are explicitly about specific regions (Cornwall, or the New York Metropolitan area, for example), this project codes any article about individual races or candidates as regional, along with any article about trends within any of the U.S. States or any specific area of

political distinction. This definition also includes articles about the Scottish Parliament or Welsh Assembly. It is important to include this metric in the analysis because national news outlets (like NBC, or BBC) provide local and regional news coverage alongside their national coverage, but the extent to which national sources provide regional content online is unclear.

To determine if convergence has taken place, the thesis compares the observed data with data on offline preferences for local news content. Once again, the analysis considers both unweighted and weighted frequency. Convergence is supported if the values for each do not reflect the offline statistics concerning preference for local content. If path dependency holds true and no convergence occurs, then the results should reflect an American dataset that relies on a comparatively robust regional press and a British system where national competitors dwarf the local press. Again, path dependency suggests an American press comparatively more focused on regional content. The product of a legacy of geographical and technological isolation, it focuses on local politics and individual election candidates. This is in comparison to a highly-centralized press in the United Kingdom. There, a focus on Westminster and party-level politics is the focus, often at the expense of individual candidates and local government.

In addition to this cross-national comparison, the data also offers critical insight into the ongoing debate surrounding the internet as a revolutionary force. Understanding the discrepancy between the prevalence of regional sources and the actual amount of regional content provided, this approach provides a realistic account of this kind of online news. As the next two chapters demonstrate, the use of three different modes of internet consumption in this analysis is particularly relevant for the subject of local news. Moving forward beyond this research, the variance in regional sources and content across these three modes indicates that there is a need to study these gatekeepers more carefully in the context of local news.

4.4.4: Editorial Content

Chapter 3 argued that the exertion of editorial influence, either explicit in the form of opinion and editorial (Op-Ed) content or implied through the consistent

lack of alternative perspectives, is more broadly accepted in the United States in an age of electronic media than in the United Kingdom. After an initial wave of broadcast regulation, corporate media interests in the United States have gained autonomy through deregulation. The persistence of the BBC not only as the dominant actor in broadcasting but also as the standard setter in the British news media has resulted in the opposite outcome, especially regarding its broadcast competitors; the disparity in editorial approach between Rupert Murdoch's most notable broadcast media holdings (Fox News and Sky News) illustrates this point well.

Unfortunately, offline data about the prevalence of opinion content is not readily available. Circulation and ratings figures lack the level of detail used in this thesis to differentiate between individual news items that contain opinion content and items that do not, making it difficult to establish a quantifiable offline point of comparison. Unlike the other areas addressed in this thesis, this analysis relies not on any specific offline data, but on the comparison between the observed prevalence of this kind of content online to demonstrate convergence. Path dependency suggests that Op-Ed content online will reflect both the offline supply of and demand for it; if the internet has facilitated convergence, the frequency of Op-Ed content, especially from the websites of broadcast news organizations, should be broadly similar in each case.

Content analysis is an appropriate methodological choice to study this phenomenon. The content analysis conducted during the data collection involves a three-part test to decide if news articles contain editorial or opinion content. The first test is explicit labelling of opinion content – if a story was labelled as opinion content or an editorial, the URL suggested that the story was organised in an opinion or editorial section of the website, or the web page included a disclosure differentiating the author and publication's perspectives, a story would be marked as opinion content. The second test, the use of first person or advocacy language, involves the text of the article itself. Here, a story was marked as opinion content if the author used first person language to convey their perspective, or if they actively petitioned the reader to act or vote in a certain way. This included formal endorsements, and other stories other stories with similar language, telling a

reader what they should do, or how they should feel about a candidate or event. The third criteria, the presence of sarcasm or hyperbole, is difficult to quantify, but a recurring technique used by several openly partisan sources. The presence of sarcastic or hyperbolic language, where the language demonstrates the writer's views, also is considered opinion or editorial content for the purposes of this thesis.

4.4.5: Source Bias and Neutrality

Measuring source bias is somewhat more complex and requires a separate scoring system developed independently. Other ranking systems have been developed (Castles & Mair 1984), but they are all far from comprehensive and generally don't include sources from all available media platforms. To evaluate the bias of each source collected in the dataset, there are two alternatives. The first is a comprehensive content analysis, the scale of which is unfortunately beyond the financial and temporal limitations of this research project. This would involve a coding of specific terms that indicate a source's editorial bias, and developing software to process it.

A comparatively less resource-intensive alternative is a survey, in which respondents use their own personal perceptions to classify each news source. While choosing a survey population is problematic, settling on the more qualified opinions of those involved in the academic study of the press produce both an interesting and representative ranking system.²⁹ The use of small-N expert surveys is still uncommon in media systems research, with the European Media Systems Survey representing the clearest example of this kind of project. That project identifies many of the same problems regarding response rate, although it has address the problem in a different way – by limiting the number of sources for each country to 11 in the 2013 iteration of the survey (Popescu et al. 2013, p.13). While the results of this approach are a shorter survey with a higher response rate, this

²⁹ Initially, the survey was designed for media professionals, but the response rate for the survey was extremely poor. A survey of media experts, on the other hand, would allow for more, and more authoritative responses. The study still has a smaller N than was initially intended, but the results are indicative of those who approach the topic with additional empirical rigour. One issue that was consistent with both survey populations was subjectivity and bias, a problem that could only be avoided with a much larger N random sample, which was not possible given the time scale of this project.

thesis argues that this approach doesn't provide enough depth in comparison, and providing the user with the option of skipping sources unfamiliar ensures that the participant controls the amount of time that it takes to complete the survey. More importantly, this regional survey does not include the United States. The approach has also been used successfully in politics, most notably by Castles and Mair (1984).

The reports of the 2010 and 2013 EMSS identify some of the major strengths of expert surveys, while overlooking some of the limitations presented here. Most significantly, they defend low response rates, arguing that "Even in the smallest countries in the sample we secured 7 and 11 respondents – in Malta and Cyprus, respectively -. Which, given the strict criteria followed in selecting potential respondents, must be sufficient to capture whatever major variation exists in expert evaluations of the given media systems" (Popescu et al. 2013, p.15). Given the limited number of sources that respondents are asked about in this survey (and the small size of the two states in question), this is a reasonable assertion. However, if the EMSS fails to identify major facets of the media system, the size of the sample isn't the problem – the problem involves the kind of sources asked about in the survey itself. Among the sources identified in the 2013 dataset, there is a clear focus on national brands at the expense of internet-based sources and regional or local sources. If this thesis is to investigate what the transformative impact of the internet is on the news media, it necessarily must include a wider range of sources than just the ones included in the EMSS in order to avoid being overly deterministic. This strategy may be useful for their established research aims, but it is not useful here.

The survey design and sample chosen for this thesis were intended to identify experts in the academic field, and to create a survey that would be simple to both understand and complete while providing useful, easily comparable data. With the population to be sampled by the project established, the sampling process relied on two methods of identifying participants in order to maximize response rates. The first method involved contacting the scholars mentioned in the literature review of this thesis. Their research's proximity to the subject matter made them ideal candidates to participate. The second method, to maximize the size of the sample, was to reach out to academics in the broader media studies and

political communication fields – researchers whose work may not focus on comparative media systems research, but may involve an academic understanding of the American or British media. This list was comprised of 15 additional academics and was developed by the primary investigator in collaboration with the project's supervisory team.

Asking respondents to rate sources on a Likert scale, from 1 to 7 which represents the traditional left – right spectrum in contemporary political discourse, and then taking an average score for each source provided, the survey can provide compelling statistical evidence to evaluate the path dependency hypothesis; that the United States achieves balance in its media system through diversity, and that the United Kingdom (particularly when it comes to broadcast) achieves balance through a source-by-source dedication to neutrality, with the BBC serving as an ideologically neutral beacon. This is visually represented using a series of graphs which evaluate how each consumption tool differs (search engines, social media, and news aggregators) differs. Path dependency suggests that for the United States, there should be a widely spread but balanced distribution in terms of frequency of sources, with sources less concentrated in the neutral ground and more sources located closer to the extremes. For the United Kingdom, the expectation is to see a similarly balanced, but much more concentrated distribution of sources, with few sources at the extremes and many more sources concentrated in the neutral ground, with the BBC at the centre.

Since there are many sources and not every respondent has an authoritative knowledge of every source (especially local ones), respondents selected a version of the survey based on the region that they are most familiar with. This prevented survey fatigue by shortening the length of the overall survey, and encouraged more responses as it was less time consuming and the user could find questions easy to answer. Still, this design isn't without any flaws, and the use of academics as a population brings inevitable subjectivity problems. In fact, the survey results offer an interesting insight into the state of the discipline – with many academics familiar with national sources, and knowledge of local sources limited to major, predominantly Southern local news sources in the United Kingdom.

Similar patterns emerged in the United States, with large geographical areas unrepresented in the survey. The only way of overcoming this would be a survey on a much larger scale which would be distributed geographically and use random sampling of the entire resident population of an area. While this would be more authoritative, it would represent an undertaking, including a large, dispersed research staff to administer the survey beyond the resource limitations of the project. The survey results are interesting not just for what they say, but what they don't say. While not the largest part of the individuals' media diet, local news sources still play a role in mediated election discourse, yet many of these sources fail to appear on the radar of most academics, suggesting that this is an area underserved by much of the academic community.³⁰

The results of the survey make an important contribution to this research project, and a modest one to the understanding of how media systems are changing in the internet age. In addition to providing useful data about how news sources are perceived by the experts who study them, the results also speak to convergence (how similar these two systems are) and the influence of the internet on balance in the news media. After assigning each source a bias score (the mean of all responses for the corresponding question), the thesis calculates two measures of central tendency (mean and standard deviation) to determine how liberal or conservative the online news media is for each case. The last chapter explored how media policy in the United States approaches balance from a market perspective and how policy in the United Kingdom has shifted from a market based to a public service based approach. Historical institutionalists would argue, therefore, that while both media systems should receive a weighted average bias score of around 4 (which represents neutrality), that the standard deviation from the mean US score should be significantly larger than the same standard deviation in the UK case. If standard deviations are broadly similar, it may be evidence that some convergence has occurred.

³⁰ One exception to this in the United Kingdom is Bob Franklin, whose continued work on local media provides important balance in the discipline (2006; 2014). His edited volume identifies several other academics interested in the provision of local news content (Pilling 2006; Tait 2006; Crisell & Starkey 2006; McNair 2006)

4.5: Complex Phenomena, Complex Methods

This research project endeavours to make a meaningful contribution to both an understanding of media system convergence and the academic evaluation of the internet as a revolutionary force in the news media. To do this, the data collection and analysis presented here is grounded in the academic debate, informed by the secondary literature, and uses a mixed methods approach to maximize validity, reliability, and representativeness. The last chapter explored the historical institutionalist expectations for internet based news consumption, and this chapter has operationalized the key variables identified by the hypotheses introduced in Chapter 1. By collecting and analysing online and some offline data on search engines, social media, and news aggregators (three major consumption channels at the time of writing this thesis) and comparing the results, this research should be able to make a statistically compelling argument.

5. Where Does Internet News Come From? Analysing Source

When this project began in 2013, the politics and news media of the United States and the United Kingdom were in a state of transition. Consider the example of Breitbart News, then a five-year-old conservative news start-up. The analysis presented in this chapter identifies Breitbart as an emerging and influential force, particularly on social media. Two years later, Breitbart and CEO Steve Bannon played a significant role in the election of President Donald Trump – so significant that he was appointed as a White House adviser in January 2017. In the UK, there are also indications that internet news is growing in importance. According to a report on news consumption in the UK, use of internet news has grown since 2013 (where 32% of respondents claimed that they used the internet for news consumption, the figure is currently 40%), while consumption of print or broadcast news has declined (2015b, p.7). Perhaps more importantly when speculating about the trajectory of internet news, the generational variance in internet news consumption is considerable. The same report notes that 59% of 16-24 year olds use the internet for news, while only 21% of those aged 55 and over can say the same.

Earlier chapters presented the theoretical framework and method for a new, alternative way of comparing media systems which focuses on the transition from print and broadcast to a new media environment where both traditional and new actors compete for control of mainstream political discourse on the web. This contrasts with those studies that have come before, which mostly concentrate on typologies of the offline media. While the offline media experience must remain relevant to any systematic analysis of these systems, researchers' methods must change to suit this new communications environment. This thesis aims to understand how the mass media environment of the past, with all its institutions and faults, informs the competition and consumption that occurs online. At a time when the internet co-exists alongside its offline predecessors and the final generation to know a life without the internet reaches political maturity, this new

approach is culturally appropriate. If internet based news consumption comes to replace broadcast news, another new paradigm will be necessary.

This comparative framework is based on an historical institutionalist analysis of media systems – through this lens, certain media institutions like broadcasting technology, public broadcasting, and neutrality regulation (or lack thereof) have become embedded within domestic media systems. From this perspective, the thesis claims that not only can these institutions resist changes resulting from creeping globalisation, technological determinism, and Americanisation; they are path dependent. Looking at the transition from offline to online news, the way in which the news media manifests itself online is influenced (if not predetermined) by those offline institutions which came before. Much of the evidence offered here confirms the suspicions of sceptics like Hindman and McChesney, who reject the notion that the internet is a borderless, democratizing force in the world.

This chapter tests the hypotheses presented earlier in this thesis using the datasets collected during the 2014 Congressional elections in the United States and the 2015 Parliamentary elections in the United Kingdom. The full datasets can be found in appendix E1, but most of the key data has been reproduced here in a variety of tables and graphs to summarise the findings for the reader. As with many other attempts at a systemic understanding of media systems and how they develop and change over time, the data reflects a complex online news environment that can even seem contradictory at times. However, as the reader will see in this chapter, robust support for the path dependency explanation in one area isn't simply cancelled out by support for convergence elsewhere.

This thesis argues that researchers should *expect* to see varying levels of support for the path dependency argument across the three different modes of internet news consumption explored here, and that the results may even be as diverse as the modes of consumption themselves. The decision to study and compare news aggregators, search engines, and social media content individually provides much needed nuance to a field that is arguably too reliant on ideal types and broad classifications to understand variance in domestic media systems. In addition to comparing these different modes of consumption side by side, the

following sections provide additional context where relevant so that the reader can easily grasp the relevance or importance of the findings to the main argument offered in this thesis.

So rather than interpreting mixed results across these channels as a lack of support for the hypothesis, researchers should use the results to ask a new set of questions – the most important of which almost certainly will reflect on the broader question of how people get their news and how this is changing. This question and its answer are critically important to the continued study and consumption of the news media. As the data analysis presented in the following sections demonstrates, if society continues to depend more heavily on social media to supply its media diet, this may represent a move towards an amplified version of the offline media system where domestic differences not only persist, they are exaggerated. If the future involves more aggregated news, however, then a new era of homogenisation may be beginning – where domestic differences give way to a set of algorithms which have little respect for borders or the institutions and practices of the past.

The analysis portion of this thesis is divided into two different themes. The first theme, addressed in this chapter, concerns source – where individuals get their news from as consumers. The next section explores source frequency in a few different ways. First, it offers a broad overview of each dataset breaking the data down into individual sources, ranked from the most popular to the least popular. The charts presented in this section provide visual representations that are as compelling and diverse as the raw data. In addition to addressing the hypotheses about source frequency (how many sources comprise the US and UK datasets) this section enables the reader to see the contours of these two media systems, specifically how highly concentrated or diffuse the internet news space is. This section ends, as each section of this chapter will, with a comparison of the data presented here and relevant offline metrics where relevant, directly addressing the path dependency of this transition from offline to online news consumption.

The second theme for analysis, presented in the next chapter, involves neutrality in the news media. While this chapter mainly uses descriptive statistics,

the next one adds some methodological diversity to the thesis in the form of content analysis, and an expert survey. Rather than focusing on source identity, this section investigates news content itself and tests hypotheses concerning the prevalence of opinion or editorial content and the question of source bias. Regarding the distribution of op-ed content, it shows how the two different systems rely on very different kinds of news producers for opinion content, with the UK displaying reliance on the traditional print news media (specifically *The Guardian* and *The Telegraph*) as opinion leaders, and the US displaying reliance on less traditional sources like Breitbart News and Think Progress to provide ideological diversity in election news. The next chapter also presents the results of the expert survey, discussing what insight it provides for the continued study of media systems. In doing so, it also points out some of the weaknesses of the survey research, and suggests alternative strategies for future research.

5.1 Source Frequency

One of the simplest ways to identify key differences between internet news in the United States and the United Kingdom is to examine source frequency. This section measures those sources people consume as well as how this consumption is distributed to make a useful comparison between the American and British online news landscapes. Earlier, this thesis presented a set of hypotheses directly related to source frequency and media concentration. Specifically, H_1 hypothesises that key differences in regulatory culture and domestic approaches to public broadcasting would yield an online news environment in the United Kingdom comprised of fewer sources than in the United States. The concentration highlighted in Chapter 3 should manifest itself both in terms of how frequently the most popular sources appear, and the total number of sources that would appear.

These hypotheses can be tested graphically in two ways. First, the UK data should exhibit exponential, unequal behaviour: that is, it should have a taller head (high Y values for the lowest X values, which translate to high frequency for the top sources) and a short tail. For the United States data, the data should vary from the trend line in linear ways. This should appear as a graph with a shorter head, a

longer tail, and a milder slope in comparison to the UK, representing greater equality in American online news. Conversely, if the convergence theorists are correct, the result should be graphs which are identical, specifically in terms of the height of the head of the graph, and the length of the tail – reflecting a similar media experience for both states. First, this chapter presents data from each of the three media outlets focused on in this study: social media, search engines, and news aggregators. This includes unweighted frequency data (the number of times each source appeared in the dataset), and weighted scores for the NewsWhip and Google data. Comparing these different online news experiences will provide more detailed evidence to support or reject the hypothesis.

5.1.1: News Aggregators

The News360 data provides a useful introduction to analysis. The table below shows the frequency of the top 20 sources in the dataset. To compare the data, the names of sources were replaced with their rank in terms of overall frequency. For example, position 1 on the horizontal axis in the United Kingdom's News360 graph (see Figure 5.2) represents the *The Daily Telegraph*. Sources generally fell into one of three different categories; the elite, the consistent, and the single-story performers. As their names suggest, the elite comprise the top 5 or 10 sources which outperform the rest of the field. They are followed first by a group of 60 or 80 sources which appear several times in the dataset, and second by those sources which appear only once. Table 5.1 shows the top twenty sources that News360 relies on for the parameters set out in the methodology: as expected, sources like *The New York Times*, *The Guardian*, and the *BBC* appear in this list, alongside internet natives like *Breitbart* and *The Huffington Post*. Figure 5.2, on the other hand, presents the frequency data in its entirety.

Top 20 News 360 Sources	
United States	United Kingdom
Associated Press	Telegraph
Washington Post	Independent
New York Times	Guardian
Reuters	Daily Mirror
Huffington Post	BBC
SF Gate (San Francisco Chronicle)	Sky News
Breitbart	Huffington Post
USA Today	Daily Mail
Telegraph (UK)	Daily Express
Wall Street Journal	Metro
CNN	Herald (Scotland)
ABC News	ITV
Star Tribune	Spectator
BBC	Western Morning News
Washington Times	Conversation
CBS Local	Sydney Morning Herald
Daily Kos	Irish Times
Politico	Russia Today
Guardian (UK)	Labour List
Roll Call	Clacton Gazette

Table 5.1: Top 20 News360 Sources

At first glance, the lines (which represent the frequency distribution for the United States and the United Kingdom) present a similar picture. Looking more carefully, two important differences relevant to the hypotheses emerge. First, as path dependency would suggest, frequency is much more tightly concentrated in the top sources of the United Kingdom in comparison to the United States. Likewise, the length of the long tail (the majority of sources which appeared in the dataset) of the United States line is predictably longer (385) than the United Kingdom (234). Support for the hypothesis from news aggregators is interesting because of the unique presentation and story selection algorithms that News360 uses.

In the graphs, the lines for both datasets demonstrate that the UK sources are, as predicted, more closely concentrated than their US counterparts (evidenced by the taller head of the UK graph). The trend lines used in the graphs below

suggest the data for both systems closely adhere to the power-law relationship proposed by Hindman – the source distributions indicate that when you rank sources according to how frequently they appear in the dataset, the number of times a source appears decays exponentially. This is evidenced by a very good fit, with R^2 figures above 0.9 for each dataset – providing statistical evidence that suggests both that readership and influence remains unequally distributed in both systems, and that the inequality of the British system is even more pronounced than its American counterpart.

If there is some more complicated algorithm that determines where results appear on the web page, it is not immediately evident to the consumer or the researcher. When asked, News360 declined to share the basis of their algorithms on the basis that the product is protected intellectual property. While this information would have provided useful insight – it could have told us, for example, if News360 weighs news from certain sources more heavily than others when deciding which sources appear – it is beyond the scope of the thesis to know exactly how the aggregator chooses one news source over another. As the data from social media and search engines demonstrate, unweighted frequency is useful, but not the only means researchers possess to measure how power is distributed in mainstream online political discourse.

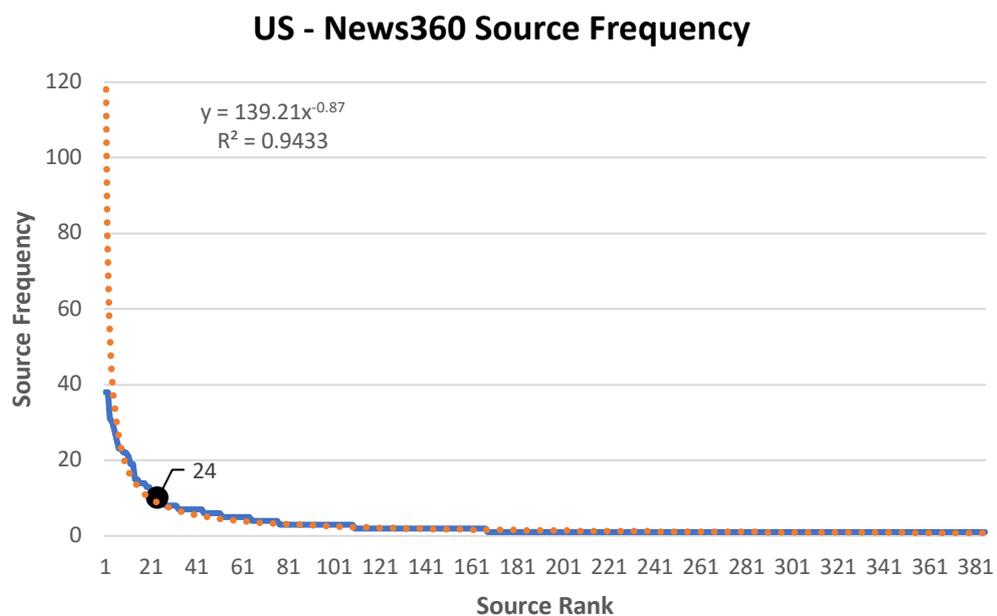
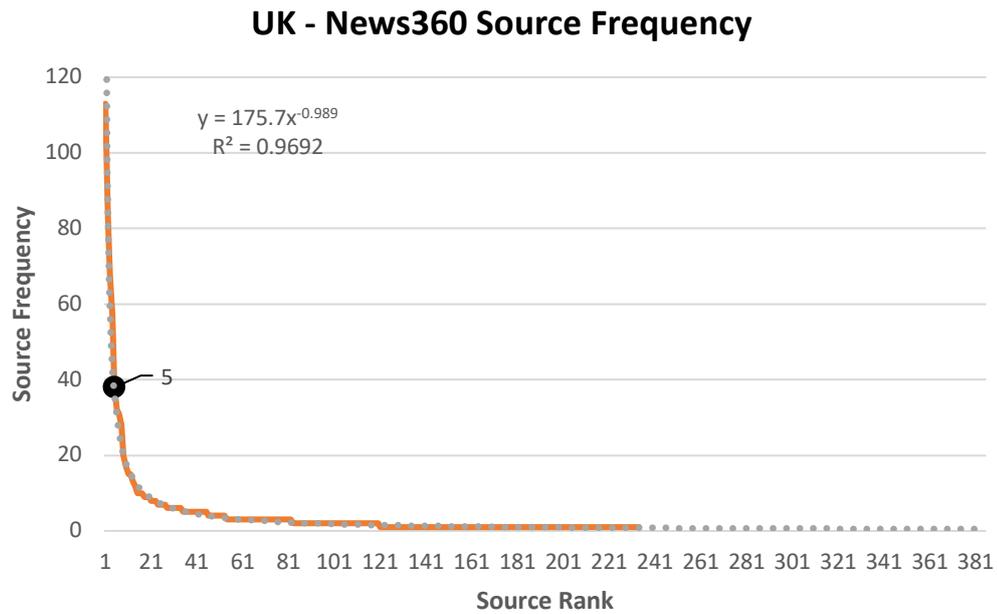


Figure 5.2: News360 Source Frequency Comparison^{31,32}

³¹ Instead of reproducing these graphs again later in the following section, each of the following source distributions (5.2-5.8) illustrate the position of three PSBs (BBC, NPR, PBS) along the Lorenz curve for each dataset. They are represented by the larger, black data point and the label indicating their source rank, or position on the horizontal axis.

³² Each graph also includes a trend line (represented by a dotted line) that describes the relationship between source frequency and source rank. The exponent of variable x in the equation approximates how unequal source distribution for the data in the graph. The R^2 figure describes

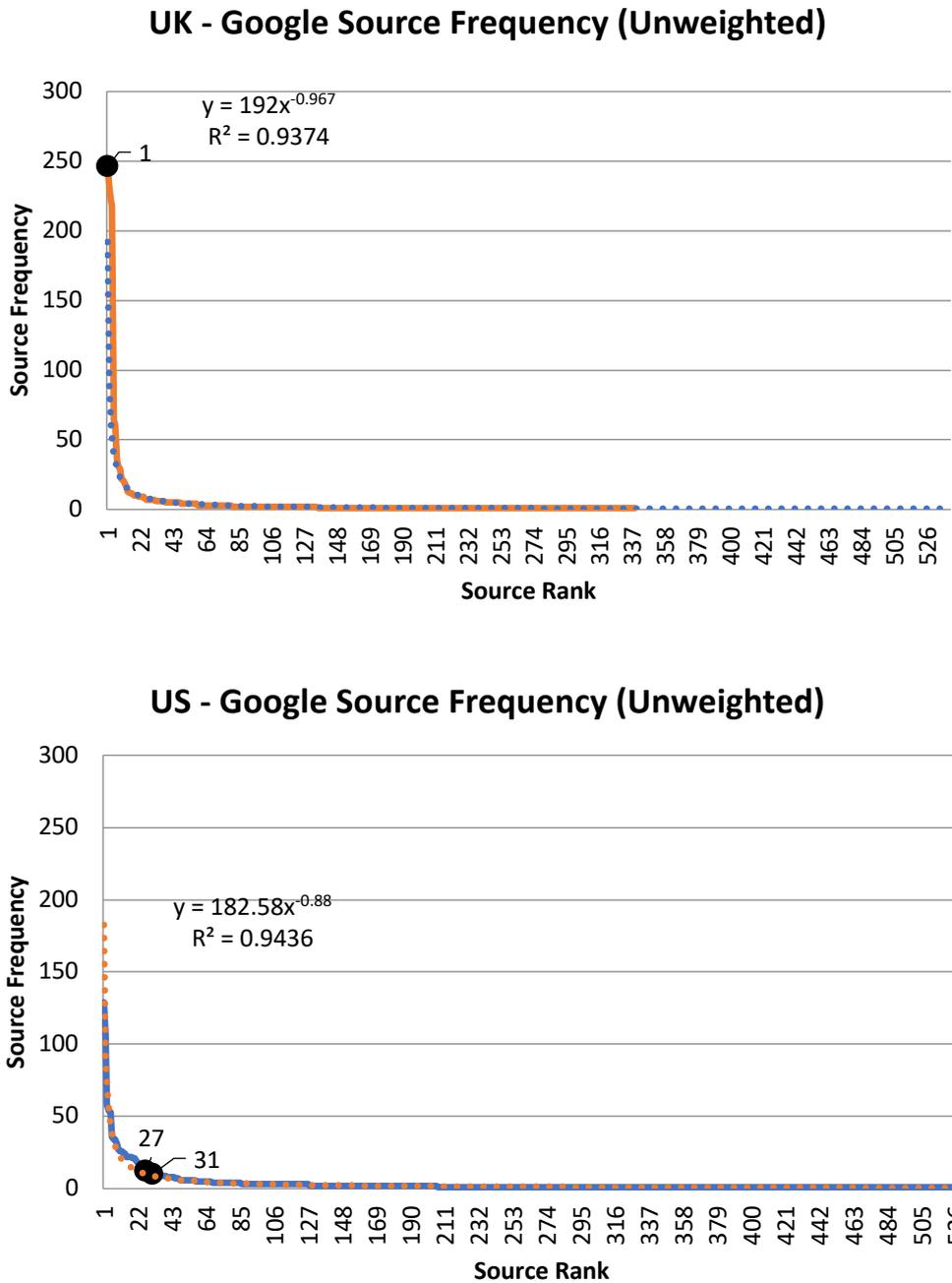


Figure 5.3: Unweighted Google Source Frequency Comparison

how well this line fits the observed data. Particularly relevant for this analysis are the areas where the observed values vary from the trend line.

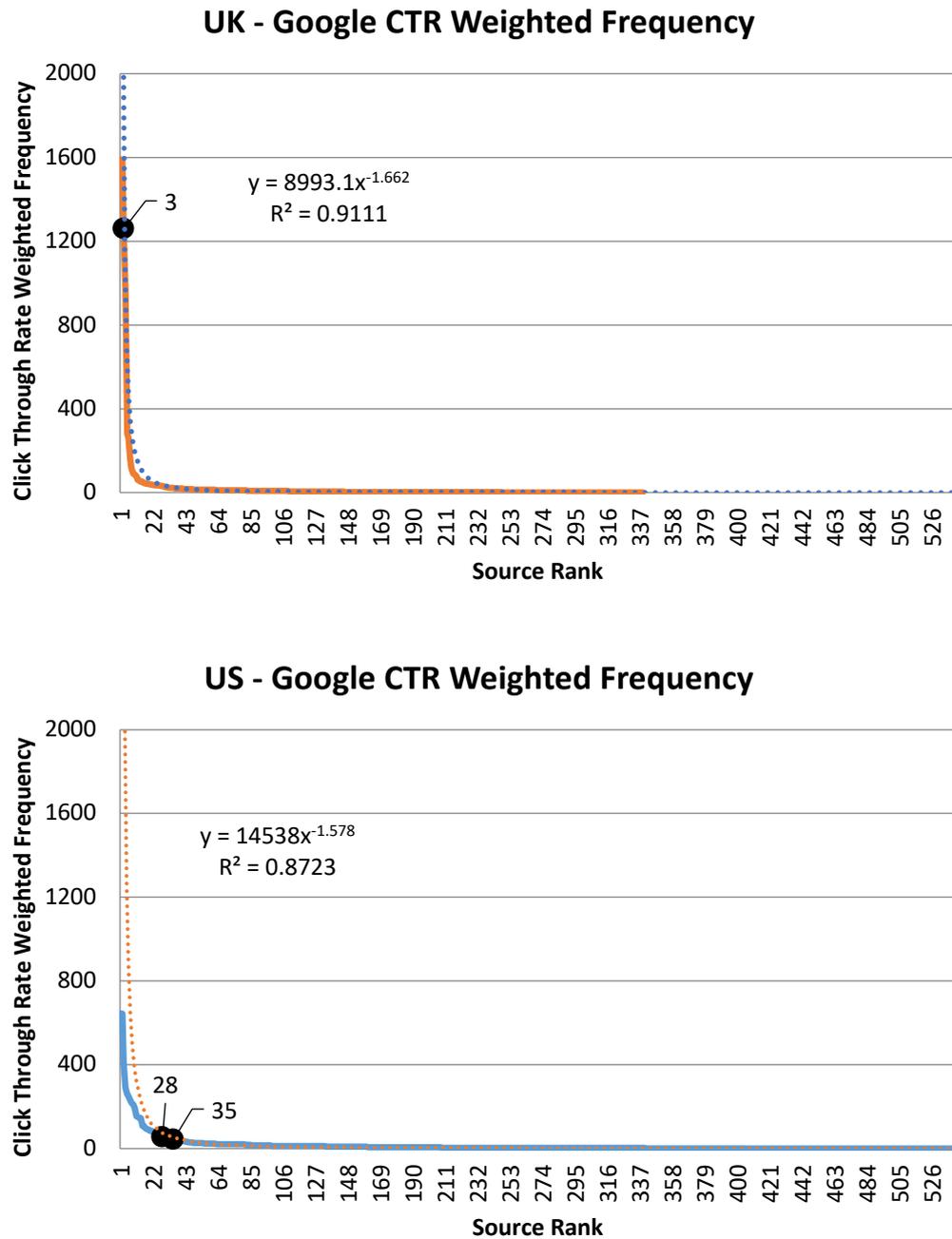


Figure 5.4: Click Through Rate (CTR) Weighted Google Source Frequency Comparison

5.1.2: Search Engines

As with news aggregators, the expectation of a highly concentrated online news media in both the United States and the United Kingdom environment seems to be confirmed when looking at the Google data. As Figures 5.3 and 5.4 confirm, news consumers who use search engines are exposed to and statistically more likely to click on some sources more than others. To better understand the transition from an offline news environment to an online one, and to evaluate if

the domestic experiences of these states have converged, researchers must have a firm grasp on the dynamics of both exposure (operationalised as frequency) and consumption (operationalised as click through rate (CTR) weighted frequency).

At first glance, both charts tell convey similar things. The CTR data presented in Figure 5.4 and the unweighted frequency data present in Figure 5.3 both suggest that exposure to and consumption of online news sources obey a power law relationship in both cases. Influence drops exponentially from the elite at the head of the graphs to the smaller, less successful sources that comprise their respective long tails. This is a powerful statement regarding media concentration online – these charts reflect only those sources which appeared in the first two pages of the dataset. The data suggests that an ‘elite of elites’ seems to have emerged – a group so dominant that they dwarf even their closest competitors.³³ The graphs also show that the distribution of influence is even less egalitarian in the United Kingdom than the United States. In terms of the total number of sources present, the larger number of total sources in the United States, and the smaller number of sources in the United Kingdom seems to provide support for hypothesis H₁. In addition to the longer tail, the United States data exhibits a shorter head in comparison to the United Kingdom.

The Google data illustrates the importance of including both weighted and unweighted models. For Google, CTR rates seem to exaggerate the differences between these two systems – both groups predictably become less egalitarian, but this is much more pronounced in the United Kingdom. According to CTR rates, certain sources like *The Telegraph* and the BBC are even more powerful or influential than frequency alone would suggest.³⁴ The BBC’s position of dominance

³³ It is important to emphasise the implications of this concentration when considering the entire online news environment. This data, as concentrated as it is, is comprised only of those stories that were among the top twenty of each day. With such inequality present within a microcosm of elites – the exponents of the trend lines indicate this inequality – the relationship between these sources and those which do not appear in the search results must be considerably more unequal. Hindman’s measurements (see 4.1.2) may be a conservative estimate of inequality in online news.

³⁴ See Appendix E3 for the relevant tables identifying each source according to its rank. Where relevant, the lists can be sorted by both weighted and unweighted rank.

is particularly important in the context of this thesis, as this closely reflects the public broadcaster's traditionally privileged role in the broadcast media.³⁵

Although the two metrics reinforce each other in many ways, how can the observer reconcile the differences between the models? As set out in section 4.2.1 of the methodology chapter, these two metrics were used primarily because choosing either exposure or consumption were, by themselves, insufficient proxies for power or influence. It is clear from the data that being a part of the select few in the first two pages of the Google search is a position of power. For example, the presence of LSE's blogs in the results data represent either quality content, effective link structure, or considerable investment in Search Engine Optimisation. In any case, this source's presence in the first two pages of search results, at the expense of all other sources, is a position of power offered only to those who best meet Google's criteria. One way of reflecting a source's position in the online media environment is to measure how many times that source appears there.

However, that doesn't mean that all sources that appear in the search results are created equal. Sources at the top of the results are consumed more often than those at the bottom, and those sources with more clicks have more influence in shaping the public discourse than sources which are consumed less. Since sources like the BBC and *The Washington Post* appear so consistently atop the search results, more people will rely on these sources to inform shape their own political views. To understand the Google news environment, a study that incorporates both metrics can provide more detail than a study focused on one ever could. Using both metrics provides clearer picture of what sources are available to consumers who use Google to get their news, and which sources they click on.

Table 5.5 (below) demonstrates further why it is important to consider both metrics when reliable data is available. While the Google data suggests a similar distribution when looking at the weighted or unweighted frequencies, there is a lot of variation in terms of the overall rankings. This variation in source ranking has important implications, both for future research and for the comparison of these

³⁵ See section 3.2.2

two systems. Regarding future research, the table below illustrates the importance of choosing the way in which academics measure influence carefully. While many sources appear in both lists, including established voices like *The Telegraph*, *The Guardian*, *The New York Times*, and CNN, the variation in their ranking in these lists is important, especially when influence or market share (however it is measured) decays so quickly. While it is beyond the scope of this thesis to decide which metric better reflects the reality of online news (both metrics are necessarily imperfect because they only act as a proxy for influence), presenting both unweighted and CTR weighted frequencies in this thesis provides a more detailed picture. For example, is *Time* the fourth most influential source when consumers use Google in the United States, or is it the eleventh? This thesis argues that the reality of *Time's* influence probably lies somewhere between these two metrics, as each ranking system tells the researcher something subtly different about the source, its marketing strategy, and the tool (in this case, Google) that is used to consume it.

For the purposes of this research, these two metrics also offer an interesting comparison which both challenges the expectations set out earlier and enriches the analysis that this thesis can provide. Examining Figures 5.3 and 5.4, the key area of divergence between the two datasets occurs within the first 40 sources where the UK's sharper slope would cross over the more egalitarian US data, before both lines flatten into long tails. Focusing on this section of volatility, it's possible to identify which US sources in this range are outperforming their UK counterparts. In a sentence, it is not just the premium brands like the *BBC*, it is also the somewhat less conspicuous sources like *Latin Post* and Euronews which define and differentiate these two systems. Based on the data presented in the charts, two distinct themes emerge and the performance of these sources has as much to contribute to an understanding of the differences between these two systems as the performance of the elite, *BBC*-level performers.

UK Unweighted Top 20	UK CTR Top 20	US Unweighted Top 20	US CTR Top 20
BBC	Telegraph	New York Times	New York Times
Telegraph	Independent	Washington Post	Washington Post
Guardian	BBC	Fox News	International Business Times
Independent	Guardian	Huffington Post	Time
Huffington Post	Huffington Post	Politico	Fox News
Reuters	Reuters	Wall Street Journal	Politico
Yahoo! News	International Business Times	International Business Times	Huffington Post
Financial Times	Yahoo! News	Washington Times	Brookings Institution
International Business Times	Daily Mail	CNN	Wall Street Journal
New Statesman	The Week	ABC News	CNN
Daily Mail	Financial Times	Time	ABC News
Wales Online	DW	USA Today	Washington Times
The Week	Economist	CBS News	New York Daily News
Echo	New Statesman	Guardian (UK)	CBS News
Belfast Telegraph	Belfast Telegraph	Brookings Institution	Boston Globe
Metro	Shropshire Star	Breitbart News	Breitbart
Daily Mirror	Euronews	Bloomberg	Real Clear Politics
Bloomberg	Wales Online	NewsMax	Guardian (UK)
Democratic Audit UK	Bloomberg	Boston Globe	USA Today
Press TV	Al Jazeera	Latin Post	Bloomberg

Table 5.5: Top 20 Google Sources

At first glance the Google data, when juxtaposed with the News360 data, illustrate the importance of considering a plurality of news consumption tools in media system analysis. In comparison to news aggregators, Figures 5.3 and 5.4 exhibit two important properties. First, both charts seem to exhibit an even more exaggerated portrayal of media concentration in the UK, both in terms of the total number of sources and the distribution of both frequency and estimated clicks. In comparison to the United States, where 541 unique sources appeared in the Google dataset, the United Kingdom featured only 339. Among those fewer total sources, both metrics suggested a taller head and steeper slope in the UK than the US. Alongside the total source data (which is represented graphically here by the length of the line along the X axis), the shape of the curve is evidence of a more highly concentrated news environment than the aggregator News360. As aggregators are typically characterised as a more curated experience informed by

both link structure as well as some human input, this data suggests that News360 and its competitors do a better job of both exposing consumers to new sources, and driving traffic to those sources. Without more exact information about the products and their algorithms this reasonable interpretation must remain speculative, but it is important to emphasise that an understanding of the intricacies of programming these tools is not the focus of this research. Rather, this analysis is based on outputs: simulating the news consumer's experience, and drawing conclusions about the state of the media system from these observations.

Second, the Google data reflects a more unequal frequency distribution than the News360 data. It appears that Google search results in both cases exhibit the exponential behaviour predicted by the offline United Kingdom data, or a technologically converged unequal internet, but not from the United States. This data suggests that if convergence is occurring, it may not be a product of Americanisation at all. Instead, it might involve the US media behaving more like the top-heavy UK media or that both systems are converging on a highly concentrated online environment. However, there are a few features of the data that suggest domestic differences have not been completely erased yet. Even though both the weighted and unweighted data for the United States is far from linear, the inequality in the UK system is even more pronounced. For both cases, stories from the top sources in the United Kingdom were roughly twice as frequent, and ranked twice as highly. The other key factor when looking at the data concerns the tail – H_1 hypothesised that the United States' data would produce a longer list of individual sources than the United Kingdom's data, and this seems to have support. As the next section demonstrates, the NewsWhip data offers yet another alternative view on the distribution of influence in online news. These metrics should be viewed as complementary, rather than contradictory – with each helping to approximate the actual extent to which these systems have become more homogenous.

5.1.3: Social Media

In comparison to the news environment created using search engines or news aggregators, the social media news environment is a creation of the

consumer. It is unique partly because social networks – the people that individuals associate with online - function as gatekeepers in the same role that Google or News360 occupy in the worlds of search engines and news aggregators. While individual experiences on social media might vary, tools like NewsWhip allow researchers to examine news sharing and consumption trends on Facebook and Twitter. By allowing users to examine, on aggregate, how frequently a news story is shared and over what period it is shared, NewsWhip provides useful insight into the new phenomenon of virality – high frequency sharing over a short period of time.

Studying social media also provides insight into consumer's perception of news sources. As the data suggests in Table 5.6 and Figures 5.7 and 5.8, many of the sources which appear in the dataset are established sources with near global recognition. With social media, however, this may be only one side of the story. In addition to providing content for friends and followers, the act of sharing news stories on social media also has utility for the sharer. Research suggests that there are different motivations when deciding what content to share. Much of the research in the field revolves around uses and gratifications theory used for decades in communications literature (Lee & Ma 2012). Lee, Ma, and Goh cite three statistically significant reasons for sharing news, including informativeness, socialising and status seeking (2011). Macafee (2013) explores the political use of social media sites, and finds that "literature in this area has unearthed two important patterns. First, individuals use Facebook politically in different ways, and the psychological motivations for doing so may depend on the specific type of behaviour" (p.2768).

UK Frequency Top 20	UK Velocity Top 20	US Frequency Top 20	US Velocity Top 20
Guardian	BBC	New York Times	Huffington Post
BBC	Guardian	Huffington Post	New York Times
Telegraph	Telegraph	Breitbart News	Tea Party News Network
Huffington Post	Huffington Post	Politico	Politico
Pink News	Pink News	Tea Party News Network	Breitbart
Sky News	Sky News	Fox News	Fox News
Yahoo! News	UKIP Official Website	Washington Examiner	Washington Examiner
Daily Express	Yahoo! News	Salon	Salon
New Statesman	Daily Express	ABC News	Talking Points Memo
Palestine Solidarity Campaign	Palestine Solidarity Campaign	Talking Points Memo	ABC News
BuzzFeed	New Statesman	Washington Post	Think Progress
Independent	Political Scrapbook	Daily Kos	Blaze
Western Morning News	BuzzFeed	Blaze	CNN
UKIP Official Website	SNP Official Website	CNN	Washington Post
Political Scrapbook	Independent	Think Progress	Washington Free Beacon
Respect Party Official Website	Respect Party Official Website	Washington Free Beacon	Daily Kos
LBC	ITV	NewsBusters	Western Journalism
Daily Mail	Kent News	New Civil Rights Movement	NewsBusters
SNP Official Website	Thurrock Gazette	National Public Radio	New Civil Rights Movement
ITV	Daily Mail	Weekly Standard	National Public Radio

Table 5.6: Top 20 NewsWhip Sources

From the table above, two distinct themes about sharing emerge. First, it seems that people like to share news from sources that are well known. In the United Kingdom, for example, the top three sources (*BBC*, *The Telegraph*, and *The Guardian*) have been established for a nearly a century or longer. Sharing news from authoritative sources like these so that the sharer is perceived as someone who is discerning or selective in their selection of news media fits neatly with the status seeking utility highlighted by researchers like Lee, Mah, and Goh. If they want to inform others, using a well-known source might lend credibility to the share story and could lead to more friends and family viewing the content. In any case, the focus of this thesis is broader and institutional – instead of extrapolating

individual behaviour to explain systematic trends, the path dependency argument presented here attempts to describe the environment that restricts and shapes these behaviours.

The other trend that emerges from this data, perhaps more evident in the United States, is the sharing of news as an openly partisan act. Here, sharing content from sites like *Tea Party News Network* is a deliberate choice – it is either a criticism of the mainstream media’s inadequacy to address issues important to the consumer, or advocacy for the source’s editorial perspective. This phenomenon has clear links to the partisan echo chamber identified by academics like Sunstein (2007), with users clearly signalling about their own politics when sharing content from these sites. Thinking about both themes, the act of sharing content (be it from partisan websites or established, authoritative ones) can enhance the social media user’s standing within their networks, especially when the user’s network has similar ideological preferences.

An examination of Figure 5.7 demonstrates two important things. First, the total number of sources shared by users during the data collection period is very small, suggesting that for both states, the social media news environment is considerably more concentrated than news aggregators or search engines in terms of the overall number of sources in the dataset. Second, and perhaps more importantly for this thesis, NewsWhip’s frequency data suggests that the differences between the United States and the United Kingdom’s online news environment are most pronounced on social media. As before, the frequency data in the UK features a taller head and shorter tail than its US counterpart, but these differences are more extreme on social media. Looking at the dominance of the BBC and the leading national newspapers in Britain, and the much flatter, more competitive media environment of the United States, there is robust support for the path dependency argument for continued heterogeneity in these two media systems. This is particularly significant because in the absence of gatekeepers or, in the case of Google, algorithms that function as a gatekeeper, it is possible that social media sharing trends are the most accurate reflection of consumer preference.

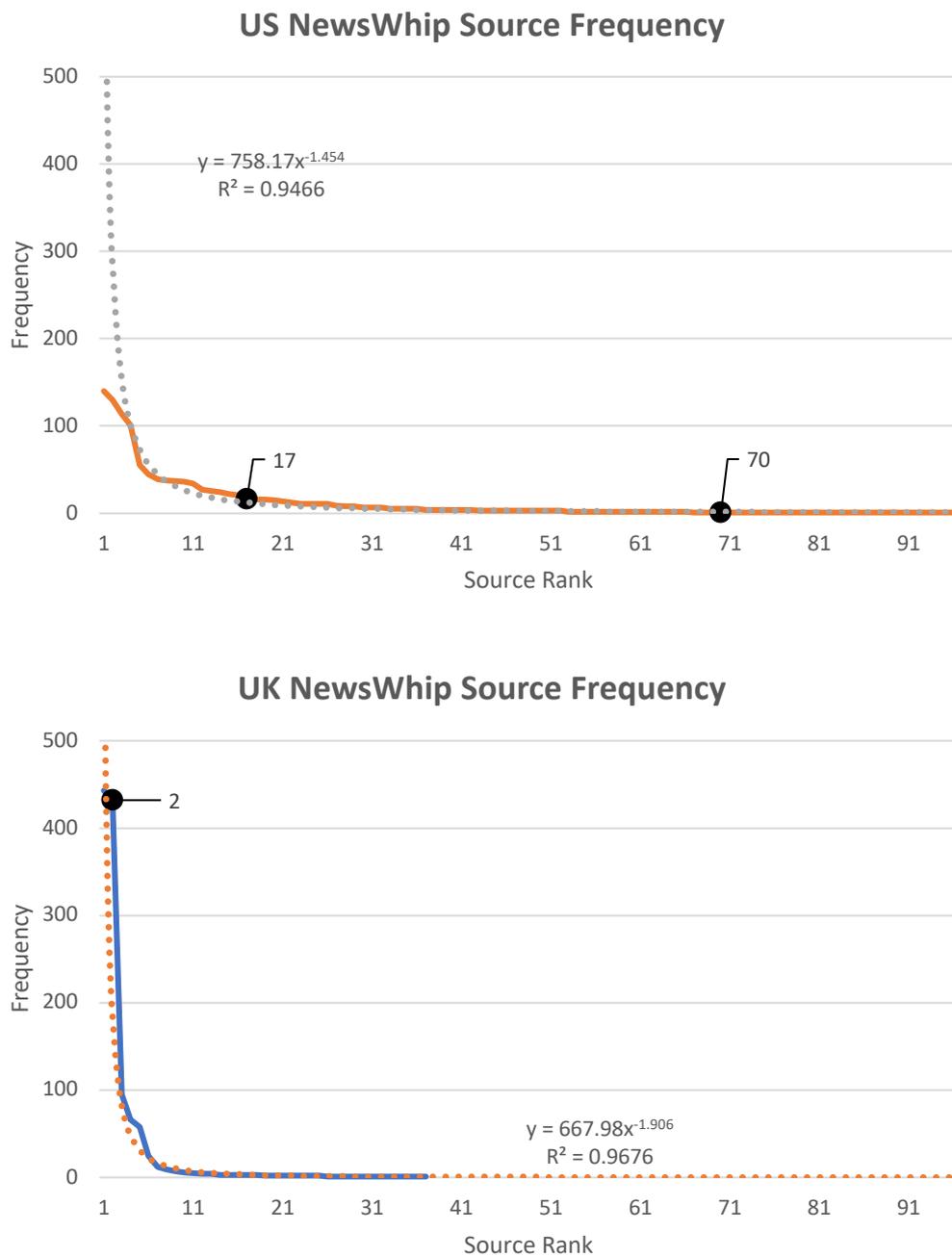


Figure 5.7: Unweighted NewsWhip Source Frequency Comparison

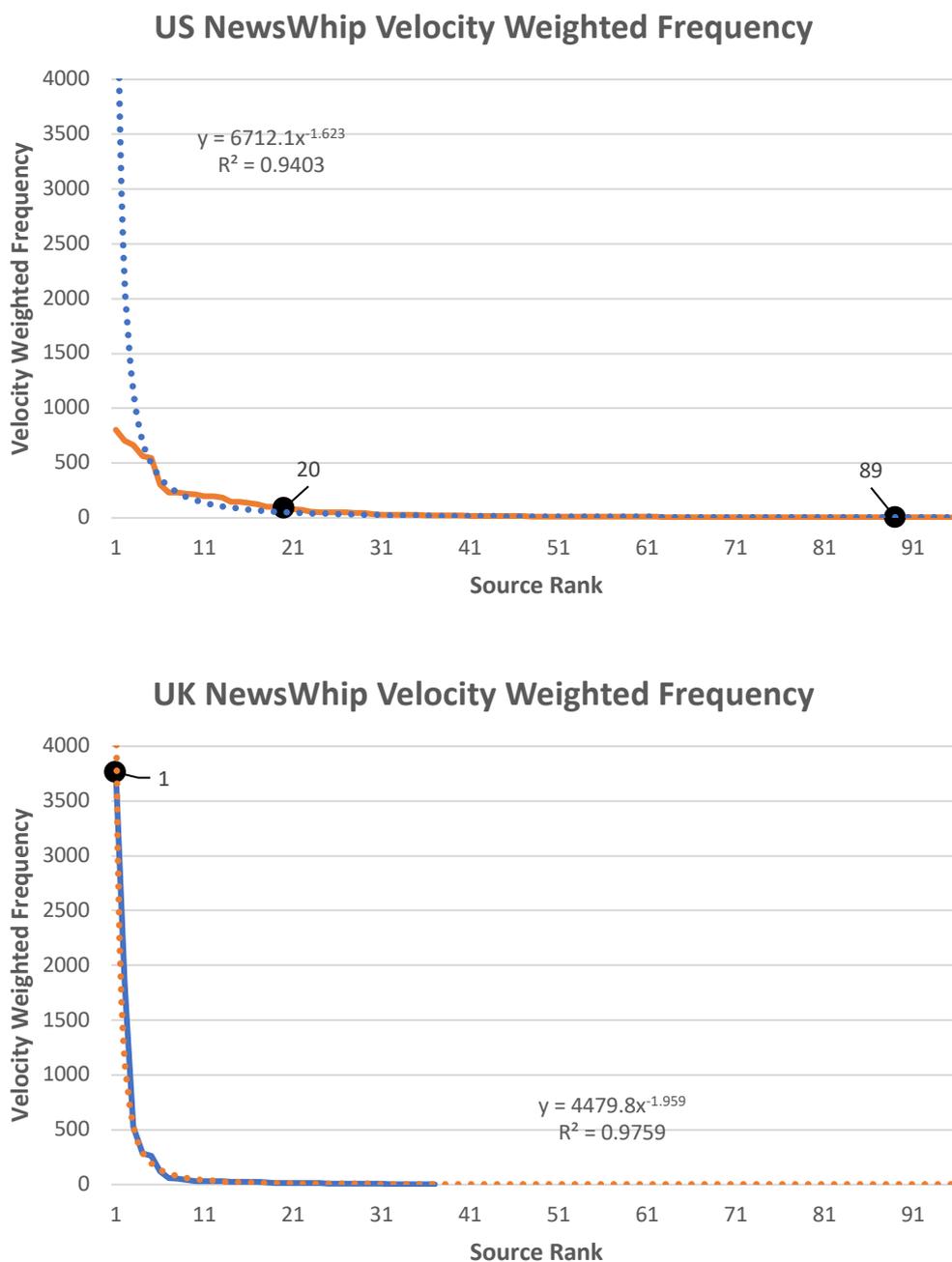


Figure 5.8: Velocity Weighted NewsWhip Source Frequency Comparison

Figure 5.8 is based on the same dataset, but uses the viral velocity weighted scores to graph how many times, and how quickly, stories are shared. The United Kingdom data suggests that social media may be even more concentrated than the simple unweighted frequency distribution suggests; tightly focused around one source, the BBC. More broadly, using the language of H_1 , the total number of sources which appear in the UK dataset is much shorter along the horizontal axis

than the US. This suggests that fewer sources make it into the top 20 most viral stories each day in the United Kingdom than in the United States.

Looking more broadly at the trends present in both Figures 5.7 and 5.8, evidence for path dependency is clearest when looking at social media. The two key characteristics identified by the offline data are clearly observable when looking at the online data as well. First, the UK data behaves exponentially, especially among the highest ranked sources. In key areas, the US data demonstrates increased linearity. Among the top sources, before the observed data intersects the trend line, there is clear deviation from the power law relationship – much more pronounced deviation than in either the google or News360 models. From that first point of intersection, the data again reflects greater linearity than expected, although this conforms to the more modest deviation observed in the other models. Both factors suggest a much more even distribution in terms of news consumption in America. The R^2 metrics of 0.95 and 0.94 are a bit misleading here, because while the trend lines are a very good fit for most of the data, but very bad at explaining or predicting the behaviour of the first few sources (the most influential ones).

5.1.4: Evaluating Path Dependency – Source Frequency

These different news consumption strategies yield different results, but only a comparison with offline news consumption can offer real evidence of path dependency. While the concentration of media sources in the United States and United Kingdom both adhere to the power laws described by Hindman, suggesting that states are experiencing similar levels of inequality, there are also many indicators in the data to suggest that the path dependency persists in several ways. First, there seems to be robust support for H_1 , with UK distributions universally shorter along the horizontal axes. Representing the total number of sources included in the respective datasets, the US consistently has more total sources to navigate through. The last section demonstrated that this is very pronounced for social media. Similarly, the distribution of influence along both the weighted and unweighted index models is considerably more inegalitarian in the United Kingdom than it is in the United States. Consistently, the UK distributions reach higher up

the vertical axis than their US counterparts. Second, there are key areas along the source frequency distributions which suggest increased linearity – areas where the observed data behaves more linearly than the trend line used for the model. In practical terms, these observations suggest that while the online news environment is as concentrated as predicted, the experience is not the same for both systems and that variations conform to the expectations set out by the path dependency argument.

5.2: Public Broadcasting

Chapter 3 argued that understanding the different domestic roles of public service broadcasters was key to an historical institutionalist analysis of media systems. It also argued that thanks to decades of public broadcasting monopoly in the United Kingdom – as opposed to the comparatively robust corporate competition that defined American broadcasting during the early twentieth century – understanding how the public/private dichotomy manifests itself online would be particularly important when comparing the American and British systems. The data presented in this section provides robust support for continued path dependency and even suggests accelerated divergence between the two systems online.

Earlier, the introduction hypothesised that public service broadcasters' position within the media system is important when evaluating homogeneity in media systems – if public broadcasters enjoyed similar prominence in both cases, this would be compelling evidence for convergence. For example, if both American and British public broadcasters were found at the end of the long tail of the frequency distributions above, this would suggest that public broadcasting is becoming less relevant in this new online news environment as it has become in the United States. Likewise, if both were found in the head of a distribution, this constitutes evidence for a resurgent American public broadcasting presence and a persistent BBC. In either case, a similar position along the frequency distribution curve for public service broadcasters would confirm the globalisation or convergence hypothesis. A lot of variation between the domestic roles of public

service broadcasters, according to the expectations set offline, is evidence of path dependence.

In the previous section the enlarged circular data points along the frequency lines in Figures 5.2 through 5.8 represent publicly funded broadcasters – namely the BBC in the United Kingdom, and PBS and NPR (both funded by the CPB) in the United States. As the source frequency distributions suggest, the three news consumption tools studied in this thesis offer different perspectives on the role of public service broadcasters. Rather than acting as a facilitator of increased homogeneity among media systems (thanks to the increased interconnectedness of global telecommunications infrastructure), the data suggests that the internet can maintain – or even magnify – heterogeneity in media systems. Social media and search engines provide robust support for path dependency, while the news aggregator data is less clear. On Google, as well as Facebook and Twitter, the BBC remains highly influential, perhaps even consolidating its position at the apex of the British media system online, while the American public service broadcasters continue to make only a modest contribution to mainstream political discourse online. News360, however, may represent a more egalitarian news consumption tool that doesn't favour any sources based on their offline reputation or journalistic output.

The NewsWhip data is perhaps the most compelling evidence for the path dependency argument. Along with Figures 5.7 and 5.8, Table 5.9 (below) illustrates this well. In the UK, over one third of stories shared on Facebook and Twitter that conformed with the search criteria came from the BBC. Using NewsWhip's viral velocity metric to approximate how many times BBC articles were shared in comparison to alternative sources ranked lower, this figure grows even larger. By weighing the top ranked sources more heavily than the lower ranked sources each day, the data suggests that almost one in every two of the most popular articles (to be precise, the figure is 47.18%) shared on Facebook and Twitter during the 2015 Parliamentary election cycle came from the BBC. In contrast, both NPR's unweighted and velocity weighted scores suggest that just over 1 in every 100 news stories come from the public broadcaster's website. PBS fared even worse, barely appearing in the dataset at all (0.08% of all shared items were from the PBS

website). Another interpretation of the PBS data is that although it did feature in the dataset, it appeared both infrequently and at a low rank.

Public Broadcasting Frequency - NewsWhip			
	BBC	PBS	NPR
Unweighted Rank	2	70	17
Weighted Rank	1	89	20
Unweighted Frequency (% of Total)	35.79%	0.08%	1.33%
Weighted Frequency (% of Total)	47.18%	0.05%	1.23%

Table 5.9: Profile of Public Broadcasters – Social Media

Interpreting this data requires some context. National Public Radio's position in the top quintile of the US frequency distribution curve seems to suggest that it is a key player in the United States, much like the BBC is in the United Kingdom. Referring to Figures 5.7 and 5.8, however, it is important to keep the shape of these distribution curves in mind when making this kind of comparison. The BBC appears at the top of a very steep curve, while NPR's position could be better characterised as the start of the long tail of a much flatter curve. Measures of central tendency like mean and standard deviation provide more statistical insight. Both NPR's weighted and unweighted frequencies fall within one standard deviation of the mean frequency of the entire dataset ($\sigma = 152.92$ and 25.54 , $m = 74.17$ and 12.5 , respectively). In the United Kingdom, the sharper and shorter curve results in a higher mean and larger standard deviation ($\sigma = 678.32$ and 100.18 , $m = 199.04$ and 32.62 , again with the weighted scores first and the unweighted scores second), but the BBC's position is over four standard deviations away from the mean in when looking at velocity scores, and over three standard deviations from the mean when looking at unweighted frequency. This analysis suggests that while NPR is competitive with most other sources in the dataset, the BBC is truly exceptional, operating as a hugely influential outlier.

The Google data also demonstrates heterogeneity identified by the path dependency thesis. Using both unweighted source frequency and CTR weighted

frequency, both PBS and NPR cumulatively represent around 1% of all stories which appeared in the dataset. Again, the BBC appears at the very top of the British news media as the source which appeared most in the unweighted dataset, and is the third most influential source when considering how an article's position within the search results affects click through rate. With neither American public broadcaster meeting the modest threshold of one percent of the total dataset the BBC's unweighted market share is considerable. The Google news environment is much more diverse and less concentrated than its equivalent on social media, but taking source rank and click through rates into consideration, the BBC's 13.01% of total stories in the first two pages of the search result received approximately 21.81% of all clicks during the election cycle. While not as dominant as it is on social media, this suggests that one in five clicks on a representative Google search for political news leads to the British public broadcaster's website.

Public Broadcasting Frequency - Google			
	BBC	PBS	NPR
Unweighted Rank	1	31	27
Weighted Rank	3	35	28
Unweighted Frequency (% of Total)	13.01%	0.53%	0.64%
Weighted Frequency (% of Total)	21.81%	0.21%	0.67%

Table 5.10: Profile of Public Broadcasters – Search Engines

Using the same statistical analysis that was used earlier for social media, the evidence for a divergence between public broadcasters' domestic internet presence becomes clearer. For the United States, sources appeared in the dataset an average of 3.48 times, with a standard deviation of $\sigma = 9.27$. When controlling for source rank and click through rate, the mean is 15.67 and the standard deviation becomes $\sigma = 52.87$. Neither NPR nor PBS deviates more than one standard deviation from the unweighted and CTR weighted mean score, meaning that both public broadcasters are competitive but not elite. In the United Kingdom, the unweighted mean number of appearances in the search results is 5.58, and the

standard deviation is larger than the in the United States, with $\sigma = 25.27$. The same exercise with the CTR weighted data reveals a mean of 15.66 and a standard deviation of 52.87. In both cases, the BBC again emerges as an outlier, over 7 standard deviations from the mean (7.97 unweighted, 7.18 weighted).

The news aggregator data provides an interesting contrast to the compelling case made by NewsWhip and Google. In fact, News360 seems to provide some support for internet news convergence. In comparison to NewsWhip and Google, the BBC underperforms here – only making up about 3% of the total stories on the site. NPR performs similarly, although its overall rank is considerably lower at 24 in comparison to the BBC’s rank of 5. While those ranks are broadly similar to what has come before, the statistical measurements illustrate how similar the public broadcasters’ experience is. This time, both sources appear more than one standard deviation from the mean, outperforming many other sources. In the United States, NPR is 1.21 standard deviations ($\sigma = 5.11$) from the mean of 3.17. In the United Kingdom, the BBC is 2.38 standard deviations ($\sigma = 11.45$) from the mean of 4.52.

One important factor to keep in mind when incorporating the News360 data into the greater data analysis of this chapter is that while NPR has moderate success on the medium, PBS does not appear in the dataset at all. Whether this is symptomatic of an aggregator that doesn’t prioritize content from public broadcasters, or if PBS simply can’t compete with those sources is difficult to investigate. Overall, while the News360 data might contradict the data from the other means of news consumption, the variation here provides more justification for including all three of them in the analysis. Exposure to, and consumption of, content from public service broadcasters greatly depends on the way in which you get your news on the internet.

Public Broadcasting Frequency - News360			
	BBC	PBS	NPR
Unweighted Rank	5	0	24
Unweighted Frequency	3.06%	0.00%	2.95%

Table 5.11: Profile of Public Broadcasters – News Aggregators

The data presented in these tables is compelling. It emphasises that online, the domestic roles of public service broadcasters in the United States and the United Kingdom can be drastically different. There is considerable support (especially when examining viral news on Facebook and Twitter) for the idea that domestic online news experience is informed by and remarkably similar to the offline news experience. One important exception to these findings is News360, a news aggregator that seems to treat public service broadcasters the same way, no matter where news is consumed. The data here, when compared with the data for Google and NewsWhip, suggest that convergence may not only be occurring, but that it may be forced upon consumers by an aggregator. As mentioned earlier, aggregators are the most curated of the three consumption tools used by internet news consumers, and perhaps the most susceptible to human intervention in the filtering process. Human intervention in search engine results remains an area of interest and debate; since this project began, similar interest in how social media feeds filter content is growing considering the phenomenon of 'fake' news.

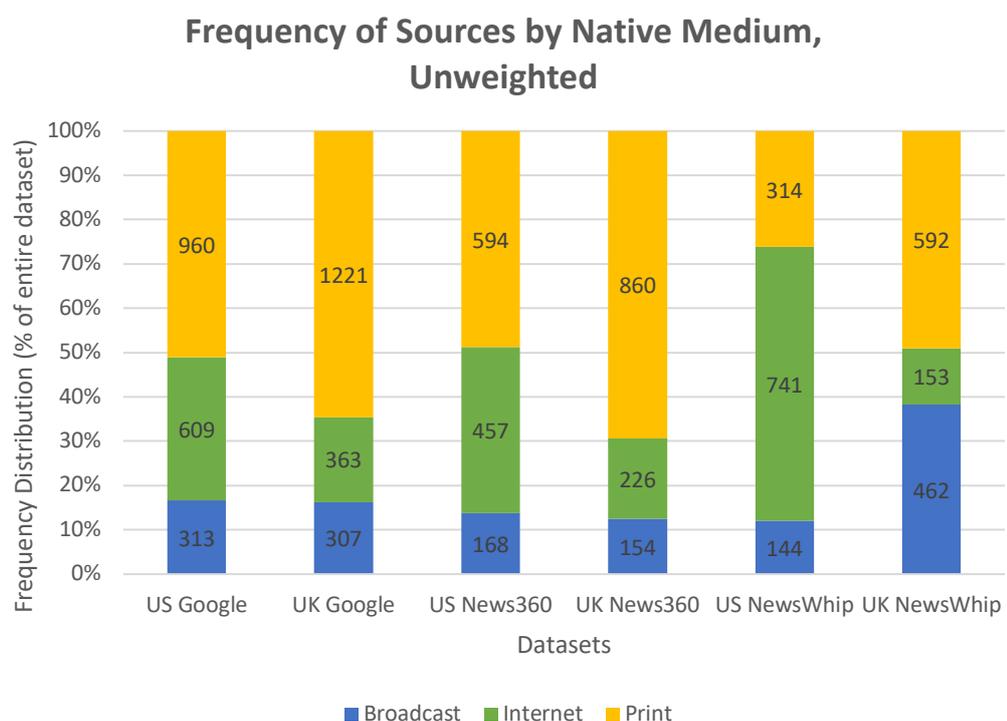
5.3: Native Medium

While the previous sections demonstrate the amount of media concentration or diversity present in these two systems, studying frequency distribution by using individual sources as the primary unit of analysis is only one of several informative metrics that can be used to evaluate media system convergence. A second way to study the frequency distribution of online news is to consider the native medium of internet news stories. Offline news media organisations have invested in an online presence since the creation of the World Wide Web, and they currently exist alongside a new kind of news organisation, the internet native. Earlier, this thesis hypothesised that increased market pluralism in the United States, driven by new technologies like satellite and cable, could lead to increased adoption (or use) of these internet natives.

In the source frequency section, this chapter demonstrated that increased pluralism offline in the United States yields an online news environment with more individual sources than the United Kingdom. There, it also demonstrated how a

more concentrated British news media manifested itself online, with British consumers exposed to fewer total sources than their American counterparts. This section addresses a similar question, but rather than focusing on the total number of sources that domestic consumers are exposed to online, it focuses on the rate of consumption of news sources that consumers simply could not get if they were offline.

In other words, the internet appears to amplify the patterns already present offline. Those exposed to or familiar with greater choice offline may be more receptive to new internet based alternatives. In the same way, when consumers who depend on a smaller number of sources offline consume news online, they may be less likely to consume news from unfamiliar sources. This should prove especially true when looking at social media where, in the absence of gatekeepers like Google and News360, consumer preference is most transparent. In the graph below, which reflects the frequency of sources for each dataset by native medium, there is some clear support for these hypotheses. Throughout all the datasets, internet news sources prove consistently more prevalent in the United States than they are in the United Kingdom. Some other trends that relate to path dependency and convergence also emerge.



5.12: Unweighted Source Distribution by Native Medium³⁶

When looking at the unweighted frequency distribution in Figure 5.12, there are robust and persistent domestic differences between the United States and the United Kingdom. Most prominently, consumers in the US are exposed to and consume news from internet native sources at a much greater rate, no matter the tool that was used to access it. Another similarly persistent difference is the prominence of the print media in the UK. For search engines and news aggregators, online UK consumers use print-based news at greater rates than their American counterparts. Both trends support a path dependency argument, whereby even in the absence of traditional offline regulatory institutions, the internet would appear to amplify offline patterns of news consumption.

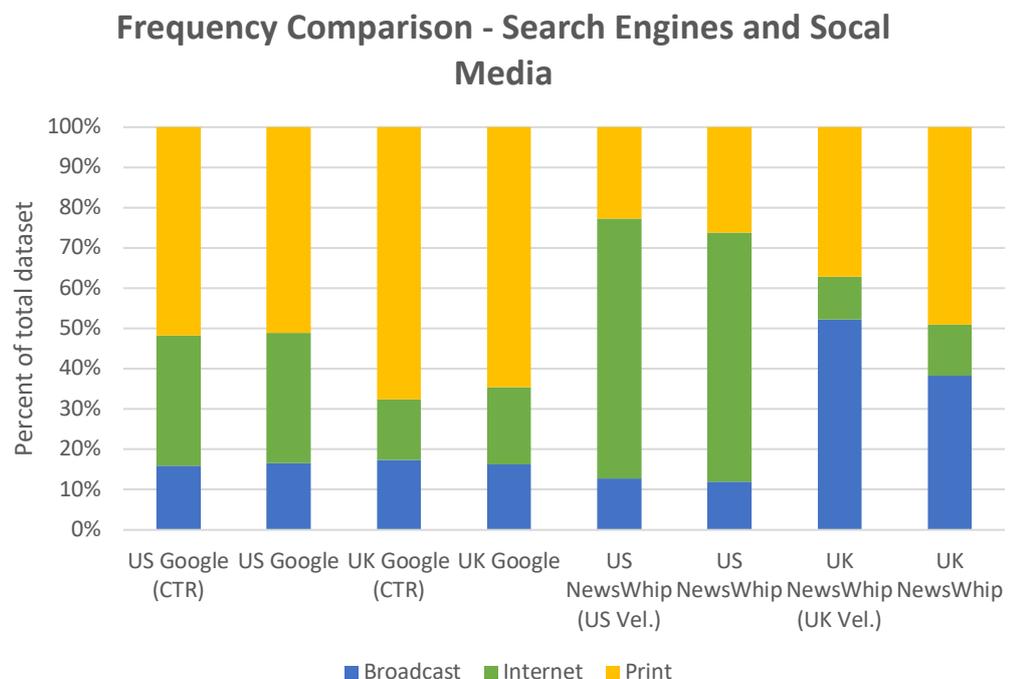
Returning to the consumption of internet natives, the unweighted data suggests two important themes. The first theme, introduced in the previous paragraph, is that American audiences are much more likely to be exposed to and consume these news sources. While this supports the path dependency argument, this also offers important insight into the online news environment. While news consumption by native medium is distributed similarly in the Google and News360 results, and domestic differences in these distributions are constant, the distribution on social media diverges significantly from these patterns. As the table below demonstrates, Americans share internet-based sources on social media at a rate of five to every one shared by a consumer in the United Kingdom. Meanwhile, the gatekeeping algorithms of search engines and news aggregators maintain the distribution at two to one.

While focusing on social media, it is also important to note the increased role for broadcasting-based sources in the United Kingdom. Driven mainly by a proclivity for sharing content by the BBC, this increase is further evidence of path dependency. In the absence of gatekeeping from Google and News360, British consumers generally share news from either established print sources like the Guardian or the Telegraph, or the public broadcaster. This preference for

³⁶ The Native Medium distribution data for 5.12 and 5.13 can be found in the appropriate table in this volume in Appendix 2

established sources is considerably different from the United States, where internet-based news sources comprise nearly 60% of all sources shared. Offline preferences, in terms of plurality in news consumption, persist regardless of how news is consumed online, but this is clearest on Facebook and Twitter.

The weighted data generally reinforces this interpretation of the unweighted data. In the frequency comparison below, some variation exists between the weighted and unweighted models, but it is only the UK cases that merit further analysis. The CTR weighted search engine data here suggests that the print-internet-broadcast order of popularity present in the Google data is wrong. Rather, the weighted data suggests that the order should be print followed by broadcast and internet. The unweighted data shows that 19.20% of all stories in the dataset were from internet natives, and 16.23% were from broadcast news sources. The weighted data, on the other hand, shows that while broadcast stories were less prevalent, their rankings suggest that these fewer stories would have yielded more clicks than all the stories published by internet natives – broadcasters' 307 stories would yield 17.31% of all clicks on the website, while internet natives' 363 stories represent only 15.15%.



5.13: Weighted and Unweighted Native Medium Frequency Comparison

While the Google data represents a relatively small but important difference, the UK NewsWhip data points to a bigger discrepancy between the weighted and unweighted data. In this case, the unweighted data overestimates the popularity of stories attributed to the print media, and underestimates the popularity of broadcast sources. Based on the data presented in the last section, this can be attributed almost entirely to the popularity of the BBC as a source to share and consume via social media – the public broadcaster represents 35.79 of all stories that appeared during the campaign, but 47.18% of all viral activity on Twitter and Facebook. Similarly, 462 stories from all UK broadcasters account for 52.28% of viral activity.

5.4: Geographical Distribution

Another important dynamic to consider while looking at source frequency is the distribution of regional and national sources. As a medium that exposes local and regional news organisations to a global audience, the internet offers a new opportunity for local and regional news sources to compete against national news alternatives. This optimistic view of the internet as a marketplace of ideas (see section 2.3.1), where the quality of a source's content is the only salient factor in determining what news people choose to read or watch, is factually true (since anyone can produce content), but of limited practical use. From a production perspective, the internet has expanded the potential audience of local news organizations (after all, anyone with access to a web browser can visit NJ.com if they want to consume news written by the staff of *New Jersey's Star-Ledger*), but the extent to which local news sources have capitalised on this is unclear. This section examines source distribution through the lens of geographical orientation. Like the last section, the analysis here explores how the regional press is represented on social media, in news aggregators, and search engines in each state.

As mentioned in the path dependency chapter, a historical institutionalist analysis of both print and broadcasting in the United Kingdom suggests that the dominance of national news outlets, alongside a smaller geographical area to

cover, will translate not only to a preference for national, Westminster based sources, but a smaller total number of sources (see section 5.1) in comparison to the United States. That chapter also emphasised that the United States has a very different history – one characterised by early technological and logistical barriers to truly national news sources, complex broadcasting networks (a mixture of network owned and affiliate stations), regulatory emphasis on regionalism in public service, in addition to the corporate liberal media culture described by McChesney (1999), Streeter (1996), and Pickard (2015). This history suggests an online media environment that reflects consumer’s familiarity with local and regional sources, where the regional and local news media have a prominent role.

To adequately frame an analysis of the online data and to establish an offline point of comparison, there are a few resources available to researchers. For the United States, the data provided by Statista adequately reflects the offline news environment. The most relevant information is included in the response to a survey question posed to American audiences by the Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism (Statista Inc. 2015). When asked “which offline news brands have you accessed in the last week,” 33% of respondents claimed that they consumed local television news, 23% had responded that they consumed a regional or local newspaper. Meanwhile, 18% consumed local radio news and 6% read free city papers. Considering that there may be some overlap between these groups, it is the 33% figure which represents the lowest possible estimate of offline local or regional news consumption. For the purposes of comparison, support for the path dependency argument in the United States can be operationalised as a distribution of at least one local story for every two national stories which appear. As the online figures stray from this one-out-of-three ratio, alternative explanations technological determinism or globalisation are strengthened.

For the United Kingdom, the Ofcom data measures this question, but there are a few other surveys also worth considering that address the issue of local or regional news consumption. The British Social Attitudes (BSA) survey asks respondents which newspapers they consume, and include two Scottish papers and another option for other regional papers. While this may be a statistically and methodologically rigorous measure of what offline habits are, it is hardly

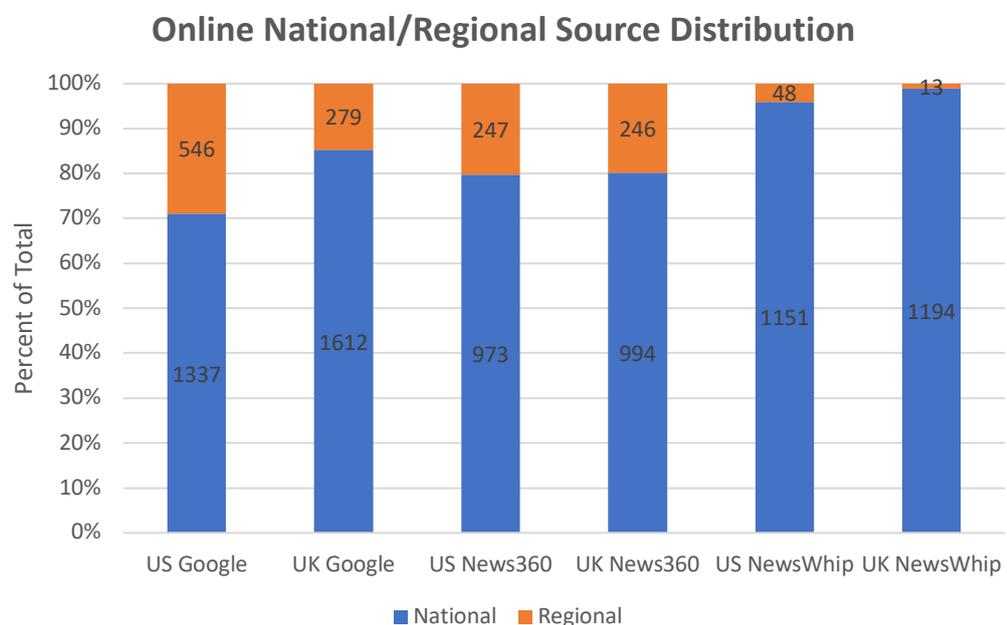
exhaustive and doesn't include broadcast networks in its analysis. The same survey also asks its respondents in 2001 if they had watched a regional news program in the previous three weeks, with 80.7% responding that they had and 19.3% responding they had not (Ofcom 2015b, p.35). However, a lack of *de facto* regional broadcasters in the United Kingdom means that this survey question is about regional news *content*, rather than regional news *source* – a subtle but important distinction that is addressed in the next chapter.

With these other surveys in mind, the Ofcom data is more useful. In the absence of local TV broadcasters, the only ways to measure local and regional news consumption are through newspaper readership and local radio. In 2015, only 11% of people reported that they used local dailies 'for news nowadays' (UK Data Service 2001). Similarly, 7% reported that they used a BBC local radio station while 11% used a local commercial radio station for news (2015b, p.52). These offline statistics are consistent with observations in the table below; particularly the Google data. While these questions are subtly different in what they evaluate, if the survey question about regional programming is representative of consumers' preference for local news, trends in regional news consumption via search engines and news aggregators (seen in the table below) are consistent with offline habits in the United Kingdom. Regarding sharing news on social media, the online experience is even more heavily skewed in favour of content from national news sources.

Surprisingly, this is also true in the United States during a midterm election where two important offline trends would suggest a better performance by local and regional news sources. First, the 2014 midterm campaign focused on local and Congressional politics and individual districts. In comparison to federal elections in a Presidential year where a considerable amount of news coverage is concerns the two major party candidates, a political congruence approach might suggest that local news sources should play a greater role than usual; vetting local candidates and covering campaign events. The online evidence, however, does not support this. Each unweighted dataset underperforms in comparison to the offline local news consumption statistics provided by both Ofcom and Statista. Second, the offline consumption data from the Reuters Institute suggests that this distribution

should be, at a minimum, one local or regional news source in every three, or 33% of the entire dataset (Statista Inc. 2015, p.61). Google performs the best here in terms of replicating the offline environment, but it also falls short, with only about one in four (27%) of the total dataset representing local sources – a difference of 5%.

The chart below demonstrates how online news consumption is dominated by national sources as opposed to regional or local ones. This proves to be true across all three news consumption methods, and in both the United States and the United Kingdom. However, this dominance is inconsistent, and the way that it varies online highlights the importance of considering these different channels if academics are to fully understand the complexity of the online news media environment. These differences are small, but noticeable. Without an offline basis of comparison, however, it is difficult to determine whether the online news environments of the United States and the United Kingdom are more similar due to the technological and cultural circumstances of the Internet Age, or if the observed differences reflect the consumer’s previous relationship with local news.



5.14: Geographical Distribution by Article Source (See Appendix 2 for distribution table)

In addition to examining how online news consumption measures up to offline expectations, it is also useful to compare the online data to better understand the variance present in Figure 5.14. The user’s exposure to (and

consumption of) local or regional sources changes depending on how they seek news. Social media users, for example, have such an overwhelming preference for (and exposure to) national news sources that it merits exploration in greater depth. The stories shared on social media that come from regional or local sources only represent 4% and 1.08% for the United States and the United Kingdom, respectively. In comparison, the next smallest percentage of regional sources within a dataset is 14.75%, which is the Google data for the United Kingdom. While it is beyond the scope of this research project to determine exactly what factors motivate individuals to share regional stories at a lower rate than they are consumed on search engines, it may concern some uses and gratifications themes already addressed earlier in this thesis.

For NewsWhip and News360, the domestic system in which this consumption occurs seems to matter very little, providing support for the technological determinism argument; that domestic differences won't persist online thanks to the uniquely borderless, unregulated, and technologically uniform characteristics of the internet. While the NewsWhip data for the United States does have more regional sources than the United Kingdom, it is a difference of less than 3%. For both the United States and the United Kingdom, those sharing stories on social media are choosing sources that are national in scope at a much greater rate than their offline consumption habits would suggest. More importantly, since the observed values lie outside the area between the two predicted values (unlike the Google data, which suggests convergence between these two predicted outcomes), the data suggests that if a convergence is occurring, it is not as simple as the emergence of an Anglo-American model where the reality of online news consumption can be approximated somewhere between the offline expectations of both countries.

The News360 data also supports the convergence argument: both sets have a distribution of 80% national sources and 20% regional or local sources. It is possible (but unverifiable without examining News360's algorithms more closely) that the ratio of 2 local stories for every 8 national stories is actually built into News360's results, but whether it is intentionally or unintentionally done, the results suggest that again offline expectations regarding the use of local sources

are not met online. However, News360's results do exist between the expectations set by offline media in the US and the UK – so while there is convergence occurring, it is difficult to know if this convergence is a product of technological standardisation (using the same algorithms, regardless of where the content is consumed) or other more organic changes in domestic content and source preferences of online news consumers.

The Google data, on the other hand, offers evidence that there are substantial differences between search results in the United States and the United Kingdom (for search engines, at least). In the United States, Google provided considerably more content from local sources than it did in the United Kingdom. In comparison to the offline statistics, though, these differences are smaller than expected. Google underperforms in terms of expected regional content in the US, while outperforming expectations in the same area in the UK. While they have not reached the same level (as they have in the News360 case), they are certainly converging. This shrinking of the gap suggests that although domestic differences are still visible when looking at results from search engines like Google, they aren't as pronounced as they were when looking at offline data. Continued research here could help to determine if this gap has stabilised or if it is shrinking, providing robust support for the technological determinism advocates.

5.5: Path Dependency and Convergence in Source Data

The inspiration behind this project was a desire to understand exactly what the internet means for the provision and consumption of news. Is it a force for homogeneity? If so, are media systems converging around some globalised norm, or is a force for Americanisation? If not, does the internet represent just more of the same? While a complete answer to these fundamental questions is beyond the scope of only one research project, this chapter addresses them through a careful comparison with three dimensions of analysis. The first dimension concerns the differences between offline and online media environments and tests path dependency in the broadest possible terms. The second dimension addresses the question of Americanisation directly by evaluating online news consumption in the

United States and the United Kingdom. The third dimension, overlooked by much of the current research on the subject, addresses how the different ways in which people consume news online can have a profound impact on personal online experiences.

The answers that this research project proposes reflect a news environment that is increasingly complex. While the analysis presented in this chapter makes it clear that online news consumption exists within the shadow of offline institutions, it fails to conform neatly with any of the theories put forward by the academic community. Evidence of path dependency – that domestic differences persist online – is clear in some areas, but elusive or indeed non-existent in others. Some of the research present here suggests that convergence is occurring. While Google and News360 could be viewed as gatekeeping forces for homogenisation by imposing their standards throughout borderless cyberspace, their impact is profoundly different when looking at different states.

As the provision and consumption of news continues to develop throughout the unregulated frontiers of the internet, those who are best positioned to navigate it come from one of two groups. The first group is comprised of the offline news giants, who continue to serve as touchstones for mainstream, if not quality, journalism in an environment that has been saturated with a seemingly infinite number of new internet-based competitors. Their familiarity to customers, economies of scale and scope, and cross media promotion has made this group particularly successful on social media. The second group is made up of those online sources like *The Huffington Post* – a source that has invested boldly in developing its news provision and content, resulting in favourable ranking from search engines.

Regarding the focus of this research project, measuring media system convergence, some important findings emerge from the analysis presented here. Most of these findings confirm that online media in these two states remain distinct and path dependent from one another. The clearest manifestation of path dependency lies in the continued dominance of the BBC in the United Kingdom (H₃). Of all the sources present in both datasets, it is a consistent outlier, outperforming most other sources. In comparison to its public service counterparts

in the United States, which appear much lower in each of the source frequency rankings, the BBC plays a central role in the provision of election news. The graphs included in this chapter demonstrate this – the BBC consistently appears in the tall head, while PBS and NPR exist at various points in the long tail.

Path dependency also has support in other areas. For all three data sources, the total number of sources that appeared in the dataset was greater in the United States than the United Kingdom (H_1). This reflects the offline broadcast news environment of the two states, specifically a much more limited broadcast news environment in the United Kingdom, and its more competitive, pluralistic American counterpart. The social media data is particularly illustrative here, where the British dataset has less than half the number of total sources present in the American data.

These findings are also linked with hypotheses H_2 , which argues that internet natives will make up a comparatively larger overall percentage of the dataset in the US case. Looking at the weighted and unweighted Google, NewsWhip, and News360 data, the data universally confirms this. Perhaps one of the most resounding confirmations of path dependency concerns these findings, as the data from social media demonstrates a sharp contrast between the United States (where over half of the stories collected were from the websites of internet natives) and the United Kingdom, which demonstrates a reliance on print and broadcast news sources. Considering these results, it may be important to revisit the literature on sharing motivations on social media – such substantive differences in source distribution might mean that motivations (and the sources that social media users share based on these motivations) might be a product of domestic experience rather than a universal one.

There are some areas, highlighted in the analysis throughout this chapter, where convergence arguments (either in the form of Americanisation or technological determinism) have some support. When examining the geographic orientation of the sources (H_5) present in the dataset, the picture is unclear. Most notably, this seems to be the case with news aggregator News360, where both American and British users are exposed to regional and national news sources at very similar rates. Similarly, the NewsWhip data indicates two things. First, that

there is little difference between the two states in terms of the rate at which individuals share local and regional news content. The second finding here is that people are not sharing news from local and regional news sources at rates expected when looking at the offline data. The Google data, on the other hand, does demonstrate some path dependency, with a more substantial difference in search results. Regarding the geographical orientation of sources in online news, this thesis finds that it depends on how you get your news. If consumers use Google, they may get a news environment that reflects domestic offline media experience. If they use social media sites like Facebook or news aggregators like News360, the state in which the news consumption occurs seems to matter less. If the reason for this lies in algorithms that are consistent for users across the globe, this supports convergence in the form of technological determinism.

The analysis presented here demonstrates that while there is considerable support for several of the hypotheses proposed at the start of this project, this support is not universal. Among the most important findings of this chapter and this thesis, however, is the variance present between the three news consumption tools. While the implications for this phenomenon are revisited in the final chapter, it's important to emphasise how varied online news consumption is, and how different individuals' experiences can be based on the way they choose to consume news. In comparison to consumers who rely on search engines, those who rely on social media, for example, are demonstrably exposed to a very different diet of news. While some similarities exist, and the theme of path dependency is consistent for a few hypotheses, this depends on the lens you use to study online news. As expected, the reality of online news is messy and complicated, and it demands a nuanced, granular analysis. The historical institutionalist framework used here does this successfully – highlighting those areas of divergence and allowing deeper interpretations of convergence where it is observed.

6. Measuring Content and Source Bias in internet News

The last chapter demonstrated an internet news environment that is complex, and shaped in significant ways by the traditional, offline news media. It explored how the stories that individuals are exposed to and consume are shaped both by the domestic media system in which individuals live, as well as the tools that they use to consume them. It demonstrated that social media closely reflected offline consumer preference in the United Kingdom and the United States in terms of source. Likewise, it demonstrated how the algorithms that drive search engines favour established and well-funded news sources and perpetuate (if not accelerate) media concentration online. The data also suggested that there are some areas in which convergence is occurring. This was especially true when looking at aggregator News360.

Earlier, this thesis established several key areas of path dependency in offline news media and developed hypotheses about how this path dependency might manifest itself online. The last chapter investigated those hypotheses that concerned media ownership and the role of public broadcasting. There, the analysis identified the organisations that are influential in the provision of online news and the circumstances surrounding their success. This chapter investigates the remaining hypotheses, which move beyond the study of organizations that provide the news to a greater understanding of the actual content that is being provided. In other words, this chapter is concerned with what is being said, rather than the source that says it.

Specifically, this chapter investigates three characteristics of online news content. The first section revisits the topic of regional and local news, from the perspective of content rather than source. Although the difference between this analysis and what was presented in the previous chapter is subtle, this section highlights the important differences between these two perspectives. In the second section, it studies the prevalence of opinion and editorial content online by comparing the experience of American and British consumers. This section uses

basic content analysis to evaluate the validity of arguments that suggest an Americanisation of British news content put forward by parallel systems theorists. The final section contains analysis of the results of an expert survey concerning editorial bias in online news.

6.1: Geographical Distribution of Subject

To investigate one dimension of path dependency identified by this thesis, the previous chapter investigated the geographical distribution of online news by examining the regional or national identities of the sources which appeared in the datasets. While these results were informative and useful in evaluating claims of media system convergence, they provide only one perspective. Many of the national news sources that appeared can provide local news coverage online; satisfying the consumer's needs without them having to use a local news source at all. For example, broadcast networks like NBC and BBC have robust, geographically diffuse networks involved in the newsgathering process and programming dedicated to local news content. During election cycles, national newspapers dispatch journalists to cover local election campaigns – some may be close races, or reporters may be sent in response to some controversy or scandal. To this end, examining this question through the lens of source distribution is only one dimension of the analysis. For a fuller understanding of localism in online news, researchers also must look at the content of the news stories themselves.

When looking at the local or national composition of online news content, regional news sources' coverage of local elections is supplemented by two groups - established, national sources like *The Telegraph*, and internet natives with no fixed geographical orientation. All three groups can cover local news; any story focused on individual candidates, campaigns, local constituencies or state politics. In five of six cases, there are more stories with local content (see the table below) than stories from local sources (see Figure 5.14) in five of six cases. If this is a better reflection of domestic consumers' preference for local content, it offers some interesting differences to the frequency distribution that focuses on source localism.

When considering the difference between source and subject localism, search engines don't behave much differently (See Figure 6.1). In the United Kingdom, there are slightly more stories with local subject matter than there are stories from local sources (a change from 14.75% to 16.50% of stories), and the distribution is identical when looking at the US (27% local). This total variance of less than 2% suggests that localism is relatively constant on the popular search engine, whether you look at subject or source. Interpreting this, the reality of localism in news consumption online lies somewhere between these two metrics, and the ratios of national to regional news coverage constitute the basis of comparison between the case studies. Online, a Google search for US election news yielded a local news story 27% of the time, while a similar search in the UK returned local stories just 16% of the time. Greater demand for local news in the US offers some support for the path dependency thesis and a rejection of the convergence thesis when it comes to search engines. The next section, which explores how well these online distributions fit the offline patterns of local news consumption, will offer further evidence for the path dependency argument.

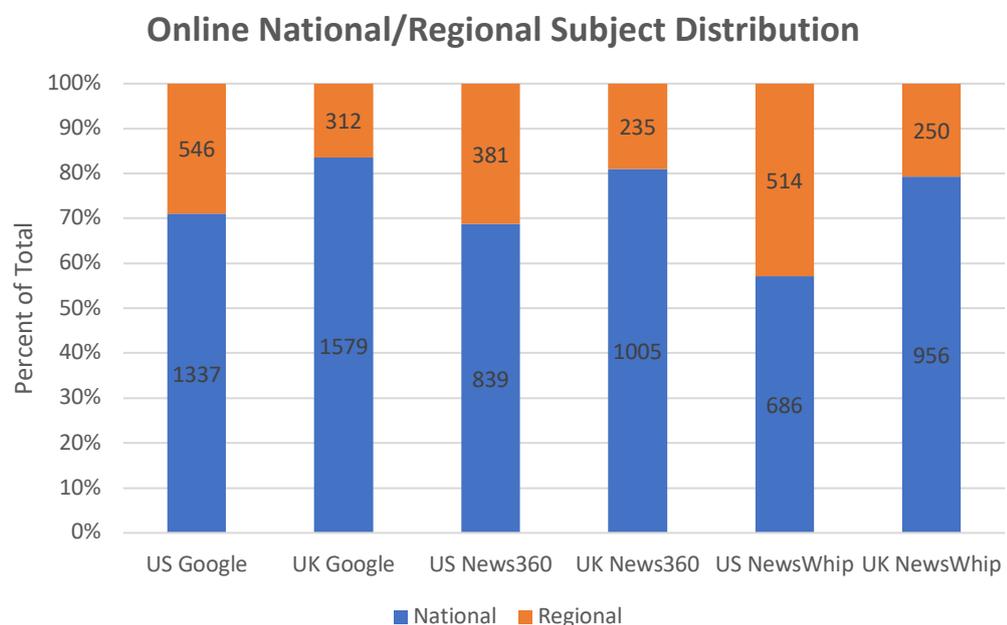


Figure 6.1: Geographical Distribution by Article Subject

As the most highly curated channel to consume news, News360 and other aggregators' approach to localism is unique and the data reflects this. Before discussing this in more detail, it is important to emphasize that there were no

specific regional or local filters used when collecting this dataset. It is possible to use filters for regional news on some aggregator websites, but the filters used here focused on Congressional and Parliamentary campaigns in general, showing no preference for any specific local or national sources or content. The frequency distribution for News360 in the United Kingdom is the only dataset which has fewer stories with a local subject than a local source, although the difference is just under 1% (from 19.84% to 18.95%). This consistency suggests that just under 20% of the time, or roughly one out of every five stories for the UK, the news aggregator offered content that had to do with individual constituencies or candidates, rather than broader political trends. In contrast, although News360 returned local news sources 20.25% of the time in the United States, it returned stories with local content 31.23% of the time. As with Google, the subject data suggests that the aggregator offers more local content for the US audience than it does for the UK. Combined with the source data, representation of local and regional sources and content for news aggregators like News360 is distinct from search engines and social networks.

NewsWhip's source data was perhaps the most surprising when looking at this regional/national dynamic. Overwhelmingly, American and British social media users choose to share news from national sources, but when considering the subject matter of a news story, a different pattern emerges. The US NewsWhip data represents the largest percentage of stories with local content with 42.83% of total stories concerning individual candidates or state and local races. The UK dataset also expands significantly in comparison to the 13 local or regional sources that appeared in the data, with 250 items featuring content about candidates or constituencies rather than national politics. These figures offer considerable support for the path dependency argument, with the United States showing a much greater preference for sharing local or regional news stories than their counterparts from the United Kingdom. In fact, Americans are over twice as likely to share local news content than the British.

6.2: Opinion and Editorial Content in Online News

When examining the use of editorial content (especially regarding election coverage), important differences exist offline between the United States and the United Kingdom. Although both states have rich traditions of editorial content in print journalism, broadcast regulation concerning content represents an important point of divergence, both in terms of what is said and who says it. This is especially true in the United Kingdom, where a robust regulatory apparatus and domestic tradition has resulted in a public broadcaster which adheres to rules about impartiality, and its competitors following its standard. Meanwhile, in the United States, opinion content has occupied an increasingly prominent position in broadcast news ever since the abolition of the Fairness Doctrine.

For each news story collected for this project, a basic content analysis was conducted by the researcher regarding the presence of opinion or editorial content. The methodology section details the criteria for the content analysis, focused on several indicators of opinion content.³⁷ Based on the data collection, opinion content took on many forms. At the most extreme, content from sources like *Daily Kos* or *Tea Party News Network* involved the use of hyperlinks within the text to encourage readers to donate to individual campaigns or Political Action Committees (PACs). One *Daily Kos* article from October 9 ended with a plea: “Can you chip in \$5 to elect Democratic women up and down the ballot?” (Lewison 2014). Less extreme examples encouraged readers to share content if they agree with the perspectives of the writer. The growing use of sarcasm and hyperbole to add editorial perspective to a news story is a unique challenge when conducting content analysis and one of the main reasons (besides limited resources) that the analysis was conducted by human coding rather than electronic text coding.

6.2.1: Frequency of Op-Ed Content - Unweighted

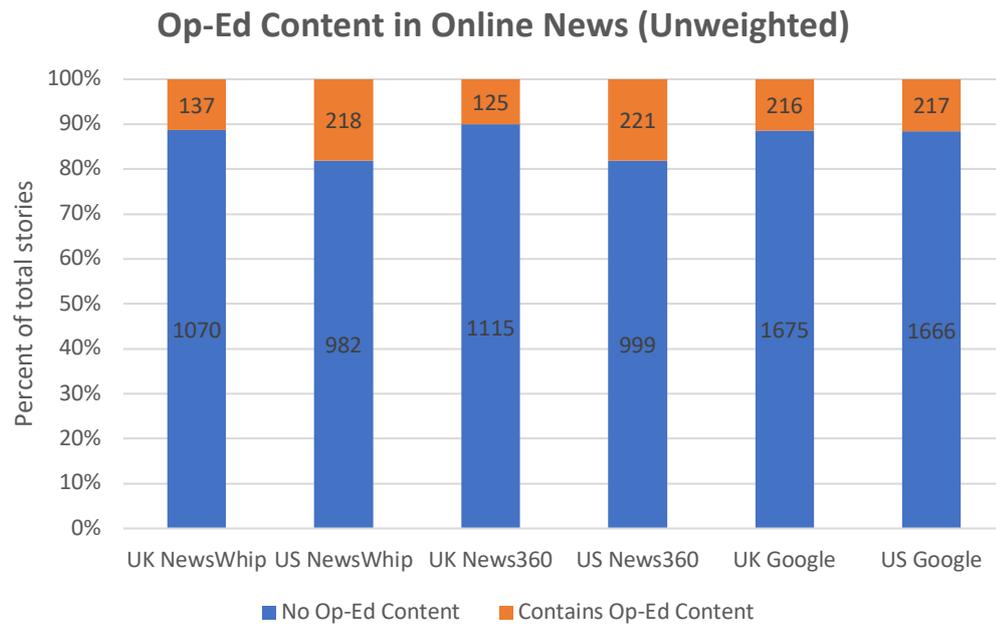
Figure 6.2 is an unweighted frequency distribution that demonstrates a complex online news environment that is consistent with the analysis in the previous chapter. As before, the consumer’s experience of media system

³⁷ See section 4.4.5

convergence depends both on the location in which it was consumed, and on the way in which online news is consumed. Concerning the prevalence of opinion content in campaign coverage, there is some clear evidence of path dependency when consumers use news aggregators and social media, but again this is not universally true. This graph suggests that while opinion content hovers between 10 and 20 percent of all news stories, there are persistent differences between the UK and US cases when looking at the NewsWhip and News360 data.

Ignoring where these stories appeared in terms of rank for the moment (the next section considers it in more detail), social media exhibits the largest difference between the two cases. Of all stories that appeared in the NewsWhip datasets, 11.35% of all UK stories contained Op-Ed content, while 18.17% of all US stories contained Op-Ed Content – a difference of 6.82% between the two cases. Content on the news aggregator was similarly split with more Op-Ed Content in the US (18.11%) than the UK (10.08%), a difference of 8.03%. Although the differences here are small in terms of percentages, they are still important. For NewsWhip, this difference represents 81 additional stories in the United States that contained opinion content. For News360, the numbers are even greater, with a difference of 96 stories. As hypothesised, this evidence suggests that opinion content is more prevalent online in the United States than it is in the United Kingdom.

Examining the unweighted frequency data, evidence of path dependency is not constant throughout all three methods of consuming news. The Google search results show that there is little difference between the American and British experience concerning Op-Ed content on search engines. A difference of 0.10% between the two datasets (11.42% of UK content and 11.52% of US content contains this kind of content) provides evidence of homogenisation and support for convergence theories like Americanisation or technological determinism. Whether this is a product of consistencies in the link structure of Op-Ed pieces, a more proactive filter that restricts the amount of opinion content from reaching the top two pages of the search results, or the search queries themselves, the result is an almost identical split between traditional news content and opinion content.



6.2: Opinion and Editorial Content in Online News, Unweighted

When this Google data is presented alongside the regional source data from the previous chapter (where the aggregator was the one exhibiting increased homogeneity between cases), homogeneity also depends on the researcher's perspective. If researchers focus only on the source data, they would rightly conclude that News360 provides evidence for convergence, while Google and NewsWhip suggest that path dependency persists online. When looking at unweighted frequency distributions for opinion content, it is Google that suggests convergence and NewsWhip and News360 which exhibit path dependence. Considering both perspectives, the transition to online news has been complex.

6.2.2: Frequency of Op-Ed Content – CTR and Velocity Weighted

It is important to reflect not only on the prevalence of op-ed content in the dataset, but also on the popularity of this content using CTR and Velocity weighted models as well. Using the same scoring method employed in the previous chapter while discussing source frequency distributions, it is possible to determine how influential a news story was by using click through rate (CTR) and NewsWhip's velocity data to assign scores based on rank. As before, News360 is excluded from this scoring, since the 'front page' of the website is randomised to some degree (in any case, there is no consistency to the ranking system that News360 uses) when

the webpage is refreshed. The results presented in Figure 6.3, alongside the unweighted results provide a more nuanced analysis when considered alongside the unweighted data.

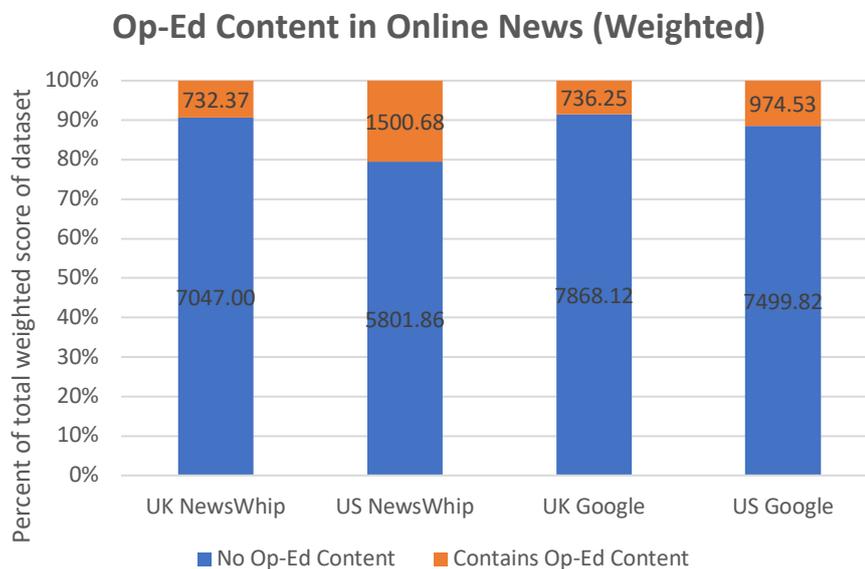


Figure 6.3: Opinion and Editorial Content in Online News, CTR and Velocity-Weighted

The figure above shows that when researchers consider how highly ranked a story is in Google’s search results, or the virality of specific news stories on Facebook and Twitter, Americans are more likely to click on or share Op-Ed content than their British counterparts. This is true even for Google, where the unweighted data supported the convergence thesis. When applying this scoring system, where lower ranked stories are weighted less, Op-Ed content makes up a greater percentage of the total weighted score than the unweighted frequency might suggest. In the United Kingdom, opinion content represents 8.56% of the total score of all stories in the United Kingdom while in the United States the figure is 11.50% - a difference of 2.94%. The difference between the two cases when examining the NewsWhip data grows as well to 11.14%, with Op-Ed content representing 20.55% of the total in the United States.

In addition to the larger variation between cases, a few other themes emerge based on this data. The first theme, which is consistent with the findings regarding source, is that the social media data again provides the strongest support for path dependency, even when looking at opinion content. As the use of social media websites like Facebook and Twitter for news consumption continues to

grow, so do the implications of this data for researchers' understanding of the news media. While this idea is explored more in the conclusion that follows this chapter, social media's role as both an indicator of public preference and consumption habits as well as a comparatively sophisticated and technologically demanding tool make it an important bellwether for the future of internet news.

The second theme, specific to the prevalence of Op-Ed content, is that the importance of such stories which contain such content are when looking at frequency alone. This depends on the perspective of the researcher – should they be more concerned with what sources are available or what sources are more likely to be consumed? Although these findings do reflect the former perspective, treating each story in the results as equal to every other story can mislead researchers when considering convergence. By introducing velocity and CTR weighted scoring alongside frequency, researchers gain a more complete understanding of how influential or popular an individual news story is. Without both perspectives, it would be simple (but also deceptive) to label the Google results as proof of convergence (when looking at the unweighted frequency data) or path dependence (when considering only the weighted data). Comparing the weighted and unweighted analysis, however, provides some important insight.

As mentioned earlier, data presented in the figure above provides more robust and consistent evidence for path dependency than the frequency data alone. For the Google results, the difference in terms of the differential between the United States and the United Kingdom is important because it suggests that even if American and British consumers are exposed to opinion content at the same rate when they use search engines, Americans are more likely to consume opinion content than the British. The unweighted NewsWhip data suggests that consumers in the United States are exposed to a higher rate of opinion news content on social media than consumers in the United Kingdom. The weighted data confirms this and suggests that the difference is even larger than the unweighted data would suggest.

An important difference between the two perspectives, however, concerns the actual percentage of news stories in each dataset that contain op-ed content, as opposed to the differential between the US and the UK data. In terms of

percentage of the overall dataset, unweighted opinion content in the UK comprised 11.35% of the NewsWhip data and 11.42% of the Google data. When looking at the weighted data, these figures drop to 9.41% and 8.56%, respectively.

Interpreting this data, opinion news content in the United Kingdom is less influential or popular as its frequency might suggest. While the Google results for the US are relatively constant across the weighted or unweighted data (there is less than a 0.02% difference between the two datasets), the social media data for the US provides more evidence. Here, frequency data underestimates the influence of opinion content. Unweighted opinion content makes up 18.17% of the NewsWhip stories, while weighted content represents 20.55% of the dataset's total 'score.'

6.2.3: *Who Produces Opinion Content Online?*

With a good understanding of how prevalent opinion content is online, it is also important to reflect on where that content comes from to make a more substantial link between the results presented in the previous section and path dependency. To do this, this section focuses on native medium to identify exactly which kind of news organisations produce this kind of content. Looking only at the opinion data identified in the previous section, this section examines how it is distributed based on native medium, where path dependence should manifest itself as greater opinion content from broadcast and internet native sources in the United States, and print media making up most of the opinion content in the United Kingdom.

Chapter 3, which provided the theoretical foundation for the historical institutionalist approach, argued that the online news environment in the United States is shaped by an offline regulatory approach that allows opinion content to flourish outside of the editorial pages of newspapers and magazines. This has two important effects. First, that editorial content from broadcasters should be more prevalent in the US than it is in the UK. The second is that this should also be true for internet natives, since consumers in the US have already been exposed to editorial content via electronic media. The United Kingdom's different approach to broadcast regulation (which prohibits editorialising), on the other hand, should yield an online news environment where opinion is dominated by the established

offline print media. In comparison, there should be little (if any) broadcast editorial content, and fewer online only sources than the United States.

To investigate this question, this section revisits native medium as a lens through which to view opinion content. Comparing the United States and the United Kingdom, the NewsWhip and News360 results are consistent with expectations in that opinion content was more prevalent in the American data. Interestingly, for the search engine, the frequency of Op-Ed content is almost identical in terms of frequency but not in terms of how those stories are distributed. As expected, the op-ed content that is present in the UK is dominated by the established print media; well over half of opinion content from search engines (69.91%), news aggregators (59.20%), and social media (73.2%) comes from sources like *The Guardian* and *The Telegraph*. Similarly, this kind of content in the United States comes primarily from internet based sources on social media (89.45%) and news aggregators (75.57%). In the UK, the search engine's op-ed content is dominated by print, while the same is true in the US but the distribution is much more balanced.

Regarding broadcast, these sources only make up a very small percent of the total opinion content overall. Even though broadcast content made up at least 10% of all news stories (see figure 5.13), the chart below indicates that this medium doesn't keep pace in terms of providing Op-Ed content.

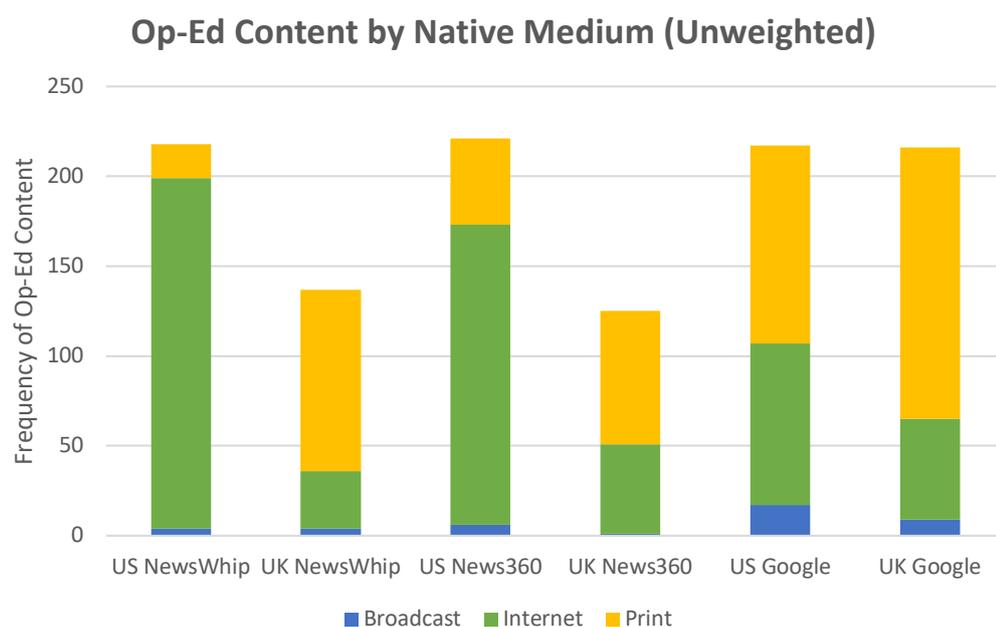


Figure 6.4: Opinion and Editorial Content by Native Medium, Unweighted

Weighted data highlights these differences and in some cases, exaggerates them. When controlling by velocity, the percentage of broadcast and internet native's opinion content grows a few percentage points to 2.74% and 90.32% respectively in the United States. This kind of print content makes up 8.72% of all stories that were shared on Facebook or Twitter, but velocity scores suggest that they represent only 6.94% of all opinion content. When considering CTR in the Google results, the share of opinion content grows more considerably to 12.04% for broadcasters and 47.11% for broadcasting. Meanwhile, print's share also drops more precipitously from 50.69% of all opinion content to 40.85% when using this measure.

While the UK Google data adheres to expectations, the NewsWhip velocity data suggests that the unweighted data underestimates the importance or influence of internet based opinion content and overestimates print (even though the weighted model still shows print to be the dominant source). Velocity scores suggest that broadcast and internet native op-ed content account for 4.09% and 29.84% of all viral content, while print accounts for 66.07%, down from 73.82%. While this suggests that the unweighted data requires some context, it does not challenge the path dependency narrative, considering that conservative estimates place print as the provider of about two thirds of all opinion content online when it comes to elections. On the other hand, the unweighted data is the more conservative metric for Google, as the CTR weighted scores suggest that 71.61% of clicks that led to opinion content led to print news sources (up slightly from 69.91%). Similarly, small reductions for broadcast and internet natives' opinion content (down to 3.72% from 4.17% and 24.67% from 25.93%, respectively) demonstrate that no matter how you look at the data, print continues to dominate the op-ed content provided on search engines.

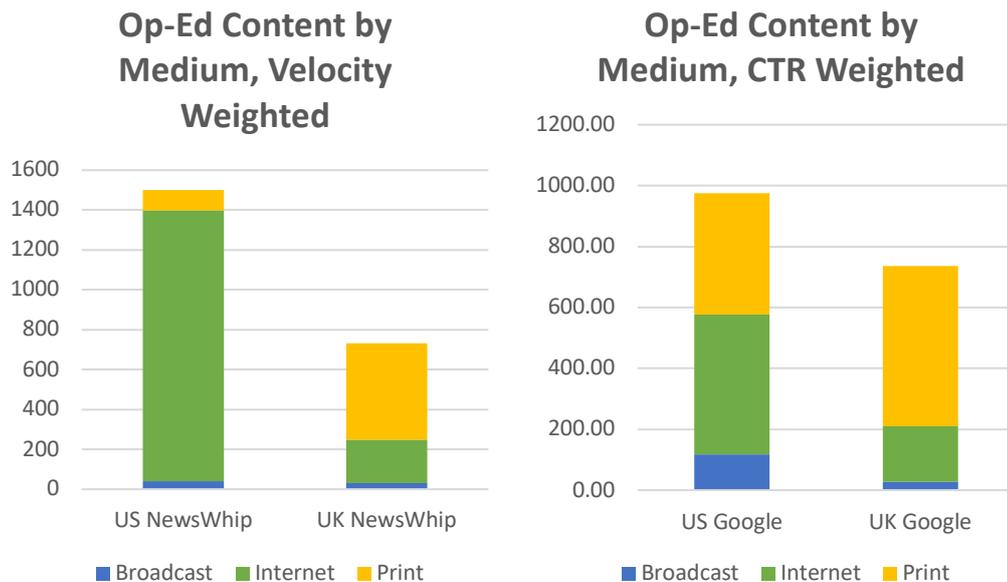


Figure 6.5: Opinion and Editorial Content by Native Medium, Velocity and CTR Weighted

The data presented here demonstrates nearly universal support for the path dependency thesis. It suggests a UK media system where the opinion content primarily comes from established print sources and a US system that embraces opinion content from electronic news sources – both broadcast and, much more significantly, internet natives. More generally, the data suggests that opinion content was more prevalent in the United States than the United Kingdom for both social media and search engines – not only in terms of how many times these stories appeared, but also in terms of how influential these stories are.

6.2.4: Opinion Content and Path Dependency

Most of the data presented in this section demonstrates that domestic differences in the regulation of broadcast opinion content yield an online experience unique to each state. This is consistent with expectations set out earlier in this thesis, which highlighted key points of regulatory divergence between the United States and the United Kingdom. Specifically, important regulatory changes that occurred during the Reagan era (which corresponded with both the rise of cable news and satellite communications) yielded a modern broadcast news environment where opinion content would flourish. The research here suggests that the economic success of partisan cable news, alongside consumers' three decades of familiarity with it, often translates to an online news

environment with more opinion content in comparison to the United Kingdom. Led by the BBC, which has a legal commitment to impartiality, each British broadcaster (including Sky News and ITN) approaches the issue of balance as an individual obligation.

Concerning opinion content, data collected in this thesis from both social media and a popular news aggregator indicates considerable variance between the two cases studied here. In other words, the content that individuals are exposed to and consume varies depending on where (geographically) that consumption occurs. This data conforms to expectations set by hypotheses H₈ and H₉. There is, however, one area where the data is less clear and more research might be needed. While the weighted Google results maintain that internet natives claim 47.11% of all clicks to the print media's 40.85%, the unweighted Google data for the US suggests that the press contributes more opinion content to the first two pages of the search (50.69%) than internet natives (41.47%) or broadcasters (7.83%).

This is the only evidence regarding opinion content that suggests, unlike the News360 and NewsWhip data, that the system in which news consumption occurs (in this case, the US and the UK) does not matter when consuming news via search engines. If the unweighted Google data supports convergence, it also offers some insight into what kind of convergence is occurring. Had the results been the opposite, and the UK had behaved as researchers would expect the US to, it would be more difficult to differentiate between convergence via technological determinism and convergence via the Americanisation or cultural hegemony approach. As it stands, the only explanatory approach put forward in the academic debate thus far which explains this is technological determinism. The only other alternative would be an inverse of the Americanisation thesis, where the UK news media behaves as the standard to be emulated by the United States and this does not have any advocates in the debate thus far.

6.3: Source Bias

The final area of online news that this thesis investigates concerns source bias. As the previous section indicates, the broadcast news experience suggests that the online news experience should be very different in the United States and the United Kingdom. For the United States, a policy approach that addresses neutrality from a market perspective (alongside two decades of cable news proliferation) should lead to an online news environment with sources that are polarised at the edges of traditional left-right continuum of political preference. In the United Kingdom, on the other hand, a system initially defined by the BBC's commitment to neutrality will lead to a system focused much more closely around the centre ground ideologically. To measure this, an expert survey was used.

6.3.1: Expert Survey

Developing a model that classifies every news source that appeared in the dataset is a huge challenge: the content analysis present in this chapter offers one method to overcome this challenge, but even this is imperfect. Another technique used by research agencies like Pew is a survey which asks respondents to classify the sources that they consume ideologically. Whether this kind of project relies on a large-N style survey of the public, or a small-N survey of experts, they are imperfect tools; concerns about subjectivity persist regardless of sample size. A larger survey would reflect public opinion (which may be unqualified or uninformed), while a smaller survey of academics in the field could reflect the analysis of those most familiar with the sources and the conceptual background of the question itself. Still, an expert survey could provide a better, more thoughtful evaluation of the similarities and differences between the online news media in the United States and the United Kingdom.

As discussed in the method chapter presented before the analysis, the survey format works best when questions and responses are simple. For this reason, respondents were asked to classify several news sources on a Likert scale, where a response of 1 represents a source that is very liberal and a response of 7 represents a source that is very conservative. While most respondents had no

trouble understanding or performing the task asked of them in the survey, one rightly questioned whether the model being used was overly simplistic. In administering the survey, some of the feedback from the academics consulted for this survey reflects this – with one respondent arguing that certain news sources ideological position wouldn't accurately be reflected in this continuum between only two descriptors, and that they couldn't respond. While the model is admittedly somewhat simplistic, most respondents understood the exercise and the responses (and non-responses in some cases) still prove insightful.

If the path dependency argument is valid, the online news media environment will again look very different when looking at the United States and the United Kingdom. In the United Kingdom, the expectation is a bell curve – where the most popular sources are those which appear in the ideological centre ground, while sources that appear at the extremes of the ideological debate experience lower readership figures. For the United States, the expectation is the opposite, with the most partisan sources getting higher readership figures, and the sources which are most balanced performing worse. As in the previous chapter's frequency distributions, special attention is paid to the position of public broadcasters, and both weighted and unweighted frequency data will be presented to provide a more robust picture.

6.3.2: Mapping Survey Results

The unweighted News360 data provides one perspective on neutrality from a systemic approach. The results for the United States and the United Kingdom, reported in the two charts below, do not provide any clear support for the hypotheses presented earlier. For the United States, the news aggregator data is relatively flat, with no individual source appearing more than 50 times. Flatness in terms of source distribution suggests support for the hypotheses presented earlier, but interpreting these results is more complicated than just measuring flatness. This project is also interested in the spread of sources along the horizontal axis, which represents ideological bias. When plotting news sources on this axis according to neutrality scores, the sources are most heavily clustered between points 3 (somewhat liberal) and 4. A more even distribution would provide more

support for the hypotheses, but, due to the size of the survey, this may have more to do with respondents' lack of familiarity with some sources. Undoubtedly, an area of further research would be developing model that would more comprehensively measure the data collected from aggregators (as well as social media and search engines). However, the data collected for this project does not match expectations for the United States – where the ideological distribution should be either regular, or clustered at the ideological extremes.

Source Distribution by Neutrality Score - US News360 (Unweighted)

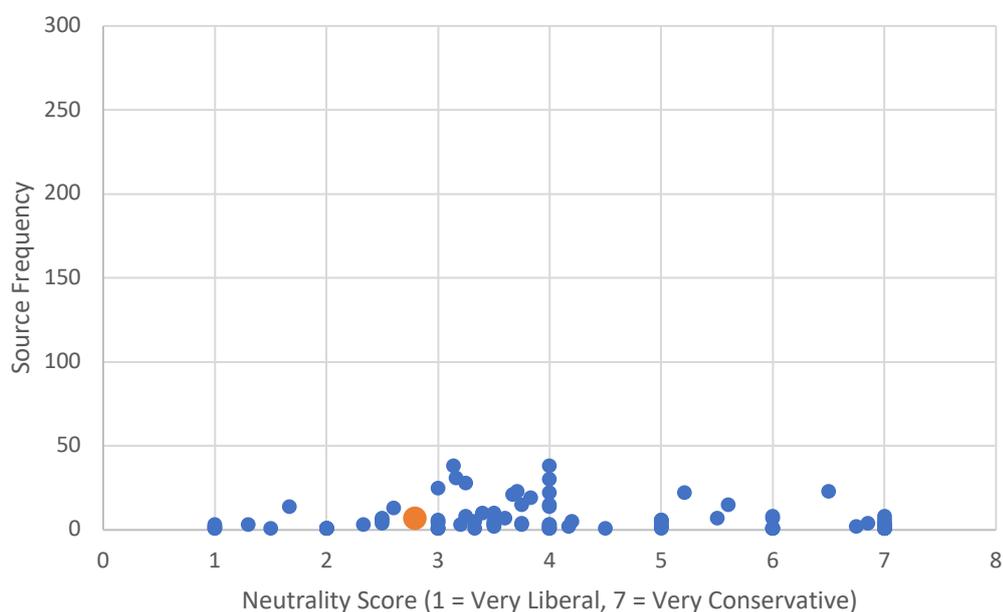


Figure 6.6: Source Distributions by Neutrality Score, News360

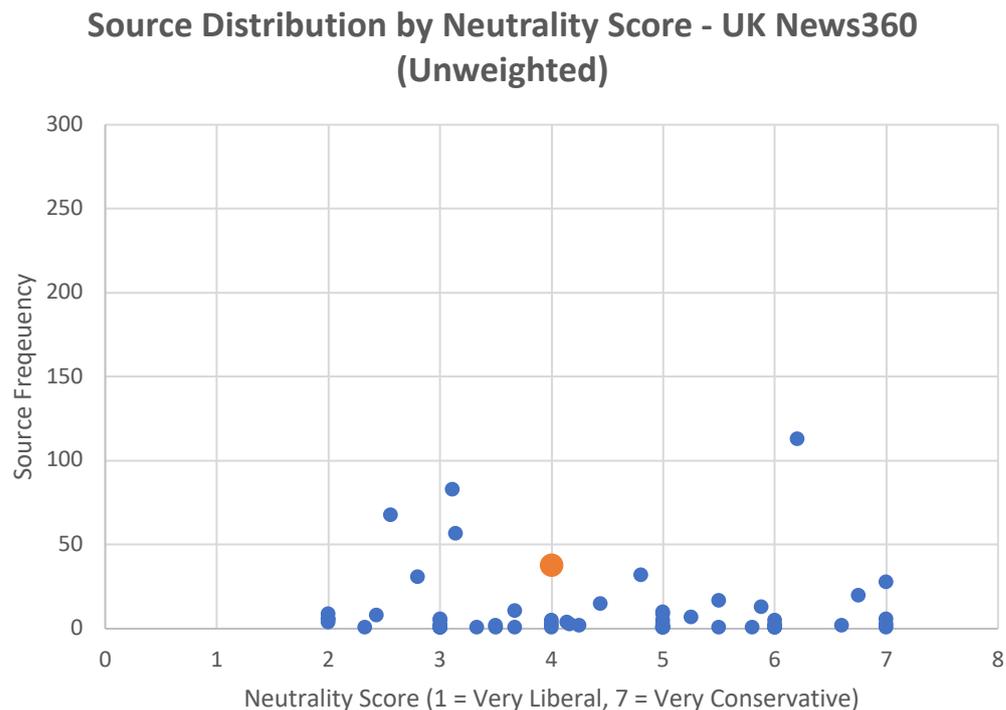


Figure 6.6 (cont): Source Distributions by Neutrality Score, News360

Despite the BBC appearing exactly in the middle of the ideological spectrum (unlike NPR, which had an average neutrality score of 2.79), the UK News360 data also defies expectations in three important ways. First, as the frequency data from the previous chapter suggests, the BBC was not the most popular news source. A second observation related to this is that based on the survey results, more partisan sources appeared more frequently than neutral ones – if the expectation is a bell curve which peaks at the ideological centre ground, there is very little support for path dependency here. It seems that instead of the sources with the most frequency being those sources which are the most ideologically balanced, sources like *The Guardian* and *The Daily Telegraph* appear more often than the BBC or Reuters. Third, where the hypotheses expected the sources, big and small, to be clustered around the centre ground, the distribution is even. Again, the researcher's suspicion is that a more comprehensive view of the system might look different. Even though these missing sources appear in the national news discourse infrequently, their absence here is important, and both representative of

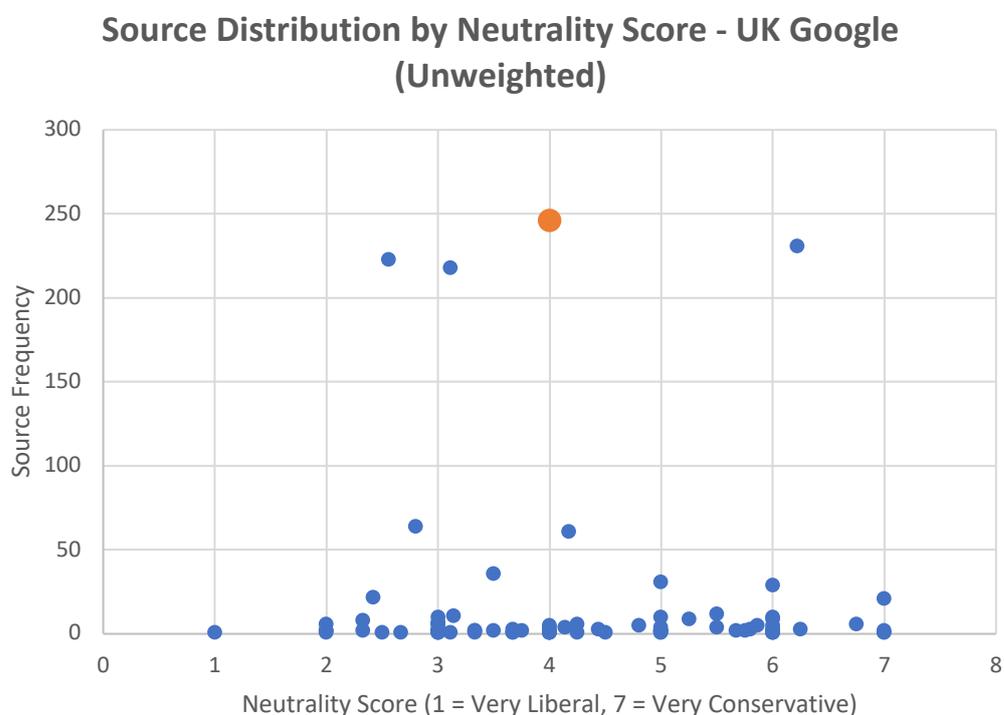
a lack of familiarity with these sources, and indicative of their secondary role in the provision of election news content.

What is the appropriate interpretation of the differences between offline expectations and the data presented here? Again, the unique circumstances of this method of news consumption are worth considering. If the algorithms that drive the news aggregator are consistent (in other words, if the algorithms used for news are the same in the United States as they are in the United Kingdom), then there is reason to believe that technology, not domestic circumstance, is the primary factor that determines what news individuals are exposed to. Variance between the News360 data and the NewsWhip and Google data presented here will help to determine if these results are representative of the online news environment, or if they are only representative of news aggregators.

The Google data offers another perspective. As with the NewsWhip data for the United Kingdom, the BBC is the source which appears most frequently in the search results. Alongside the public service broadcaster, the three major newspapers which appear most frequently are *The Guardian* (2.56), *The Independent* (3.11), and *The Daily Telegraph* (6.22). As demonstrated in the two figures below, there is considerable variance between the CTR and the unweighted models – the BBC appears the most frequently but performs behind *The Telegraph* and *The Independent* in terms of how many clicks each story gets. While the performance of *The Telegraph* suggests that the partisan print media is alive and well, this indicates that support for path dependency is weaker than the unweighted data suggests. Although there are two tiers of performers in terms of frequency, both groups are ideologically spread out and the bell curve expected of online news in the UK isn't well defined. On the other hand, most of the data is clustered between points 2 and 6, suggesting that sources are closer to the centre ground than the News360 data suggests.

The emergence of these two tiers is important, as the four sources of the first tier (mentioned in the previous paragraph) seem to enjoy a level of visibility and conversion that the other sources that appeared in the dataset do not. An important area for further research, therefore, is an attempt to understand exactly what these four sources do in terms of news production and distribution strategy

that helps them to excel. It is important to remember that although these four are members of the established offline media, there are several other actors from this group that are missing from the first tier. For example, how significantly does *Financial Times'* paywall restrict the number of visitors to its site through these means? Another more surprising absence is *The Daily Mail*, which boasts a far larger online readership than any other print source according to Ofcom. Understanding why their election content underperforms here in comparison to the rest of their website is important to achieve a better understanding of the dynamics of internet news.



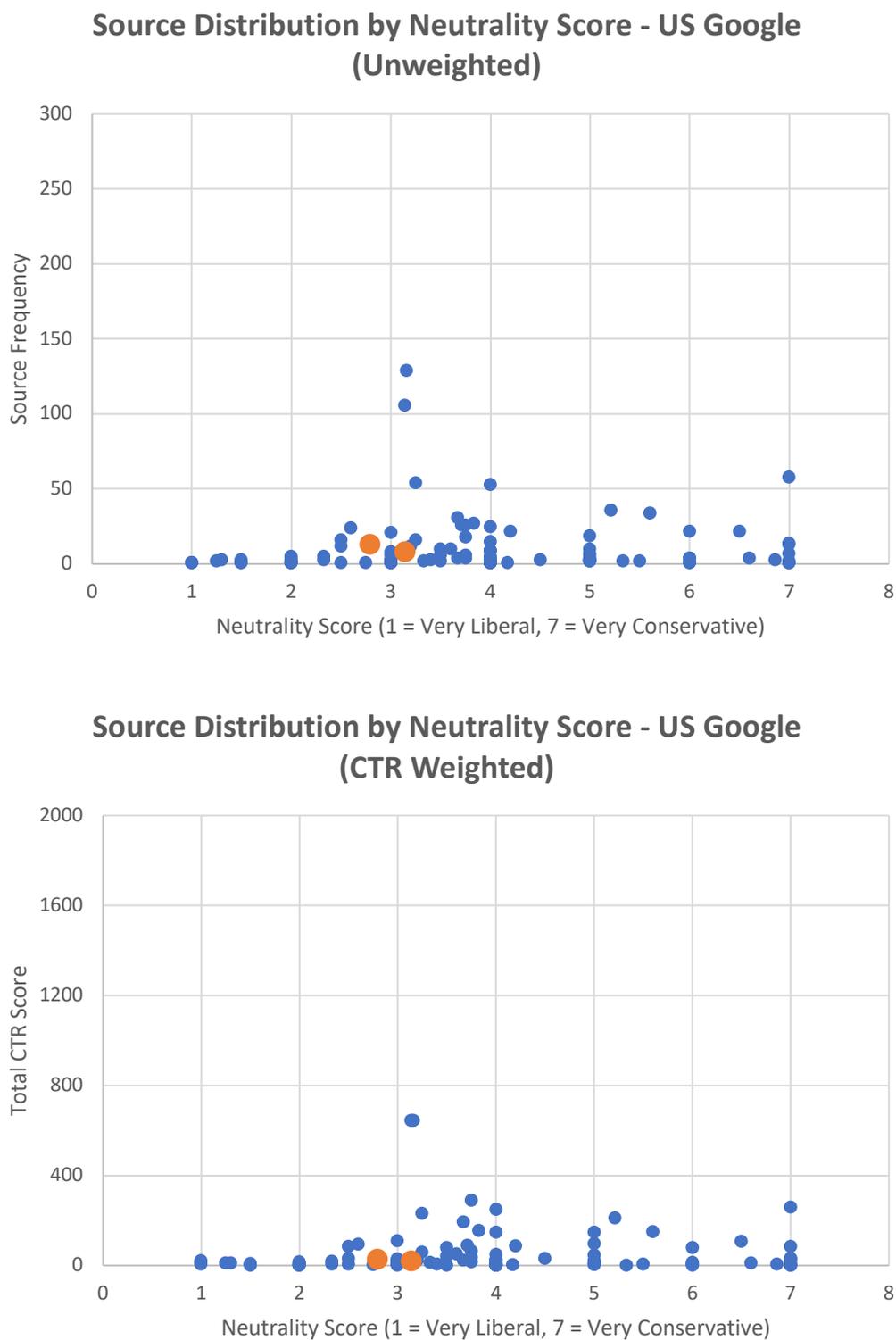
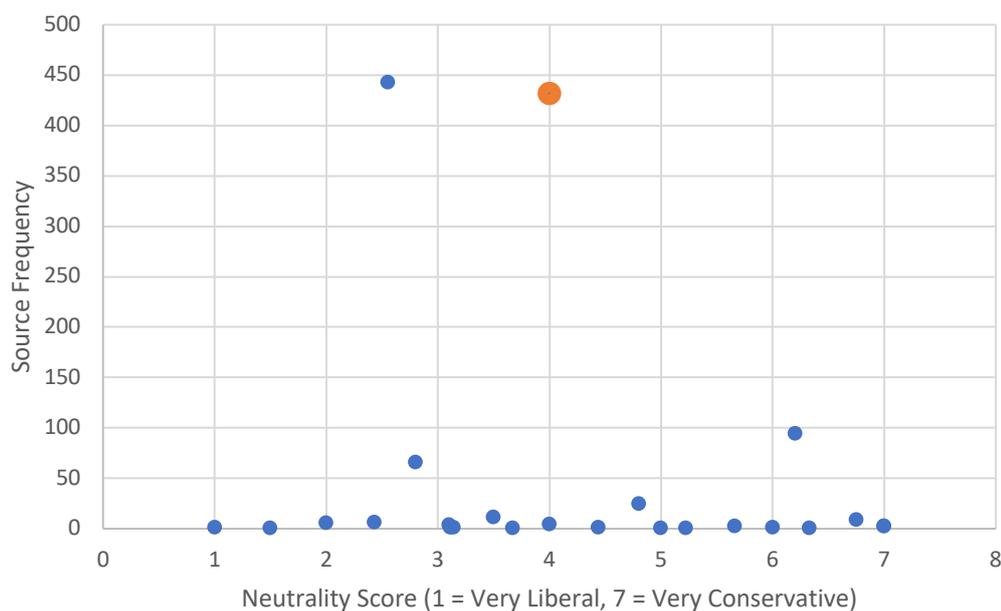


Figure 6.8: Source Distributions by Neutrality Score, US Google

Where the News360 suggests little support for the path dependency argument, both the unweighted and velocity weighted NewsWhip data confirms the hypotheses. Examining the United Kingdom data first, the bell curve

distribution is present, with the BBC occupying its expected place as both in the ideological centre and among the most popular sources. When controlling for viral velocity, the data is even more compelling, illustrating how dominant the BBC is, in comparison both to *The Guardian* and *The Telegraph* (the other leaders) and particularly with those sources on the ideological extremes (the sources nearest to 1 and 7 on the graphs below). Interestingly, there is still an even distribution of sources ideologically – again challenging the notion that most news sources are following the lead of the BBC in terms of their commitment to neutrality. Overall, the UK NewsWhip data reflects the offline news system where broadcasters, led by the BBC - occupy an ideological middle ground between the established, mainstream partisan press. In fact, all of the major UK broadcasters (BBC, Sky, Channel 4, and ITV) all scored between *The Guardian* and *The Telegraph* in terms of bias.

**Source Distribution by Neutrality Score - UK
NewsWhip (Unweighted)**



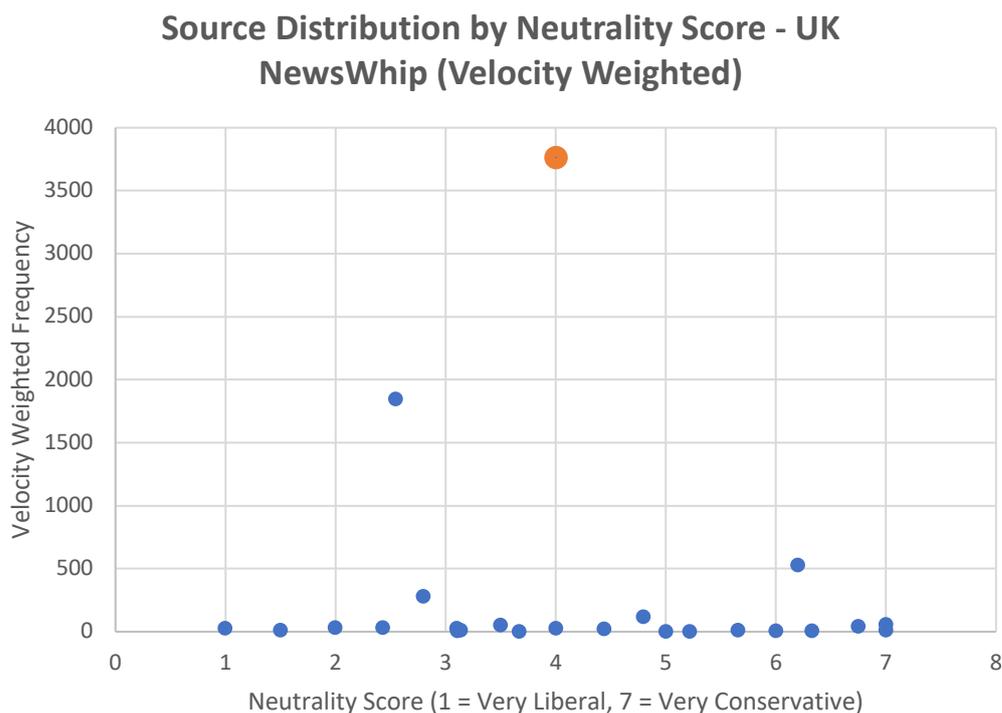
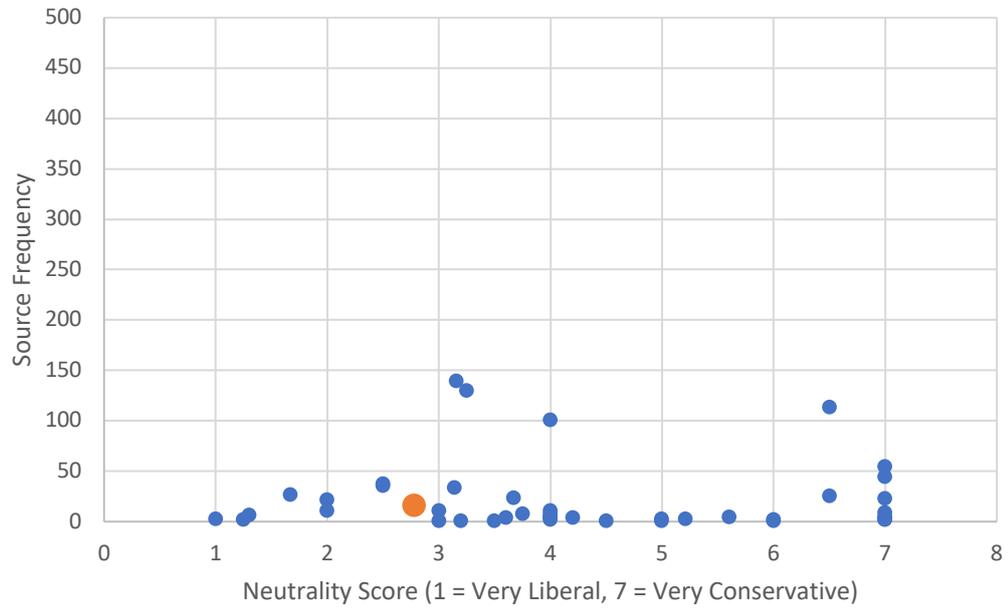


Figure 6.9: Source Distributions by Neutrality Score, UK NewsWhip

The US NewsWhip data also adheres to expectations. Keeping the scales used on the y-axes constant, no individual source approaches the same frequency that the BBC enjoys. Overall, the US data is flatter, with the popular sources to the left of centre (*The New York Times* and *The Huffington Post* among them) balanced out by sources like Fox News and the openly partisan *Tea Party News Network*. Interestingly, the sources scored in the survey are clustered most tightly around ideological poles with scores of 3 and 7. One of the American public broadcasters, National Public Radio, appears alongside the mainstream sources of the left, with a score of 2.78. If, as argued before, the NewsWhip data most closely reflects consumer preference for election coverage, academic narratives about growing partisanship in American political discourse seem to be confirmed here. Individuals seem to be sharing news from partisan sources at the same pace as they share content from ideologically neutral sources like Reuters and Pew. While the data isn't an evenly distributed flat line of sources, it is much closer to the market based

neutrality expected of a post-Fairness Doctrine American media system than the UK NewsWhip data.

Source Distribution by Neutrality Score - US NewsWhip (Unweighted)



Source Distribution by Neutrality Score - US NewsWhip (Velocity Weighted)

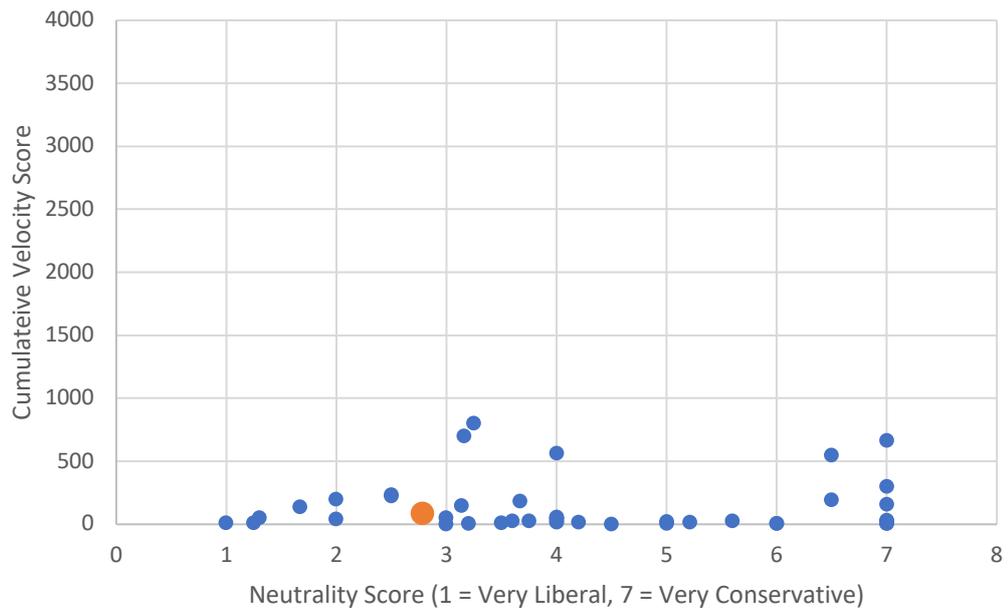


Figure 6.10: Source Distributions by Neutrality Score, US NewsWhip

While the representativeness of the results of such a small-N survey is very limited, the data presented in these graphs do serve as a useful place to begin thinking about more comprehensive large scale research projects. This thesis doesn't claim that academics can or should be neutral in their analysis of online news providers. However, it does assert that their knowledge of the media and organisations is collectively vast, and can provide a useful glance into the ecology of online news. A more comprehensively funded research program could take this survey design and use it for larger sample sizes, but questions about individual respondents' ability to objectively classify news sources would persist. Perhaps alternative methods to measure this would be of more use – content analysis offers potential here, but demands considerable investment in research staff or software design. However, it is unclear how many of the problems associated with this method (small-N, low recognition of many sources) would be overcome with other methods without introducing new methodological challenges.

	United States			United Kingdom		
	NewsWhip	News360	Google	NewsWhip	News360	Google
Mean Neutrality Score	4.36	4.32	3.90	4.22	4.38	4.26
Standard Deviation	1.87	1.82	1.59	1.78	1.49	1.45

Figure 6.11: Mean Neutrality Scores and Standard Deviations (See Appendix E4 for relevant data)

A useful way to compare these frequency distributions, is to examine the average or mean neutrality score (represented in the graphs by the x coordinate) and the dataset's standard deviation from that mean. The calculations make a few insights regarding path dependency and convergence. First, the average neutrality score of sources that appeared in the datasets were consistent, with the US Google dataset both the closest to 4, the point of neutrality, and the average source that is farthest to the left. This suggests that based on the survey results, the average source's position along this ideological continuum is close to the centre. The standard deviation data, suggests that there is not much difference between the two states either, with only the News360 datasets exhibiting a variance in standard deviation of more than 0.1. It is unclear whether or not this is evidence of

convergence, or if it represents problems with the survey in terms of the sample's familiarity with a large number of the sources included in the questionnaire.

6.4: Path Dependency and Online News Content

When studying the news media, it is important to consider more than just the question of who provides online news: for a nuanced understanding of media system convergence and path dependency, researchers must also ask what kind of news is being shared. This chapter's focus on content addresses this. The first part of this chapter focuses on the geographical distribution of content, and the second part considers the prevalence and distribution of opinion content. The previous section presents the results of an expert survey which offers some insight into news producers overall editorial perspective. The findings here have important implications for the study of media system convergence.

While support for path dependency is limited when looking at the geographical orientation of a news article's source, support for path dependency in news content is consistent among search engines, news aggregators, and social media. This is particularly evident when examining the NewsWhip data, where local news content (about individual candidates, contests, or places) was about twice as common in the United States than it was in the United Kingdom. Support for H_6 is particularly strong – as the experience of regional content is remarkably similar across all three different methods of consumption.

The section on opinion and editorial content offers a detailed image that again reflects the complexity of online news. Major differences in opinion and editorial content exist in American and British online news, and the analysis presented in this chapter leads to a few important conclusions. At first glance, support for path dependency (H_8) is lukewarm when looking at the unweighted opinion data. The weighted data suggest that path dependency is stronger on social media than search engines, but even so the picture is still somewhat unclear – even though opinion content is more prevalent in the United States than the United Kingdom for each case, the difference in how prevalent opinion content is online is small when comparing them. A much more pronounced difference

regarding opinion content is how it is distributed among different groups of news producers. Figure 6.4 demonstrates the prevalence of opinion content from internet natives (rather than print or broadcast sources) in the United States. Again, social media is the most extreme illustration of this, where the difference between the distributions of opinion content is sharpest. As path dependency suggests, the British news environment's opinion content is provided by the established print media. American audiences, on the other hand, overwhelmingly share opinion content from internet-based news sources. For this reason, there is robust support for hypothesis H₉.

This thesis acknowledges the important weaknesses associated with the expert survey conducted for this thesis, but the results still offer a useful glimpse into the ideological distribution of the news media. While a much larger sample size would be needed to authoritatively confirm or reject hypothesis H₇, the data presented here highlights a few key characteristics of the American and British news media that speak to the subject of media system convergence. One of the key findings of the survey is that while it's difficult to argue that the United States is any more widely spread ideologically than the United Kingdom, a clear difference exists in terms of where influence lies. Among all British news sources, a two-tiered system emerges. The bottom tier looks like the United States entire distribution, where news content is ideologically diverse, filling the entire spectrum. In the top tier, however, a few extremely popular sources (*BBC*, *The Guardian*, *The Daily Telegraph*, and *The Independent*) seem to represent the major ideological positions of mainstream politics. The BBC features as a neutral source for news, *The Daily Telegraph* reflects mainstream conservatism, *The Guardian* articulates the progressive left, and *The Independent* seems to represent a centre-left alternative to the other three sources. The Google data demonstrates this most compellingly.

Combined with the data presented in the previous chapter, the content data presented in this chapter speaks directly to media system convergence and path dependency. The analysis in these chapters demonstrates the importance of having a research design that reflects the complexities of the research subject. Such demonstrable variation between the data on search engines, news

aggregators, and social media should encourage researchers to look at the internet and internet news, not as one unitary ecosystem, but as several smaller ones, each shaped by the gatekeepers that choose or restrict what news consumers will be exposed to. This is particularly true for content. This chapter has demonstrated that as online news consumption habits vary, exposure to certain kinds of content also varies. In terms of regional or local news content, and the kinds of sources that provide opinion content, the research presented here confirms this.

7. Making Sense of internet News Consumption – Convergence or Path Dependency?

The empirical analysis in the previous two chapters provides new insight into the way in which individuals in the United States and the United Kingdom consume news. While there is clearly much more work to be done to understand the motivations of individual consumers, or the effects of the inner workings of search engines and news aggregators on the news individuals consume, the research presented here has tried to bring internet news consumption into the light by identifying some important patterns. In its examination of the 2014 Congressional elections in the United States and the 2015 Parliamentary elections in the United Kingdom, it has primarily addressed the question of media system convergence; contributing to the academic community's debate surrounding two increasingly relevant questions. The first question asks if the British news media have become increasingly Americanised. Equally important, the second question asks about what the impact of the internet has been on facilitating this convergence. Since this project began, the call for such research – from voters, politicians, and other interested parties – has only grown. The coincidence of two more recent political campaigns, namely the Brexit referendum of 2016 and the contentious election of businessman and political outsider Donald Trump in the United States, have prompted individuals and governments to reflect on their relationships with the news media and its role in the democratic process.

The findings presented here provide valuable insight into the ways in which these states consume election news. Most importantly, they contribute directly to the debate surrounding media system convergence through a comparative analysis of online news in the United States and the United Kingdom. The thesis identifies areas where convergence is occurring, as well as those areas of online news consumption where domestic differences continue to persist. While it takes no normative position on this question, there is consistent support for path dependence regarding the American and British experience. The hypotheses

tested in the previous two chapters challenge the notion of media system convergence as inevitable; using an historical institutionalist lens to re-examine claims made by advocates for convergence theories – specifically Americanisation, globalisation, and technological determinism theorists.

As the internet news environment becomes increasingly complicated, academics must adapt, using research design that is sensitive to both the historical circumstances behind and technological nuances of the medium. Internet news consumption takes many forms, and only a research project that is sensitive to this diversity can provide an answer with sufficiently broad application and analytical weight. To this end, the research presented here is broad in scope, considering three different forms of internet news consumption; search engines, news aggregators, and social media. Even this is not comprehensive - one important limitation of this research is that it does not consider direct web traffic.

With the methodological limitations of this project in mind, a method that includes these three forms of (or tools for) consumption can still tell consumers and researchers a lot about the online news environment. In the same way as cable service providers like Comcast and Sky determine which networks to provide to consumers, search engines, news aggregators, and social media each represent a form of gatekeeping. Demonstrating the consequences of these new, different forms of gatekeeping are one of the most important findings of this thesis. For example, understanding how the experience of an individual who consumes all their news via social media differs from that of an individual who uses search engines instead will become increasingly important as news provision and consumption continues to migrate from traditional print and broadcast news to the internet.

Above all, this thesis shows that internet news consumption, and consumers' relationship with the news media, deserve increased attention by the academic community. Since the foundational work of Hallin and Mancini, comparatively little has been done to explore the validity of their claims, especially from a comparative perspective. This work rejects the notion of a homogenous North Atlantic or Americanised model of media systems, and argues that such typologies must be challenged with comparative studies that are both empirically

rigorous and sensitive to domestic experience. The findings of this thesis suggest that despite globalising forces, domestic differences often persist in the online news environment, and that those projects that are sensitive to the unique political, social, and cultural circumstances of individual states are best positioned to illustrate these differences through comparative analysis. This chapter reflects on some of the findings presented in the previous two chapters, and offers a few areas of importance, as well as suggestions for future research.

The hypotheses developed for this thesis all share a consistent theoretical foundation, namely that news consumption occurs within a set of institutions that simultaneously enable certain producers and constrain consumer choice, and that these institutions are a product of path dependency. Using this historical institutionalist lens, this thesis has demonstrated the merits of this approach by identifying a number of important ways in which the media system continues to be shaped by established, persistent institutions even in a time of robust technological and cultural change. Contrary to those who argue that path dependency theory is too deterministic for social science research, this thesis has identified several areas, summarised in some of the sections below, where internet-based news consumption varied from expected norms. Those areas where this is the case constitute some of the most interesting and important findings of this research project. The next few sections discuss the results provided earlier in the context of the three areas of divergence set out in the theoretical framework. Following this is a more general discussion of the results, which highlights some interesting conclusions that researchers can draw from these findings.

7.1: Plurality and PSBs in internet news – persistent themes

The source data presented in Chapter 5 offers considerable support for path dependency, especially when looking at intermediate-level patterns of news consumption in the two cases investigated here. Consistently across social media, search engines, and news aggregators, sources in the United Kingdom are fewer and more unequally distributed, with a few sources enjoying great prominence in

public discourse. In the United States, more plurality in terms of the total number of sources in the dataset yields a (comparatively) more even distribution, with a shorter head and longer tail. These online distributions reflect similar kinds of distributions available offline, suggesting that domestic differences between the two systems persist online.

When considering source distribution and path dependency, this thesis has highlighted the salience of public service broadcasters and their position in the media system. The data supports this, as PSBs in the United Kingdom (BBC) and the United States (NPR and PBS) play fundamentally different roles in their systems. The source data suggests that the BBC, thanks to its well established (and historically monopolistic) position in the British broadcasting arena, continues its dominance online, appearing at the very top of a very unequal distribution. Meanwhile, NPR and PBS play much more minor roles in the United States, appearing in the middle of the 'pack' of middling news providers – not quite part of the long tail, but far from the most influential sources. This data may reflect an American public service news provision that innovates (NPR in particular outperforms some established names), but is limited by a lack of funding in comparison first to the BBC, and second to other, commercially funded news sources in the United States.

Consistently, across all three methods of news consumption, the UK news experience is more unequal, and is comprised of fewer total sources than its US counterpart. This conforms with the hypotheses set out earlier and makes intuitive sense, as the United States is larger, both in terms of geography and population. What is significant about the shape of these distributions is how they contribute to the debate about the internet as a democratising force and the phenomenon of narrowcasting. The research here indicates that social media users in the United Kingdom, for example, source their news from a very small number of total news organisations – mostly established print and broadcast sources. The lack of a longer tail throughout the UK data indicates that consumers are content to share established, mainstream sources at the expense of niche or internet native sources that could potentially better reflect their own political preferences and local political concerns. An alternative explanation offered by historical institutionalism

is that since political preferences are shaped in an environment subject to the same institutional constraints that news producers are subject to, the smaller number of sources adequately reflect plurality in public opinion. In the United States, local news sources and more ideologically-focused news sources, while not nearly as popular as established sources like *The New York Times*, do (cumulatively, at least) play a role in the online news provision.

7.2: Localism in online media content, not source

The domestic experience regarding regionalism and centrality is more complicated. The research presented in the last two chapters suggests that support for path dependency on the topic of regionalism depends on how researchers operationalise it, and on the channel or tool that individuals use to consume it online. As the next paragraph demonstrates, support for the path dependence approach depends on whether the project examines the subject of regionalism in terms of source or content. Similarly, the evidence suggests that some methods of news consumption are more path dependent than others. While the former consideration is a methodological concern with interesting implications for further research, the latter one is a major contribution of this thesis, which is revisited later in the chapter. In both cases, adding this level of granularity to media system analysis can provide a level of nuance to a debate that has traditionally been dominated by typologies and generalisation.

When studying localism in online news in terms of source, the evidence suggests that users from both the United Kingdom and the United States consume content from local sources at lower rates than they do offline. This trend supports the technological determinism argument rather than the path dependency or Americanisation arguments - not only are both states behaving similarly, they are underperforming based on those expectations set by the offline news media. This has some support in the literature, as economies of scale enable larger news sources (who are less likely to be regional in focus) to offer more robust, user friendly content, but these findings demonstrate that it's not just up to offline producers who provide news content. Among the internet natives which appeared

in the dataset, relatively few identified with any single region or locality, with most (Politico, FiveThirtyEight, and Huffington Post are examples) focused on politics without any geographical distinction.

On the other hand, offline domestic differences do persist when looking at the content that people consume rather than the sources they are exposed to. Focusing on the subject matter of individual stories, rather than the organisations which publish them, Americans are exposed to roughly twice as much local news than their British counterparts. While local news content still comprises less than half of all news content across all datasets, this data is compelling for two reasons. First is the how considerable the difference is. On NewsWhip, the measure which demonstrates the most divergence, content about localities and individual candidates in the United States counts for over 40% of all viral news, while the same figure in the United Kingdom hovers around 20%. The second reason this data is so compelling is that it is persistent; that is, a similar ratio emerges across all three channels. This suggests that despite the different filters associated with each method of consumption, appetites for local news content have more to do with the state in which it is consumed than the technology used to consume it.

Content may matter, but the source data suggests that the way in which it is consumed matters as well. The intermediary chosen by the consumer, whether they get their news via search engines, news aggregators, or social media, is a filter, and each of these filters have different effects on the news that appears in the dataset. Perhaps no data better represents the technological determinism and media system convergence arguments than the NewsWhip source data. Nearly identical distributions for both the United States and the United Kingdom suggest that content from regional sources is simply less likely to go viral. There could be a few explanations for this that merit further investigation, from smaller regular readership to less engagement with consumers on social media platforms. The News360 data also indicates convergence (whether it be technological determinism or Americanisation), as the country the user accesses the aggregator from, along with all the domestic peculiarities regarding the use of regional news content that go along with it, fails to manifest itself online.

Which matters more, regionalism in source or content? Both metrics can inform the discussion on path dependency and convergence, but each one says something subtly different. Concerning content, domestic differences emerge between the US and the UK. When looking at the prevalence of regional source content, national news producers' economies of scale and the geographically nebulous identities of internet natives may partly explain the fact that these expectations were not met, but technology also plays a role. When looking at the Google source data, the expectation that regional news features more regularly in the US than the UK seems to have support, but this isn't the case with News360 or NewsWhip.

What is clear is that users in both the United States and United Kingdom often get their local news from sources that aren't local. National news sources' provision of news with local significance raises important questions. With more individuals getting their news online than ever before, can national news organisations meet the demand for resource intensive local news coverage? If so, what are the democratic implications of this shift? As the online news environment reaches maturity, the public's appetite for local perspectives on both local and national news will become clearer. While this thesis has generally avoided normative positions on the question of media system convergence, depending too heavily on a small number of sources for both local and national news consolidates great power in the hands of a few. Traditionally, local news outlets (both in print and broadcast) have played important roles in terms of providing quality investigative journalism and regionally focused editorial content. If editorial endorsements still have relevance in today's elections, surely local voices are important when considering candidates to represent a constituency in federal, state, or local government. Can (or should) a citizenry rely on national news sources for these opinions? More research on the implications of this question in the Internet Age is needed.

7.3: Opinion content and neutrality online

One of the areas where the internet promises to be more transformative concerns the role of editorial or opinion content. The data presented here demonstrates that little has changed online for legacy news producers, but also offers new insight into the competition between established sources and internet natives. While the previous chapter highlighted the need for a separate and more robust, resource intensive project to more accurately portray the ideological distribution of sources in the United Kingdom, the expert survey and analysis used in this project serves as an important starting point for further research. In the United States, online news reflects an offline market that is ideologically diverse, where public service broadcasters like NPR and PBS constitute another partisan voice. On the other hand, online news in the United Kingdom reflects its offline counterpart, with the BBC playing a central position both ideologically and in terms of popularity, in between the traditional opinion leaders of print news – specifically *The Guardian* and *The Daily Telegraph*.

From a political communication perspective and in a project focused on election news coverage, an important facet of media systems is the prevalence and role of opinion content. Understanding exactly who provides opinion content, and how popular this content is, tells researchers a lot about the contours of the media system – this thesis argues that this is a more specific and relevant point of comparison than the political system within which the media operates. Rather than look at pluralism in the political system as a proxy for pluralism in the news media, which Hallin and Mancini did in *Comparing Media Systems*, opinion content can provide a measurement more reflective of consumer experience.

Across social media and news aggregators, news consumers in the United States are consistently exposed to more opinion content than their British counterparts, and this opinion content comes from a wide variety of backgrounds in terms of native medium. Most notably, in terms of viral news shared on social media, the weighted data suggests that US op-ed content is more likely to be shared by more people, while the same kind of content has less viral ‘velocity’ and is generally not the kind of content that British social media users share in large

numbers. Additionally, the way in which opinion content is divided among native media supports path dependence. In the United States, internet natives play a much larger role in the provision of opinion content, suggesting an appetite for and affinity toward new ideological perspectives from electronic media sources. In the United Kingdom, in all three cases, provision of opinion content is mostly the purview of established print media sources – making up well over half of all stories that contain explicit opinion content.

These findings support the path dependency argument established in the third chapter, with more plurality in the United States, but support for the theory is not universal. The exception to this rule seems to be search engines, where both cases exhibit similar levels of opinion content. Whether this is built into Google's news algorithms, or opinion content is simply linked to other content more effectively, it represents some evidence of convergence, specifically Americanisation since both measurements of op-ed content are consistent with opinion data from social media and news aggregators in the United States.

The survey data summarised in the last chapter represents a first attempt at mapping ideological perspectives in internet news, and the results offer some support for path dependency. Most notably, the data highlights the importance of Public Service Broadcasting in the United Kingdom, and the minimal role that PSBs play in the United States. Although a larger N for the expert survey may have moved the BBC from the point of neutrality slightly, its position in the ideological centre ground is consistent with the BBC's commitment to neutrality in broadcasting, as set out in its Royal Charter. More interesting is the role of the other broadcasters in the United Kingdom, namely ITV, Channel 4, and Sky News, which all remain within the centre ground between the opinion leaders of the left (*The Guardian*) and the right (*The Telegraph*). Meanwhile, one of the most popular broadcasters in the United States, Fox News, operates at the far right of the ideological spectrum, well beyond established conservative voices like *US News & World Report* and *The Wall Street Journal*, alongside radical sources like the now defunct Tea Party News Network.

Overall, the ideological distribution of the United States adheres to the American approach to neutrality in broadcasting. Online, many different

ideological positions are catered to by the news media – establishing a flat and evenly dispersed equilibrium. As anticipated, the distribution of the United Kingdom is more concentrated around the ideological centre ground – with the BBC as both the North Star for neutrality and the single most popular source within the larger constellation of internet news. One interesting result here involves the Google data, which seems to establish a two-tier system of a few ideologically diverse opinion leaders representing the first tier and, and a larger, similarly ideologically balanced second tier. Equilibrium, in the case of the United Kingdom seems to lie in closer to the centre than it does in the United States, where click through rates seem to indicate that equilibrium exists just to the right of centre when looking at both the Google and NewsWhip velocity data. This may be a product of the population chosen for the expert survey, but the News360 data here serves as a control, with equilibrium hovering just to the left of centre. This shift to the right on social media is especially prophetic considering the results of the 2016 Presidential elections because they suggest that the news media would provide the more conservative candidate (embodied by Republican Party nominee and now President Donald Trump) with more sympathetic news coverage.

7.4: Who is missing?

One important and interesting area of divergence between the research presented here and other research conducted by agencies like Ofcom and academics like Hindman is that some sources identified as influential by these other reports don't feature as prominently in this project. The absence of one source, *The Daily Mail*, is particularly conspicuous. How is it possible that one of the most widely visited news websites barely registered in the dataset? What about other established sources, like *The Times*, which occupied a prestigious position in the offline British news media? While it is beyond the scope of this thesis to explain exactly why these sources don't feature, there are a few potential reasons for their absence to consider. Besides the decision to exclude direct internet traffic (typing the website's URL directly into the address bar of a search browser), there are two other reasons that might explain this difference.

The first reason, which might explain the reduced influence of sources like *The Times*, *The Economist*, and *The Sun* is the use of a paywall revenue model, discussed by McChesney and Nichols (2010, pp.72–73). As an alternative to the advertising and donation based revenue model of *The Guardian*, content on these websites is restricted to those who pay monthly or yearly subscription fees. While this may not be a restriction for their offline subscribers, the prospect of attracting new readers online when competitors' content is free is a considerable challenge, especially when quality alternatives are available. The BBC's advertising free, quality news website may be the largest perpetrator in terms of attracting these unaffiliated users. Some websites, like *The Telegraph*, use hybrid revenue models which allows casual users to consume a limited number of articles (with advertisements) per month before the paywall appears. Regardless of how successful each of these revenue models are at funding these news sources, given how *The Telegraph* features in this analysis, this alternative model may be a way forward for sites with a more rigid paywall in terms of generating more interest and traffic from social media, search engines, and news aggregators.

A second reason for the disparity between this research project and other ones mentioned earlier is the conscious methodological decision to examine election news specifically at the expense of other kinds of news. This thesis does not dispute the popularity of *The Daily Mail*, but it does question how many users visit the site for news about elections. Despite its influential and openly partisan political voice in the offline news, very few stories caught by the search terms set out in the methodology come from *The Daily Mail*. There could be several explanations for why this is the case, but a good start may be to ask exactly what kind of content users consume on this website. A decidedly unscientific glance at the front page of the website suggests that its popularity may come from its provision of entertainment news, and other kinds of news less relevant to the general election campaign. A more scientific approach to studying this content would be needed to substantiate this. If consumers consider *The Daily Mail* a tabloid, uses and gratifications theory could provide another reason; with users preferring to share and consume content from more authoritative, less openly partisan sources to appear more politically mainstream or respectable. Whatever

the reason, the conspicuous difference between these results and other, well established surveys of internet news is important and merits further research.

7.5: How do you get your news?

An analysis of internet news which uses the three lenses discussed thus far in this section demonstrates that while the online news environment is complex, there are consistent and significant indications of continued path dependency in the British and American cases. The most significant finding of this thesis for the continued study of media systems is that the news individuals are exposed to varies greatly depending on how they consume it. While the academic community has generally treated the internet as a single (if concentrated) playing field, the data and analysis provided in the last two chapters demonstrate a significant plurality in news consumption experiences online. As such, researchers need to stop treating the internet as uniform and start examining how different internet-based technologies can produce radically different experiences for users. Consumers who use search engines as a tool to navigate online news, are exposed to a very different news environment than those who use news aggregators to deliver content in the spirit of Negroponte's *Daily Me* (1995). Those who consume viral news shared on social media websites like Twitter and Facebook are likely to have a different experience as well.

This project demonstrates how important the way consumers get their news online is in terms of how converged or Americanised their experience is, but more research that measures this effect more broadly is needed. To better understand internet news consumption, researchers need to develop a framework that articulates the differences between these methods of news consumption more clearly. Consumers, and particularly those looking for information about the politicians who represent them, should understand how the very tools they use to seek that information filter the content that they are exposed to. This is important for many reasons – the fact that this gatekeeping isn't always explicit or straightforward may be the most important contribution of this thesis to the study of media systems and the online news environment.

Perhaps the most straightforward of these filters is social media – where the content individuals are exposed to and consume is a product of connections they have made with family and friends. For most people, understanding why they are exposed to a certain news item and not others might involve some reflection about who they associate with. In the case of Twitter and Facebook, social media users can even ask the individual who shared the news content about their motivations or thought process. Less transparent, but more technologically sophisticated, are the gatekeeping powers of search engines like Google. Google's meteoric rise in the last twenty years is thanks (in large part) to the significance that society continues to place on its search results. The logic behind its algorithms, which put much of the internet at the fingertips of users with mind-boggling speed, is constant; following a set of rules that can be understood, and in the case of the growing field of search engine optimisation, exploited. Less transparent still are news aggregators, which rely on a mixture of algorithms and more deliberate curation. Services like News360 make accessing the news that individuals find interesting extremely easy by allowing them to set specific filters for content, but a corporate environment where intellectual property is kept secret means that it's harder to understand why consumers are exposed to some sources and content and not others while using this kind of service.

As news consumption continues to migrate online, the role of these gatekeeping technologies becomes increasingly important. Many have previously discussed how cable broadcasting companies and, more recently, internet service providers (ISPs) are powerful gatekeepers – with the former deciding which channels to provide to their subscribers, and the latter pushing back against the principle of net neutrality by favouring a tiered system of access. Just as this constitutes a political decision for cable companies and ISPs, the gatekeeping role of Google and News360 is a politically charged and undoubtedly powerful one. How these organisations choose to wield that power, be it in the public interest or in their own economic interests, may be one of the most important questions of the Internet Age. These gatekeepers already shape the public's understanding of the world by controlling what they are exposed to – understanding their

motivations and the technology behind the services they provide will be crucial to inform and protect consumers, both as citizens and voters.

7.6: A revolutionary internet, or a resurgent offline media? A historical institutionalist's response

As this chapter demonstrates, a historical institutionalist approach to media systems research can help to answer persistent questions about news consumption while simultaneously raising important new ones. For example, when using this historical institutionalist lens to compare the American and British media systems, important differences persist between the two states – differences that are not as apparent when examining much of the research identified in the literature review. The approach taken here is a response to work in the field that uses the language of cyber-optimists (that the internet is a potentially revolutionary force in media consumption) to drive hypothesis creation and research. This thesis has addressed the subject of change from a slightly different perspective that does not assume (or challenge assumptions about) the internet's transformative potential.

Instead, the hypotheses tested in the previous two chapters suggest that embedded institutions make change difficult. Much of the evidence presented here confirms this, and this research demonstrates that even when change does occur, it is inconsistent and its impact depends on how individuals consume news online. A behaviouralist perspective might explain this variance differently, and while there may be some truth to claims that social media users are more likely to consume some sources rather than others, this thesis offers an alternative, institutional explanation for this variance.

The analysis highlighted in this conclusion serves as evidence of the unique contribution that historical institutionalist theory can make for the continued study of media systems and the internet. In asking a narrow set of research questions, this approach can offer analysis that is grounded not just theoretically but chronologically as well. While other strands of political communication research place human agency at the centre of political phenomena, these approaches fail to adequately address how institutional inertia and path dependency restrict the

choices that are available and in doing so, shape consumer preferences. By reintroducing institutions into this debate, researchers can gain a better understanding of both the environment in which both the production and consumption of news occurs, and the ways in which that environment influences these processes. As Wright argues, “we should not look to the latest technology in isolation” when what we may be seeing is “the mashing together of two different existing technologies” (2011, p.252). Instead, this thesis shows how a more informative research plan considers how the technology in question, the internet, fits within the broader media environment and its institutions.

Using this path dependency frame, this thesis has challenged assumptions made in the media systems debate regarding media system convergence or homogenisation, identifying three specific areas where convergence either hasn't occurred as expected, or hasn't occurred at all. In doing so, it highlights the need for more research in the field to adopt a more critical, historically and institutionally sensitive tone. At a minimum, this serves to encourage debate; challenging dominant research paradigms that focus too much on the individual and their agency. Beyond this meagre contribution, this thesis has demonstrated that the approach taken here also offers additional theoretical and conceptual heft to the debate – encouraging comparative research that is informed by the domestic experience – with all of its idiosyncrasies – instead of whitewashing it.

While the primary focus of this thesis has been to address the question of media system convergence or homogenisation, the findings here have implications for broader debates about the internet's role in both the news media and politics. This thesis expresses considerable support for path dependency when looking at certain facets of the media system, including public service broadcasting and the provision of regional news content. Support for the internet's role as a force for convergence or globalisation is limited to a few specific areas, and those areas raise important normative questions about economic and technological dimensions of this phenomena. Specifically, this thesis has demonstrated the decidedly corporate (if entrepreneurial) form that globalisation can take by highlighting the power and influence that gatekeepers like Google can yield online. Similarly, smaller commercial entities like News360 offer a set of services that don't always reflect

domestic offline experience. While it is beyond the scope of this project to speculate about whether this is inherently good or bad for consumers, the status quo of the twentieth century – characterised by a largely domestic news media for a domestic audience - may be changing even if this change is more slow and iterative than revolutionary.

One important but exciting limitation of this research is that it takes place in a time where news consumption and consumers are in transition. As the first generation that has enjoyed internet access throughout their entire life reaches political maturity, it will be interesting to see how the findings of this kind of research project might change. While path dependence also affects how news is produced (which should be more persistent as generations come and go), early exposure to and familiarity with internet-based news consumption could have a considerable impact on consumers' habits. Perhaps a new generation will feel less tied to the television and be more likely to seek out niche news sources. The data presented here indicates that this hasn't happened yet. While this research suggests that the internet has not fulfilled its role as a revolutionary force, iterative change on a larger, generational timescale may well be underway. If this is the case, the business of differentiating between technological trends like the internet and broader societal trends is sure to become a more complicated endeavour. Continued research on the subject over time will be needed to do this, but current interest in this area indicates that the academic community is prepared for this challenge.

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Appendix 1: Directory of Electronic Appendices

For ease of navigation, the raw data collected and analysis conducted for this thesis have been included in the presentation of this thesis as an electronic appendix.

Electronic appendices are identified throughout the text with the designator E – for example, E1 refers to Electronic Appendix 1.

- E1. Master Dataset
- E2. Source Frequency Comparisons
- E3. Calculating CTR and Velocity Scores
- E4. Average Neutrality Scores

Appendix 2: Frequency Tables

Dataset	Frequency of Sources by Native Medium			Percent of Total		
	Broadcast	Internet	Print	Broadcast	Internet	Print
US Google	313	609	960	16.63%	32.36%	51.01%
UK Google	307	363	1221	16.23%	19.20%	64.57%
US News360	168	457	594	13.78%	37.49%	48.73%
UK News360	154	226	860	12.42%	18.23%	69.35%
US NewsWhip	144	741	314	12.01%	61.80%	26.19%
UK NewsWhip	462	153	592	38.28%	12.68%	49.05%
US Google (CTR)	1355.62	2739.54	4375.745	16.00%	32.34%	51.66%
UK Google (CTR)	1489.015	1303.555	5811.79	17.31%	15.15%	67.54%
US NewsWhip (US Vel.)	917.55	4610.5	1628.69	12.82%	64.42%	22.76%
UK NewsWhip (UK Vel.)	3861.12	777.86	2747.07	52.28%	10.53%	37.19%
Unweighted Data						
Weighted Data						

Figure A.1: Native Medium Frequency Distribution Table

National and Regional Source Distribution				
Dataset	National	Regional	National (%)	Regional (%)
US Google	1368	515	72.65%	27.35%
UK Google	1612	279	85.25%	14.75%
US News360	973	247	79.75%	20.25%
UK News360	994	246	80.16%	19.84%
US NewsWhip	1151	48	96.00%	4.00%
UK NewsWhip	1194	13	98.92%	1.08%

Figure A.2: Geographical Source Distribution Table

National and Regional Content Distribution				
Dataset	National	Regional	National (%)	Regional (%)
US Google	1337	546	71.00%	29.00%
UK Google	1579	312	83.50%	16.50%
US News360	839	381	68.77%	31.23%
UK News360	1005	235	81.05%	18.95%
US NewsWhip	686	514	57.17%	42.83%
UK NewsWhip	956	250	79.27%	20.73%

Figure A.3: Geographical Subject Distribution Table

Dataset	Frequency of Op-Ed Content				% Change
	No Op-Ed Content	Contains Op-Ed Content	Total	Op-Ed Content (% of total)	
UK NewsWhip	1070	137	1207	11.35%	
US NewsWhip	982	218	1200	18.17%	6.82%
UK News360	1115	125	1240	10.08%	
US News360	999	221	1220	18.11%	8.03%
UK Google	1675	216	1891	11.42%	
US Google	1666	217	1883	11.52%	0.10%
UK NewsWhip, Velocity Weighted	7047.00	732.37	7779.37	9.41%	
US NewsWhip, Velocity Weighted	5801.86	1500.68	7302.55	20.55%	11.14%
UK Google, CTR Weighted	7868.12	736.25	8604.36	8.56%	
US Google, CTR Weighted	7499.82	974.54	8474.36	11.50%	2.94%

Figure A.4: Opinion and Editorial Content Frequency Distribution Table

Appendix 3: Expert Surveys

This appendix contains copies of the surveys administered to media experts in the United States and the United Kingdom. As the Participant Information Sheet suggests, the responses have been anonymised and are held in a password protected file.

Professional Perspectives in UK Internet News

Page 1

Participant Information Sheet

University of Manchester
School of Social Sciences
Participant Information Sheet

What is the title of the research?

"Is Internet News a Converged Space? An Historical Institutional Exploration of Media System Convergence in the Internet Age"

Who will conduct the research?

Evan Vellis, PhD Researcher, University of Manchester

What is the aim of the research?

The aim of the research is to gain a better understanding of the contemporary news environment of the United States and the United Kingdom through quantitative analysis. This includes a survey of media experts to identify the editorial perspectives of online news sources.

Why have I been chosen?

You have been chosen because of your professional experience regarding the news media.

What would I be asked to do if I took part?

To take part, you will complete a survey that asks you about your opinion on the editorial perspectives of a number of news sources.

What happens to the data collected?

The data collected will be compiled and stored confidentially. All data (including personal data) will be stored in a password-protected file which can only be accessed by the investigator, Evan Vellis, and his supervisors, Dr. Peter Humphreys and Dr. Andrew Russell. Survey responses will not be analysed or stored with the personal data, and personal data will not be held longer than necessary in accordance with the ethical guidelines set out by the University of Manchester Faculty of Humanities and School of Social Sciences. Survey responses will be used strictly for academic purposes, and your personal details will never be published. Academic use of your responses includes publication in academic journals, conference presentations, and the completion and potential publication of the entire thesis project. If you do not agree with how your responses and personal data will be used or stored, please do not take the survey or contact the investigator at the email address provided below.

What happens if I do not want to take part or if I change my mind?

Participation in this survey is entirely voluntary. If for any reason you would like your responses to be amended or removed from the database, you can submit a request to the researcher via email to the address provided below.

Will I be paid for participating in the research?

Successful completion of the survey enters the participant in a draw to win one of four (4) Amazon e-vouchers, valued at \$30 if you are in the US or £20 if you are in the United Kingdom.

What benefit might this research be to me or other subjects of the research?

The completed research project will inform participants of their own institution's editorial perspective, as determined by their peers.

If there are any problems with the survey or questions about the research project, please contact the investigator directly at evan.vellis@manchester.ac.uk, or by post at the following address:

Evan Vellis
4th Floor, Arthur Lewis Building
University of Manchester

Thank You!

05/09/2017, 12:29

Oxford Road
Manchester
M13 9PL

Professional Perspectives in UK Internet News

Page 2

Select a Region

- Please choose the regions that contain publications that you might be familiar with. If you are a media professional and your publication is not based in any particular region, please choose any regions that contain publications that you are familiar with. Only choose International if your organization has no office in London or if you do not currently live in the UK and have never encountered any UK based regional news.*
You must select at least one region to continue the survey.
 - Scotland
 - Wales
 - Northern Ireland & Republic of Ireland
 - Northeast, Northwest, and Yorkshire
 - East and West Midlands
 - East Anglia
 - Southwest, Southeast, Channel Islands
 - Greater London
 - International

Professional Perspectives in UK Internet News

Page 3

Scotland

These are online news sources that are based in Scotland.

- On a scale from 1 to 7, where 1 is very liberal, 4 is unbiased, and 7 is very conservative, what is your perspective on the editorial bias of the following institutions? Please remember that you only need to provide answers to sources with which you are familiar.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Aberdare Online	<input type="radio"/>						
Courier (Dundee)	<input type="radio"/>						
Daily Record (Scotland)	<input type="radio"/>						
Aberdeen Evening Express	<input type="radio"/>						
Falkirk Herald	<input type="radio"/>						
For Argyll	<input type="radio"/>						
Glasgow Extra	<input type="radio"/>						
Helensburgh Advertiser	<input type="radio"/>						

Thank You!

05/09/2017, 12:29

Herald (Scotland)	<input type="radio"/>						
Peeblesshire News	<input type="radio"/>						
Press and Journal (Aberdeen)	<input type="radio"/>						
Scotsman	<input type="radio"/>						
Stornoway Gazette	<input type="radio"/>						
STV	<input type="radio"/>						

3. If you would like to provide justification for any of your answers, please feel free to do so in the box below.

Professional Perspectives in UK Internet News

Page 4

Wales

These are online news sources that are based in Wales.

4. On a scale from 1 to 7, where 1 is very liberal, 4 is unbiased, and 7 is very conservative, what is your perspective on the editorial bias of the following institutions? Please remember that you only need to provide answers to sources with which you are familiar.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Border Counties Advertiser	<input type="radio"/>						
Cambrian News	<input type="radio"/>						
Click on Wales	<input type="radio"/>						
Daily Post	<input type="radio"/>						
Llanelli Star	<input type="radio"/>						
South Wales Argus	<input type="radio"/>						
South Wales Evening Post	<input type="radio"/>						
Wales Online	<input type="radio"/>						

5. If you would like to provide justification for any of your answers, please feel free to do so in the box below.

Professional Perspectives in UK Internet News

Page 5

Northern Ireland & Republic of Ireland

These are online news sources that are based in both Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland.

6. On a scale from 1 to 7, where 1 is very liberal, 4 is unbiased, and 7 is very conservative, what is your perspective on the editorial bias of the following institutions? Please remember that you only need to provide answers to sources with which you are familiar.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Ballymoney and Moyle Times	<input type="radio"/>						
Belfast Telegraph	<input type="radio"/>						
Irish Examiner	<input type="radio"/>						
Irish Independent	<input type="radio"/>						
Irish Post	<input type="radio"/>						
Irish Times	<input type="radio"/>						
Journal.ie	<input type="radio"/>						
Larne Times	<input type="radio"/>						
News Letter	<input type="radio"/>						
NewsTalk	<input type="radio"/>						
Newtown Abbey Today	<input type="radio"/>						
Portadown Times	<input type="radio"/>						
RTE	<input type="radio"/>						

7. If you would like to provide justification for any of your answers, please feel free to do so in the box below.

Professional Perspectives in UK Internet News

Page 6

Northeast, Northwest, and Yorkshire

These are online news sources that are based in the Northeast, Northwest, and Yorkshire

8. On a scale from 1 to 7, where 1 is very liberal, 4 is unbiased, and 7 is very conservative, what is your perspective on the editorial bias of the following institutions? Please remember that you only need to provide answers to sources with which you are familiar.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Blackpool Gazette	<input type="radio"/>						
Bolton News	<input type="radio"/>						

Thank You!

05/09/2017, 12:29

Boston Standard	<input type="radio"/>						
Boston Target	<input type="radio"/>						
Burnley and Pendle Citizen	<input type="radio"/>						
Burnley Express	<input type="radio"/>						
Chorley Citizen	<input type="radio"/>						
Clitheroe Advertiser and Times	<input type="radio"/>						
Cumbria Crack	<input type="radio"/>						
Doncaster Free Press	<input type="radio"/>						
Grimsby Telegraph	<input type="radio"/>						
Huddersfield Daily Examiner	<input type="radio"/>						
Lancashire Telegraph	<input type="radio"/>						
Lancaster Guardian	<input type="radio"/>						
Leigh Journal	<input type="radio"/>						
Lincolnshire Echo	<input type="radio"/>						
Liverpool Echo	<input type="radio"/>						
Lytham Today	<input type="radio"/>						
Manchester Evening News	<input type="radio"/>						
Morpeth Herald	<input type="radio"/>						
North East Chronicle	<input type="radio"/>						
North East Journal	<input type="radio"/>						
Northern Echo	<input type="radio"/>						
Northumberland Gazette	<input type="radio"/>						
Palatinate (University of Durham)	<input type="radio"/>						
Prolific North	<input type="radio"/>						
Scunthorpe Telegraph	<input type="radio"/>						
Sheffield Telegraph	<input type="radio"/>						
Telegraph and Argus	<input type="radio"/>						
This is Lancashire	<input type="radio"/>						
Warrington Guardian	<input type="radio"/>						
Westmorland Gazette	<input type="radio"/>						
Wirral Globe	<input type="radio"/>						
Yorkshire Post	<input type="radio"/>						

9. If you would like to provide justification for any of your answers, please feel free to do so in the box below.

Professional Perspectives in UK Internet News

East and West Midlands

These are online news sources based in the Midlands.

10. On a scale from 1 to 7, where 1 is very liberal, 4 is unbiased, and 7 is very conservative, what is your perspective on the editorial bias of the following institutions? Please remember that you only need to provide answers to sources with which you are familiar.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Biggleswade Chronicle	<input type="radio"/>						
Birmingham Mail	<input type="radio"/>						
Birmingham Post	<input type="radio"/>						
Burton Mail	<input type="radio"/>						
CitiBlog Milton Keynes	<input type="radio"/>						
Coventry Telegraph	<input type="radio"/>						
Derby Telegraph	<input type="radio"/>						
Evesham Journal	<input type="radio"/>						
Express and Star (Wolverhampton)	<input type="radio"/>						
Hereford Times	<input type="radio"/>						
Hertfordshire Mercury	<input type="radio"/>						
Leicester Mercury	<input type="radio"/>						
Lichfield Mercury	<input type="radio"/>						
Northampton Chronicle & Echo	<input type="radio"/>						
Nottingham Post	<input type="radio"/>						
Redditch Advertiser	<input type="radio"/>						
Royal Sutton Coldfield Observer	<input type="radio"/>						
Shropshire Star	<input type="radio"/>						
Staffordshire Newsletter	<input type="radio"/>						
Stoke Sentinel	<input type="radio"/>						
Stourbridge News	<input type="radio"/>						
Tamworth Herald	<input type="radio"/>						
Mansfield & Ashfield Chad	<input type="radio"/>						

11. If you would like to provide justification for any of your answers, please feel free to do so in the box below.

Professional Perspectives in UK Internet News

East Anglia

These are online news sources based in East Anglia.

12. On a scale from 1 to 7, where 1 is very liberal, 4 is unbiased, and 7 is very conservative, what is your perspective on the editorial bias of the following institutions? Please remember that you only need to provide answers to sources with which you are familiar.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Braintree and Witham Times	<input type="radio"/>						
Brentwood Weekly News	<input type="radio"/>						
Cambridge News	<input type="radio"/>						
Clacton and Frinton Gazette	<input type="radio"/>						
Daily Gazette (Colchester)	<input type="radio"/>						
East Anglian Daily Times	<input type="radio"/>						
Eastern Daily Press	<input type="radio"/>						
Echo	<input type="radio"/>						
Ely News	<input type="radio"/>						
Essex Chronicle	<input type="radio"/>						
Essex County Standard	<input type="radio"/>						
Halstead Gazette	<input type="radio"/>						
Harwich and Manningtree Standard	<input type="radio"/>						
Ipswich Star	<input type="radio"/>						
Lowestoft Journal	<input type="radio"/>						
Maldon and Burnham Standard	<input type="radio"/>						
Norwich Evening News 24	<input type="radio"/>						
Peterborough Telegraph	<input type="radio"/>						
Southend Standard	<input type="radio"/>						
Thurrock Gazette	<input type="radio"/>						

13. If you would like to provide justification for any of your answers, please feel free to do so in the box below.

Professional Perspectives in UK Internet News

Southwest, Southeast, and the Channel Islands

These are online news sources based in the Southwest, Southeast, and the Channel Islands

14. On a scale from 1 to 7, where 1 is very liberal, 4 is unbiased, and 7 is very conservative, what is your perspective on the editorial bias of the following institutions: Please remember that you only need to provide answers to sources with which you are familiar.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Banbury Cake	<input type="radio"/>						
Bath Chronicle	<input type="radio"/>						
Bournemouth Echo	<input type="radio"/>						
Bridport News	<input type="radio"/>						
Bucks Herald	<input type="radio"/>						
Central Somerset Gazette	<input type="radio"/>						
Crawley and Horley Observer	<input type="radio"/>						
Daily Echo	<input type="radio"/>						
Dorset Echo	<input type="radio"/>						
Eagle Radio	<input type="radio"/>						
Get Reading	<input type="radio"/>						
Get Surrey	<input type="radio"/>						
Gloucester Citizen	<input type="radio"/>						
Gloucestershire Echo	<input type="radio"/>						
Guernsey Press	<input type="radio"/>						
Hampshire Chronicle	<input type="radio"/>						
Hull Daily Mail	<input type="radio"/>						
Jersey Evening Post	<input type="radio"/>						
Kent and Sussex Courier	<input type="radio"/>						
Kent Business	<input type="radio"/>						
Kent News	<input type="radio"/>						
North Devon Gazette	<input type="radio"/>						
North Devon Journal	<input type="radio"/>						
Oxford Mail	<input type="radio"/>						
Plymouth Herald	<input type="radio"/>						
Portsmouth News	<input type="radio"/>						
Salisbury Journal	<input type="radio"/>						
Shepton Mallet Journal	<input type="radio"/>						
Somerset Guardian	<input type="radio"/>						
South West Business	<input type="radio"/>						
Southern Daily Echo	<input type="radio"/>						
Southern Reporter	<input type="radio"/>						

Thank You!

05/09/2017, 12:29

Stroud Life	<input type="radio"/>						
Swindon Advertiser	<input type="radio"/>						
This is Wiltshire	<input type="radio"/>						
University of Bath	<input type="radio"/>						
Wells Journal	<input type="radio"/>						
Wessex Scene	<input type="radio"/>						
West Briton	<input type="radio"/>						
Western Daily Press	<input type="radio"/>						
Western Morning News	<input type="radio"/>						
Western Telegraph	<input type="radio"/>						
Wiltshire Business	<input type="radio"/>						
Wiltshire Times	<input type="radio"/>						

15. If you would like to provide justification for any of your answers, please feel free to do so in the box below.

Professional Perspectives in UK Internet News

Page 10

Greater London

These are local online news sources based in Greater London.

16. On a scale from 1 to 7, where 1 is very liberal, 4 is unbiased, and 7 is very conservative, what is your perspective on the editorial bias of the following institutions? Please remember that you only need to provide answers to sources with which you are familiar.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Barking and Dagenham Post	<input type="radio"/>						
Basildon Recorder	<input type="radio"/>						
City AM	<input type="radio"/>						
Croydon Advertiser	<input type="radio"/>						
Ealing Times	<input type="radio"/>						
Epsom Guardian	<input type="radio"/>						
Evening Standard	<input type="radio"/>						
Hampstead & Highgate Gazette	<input type="radio"/>						
Herts 24	<input type="radio"/>						
Herts Advertiser	<input type="radio"/>						
Herts and Essex Observer	<input type="radio"/>						

Thank You!

05/09/2017, 12:29

Hillingdon & Uxbridge Times	<input type="radio"/>						
Ilford Recorder	<input type="radio"/>						
Kings of War (King's College University of London Blog)	<input type="radio"/>						
LBC	<input type="radio"/>						
London Review of Books	<input type="radio"/>						
Londonist	<input type="radio"/>						
News Shopper	<input type="radio"/>						
St Albans Review	<input type="radio"/>						
This is Local London	<input type="radio"/>						
Watford Observer	<input type="radio"/>						

17. If you would like to provide justification for any of your answers, please feel free to do so in the box below.

Professional Perspectives in UK Internet News

Page 11

International Sources A-L

These are online sources based outside the United Kingdom which provide news coverage of British Politics. This includes all sources which originate outside the British Isles.

18. On a scale from 1 to 7, where 1 is very liberal, 4 is unbiased, and 7 is very conservative, what is your perspective the editorial bias of the following institutions? Please remember that you only need to provide answers to sources with which you are familiar.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
ABC News (USA)	<input type="radio"/>						
Age (Australia)	<input type="radio"/>						
Al Arabiya	<input type="radio"/>						
Al Jazeera	<input type="radio"/>						
Algemeiner	<input type="radio"/>						
Australian Financial Review	<input type="radio"/>						
BD Live	<input type="radio"/>						
Bloomberg	<input type="radio"/>						
Bradenton Herald (Florida)	<input type="radio"/>						
Breakingnews.ie (Ireland)	<input type="radio"/>						
CBC	<input type="radio"/>						

Thank You!

05/09/2017, 12:29

CBC (Canada)	<input type="radio"/>						
CCTV (China)	<input type="radio"/>						
Christian Science Monitor	<input type="radio"/>						
Clinton Herald (Iowa)	<input type="radio"/>						
CNBC	<input type="radio"/>						
CNN	<input type="radio"/>						
Coast Week (Africa)	<input type="radio"/>						
Colombo Gazette (Sri Lanka)	<input type="radio"/>						
Complete France	<input type="radio"/>						
Daily Star (Lebanon)	<input type="radio"/>						
Daily Times (Pakistan)	<input type="radio"/>						
Denver Post	<input type="radio"/>						
DW	<input type="radio"/>						
Economic Times (India)	<input type="radio"/>						
Euronews	<input type="radio"/>						
Financial Express	<input type="radio"/>						
Forbes	<input type="radio"/>						
Foreign Affairs	<input type="radio"/>						
Fox News	<input type="radio"/>						
Free Malaysia Today	<input type="radio"/>						
Gant Daily (Pennsylvania)	<input type="radio"/>						
Globe and Mail (Canada)	<input type="radio"/>						
GoldMyne	<input type="radio"/>						
Government Executive	<input type="radio"/>						
Government of Canada	<input type="radio"/>						
GQ	<input type="radio"/>						
Gulf News	<input type="radio"/>						
Haaretz	<input type="radio"/>						
Hamilton Spectator	<input type="radio"/>						
Helena Independent Record (Montana)	<input type="radio"/>						
Hill Times (Canada)	<input type="radio"/>						
Hindustan Times	<input type="radio"/>						
Huffington Post	<input type="radio"/>						
Japan Times	<input type="radio"/>						
Jerusalem Post	<input type="radio"/>						
Jewish Chronicle	<input type="radio"/>						
La Trobe University (Australia)	<input type="radio"/>						
Leader-Post (Canada)	<input type="radio"/>						

19. If you would like to provide justification for any of your answers, please feel free to do so in the box below.

Thank You!

05/09/2017, 12:29



Professional Perspectives in UK Internet News

Page 12

International Sources M-Z

These are online sources based outside the United Kingdom which provide news coverage of British Politics. This includes all sources which originate outside the British Isles.

20. On a scale from 1 to 7, where 1 is very liberal, 4 is unbiased, and 7 is very conservative, what is your perspective on the editorial bias of the following institutions? Please remember that you only need to provide answers to sources with which you are familiar.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Maclean's (Canada)	<input type="radio"/>						
Medindia.net	<input type="radio"/>						
Middle East Eye	<input type="radio"/>						
Middle East Monitor	<input type="radio"/>						
Mississauga News (Canada)	<input type="radio"/>						
Missoulain (Montana, US)	<input type="radio"/>						
Nanaimo News Bulletin (Canada)	<input type="radio"/>						
National Catholic Register	<input type="radio"/>						
National Post (Canada)	<input type="radio"/>						
National Public Radio (US)	<input type="radio"/>						
NationTalk (Canada)	<input type="radio"/>						
NBC News	<input type="radio"/>						
New Republic	<input type="radio"/>						
New Straits Times (Malaysia)	<input type="radio"/>						
New York Times	<input type="radio"/>						
News Ghana	<input type="radio"/>						
News Tribune (Washington, US)	<input type="radio"/>						
News.com.au	<input type="radio"/>						
Newsweek	<input type="radio"/>						
Northwest Arkansas Democrat Gazette	<input type="radio"/>						
Ottawa Citizen (Canada)	<input type="radio"/>						
Philadelphia Trumpet	<input type="radio"/>						

Thank You!

05/09/2017, 12:29

(US)	<input type="radio"/>						
Picayune (Louisiana, US)	<input type="radio"/>						
PJ Media	<input type="radio"/>						
Pravda	<input type="radio"/>						
Press TV	<input type="radio"/>						
Prince Albert Daily Herald	<input type="radio"/>						
Rabble.ca	<input type="radio"/>						
Rakyat Post	<input type="radio"/>						
Russia Today	<input type="radio"/>						
San Diego Union Times (US)	<input type="radio"/>						
San Francisco Chronicle (US)	<input type="radio"/>						
San Luis Obispo Tribune (California, US)	<input type="radio"/>						
South China Morning Post	<input type="radio"/>						
Spanish News Today	<input type="radio"/>						
Sputnik News	<input type="radio"/>						
Sri Lanka Guardian	<input type="radio"/>						
Straits Times	<input type="radio"/>						
Sun Herald (Mississippi)	<input type="radio"/>						
Sydney Morning Herald	<input type="radio"/>						
The Dominion Post (New Zealand)	<input type="radio"/>						
The Nation (Pakistan)	<input type="radio"/>						
The Province (British Columbia)	<input type="radio"/>						
The Star (Toronto, Canada)	<input type="radio"/>						
The Week	<input type="radio"/>						
Times of India	<input type="radio"/>						
Times of Israel	<input type="radio"/>						
Tribune (Pakistan)	<input type="radio"/>						
Tribune Media (India)	<input type="radio"/>						
Turkish Weekly	<input type="radio"/>						
Ukraine Today	<input type="radio"/>						
US News & World Report	<input type="radio"/>						
USA Today	<input type="radio"/>						
Vancouver 24 Hours	<input type="radio"/>						
Vanguard (Nigeria)	<input type="radio"/>						
Vogue	<input type="radio"/>						
Wall Street Journal	<input type="radio"/>						
Washington Post	<input type="radio"/>						
Washington Times	<input type="radio"/>						

Thank You!

05/09/2017, 12:29

	<input type="radio"/>						
Weekly Standard (US)	<input type="radio"/>						
Winnipeg Free Press	<input type="radio"/>						

21. If you would like to provide justification for any of your answers, please feel free to do so in the box below.

Professional Perspectives in UK Internet News

Page 13

National Press

These are online news sources based in the United Kingdom that either have no regional basis, or have a national readership.

22. On a scale from 1 to 7, where 1 is very liberal, 4 is unbiased, and 7 is very conservative, what is your perspective on the editorial bias of the following institutions? Please remember that you only need to provide answers to sources with which you are familiar.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
BBC News	<input type="radio"/>						
Channel 4	<input type="radio"/>						
Daily Express	<input type="radio"/>						
Daily Mail	<input type="radio"/>						
Daily Mirror	<input type="radio"/>						
Daily Star	<input type="radio"/>						
Ecologist	<input type="radio"/>						
Economist	<input type="radio"/>						
Financial Times	<input type="radio"/>						
Guardian	<input type="radio"/>						
Independent	<input type="radio"/>						
ITV News	<input type="radio"/>						
Metro	<input type="radio"/>						
Mirror	<input type="radio"/>						
Nature	<input type="radio"/>						
NDTV	<input type="radio"/>						
New Statesman	<input type="radio"/>						
NME	<input type="radio"/>						
Press Gazette	<input type="radio"/>						
Publican's Morning Advertiser	<input type="radio"/>						

Thank You!

05/09/2017, 12:29

Reuters	<input type="radio"/>						
Science Insider	<input type="radio"/>						
Science Magazine	<input type="radio"/>						
Sky News	<input type="radio"/>						
Spectator	<input type="radio"/>						
Telegraph	<input type="radio"/>						
The Stage	<input type="radio"/>						
The Times	<input type="radio"/>						
Travel Weekly	<input type="radio"/>						

23. If you would like to provide justification for any of your answers, please feel free to do so in the box below.

Professional Perspectives in UK Internet News

Page 14

Internet Sources A-H

These are sources that are Internet natives. In other words, these are sources which have no traditional offline media presence.

24. On a scale from 1 to 7, where 1 is very liberal, 4 is unbiased, and 7 is very conservative, what is your perspective on the editorial bias of the following institutions? Please remember that you only need to provide answers to sources with which you are familiar.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Alliance Party	<input type="radio"/>						
AOL	<input type="radio"/>						
APM (Association for Project Management)	<input type="radio"/>						
Asian Lite	<input type="radio"/>						
Belief Net	<input type="radio"/>						
Big Hospitality	<input type="radio"/>						
Blastingnews	<input type="radio"/>						
Blastr	<input type="radio"/>						
BQ Live	<input type="radio"/>						
Breitbart	<input type="radio"/>						
Britain Israel Communications & Research Centre	<input type="radio"/>						
BT	<input type="radio"/>						
Business Insider	<input type="radio"/>						

Thank You!

05/09/2017, 12:29

Business Zone	<input type="radio"/>						
Buying Business Travel	<input type="radio"/>						
BuzzFeed	<input type="radio"/>						
Cancer Research UK	<input type="radio"/>						
CarBuyer.co.uk	<input type="radio"/>						
Christian Institute	<input type="radio"/>						
CIDRAP	<input type="radio"/>						
City Index	<input type="radio"/>						
CityWire	<input type="radio"/>						
Civil Service World	<input type="radio"/>						
Commentary	<input type="radio"/>						
Computer Business Review	<input type="radio"/>						
Conservative Home	<input type="radio"/>						
Contractor UK	<input type="radio"/>						
Conversation	<input type="radio"/>						
Counterpunch	<input type="radio"/>						
Currency Watch	<input type="radio"/>						
Cycling Weekly	<input type="radio"/>						
Daily Beast	<input type="radio"/>						
Daily FX	<input type="radio"/>						
Daily Squib	<input type="radio"/>						
Daily Start	<input type="radio"/>						
Day News	<input type="radio"/>						
Defense News	<input type="radio"/>						
Demanjo	<input type="radio"/>						
Democratic Audit UK	<input type="radio"/>						
Desi Blitz	<input type="radio"/>						
Digital Spy	<input type="radio"/>						
Dissident Voice	<input type="radio"/>						
Drum	<input type="radio"/>						
Easy Branches	<input type="radio"/>						
Ed Miliband's Official Instagram	<input type="radio"/>						
Elections Etc.	<input type="radio"/>						
Elite Business Daily	<input type="radio"/>						
Euractiv	<input type="radio"/>						
Euro Exchange Rate News	<input type="radio"/>						
ExchangeRates.org.uk	<input type="radio"/>						
Farming Life	<input type="radio"/>						
Financial Director	<input type="radio"/>						
FindLaw UK	<input type="radio"/>						

Thank You!

05/09/2017, 12:29

First Look	<input type="radio"/>						
FiveThirtyEight	<input type="radio"/>						
FullFact.org	<input type="radio"/>						
Further Education Week	<input type="radio"/>						
GeorgeGalloway.net	<input type="radio"/>						
Global Research	<input type="radio"/>						
Gov.co.uk	<input type="radio"/>						
Guido Fawkes	<input type="radio"/>						
Here is the City	<input type="radio"/>						
Hollingdale Pooley	<input type="radio"/>						
Horticulture Week	<input type="radio"/>						

25. If you would like to provide justification for any of your answers, please feel free to do so in the box below.

Professional Perspectives in UK Internet News

Page 15

Internet Sources I-P

These are sources that are Internet natives. In other words, these are sources which have no traditional offline media presence.

26. On a scale from 1 to 7, where 1 is very liberal, 4 is unbiased, and 7 is very conservative, what is your perspective on the editorial bias of the following institutions? Please remember that you only need to provide answers to sources with which you are familiar.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
IG	<input type="radio"/>						
Indie Wire	<input type="radio"/>						
Inquisitr	<input type="radio"/>						
Insight.org	<input type="radio"/>						
Insurance Age	<input type="radio"/>						
Interactive Investor	<input type="radio"/>						
International Business Times	<input type="radio"/>						
Investing.com	<input type="radio"/>						
Invezz	<input type="radio"/>						
IT Pro	<input type="radio"/>						
Jewish Community Watch	<input type="radio"/>						
Jewish News	<input type="radio"/>						

Thank You!

05/09/2017, 12:29

Labour List	<input type="radio"/>						
Leap Rate	<input type="radio"/>						
Left Foot Forward	<input type="radio"/>						
Legal Cheek	<input type="radio"/>						
Lexology	<input type="radio"/>						
Liberal Democrat Voice	<input type="radio"/>						
Liberal Democrats	<input type="radio"/>						
LSE British Politics and Policy Blog	<input type="radio"/>						
LSE European Politics and Policy Blog	<input type="radio"/>						
LSE General Election 2015 Blog	<input type="radio"/>						
Management Today	<input type="radio"/>						
Marilyn Stowe Family Law	<input type="radio"/>						
Market Oracle	<input type="radio"/>						
Market Watch	<input type="radio"/>						
Mashable	<input type="radio"/>						
Mayor Watch	<input type="radio"/>						
Mediatel	<input type="radio"/>						
Merco Press	<input type="radio"/>						
Military Technology	<input type="radio"/>						
Mindful Money	<input type="radio"/>						
Money Week	<input type="radio"/>						
Motley Fool UK	<input type="radio"/>						
N3	<input type="radio"/>						
New Europe Online	<input type="radio"/>						
New Internationalist	<input type="radio"/>						
News Thump	<input type="radio"/>						
Nieman Lab	<input type="radio"/>						
Number10.gov.uk	<input type="radio"/>						
Open Democracy	<input type="radio"/>						
Open Media	<input type="radio"/>						
Out-Law.com	<input type="radio"/>						
Oxford University Press Blog	<input type="radio"/>						
Palestine Campaign	<input type="radio"/>						
Palestine Solidarity Campaign	<input type="radio"/>						
PC Advisor	<input type="radio"/>						
Pensions Insight	<input type="radio"/>						
Pharmaceutical Journal	<input type="radio"/>						
PHG Foundation	<input type="radio"/>						
Pink News	<input type="radio"/>						

Thank You!

05/09/2017, 12:29

Political Scrapbook	<input type="radio"/>						
Politico	<input type="radio"/>						
Politics.co.uk	<input type="radio"/>						
Pound Sterling	<input type="radio"/>						
Pound Sterling Live	<input type="radio"/>						
Power-Technology.com	<input type="radio"/>						
Practical Law	<input type="radio"/>						
Project Syndicate	<input type="radio"/>						
Prospect	<input type="radio"/>						

27. If you would like to provide justification for any of your answers, please feel free to do so in the box below.

Professional Perspectives in UK Internet News

Page 16

Internet Sources Q-Z

These are sources that are Internet natives. In other words, these are sources which have no traditional offline media presence.

28. On a scale from 1 to 7, where 1 is very liberal, 4 is unbiased, and 7 is very conservative, what is your perspective on the editorial bias of the following institutions? Please remember that you only need to provide answers to sources with which you are familiar.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Real Independent News & Film	<input type="radio"/>						
Recode.net	<input type="radio"/>						
Recruitment Grapevine	<input type="radio"/>						
Relocate Magazine	<input type="radio"/>						
Respect Party Official Website	<input type="radio"/>						
Road.cc	<input type="radio"/>						
RTT News	<input type="radio"/>						
Shout Out UK	<input type="radio"/>						
Sikh Siyasat News	<input type="radio"/>						
Slate	<input type="radio"/>						
Sluggo O'Toole	<input type="radio"/>						
SNP Official Website	<input type="radio"/>						
Social Europe	<input type="radio"/>						

Thank You!

05/09/2017, 12:29

Speaking of Research	<input type="radio"/>						
Spiked Online	<input type="radio"/>						
Startups	<input type="radio"/>						
Supply Management	<input type="radio"/>						
sys.con Media	<input type="radio"/>						
Tech Crunch	<input type="radio"/>						
The Construction Index	<input type="radio"/>						
The Drum	<input type="radio"/>						
The News Hub	<input type="radio"/>						
The Next Web	<input type="radio"/>						
The Register	<input type="radio"/>						
This is Money	<input type="radio"/>						
Town Hall	<input type="radio"/>						
TV Newsroom	<input type="radio"/>						
U.tv	<input type="radio"/>						
UK Chagos Support Association	<input type="radio"/>						
UK Fundraising	<input type="radio"/>						
UK Human Rights Blog	<input type="radio"/>						
UKIP Official Website	<input type="radio"/>						
Value Walk	<input type="radio"/>						
Venture Beat	<input type="radio"/>						
Visitor	<input type="radio"/>						
Voltairenet.org	<input type="radio"/>						
Wealth Manager	<input type="radio"/>						
Wired	<input type="radio"/>						
WorkPermit.com	<input type="radio"/>						
World Poultry	<input type="radio"/>						
World Socialist Web Site	<input type="radio"/>						
Yahoo!	<input type="radio"/>						
YouGov	<input type="radio"/>						
Zacks (Research Firm)	<input type="radio"/>						
Zero Hedge	<input type="radio"/>						

29. If you would like to provide justification for any of your answers, please feel free to do so in the box below.

Professional Perspectives in US Internet News

Page 1

Participant Information Sheet

University of Manchester
School of Social Sciences
Participant Information Sheet

What is the title of the research?

"Is Internet News a Converged Space? An Historical Institutional Exploration of Media System Convergence in the Internet Age"

Who will conduct the research?

Evan Vellis, PhD Researcher, University of Manchester

What is the aim of the research?

The aim of the research is to gain a better understanding of the contemporary news environment of the United States and the United Kingdom through quantitative analysis. This includes a survey of media experts to identify the editorial perspectives of online news sources.

Why have I been chosen?

You have been chosen because of your professional experience regarding the news media.

What would I be asked to do if I took part?

To take part, you will complete a survey that asks you about your opinion on the editorial perspectives of a number of news sources.

What happens to the data collected?

The data collected will be compiled and stored confidentially. All data (including personal data) will be stored in a password-protected file which can only be accessed by the investigator, Evan Vellis, and his supervisors, Dr. Peter Humphreys and Dr. Andrew Russell. Survey responses will not be analysed or stored with the personal data, and personal data will not be held longer than necessary in accordance with the ethical guidelines set out by the University of Manchester Faculty of Humanities and School of Social Sciences. Survey responses will be used strictly for academic purposes, and your personal details will never be published. Academic use of your responses includes publication in academic journals, conference presentations, and the completion and potential publication of the entire thesis project. If you do not agree with how your responses and personal data will be used or stored, please do not take the survey or contact the investigator at the email address provided below.

What happens if I do not want to take part or if I change my mind?

Participation in this survey is entirely voluntary. If for any reason you would like your responses to be amended or removed from the database, you can submit a request to the researcher via email to the address provided below.

Will I be paid for participating in the research?

Successful completion of the survey enters the participant in a draw to win one of four (4) Amazon e-vouchers, valued at \$30 if you are in the US or £20 if you are in the United Kingdom.

What benefit might this research be to me or other subjects of the research?

The completed research project will inform participants of their own institution's editorial perspective, as determined by their peers.

If there are any problems with the survey or questions about the research project, please contact the investigator directly at evan.vellis@manchester.ac.uk, or by post at the following address:

Evan Vellis
4th Floor, Arthur Lewis Building
University of Manchester

Thank you!

05/09/2017, 12:31

Oxford Road
Manchester
M13 9PL

Professional Perspectives in US Internet News

Page 2

Select a Region

- Please choose the regions that contain publications that you are familiar with. If you are a media professional and your publication is not based in any particular region, please choose any regions that contain publications that you are familiar with. Only choose 'International' if your publication has no office in the United States, or if you are not based in the United States and have never encountered any regional journalism in the United States.*

You must select at least one answer to continue the survey.

- Northeast (ME, VT, NH, MA, RI, CT, NY, NJ, PA)
- Southeast (DE, MD, VA, WV, NC, SC, GA, FL)
- Great Lakes (OH, IN, MI, IL, WI, MN, IA, ND, SD)
- Mississippi Valley (KY, TN, AL, MS, LA, AK, MS)
- Central (WY, CO, NM, TX, OK, KS, NE)
- West (MO, ID, UT, NV, AZ, CA, OR, WA, AK, HI)

Professional Perspectives in US Internet News

Page 3

Northeast

These are online news sources that are based in the Northeast United States. This includes all sources from Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Connecticut, New York, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania.

- On a scale from 1 to 7, where 1 is very liberal, 4 is unbiased, and 7 is very conservative, what is your perspective on the editorial bias of the following institutions? Please remember that you only need to provide answers to sources with which you are familiar.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Albany Times-Union	<input type="radio"/>						
Asbury Park Press (Asbury Park, NJ)	<input type="radio"/>						
Atlantic Highlands Herald (NJ)	<input type="radio"/>						
Baltimore Sun	<input type="radio"/>						
Bangor Daily News (Maine)	<input type="radio"/>						
Bedford Patch	<input type="radio"/>						
Boston Globe	<input type="radio"/>						
Boston Herald	<input type="radio"/>						

Thank you!

05/09/2017, 12:31

Boston.com (Boston Globe Media Partners)	<input type="radio"/>						
Buffalo News	<input type="radio"/>						
Burlington Free Press (Vermont)	<input type="radio"/>						
Camel City Dispatch (Winston-Salem, Mass)	<input type="radio"/>						
Chappaqua-Mount Kisco Patch	<input type="radio"/>						
Coastal Point	<input type="radio"/>						
Courant (Connecticut)	<input type="radio"/>						
Daily Princetonian (New Jersey)	<input type="radio"/>						
Daily Record (NJ)	<input type="radio"/>						
Eagle-Tribune (Andover, Massachusetts)	<input type="radio"/>						
Go Local Providence (Rhode Island)	<input type="radio"/>						
Harford Courant	<input type="radio"/>						
Harvard Politics	<input type="radio"/>						
Herald-Standard (Pennsylvania)	<input type="radio"/>						
Maine Sun-Journal	<input type="radio"/>						
Mass Live (The Republican, Massachusetts Newspaper)	<input type="radio"/>						
Massachusetts Live	<input type="radio"/>						
Montgomery Media (Pennsylvania)	<input type="radio"/>						
New England Cable News	<input type="radio"/>						
New England Public Radio	<input type="radio"/>						
New Haven Register	<input type="radio"/>						
New London Patch	<input type="radio"/>						
New Pittsburgh Courier	<input type="radio"/>						
New York Daily News	<input type="radio"/>						
New York Magazine	<input type="radio"/>						
New York Observer	<input type="radio"/>						
New York Post	<input type="radio"/>						
New Yorker	<input type="radio"/>						
News @ Wesleyan University (Connecticut)	<input type="radio"/>						
NJ.com (Star Ledger)	<input type="radio"/>						
NYU Local	<input type="radio"/>						
PA Pundits	<input type="radio"/>						
Philadelphia Inquirer (Philly.com)	<input type="radio"/>						
Philadelphia Tribune	<input type="radio"/>						

Thank you!

05/09/2017, 12:31

Pittsburgh Post-Gazette	<input type="radio"/>						
Politicker NJ	<input type="radio"/>						
Politics PA	<input type="radio"/>						
Portland Press-Herald (Maine)	<input type="radio"/>						
Press-Herald (Portland, Maine)	<input type="radio"/>						
Reading Eagle (Pennsylvania)	<input type="radio"/>						
Republican-American (Waterbury, CT)	<input type="radio"/>						
SI Live (Staten Island Advance)	<input type="radio"/>						
Stamford Daily Voice	<input type="radio"/>						
Swarthmore College Daily Gazette (Swarthmore, PA)	<input type="radio"/>						
Syracuse.com (Post-Standard)	<input type="radio"/>						
Tarrytown-Sleepy Hollow Patch	<input type="radio"/>						
The Boston Globe	<input type="radio"/>						
The Brooklyn Reader	<input type="radio"/>						
Daily Gazette (Schenectady, NY)	<input type="radio"/>						
Daily Pennsylvanian	<input type="radio"/>						
The Star Ledger (New Jersey)	<input type="radio"/>						
The Trentonian (NJ)	<input type="radio"/>						
Times-Union (Albany, NY)	<input type="radio"/>						
Titusville Herald (PA)	<input type="radio"/>						
Pittsburgh Tribune-Review	<input type="radio"/>						
Uniontown Herald-Standard	<input type="radio"/>						

3. If you would like to provide justification for any of your answers, please feel free to do so in the box below.

Professional Perspectives in US Internet News

Southeast

Thank you!

05/09/2017, 12:31

These are online news sources that are based in the Southeast United States. This includes news all sources from Delaware, Maryland, Virginia, West Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, and Florida. It also includes Washington D.C. local news.

4. On a scale from 1 to 7, where 1 is very liberal, 4 is unbiased, and 7 is very conservative, what is your perspective on the editorial bias of the following institutions? Please remember that you only need to provide answers to sources with which you are familiar.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Asheville Citizen-Times	<input type="radio"/>						
Athens Banner-Herald (Georgia)	<input type="radio"/>						
Atlanta Business Chronicle	<input type="radio"/>						
Atlanta Daily World	<input type="radio"/>						
Atlanta Journal Courier	<input type="radio"/>						
Atlanta Journal-Constitution	<input type="radio"/>						
Augusta Chronicle	<input type="radio"/>						
Augusta Free Press (Virginia)	<input type="radio"/>						
Bradenton Herald (FL)	<input type="radio"/>						
Central Florida Future	<input type="radio"/>						
Charleston Daily Mail	<input type="radio"/>						
Charlotte Observer	<input type="radio"/>						
Charlotte Post	<input type="radio"/>						
Chronicle-Independent (Camden, SC)	<input type="radio"/>						
Citizen-Times (Asheville, NC)	<input type="radio"/>						
Columbia Tribune	<input type="radio"/>						
Creative Loafing (Tampa Bay)	<input type="radio"/>						
Daily Progress (Virginia)	<input type="radio"/>						
Daily Tar Heel (North Carolina)	<input type="radio"/>						
Diamondback Online (Univ. of Maryland)	<input type="radio"/>						
Duke Chronicle	<input type="radio"/>						
Eagle (American University)	<input type="radio"/>						
Fishbowl DC	<input type="radio"/>						
FIUSM (Florida International University)	<input type="radio"/>						
FlaglerLive.com	<input type="radio"/>						
Florida Today	<input type="radio"/>						
Greene County Democrat (Alabama)	<input type="radio"/>						
Gwinnett Daily Post (Georgia)	<input type="radio"/>						
Hatchet (George Washington University)	<input type="radio"/>						
Herald Online (South	<input type="radio"/>						

Thank you!

05/09/2017, 12:31

Carolina)	<input type="radio"/>						
High Point Enterprise (North Carolina)	<input type="radio"/>						
Ledger-Enquirer (Columbus, GA)	<input type="radio"/>						
Macon Telegraph (Georgia)	<input type="radio"/>						
McClatchy DC	<input type="radio"/>						
Miami Herald	<input type="radio"/>						
Miami Sun-Herald	<input type="radio"/>						
Montgomery Advertiser	<input type="radio"/>						
Moultrie Observer (Georgia)	<input type="radio"/>						
My News 13 (Orlando, FL)	<input type="radio"/>						
News & Observer (North Carolina)	<input type="radio"/>						
News & Record (North Carolina)	<input type="radio"/>						
News 4 (Jacksonville, FL)	<input type="radio"/>						
News-Observer (NC)	<input type="radio"/>						
News-Press (Fort Myers, FL)	<input type="radio"/>						
NewsPlex (Charlottesville, Va)	<input type="radio"/>						
Panama City News Herald (Florida)	<input type="radio"/>						
PennLive (Pennsylvania Patriot News)	<input type="radio"/>						
Pennsylvania Patriot- News	<input type="radio"/>						
Post and Courier (South Carolina)	<input type="radio"/>						
Post-Crescent (Wisconsin)	<input type="radio"/>						
Richmond Times- Dispatch	<input type="radio"/>						
Sarasota Herald-Tribune	<input type="radio"/>						
Savannah Now (Savannah Morning Post)	<input type="radio"/>						
Space Coast Daily	<input type="radio"/>						
St Petersburg	<input type="radio"/>						
Stanly News and Press (North Carolina)	<input type="radio"/>						
Star-Democrat (Maryland)	<input type="radio"/>						
State (South Carolina)	<input type="radio"/>						
Statesman-Journal (South Carolina)	<input type="radio"/>						
Sun Herald (Gulfport, MS)	<input type="radio"/>						
Sun-Sentinel	<input type="radio"/>						

Thank you!

05/09/2017, 12:31

Tallahassee Democrat	<input type="radio"/>						
GW Hatchet (George Washington University)	<input type="radio"/>						
Times-News (NC)	<input type="radio"/>						
Univ. of Virginia Center for Politics	<input type="radio"/>						
University of Alabama News	<input type="radio"/>						
Washington City Paper	<input type="radio"/>						
Washington Monthly	<input type="radio"/>						
WSB Radio (Atlanta)	<input type="radio"/>						

5. If you would like to provide justification for any of your answers, please feel free to do so in the box below.

Professional Perspectives in US Internet News

Page 5

Great Lakes

These are online news sources that are based in the Northeast United States. This includes all sources from Ohio, Indiana, Michigan, Illinois, Wisconsin, Minnesota, Iowa, North Dakota, and South Dakota.

6. On a scale from 1 to 7, where 1 is very liberal, 4 is unbiased, and 7 is very conservative, what is your perspective on the editorial bias of the following institutions? Please remember that you only need to provide answers to sources with which you are familiar.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Argus Leader (Sioux Falls, SD)	<input type="radio"/>						
Bemidji Pioneer (MN)	<input type="radio"/>						
Chicago Sun-Times	<input type="radio"/>						
Chicago Tribune	<input type="radio"/>						
Cincinnati.com	<input type="radio"/>						
Cleveland.com (Plain Dealer)	<input type="radio"/>						
Columbus CEO	<input type="radio"/>						
Columbus Dispatch (Ohio)	<input type="radio"/>						
Daily Chronicle (Illinois)	<input type="radio"/>						
Daily Iowan	<input type="radio"/>						
DePaulia (De Paul University, Chicago, IL)	<input type="radio"/>						
Des Moines Register	<input type="radio"/>						

Thank you!

05/09/2017, 12:31

Detroit Free Press	<input type="radio"/>						
Detroit News	<input type="radio"/>						
Font du Lac Reporter (Wisconsin)	<input type="radio"/>						
Frost Illustrated	<input type="radio"/>						
Green Bay Press-Gazette (Wisconsin)	<input type="radio"/>						
Herald-News (Illinois)	<input type="radio"/>						
Illinois Review	<input type="radio"/>						
IndyStar (Indianapolis Star)	<input type="radio"/>						
Iowa City Press-Citizen	<input type="radio"/>						
Iowa Republican	<input type="radio"/>						
Iowa State Daily	<input type="radio"/>						
Journal Review (Indiana)	<input type="radio"/>						
Keloland Television (South Dakota)	<input type="radio"/>						
Lafayette Journal & Courier (Indiana)	<input type="radio"/>						
Local News 8 (Iowa)	<input type="radio"/>						
Macomb Daily (Mount Clemens, Michigan)	<input type="radio"/>						
Madison.com	<input type="radio"/>						
Marion Star (Ohio)	<input type="radio"/>						
Michigan Daily	<input type="radio"/>						
Michigan Live	<input type="radio"/>						
Michigan Radio (National Public Radio Affiliate)	<input type="radio"/>						
Milwaukee Business Journal	<input type="radio"/>						
Milwaukee Journal-Sentinel	<input type="radio"/>						
Minnesota Daily	<input type="radio"/>						
Minnesota Post	<input type="radio"/>						
Minnesota Public Radio	<input type="radio"/>						
MPR News (Minnesota)	<input type="radio"/>						
Newton Daily News (Iowa)	<input type="radio"/>						
Observer (Notre Dame & St. Mary's)	<input type="radio"/>						
On Milwaukee	<input type="radio"/>						
Port Huron Times-Herald (Michigan)	<input type="radio"/>						
Press Citizen (Iowa City)	<input type="radio"/>						
Progress Illinois	<input type="radio"/>						
Quad City Times (IA/IL)	<input type="radio"/>						
Sauk Valley Telegraph/Daily Gazette (Illinois)	<input type="radio"/>						

Thank you!

05/09/2017, 12:31

Sioux City Journal	<input type="radio"/>						
South Bend Tribune	<input type="radio"/>						
Star Tribune (Minneapolis, MN)	<input type="radio"/>						
State Journal-Register (Illinois)	<input type="radio"/>						
Toledo Blade (OH)	<input type="radio"/>						
Wausau Daily Herald (WI)	<input type="radio"/>						
West Virginia Gazette- Mail	<input type="radio"/>						
Windy City Times	<input type="radio"/>						
Wisconsin News	<input type="radio"/>						
Wisconsin State-Journal	<input type="radio"/>						
Zanesville Times- Recorder (Ohio)	<input type="radio"/>						

7. If you would like to provide justification for any of your answers, please feel free to do so in the box below.

Professional Perspectives in US Internet News

Page 6

Mississippi Valley

These are online news sources that are based in the Northeast United States. This includes all sources from Kentucky, Tennessee, Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana, Arkansas, and Missouri.

8. On a scale from 1 to 7, where 1 is very liberal, 4 is unbiased, and 7 is very conservative, what is your perspective on the editorial bias of the following institutions? Please remember that you only need to provide answers to sources with which you are familiar.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Advertiser (LA)	<input type="radio"/>						
Advocate (Baton Rouge)	<input type="radio"/>						
AL.com (Birmingham News)	<input type="radio"/>						
Arkansas Times	<input type="radio"/>						
Baxter Bulletin (Arkansas)	<input type="radio"/>						
Clarion Ledger (Jackson, MS)	<input type="radio"/>						
Commercial Appeal (Memphis)	<input type="radio"/>						
Courier-Journal (Kentucky)	<input type="radio"/>						

Thank you!

05/09/2017, 12:31

Daily News Journal (Tennessee)	<input type="radio"/>						
Daily Reveille (Louisiana State University)	<input type="radio"/>						
Fort Smith Times-Record (Arkansas)	<input type="radio"/>						
Kansas City Star	<input type="radio"/>						
Kansas Health Institute	<input type="radio"/>						
Kentucky.com (Lexington Herald-Ledger)	<input type="radio"/>						
Kingsport Times-News (Tennessee)	<input type="radio"/>						
Louisiana Weekly	<input type="radio"/>						
Memphis Daily News	<input type="radio"/>						
Missouri Times	<input type="radio"/>						
Nola.com (New Orleans Times-Picayune)	<input type="radio"/>						
Shreveport Times	<input type="radio"/>						
St Louis Post-Dispatch	<input type="radio"/>						
St Louis Riverfront Times	<input type="radio"/>						
State Journal (Frankfort, KY)	<input type="radio"/>						
SW Times Record (Arkansas)	<input type="radio"/>						
Tennessean.com	<input type="radio"/>						
The Town Talk (Alexandria, LA)	<input type="radio"/>						
Times-Record (Fort Smith, AS)	<input type="radio"/>						

9. If you would like to provide justification for any of your answers, please feel free to do so in the box below.

Professional Perspectives in US Internet News

Page 7

Central

These are online news sources based in the Central United States. This includes all sources from Texas, Oklahoma, Kansas, Nebraska, Wyoming, Colorado, and New Mexico.

10. On a scale from 1 to 7, where 1 is very liberal, 4 is unbiased, and 7 is very conservative, what is your perspective on the editorial bias of the following institutions? Please remember that you only need to provide answers to sources with which you are familiar.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Thank you!

05/09/2017, 12:31

Amarillo Globe-News	<input type="radio"/>						
Colorado Independent	<input type="radio"/>						
Colorado Springs Gazette	<input type="radio"/>						
CU Independent (Boulder, CO)	<input type="radio"/>						
Daily Texan (University of Texas, Austin)	<input type="radio"/>						
Dallas Morning News	<input type="radio"/>						
Denver Post	<input type="radio"/>						
Durango Herald	<input type="radio"/>						
El Paso Inc.	<input type="radio"/>						
Fort Hays State University Leader (Kansas)	<input type="radio"/>						
Gilmer Mirror	<input type="radio"/>						
Hays Post (Fort Hays, KS)	<input type="radio"/>						
Houston Chronicle	<input type="radio"/>						
Houston Forward-Times	<input type="radio"/>						
Hutchinson News (Kansas)	<input type="radio"/>						
Journal-Star (Lincoln, NE)	<input type="radio"/>						
KERA North Texas Public Radio	<input type="radio"/>						
Killeen Daily Herald (Texas)	<input type="radio"/>						
Lawrence Journal-World (Kansas)	<input type="radio"/>						
Lubbock Avalanche-Journal (Texas)	<input type="radio"/>						
My San Antonio (Express News)	<input type="radio"/>						
News OK (Oakhoma)	<input type="radio"/>						
News-Journal (Longview, TX)	<input type="radio"/>						
Oklahoman	<input type="radio"/>						
Star-Telegram (Texas)	<input type="radio"/>						
Texas Insider	<input type="radio"/>						
Texas Tribune	<input type="radio"/>						
The Monitor (South Texas)	<input type="radio"/>						
Waco Tribune	<input type="radio"/>						

11. If you would like to provide justification for any of your answers, please feel free to do so in the box below.

Thank you!

05/09/2017, 12:31

Professional Perspectives in US Internet News

Page 8

West

These are online news sources based in the Western United States. This includes all sources from California, Arizona, Nevada, Utah, Idaho, Montana, Washington, Oregon, Alaska, and Hawaii.

12. On a scale from 1 to 7, where 1 is very liberal, 4 is unbiased, and 7 is very conservative, what is your perspective the editorial bias of the following institutions? Please remember that you only need to provide answers to sources with which you are familiar.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
43rd State Blues (Idaho)	<input type="radio"/>						
Alaska Daily News	<input type="radio"/>						
Alaska Dispatch News	<input type="radio"/>						
Alaska Public Media	<input type="radio"/>						
Arizona Capital Times	<input type="radio"/>						
Arizona Jewish Post	<input type="radio"/>						
Arizona Republic	<input type="radio"/>						
AZ Central (12 news & Arizona Republic)	<input type="radio"/>						
Berkeley Daily Planet	<input type="radio"/>						
Cache Valley Daily	<input type="radio"/>						
Daily Trojan (University of Southern California)	<input type="radio"/>						
Deseret News (Utah)	<input type="radio"/>						
Desert Sun	<input type="radio"/>						
Digital Universe (Brigham Young University, Utah)	<input type="radio"/>						
Fresno Bee	<input type="radio"/>						
Great Falls Tribune (Montana)	<input type="radio"/>						
Idaho Statesman	<input type="radio"/>						
Imperial Valley Press (California)	<input type="radio"/>						
LA Progressive	<input type="radio"/>						
La Voz (Phoenix, AZ)	<input type="radio"/>						
Las Vegas Review-Journal	<input type="radio"/>						
Las Vegas Sun	<input type="radio"/>						

Thank you!

05/09/2017, 12:31

Los Angeles Sentinel	<input type="radio"/>						
Los Angeles Times	<input type="radio"/>						
Magic Valley Times- News (Idaho)	<input type="radio"/>						
Mail Tribune (Oregon)	<input type="radio"/>						
Merced Sun-Star (California)	<input type="radio"/>						
Missoulian (Montana)	<input type="radio"/>						
Modesto Bee (California)	<input type="radio"/>						
My Central Oregon	<input type="radio"/>						
Nevada Appeal	<input type="radio"/>						
News-Tribune (Washington)	<input type="radio"/>						
Oregon Live (the Oregonian)	<input type="radio"/>						
Oregon Statesman- Journal	<input type="radio"/>						
Pacific Standard	<input type="radio"/>						
Press-Enterprise (Riverside County, California)	<input type="radio"/>						
Reno Gazette-Journal	<input type="radio"/>						
Sacramento Bee	<input type="radio"/>						
Salt Lake Tribune (Utah)	<input type="radio"/>						
San Angelo Standard- Times	<input type="radio"/>						
San Antonio Express- News	<input type="radio"/>						
San Diego Union-Tribune	<input type="radio"/>						
San Luis Obispo Tribune (CA)	<input type="radio"/>						
Seattle Met	<input type="radio"/>						
Seattle PI	<input type="radio"/>						
Seattle Times	<input type="radio"/>						
SF Gate (San Francisco Chronicle)	<input type="radio"/>						
Sierra Sun-Times	<input type="radio"/>						
Spokesman-Review (Spokane, WA)	<input type="radio"/>						
St Luis Obispo Tribune (California)	<input type="radio"/>						
Standard-Examiner (Utah)	<input type="radio"/>						
Stanford Daily (Stanford University)	<input type="radio"/>						
Stanford Review	<input type="radio"/>						
State Press (Tempe, AZ)	<input type="radio"/>						
Statesman-Journal (Oregon)	<input type="radio"/>						
Bellingham Herald	<input type="radio"/>						

Thank you!

05/09/2017, 12:31

(Washington)							
The Californian	<input type="radio"/>						
Daily Wildcat (Uni. Of Arizona)	<input type="radio"/>						
The Signpost (Weber State University, Utah)	<input type="radio"/>						
The Spectrum (Utah)	<input type="radio"/>						
The Spokesman-Review (Spokane, WA)	<input type="radio"/>						
Tri-City Herald (WA)	<input type="radio"/>						
Tucson Weekly	<input type="radio"/>						
Tuscon.com (Arizona Daily Star)	<input type="radio"/>						
UT San Diego	<input type="radio"/>						
Ventura County Star	<input type="radio"/>						
Yakima Herald (Washington)	<input type="radio"/>						

13. If you would like to provide justification for any of your answers, please feel free to do so in the box below.

Professional Perspectives in US Internet News

International Sources

These are online sources based outside the United States which provide news coverage of American Politics. This includes all sources which originate outside the 50 U.S. States. For the purposes of this survey, U.S. Territories (such as Puerto Rico and Guam) are treated as international sources.

14. On a scale from 1 to 7, where 1 is very liberal, 4 is unbiased, and 7 is very conservative, what is your perspective on the editorial bias of the following institutions? Please remember that you only need to provide answers to sources with which you are familiar.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
5 News (UK)	<input type="radio"/>						
9 News (Australia)	<input type="radio"/>						
ABC News (Australia)	<input type="radio"/>						
Al Arabiya	<input type="radio"/>						
Al Bawaba	<input type="radio"/>						
Al Jazeera	<input type="radio"/>						
All Africa	<input type="radio"/>						
American Politics and Policy Blog (London)	<input type="radio"/>						

Thank you!

05/09/2017, 12:31

School of Economics)							
APB Live (India)	<input type="radio"/>						
Asian Lite	<input type="radio"/>						
BBC News (UK)	<input type="radio"/>						
BD Live (South Africa)	<input type="radio"/>						
Brisbane Times	<input type="radio"/>						
Business Mirror (Philippines)	<input type="radio"/>						
Business Spectator (Australia)	<input type="radio"/>						
Canada Free Press	<input type="radio"/>						
Canada.com	<input type="radio"/>						
CBC (Canada)	<input type="radio"/>						
Channel News Asia	<input type="radio"/>						
China Topix	<input type="radio"/>						
China.org	<input type="radio"/>						
Columbian	<input type="radio"/>						
CTV News (Canada)	<input type="radio"/>						
Daily Mail (UK)	<input type="radio"/>						
Daily Mirror (UK)	<input type="radio"/>						
Daily Post (Nigeria)	<input type="radio"/>						
Daily Telegraph (UK)	<input type="radio"/>						
Dawn (Pakistan)	<input type="radio"/>						
Durham Region	<input type="radio"/>						
Dw.de	<input type="radio"/>						
Economic Times (India)	<input type="radio"/>						
Economist	<input type="radio"/>						
eNews Channel Africa	<input type="radio"/>						
Euronews	<input type="radio"/>						
Express Tribune (India)	<input type="radio"/>						
Financial Post (Canada)	<input type="radio"/>						
Financial Review (Australia)	<input type="radio"/>						
Financial Times (UK)	<input type="radio"/>						
First Post India	<input type="radio"/>						
Globe and Mail (Canada)	<input type="radio"/>						
Guardian (Trinidad & Tobago)	<input type="radio"/>						
Guardian (UK)	<input type="radio"/>						
Haaretz	<input type="radio"/>						
Independent (UK)	<input type="radio"/>						
Iraqi Dinar	<input type="radio"/>						
Irish Times	<input type="radio"/>						
Israel National News	<input type="radio"/>						

Thank you!

05/09/2017, 12:31

ITV	<input type="radio"/>						
ITV News India	<input type="radio"/>						
Japan Times	<input type="radio"/>						
Japan Today	<input type="radio"/>						
Jerusalem Post (Israel)	<input type="radio"/>						
Malay Mail	<input type="radio"/>						
Nation (Pakistan)	<input type="radio"/>						
National Post (Canada)	<input type="radio"/>						
New Zealand Herald	<input type="radio"/>						
News.com.au (Australia)	<input type="radio"/>						
NVO News (India)	<input type="radio"/>						
Press TV (Iran)	<input type="radio"/>						
Rabble (Canada)	<input type="radio"/>						
Ria Novosti (Russia)	<input type="radio"/>						
Russia Today	<input type="radio"/>						
St Catherines Standard (Canada)	<input type="radio"/>						
Sydney Morning Herald (Australia)	<input type="radio"/>						
Telegraph (UK)	<input type="radio"/>						
The Perspective (Liberia)	<input type="radio"/>						
The Star (Toronto, Canada)	<input type="radio"/>						
The Zimbabwean	<input type="radio"/>						
Tico Times (Costa Rica)	<input type="radio"/>						
Times Colonist (Canada)	<input type="radio"/>						
UK Progressive	<input type="radio"/>						
World Bulletin (Turkey)	<input type="radio"/>						
Yeshiva World News	<input type="radio"/>						
Zee News (India)	<input type="radio"/>						

15. If you would like to provide justification for any of your answers, please feel free to do so in the box below.

Professional Perspectives in US Internet News

National Press

Thank you!

05/09/2017, 12:31

These are online news sources based in the United States that either have no regional basis, or have a national readership. For example, the New York Times, The Wall Street Journal, and the Washington Post are included in this category alongside other non-regional sources like PBS and USA Today.

16. On a scale from 1 to 7, where 1 is very liberal, 4 is unbiased, and 7 is very conservative, what is your perspective on the editorial bias of the following institutions? Please remember that you only need to provide answers to sources with which you are familiar.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
ABC News	<input type="radio"/>						
Associated Press	<input type="radio"/>						
Atlantic	<input type="radio"/>						
Barrons	<input type="radio"/>						
Bloomberg	<input type="radio"/>						
C-Span	<input type="radio"/>						
CBS News	<input type="radio"/>						
Channel Guide Magazine	<input type="radio"/>						
Christian Post	<input type="radio"/>						
Christian Science Monitor	<input type="radio"/>						
Christian Times	<input type="radio"/>						
CNBC	<input type="radio"/>						
CNN	<input type="radio"/>						
Commentary Magazine	<input type="radio"/>						
Complex	<input type="radio"/>						
Equities.com	<input type="radio"/>						
Esquire	<input type="radio"/>						
Esseence	<input type="radio"/>						
Forbes	<input type="radio"/>						
Foreign Policy	<input type="radio"/>						
Fortune	<input type="radio"/>						
Fox Business	<input type="radio"/>						
Fox News	<input type="radio"/>						
Government Executive	<input type="radio"/>						
In These Times	<input type="radio"/>						
Investor's Business Daily	<input type="radio"/>						
Jewish Telegraphic Agency	<input type="radio"/>						
MarketWatch (Wall Street Journal)	<input type="radio"/>						
Mother Jones	<input type="radio"/>						
MSNBC	<input type="radio"/>						
Nation	<input type="radio"/>						
National Journal	<input type="radio"/>						
National Public Radio	<input type="radio"/>						
National Review	<input type="radio"/>						
NBC News	<input type="radio"/>						

Thank you!

05/09/2017, 12:31

New American	<input type="radio"/>						
New Republic	<input type="radio"/>						
New York Times	<input type="radio"/>						
Newsweek	<input type="radio"/>						
NPR	<input type="radio"/>						
PBS	<input type="radio"/>						
Reuters	<input type="radio"/>						
Rush Limbaugh	<input type="radio"/>						
The American Prospect	<input type="radio"/>						
The Atlantic	<input type="radio"/>						
The Wall Street Journal	<input type="radio"/>						
The Washington Post	<input type="radio"/>						
The Washington Times	<input type="radio"/>						
The Week	<input type="radio"/>						
The Weekly Standard	<input type="radio"/>						
Time	<input type="radio"/>						
Time Warner Cable News	<input type="radio"/>						
U.S. News & World Report	<input type="radio"/>						
USA Today	<input type="radio"/>						
Vice News	<input type="radio"/>						
Wall Street Journal	<input type="radio"/>						
Washington Examiner	<input type="radio"/>						
Washington Free Beacon	<input type="radio"/>						
Washington Post	<input type="radio"/>						
Washington Times	<input type="radio"/>						
WGN	<input type="radio"/>						

17. If you would like to provide justification for any of your answers, please feel free to do so in the box below.

Professional Perspectives in US Internet News

Page 11

Internet Sources A-F

These are sources that are Internet natives. In other words, these are sources which have no traditional offline

Thank you!

05/09/2017, 12:31

media presence.

18. On a scale from 1 to 7, where 1 is very liberal, 4 is unbiased, and 7 is very conservative, what is your perspective on the editorial bias of the following institutions? Please remember that you only need to provide answers to sources with which you are familiar.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
AARP Blog	<input type="radio"/>						
About.com	<input type="radio"/>						
Accounting Web	<input type="radio"/>						
Addicting Info	<input type="radio"/>						
AL Monitor	<input type="radio"/>						
All Access	<input type="radio"/>						
All Gov.com	<input type="radio"/>						
All Things Democrat	<input type="radio"/>						
All Voices.com	<input type="radio"/>						
Allen B West	<input type="radio"/>						
Alternnet	<input type="radio"/>						
America Blog	<input type="radio"/>						
America Online	<input type="radio"/>						
American Conservative	<input type="radio"/>						
American Progress	<input type="radio"/>						
American Thinker	<input type="radio"/>						
Americans Against the Tea Party	<input type="radio"/>						
Android Police	<input type="radio"/>						
AOL	<input type="radio"/>						
Associations Now	<input type="radio"/>						
Autostraddle	<input type="radio"/>						
Aviation International News	<input type="radio"/>						
Barracuda Brigade (Blog)	<input type="radio"/>						
Bilerico.com	<input type="radio"/>						
BizPac Review	<input type="radio"/>						
Black Press USA	<input type="radio"/>						
Blacksphere	<input type="radio"/>						
Blaze	<input type="radio"/>						
Blue Nation Review	<input type="radio"/>						
Breitbart	<input type="radio"/>						
BringMeTheNews.com	<input type="radio"/>						
Brookings	<input type="radio"/>						
Brown Political Review	<input type="radio"/>						
Business 2 Community	<input type="radio"/>						
Business Insider	<input type="radio"/>						
Business Journals	<input type="radio"/>						

Thank you!

05/09/2017, 12:31

Bustle	<input type="radio"/>						
BuzzFeed	<input type="radio"/>						
Casino Listings	<input type="radio"/>						
Chalkbeat	<input type="radio"/>						
Chimp Reports	<input type="radio"/>						
Clash Daily	<input type="radio"/>						
CNS News	<input type="radio"/>						
College Republican National Committee	<input type="radio"/>						
Comically Incorrect	<input type="radio"/>						
Communities Digital News	<input type="radio"/>						
Conservative Infidel	<input type="radio"/>						
Conservative News and Views	<input type="radio"/>						
Conservatives 4 Palin	<input type="radio"/>						
Counter Jihad Report	<input type="radio"/>						
Counterpunch.org	<input type="radio"/>						
Crooks and Liars	<input type="radio"/>						
Daily Caller	<input type="radio"/>						
Daily Dot	<input type="radio"/>						
Daily Kos	<input type="radio"/>						
Daily Signal	<input type="radio"/>						
Deadline	<input type="radio"/>						
Defense One	<input type="radio"/>						
Democracy Now	<input type="radio"/>						
Democrats (official website)	<input type="radio"/>						
Demos	<input type="radio"/>						
Digital Journal	<input type="radio"/>						
Diplomat	<input type="radio"/>						
Downtrend.com	<input type="radio"/>						
Eagle Rising	<input type="radio"/>						
Education Week	<input type="radio"/>						
Electa (Blog)	<input type="radio"/>						
Electronic Urban Report	<input type="radio"/>						
Epoch Times	<input type="radio"/>						
Eurasia Review	<input type="radio"/>						
Examiner.com	<input type="radio"/>						
ExecutiveGov	<input type="radio"/>						
Fact Check	<input type="radio"/>						
Federalist	<input type="radio"/>						
Fierce Health Payer	<input type="radio"/>						
FireAndreaMitchell.com	<input type="radio"/>						

Thank you!

05/09/2017, 12:31

Firedoglake	<input type="radio"/>						
Fiscal Times	<input type="radio"/>						
FiveThirtyEight	<input type="radio"/>						
Forward Progressives	<input type="radio"/>						
Freedom Outpost	<input type="radio"/>						
From the Trenches World Report	<input type="radio"/>						
Fusion	<input type="radio"/>						

19. If you would like to provide justification for any of your answers, please feel free to do so in the box below.

Professional Perspectives in US Internet News

Page 12

Internet Sources G-O

These are sources that are Internet natives. In other words, these are sources which have no traditional offline media presence.

20. On a scale from 1 to 7, where 1 is very liberal, 4 is unbiased, and 7 is very conservative, what is your perspective on the editorial bias of the following institutions? Please remember that you only need to provide answers to sources with which you are familiar.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Gallup	<input type="radio"/>						
Gateway Pundit	<input type="radio"/>						
Gawker	<input type="radio"/>						
Gay Patriot	<input type="radio"/>						
Global Post	<input type="radio"/>						
Global Practices	<input type="radio"/>						
Gnomes National News Service	<input type="radio"/>						
Godfather Politics	<input type="radio"/>						
Good Men Project	<input type="radio"/>						
GOP USA	<input type="radio"/>						
Governing.com	<input type="radio"/>						
Grist	<input type="radio"/>						
Guardian Liberty Voice	<input type="radio"/>						
Healthcare Informatics	<input type="radio"/>						
Heavy	<input type="radio"/>						

Thank you!

05/09/2017, 12:31

HNGN.com	<input type="radio"/>						
Hometown Source	<input type="radio"/>						
Hot Air	<input type="radio"/>						
Huffington Post	<input type="radio"/>						
Human Events	<input type="radio"/>						
Humor Outcasts	<input type="radio"/>						
i24 News	<input type="radio"/>						
Immigration Impact (American Immigration Council)	<input type="radio"/>						
Independent Journal Review	<input type="radio"/>						
Independent Voter Network	<input type="radio"/>						
Indian Country Today Media Network	<input type="radio"/>						
Inquirer.net	<input type="radio"/>						
Inquisitr	<input type="radio"/>						
Insight News	<input type="radio"/>						
Insurance News Net	<input type="radio"/>						
Inter Press News Service	<input type="radio"/>						
International Business Times	<input type="radio"/>						
International Liberty	<input type="radio"/>						
International Policy Digest	<input type="radio"/>						
Jewish Political News & Updates	<input type="radio"/>						
Jezebel	<input type="radio"/>						
Joe for America	<input type="radio"/>						
Joe. My. God.	<input type="radio"/>						
Jonathan Turley	<input type="radio"/>						
Journalists Resource	<input type="radio"/>						
Kaiser Health News	<input type="radio"/>						
Last Resistance	<input type="radio"/>						
Latin Post	<input type="radio"/>						
Legal Insurrection	<input type="radio"/>						
Liberal America	<input type="radio"/>						
Liberal Values Blog	<input type="radio"/>						
Liberaland	<input type="radio"/>						
Liberals Unite	<input type="radio"/>						
Liberty Unyielding	<input type="radio"/>						
Live Trading News	<input type="radio"/>						
Madame Noire	<input type="radio"/>						
Mashable	<input type="radio"/>						
Mass Device	<input type="radio"/>						

Thank you!

05/09/2017, 12:31

Media Bistro	<input type="radio"/>						
Media Matters	<input type="radio"/>						
Media Research Center	<input type="radio"/>						
Mediaite	<input type="radio"/>						
MediaPost	<input type="radio"/>						
Medicine Net	<input type="radio"/>						
Metal Miner	<input type="radio"/>						
Mic.com	<input type="radio"/>						
Mining Feeds	<input type="radio"/>						
Mining.com	<input type="radio"/>						
MintPress News	<input type="radio"/>						
Moderate Voice	<input type="radio"/>						
Morning Call	<input type="radio"/>						
Motley Fool	<input type="radio"/>						
Moyers & Company	<input type="radio"/>						
MSN.com	<input type="radio"/>						
Multichannel News	<input type="radio"/>						
My Next Fone	<input type="radio"/>						
mykeystrokes.com	<input type="radio"/>						
National Catholic Register	<input type="radio"/>						
National Republican Congressional Committee	<input type="radio"/>						
National Right to Life News	<input type="radio"/>						
New Civil Rights Movement	<input type="radio"/>						
News Busters	<input type="radio"/>						
News Corpse	<input type="radio"/>						
News is my Business	<input type="radio"/>						
News on News	<input type="radio"/>						
NewsBusters	<input type="radio"/>						
Newser	<input type="radio"/>						
NewsMax	<input type="radio"/>						
NewsWise	<input type="radio"/>						
Next Gov	<input type="radio"/>						
Niner Times	<input type="radio"/>						
NORML Blog	<input type="radio"/>						
On Politics	<input type="radio"/>						
Op-Ed News	<input type="radio"/>						
Open Democracy	<input type="radio"/>						
Open Secrets (Center for Responsive Politics)	<input type="radio"/>						
Outside the Beltway	<input type="radio"/>						

Thank you!

05/09/2017, 12:31

21. If you would like to provide justification for any of your answers, please feel free to do so in the box below.

Professional Perspectives in US Internet News

Page 13

Internet Sources P-Z

These are sources that are Internet natives. In other words, these are sources which have no traditional offline media presence.

22. On a scale from 1 to 7, where 1 is very liberal, 4 is unbiased, and 7 is very conservative, what is your perspective on the editorial bias of the following institutions? Please remember that you only need to provide answers to sources with which you are familiar.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Patriot Update	<input type="radio"/>						
People's Pundit Daily	<input type="radio"/>						
People's World	<input type="radio"/>						
Personal Liberty	<input type="radio"/>						
Petition 2 Congress	<input type="radio"/>						
Pew	<input type="radio"/>						
Pink News	<input type="radio"/>						
Pitch.com	<input type="radio"/>						
PJ Media	<input type="radio"/>						
Policy.Mic	<input type="radio"/>						
Political Outcast	<input type="radio"/>						
Politico	<input type="radio"/>						
Politics Cheat Sheet	<input type="radio"/>						
PoliticusUSA	<input type="radio"/>						
Politifact	<input type="radio"/>						
Poltiico	<input type="radio"/>						
Porridge	<input type="radio"/>						
Power Line	<input type="radio"/>						
PR Newswire	<input type="radio"/>						
Public Integrity	<input type="radio"/>						
Public News Service	<input type="radio"/>						
Queerty	<input type="radio"/>						
Rare	<input type="radio"/>						
Raw Story	<input type="radio"/>						

Thank you!

05/09/2017, 12:31

Real Clear Poltiics	<input type="radio"/>						
Real Screen	<input type="radio"/>						
Reason.com	<input type="radio"/>						
Red Alert Politics	<input type="radio"/>						
Red State	<input type="radio"/>						
Religion News Service	<input type="radio"/>						
Restoring Liberty	<input type="radio"/>						
Right Scoop	<input type="radio"/>						
Right Wing News	<input type="radio"/>						
Right Wing Watch	<input type="radio"/>						
Ring Of Fire	<input type="radio"/>						
Robin's Post	<input type="radio"/>						
Roll Call	<input type="radio"/>						
Salon	<input type="radio"/>						
Say Anything Blog	<input type="radio"/>						
SB Nation	<input type="radio"/>						
Seeking Alpha	<input type="radio"/>						
Service Employees International Union Blog	<input type="radio"/>						
SGT Report.com	<input type="radio"/>						
Sikh Net	<input type="radio"/>						
Slate	<input type="radio"/>						
Space News	<input type="radio"/>						
Speaker.gov	<input type="radio"/>						
Sunlight Foundation	<input type="radio"/>						
Take Part	<input type="radio"/>						
Talking Points Memo	<input type="radio"/>						
Tea Party News Network	<input type="radio"/>						
Tea Party Patriots	<input type="radio"/>						
Tech Cocktail	<input type="radio"/>						
Tech Republic	<input type="radio"/>						
Tele Sur	<input type="radio"/>						
The American Interest	<input type="radio"/>						
The Blaze	<input type="radio"/>						
Daily Beast	<input type="radio"/>						
Dissenter	<input type="radio"/>						
Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation	<input type="radio"/>						
The Hill	<input type="radio"/>						
The Hindu	<input type="radio"/>						
The Locker Room (John Lock Foundation)	<input type="radio"/>						
The Right Scoop	<input type="radio"/>						

Thank you!

05/09/2017, 12:31

The Root	<input type="radio"/>						
The Wire	<input type="radio"/>						
Think Progress	<input type="radio"/>						
Thompson Hall	<input type="radio"/>						
Tom O'Halloran	<input type="radio"/>						
Town Hall	<input type="radio"/>						
Town Talk	<input type="radio"/>						
Truth Dig	<input type="radio"/>						
Twitchy	<input type="radio"/>						
Uloop	<input type="radio"/>						
United Liberty	<input type="radio"/>						
United Nations News Centre	<input type="radio"/>						
United Nations Watch	<input type="radio"/>						
United Press International	<input type="radio"/>						
Universal Free Press	<input type="radio"/>						
USA News	<input type="radio"/>						
Value Walk	<input type="radio"/>						
Voice of America	<input type="radio"/>						
Vox	<input type="radio"/>						
Voxxi	<input type="radio"/>						
Wall Street Cheat Sheet	<input type="radio"/>						
Washingtons Blog	<input type="radio"/>						
Watchdog.org	<input type="radio"/>						
Weasel Zippers	<input type="radio"/>						
Western Journalism (Blog)	<input type="radio"/>						
World	<input type="radio"/>						
World Net Daily	<input type="radio"/>						
World Socialist Web Site	<input type="radio"/>						
Yahoo! News	<input type="radio"/>						

23. If you would like to provide justification for any of your answers, please feel free to do so in the box below.

Professional Perspectives in US Internet News

Professional Perspectives in UK Internet News

Page 17

Thank You!

Thank you for completing this survey! It is my hope that while the questions may have been repetitive, your experience completing them has been thought provoking.

Your responses will used to better understand how the Internet is changing the ideological balance of political discourse in the United Kingdom and the United States.

30. If you would like to enter a draw to win one of four (4) Amazon vouchers valued at £20/\$30 each, or if you would like to be contacted via email regarding the results of this research project, please tick the appropriate choices below.

 Enter prize draw Contact me with results

31. If you ticked either of the boxes above, please enter your email address in the box below.

32. Please enter the news organisation or academic institution that you are associated with.

This information is used to prevent duplicate responses, and to ensure that the results are representative of the entire media landscape, and not just one or a few news organisations. Your email address will also be used to contact you if you tick either of the choices below.

News

Organisation

Professional Perspectives in US Internet News

Page 1

Participant Information Sheet

University of Manchester
School of Social Sciences
Participant Information Sheet

What is the title of the research?

"Is Internet News a Converged Space? An Historical Institutional Exploration of Media System Convergence in the Internet Age"

Who will conduct the research?

Evan Vellis, PhD Researcher, University of Manchester

What is the aim of the research?

The aim of the research is to gain a better understanding of the contemporary news environment of the United States and the United Kingdom through quantitative analysis. This includes a survey of media experts to identify the editorial perspectives of online news sources.

Why have I been chosen?

You have been chosen because of your professional experience regarding the news media.

What would I be asked to do if I took part?

To take part, you will complete a survey that asks you about your opinion on the editorial perspectives of a number of news sources.

What happens to the data collected?

The data collected will be compiled and stored confidentially. All data (including personal data) will be stored in a password-protected file which can only be accessed by the investigator, Evan Vellis, and his supervisors, Dr. Peter Humphreys and Dr. Andrew Russell. Survey responses will not be analysed or stored with the personal data, and personal data will not be held longer than necessary in accordance with the ethical guidelines set out by the University of Manchester Faculty of Humanities and School of Social Sciences. Survey responses will be used strictly for academic purposes, and your personal details will never be published. Academic use of your responses includes publication in academic journals, conference presentations, and the completion and potential publication of the entire thesis project. If you do not agree with how your responses and personal data will be used or stored, please do not take the survey or contact the investigator at the email address provided below.

What happens if I do not want to take part or if I change my mind?

Participation in this survey is entirely voluntary. If for any reason you would like your responses to be amended or removed from the database, you can submit a request to the researcher via email to the address provided below.

Will I be paid for participating in the research?

Successful completion of the survey enters the participant in a draw to win one of four (4) Amazon e-vouchers, valued at \$30 if you are in the US or £20 if you are in the United Kingdom.

What benefit might this research be to me or other subjects of the research?

The completed research project will inform participants of their own institution's editorial perspective, as determined by their peers.

If there are any problems with the survey or questions about the research project, please contact the investigator directly at evan.vellis@manchester.ac.uk, or by post at the following address:

Evan Vellis
4th Floor, Arthur Lewis Building
University of Manchester

Thank you!

05/09/2017, 12:31

Oxford Road
Manchester
M13 9PL

Professional Perspectives in US Internet News

Page 2

Select a Region

- Please choose the regions that contain publications that you are familiar with. If you are a media professional and your publication is not based in any particular region, please choose any regions that contain publications that you are familiar with. Only choose 'International' if your publication has no office in the United States, or if you are not based in the United States and have never encountered any regional journalism in the United States.*

You must select at least one answer to continue the survey.

- Northeast (ME, VT, NH, MA, RI, CT, NY, NJ, PA)
- Southeast (DE, MD, VA, WV, NC, SC, GA, FL)
- Great Lakes (OH, IN, MI, IL, WI, MN, IA, ND, SD)
- Mississippi Valley (KY, TN, AL, MS, LA, AK, MS)
- Central (WY, CO, NM, TX, OK, KS, NE)
- West (MO, ID, UT, NV, AZ, CA, OR, WA, AK, HI)

Professional Perspectives in US Internet News

Page 3

Northeast

These are online news sources that are based in the Northeast United States. This includes all sources from Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Connecticut, New York, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania.

- On a scale from 1 to 7, where 1 is very liberal, 4 is unbiased, and 7 is very conservative, what is your perspective on the editorial bias of the following institutions? Please remember that you only need to provide answers to sources with which you are familiar.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Albany Times-Union	<input type="radio"/>						
Asbury Park Press (Asbury Park, NJ)	<input type="radio"/>						
Atlantic Highlands Herald (NJ)	<input type="radio"/>						
Baltimore Sun	<input type="radio"/>						
Bangor Daily News (Maine)	<input type="radio"/>						
Bedford Patch	<input type="radio"/>						
Boston Globe	<input type="radio"/>						
Boston Herald	<input type="radio"/>						

Thank you!

05/09/2017, 12:31

Boston.com (Boston Globe Media Partners)	<input type="radio"/>						
Buffalo News	<input type="radio"/>						
Burlington Free Press (Vermont)	<input type="radio"/>						
Camel City Dispatch (Winston-Salem, Mass)	<input type="radio"/>						
Chappaqua-Mount Kisco Patch	<input type="radio"/>						
Coastal Point	<input type="radio"/>						
Courant (Connecticut)	<input type="radio"/>						
Daily Princetonian (New Jersey)	<input type="radio"/>						
Daily Record (NJ)	<input type="radio"/>						
Eagle-Tribune (Andover, Massachusetts)	<input type="radio"/>						
Go Local Providence (Rhode Island)	<input type="radio"/>						
Harford Courant	<input type="radio"/>						
Harvard Politics	<input type="radio"/>						
Herald-Standard (Pennsylvania)	<input type="radio"/>						
Maine Sun-Journal	<input type="radio"/>						
Mass Live (The Republican, Massachusetts Newspaper)	<input type="radio"/>						
Massachusetts Live	<input type="radio"/>						
Montgomery Media (Pennsylvania)	<input type="radio"/>						
New England Cable News	<input type="radio"/>						
New England Public Radio	<input type="radio"/>						
New Haven Register	<input type="radio"/>						
New London Patch	<input type="radio"/>						
New Pittsburgh Courier	<input type="radio"/>						
New York Daily News	<input type="radio"/>						
New York Magazine	<input type="radio"/>						
New York Observer	<input type="radio"/>						
New York Post	<input type="radio"/>						
New Yorker	<input type="radio"/>						
News @ Wesleyan University (Connecticut)	<input type="radio"/>						
NJ.com (Star Ledger)	<input type="radio"/>						
NYU Local	<input type="radio"/>						
PA Pundits	<input type="radio"/>						
Philadelphia Inquirer (Philly.com)	<input type="radio"/>						
Philadelphia Tribune	<input type="radio"/>						

Thank you!

05/09/2017, 12:31

Pittsburgh Post-Gazette	<input type="radio"/>						
Politicker NJ	<input type="radio"/>						
Politics PA	<input type="radio"/>						
Portland Press-Herald (Maine)	<input type="radio"/>						
Press-Herald (Portland, Maine)	<input type="radio"/>						
Reading Eagle (Pennsylvania)	<input type="radio"/>						
Republican-American (Waterbury, CT)	<input type="radio"/>						
SI Live (Staten Island Advance)	<input type="radio"/>						
Stamford Daily Voice	<input type="radio"/>						
Swarthmore College Daily Gazette (Swarthmore, PA)	<input type="radio"/>						
Syracuse.com (Post-Standard)	<input type="radio"/>						
Tarrytown-Sleepy Hollow Patch	<input type="radio"/>						
The Boston Globe	<input type="radio"/>						
The Brooklyn Reader	<input type="radio"/>						
Daily Gazette (Schenectady, NY)	<input type="radio"/>						
Daily Pennsylvanian	<input type="radio"/>						
The Star Ledger (New Jersey)	<input type="radio"/>						
The Trentonian (NJ)	<input type="radio"/>						
Times-Union (Albany, NY)	<input type="radio"/>						
Titusville Herald (PA)	<input type="radio"/>						
Pittsburgh Tribune-Review	<input type="radio"/>						
Uniontown Herald-Standard	<input type="radio"/>						

3. If you would like to provide justification for any of your answers, please feel free to do so in the box below.

Professional Perspectives in US Internet News

Southeast

Thank you!

05/09/2017, 12:31

These are online news sources that are based in the Southeast United States. This includes news all sources from Delaware, Maryland, Virginia, West Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, and Florida. It also includes Washington D.C. local news.

4. On a scale from 1 to 7, where 1 is very liberal, 4 is unbiased, and 7 is very conservative, what is your perspective on the editorial bias of the following institutions? Please remember that you only need to provide answers to sources with which you are familiar.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Asheville Citizen-Times	<input type="radio"/>						
Athens Banner-Herald (Georgia)	<input type="radio"/>						
Atlanta Business Chronicle	<input type="radio"/>						
Atlanta Daily World	<input type="radio"/>						
Atlanta Journal Courier	<input type="radio"/>						
Atlanta Journal-Constitution	<input type="radio"/>						
Augusta Chronicle	<input type="radio"/>						
Augusta Free Press (Virginia)	<input type="radio"/>						
Bradenton Herald (FL)	<input type="radio"/>						
Central Florida Future	<input type="radio"/>						
Charleston Daily Mail	<input type="radio"/>						
Charlotte Observer	<input type="radio"/>						
Charlotte Post	<input type="radio"/>						
Chronicle-Independent (Camden, SC)	<input type="radio"/>						
Citizen-Times (Asheville, NC)	<input type="radio"/>						
Columbia Tribune	<input type="radio"/>						
Creative Loafing (Tampa Bay)	<input type="radio"/>						
Daily Progress (Virginia)	<input type="radio"/>						
Daily Tar Heel (North Carolina)	<input type="radio"/>						
Diamondback Online (Univ. of Maryland)	<input type="radio"/>						
Duke Chronicle	<input type="radio"/>						
Eagle (American University)	<input type="radio"/>						
Fishbowl DC	<input type="radio"/>						
FIUSM (Florida International University)	<input type="radio"/>						
FlaglerLive.com	<input type="radio"/>						
Florida Today	<input type="radio"/>						
Greene County Democrat (Alabama)	<input type="radio"/>						
Gwinnett Daily Post (Georgia)	<input type="radio"/>						
Hatchet (George Washington University)	<input type="radio"/>						
Herald Online (South	<input type="radio"/>						

Thank you!

05/09/2017, 12:31

Carolina)	<input type="radio"/>						
High Point Enterprise (North Carolina)	<input type="radio"/>						
Ledger-Enquirer (Columbus, GA)	<input type="radio"/>						
Macon Telegraph (Georgia)	<input type="radio"/>						
McClatchy DC	<input type="radio"/>						
Miami Herald	<input type="radio"/>						
Miami Sun-Herald	<input type="radio"/>						
Montgomery Advertiser	<input type="radio"/>						
Moultrie Observer (Georgia)	<input type="radio"/>						
My News 13 (Orlando, FL)	<input type="radio"/>						
News & Observer (North Carolina)	<input type="radio"/>						
News & Record (North Carolina)	<input type="radio"/>						
News 4 (Jacksonville, FL)	<input type="radio"/>						
News-Observer (NC)	<input type="radio"/>						
News-Press (Fort Myers, FL)	<input type="radio"/>						
NewsPlex (Charlottesville, Va)	<input type="radio"/>						
Panama City News Herald (Florida)	<input type="radio"/>						
PennLive (Pennsylvania Patriot News)	<input type="radio"/>						
Pennsylvania Patriot-News	<input type="radio"/>						
Post and Courier (South Carolina)	<input type="radio"/>						
Post-Crescent (Wisconsin)	<input type="radio"/>						
Richmond Times-Dispatch	<input type="radio"/>						
Sarasota Herald-Tribune	<input type="radio"/>						
Savannah Now (Savannah Morning Post)	<input type="radio"/>						
Space Coast Daily	<input type="radio"/>						
St Petersburg	<input type="radio"/>						
Stanly News and Press (North Carolina)	<input type="radio"/>						
Star-Democrat (Maryland)	<input type="radio"/>						
State (South Carolina)	<input type="radio"/>						
Statesman-Journal (South Carolina)	<input type="radio"/>						
Sun Herald (Gulfport, MS)	<input type="radio"/>						
Sun-Sentinel	<input type="radio"/>						

Thank you!

05/09/2017, 12:31

Tallahassee Democrat	<input type="radio"/>						
GW Hatchet (George Washington University)	<input type="radio"/>						
Times-News (NC)	<input type="radio"/>						
Univ. of Virginia Center for Politics	<input type="radio"/>						
University of Alabama News	<input type="radio"/>						
Washington City Paper	<input type="radio"/>						
Washington Monthly	<input type="radio"/>						
WSB Radio (Atlanta)	<input type="radio"/>						

5. If you would like to provide justification for any of your answers, please feel free to do so in the box below.

Professional Perspectives in US Internet News

Page 5

Great Lakes

These are online news sources that are based in the Northeast United States. This includes all sources from Ohio, Indiana, Michigan, Illinois, Wisconsin, Minnesota, Iowa, North Dakota, and South Dakota.

6. On a scale from 1 to 7, where 1 is very liberal, 4 is unbiased, and 7 is very conservative, what is your perspective on the editorial bias of the following institutions? Please remember that you only need to provide answers to sources with which you are familiar.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Argus Leader (Sioux Falls, SD)	<input type="radio"/>						
Bemidji Pioneer (MN)	<input type="radio"/>						
Chicago Sun-Times	<input type="radio"/>						
Chicago Tribune	<input type="radio"/>						
Cincinnati.com	<input type="radio"/>						
Cleveland.com (Plain Dealer)	<input type="radio"/>						
Columbus CEO	<input type="radio"/>						
Columbus Dispatch (Ohio)	<input type="radio"/>						
Daily Chronicle (Illinois)	<input type="radio"/>						
Daily Iowan	<input type="radio"/>						
DePaulia (De Paul University, Chicago, IL)	<input type="radio"/>						
Des Moines Register	<input type="radio"/>						

Thank you!

05/09/2017, 12:31

Detroit Free Press	<input type="radio"/>						
Detroit News	<input type="radio"/>						
Font du Lac Reporter (Wisconsin)	<input type="radio"/>						
Frost Illustrated	<input type="radio"/>						
Green Bay Press- Gazette (Wisconsin)	<input type="radio"/>						
Herald-News (Illinois)	<input type="radio"/>						
Illinois Review	<input type="radio"/>						
IndyStar (Indianapolis Star)	<input type="radio"/>						
Iowa City Press-Citizen	<input type="radio"/>						
Iowa Republican	<input type="radio"/>						
Iowa State Daily	<input type="radio"/>						
Journal Review (Indiana)	<input type="radio"/>						
Keloland Television (South Dakota)	<input type="radio"/>						
Lafayette Journal & Courier (Indiana)	<input type="radio"/>						
Local News 8 (Iowa)	<input type="radio"/>						
Macomb Daily (Mount Clemens, Michigan)	<input type="radio"/>						
Madison.com	<input type="radio"/>						
Marion Star (Ohio)	<input type="radio"/>						
Michigan Daily	<input type="radio"/>						
Michigan Live	<input type="radio"/>						
Michigan Radio (National Public Radio Affiliate)	<input type="radio"/>						
Milwaukee Business Journal	<input type="radio"/>						
Milwaukee Journal- Sentinel	<input type="radio"/>						
Minnesota Daily	<input type="radio"/>						
Minnesota Post	<input type="radio"/>						
Minnesota Public Radio	<input type="radio"/>						
MPR News (Minnesota)	<input type="radio"/>						
Newton Daily News (Iowa)	<input type="radio"/>						
Observer (Notre Dame & St. Mary's)	<input type="radio"/>						
On Milwaukee	<input type="radio"/>						
Port Huron Times-Herald (Michigan)	<input type="radio"/>						
Press Citizen (Iowa City)	<input type="radio"/>						
Progress Illinois	<input type="radio"/>						
Quad City Times (IA/IL)	<input type="radio"/>						
Sauk Valley Telegraph/Daily Gazette (Illinois)	<input type="radio"/>						

Thank you!

05/09/2017, 12:31

Sioux City Journal	<input type="radio"/>						
South Bend Tribune	<input type="radio"/>						
Star Tribune (Minneapolis, MN)	<input type="radio"/>						
State Journal-Register (Illinois)	<input type="radio"/>						
Toledo Blade (OH)	<input type="radio"/>						
Wausau Daily Herald (WI)	<input type="radio"/>						
West Virginia Gazette- Mail	<input type="radio"/>						
Windy City Times	<input type="radio"/>						
Wisconsin News	<input type="radio"/>						
Wisconsin State-Journal	<input type="radio"/>						
Zanesville Times- Recorder (Ohio)	<input type="radio"/>						

7. If you would like to provide justification for any of your answers, please feel free to do so in the box below.

Professional Perspectives in US Internet News

Page 6

Mississippi Valley

These are online news sources that are based in the Northeast United States. This includes all sources from Kentucky, Tennessee, Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana, Arkansas, and Missouri.

8. On a scale from 1 to 7, where 1 is very liberal, 4 is unbiased, and 7 is very conservative, what is your perspective on the editorial bias of the following institutions? Please remember that you only need to provide answers to sources with which you are familiar.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Advertiser (LA)	<input type="radio"/>						
Advocate (Baton Rouge)	<input type="radio"/>						
AL.com (Birmingham News)	<input type="radio"/>						
Arkansas Times	<input type="radio"/>						
Baxter Bulletin (Arkansas)	<input type="radio"/>						
Clarion Ledger (Jackson, MS)	<input type="radio"/>						
Commercial Appeal (Memphis)	<input type="radio"/>						
Courier-Journal (Kentucky)	<input type="radio"/>						

Thank you!

05/09/2017, 12:31

Daily News Journal (Tennessee)	<input type="radio"/>						
Daily Reveille (Louisiana State University)	<input type="radio"/>						
Fort Smith Times-Record (Arkansas)	<input type="radio"/>						
Kansas City Star	<input type="radio"/>						
Kansas Health Institute	<input type="radio"/>						
Kentucky.com (Lexington Herald-Ledger)	<input type="radio"/>						
Kingsport Times-News (Tennessee)	<input type="radio"/>						
Louisiana Weekly	<input type="radio"/>						
Memphis Daily News	<input type="radio"/>						
Missouri Times	<input type="radio"/>						
Nola.com (New Orleans Times-Picayune)	<input type="radio"/>						
Shreveport Times	<input type="radio"/>						
St Louis Post-Dispatch	<input type="radio"/>						
St Louis Riverfront Times	<input type="radio"/>						
State Journal (Frankfort, KY)	<input type="radio"/>						
SW Times Record (Arkansas)	<input type="radio"/>						
Tennessean.com	<input type="radio"/>						
The Town Talk (Alexandria, LA)	<input type="radio"/>						
Times-Record (Fort Smith, AS)	<input type="radio"/>						

9. If you would like to provide justification for any of your answers, please feel free to do so in the box below.

Professional Perspectives in US Internet News

Page 7

Central

These are online news sources based in the Central United States. This includes all sources from Texas, Oklahoma, Kansas, Nebraska, Wyoming, Colorado, and New Mexico.

10. On a scale from 1 to 7, where 1 is very liberal, 4 is unbiased, and 7 is very conservative, what is your perspective on the editorial bias of the following institutions? Please remember that you only need to provide answers to sources with which you are familiar.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Thank you!

05/09/2017, 12:31

Amarillo Globe-News	<input type="radio"/>						
Colorado Independent	<input type="radio"/>						
Colorado Springs Gazette	<input type="radio"/>						
CU Independent (Boulder, CO)	<input type="radio"/>						
Daily Texan (University of Texas, Austin)	<input type="radio"/>						
Dallas Morning News	<input type="radio"/>						
Denver Post	<input type="radio"/>						
Durango Herald	<input type="radio"/>						
El Paso Inc.	<input type="radio"/>						
Fort Hays State University Leader (Kansas)	<input type="radio"/>						
Gilmer Mirror	<input type="radio"/>						
Hays Post (Fort Hays, KS)	<input type="radio"/>						
Houston Chronicle	<input type="radio"/>						
Houston Forward-Times	<input type="radio"/>						
Hutchinson News (Kansas)	<input type="radio"/>						
Journal-Star (Lincoln, NE)	<input type="radio"/>						
KERA North Texas Public Radio	<input type="radio"/>						
Killeen Daily Herald (Texas)	<input type="radio"/>						
Lawrence Journal-World (Kansas)	<input type="radio"/>						
Lubbock Avalanche-Journal (Texas)	<input type="radio"/>						
My San Antonio (Express News)	<input type="radio"/>						
News OK (Oakhoma)	<input type="radio"/>						
News-Journal (Longview, TX)	<input type="radio"/>						
Oklahoman	<input type="radio"/>						
Star-Telegram (Texas)	<input type="radio"/>						
Texas Insider	<input type="radio"/>						
Texas Tribune	<input type="radio"/>						
The Monitor (South Texas)	<input type="radio"/>						
Waco Tribune	<input type="radio"/>						

11. If you would like to provide justification for any of your answers, please feel free to do so in the box below.

Thank you!

05/09/2017, 12:31

Professional Perspectives in US Internet News

Page 8

West

These are online news sources based in the Western United States. This includes all sources from California, Arizona, Nevada, Utah, Idaho, Montana, Washington, Oregon, Alaska, and Hawaii.

12. On a scale from 1 to 7, where 1 is very liberal, 4 is unbiased, and 7 is very conservative, what is your perspective the editorial bias of the following institutions? Please remember that you only need to provide answers to sources with which you are familiar.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
43rd State Blues (Idaho)	<input type="radio"/>						
Alaska Daily News	<input type="radio"/>						
Alaska Dispatch News	<input type="radio"/>						
Alaska Public Media	<input type="radio"/>						
Arizona Capital Times	<input type="radio"/>						
Arizona Jewish Post	<input type="radio"/>						
Arizona Republic	<input type="radio"/>						
AZ Central (12 news & Arizona Republic)	<input type="radio"/>						
Berkeley Daily Planet	<input type="radio"/>						
Cache Valley Daily	<input type="radio"/>						
Daily Trojan (University of Southern California)	<input type="radio"/>						
Deseret News (Utah)	<input type="radio"/>						
Desert Sun	<input type="radio"/>						
Digital Universe (Brigham Young University, Utah)	<input type="radio"/>						
Fresno Bee	<input type="radio"/>						
Great Falls Tribune (Montana)	<input type="radio"/>						
Idaho Statesman	<input type="radio"/>						
Imperial Valley Press (California)	<input type="radio"/>						
LA Progressive	<input type="radio"/>						
La Voz (Phoenix, AZ)	<input type="radio"/>						
Las Vegas Review-Journal	<input type="radio"/>						
Las Vegas Sun	<input type="radio"/>						

Thank you!

05/09/2017, 12:31

Los Angeles Sentinel	<input type="radio"/>						
Los Angeles Times	<input type="radio"/>						
Magic Valley Times-News (Idaho)	<input type="radio"/>						
Mail Tribune (Oregon)	<input type="radio"/>						
Merced Sun-Star (California)	<input type="radio"/>						
Missoulian (Montana)	<input type="radio"/>						
Modesto Bee (California)	<input type="radio"/>						
My Central Oregon	<input type="radio"/>						
Nevada Appeal	<input type="radio"/>						
News-Tribune (Washington)	<input type="radio"/>						
Oregon Live (the Oregonian)	<input type="radio"/>						
Oregon Statesman-Journal	<input type="radio"/>						
Pacific Standard	<input type="radio"/>						
Press-Enterprise (Riverside County, California)	<input type="radio"/>						
Reno Gazette-Journal	<input type="radio"/>						
Sacramento Bee	<input type="radio"/>						
Salt Lake Tribune (Utah)	<input type="radio"/>						
San Angelo Standard-Times	<input type="radio"/>						
San Antonio Express-News	<input type="radio"/>						
San Diego Union-Tribune	<input type="radio"/>						
San Luis Obispo Tribune (CA)	<input type="radio"/>						
Seattle Met	<input type="radio"/>						
Seattle PI	<input type="radio"/>						
Seattle Times	<input type="radio"/>						
SF Gate (San Francisco Chronicle)	<input type="radio"/>						
Sierra Sun-Times	<input type="radio"/>						
Spokesman-Review (Spokane, WA)	<input type="radio"/>						
St Luis Obispo Tribune (California)	<input type="radio"/>						
Standard-Examiner (Utah)	<input type="radio"/>						
Stanford Daily (Stanford University)	<input type="radio"/>						
Stanford Review	<input type="radio"/>						
State Press (Tempe, AZ)	<input type="radio"/>						
Statesman-Journal (Oregon)	<input type="radio"/>						
Bellingham Herald	<input type="radio"/>						

Thank you!

05/09/2017, 12:31

(Washington)							
The Californian	<input type="radio"/>						
Daily Wildcat (Uni. Of Arizona)	<input type="radio"/>						
The Signpost (Weber State University, Utah)	<input type="radio"/>						
The Spectrum (Utah)	<input type="radio"/>						
The Spokesman-Review (Spokane, WA)	<input type="radio"/>						
Tri-City Herald (WA)	<input type="radio"/>						
Tucson Weekly	<input type="radio"/>						
Tuscon.com (Arizona Daily Star)	<input type="radio"/>						
UT San Diego	<input type="radio"/>						
Ventura County Star	<input type="radio"/>						
Yakima Herald (Washington)	<input type="radio"/>						

13. If you would like to provide justification for any of your answers, please feel free to do so in the box below.

Professional Perspectives in US Internet News

Page 9

International Sources

These are online sources based outside the United States which provide news coverage of American Politics. This includes all sources which originate outside the 50 U.S. States. For the purposes of this survey, U.S. Territories (such as Puerto Rico and Guam) are treated as international sources.

14. On a scale from 1 to 7, where 1 is very liberal, 4 is unbiased, and 7 is very conservative, what is your perspective on the editorial bias of the following institutions? Please remember that you only need to provide answers to sources with which you are familiar.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
5 News (UK)	<input type="radio"/>						
9 News (Australia)	<input type="radio"/>						
ABC News (Australia)	<input type="radio"/>						
Al Arabiya	<input type="radio"/>						
Al Bawaba	<input type="radio"/>						
Al Jazeera	<input type="radio"/>						
All Africa	<input type="radio"/>						
American Politics and Policy Blog (London)	<input type="radio"/>						

Thank you!

05/09/2017, 12:31

School of Economics)							
APB Live (India)	<input type="radio"/>						
Asian Lite	<input type="radio"/>						
BBC News (UK)	<input type="radio"/>						
BD Live (South Africa)	<input type="radio"/>						
Brisbane Times	<input type="radio"/>						
Business Mirror (Philippines)	<input type="radio"/>						
Business Spectator (Australia)	<input type="radio"/>						
Canada Free Press	<input type="radio"/>						
Canada.com	<input type="radio"/>						
CBC (Canada)	<input type="radio"/>						
Channel News Asia	<input type="radio"/>						
China Topix	<input type="radio"/>						
China.org	<input type="radio"/>						
Columbian	<input type="radio"/>						
CTV News (Canada)	<input type="radio"/>						
Daily Mail (UK)	<input type="radio"/>						
Daily Mirror (UK)	<input type="radio"/>						
Daily Post (Nigeria)	<input type="radio"/>						
Daily Telegraph (UK)	<input type="radio"/>						
Dawn (Pakistan)	<input type="radio"/>						
Durham Region	<input type="radio"/>						
Dw.de	<input type="radio"/>						
Economic Times (India)	<input type="radio"/>						
Economist	<input type="radio"/>						
eNews Channel Africa	<input type="radio"/>						
Euronews	<input type="radio"/>						
Express Tribune (India)	<input type="radio"/>						
Financial Post (Canada)	<input type="radio"/>						
Financial Review (Australia)	<input type="radio"/>						
Financial Times (UK)	<input type="radio"/>						
First Post India	<input type="radio"/>						
Globe and Mail (Canada)	<input type="radio"/>						
Guardian (Trinidad & Tobago)	<input type="radio"/>						
Guardian (UK)	<input type="radio"/>						
Haaretz	<input type="radio"/>						
Independent (UK)	<input type="radio"/>						
Iraqi Dinar	<input type="radio"/>						
Irish Times	<input type="radio"/>						
Israel National News	<input type="radio"/>						

Thank you!

05/09/2017, 12:31

ITV	<input type="radio"/>						
ITV News India	<input type="radio"/>						
Japan Times	<input type="radio"/>						
Japan Today	<input type="radio"/>						
Jerusalem Post (Israel)	<input type="radio"/>						
Malay Mail	<input type="radio"/>						
Nation (Pakistan)	<input type="radio"/>						
National Post (Canada)	<input type="radio"/>						
New Zealand Herald	<input type="radio"/>						
News.com.au (Australia)	<input type="radio"/>						
NVO News (India)	<input type="radio"/>						
Press TV (Iran)	<input type="radio"/>						
Rabble (Canada)	<input type="radio"/>						
Ria Novosti (Russia)	<input type="radio"/>						
Russia Today	<input type="radio"/>						
St Catherines Standard (Canada)	<input type="radio"/>						
Sydney Morning Herald (Australia)	<input type="radio"/>						
Telegraph (UK)	<input type="radio"/>						
The Perspective (Liberia)	<input type="radio"/>						
The Star (Toronto, Canada)	<input type="radio"/>						
The Zimbabwean	<input type="radio"/>						
Tico Times (Costa Rica)	<input type="radio"/>						
Times Colonist (Canada)	<input type="radio"/>						
UK Progressive	<input type="radio"/>						
World Bulletin (Turkey)	<input type="radio"/>						
Yeshiva World News	<input type="radio"/>						
Zee News (India)	<input type="radio"/>						

15. If you would like to provide justification for any of your answers, please feel free to do so in the box below.

Professional Perspectives in US Internet News

National Press

Thank you!

05/09/2017, 12:31

These are online news sources based in the United States that either have no regional basis, or have a national readership. For example, the New York Times, The Wall Street Journal, and the Washington Post are included in this category alongside other non-regional sources like PBS and USA Today.

16. On a scale from 1 to 7, where 1 is very liberal, 4 is unbiased, and 7 is very conservative, what is your perspective on the editorial bias of the following institutions? Please remember that you only need to provide answers to sources with which you are familiar.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
ABC News	<input type="radio"/>						
Associated Press	<input type="radio"/>						
Atlantic	<input type="radio"/>						
Barrons	<input type="radio"/>						
Bloomberg	<input type="radio"/>						
C-Span	<input type="radio"/>						
CBS News	<input type="radio"/>						
Channel Guide Magazine	<input type="radio"/>						
Christian Post	<input type="radio"/>						
Christian Science Monitor	<input type="radio"/>						
Christian Times	<input type="radio"/>						
CNBC	<input type="radio"/>						
CNN	<input type="radio"/>						
Commentary Magazine	<input type="radio"/>						
Complex	<input type="radio"/>						
Equities.com	<input type="radio"/>						
Esquire	<input type="radio"/>						
Essence	<input type="radio"/>						
Forbes	<input type="radio"/>						
Foreign Policy	<input type="radio"/>						
Fortune	<input type="radio"/>						
Fox Business	<input type="radio"/>						
Fox News	<input type="radio"/>						
Government Executive	<input type="radio"/>						
In These Times	<input type="radio"/>						
Investor's Business Daily	<input type="radio"/>						
Jewish Telegraphic Agency	<input type="radio"/>						
MarketWatch (Wall Street Journal)	<input type="radio"/>						
Mother Jones	<input type="radio"/>						
MSNBC	<input type="radio"/>						
Nation	<input type="radio"/>						
National Journal	<input type="radio"/>						
National Public Radio	<input type="radio"/>						
National Review	<input type="radio"/>						
NBC News	<input type="radio"/>						

Thank you!

05/09/2017, 12:31

New American	<input type="radio"/>						
New Republic	<input type="radio"/>						
New York Times	<input type="radio"/>						
Newsweek	<input type="radio"/>						
NPR	<input type="radio"/>						
PBS	<input type="radio"/>						
Reuters	<input type="radio"/>						
Rush Limbaugh	<input type="radio"/>						
The American Prospect	<input type="radio"/>						
The Atlantic	<input type="radio"/>						
The Wall Street Journal	<input type="radio"/>						
The Washington Post	<input type="radio"/>						
The Washington Times	<input type="radio"/>						
The Week	<input type="radio"/>						
The Weekly Standard	<input type="radio"/>						
Time	<input type="radio"/>						
Time Warner Cable News	<input type="radio"/>						
U.S. News & World Report	<input type="radio"/>						
USA Today	<input type="radio"/>						
Vice News	<input type="radio"/>						
Wall Street Journal	<input type="radio"/>						
Washington Examiner	<input type="radio"/>						
Washington Free Beacon	<input type="radio"/>						
Washington Post	<input type="radio"/>						
Washington Times	<input type="radio"/>						
WGN	<input type="radio"/>						

17. If you would like to provide justification for any of your answers, please feel free to do so in the box below.

Professional Perspectives in US Internet News

Page 11

Internet Sources A-F

These are sources that are Internet natives. In other words, these are sources which have no traditional offline

Thank you!

05/09/2017, 12:31

media presence.

18. On a scale from 1 to 7, where 1 is very liberal, 4 is unbiased, and 7 is very conservative, what is your perspective on the editorial bias of the following institutions? Please remember that you only need to provide answers to sources with which you are familiar.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
AARP Blog	<input type="radio"/>						
About.com	<input type="radio"/>						
Accounting Web	<input type="radio"/>						
Addicting Info	<input type="radio"/>						
AL Monitor	<input type="radio"/>						
All Access	<input type="radio"/>						
All Gov.com	<input type="radio"/>						
All Things Democrat	<input type="radio"/>						
All Voices.com	<input type="radio"/>						
Allen B West	<input type="radio"/>						
Alternnet	<input type="radio"/>						
America Blog	<input type="radio"/>						
America Online	<input type="radio"/>						
American Conservative	<input type="radio"/>						
American Progress	<input type="radio"/>						
American Thinker	<input type="radio"/>						
Americans Against the Tea Party	<input type="radio"/>						
Android Police	<input type="radio"/>						
AOL	<input type="radio"/>						
Associations Now	<input type="radio"/>						
Autostraddle	<input type="radio"/>						
Aviation International News	<input type="radio"/>						
Barracuda Brigade (Blog)	<input type="radio"/>						
Bilerico.com	<input type="radio"/>						
BizPac Review	<input type="radio"/>						
Black Press USA	<input type="radio"/>						
Blacksphere	<input type="radio"/>						
Blaze	<input type="radio"/>						
Blue Nation Review	<input type="radio"/>						
Breitbart	<input type="radio"/>						
BringMeTheNews.com	<input type="radio"/>						
Brookings	<input type="radio"/>						
Brown Political Review	<input type="radio"/>						
Business 2 Community	<input type="radio"/>						
Business Insider	<input type="radio"/>						
Business Journals	<input type="radio"/>						

Thank you!

05/09/2017, 12:31

Bustle	<input type="radio"/>						
BuzzFeed	<input type="radio"/>						
Casino Listings	<input type="radio"/>						
Chalkbeat	<input type="radio"/>						
Chimp Reports	<input type="radio"/>						
Clash Daily	<input type="radio"/>						
CNS News	<input type="radio"/>						
College Republican National Committee	<input type="radio"/>						
Comically Incorrect	<input type="radio"/>						
Communities Digital News	<input type="radio"/>						
Conservative Infidel	<input type="radio"/>						
Conservative News and Views	<input type="radio"/>						
Conservatives 4 Palin	<input type="radio"/>						
Counter Jihad Report	<input type="radio"/>						
Counterpunch.org	<input type="radio"/>						
Crooks and Liars	<input type="radio"/>						
Daily Caller	<input type="radio"/>						
Daily Dot	<input type="radio"/>						
Daily Kos	<input type="radio"/>						
Daily Signal	<input type="radio"/>						
Deadline	<input type="radio"/>						
Defense One	<input type="radio"/>						
Democracy Now	<input type="radio"/>						
Democrats (official website)	<input type="radio"/>						
Demos	<input type="radio"/>						
Digital Journal	<input type="radio"/>						
Diplomat	<input type="radio"/>						
Downtrend.com	<input type="radio"/>						
Eagle Rising	<input type="radio"/>						
Education Week	<input type="radio"/>						
Electa (Blog)	<input type="radio"/>						
Electronic Urban Report	<input type="radio"/>						
Epoch Times	<input type="radio"/>						
Eurasia Review	<input type="radio"/>						
Examiner.com	<input type="radio"/>						
ExecutiveGov	<input type="radio"/>						
Fact Check	<input type="radio"/>						
Federalist	<input type="radio"/>						
Fierce Health Payer	<input type="radio"/>						
FireAndreaMitchell.com	<input type="radio"/>						

Thank you!

05/09/2017, 12:31

Firedoglake	<input type="radio"/>						
Fiscal Times	<input type="radio"/>						
FiveThirtyEight	<input type="radio"/>						
Forward Progressives	<input type="radio"/>						
Freedom Outpost	<input type="radio"/>						
From the Trenches World Report	<input type="radio"/>						
Fusion	<input type="radio"/>						

19. If you would like to provide justification for any of your answers, please feel free to do so in the box below.

Professional Perspectives in US Internet News

Page 12

Internet Sources G-O

These are sources that are Internet natives. In other words, these are sources which have no traditional offline media presence.

20. On a scale from 1 to 7, where 1 is very liberal, 4 is unbiased, and 7 is very conservative, what is your perspective on the editorial bias of the following institutions? Please remember that you only need to provide answers to sources with which you are familiar.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Gallup	<input type="radio"/>						
Gateway Pundit	<input type="radio"/>						
Gawker	<input type="radio"/>						
Gay Patriot	<input type="radio"/>						
Global Post	<input type="radio"/>						
Global Practices	<input type="radio"/>						
Gnomes National News Service	<input type="radio"/>						
Godfather Politics	<input type="radio"/>						
Good Men Project	<input type="radio"/>						
GOP USA	<input type="radio"/>						
Governing.com	<input type="radio"/>						
Grist	<input type="radio"/>						
Guardian Liberty Voice	<input type="radio"/>						
Healthcare Informatics	<input type="radio"/>						
Heavy	<input type="radio"/>						

Thank you!

05/09/2017, 12:31

HNGN.com	<input type="radio"/>						
Hometown Source	<input type="radio"/>						
Hot Air	<input type="radio"/>						
Huffington Post	<input type="radio"/>						
Human Events	<input type="radio"/>						
Humor Outcasts	<input type="radio"/>						
i24 News	<input type="radio"/>						
Immigration Impact (American Immigration Council)	<input type="radio"/>						
Independent Journal Review	<input type="radio"/>						
Independent Voter Network	<input type="radio"/>						
Indian Country Today Media Network	<input type="radio"/>						
Inquirer.net	<input type="radio"/>						
Inquisitr	<input type="radio"/>						
Insight News	<input type="radio"/>						
Insurance News Net	<input type="radio"/>						
Inter Press News Service	<input type="radio"/>						
International Business Times	<input type="radio"/>						
International Liberty	<input type="radio"/>						
International Policy Digest	<input type="radio"/>						
Jewish Political News & Updates	<input type="radio"/>						
Jezebel	<input type="radio"/>						
Joe for America	<input type="radio"/>						
Joe. My. God.	<input type="radio"/>						
Jonathan Turley	<input type="radio"/>						
Journalists Resource	<input type="radio"/>						
Kaiser Health News	<input type="radio"/>						
Last Resistance	<input type="radio"/>						
Latin Post	<input type="radio"/>						
Legal Insurrection	<input type="radio"/>						
Liberal America	<input type="radio"/>						
Liberal Values Blog	<input type="radio"/>						
Liberaland	<input type="radio"/>						
Liberals Unite	<input type="radio"/>						
Liberty Unyielding	<input type="radio"/>						
Live Trading News	<input type="radio"/>						
Madame Noire	<input type="radio"/>						
Mashable	<input type="radio"/>						
Mass Device	<input type="radio"/>						

Thank you!

05/09/2017, 12:31

Media Bistro	<input type="radio"/>						
Media Matters	<input type="radio"/>						
Media Research Center	<input type="radio"/>						
Mediaite	<input type="radio"/>						
MediaPost	<input type="radio"/>						
Medicine Net	<input type="radio"/>						
Metal Miner	<input type="radio"/>						
Mic.com	<input type="radio"/>						
Mining Feeds	<input type="radio"/>						
Mining.com	<input type="radio"/>						
MintPress News	<input type="radio"/>						
Moderate Voice	<input type="radio"/>						
Morning Call	<input type="radio"/>						
Motley Fool	<input type="radio"/>						
Moyers & Company	<input type="radio"/>						
MSN.com	<input type="radio"/>						
Multichannel News	<input type="radio"/>						
My Next Fone	<input type="radio"/>						
mykeystrokes.com	<input type="radio"/>						
National Catholic Register	<input type="radio"/>						
National Republican Congressional Committee	<input type="radio"/>						
National Right to Life News	<input type="radio"/>						
New Civil Rights Movement	<input type="radio"/>						
News Busters	<input type="radio"/>						
News Corpse	<input type="radio"/>						
News is my Business	<input type="radio"/>						
News on News	<input type="radio"/>						
NewsBusters	<input type="radio"/>						
Newser	<input type="radio"/>						
NewsMax	<input type="radio"/>						
NewsWise	<input type="radio"/>						
Next Gov	<input type="radio"/>						
Niner Times	<input type="radio"/>						
NORML Blog	<input type="radio"/>						
On Politics	<input type="radio"/>						
Op-Ed News	<input type="radio"/>						
Open Democracy	<input type="radio"/>						
Open Secrets (Center for Responsive Politics)	<input type="radio"/>						
Outside the Beltway	<input type="radio"/>						

Thank you!

05/09/2017, 12:31

21. If you would like to provide justification for any of your answers, please feel free to do so in the box below.

Professional Perspectives in US Internet News

Page 13

Internet Sources P-Z

These are sources that are Internet natives. In other words, these are sources which have no traditional offline media presence.

22. On a scale from 1 to 7, where 1 is very liberal, 4 is unbiased, and 7 is very conservative, what is your perspective on the editorial bias of the following institutions? Please remember that you only need to provide answers to sources with which you are familiar.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Patriot Update	<input type="radio"/>						
People's Pundit Daily	<input type="radio"/>						
People's World	<input type="radio"/>						
Personal Liberty	<input type="radio"/>						
Petition 2 Congress	<input type="radio"/>						
Pew	<input type="radio"/>						
Pink News	<input type="radio"/>						
Pitch.com	<input type="radio"/>						
PJ Media	<input type="radio"/>						
Policy.Mic	<input type="radio"/>						
Political Outcast	<input type="radio"/>						
Politico	<input type="radio"/>						
Politics Cheat Sheet	<input type="radio"/>						
PoliticusUSA	<input type="radio"/>						
Politifact	<input type="radio"/>						
Poltiico	<input type="radio"/>						
Porridge	<input type="radio"/>						
Power Line	<input type="radio"/>						
PR Newswire	<input type="radio"/>						
Public Integrity	<input type="radio"/>						
Public News Service	<input type="radio"/>						
Queerty	<input type="radio"/>						
Rare	<input type="radio"/>						
Raw Story	<input type="radio"/>						

Thank you!

05/09/2017, 12:31

Real Clear Poltiics	<input type="radio"/>						
Real Screen	<input type="radio"/>						
Reason.com	<input type="radio"/>						
Red Alert Politics	<input type="radio"/>						
Red State	<input type="radio"/>						
Religion News Service	<input type="radio"/>						
Restoring Liberty	<input type="radio"/>						
Right Scoop	<input type="radio"/>						
Right Wing News	<input type="radio"/>						
Right Wing Watch	<input type="radio"/>						
Ring Of Fire	<input type="radio"/>						
Robin's Post	<input type="radio"/>						
Roll Call	<input type="radio"/>						
Salon	<input type="radio"/>						
Say Anything Blog	<input type="radio"/>						
SB Nation	<input type="radio"/>						
Seeking Alpha	<input type="radio"/>						
Service Employees International Union Blog	<input type="radio"/>						
SGT Report.com	<input type="radio"/>						
Sikh Net	<input type="radio"/>						
Slate	<input type="radio"/>						
Space News	<input type="radio"/>						
Speaker.gov	<input type="radio"/>						
Sunlight Foundation	<input type="radio"/>						
Take Part	<input type="radio"/>						
Talking Points Memo	<input type="radio"/>						
Tea Party News Network	<input type="radio"/>						
Tea Party Patriots	<input type="radio"/>						
Tech Cocktail	<input type="radio"/>						
Tech Republic	<input type="radio"/>						
Tele Sur	<input type="radio"/>						
The American Interest	<input type="radio"/>						
The Blaze	<input type="radio"/>						
Daily Beast	<input type="radio"/>						
Dissenter	<input type="radio"/>						
Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation	<input type="radio"/>						
The Hill	<input type="radio"/>						
The Hindu	<input type="radio"/>						
The Locker Room (John Lock Foundation)	<input type="radio"/>						
The Right Scoop	<input type="radio"/>						

Thank you!

05/09/2017, 12:31

The Root	<input type="radio"/>						
The Wire	<input type="radio"/>						
Think Progress	<input type="radio"/>						
Thompson Hall	<input type="radio"/>						
Tom O'Halloran	<input type="radio"/>						
Town Hall	<input type="radio"/>						
Town Talk	<input type="radio"/>						
Truth Dig	<input type="radio"/>						
Twitchy	<input type="radio"/>						
Uloop	<input type="radio"/>						
United Liberty	<input type="radio"/>						
United Nations News Centre	<input type="radio"/>						
United Nations Watch	<input type="radio"/>						
United Press International	<input type="radio"/>						
Universal Free Press	<input type="radio"/>						
USA News	<input type="radio"/>						
Value Walk	<input type="radio"/>						
Voice of America	<input type="radio"/>						
Vox	<input type="radio"/>						
Voxxi	<input type="radio"/>						
Wall Street Cheat Sheet	<input type="radio"/>						
Washingtons Blog	<input type="radio"/>						
Watchdog.org	<input type="radio"/>						
Weasel Zippers	<input type="radio"/>						
Western Journalism (Blog)	<input type="radio"/>						
World	<input type="radio"/>						
World Net Daily	<input type="radio"/>						
World Socialist Web Site	<input type="radio"/>						
Yahoo! News	<input type="radio"/>						

23. If you would like to provide justification for any of your answers, please feel free to do so in the box below.

Professional Perspectives in US Internet News

Thank you!

05/09/2017, 12:31

Page 14

Thank you!

Thank you for completing this survey! It is my hope that while the questions may have been repetitive, your experience completing them has been thought provoking.

Your responses will used to better understand how the Internet is changing the ideological balance of political discourse in the United Kingdom and the United States.

24. If you would like to enter a draw to win one of four (4) Amazon vouchers valued at £20/\$30 each, or if you would like to be contacted via email regarding the results of this research project, please tick the appropriate choices below.

 Enter prize draw Contact me with results

25. If you ticked either of the boxes above, please enter your email address in the box below.

26. Please enter the news organisation or academic institution that you are associated with.

This information is used to prevent duplicate responses, and to ensure that the results are representative of the entire media landscape, and not just one or a few news organisations. Your email address will also be used to contact you if you tick either of the choices below.

News

Organisation