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Meeting probative obligations in political interviews: A case of accountability

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ABSTRACT In this paper, the author argues that political interviews function nowadays as accountability practices, arguably due to their predominantly argumentative character. Political interviews are viewed as informal practices of accountability aimed mainly at opinion-formation. They constitute a forum for an exchange of opinions and criticisms advanced with a view to putting the political performance to the critical test directly under the eyes of the citizens. First, political interviews will be characterized as accountability practices by using insights derived from the rules of procedure, such as broadcasting codes, agreements and editorial guidelines, as well as empirical insights derived from directly observing these communicative practices. Second, the way in which the participants deal with their probative obligations with a view to contributing to the accountability purpose will be analyzed.

KEYWORDS Political accountability, political interviews, burden of proof

1. Introduction

When taking part in political interviews, politicians usually inform the public of their activities, decisions and plans, advance standpoints in relation to these, and argue for their performance (e.g., Fetzer 2007, Montgomery 2007, Hutchby 2011, Andone 2013). In these standpoints, politicians give a positive evaluation of their political performance by claiming that their activities are up to standard. Their standpoints are more often than not met with doubt and criticism, because the role of the interviewers is precisely to raise questions about the political account (Andone 2013). In response to criticism, politicians incur the obligation to argue, known in argumentation theory as a burden of proof.

This paper aims to contribute to an understanding of the politicians’ burden of proof in political interviews. Although the fundamental role played by this component of argumentation in political interviews is often implicitly recognized, the literature offers more questions than answers with respect to this issue. Apart from illustrating with the help of examples that politicians have an obligation to argue for their positions, no explanation has

1 In order to demonstrate their argumentative character, scholars have drawn on empirical insights derived from their observations of political interviews. An illustrative case in point is Hutchby’s (2011) empirical research in which the structural features and the content of argumentative moves are examined to demonstrate the non-neutrality of what he calls ‘the hybrid political interview.’ The presence of sceptical rejoinders, contrastives and personalization of standpoints is taken as an indicator of the argumentative framing of political interviews.
yet been provided of the way in which the burden of proof is acquired, met and discharged by the politicians who are being interviewed.

In this paper, my interest is to explain how politicians attempt to delimit the burden of proof which they acquire for their standpoints in response to criticism. This interest is triggered by the fact that politicians always want to give a positive evaluation of their activities, and therefore respond to the critics by delimiting their burden of proof in such a way that their standpoints are easy to defend. Therefore, the research question to be answered in this paper is the following: **How do politicians expediently delimit their burden of proof in political interviews in response to criticism?**

In answering this question, I will concentrate on the stage of a political interview in which the role of the burden of proof is fundamental, namely the initial situation, in which standpoints are put forward and for which a burden of proof is acquired when they are met with doubt. In my explanation, I will follow a pragma-dialectical approach to argumentation by concentrating on the strategies employed by the politicians for the purpose of delimiting the burden of proof. In the first section of the paper, I will characterize political interviews as accountability practices which by virtue of their institutional traits impose limits on the politicians’ burden of proof in the initial situation. I will do so by using insights derived from the rules of procedure, such as broadcasting codes, agreements and editorial guidelines, as well as empirical insights derived from directly observing these communicative practices. In the second section, I will explain some of the possibilities for delimiting the burden of proof in the communicative practices at issue by analyzing in detail several fragments from a political interview. The analysis will concentrate on the way in which the participants deal with their probative obligations with a view to contributing to the accountability purpose.

2. Political interviews as argumentative accountability practices

2.1 Account-giving in political interviews

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2 In doing so, I do not deny that the burden of proof plays a role at all stages of the discussion: The burden of proof is distributed over the parties at the stage of the discussion at which starting points are established, an attempt is made to meet it at the stage in which arguments are being advanced, and it is discharged in the concluding stage of a discussion (van Eemeren & Houtlosser 2002).
Recent studies on political interviews show that this communicative practice is predominantly argumentative, because at all times politicians advance standpoints and argue for them in response to an interviewer’s doubt and criticism (Andone 2013). This view of political interviews is not surprising if one takes into account that political interviews have been established as accountability practices (Mulgan 2003, Montgomery 2007). In these practices, as political scholars show, “a relationship between an actor and a forum [is established], in which the actor has the obligation to explain and justify his or her conduct, the forum can pose questions and pass judgment, and the actor might face consequences” (Bovens 2006: 7). The actor is in this case a political official and the forum is a journalist acting on behalf of the general public. Mulgan (2003) explains that the accountability obligation lying upon the politician in the media is informal, in the sense that he is not formally obliged to render a regular account, as it happens in committees of inquiry, courts or auditors, in accordance with strict rules and obligations.

In Andone (2013: 36), following political scientists such as Bovens (2006: 10), I show that in political interviews the account-giving consists of three phases. The first phase is informative: In this phase the politician informs the journalist and the audience about his retrospective or prospective actions in preparation for the second phase in which the actual debating takes place. In this second phase, the journalist demands answers explaining the politician’s conduct, thus enabling the audience at home to make an assessment of the political performance. Mulgan (2003: 9) points out that “forcing people to explain what they have done is perhaps the essential component of making them accountable. In this sense, the core of accountability becomes a dialogue between accountors and account-holders.” Finally, in the judgment phase, the journalist suggests an assessment of the politician’s performance, which can take the form of approval, denouncing, or public condemnation of the politician’s performance. Political interviews, unlike institutionalized forums such as courts or parliaments, lack the authority to impose formal sanctioning, but journalists set, as it were, the ground for the politicians facing consequences later and elsewhere.

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3 This recent view on the argumentative character of political interviews contradicts the traditional approach to this communicative practice according to which political interviews are simply informative. Just like many other authors, Clayman and Heritage (2002: 98), for example, claim that the interviewer is institutionally obliged to remain neutral and impartial in the sense that “[he] cannot express opinions, or argue with, debate, or criticize the interviewee’s positions.” In Andone (2013: 43-46) I demonstrate that this view is based on a misunderstanding. By closely examining the codified rules in Great Britain, for instance, I show that the interviewer’s neutrality in fact amounts to maintaining a balance in the representation of views.
The debating phase of political interviews is vital to realizing the purpose for which this communicative practice has been established: In this phase an exchange of standpoints, arguments and criticisms takes place at all times. Without advancing standpoints, the politician does not fulfill his primary role of making his positions clear for the audience at home. Without advancing criticisms, the journalist cannot hold the politician properly to account, because by definition doing so involves asking critical questions that challenge the interlocutor to respond. Without advancing arguments, the politician cannot justify his political performance.

In what follows, I will provide an account of the initial situation of political interviews by explaining the role of the participants to the discussion, the type of difference of opinion in which they are involved, and the issues that are central to political interviews. In the recent pragma-dialectical approach to contextualized argumentation, these three characteristics of the initial situation of a communicative practice are shown to play the most important role for the way in which the discussion proceeds (van Eemeren 2010: 146-151). They shape the definition of the difference of opinion and impose vital constraints on the participants’ subsequent arguing. The ultimate purpose of my characterization is to show how these three aspects of the initial situation affect the politician’s burden of proof in political interviews.

2.2 The burden of proof in political account-giving

The critical exchange of argumentative moves in political interviews takes place between the politician and the journalist who are the direct participants to the discussion. However, the difference of opinion arising in these discussions takes place in fact between the politician and the audience watching, reading or listening to the interview. The journalist acts in political interviews as a representative of the public for whom the interview is primarily conducted. He gives voice to public concerns by demanding an account from the politician on behalf of the audience at home.\(^4\)

\(^4\) Van Eemeren (2010: 109) emphasizes that in deliberative communicative practices such as political interviews the arguer wants to reach in the first place the general public, who thus becomes the primary audience. The persons instrumental in reaching them, in this case the interviewers, represent the secondary audience.
The difference of opinion arising in the initial situation of the discussion in political interviews is sometimes, though rarely, non-mixed. In pragma-dialectical terms, this amounts to only one party advancing a standpoint which is afterwards doubted by the other party (van Eemeren & Grootendorst 2004). Since the politician is the party expected to give an account of his performance, and therefore advances a standpoint, he has a burden of proof if challenged to defend his position (Andone 2013: 39-40). The politician is obliged to offer proof for the positive evaluation of his performance which he gives in his standpoint.

This simple situation in which only the politician advances a standpoint is quite rare in political interviews, because more often than not the journalist gives a negative evaluation of the politician’s activity which he expresses in a position of his own. After all, he commonly acts as the devil’s advocate criticizing his interlocutor even when he knows that his actions up to the expected standard (Andone 2013: 55). Acting as the forum in the accountability practice of political interviews, the journalist is moreover institutionally obliged to take on a burden of proof for his criticism. By advancing a standpoint of his own, the interviewer puts thoroughly the acceptability of the politician’s actions to the test. The discussion in political interviews can thus be fairly characterized as a mixed difference of opinion in which both parties advance their own standpoint (Andone 2013: 40). The politician advances a standpoint in which he evaluates positively his political actions, and the interviewer advances a standpoint in which he criticizes the advocated positive performance.

In the initial situation of political interviews, in which standpoints are advanced and met with criticism, the politician acquires a burden of proof as a consequence of the need to respond to criticism against his standpoint if challenged to do so. Houtlosser shows that “advancing a standpoint counts as taking responsibility for a [...] position in respect of [an expressed opinion] O, assuming an obligation to defend the [...] position in respect of O if challenged to do so” (2002: 171). Unlike authors such as Rescher (2006) and Kauffeld (2007) who believe that a burden of proof reflects an obligation that a speaker incurs as a consequence of making an assertion, pragma-dialecticians favour a view according to which

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5 Often, especially because of time constraints, the interviewer’s burden of proof is lighter in comparison with the politician’s burden of proof.
6 The journalist obviously also acquires a burden of proof for his standpoint, but he is rarely challenged by the politician to meet this obligation, usually because of strict time constraints (Andone 2013: 52).
7 Following the principle of externalization – according to which judgments are to be made on the basis of the externalized commitments – only those objections need to be dealt with by the protagonist that are advanced in the discourse, whether explicitly, implicitly or indirectly (van Eemeren & Houtlosser 2002:18).
simply putting forward an assertive is not enough. In their account, only assertives which are met with doubt or criticism – and thus become standpoints – involve a burden of proof (van Eemeren & Houtlosser 2002). By taking on a burden of proof at the confrontation stage, the protagonist of a standpoint contributes to the critical testing procedure because in this way he helps to define the difference of opinion and thus contributes to realizing the purpose of the confrontation stage.8

Because advancing a standpoint brings with it an obligation to prove, and in view of the institutional constraint of having to give an account of the political performance, politicians can be said to acquire two types of burden of proof in the initial situation of political interviews. One such type can be called a probative burden of proof which involves an obligation to argue for the standpoint once it is advanced. This kind of obligation corresponds to Rescher’s ‘probative burden of an initiating assertion’ (1977: 27, later called ‘the probative burden of an original assertion’ in Rescher 2006: 15) and Walton’s internal burden of proof (1988: 247). As the latter explains, “at the local level of dialogue, where requirements of proof or argument are set relative to one specific move, or pairs of moves” (Walton 1988: 247), a burden of proof is imposed on the arguer. This burden amounts to providing arguments for that which is asserted.

The second type of burden of proof acquired by politicians taking part in interviews can be called a refutative burden of proof, as it involves refuting the negative evaluation expressed in the interviewer’s criticism. This type of burden of proof, imposed institutionally, corresponds to a great extent to Rescher’s ‘evidential burden of further reply in the face of contrary considerations’ (1977: 27, later called ‘the dialectical burden’ in Rescher 2006: 16). In Rescher’s view, this type of burden of proof takes the argument forward in the light of evidence and counterevidence in the situation at hand. This kind of obligation resembles Walton’s external burden of proof (1988: 246), a term which he uses to refer to the obligation imposed by the rules of procedure and goals of the dialogue. In the absence of this kind of refutative obligation, the politician does not help to move the discussion forward towards achieving the accountability purpose. In response to the interviewer’s negative reaction, the politician cannot afford to do less than refuting the criticism. His political role

8 Of course, at this stage a burden of proof arises only in case the protagonist has not already successfully defended the same standpoint against the same discussant on a previous occasion and in case the protagonist has not withdrawn his standpoint (van Eemeren & Grootendorst 2004:139).
requires him moreover to direct his rejection not only at the public and the interviewer, but also at his opponents. He does so, because the audience usually judges the acceptability of the political performance in comparison with the words and actions of political rivals (Andone 2013: 53-54).

The burden of proof, whether probative or refutative, pertains in all cases to issues “of political controversy and matters relating to current public policy” (Andone 2013: 40) which are of major importance for the public. The range of issues for discussion is chosen by the interviewer in such a way that possible public interest is satisfied and a balance of issues is ensured. Because the issues for discussion are multiple, a burden of proof is acquired for all the issues brought up for discussion. In other words, the politician’s burden of proof is preconditioned by the various topics that trigger the difference of opinion.

The characteristics of the initial situation of a political interview outlined so far make clear that a politician is obliged to give an account to the public in response to criticism, while also trying to suggest that his political performance is up to the expected standard. Because politicians always try to refute the interviewer’s negative evaluation, their ultimate goal is to give the impression that the retrospective and prospective actions for which they argue are in line with public expectations. The need to balance the institutional obligations of giving an account with doing so positively results in an attempt at delimiting the burden of proof in such a way that standpoints are easier to defend. How can the burden of proof be delimited in view of these institutional constraints?

In principle, three types of constraints influence the politicians’ burden of proof, corresponding to the three types of constraints of the initial situation of political interviews: audience constraints, issue constraints and the constraints imposed by the type of difference of opinion at issue. Obviously, audience constraints affect the choice of issues and vice versa, and the type of difference of opinion constrains in turn the other two aspects. Despite this unavoidable influence of one aspect over the others, it is possible to distinguish analytically among various possibilities for delimiting the burden of proof.

In the initial situation of a political interview, audience constraints impose on the politicians the need to take into account public concerns. After all, the political actions which

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9 In Andone (2013: 40-41) I show that these matters are central to political interviews in Great Britain. As Clayman and Heritage (2002) convincingly demonstrate, the same kind of issues are discussed usually in other countries.
are at the centre of the discussion are matters of public importance which affect the majority of those watching, reading or listening to the interview. As far as the burden of proof is concerned, politicians will concentrate on delimiting it in such a way that that they state a position which they expect to be easily accepted by the general public. One way of doing so is by unequivocally limiting their burden of proof to uncontroversial issues, so that it is not too difficult to meet it at a later stage of the discussion or no defense is after all necessary, as no one can disagree with the advocated position (cf. van Eemeren & Houtlosser 2002).

Issue constraints force the politicians to deal with the controversial matters chosen for discussion by the interviewer. Because the issues for discussion always affect some people negatively – after all, no political decision, policy and action can satisfy everyone – politicians will most probably try to emphasize only matters which fit them best. In this way, the scope of the standpoint is very much reduced and no burden of proof is acquired that exceeds this scope.

The type of difference of opinion imposes a probative and/or a refutative burden of proof. Whereas in the former case the politicians have to defend their positions and reject doubt from the interviewer, in the latter case they must moreover refute the opposite standpoint. The burden of proof will be limited to such an extent that instead of concentrating mostly on rejecting doubt or criticism from the interviewer, the politicians will bring to the foreground weak points in the opposite position. In this way, a negative image of the opponents is created and their own political qualities are highlighted.

The institutional constraints just outlined make it possible to predict to some extent the way in which politicians attempt to delimit their burden of proof in such a way that they can more easily defend their standpoints and maintain a positive image for the audience. In what follows, I will analyze in detail several fragments from a political interview with the aim of showing how politicians delimit their burden of proof in argumentative reality. The analysis will bring to light different strategies employed for this purpose.

3. The Race for Europe’s Top Job

The empirical material selected for the purpose of this paper is taken from the online English version of *Spiegel* in which European politicians are commonly interviewed with a view to
holding them to account for their actions, decisions and plans. In the interview chosen for
analysis, dating from March 12, 2014, the journalist discusses with the two leading
candidates for the presidency of the European Commission: Jean-Claude Juncker (originally
from Luxembourg) and Martin Schulz (originally from Germany). The discussion concerns
as diverse topics as tax havens in Europe, euro bonds and the European debt crisis. In
dealing with these topics, the interviewer asks the two candidates to explain and justify their
political performance by comparing it to that of the opponent. In so doing, the two
politicians try to emphasize their own qualities while also negatively evaluating the
opponent. For this purpose, the two politicians delimit their burden of proof in various ways
which my analysis of some fragments from the interview will bring to light.

At the beginning of the interview, the journalist mentions that Luxembourg has
already provided the European Commission with two presidents, whereas Germany gave
one more than 50 years before. For this reason, he suggests that Schulz might have a higher
chance to win the elections, and invites Juncker to comment on this:

Spiegel: There have already been two European Commission presidents from Luxembourg.
The last one served 15 years ago. Germany, on the other hand, has only succeeded once in
landing the post – and that was over 50 years ago. Could that play to Schulz’s advantage?

In his question, the journalist imposes on Juncker an obligation to advance a standpoint
concerning Schulz’s chances of winning the elections and implicitly, to defend it. Since the
interview is aimed at giving the public an idea about the most suitable candidate for the job
– by asking the politicians to account for their performance – the journalist’s question can be
fairly interpreted as implicitly asking Juncker to argue for the benefits of having a president
from Luxembourg. The arguments, so it is suggested, should refer to the merits of those
from Luxembourg.

In reply to this question, Juncker does not question the presupposition of the
question that a German candidate could count on a temporal advantage. Instead, he
interprets the question as raising an issue related to the nationality of the potential
Commission president:

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10 In May 2014, it is for the first time that European voters have a say about the president of the European
Commission.
Juncker: I don’t think in national categories. For me it is about concepts and substance. But still, I would still say that it would be better for Europe if the next Commission president were from Luxembourg. My country has always played the role of a mediator in the EU, especially between the Germans and the French. I believe in the power of consensus. Martin Schulz prefers provocation.

Juncker first denies any relevance of the issue of nationality in voting for a candidate (I don’t think in national categories), thereby trying to create the impression that the focus should lie on the personal and professional qualities of the candidate. This impression is emphasized in saying that ‘contents and substance’ are what really matters. Having advanced this position, Juncker could reasonably anticipate doubt from some of the audience and should therefore attempt to meet the burden of proof acquired by putting forward his standpoint. Instead he chooses to deny his own views (but still) and uses praeteritio to put forward a position according to which nevertheless someone from Luxembourg – in this case him – would be a better Commission president.

In order to cover for the weakness of being inconsistent, suggested by the use of praeteritio, Juncker immediately lives up to the burden of proof acquired as a result of taking on a position: He emphasizes the consensual approach specific of his country (My country has always played the role of a mediator in the EU) and of himself (I believe in the power of consensus). This probative burden of proof is complemented by living up to the institutional constraint of arguing against his competitor by suggesting that Germans in general are more conflicting in their attitude (My country has always played the role of a mediator in the EU especially between the Germans and the French) and Schulz in particular has a history of someone provocative (Martin Schulz prefers provocation). Thus, both a probative and a refutative burden of proof are at issue in this fragment. The probative burden of proof involves a commitment to defend his own qualities, the refutative burden of proof involves rejecting anticipated doubt and arguing for a negative evaluation of the competitor.

Responding to this, Schulz underlines his ‘European’ character, but does not live up to his burden of proof. He presents his standpoint (I have a European calling and nationality plays no role for me) as if no arguments need to be put forward, since the European citizens are familiar with his approach (I think people know that):
Schulz: [...] I have a European calling and nationality plays no role for me. I think people know that.

By avoiding to refer to his own nationality, Schulz goes for a safe strategy, because he certainly satisfies in this way the expectations of a larger number of people than just those of his co-nationals. Unlike Juncker who emphasizes the advantage of someone from Luxembourg, Schulz focuses on the quality of being European, particularly important in the context of elections at European level.

Later in the discussion, Schulz further delimits his burden of proof by shifting the discussion to another issue than the very much controversial issue chosen by the journalist. Because Schulz is currently the president of the European Parliament, many people have called for his resignation as he is campaigning for the European Commission. Asked to comment on this, Schulz replies that he tries to act in a non-partisan manner, but:

Schulz: [...] We should instead focus this campaign on debating the right course for Europe.

With this reply, Schulz restricts his burden of proof to issues which fit him best and at the same time need little if any arguing at all. No one would deny that Europe needs to take ‘the right course’ which depends to a great extent on the Commission president. In fact, the discussion on this matter is discontinued by the journalist who proceeds to another matter.

The interview offers more instances of limitations of the burden of proof by the two politicians. At some point, the journalist casts doubt on the seriousness of Juncker’s candidacy, because he has already turned down twice the opportunity to become president of the European Commission. In 2004 he preferred to work as prime minister in his own country and in 2009 he chose to become president of the European Council. Juncker’s credibility is put to the critical test:

Spiegel: Mr. Juncker, in 2004, you had the opportunity to become president of the European Commission, but you turned it down. Now, after losing your position as prime minister of Luxembourg, you suddenly seem to be interested in the job. Why should voters find that to be credible?
Juncker: In 2004, the European and Luxembourg elections were held on the same day. At the time, I said I would only take a position in Europe if I was not re-elected prime minister. I was re-elected, so I didn’t switch to Brussels.


Juncker: I recognize that the German press is speculating that I allegedly don't want to become president of the Commission. This is what I have to say to voters: I am serious about my candidacy.

In his second answer to the critical question doubting his credibility as a candidate, Juncker simply guarantees the acceptability of his standpoint (This is what I have to say to voters) without further ado. The weakness of his answer is obvious in the reconstruction of this example: I am serious because I say so. Neither a probative nor a refutative burden of proof is even attempted to be met, as if there is no need for this.

Limiting the burden of proof is again at issue when the discussion turns to the much debated topic of Luxembourg as a tax haven. After several allegations from Schulz that Luxembourg does not do enough for greater transparency, and an angry reaction from Juncker that he is unfairly attacked for tax evasion, several accusations of inconsistencies are launched. Juncker tries to defend his good image by suggesting that Germany does not have the right to criticize him for tax evasion, since they also protect their own automobile industry:

Juncker: I have never given any more support to Luxembourg as a financial center than the German chancellors have to their automobile industry. However, I do agree that we need rules against tax dumping just as we do against social dumping. Europe needs to have a minimum basis of workers’ rights.

Juncker’s reply indicates that the strategy employed to do away with the criticism consists in making recourse to an accusation of inconsistency by attacking his opponent because his country gives support for their car industry, not in any way different from the support for the tax system in Luxembourg. Juncker makes his critic appear responsible for the very type of act he condemns and thus shifts the burden of proof to Schulz. Schulz’s question, so it seems, comes from someone who has acted inconsistently and should therefore not be answered. The burden of proof is delimited such that the tax evasion of which he is accused is no longer debated. Because Juncker knows that
this answer will hardly do, he concedes something that no one can possibly deny (I do agree that we need rules against tax dumping just as we do against social dumping).

But the concession Juncker makes is not sufficient for Schulz who points out, also by means of an accusation of inconsistency, that what he preaches (social protection) is not what he practices (the solution for the situation in Greece in which he played a role is seen as ‘not very social’):

Schulz: But the Greek bailout wasn’t very social. As president of the Euro Group, you had significant influence on it, Mr. Juncker.

4. Conclusion

Political interviews constitute accountability practices in which the politicians’ performance is questioned for its acceptability and an account is provided in which the political actions are explained and justified to the public. The obligation to provide arguments for political actions counts as acquiring a burden of proof. Because this burden of proof is not always easy to meet, an attempt is commonly made to delimit it to such an extent that it is minimized as much as possible.

After explaining in pragma-dialectical terms a procedural view of the burden of proof, I made clear how this component of argumentative discourse is constrained by the context of political interviews. In principle, issue constraints, audience constraints and constraints imposed by the type of difference of opinion at issue affect the acquisition of the burden of proof and determine the strategies to be employed for delimiting it.

The analysis of several fragments from a political interview with two politicians competing in the European elections for the presidency of the European Commission brings to light several strategies for delimiting the burden of proof. One of the strategies consists in reducing the burden of proof to such an extent that it seems as if there is no need for arguing. To do so, the politicians formulate their standpoints in such a way that what they claim is something which everyone would but support (I think people know that). Another way chosen by politicians to reduce the burden of proof to a null commitment for defense consists in guaranteeing with their own authority the acceptability of their standpoint (This is what I have to say to voters). Yet another strategy is to shift the discussion to a less controversial and more advantageous issue (We should instead focus on [...] such that a burden of
proof is acquired only for a standpoint which is easy to defend. Finally, the burden of proof is
immunized by means of an accusation of inconsistency in reply to the opponent’s criticism of
inconsistency. With this strategy, the burden of proof is shifted to the competitor who apparently
has no right to raise a criticism if he is himself guilty of a similar offense.

Obviously, not all strategies employed by politicians to delimit their burden of proof are
equally reasonable. Many of the strategies employed by the politicians in giving an account in
political interviews are fallacious, because they do not help the discussion to move forward, but
rather preclude it. Such instances can be observed when politicians attempt to exclude the opponent
from the discussion, as in criticisms of inconsistency. In order to properly evaluate the quality of the
employed strategies, clear-cut criteria need to be developed which take into account both
argumentative aspects and the institutional context in which they are advanced. An equally
important enterprise would be to develop criteria for establishing the effectiveness of these
strategies. Open questions remain with regard to the extent to which the outlined strategies
contribute to winning the discussion or on the contrary, constitute an obstacle in the persuasion
process.

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The hybridity of news consumption in Wallonia (Belgium)

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ABSTRACT Research on the hybridization of journalism has tended to focus on the producers and their products, but the blurring boundaries of news cannot be fully understood in the contemporary media landscape without taking into account the place that journalistic information has in the media consumption habits of citizens. News, put in the context of everyday life, is one of the many inputs that citizens have to engage with society, learn and relax from their obligations. To explore these implications, we conducted a qualitative study of the news consumption of 90 Wallonian citizens representing a variety of socioeconomic, geographic and demographic characteristics. Participants filled in a semi-structured week-long media diary and were interviewed before and after diary to collect their interpretations and justifications of the news consumption described in the diaries. Results show how journalistic products are embedded in their daily lives as resources to structure routines and fill in moments, but, at the same time, citizens appreciate the importance of news to connect to their immediate context and have normative expectations on the quality of journalistic work. Moreover, the plurality of motivations, platforms (from the newspaper to the cell phone) and uses of news among our respondents invites for a reflection on the assumptions that professionals and scholars do about the position and the role of journalism in society, a need to acknowledge the tension between the social dispersion of news production practices and the normativity implicitly negotiated in each news story produced and consumed.

KEYWORDS digital technology, local news, media users, qualitative study, role.

Introduction
Measuring the complexity of the “audience”, Michel Souchon reminded: "To teach mathematics to John, says the old wisdom of pedagogues, we need to know math and John. To create good [television] programming we must know the public"\(^1\), in its diversity of expectations and behaviors\(^2\) (2003, p. 159). To “know the public,” is a wish that media professionals and scholars seem to have

\(^{11}\) We prefer to use the concept of “publics” that is common in the French academic tradition rather than “audiences”, which is more common in English scientific literature (Livingstone, 2004: 19), because it better captures the idea of the users of news as a community of diverse individuals that interact with the news and between them. In French, “audience” refers only to the quantification of the users of a media product, without the dimension of community (Rieffel, 2010: 151). We therefore refer to the individuals as users, and the collective as publics.

\(^{12}\) All scholarly quotes and excerpts of interviews originally in French were translated by the authors.
posed long ago, appearing almost too familiar. And yet, "first massive and almost brutal observation: after so many years of research, we still know very little of the publics. (...) Is it a body and can we suppose that there is a communion, even minimal, of views and reactions, or is it just an imagined product of a concomitant but not joint activity?" (Méadel, 2004, p. 6). In the nineties Hartley said that publics did not exist, describing them as "beings of paper, statistical constructs" (as cited in Albert Koch, Rieffel, Schröter, & Viallon, 2003, p. 49). For Esquenazi (2009), it is the instability of the concept of public that pushed the sociology of reception to the front stage; yet he prefers to speak of the publics as an activity rather than a collection of individuals, as heterogeneity is their main characteristic. Long before that, Tarde had distinguished the public from the crowd; the public resulting from autonomous and independent individuals who never meet, their collective identity and their actions developed through the media itself (Citton 2010). This colossal scattered mass has been seen as difficult to mobilize and lacking spontaneity (Bourdon, 2004). Speaking of "publics" always relates to a "deep discomfort", notably because the conception of a one and only public is a sociological ideal (Bourdon, 2004, p. 12) and masks their inherent diversity. That is why we chose to speak in this communication of "publics" in a plural form, which gives the opportunity to identify a wide range of users during the study who engage with a diversity of media (paper, computer, smartphone, tablet, TV, radio) in different ways. This is specially relevant in the current media scenario, as "the emergence of a new communication technology emphasizes that any definition of the public is a construct, a sediment, is implicit: the Internet forces us to redefine at the same time the concept of the public and of the media "(Méadel, 2004, p. 11).

This study aims to identify the needs and expectations of the publics of local media in Francophone Belgium. Considering, as Rusquin, that there is "a separate public for every picture, for every book" (as cited in Bourdon, 2004, p. 14), we intent to develop a different perspective that the one quantitative studies provide, including those conducted by the Belgian Center for the Information on Media (CIM) and those by marketing department of media groups. We intend to problematize and shed light on some of the behaviors of news users as well as their justification of practices through a qualitative study. We focus on the uses, integrating the dynamics of media tools appropriation by individuals. We will approach the re-appropriation of objects and media discourses through two forms of hybridization of news uses: the seamless consumption of news through different sources and devices (convergent hybridization) and the re-appropriation of those news products in daily life for other purposes than being informed (creative hybridization) that, we argue, constitute more of a new norm than an exception. This way, "social contexts, roles, practices and affiliations of an individual then provide a deeper understanding of the relation established between himself and
objects of consumption by redistributing the power of brands and individuals within the consumer society" (Coutant, 2009).

Concretely, this paper focuses on the following research question: How do hybrid uses of news reflect the public expectations about the role of journalism? Indeed, with the advent of new technologies, practices of the publics of local press are undergoing profound changes, which may redefine their expectations in terms of information. Contents are no longer limited to plain text, but can incorporate images, graphics, symbols, animations, photos, voice, sounds, music, or videos. Potentially, producers and users could see their roles redefined: producers can produce and stage original content using new interactive technologies, while readers may themselves become producers. We follow the call of researchers like Costera Meijer and Groot Kormelink (2014) for empirical research on the nuances and diversity of the practices that surround the use of news in everyday life.

From a methodological standpoint, we conducted interviews with 82 people living in Wallonia and with various socio-professional profiles. Participants were also asked to complete a media diary for a period of seven days enabling to trace their media practices throughout the day. The idea was to determine how users intertwined through the day their relationships to different news sources and devices, and how was that connected to their image of the role of journalism in society, to go beyond the common assumption of a linear succession such as "the radio to start the day, reading the free daily newspapers in the transportation, consulting websites blogs and other information before starting work, watching the newscast at eight o'clock, etc." (Granjon, & The Foulgoc, 2010, p. 237).

We will therefore specify the methodology before presenting two forms of hybridization of news uses: the seamless consumption of news through different sources and devices (convergent hybridization) and the re-appropriation of those news products in daily life for other purposes than being informed (creative hybridization).

1. Methodological considerations

This paper is part of a research project titled “Jounum” and financed by the “Région Wallonne”13. This project aims at designing a digital environment suitable to media users that are the publics and (professional or not) content producers active within the French-speaking Belgian local media sector. The project extends over a period of two years (from October 2013 to December 2015) and is accomplished with the help of key actors of the sector. It is jointly executed by members of the ReSIC

13 Wallonia is the Southern region of Belgium, mainly French-speaking.
-the center of research in information and communication of the ULB-, Sudpresse –the biggest press group in French-speaking Belgium-, the Lilab –a research team specializing in human-computer interaction at the UCL-, and DPI-247 –a digital multichannel publication developer. The scope of the project for the ReSIC consists in realizing a longitudinal study of the needs and expectations of each of the actors of the local media sector in French-speaking Belgium.

The study focuses on three target cities in Wallonia -Liège, Namur, and Mouscron-, within which Sudpresse has a varying presence and is confronted with an active and plural competition. From a geographical standpoint, these three zones cover a great area within the region of Wallonia, Liège being located in the East, Mouscron in the West, and Namur in the center; and Sudpresse has a newsroom in each of them. Moreover, these cities have been selected according to criteria of population density (high in Liège, average in the two others), of media competition (presence of local radios and television channels in Namur and Liège as opposed to Mouscron), of circulation numbers of Sudpresse’s paper (Mouscron’s penetration is of 7,60%, Liège of 4,46% and Namur, the newsroom’s head office, 2,12% 14), of the academic character of the cities (for Liège and Namur) and finally of territorial peculiarities (Mouscron being located at the edge of the linguistic borders of Belgium, and close to the French border).

The users of the three cities participating in this study have been selected through a quantitative survey. Created in November 2013, this survey interrogated respondents on their socio-professional characteristics (age, diploma obtained, extra-professional activities, etc.), reading places, types of media usage, technological equipment at home or at the workplace, and their considerations on media content. The questionnaires were distributed in two versions: an online version send by mail to Sudpresse’s subscribers living in one of the three zones (8,000 email addresses), and a printed version of 300 questionnaires put in 12 news- and book-shops in key locations within the three zones (train stations, near schools, industrial areas, or poor neighborhoods amongst others). Altogether, 685 questionnaires were collected (including 67 paper versions). This survey has enabled to establish a first profile of respondents from which we selected the sample for the qualitative analysis.

A panel of 90 respondents participated in the second phase between December 2013 and June 2014. In the end, over 164 interviews (two per participant) were conducted complementing 82 media diaries filled in daily over the period of one week. Media diaries displayed habits of uses of various devices (computer, Smartphone, tablet, paper, television and radio). Describing the four types of media consumption (television, Internet, press and radio), “the media diary offers a unique window on human phenomenology”, reporting events and experiences naturally, spontaneously, providing information complementary to the interviews (Bolger, David, & Rafaeli, 2003, p. 610). It allows to

14 Figures provided by Rossel Advertising, a newsgroup that possesses Sudpresse and realizes its market studies.
reveal changing dynamics of individuals and to detect the factors influencing media use. Pragmatically, the diary was made in a “pocket format” (A5), light and quick to fill in so as not to discourage respondents who still had to spend a significant amount of time filling it. Each day was divided as follow: four periods (morning, midday, afternoon, and evening), and one page of general questions on the day’s media usage. Within each period, individuals had the opportunity to pick the device(s) used (television, radio, newspaper, computer or mobile devices), the place, the time, the duration and the type of information and outlets consumed.

Each participant was interviewed twice: once to establish contact, explain the media diary, and do a preliminary interview; and an in-depth interview was conducted after the seven days completion period, to give the individuals the possibility to reflect and voice their practices inscribed day after day, as well as to widen the field of investigation initiated during the first meeting. This research protocol matched the researchers’ will to narrow the gap between declarative statements and individual’s realities. Indeed, Coutant (2009) emphasizes the need to go beyond the discourses on media use through qualitative studies and methods bypassing the mere enunciation of “purchase intentions,” suggesting practices’ diaries over a certain period of time and repeated interviews amongst other methods. He adds “surveys on children’s diets showed how children memorize and repeat the recommendations of the [television] program Eating, moving without this having any incidence neither on their representations of nutrition nor on their practices” (2009). In the case of this study, even if the participants were still free to note whatever they wanted during seven days, the in-depth post-diary interview implemented the emergence of eventual contradictions between discourses of the first interview, effective practices, and justification of choices during the second interview. As Hurard underlines, “it is well known in the analysis of cultural practices in its widest sense, that the declarations of individuals often shift from their effective practices” (2003, p. 203).

In addition, media diaries offered the participants a period of reflection on their media practices and from it arose many introspective interrogations as well as more precision in the expression of behaviors. In this sense, while the preliminary interview was conducted in a more directive style, often limiting the participants answers to questions of the researchers, the in-depth interview was semi-structured, providing the participants a broader space to express themselves. This space was easily filled partly by the explanation of the practices of the week and by analyzing the diary, and partly by the reflections that they had fed during the seven days, alone with their diary.

This method allowed to "bring out as much as possible the mental and symbolic universes that structure the practices" (Blanchet, & Gotman, 2011, p. 39), thus highlighting the value systems often linked to the attachment to a particular media, and reflecting the domestic and/or professional
influence, the perception of media brands, the place information in daily life, the justification for the act of subscription or, conversely, the act of non-purchase, etc.

Two guides were established prior to data collection leading to interviews lasting around 45 minutes (initial interviews) and 90 minutes (in-depth interviews). However, the researchers gave less importance to the duration of the interview than to the effect of saturation, concluding the interview once the participant had answer all questions thoroughly and began to repeat ideas.

Afterwards, once the fieldwork completed, interviews were transcribed, with the exception of out-of-context discourse that are "breaks that participants give themselves to relax" (Andreani & Conchon, 2003, p. 4), and reflecting the participants ease to deviate from initial conversations to set personal stories, stories of life and everyday situations, which are signs of the interviewees acceptance of the researchers’ incursions in his private life. Aside from the initial hypotheses, the in-depth analysis of transcripts and the use of an inductive approach, gave rise to categories of analysis.

The encoding process therefore resulted in subsets of elements raised by participants: the role of media, the use of new and traditional technologies, or the various external influences on the public’s media use (professional, financial, family, and editorial). These categories of analysis were then grouped by analogy, oriented according to criteria of media uses and hybridity, to allow for the interpretation of results.

As a result of data analysis -that aims, according to Robert and Bouillaguet, at "building on the elements revealed by the categorization to establish an original and objective reading of the corpus” (as cited in Wanlin, 2007, p. 31)- users’ expectations and universes of representations in terms of news and information were decoded.

Without trying to have a panel that would be statistically representative of the Wallonian population, we tried to get a representation of the heterogeneity of the publics of the local press in French-speaking Belgium, both in respect of socio-professional profiles and in digital practices.
Nonetheless, the panel over-represents the categories *men, 45-64 years old and employed* (full time and part time), see figure 1. Indeed, on one hand men overwhelmingly answered the survey, making it difficult to find enough women to balance profiles and, on the other hand, we have been dependent on the agreement of the participants to participate in a study lasting over seven days, including several hours of interviews. Nonetheless, a big amount of retirees answered the questionnaire, a proportion that we managed limit to 17% within the panel. We are still concerned by the difficulty to reach the younger generation (under 25 years) and those with a low level of education and one should keep that in mind when reading our results.

On this point we need to emphasize the main criterion for panel inclusion, which is the regular reading of at least one newspaper, daily or weekly, digital or printed. This means the exclusion of non-readers of the press, which would require a different methodology, too impractical to be implemented within the general study. Considering the purpose of the project is to develop a user-friendly digital media environment, we felt it would be appropriate to focus only on those already familiar with processes of media use.

![Figure 1. Panel representation by gender, age, profession and educational degree](chart.png)
2. **Normative representations and hybridity**

Regarding news users, the concept of hybridization—which "refers to the production of a new object by combining two existing objects or by combining elements borrowed from existing objects" (Soriano, 2007)—highlights diversity of the publics needs and practices in terms of content and media forms. Therefore, through the interviews with the participants, it was possible to determine not only hybrid practices but also what they meant in terms of journalistic roles expected by users.

The first main observation coming from the data is that the representation of the role of media and the work of journalists in particular, are often very close to the traditional discourse of journalism schools. In-depth reporting, journalistic values, objectivity and access to sources are norms shared by the publics in their representation of journalism.

In-depth reporting is often cited by the participants. For them, it means to have the information dissected by the journalist, who brings out all sides to the story. Scientists (379, dentist, and 168 former chemist)\(^{15}\) value the application of proof theory "assumptions - thesis - deduction" in the production of content. In other words, a piece of news is deemed reliable if it answers the following questions: "where does it come from? Where is this going? What are its implications? ".

For the participants, media outlets should give their publics the opportunity to deepen the topics. Through hyperlinks (49 - P015), additional or related news pieces, they should provide the possibilities to interpret the importance of a subject. Information must be contextualized by the media, facilitate the understanding of social realities, and provide reading grids (335) to understand the world.

449 - Woman - 51 years old - Executive Assistant: Often, when I read global news events, I feel like I do not know the origin of all this conflict, I tell myself that I don't remember the origin of the conflict or more, that I've never known it, I don't know, and then I think I would like to go back to the beginning, and have a summary of what happened.

Participants occasionally notice a discrepancy between their level of understanding and the language used by journalists. They state that journalists should take responsibility to paraphrase "unknown" (P041) words, to specify all the abbreviations used (168), to contextualize by making "reminders" (30) or "brief summaries" (9). Otherwise the risk of seeing the users turn away from the subject or the medium itself. This results in a desire to get a "custom" language, depending on the level of education of the public, but also age specific. For example, a man finds *Focus Vif* "too sharp", "a little

\(^{15}\) The anonymity of participants was guaranteed through the allocation of a code upon delivery of their questionnaires. For example, the third questionnaire online receipt bears the number 3. For the questionnaires received in hard copy, we have also listed in order of receipt and we added the letter P. Therefore, the fifth meeting paper has been assigned the code "P005". These codes are used to introduce in this text verbatim quotes from participants.
elitist" in the cultural field while searching for a more detailed information on the world of comics, a
world that fascinates him for years (89). Conversely, a participant, it is not the intelligibility of speech
prevails but the speech itself:

321 - Man - 74 years - Pensioner: At 22:30, C dans l’air, I have not really looked at everything
but still, just to listen to these guys explain, listen, even if you do not understand.

The use of radio shows the important role played by the journalist himself, his posture, his
involvement in the transmission of information. As an intermediary, the reporter influences the
perception of information and it is the most publicized that are cited (Eddy Caelkelberghs, Sebastien
Nollevaux, Benjamin Marshall, Vrebos Pascal, etc). Specifically, the qualities of a journalist for our
participants are: neutrality (even if they claim to recognize trends in each), openness and tolerance
(in animation and moderating debates in particular), knowledge of the subject (even if they do not
define them as experts) and audacity (daring to ask tough questions, the ones that no one else can
pose). This is a non-exhaustive list of the qualities most sought by the participants.

Participating in the formation of public opinion in a democracy, the reporter must "remain neutral"
(618, P006). The notion of objectivity is a standard echoed by many respondents, and the base of
confidence on the media. "You report the facts, period. Then it’s up to us to make our judgment "(61).
The information should be as objective as possible (350), it must be neutral in politics (554), the
media should certainly not take a position (564). That’s the theory. In practice, the participants
intuitively sense the positions of each media outlet, even if they often find it difficult to clearly
identify the possible political color of their media of choice. In this sense, the editorial occupies a
special place, allowing the columnist (Béatrice Delvaux is the most often cited) to comment on
current events, often political, through the prism of the editorial line "dissecting the case" and
explaining the issues (486). According to one participant, "a print journalist can afford to say more
things than in other media" on television, for example, where the journalist takes no position (486).
The critical view on journalists and their role is sometimes underlined by claiming knowledge of the
backstage: some of the participants who had the experience of being interviewed by journalists at
some point in their lives or in contact with them as acquaintances anticipate the conditions of
production of news. The "I put myself in their place," therefore expresses empathy towards the duty
of journalists to produce "a lot in a short time", the constraints to journalistic independence and
harsh work conditions (68).

379 - Man - 59 years - Dentist: We feel very strong that a journalist does not take his pension
the day after, so it must always ensure that those interviewed agree that he will have access
the next time. (...) They must interview throughout their careers the same guys and so they
cannot get too angry. So this is to say that one manipulates the other and the other copes, he
must not go too far.
This also highlights the importance of access to sources: the journalist must benefit the consumer of its network, its relationship to give him information he would not find elsewhere (168). It should be noted that the term "media" is not for those participants a fuzzy and rough entity: the term does not refer to foreign reporters, presenters of TV news, but local or national journalists, anyway those they encountered in the field and sometimes they are very familiar (through their activities, professional or not, they can be brought to rub regularly).

3. **Convergent hybridization: Publics expectations**

For some, if a subject they know well and consider important is missing from the media agenda, they see this as an attempt to manipulate, "bread and games" offered to the public in order to keep them busy with less important information (379, P006). For instance, an environmentalist (463) engaged in various activist protests, noted the absence of a subject on the situation of overfishing in the newscast of RTBF (the Belgian public broadcaster), which she described as alarming and interprets as an evidence of the weight that politics has on media. Others denounce the use of media in the fight against terrorism; going as far as saying that they are manipulations to justify war (49).

330 - Man – 57 years old - Retired: I wonder about the power of the media in relation with the Islamic threat, are we not manipulated a little bit or even more? What bothers me is... What happened with the Islamic threat and the information disseminated by journalists: "Watch this, watch this, there are groups here and groups there." When they see a veiled woman, don’t people in the street cross over? People end up being afraid of everyone. While among Muslims, there are still 90% of good people! They are not all terrorists.

The attitude of some readers is fueled by their desire to maintain a critical mind; their media consumption is plural, a blend of various sources of information they consider necessary to be protected against manipulation (546). These practices meet the thought of Bougnoux (2006) that it is the media that guide the construction of our space and time continuum: they say when look and where to look. Media define what is "urgent, a priority and what is negligible" (pp. 20-21). That is why users’ attention can also be put on what is not said, what media do not talk about.

3.1. **Newspapers as detailed, quality news sources**

The importance of the quality of the information provided stands out in the use of various titles of newspapers, often dailies (such as Le Soir, La Libre, or Le Monde), sometimes weeklies (Vif l'Express Mail International). In contrast with other media, print media is regarded by users as the most appropriate form of quality information. This kind of discourse might be explained by the perception that the reader has of himself: "one must be an actor, you have to stop to read your article, it is too hard to do two things at the same time" (486). Unlike television where we are "distracted by images" (46), the web where it is difficult to focus on a screen (308), where the backlight is hard on the eyes
the printed press requires concentration (30) and provides a space for reflection, development and analysis (379, P053).

385 - Woman - 49 years old - Studying Human Resources: I think we can find much more relevant information in newspapers [than on TV]. On the other hand, newspapers and magazines are physical objects, anchored in the real world, and that leads to a sensory experience: touch, see, feel. The smell that emanates from the newspaper recently received, the physical contact with the newspaper, the opportunity to take it, leave it, and pick up where you left off (182), "depending on your mood" (P006) make this object an appreciated source of news. Reading the paper is associated with the notion of pleasure (308, P052), relaxation (9) and conviviality (435).

89 - Man- 61 years old - Retired: what do you think about reading the news online? Ah, I don’t like it! I do it but I prefer paper. I think it's more comfortable ... It's a matter of comfort and it is physical: having the paper, turning the pages, being able to read them on a chair, etc. In front of a screen, I do not find it enjoyable. It is not the content but it’s really a matter of attitude.

Printed news offered to the reader a "general view", inserted in a space defined by the format of the paper (P020). Each turned page provides the readers with an overview of articles and sidebars, which allows them, in a glance, to select or read parts of the page (73, 308, 291). A practice that for many seems somewhat difficult with a tablet and impossible with a smartphone (8), especially with the PDF versions of newspapers. Articles available online (even if embellished with hyperlinks opening news possibilities of information) are formatted for linear reading. Some respondents appreciate the usability of tablets, but still prefer to read on paper by force of habit, although they then describe themselves as "dinosaurs" (482), a transitional generation at the dawn of the digital era (535). Perriault contextualizes "social use is developed over time as it faces the resistance of the social body, and the force of habits and traditions that counteract the rapid diffusion of innovation" (as cited in Jouët, 2000 p. 500). Habits do play an important role. For some subscribers, reading the newspaper in the morning is a true ritual they practice daily while eating breakfast (323, 564). Retirees may dedicate up to sixty minutes to quasi exhaustive readings (190), consuming the newspaper "from A to Z", while others quickly read the headlines in the morning and return in the evening to read carefully articles identified during the first reading.

214 - Man - 54 years old – Prevention advisor: [talking about newspaper articles] This, I tell myself every morning and I’m already happy: “great, I’ll read this tonight!”.

The weekend is the ideal time for most participants, because they can take the time to read the paper (449). Reading the same newspaper provides benchmarks. Regular readers know exactly where to find various items ("the middle of La Dernière Heure, is the sport section", "in Le Soir, the pink sheets are economic," 46).
Paper as an object of everyday life is subject to various appropriations: some people take notes directly on it, while others underline, classify and retain. This applies for example to cooking recipes (73), the television program and games (Sudoku, crosswords - P004, 308, 339), or simply to regular articles "because I know they will be useful" (482). The paper passes very often from one person to another within the family home primarily but also beyond (486, 89, P006, 89, 321, 532). The division of the newspaper into different sections facilitates these exchanges.

616 - Man - 54 years old - Employee: I read [Vers L'Avenir] at work. Some of my colleagues have it, so I take a look at it, and we exchange papers. (…) Sometimes it crazy, we do a press review. One read La DH, one reads La Meuse, ...

3.2. Internet: news without boundaries

"New digital media do not differ from previous media by the conquest of another category of signs (sound and image after writing on paper), but by reducing all the signs in computer code. They can then combine and simulate all other media and participate in a hypersphere "(Soriano, 2007, p. 6), providing many opportunities in terms of hybridity.

The most popular form of hybridity seems to emerge from the social network Facebook and news media. Indeed, the combination of socialization and the news leads to a new way to stay "in touch with the outside world", to be continuously informed on a variety of topics. By disseminating brief, daily and currently free information, this (social-)media meets the users’ needs of diversity and immediacy. Users select a priori a piece of information when they choose to follow, and will then be guided by the content presented on their newsfeed. Apprehending knowledge is apparently easy (103). Evidently, users do not expect getting actually in-depth information but an overview of a subject.

Furthermore, there is a second stake that appears out of this relationship between socialization and Information: it becomes then possible to reuse of information that can be shared and discussed. Some participants have developed a virtual community around specific topics, occasionally even existing physically. For some, it appears to be the environment and ecology, for other politics. They then act as community whistleblowers, prompting their "friends" to react or at least be aware of the current situation. However, it is not the case for the majority of participants, which remain cautious about the comments on the internet. For fear of "commenting without thinking" and of "leaving a trace", they refrain from commenting on social networks or even news websites. In this regard, several users are demanding the introduction of some sort of mediation on the Internet, the integration of the journalist in the post-distribution life of articles. Someone noticed, for instance, an improvement of the quality of comments on the site of La Dernière Heure (dhnet.be) since commentators must identify themselves with their Facebook account (595). There is therefore self-
regulation once there is identification. For others, it is not enough, the reporter should therefore take the place of mediator of the virtual community in order to "raise the debate" (73). Otherwise, Hervouet notes a decline in the general culture: "It is increasingly difficult for a journalist to explain things that are more and more complicated to "customers" who know less and less about everything, even if they know more and more about little. Moreover, the reader’s time-budget, always solicited by the television and magazines, is now harassed by mobile phones or multimedia" (p. 100). Some participants also call themselves into question regarding the immediacy of information, sometimes seen as a "deception" of the media. Indeed, if it publishes information quickly and apologizes (or not) later about a wrongful information, participants' confidence in the reliability of their media is affected, depending on the scale of the journalistic error (618, 46, 8).

3.3. Audiovisual media, between entertainment and the quest for information

The search for knowledge is also coupled with the pleasure of entertaining which can be seen as a sign of hybridity. This desire answers the need to know while providing another look at the information, a “break”, a certain lightness to the news that is sometimes described as heavy in terms of emotions (such as “shock images” - 471) or complex (the interest of “general news” - 49). In this sense, television is very different from the newspaper because it is accessed more consciously for its hybridity of content presentation as infotainment. An evident element is the FIFA World Cup 2014 that has strongly influenced the uses of television of many participants at the time of the survey. Throughout the year, infotainment can be found in shows such as Sept à Huit (532 - P041) where a variety of topics are approached (both in terms of journalistic genres - survey, interview, portrait - that of types of subjects - society, health, economy, environment, miscellaneous) open to the world and specifically presented shortly. Information on regions, the land and its inhabitants are also mentioned, and seen in the newscast of France 2 and/or France 3.

9 – Woman - 29 years old – Travel agent: What do you appreciate in the TV show Thalassa ?
- I find it quite interesting, it’s not too annoying to watch, it is not too precise. This is like a movie but a more interesting. It relaxes me. This is what I’m looking for when watching TV, it is relaxation and a little information. After that, I also learn things by watching such programs.

Participants considered that television fostered a passive use of news (486), in comparison with the newspaper or the web, where an active effort is done to select what to read. The person must sit in front of the television set in order to follow, that is to say, see and hear. During the newscast, participants’ passivity perception increases with the inability to select information. The viewer has to somehow “undergo” the news because even if the headlines are displayed on the screen (as in the 12 minutes, for example) and it is possible to "pause" and "fast forward", it is not possible to directly select the desired content (9). One must therefore « often be patient » (486). Another observation
made by the participants about the newscast or other audiovisual information contained is the predominance of the image on the commentary (46).

46 - Man - 65 - Brewer: I see that people “undergo” their TV. And once that happened, it’s over, forgotten. TV makes you “stupid”, I sorry! When you read, you are forced to think. Here you receive information and hop it passes. Whereas [when you are reading], if you do not understand your topic, you re-read it. (...) Often, the anchorman goes, and then we start with the images while continuing comments. They look only at the images; they do not care about the comments, or vice versa. Two things at the same time, it is very difficult. This is the same as the subtitled film, half of the film is lost.

Criticized by some, appreciated by others, "illustrated" information might allow for a better understanding, especially for people with visual memory (618), but would be detrimental to the quality of the transmitted information. The lack of editorials in the newscast also projects a certain lack of editorial position on the part of the reporter (486).

4. **Creative hybridization: invention of uses?**

The creative hybridization in the use of news occurs when there is a shift, a gap between the originally intended by journalists and publics alike (updates on current events, understanding social changes) and actual use. Consciously or unconsciously, users will re-appropriate the object according to their own needs, thus bypassing the "dictated rules" (Barbagelata, 2013), which can be considered as a "micro-resistance" to the imposition of norms (Jouët, 2000). According Barbagelata, the contextualization of practices helps the identification of the characteristics of hybridity in news consumption. Coutant points out that hybrid practices (braconnage) are in fact the standard rather than the exception (2009).

According to the Walloon ICT Barometer, e-mail is still the most popular application of the web, but the search for information on current events comes right after (AWT, 2014). Toussaint explains "e-mail combines the delay of postal services and speed of telecommunications, the writing of letter exchanges and the spoken language of the phone" (as cited in Jouët, 2000, p. 501). Besides the possibility to keep in touch with family and friends, this means of communication has also become by hybridization a new tool for opinion exchanges about the news: users send to their friends pieces of news on specific topics corresponding to their interests.

Regarding audiovisual media, news is sometimes regarded by our sample as a source of leisure, entertainment. For instance, a participant declared watching the “Tour de France” not for the cycling news but for the “sightseeing”, admire the "beautiful scenery" and discover small towns (263). Information reception does not always require the participants’ full attention making it possible for them to enjoy other activities simultaneously. Whether it is while driving, playing sports or performing household chores, listening to information can always be coupled with other
occupations. Today, however, the proliferation of media devices has increased the possibilities of reception; participants sometimes divert traditional uses of media by re-appropriation. In this sense, televisions can substitute the radio for listening news and music (8, 339, P041, 569). 

73 - Woman - 58 years old - housewife: Then I “looked” at what I had recorded on Arte, it was on the history of electricity, while doing the dishes and preparing my beans. This is something that you don’t have to see, you can just listen to.

Private and public radio stations nowadays broadcast video from their studios, offering the possibility to see the hosts and guests and to add text information to the rest of the screen. Participants using this system to follow their favourite radio program justify it by the easiness of television access, often occupying a central place in the kitchen and/or living room, and put to the fore the fact that service information is constantly available (weather and traffic conditions). The usefulness of a classic radio device at home is called into question, especially since it is sometimes has reception problems unlike television. Moreover, the display of the time on the screen, and the shows’ schedules establish a rhythm, that goes as far as to allow the family not to be late for school or work (297). The radio can be seen as a way to “occupy” one’s mind during commutes to work for instance (9), to get informed and to have a “musical background” while doing something else (618) or to have company (P065, 190) which removes “the total absence of noise” (214).

Whether there is one person in the room or more, the simultaneity of tasks done by participants during the day often relegate the radio or television use to the background. These devices take then the role of “background noise” (49, 387, 510, P041), occupying the mental space, filling in the sound voids unintentionally created between two conversations, such as during a meal. These media integrate life spaces and become a “member of the family” (P006).

612 - Woman - 67 years old - retired: If you look at the media diary, it seems as if I watch TV all the time, but the fact is that I do not like not be in the house with total silence. So I leave it on, be it radio or TV, to have a bit of noise without really paying attention to what happens. There are sometimes soap operas and I don’t know what is going on because I’m not looking.

297 - Man - 49 years - Worker: My son goes to sleep with the radio on, on his cell phone. He has a thing that let him program it so it turns off after so long, and he falls asleep like that.

Participants also use the Internet to listen to regional radios that cannot be received elsewhere than on site (417). The computer, the tablet or the smartphone then become a kind of stereo granting them access to desired music (as on Youtube – 168, 336). Podcasts are another way of listening to radio with a delay, directly on one’s cellphone (263).

The mobility of audiovisual content developed on smartphones and tablets also brings about new uses. Today, it is possible to listen to a novel (via audiobooks) while jogging, in order “not to jog
alone” (30) and to conjugate the time granted to sport and culture. However, the hybridization of news uses on digital tools is harder to detect because these devices are themselves multifunctional.

Conclusion
Reaching the end of this communication, we are now able to clarify the expectations of the public with regard to journalism through the prism of what can now be designated as convergent hybridity and creative hybridity of news uses.

The arrival of new and digital technologies in the daily life of media users has changed some of the routines previously built. Reading the newspaper is no longer necessarily a morning ritual before work or on the way there. This practice is sometimes postponed until night-time users often finding general news on various websites and through diverse devices throughout the day. The paper version of the newspaper then brings in this context a development of news, an in-depth analysis, opening the field of knowledge and to the formation of an opinion. Watching television news always seems to be seen as an appointment (at 19:00, 19:30 or 20:00 depending on the channel), and significant within families; but it is also consulted and sometimes with a delay (via the “pause” function of television services, recordings, or on the Internet). Radio devices (and the problems of diffusion due the FM band) virtually disappear in young households and are replaced by the use of smartphones, computers or television sets to listen to their favourite radio shows and channels. The proliferation of screens and the availability of a wealth of content online blurs the boundaries and relationships between entertainment and news and creates a "screen culture" (Donnat, 2009). The partial results of this study lead us to agree with Mallein and Toussaint, “the emergence of new practices is attached to the past, to routines, to cultural relics that remain and continue to spread beyond their appearance” (as cited in Jouët 2000, p. 500). There are no new routines per se but variable adjustments to prior practices depending on the level of involvement of users and potential barriers to adoption of new media and technologies.

These practices are shaped by a very normative perception of journalistic work: plural and neutral information, with facts checked, independence and prioritization. From there, there is still room for interpretation by the journalists of particular media. While the newspaper provides a space for reflection and analysis, television imposes itself as infotainment, facilitating learning by the power of images rather than words. We agree with Soriano (2007) that the web, because of its core hybridity, combines reading and writing. However, as we found out, it equally combines consultation and completion, allows for instant dialogue between the media and their audiences. Regarding these exchanges, some of users are demanding more involvement of the journalist in this virtual community as the manager of the debate, acting as a reference of the knowledge shared or simply as the producer of the content put in the discussion.
Finally, as we have seen, the creative hybridity of news practices are a re-appropriation of information according to the needs of each user. In this regard, news are a medium for the exchange of opinions, face to face or by e-mail, and for having something to say in society. Television has clearly established itself within households, being used as a leisure activity and a source of discovery, offering programs of all kinds, to be entertained while learning. Radio represents a form of routine that fills the silence at home or in the car, when users perform a manual activity requiring their visual but not always intellectual attention.

References


Dissident online journalism and the gender controversy: Investigating Polish LGBTQ blogs

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ABSTRACT This paper shall present a part of the project “Attitudes to confessional and sexual minorities in the changing Latvian, Lithuanian and Polish media discourse”, carried out at the University of Konstanz with the support of the EU FP7 Marie Curie Programme. The project uses methods of critical and historical discourse analysis to reveal stereotypes and prejudice towards minorities in post-communist Central and Eastern European societies, and the role played by the media in the processes of constructing, reinforcing and legitimizing these attitudes. Within such a framework, it is of vast importance to study not only hegemonic discourses but also counter-discourses of the minorities in question. For this reason, the proposed paper shall focus on dissident online journalism as a kind of hybrid genre combining social activism and news reporting on the Internet. The new genre may be defined as reporting on current social, political and cultural events relevant to a minority group from its own point of view, usually in ways that challenge and oppose the view offered by the mainstream media, using social media such as blogs or social networking sites. Here, reporters are also participants of progressing events; they do not strive for objectivity but rather emphasize their involvement; they embrace and the group’s complaints and demands. The study will analyse a corpus of 30 blogs by Polish LGBTQ authors, applying the framework of positive discourse analysis (PDA) and in particular a revised typology of counter-strategies developed by Felicitas Macgilchrist. Non-ironic and ironic strategies of inversion, complexification, partial reframing and radical reframing are shown as contesting mainstream frames of news reporting. Their analysis reveals how dissident online journalism interacts with, builds upon and reappropriates mainstream frames and news reporting genre conventions in diverse, often thought-provoking and unexpected ways, with striking effects.

1. Introduction

This paper presents a part of the project “Attitudes to confessional and sexual minorities in the changing Latvian, Lithuanian and Polish media discourse”, carried out by the author at the Zukunftskolleg, University of Konstanz with the support of the EU FP7 Marie Curie Programme. The project uses methods of critical and historical discourse analysis to reveal stereotypes and prejudice towards vulnerable groups in post-communist Central and Eastern European societies, and the role played by the media in the processes of constructing, reinforcing and legitimizing these attitudes.

Within such a framework, it is of vast importance to study not only hegemonic discourses of the mass media, but also counter-discourses produced and disseminated by the groups in question. For this reason, the present paper shall exemplify such counter-discourses by focusing on dissident online LGBTQ journalism in Poland, conceptualized as a kind of hybrid genre combining social activism and alternative news reporting, and its contribution to the on-going public debate on gender (theory). The analysis offered in this paper is based on a small corpus of blogs (see the list in References; note that the blogs chosen for this study are a part of a larger project, for which reason
they are not numbered consecutively. For the full list, see Chojnicka (submitted)) written by Polish authors self-identifying as LGBTQ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer). It employs the approach of positive discourse analysis (PDA) and in particular the typology of counter-strategies developed by Felicitas Magilchrist (2007), revised on the basis of identified patterns. Non-ironic and ironic strategies of inversion, complexification, partial reframing and radical reframing are shown here as contesting mainstream frames of news reporting. Their functional analysis is expected to reveal how dissident online journalism interacts with, builds upon and re-appropriates mainstream frames and news reporting genre conventions in diverse, often thought-provoking and unexpected ways, with striking effects.

The term dissident is used here with the meaning ‘one that disagrees with, dissents from, or opposes the current political or social structure(s)’, and applies to both a person or group of persons as well as to their acts/activities, including discourse.

2. The situation of LGBTQ community in Poland

The rights of sexual “minorities” in Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) constitute the object of heated debates in politics, mass media and academia in the region itself and beyond. While it is claimed that also the so-called Western world, including the Western (old) part of the European Union and the USA, is currently experiencing a conservative backlash in the perception and assessment of rights of women and sexual minorities, the situation in CEE countries in general and Poland in particular is still an issue of special concern. Korolczuk (2014) argues that the concept of backlash, understood as an adverse reaction to something which has already gained popularity, prominence or influence, cannot be applied to Poland, where the claims of women’s and sexual rights have not yet gained stable ground or become commonsensical.

Poland belongs to the most homophobic member states of the European Union, which is reflected in a restrictive legal framework concerning LGBTQ rights. For example, while other countries of the world discuss and successfully introduce marriage equality regulations, in Poland the debate on same-sex civil union law has been on hold for years (most recently, the Parliament rejected three civil union draft bills in 2013). Another example is the “bizarre” procedure of legal gender recognition, which includes, among other humiliating requirements, suing one’s own parents (Dynarski 2014).

Poland is also characterized by a low level of social acceptance of non-heteronormative behaviors, identities and lifestyles, reflected in Graff’s (2006) claim that in Poland, it is the word homophobe – not gay or queer – which has been reclaimed and is widely used for proud self-
presentation. According to the most recent survey on discrimination based on the grounds of sexual orientation, about 13% of gays and lesbian experience physical violence, about one third—psychological violence. 70% hide their sexual orientation at the job and in public sphere. About one third claim that if offered the possibility, they would consider moving abroad. 86% Poles don’t want their children to come in touch with gays or lesbians. 40% believe that homosexual acts between consenting adults should be illegal, about the same number would prefer not to have any contact with gays and lesbians at all. Finally, only 4% believe that homosexuality is normal, and a further 55% claim that it is a deviation from the norm that should be tolerated but not accepted (Gruszczyńska 2007: 96). And although a study carried out by the Government’s Plenipotentiary for Equal Treatment showed that 49% of Poles believe gay people are not treated as fairly as straight people, the same study also indicated that only 23% of Poles were in favor of registered partnerships for same-sex couples (ILGA 2013: 176).

3. Theoretical foundations of the study

3.1. The queer perspective

Numerous publications, including some in English, document cases of human rights violations (e.g. Amnesty International 2006), discrimination, hate crimes or hate speech (e.g. Makuchowska (ed.) 2011) perpetrated against the LGBTQ community in Poland and suggest hypotheses concerning possible causes of such a state of affairs (see e.g. O’Dwyer & Schwartz 2010, Czarnecki 2007). This paper (and the project of which it is a part) takes another approach. Relying upon the social constructivist definition of reality, it considers the discourses that produce it, in this case – several discourses on and around sexuality and gender that constantly interact with, permeate, cross-fertilize, challenge and defeat each other. It may be considered a discourse-oriented version of the queer perspective. Queer research has been defined as “a collection of intellectual engagements with the relations between sex, gender and sexual desire” (Spargo 1999: 9). Its theoretical foundations may be traced back to one of the central proposals of Michel Foucault (see especially 1990) – that “sexuality is not a natural feature or fact of human life but a constructed category of experience which has historical, social and cultural, rather than biological, origins” (Spargo 1999: 12) – extended to the category of gender by Judith Butler (1990).

Here, both gender and sexuality are understood as socially and discursively constructed categories with meanings and significations determined by the circumstances of a given historical moment. It is especially relevant to the present study that gender and sexuality are constructed as separate, but closely connected categories. Patriarchal/heteronormative social systems enforce the
hegemonic binary opposition of woman=female=feminine and man=male=masculine, while at the same time presupposing everyone’s heterosexual desire (Butler’s “compulsive heterosexuality”). For sure, the distinction between (biological) sex and (social) gender (not to mention the queer assumption of the social origins of both) is rejected. Homosexuality, but not heterosexuality, is considered a choice. All this means that a gender expression which transgresses the binary sex/gender opposition raises doubts about one’s sexuality (a feminine man is suspected to be gay) and the other way round – homosexuality raises doubts about one’s sex/gender affiliation (a gay man is considered less masculine).

The system of two, and only two, sexes/genders (male and female) and sexualities (heterosexuality and homosexuality) not only ignores and stigmatizes the diversity of human gender expressions and sexual behaviors, but also presupposes the superiority of one sex (male) and one sexuality (heterosexuality) over the other. Just as the female sex is perceived as a lack, an imperfection, a weakness, so is homosexuality abnormal, unnatural, deviant. The traditional patriarchy and heteronormativity go hand in hand, and so do sexism and heterosexism. Graff points to the connection between the situation of women and sexual minorities in patriarchal social systems, arguing that the level of discrimination against homosexual men is directly linked to the position of women in a given society. The more powerful the patriarchy, the more men who do not conform to the ideal of a “real man” are persecuted and degraded (2010: 108).

As section 4.1 argues, this connection is not only a theoretical concept, but is also visible in the discursive practice.

3.2. New media and new social movements

In this article, dissident LGBTQ discourse is considered a form of activism, in accordance with the widely accepted claim that discourse is a social action (e.g. Fairclough & Wodak 1997). Together with social campaigns, parades, and other activities, online (blog) activist journalism offers a form of protest and resistance towards intolerance and discrimination against sexual “minorities”, which as a whole could be conceptualized in terms of a new social movement. This social movement unites people committed to the ideal of social equality and acceptance, including, of course, heterosexual and cissexual (not questioning their gender identity) individuals. This paper, however, will focus on the discourse produced by authors self-identifying as gay, lesbian, transgender or queer.

Jaap Van Ginneken, following John Wilson (1973), defines social movements as conscious, collective and coordinated attempts to bring about or resist large-scale change in the social order by non-institutionalized means (2003: 131). While “old” social movements, such as the workers’ movement, argued for such changes as increasing or ensuring economic security or political inclusion,
the new ones emphasize social change in identity, lifestyle and culture. Another difference is that while the former brought together activists unified by their common goal for the duration of the protest and dissolved after the goals had been achieved, the latter are present in the everyday life of their members who share identities, professions, interests, values and experiences, and not merely the feeling of injustice or a common cause (Lievrouw 2011: 47). New social movements, now including green, animal rights, anti-nuclear, anti-globalization, consumer rights, women’s rights, gay rights and identity movements, appeared in the 1960s with an important shift – that of the actors’ subjectivity and self-expression playing a greater role in social change than economic, institutional or class relations (Lievrouw 2011: 40).

The new media may be defined in terms of a particular combination of material artifacts, people’s practices, and the social and organizational arrangements involved in the process of human communication. More specifically, they use hybrid/recombinant technologies that are omnipresent and portable, constituting an increasingly essential element of people’s everyday life. They have redefined the audience’s consumption of the media – “people formerly known as the audience” (Lievrouw 2011: 125, after Rosen 2006) are now becoming media users and active participants in the process of creating contents and meanings. The new media are interactive and demanding of action – searching, linking, sharing, recommending, etc. They are also continuously reorganizing and unfolding “networks of networks” (Lievrouw 2011: 15).

The development of the new media, especially Internet and World Wide Web (www) technology, has brought new possibilities to the underground, alternative media (previously limited to street or underground magazines, illegal/pirate radio stations, and similar initiatives), giving them unprecedented opportunities of reaching wide audiences at a low cost. The Internet discourse now has “the potential of altering some of the traditional structures of speaking power where the marginal entities can now find a ‘place at the table’ and be able to challenge the dominant voices” (Mitra & Watts 2002: 489). The Internet is thus a space where alternative journalism, which employs traditional conventions of news reporting to “challenge or alter dominant, expected, or accepted ways of doing society, culture, politics” (in the words of Lievrouw, 2011: 19), may indeed claim its participation in the public debate and voice the concerns of those who do not have the right to speak using the traditional media.

New media and new social movements have more in common than just the adjective new. One of the central characteristics of the new movements is the fact that they are organized into social networks – and this social networking takes place predominantly using the new media. The media are no longer utilized merely to organize, coordinate and inform about actions of social movements; instead, they function as the actual field of action (Lievrouw 2011).
To conclude, the alternative or dissident online journalism is a hybrid or recombinant phenomenon, as it links together 1) new media and alternative media, and 2) journalism and activism. As Lievrouw writes, “the practice of journalism is adopted as a method of participation” (or activism), but this practice is explicitly separated “from the institutional role and interests of traditional news and media industries” (2011: 121). Another difference to traditional journalism is that dissident journalists take an explicit sociopolitical stance, do not conceal it and stick to it; their goal is not to strive for objectivity, but to give the voice to groups previously silenced and marginalized. In my opinion, however, this should not be considered a bias or partiality, but a commitment to plurality. Since “the institutions of news reporting and presentation are socially, economically and politically situated”, and “all news is always reported from some particular angle” (Fowler 1991: 10), striving for objectivity is a myth anyway. Being honest about the perspective they are taking, dissident journalists can never be accused of deceiving or misleading their audience.

4. Dissident LGBTQ journalism

4.1. Setting the scene: Polish discourses on gender and sexuality

In Poland, a heated debate centered around the word gender is taking place – mostly between politicians, activists and academics – reported eagerly by the mass media. The year 2013 in public discourse in Poland definitely belonged to this term. It started with the (female!) Polish MP Beata Kempa founding the parliamentary group ‘Stop to the gender ideology’ (pl. Stop ideologii gender) in January and ended with pronouncing gender “the word of the year” by a panel of professors of linguistics. The collocation gender ideology was probably first propagated by representatives of the Catholic Church, and remains one of the central concepts of the religious discourse on women’s and sexual rights in Poland. And this discourse understands gender mostly as lobbying for early and obligatory sexual education, promoting homosexuality among children and claiming that every individual should be able to freely choose and repeatedly change their gender (Korolczuk 2014). The link between gender and sexuality is clear here, but unfortunately it constitutes the only claim of gender and queer movements which has not been misunderstood. Those who propagate banning sexual education in primary schools in order to protect children from early sexualization do not see that it is actually early sexual education that protects them from sexual abuse, premature pregnancies or sexually transmitted diseases. Those who propose banning

“representations of homosexuality” from public discourse, including schools, completely ignore the existence of homosexual or questioning children in need of care and support, sentencing them to further stigmatization and marginalization. And interpreting Butler’s performativity theory as the possibility to freely choose gender is a grave and utter misunderstanding of her writings.

What is interesting, such a pairing of gender and sexuality is actually closer to the queer tradition than to gender studies, but the word queer has not become so popular – or controversial – as gender in Polish public discourse.

Graff explains that for discourses which support the hegemonic social system, the concept of gender ideology is an especially powerful weapon. For an average Polish media consumer, gender sounds foreign, alien, threatening. The somewhat worn-out, good old feminists and homosexuals have already lost this potential; they have become everyone’s neighbors. Gender is also much more inclusive; its meaning may be easily manipulated according to the needs of the moment. The hate towards gender links in itself homophobia and aversion towards the European Union with concern for family and children (Graff 2013). As the author of one of the corpus blogs put it, gender ideology can incorporate everything that Church representatives want us to hate: homosexuality, transgenderism, free and multiple changes of gender and sexual orientation, deviations as well as sexual “experiments on children and youth”.

It may be noted here that when it comes to Polish academic discourse, Kochanowski reports on a process of gender and queer perspectives becoming more and more separated, with the former reserved for feminist theories and the latter – for sexuality, or more specifically homosexuality, studies. He warns that this undermines the very essence of Butler’s efforts to prove that gender and sexuality work together as normative and constraining pillars of the same system (2010: 10). Also, limiting the understanding of queer scholarship to a “fancy” continuation of gay and lesbian studies completely misses its point. Kochanowski himself wishes to be considered an adherent of the queer perspective, but admits that the process of accepting new paradigms at Polish universities in general is painstakingly slow (2005).

It thus seems that only the discourse of a broadly defined field of queer activism (or queer movement, see the next section) reflects global queer scholarship in an accurate and precise way. This discourse uses the new media in order to argue for both women’s and sexual rights and challenge judgmental representations of gender and sexuality “transgressions”. Polish feminist authors known also from their political and/or academic undertakings, printed publications and mass media presence (Agnieszka Graff, Kinga Dunin, Kazimiera Szczuka, Magdalena Środa, and others) as well as more “private” LGBTQ bloggers do not restrict their activities to challenging only

http://dopiskipedala.blox.pl/tagi_b/559930/list-biskupow.html (November 11, 2014)
patriarchy/sexism or heteronormativity/heterosexism, respectively. They understand both as interconnected manifestations of an unjust social system.

To conclude, there seems to be a situation where conservative, fundamental political and religious discourses are disseminated by the traditional mass media interested in maintaining an issue burning, in keeping it scandalous and spectacular. The concept of gender – but not queer – is used here without much connection with or respect for its academic definition, in evaluative and emotional ways. In Agnieszka Graff’s words, it seems to function as a point of connection – a common enemy – between nationalist right-wing discourse and the discourse of the Polish Catholic Church (2013).

On the other hand, the discourses of queer activism and resistant scholarship are restricted to the new media, above all the Internet. We may thus talk not only of a conflict of divergent discourses, but also of a competition between traditional and (post-)modern media. It may be interesting to note here that the traditional – especially printed – media, which have always enjoyed a good reputation of qualitative and objective news outlets, are now increasingly criticized for harboring neoliberal, socially conservative and reactionary values.

In the remaining part of this article, I will focus exclusively on the discourse of private LGBTQ bloggers in order to show how they combine the conventions of traditional journalism with dissident, counter-hegemonic activism, against the established framework of new social movements and the new media.

4.2. Strategies of dissent

When it comes to dissident LGBTQ blog discourse, we may distinguish two types of strategies of challenging mainstream representations – they may provisionally be called ‘macro’ and ‘micro’ strategies.

4.2.1. Macro strategies

Macro strategies refer to the blog’s overall stylization – in other words, to the genre the blog draws upon or is stylized to adhere to. This stylization is generally very consistent – most, if not all, entries in the given blog follow it. There are, thus, ‘intimate’ blogs, resembling diaries or personal journals, with entries focusing on everyday life narratives and stories. There are more ‘activist’ blogs, some of them limited to reposting materials – articles, pictures, music, video – from other Internet sources, others functioning as archives of the authors’ past activities and message boards announcing future endeavors. There are ‘scholarly’ blogs with entries resembling academic articles. There are, finally, ‘journalistic’ blogs that offer original texts – reports, analyses, comments – on the
current political, social and cultural events, following traditional conventions of press/newspaper articles, with one apparent exception – the ideal (or, as some would have it, the illusion) of objectivity is not observed.

Out of 14 blogs making up the corpus for this study, 3 may be classified as intimate journals (BPL15, BPL18 and BPL30), one is devoted almost entirely to reposted content (BPL1 – here, the author seems to store all possible materials she can find on LGBTQ issues, including press reports from all over the world on e.g. the struggle for marriage equality or hate crimes against transsexuals, LGBTQ films or TV series, posters promoting tolerance, recordings of interviews with politicians, activists, and many other things; it makes her blog a fine archive of the public debate on LGBTQ rights, even if lacking a personal commentary), one is activist (BPL7 – written by the leader of the Polish NGO Trans-Fuzja), two are journalistic (BPL12 and BPL26) and another two – scholarly (BPL13 and BPL25, the latter written by a transgender person who is also a therapist), with further two which may be classified as variations of the intimate genre (BPL4 – a private/activist hybrid and BPL16 – a “literary” intimate blog which reads like a novel in installments).

The final three (BPL6, BPL17 and BPL29) are special cases of the journalistic genre that offer a subjective and often quite radical commentary on the current political and social events (although they also include an odd intimate entry). I would like to devote them particular attention in section 4.4.

In order to get a better idea of the significance of gender as a topic in these different kinds of blogs, a google search has been conducted. The search, using a simple formula gender site:”www.blogsaddress.com”, has yielded the following outcomes: BPL1 – 1.660 hits, BPL4 – 23, BPL6 – 143, BPL7 – 26, BPL12 – 46, BPL13 – 19, BPL15 – 0, BPL16 – 241, BPL17 – 23, BPL18 – 1, BPL25 – 757, BPL26 – 70, BPL29 – 6, BPL30 – 1 hit. These results, however, should not be taken as reflecting exactly the frequency of the word’s use in blog entries, as the search shows also sites carrying the respective keyword in comments’ section or in tags.

It is interesting to note that blogs classified as intimate show the smallest number of hits – 0 or 1. The large number of hits for BPL1 should be disregarded due to the fact that the blog consists only reposted material. The relatively high numbers for BPL6 and BPL25 may be explained by the fact that they focus on transsexual/transgender issues. BPL16 cannot be taken into account in a study on dissident journalism. This gives the average number of 30 uses of the word gender per blog.

4.2.2. Micro strategies

We may now turn our attention to the micro strategies, which refer to the ways of constructing and framing individual texts or fragments of texts. These are what Macgilchrist (2007)
terms counter-strategies that contest the mainstream frames of news reporting – in order words, reframing strategies. He defines reframing as “shifting an issue away from its conventional ‘location’ within one set of shared assumptions and reconstructing it within a different set of knowledges. In this way the issue is assigned a different interpretation, i.e. comes to have a different ‘meaning’ in its new context” (2007: 80). His typology of counter-strategies includes:

1) inversion – a strategy that contests the mainstream view by inverting it: “If, for instance, the mainstream view contends that Russia is rolling back democracy the inverted response is to argue that no, in fact it is not” (p. 76). This strategy is not very effective – the “arguments are simply ignored or disbelieved” (p. 77);

2) parody – a kind of ironic “logical inversion of the dominant stories” (p. 78) which is slightly more sophisticated than inversion but still marginalized in Macgilchrist’s corpus;

3) complexification – the strategy that involves presenting issues in all their complexity instead of trying to “keep a news frame coherent” by omitting contradictory facts or incorporating them “with distancing lexis (e.g. ‘Officials claimed’, etc.)” (p. 78). With this strategy authors include information which “undermines a simple understanding” of the issue at hand (p. 78);

4) partial reframing – a strategy whereby the mainstream view is not questioned but other perspectives are also presented (p. 81);

5) radical reframing, in turn, “involves not only dialogue with other frames, (...) but also an inversion of the mainstream view of the issue” (p. 81).

As I argue in Chojnicka (submitted), however, this typology poses certain problems. Firstly, Macgilchrist’s study concerns alternative (non-hegemonic) representations of Russia in English-language news media. It follows that while they may be in opposition to the mainstream frames of portraying this country, they still represent the position of a Western journalist; they may constitute a discourse of dissent, but not a discourse of dissidents. In Macgilchrist’s case, dissidents would be the Russians, but they remain voiceless. For the present study, it is important that the voices represented belong to the representatives of the LGBTQ community.

Also problematic is the strategy of parody. I consider this term to be too restrictive and propose substituting it with ‘irony’. An advantage of such an approach is that all the other four strategies, from inversion to radical reframing, could be used ‘ironically’ – they come in both non-ironic and ironic variants. Thus I suggest removing parody from the list of strategies and taking irony into account as an optional property of the other strategies.

Such a revised and combined approach to counter-strategies and irony results in a twofold classification of dissident texts: first, according to the counter-strategies they employ; second,
according to whether they are non-ironic or ironic. This classification shall be applied to the analysis of dissident LGBTQ journalism on the topic of gender in what follows.

4.3. Examples of reframing strategies

4.3.1. Inversion

The strategy of inversion is used to negate statements considered untrue or unjust. As the examples below show, the statement to counter is often quoted explicitly, and its negation follows:

(1) *Australia przeciętnemu polskiemu gejowi czy lesbijce wydaje się być oazą tolerancji i poszanowania praw osób homoseksualnych. A to okazuje się być w zetknięciu z rzeczywistością niestety mitem. (…) W Australii nie dość że istnieje ustawowy zakaz małżeństw homoseksualnych (...) to co chwilę dochodzą smutne wieści o tym, że fundamentalizm religijny niestety triumfuje nad zdrowym rozsądkiem.*

To an average Polish gay or lesbian, Australia seems an oasis of tolerance and respect for homosexual people’s rights. But this in confrontation with reality unfortunately turns out to be a myth. (…) Not only is there a statutory ban on homosexual marriages in Australia (...) but also more and more sad news on religious fundamentalism triumphing over common sense.

(2) *Małżeństwo i rodzina nie są naturalne, co nic im zresztą nie ujmuje. Małżeństwo i rodzina to instytucje społeczne, wymyślone przez człowieka.*

Marriage and family are not natural, which does not demote them in any way. Marriage and family are social institutions, created by people.

A previous study (Chojnicka submitted) did not find any ironic cases of inversion in the same corpus. The reason for this may be that irony is already a kind of inversion (the speaker means the opposite of what he says, as argued by Grice, 1989). The following example may be tentatively suggested as an “inversion of an inversion”, since the claim made by the author literally agrees with the mainstream claim (*religions are not ideologies*), but should be understood in reverse (*religions are ideologies*):

(3) [original form] *Of course, gender is to blame as well. Oh, I’m sorry, gender ideology. Because, y’know, religions are not ideologies and are not aimed to convince as many people that their way of thinking is the best way of thinking. It’s a fact. A fact that created an enormous*

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amount of preachers pushing their beliefs on other people, cultures and nations. 2000 years and counting.\(^{20}\)

4.3.2. Complexification

This strategy is concerned with presenting an issue in its full complexity and intricacy, resulting in lengthy and often academic-like, “pedagogical” texts. Not surprisingly, it is frequent in blog entries whose authors do not believe that gender and sexuality are simple systems of two mutually exclusive opposites. Thus, it is especially relevant to transsexual/transgender (BPL7 and BPL25) and bi/pansexual (e.g. BPL25) activism, but of course not limited to these matters.

The complexification strategy is hardly ever ironic if authors who choose it are driven by a sincere wish to:

- educate “lay” readers (especially texts in BPL25, e.g. on cisnorm, cissexism and transphobia\(^{21}\) or the text on pansexuality in BPL7\(^{22}\));
- show an issue from many different points of view (which does not necessarily mean objectively) – for instance, a text on the controversial video clip and lyrics to the song “My, Słowianie” in BPL6\(^{23}\);
- or indicate the internal diversification and variability of the LGBTQ community, e.g. by describing conflicts or differences of opinion within it (for instance, “Stop whining, bro!” – *How not to transition into a douchebag. A guide for trans men* (in English) in BPL7\(^{24}\)).


\(^{23}\) [http://dopiskipedala.blox.pl/2014/05/8222My-Słowianie8221-Porno-z-wycinanka-czy.html](http://dopiskipedala.blox.pl/2014/05/8222My-Słowianie8221-Porno-z-wycinanka-czy.html) (November 11, 2014)

The strategy of complexification requires lengthy and elaborated texts, for which reason it is difficult to illustrate with a short example. However, the following fragment of an entry on group socialization and young boys not conforming to gender norms may shed some more light on it:


From one point of view, all extraordinary humans (...) do not fit in with the group and do not feel good if they try to fit by force. (...) From another, it is not easy at all to be an emancipated antisocial exception, if by coincidence one is 6 years old. From a third standpoint, what should parents do -- explain? But what -- that fitting in with a group is wrong? Or right? Personally I like it a lot that the boys AT HOME can do whatever they want,

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but… shall we assume that fitting in with the group is doing what they want, or rather subtly discourage them from it? A fascinating topic.

4.3.3. Partial reframing

In Macgilchrist’s study, this strategy involves drawing on an alternative frame of reporting on an issue without directly questioning the mainstream view (2007: 81). In Chojnicka (submitted), I argue that LGBTQ dissident discourse never preserves the mainstream view unquestioned, which would make it self-contradictory. Instead, the mainstream frame is extended. For the sake of simplicity, let us assume that any in-group discourse concerning the out-group(s) may be framed in two different ways: first, by presenting the out-group negatively; second, by presenting the in-group (that is not out-group) positively. The dissident (out-group) strategies of partial reframing do not reject these frames but extend them, claiming that the negative representations can also apply to the original in-group (“you, too”) and that the positive representations can also apply to the out-group (“we, too”).

For example, an accusation that gay men are promiscuous and have multiple partners, instead of being negated or rejected, may be extended to apply to heterosexual men as well (“you, too”). And an argument for the preservation of family values could be responded to with the claim that may gay and lesbian people want to maintain long-term relationships and bring up children exactly out of respect for family values (“we, too”).

When it comes to gender issues, the “you, too” variant of partial reframing is used to emphasize that problems raised by gender studies apply to everyone, not only to transgender or intersexual individuals:

(5) [original form] *każda osoba – bez względu na swój status płciowy – powinna mieć prawo do zachowania swojej integralności cielesnej oraz modyfikacji tegoż ciała wedle własnego życzenia.*

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every person – *regardless of their gender status* – should have the right to maintain the integrity of their body and to modify this very body according to their own wishes.

The following example, in turn, illustrates the ironic variant of “you, too” partial reframing:

(6) *Ta obcesja Terlikowskiego na punkcie homoseksualizmu i jego uporczywe powtarzanie o rzekomej możliwości zmiany orientacji seksualnej dają mi niemal pewność, że Terlikowski sam ze swoją seksualnością pogodzony nie jest.*

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That Terlikowski obsesses about homosexuality and persistently repeats the claimed possibility of change of sexual orientation makes me almost certain that Terlikowski is not at peace with his own sexuality.

As a side note, the Polish term *homoseksualizm*, associated with the medical genre (the ending in *-izm* brings to mind medical diseases or disorders), is now considered outdated and the term *homoseksualność*, for which also the corresponding term *heteroseksualność* is possible, is used instead. The examples quoted here show, however, that the unwelcome old term is still widely used in conservative discourse and in counter discourses that respond to it.

The “we, too” strategy, quite predictably, can be used to represent the LGBTQ community as an integral part of the society, as people with similar values, lifestyles, problems, concerns, joys to those of straight or cissexual people, and in the following (ironic) example:

(7) *Proszę sobie wyobrazić, że biseksy również potrafią tworzyć monogamiczne związki, NAWET bez ciągłego myślenia o skoku w bok z osobnikiem tej innej płci. Proszę sobie wyobrazić, że biseksy też potrafią być oddane i NAWET potrafią być w związku z jedną i tą samą osobą (osobą jednej płci!) przez całe życie. Takie to twory, te biseksy!*  

Please, try to imagine that bisexuals can also create monogamous relationships, EVEN without constant thinking about doing it with a representative of this other sex. Please, try to imagine that bisexuals can also be faithful and EVEN can be in a relationship with one and the same person (a person of one sex!) their whole life. Such creatures they are, these bisexuals!

4.3.4. Radical reframing

In Macgilchrist’s approach, this strategy pertains to “utilising the space offered by the dominant frames to achieve a wider dissemination of marginal views. Rather than the monologue of logical arguments, reframing enters into dialogue with other issues to grab media attention” (2007: 83). When it comes to dissident blogs, this motivation seems different – rather than achieving wider dissemination or grabbing media attention, their interest is to give full, unabridged, unrestricted expression to the marginal views. The word *radical* here refers not only to the extent of reframing, but also content of those views (Chojnicka submitted).

Radical reframing also comes in two variants. In the first – “inverted positioning” – mainstream representations of out-group(s) are not questioned but rather “twisted”, diverted to apply to the in-group (not to be confused with extension). The two groups switch places – the dominating majority becomes dominated, getting the chance to see “what it feels like”. In the other

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variant, “provocation”, these mainstream representations are simply accepted and reappropriated or reclaimed with a sort of proud in-your-face attitude.

The following fragment is an example of inverted positioning, where representatives of the majority are depicted as evil, careless and deviant – which are features usually attributed to homosexuals:


A pair of bums that hangs out outside by window can go home, and since they are relatively sober they may beget a child. On our cost. Financial and social. And this child, if they will not torture it or neglect it to death, we will never give to some homosexual couple for adoption. That we will also not allow to legalize their relationship. Let them feel illegal, we will feel better then. We will be more beautiful and noble, won’t we?

In the following, on the other hand, the author uses “provocation” – by seemingly accepting the conspiracy theory of homosexuality aiming at destroying the human race, he exposes the ridiculousness of such a claim:

(9) *My, napędzacz tej maczyny, Robert Biedroń, Agnieszka Graff, Anna Grodzka, Agnieszka Kozłowska-Rajewicz, Magdalena Środa, Monika Platek, Wkurwiony Pedal i cała rzesza innych, jesteśmy po prostu źli do szpiku kości. Jedyne na czym nam naprawdę zależy w życiu, to zniszczyć polskie rodziny, doprowadzić do klęski tożsamości płciowej i promować homoseksualizm. A wszysto to po to, żeby naród polski wyginął. Gdyby tylko było to możliwe, sprowadzilibyśmy na Polskę kometę, aby zrównała z ziemią wszystkie CHRZEŚCIJANSKIE RODZINY i przyniosła klęskę człowieków.*

We, the engines of this machine, Robert Biedroń, Agnieszka Graff, Anna Grodzka, Agnieszka Kozłowska-Rajewicz, Magdalena Środa, Monika Platek, the Pissed-off Faggot and a whole lot others, are simply evil through and through. The only thing we really care about in life is to destroy Polish families, cause the defeat of sexual identity and promote homosexuality. And all this so that the Polish nation dies out. If it were only possible, we would bring a comet to Poland to extinguish all CHRISTIAN FAMILIES and crush the human race.

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31 http://dopiskipedala.blox.pl/tagi_b/559930/list-biskupow.html (November 12, 2014)
A brilliant example of ironic provocation is given below. The text pretends to take seriously the claims of gender “ideology” spreading like a disease or infection, threatening the most basic values of Polish society. Such framing, again, ridicules the “gender panic” stirred up by mainstream media in Poland.

Image above: And the bad kids will be devoured by gender (monster!)\textsuperscript{32}

\textsuperscript{32} http://dopiskipedala.blox.pl/2014/01/Gender-slowem-roku-2013-kosciola-katolickiego-w.html (November 12, 2014)
Gender has infected Polish schools. The symptoms are similar everywhere: premature sexualization, homosexual epidemics, reluctance towards holy sacraments, leftism and provoking the Catholic clergy to lecherous acts. Most recently gender has been spotted in Rybnik, where during preschool activities children were shown shocking pictures of Scots in skirts. The children, greatly affected by this devilish ideology, sensibly alarmed their parents. Thanks to the heroic reaction of local party and Church structures the epidemic was stifled in the bud. Harsh consequences will now be taken towards the school’s leaders that exposed children to emotional shock and the entire local community – to a gender infection.

Other amusing and entertaining examples of ironic provocative discourse include an invitation to “celebrate the culture of death”34 or an exclusive “interview with the demon of homosexuality”35.

4.4. Radical journalism

All the micro strategies described in section 4.3 may be found in all genres (macro strategies) of counter online discourse introduced in section 4.2.1. There are, however, certain trends or tendencies of micro + macro strategy pairing. For example, the strategy of complexification predominates in scholarly and journalistic blogs. In this section, I would like to devote singular attention to the three blogs classified as journalistic with a special focus on the commentary – BPL6, BPL17 and BPL29 – which “specialize” in the strategy of radical reframing.

This strategy is already visible in the headings of the blogs:

- the title of BPL6 is *Dopiski wkurwionego pedała* – ‘Notes of a pissed-off faggot’;
- the author of BPL17 introduces himself as *Dwubiegunowy kowal-feminista promujący homoseksualizm z pomocą Thora* ‘A bipolar blacksmith-feminist promoting homosexuality with the help of Thor’;
- the title of BPL29 is *Z życia heteroseksualistów* ‘On the life of heterosexuals’.

The first two cases represent provocation (reappropriation of the evaluative phrases *faggot* and *promoting homosexuality*) and the third one – inverted positioning (constructing heterosexuals as a weird, alien species whose behavior and rituals are worth describing).

33 http://mrdobel.blog.onet.pl/2013/12/04/z-kraju-i-ze-swiat/ (November 12, 2014)
The queer reclaiming of offensive labels in BPL6 is visible not only in the blog’s title – it is its pervasive feature, a kind of signature. To illustrate, consider the following title of an entry – *Kto nie głosuje, ten PEDAL! ‘Who does not vote is a FAGGOT!’*36. Also the fragment of an entry on a “Happy Crappy Parade” given below indicates the author’s attitude towards gender normativity which could be described as queer:

(11)każdy HAPPY i CRAPPY. Każdy w ulubionym stroju swojej wewnętrznej klirowej persony! W szpilkach, legginsach, perukach, maskach a nawet w koronie cierniowej! Byle by było z fantazją, z szaleństwem i z hukiem! A w żadnym wypadku normalnie!

Bo my nie musimy się podobać i do nikogo nie musimy się dostosowywać!37

everyone [is] HAPPY and CRAPPY. Everyone in a favorite costume of their internal queer persona! In high heels, leggings, wigs, masks or even a crown of thorns! As long as it’s with imagination, craziness and with a bang! But in no case normally!

Because we do not need to be liked or adjust to anyone!

The same blog also uses the strategy of inverted positioning, whereby it is heterosexuality that is constructed as abnormal, weird and evil, as exemplified by the following entry titles:

- Śmiercionośny seks hetero ‘Deadly hetero sex’38;
- Polacy wciąż powściągliwi wobec heteroseksualizmu ‘Poles still reserved towards heterosexuality’39.

The latter title introduces a blog entry that reproduces a report on attitudes towards gays and lesbians in Poland, conducted by a leading institution specializing in measuring public opinion. The text fully imitates that report with one exception – the word *heterosexual* substitutes all uses of the word *homosexual*. As a result, the text contains such statements as the fragment below:

(12)Tyło 39% respondentów uważa, że heteroseksualizm jest rzeczą normalną. Jedna piąta Polaków (20%) jest zdania, że choć wprawdzie heteroseksualizm nie jest normalny, to należy go tolerować, a kolejna jedna piąta (20%), że heteroseksualizm nie jest normalny i nie wolno go tolerować. Według jednej czwartej ankietowanych (25%) państwo powinno zwalczać heteroseksualistów.

Only 39% respondents think that heterosexuality is a normal thing. One fifth of all Poles (20%) believe that while heterosexuality is not normal, still it must be tolerated, and another one

fifth (20%) – that heterosexuality is not normal and it must not be tolerated. According to one fourth of respondents (25%) the state should eradicate heterosexuals.

In turn, the author of BPL17 seems to specialize in another, already mentioned variant of ironic radical reframing – whereby claims and statements by anti-gay activists, politicians and other speakers are apparently taken seriously, only to expose how little sense they make. Additionally, his confrontational, straightforward and clever style mixed with educational, pedagogical elements makes his texts especially amusing, for example:

(13) Mamy pewne oczekiwania co do tego, jak powinna wyglądać, zachowywać się, co robić i kim być prawdziwa kobieta oraz prawdziwy mężczyzna. Te oczekiwania w Polsce, w Holandii, w Maroku i we Szwecji będą oczekiwaniami odmiennymi od siebie, mimo, że kierowanymi wobec osób o zupełnie takich samych genitaliach. Dlatego też określenie „ideologia gender”, lansowane przez posłów PiS spędzających czas w domach publicznych i księży spędzających czas w młodych chłopcach, nie ma żadnego sensu. Równie dobrze możemy rozmawiać o „ideologii obiad” — dla jednego obiad to pizza, dla drugiego rosół i schabowe, dla trzeciego sushi, a dla czwartego kostka lodu i powąchanie skórki grapefruita (ale dość już o Karl Lagerfeldzie).  🛟

We have certain expectations concerning how a real woman and a real man should look, behave, what they should do and who they should be. These expectations in Poland, Holland, Morocco and Sweden will differ from each other, even though they target people with the same genitalia. That is why the term “gender ideology”, promoted by MPs of PiS spending their time in public houses and by priests pending their time in young boys, makes no sense. We can just as well talk about “dinner ideology” – to someone dinner is a pizza, to another broth and pork chops, to yet another sushi, or an ice cube and sniffing a grapefruit peel (but enough on Karl Lagerfeld).

(14) Czy męskość rośnie i maleje płynnie w zależności od tego, co na sobie mam? Dzisiaj akurat mam na sobie czarne dżinsy, czarny t-shirt i wściekłe kolorowe buty — czy to oznacza, że od kostek w górę jestem męski, a od kostek w dół nie, czy też niemęskość butów znosi męskość dżinsów?  🛟

Does masculinity increase and decrease freely in accordance to what I’m wearing? Today I actually have on black jeans, a black t-shirt and outrageously colorful shoes – does it mean that from ankles up I am masculine but from ankles down I’m not, or does the un-masculinity of my shoes cancel the masculinity of my jeans?


The author of BPL29, finally, specializes in a particular format of a blog entry whereby he literally quotes texts or fragments of texts subscribing to conservative anti-gay discourse and deconstructs them, exposing logical fallacies, lack of knowledge and other faults of argumentation. In example (15), he questions the relationship between legislation against domestic violence and same-sex union legislation, which often functions in conservative discourse as the basis for arguing against the former. In example (16), he counters the assumption that conservative values are shared by the entire Polish society, constituting its common sense. In (17), he ridicules the “hysterical” tendency of some communities in Poland to spot promotion of homosexuality (homosexual propaganda) everywhere and anywhere. These three examples come from the same text.42

(15) Zaskakuje mnie głównie to, że Gowin tak otwarcie przyznaje, że polska tradycja oparta jest na uznaniu niższości kobiet za naturalną. Nie rozumiem natomiast, skąd pomysł, że wyrównanie praw i promowanie równej roli kobiety spowoduje legalizację związków osób homoseksualnych.

I am surprised mainly by the fact that Gowin admits so openly that Polish tradition is based on assuming the inferiority of women as natural. I do not understand, however, where the idea comes from that equality of rights and roles of women will cause legalization of homosexual relationships.

(16) Oczywiście, wszystko, co konserwatywne, jest zdrowo rozsądkowe, dlatego nadal mamy niewolnictwo, kobietom nie wolno głosować, małżeństwa osób różnej rasy są zakazane, a w Sejmie wisi krzyż...

Of course, everything that is conservative is also commonsensical, and that is exactly why we still have slavery, women cannot vote, interracial marriages are prohibited, and there is a cross on the wall in the Parliament...


Do you like milk? I protest the promotion of homosexuality! What is your favourite season? I protest the promotion of homosexuality! Do you often watch musicals and listen to Celine Dion? I protest the promotion of homosexuality!

The following examples, all coming from one text, mock the argumentation of anti-gay discourse through a sort of sarcastic hyperbolization:

Moją zmywarkę też stworzył w szczególnie uprzywilejowanej pozycji: jako tę, która stanowi pomoc dla mężczyzny. Wniosek: wśród płci wyróżniamy płeć podstawową (męską) oraz dwie płci uprzywilejowane (kobiety i zmywarki).

My dishwasher [God] created also in an especially privileged position: as the help to man.
Conclusion: there is one basic gender (male) and two privileged genders (women and dishwashers).

Prawdziwy mężczyzna kobiet się nie boi, jak takiej pierdzielnie piąchą pod oko, to zaraz się robi cała kobieca i miłująca realizm i Dekalog.

A real man is not afraid of women, when he punches one of those under the eye, she will immediately become all feminine and love realism and the ten commandments.

Czyli: puszchalstwo facetów hetero oraz zostawanie przez nich księży jest wyłączną winą feministek. Gdyby głupie były bardziej kobiece i gośli co jakiś czas nogi, na pewno jakiś ksiądz już by je wiernie pokochał.

So: the promiscuity of heterosexual men and their becoming priests is all feminists’ fault. If these idiots were more feminine and shaved their legs from time to time, for sure some priest would love them faithfully.

The reader may decide for themselves whether or not it is relevant that all the three blogs, defending feminism and criticizing patriarchy so fervently, are actually written by men.

5. Conclusion

The present article has been concerned with the analysis of online Polish dissident discourse on gender, exemplified by 14 blogs written by LGBTQ authors. Over one third of these blogs (5 out of 14) could be classified as journalistic. All blogs use non-ironic and ironic strategies of inversion, complexification, partial reframing and radical reframing in order to challenge traditional or mainstream framing of the gender issue, while the blogs stylized as journalistic additionally appropriate and modify the genre conventions of news reporting. They offer highly subjective and evaluative analyses, critiques and commentaries on the current political, social and cultural events, diverging from the ideal of objectivity. It should be noted, however, that the main mainstream media in Poland take the neoliberal stance, which makes the dissident discourse an important, although still marginal contribution to plurality and diversity of perspectives on what is going on in the world.

As may be seen in the examples given, the dissident blog discourse seems to be the most informed and up-to-date as far as the scientific state of the art in gender and queer studies is concerned – even more so than the Polish academic discourse (here, an obstacle may be the lack of available publications in Polish or significant delays in publishing Polish translations of publications in
English; blog authors have no problem reading in English), not to mention mainstream media or political discourse. What is more, in accordance with the new social movement theory, the bloggers who write about women’s and gay rights “live what they preach”; in their own everyday lives, they implement the principles they defend. Many intimate entries of the male gay authors, for example, describe their homemaking activities, carried out with care and dedication traditionally ascribed to women.

These two points – a subjective and critical approach and the implementation of “preached” principles in everyday life – embed this dissident discourse in the framework of social movement actions and make it a hybrid between journalism and activism.

When it comes to radical journalism as a form of this dissident discourse, using the mainstream representation and argumentation frames in inventive, provocative ways may be considered a further form of hybridization.

These points lead to the conclusion that we see this process of hybridization on many levels and in many aspects of online LGBTQ discourse. First, as argued in section 3.2, the new media constitute a hybrid form themselves. Second, the dissident online discourse links the new media technology with alternative media mission, and alternative news reporting with social activism. Third, some cases of dissident journalism mix traditional journalistic frames with radical content, creating a strong and controversial message.

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Brand journalism: How media organizations behave on Twitter
The presence on Twitter of Flemish public (Studio Brussel, MNM) and commercial (Q-Music, JOE fm) radio channels

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**ABSTRACT** In this paper we analyze the presence on Twitter of four radio channels, both public and private, in Dutch-speaking Belgium (Flanders). A quantitative content analysis of 1003 tweets posted between 1 and 15 April 2013 by four radio channels (Studio Brussel and MNM for the public broadcaster VRT, JOE fm and Q-Music for the commercial broadcaster Medialaan) was combined with three expert interviews with the heads of digital media of Studio Brussel, MNM and JOE fm/Q-Music. The findings show that self-promotion and branding is more important than functioning as a news channel, for public and private channels alike. News is defined in terms of the channels ‘core business’ which is music news in contrast to general news (with MNM as the only exception). The tone of voice is strikingly positive and touting. Interaction with the audience is the most expressed goal in the interviews but in reality it is often solved with the least possible effort (for example retweeting messages of the audience instead of replying to them). Commercial channels take the interaction with the audience as a form of customer care more serious than do public service channels. Behavior on twitter depends on individuals rather than on organizations or organizational policy, with formal rules less developed for radio than for television. Further research is needed into the twitter behavior of individual journalists. As for the radio channels we can conclude that their tweets are the expression of a hybrid form of journalism, marketing and public relations.

**KEYWORDS** Twitter, journalism, advertising, branding, radio channels

1. Introduction

The relationship between journalists and Twitter has been extensively researched. Both Twitter as a news gathering tool and as a news dissemination tool has inspired multiple studies. Next to the possibilities also the challenges have gained attention. This study does not focus on *individual* journalists’ use of Twitter but on the behavior of media *organizations* on Twitter. Next to the literature on *journalism* and Twitter therefore, also the handling of Twitter within the field of *marketing* adds to the relevant framework for this study.

Media organizations are traditionally considered to be not only profit seeking organizations but also cultural-societal institutions with a mission to inform, educate and/or entertain the
audiences – consumers as well as citizens. This is especially true for public service media in
distinction with commercial media companies. Comparative studies mainly concentrate on
similarities and differences between public and commercial media in news bulletins on television.
We want to shift attention to radio channels instead of television channels and similarities and
differences in their behavior on twitter instead of on the screen or in the air. What side of their
identity (business or institution) is dominant on the social media platform? And is there a noticeable
difference between the public and commercial channels? This study investigates the presence on
social network Twitter of public radio channels Studio Brussel and MNM (VRT) and commercial radio
channels Q-Music and JOE fm (Medialaan). Why do they twitter and how? How do they interact with
their audience? What policy rules do they obey to?

2. Literature review

2.1 Twitter and Journalism

Twitter describes itself as ‘a real-time information network that connects [users] to the latest
stories, ideas, opinions and news about what [they] find interesting’ (Twitter.com, 2013, May 5).
Twitter therefore presents itself as a news oriented network, almost a journalist network. The
relation between Twitter and journalism has been analyzed from different perspectives.

First, Twitter is a news gathering tool. While Ahmad (2010) called Twitter a research tool,
Hermida (2010) defined the micro-blogging network as an awareness system to alert journalists to
breaking news - from wildfires to terrorist attacks or election protests and results - as well as trends
and issues hovering under the news radar. Sourcing Twitter for stories adds to the traditional
journalists’ sources such as press releases and news agencies. Amateur videos and eyewitness
accounts available on social media make ‘the citizen’ a more prominent news source than ever
before. Next to the possibilities in this context such as constancy and speed (Hermida, 2009; Farhi,
2009) or facilitating collective wisdom (Howe, 2008; Surowiecki, 2004; Gillmor, 2004), analysts have
pointed out some challenges such as the credibility of information (Castillo, Mendoza, & Poblete,
2011; Tremblay, 2010; Lysak, Cremedas, & Wolf, 2012), the threat of information overload
(Scheibehenne, Greifeneder, & Todd, 2010) or work overload (Bucher, Fieseler, & Suphan, 2013).
Other authors have warned against too high expectations. Megan Knight (2012) found a disconnect
between the extent to which journalists believe they are relying on social media and the extent to
which this is obvious to the readers. In the coverage of the Iranian elections 2009, Knight (2012, p. 61)
found that ‘sourcing practices of journalists and the traditions of coverage ensure that traditional
voices and sources are heard above the crowd’.
Second, Twitter is a news dissemination tool ‘for getting information out quickly’ (Armstrong & Fangfang, 2010, p. 210). The network facilitates the instant and constant dissemination of short fragments of information (Hermida, 2009). According to Waiske (2013, p. 7), the constant and sustained rate of communication - ‘the ability to reach multitudes of dedicated readers in a short time and with pithy bursts of information’ – gives Twitter a clear edge over competing social media tools let alone traditional media. Not only original information (breaking news) can be found on Twitter but also ‘echoes’ of news stories from traditional media (Castillo, Mendoza, & Poblete, 2011) as well as ‘advertisements’ promoting these stories (see 2.2). Again some nuances are made. Peter Verweij (2010) looked into the Twitter news flows on the occasion of three plane crashes in 2009 and though he found evidence for the awareness function of Twitter, the leap to collective truth-finding was too big a step. The use of Twitter, therefore, does not result automatically and evidently in ambient journalism in the definition of Hermida (2009, p. 301): ‘value is defined less by each individual fragment of information that may be insignificant on its own or of limited validity, but rather by the combined effect of communication’. In reality, Twitter often remains limited to a collection of fragments of information.

Third, Twitter facilitates the interaction of journalists with their audiences (Lysak, Cremedas, & Wolf, 2012). According to Farhi (2009), Twitter can be used as a community organization tool for newsrooms. Often this possibility is hailed as the most important quality of Twitter for journalists, changing the one-way traditional news flow into a bidirectional communication enabling journalists to build bonds with readers, viewers or listeners. Transparency between journalists and their audiences has been suggested a treatment for the diagnosed problem that journalism has fallen out of touch with audiences (Lowrey & Woo, 2010). Coget, Yamanchi and Suman (2008) called the internet ‘the ultimate connecting tool’. Again, Twitter might be the ‘upper ultimate’ due to speed and shortness (Waiske, 2013). But theoretical possibilities are not always realized in practice. One means to structure communication on Twitter is the use of hashtags. Page (2012) analyzed the frequency, types and grammatical context of hashtags posted by ‘ordinary’ Twitter senders as well as corporations and celebrities (among them journalists). She came to the conclusion that ‘despite claims that hashtags are ‘conversational’, ‘participatory culture’ in Twitter is not evenly distributed’ (p. 199). In contrast, status hierarchies in the offline world are reflected on Twitter. To a similar conclusion came Lee and Jang (2013) in their study of public figures communicating on Twitter with their followers: ‘such interaction is most likely to be asymmetrical in nature’ (p. 47). Also Kwak, Lee, Park and Moon (2010) showed in their study that Twitter shows a low level of reciprocity.

2.2 Twitter and marketing
The same angles reappear in the discussion of the relationship between marketing and Twitter: Twitter as a research source for companies, Twitter as a dissemination tool of information (advertisements) and Twitter as a tool for customer communication.

Corporate organizations do strategically monitor their markets and customers. They need to know who their customers are, how they respond to their products and how to adapt communication according to their needs. Twitter then acts as a research tool to traditional marketing research instruments such as surveys or focus groups. Besides a research tool, Twitter acts as a new dissemination tool to reach out to their customers. According to Bhanot (2012), Twitter and social media in general are not only one new tool, but ‘a genuine game changer for business’ (p. 47). Lis and Berz (2011) show that social media strategies behind publishing products increase purchase probability. First, Social media help to market products in an unobtrusive way consumers do not even identify as advertising. Second, social media help build a brand personality and make the brand more approachable for customers (p. 203). Schultz & Sheffer (2012, p. 97) agree that brand awareness and association create loyal consumers. Brands need to be differentiated and communicated to audiences (Yan, 2011). Social media thus became tools for ‘branding’: to enable brand exposure, to build greater awareness of the brand, to influence the perceived quality of the brand and to create positive brand associations (satisfaction, trust, attachment, identification) in order to impact on purchase (Yan, 2011; Jansen, Zhang, Sobel & Chowdury, 2009).

One means to create exposure on Twitter is the use of hashtags. Hashtags can be used to make a term searchable and therefore enhances visibility. Corporations use their company names, slogans, and product names as hashtags, promoting their company name and field of expertise (Page, 2012). When a hashtag is used with significant frequency, it may be listed in the ‘trending topics’ sidebar of the Twitter site, which can be considered ‘a signal of status and influence’ (Page, 2012, p. 185). Page (2012, p. 199) has called this form of branding a ‘strategy of amplification’. As the visual cue of the brand, however, is greatly lessened on platforms such as Twitter, it is therefore necessary for brands to build a connection with users and fostering a sense of belonging through the engagement itself (Yan, 2011, p. 690) or, in Engeseth’s terms (2005), to feel ‘one’ with the brand. Twitter stimulates viral marketing campaigns and creates buzz (Lin & Peña, 2011). Customers and audiences take over part of the communication initiated by the company. Jansen and colleagues (2009) described microblogging as ‘a form of electronic word-of-mouth for sharing consumer opinions concerning brands’. Light (2014) has called this use of (social) media and journalism skills to promote brands, ‘brand journalism’: ‘Single, repetitive messages are replaced by multi-dimensional messages
via multiple channels to multiple audiences’. Notice the parallel with Hermida’s definition of ambient journalism (2009).

Inherent to social media marketing is the interaction with and between customers. More explicitly than in concepts such as social branding or brand journalism, the customer is brought to the forefront in concepts such as customer communication or customer care (Barnes, 2008). Customer care is about being of service to your audience and solving their problems. Customer care exists offline but increasingly online. Twitter, for example, enables companies to communicate with consumers efficiently and deepen relationships with them (Lin & Peña, 2011). The concept of ‘relationship marketing’ (Christopher, Payne & Ballantyne, 1991) concerns the integration of customer service, quality-management and marketing activity (p. 264). Mini-connections with consumers created through social networking can yield positive effects on brand evaluations and purchase intentions (Naylor, Lamberton, & West, 2012). Not only one-to-one relationships with customers are beneficial to companies but also supportive are ‘brand communities’, groups of customers and admirers of a brand (Zaglia, 2013). Brand communities established on social media are found to enhance feelings of community among members and have positive effects on engagement, brand use and brand loyalty (Laroche, Habibi, Richard, & Sankaranarayanan, 2012). Making use of customer feedback also increases customer involvement and builds customer loyalty (Lis & Berz, 2011, p. 204). Handbooks and guidelines (eg. Sysomos, 2012) point out that it is worth to identify the best customers and most important players in your social media circle and actively engage with them and reward them (with special content, deals, offers,...) as they do a great job in promoting your brand.

2.3 Twitter, journalism, marketing and media organizations

Media organizations are, in the words of Lowry and Woo (2010), part business and part institution: they are ‘not only businesses, responding to economic forces; they are also deeply rooted social and cultural institutions’ (p. 42). Tensions between the journalistic and business side of news production resulted in market-driven journalism, increasingly merging journalistic news making with marketing (Siegent, Gerth & Rademacher, 2011). Today’s ‘overcrowded’ media marketplace (McDowell, 2011, p.38) doesn’t help to strengthen the institution to the prejudice of the business. News organizations have to respond to increasing competition, say also Kim, Baek and Martin (2010): ‘In an environment where different organizations often offer news that is similar, differentiating media brands is necessary for survival’ (p. 117). Branding thus is considered vital. Media organizations often build brands on their well-known anchors. The ‘brand personality’ (a set of human characteristics associated with a brand - Kim, Baek, & Martin, 2010) is closely bound with the
human characteristics of those who deliver the news, such as anchors, reporters and talk show hosts (p. 120). Schultz and Sheffer (2012) mention the ‘celebrity culture’ in which journalists and news anchors increasingly participate as celebrities. In their study they found that though many reporters are not actively trying to brand themselves, ‘the conditions are ripe for personal branding to take place’ (Schultz & Sheffer, 2012, p. 93).

Branding of media organizations serves the same purpose as branding of organizations in general: making an impact on consumption. Media networks make use of social media to promote on-air programs and transmit program-related information to viewers or listeners to steer traffic to their programs and websites in order to increase audience share (Lin & Peña, 2011). ‘Big media brands are learning that most readers are not coming through the “front door” anymore’, states Cramer (2013, p. 20). Twitter provides viewers with ‘an additional access point to the TV-show’ (Yan, 2011, p. 690). In line with this intention to steer traffic to their programs, Lin and Peña (2011) found in their study that ‘giving “suggestions”’ (type “Watch the show tonight”) is the most frequent television networks’ message content on Twitter. In addition, they found that television networks post more positive socioemotional tweets than negative socioemotional tweets as senders are interested in optimizing their self-representation on Twitter and positive emotional messages help brands generate positive attitudes among consumers and lead to more favorable branding outcomes (Lin & Peña, 2011). News, like all media content, is an experience good (Kim, Baek, & Martin, 2010, p. 118) and the experience strived for is ‘good’. Media organizations also strive to a good relationship with their audience. Bruns (2012, p. 100) however believes that general organizational accounts are often unable or unwilling to respond effectively to comments and questions received as private or public replies from their followers on Twitter, acting instead as one-directional disseminators of news updates.

3. Method

3.1 Radio channels

In our study, we did not opt for television networks but for the less researched radio networks. In 2014, Belgium celebrated ‘100 years of radio’. Radio adjusted itself successfully to consecutive changing environments, with the digital reality - including the omnipresent social media - as provisionally last phase (Declerq, 2014). Digitalization signified the end of traditional characteristics of radio (as summed up by McLeish, 2005, for example). The ‘blindness’ of radio came to an end via live streams and glimpses into the studio. The individual experience was replaced by sharing communities. The linearity and volatility was reduced through the possibility to re-listening; social media prolonged the experience of radio listening as well. Also the passive nature of
the medium is reduced due to calls to action and enhanced selectivity of the listener. Radio in Flanders is very much alive. CIM-figures of 2013 (cim.be) show that 77% of Dutch-speaking Belgian inhabitants of 12 years and older listen on a daily basis to radio.

The two main players on the radio (and television) market in Flanders are public service broadcaster VRT (Vlaamse Radio en Televisie Omroep) and commercial broadcaster Medialaan (before 2014: VMMa). Their two main television channels (Eén – VRT and VTM – Medialaan), and especially their 7 p.m. news bulletins, are the focus of numerous comparative studies. Less research attention goes to the radio channels of both media organizations (d’Haenens & Ichau, 2014, xiii-xiv).

The Decree on Radio and Television in Flanders (originally from 27 March 2009, but with numerous amendments up to 2004) (Vlaamse overheid, 2014) recognizes nationwide (that means: for the Flemish Community), regional and local radio broadcasting organizations. The four radio channels in our study, commercial broadcasters JOE fm and Q-Music, as well as public broadcasters Studio Brussel and MNM, are nationwide radio channels. Nationwide radio channels are required by decree (Art. 137) to provide a variety of programs especially with regard to information and entertainment. At least four times a day, they have to provide a news bulletin with a variety of topics (Art. 138). The mission of public service broadcaster VRT is also to reach a maximum number of media users (Art. 6 §2). Needless to say that commercial broadcaster Medialaan doesn’t need a decree assignment to strive for the same goal. Public service broadcaster VRT implements a mixed financial system. Next to government financing, the VRT generates part of its resources from radio advertising, sponsoring, exploitations of programs and derived products (e.g. merchandising). The management contract with the Flemish government imposes a limit on income from radio advertising and (television) sponsoring.

Channel profiling is the rule both at VRT and Medialaan. Each radio channel has its own target audience and program emphasis. Public broadcaster VRT runs five nationwide radio channels. Next to the more general channels Radio 1 (mass audience, news and information), Radio 2 (regional information) and Klara (culture and classical music), both Studio Brussel and MNM focus on youth and stress popular music more than information. Commercial broadcaster Medialaan has two nationwide radio channels, Q-Music and JOE fm. Both channels are oriented towards music and youth as well. Inspired by the choice for the ‘most similar systems design’ we included in our study next to both radio channels of Medialaan (Q-Music and JOE fm), the two radio channels of VRT most similar to them (Studio Brussel and MNM).

Studio Brussel was, back in 1983, the public service broadcaster’s response to the popularity of local radio channels. In April 2013, Studio Brussel celebrated its 30th birthday with a market share of 13.4% (cim.be, 2013). The channel targets 12-24 years old and calls itself ‘young at heart’. It
focuses on ‘active and eager listeners’. Music plays a central role at Studio Brussel, which is demonstrated by its motto ‘Life is Music’. In their own words, Studio Brussel ‘offers contemporary and adventurous music with special attention to the Flemish music business (music productions, clubs, concerts, festivals).’ (www.vrt.be/en/studio-brussel). Studio Brussel has some well-known anchors (radio celebrities) such as Siska Schoeters, Sam De Bruyn and An Lemmens.

MNM started its broadcasts as the successor of Radio Donna in January 2009. The channel has a market share of 9.74% but in the age group of 12 to 14 years old, MNM achieves a market share of up to 21% (cim.be, 2014). MNM presents itself as ‘the VRT’s relaxing radio station’. It clearly focuses on a young target group and offers ‘listener sized news and information, social commitment and the promotion of a team spirit’. Its music attracts young people with today’s hits and ‘the best of the 80s until now’ (www.vrt.be/en/mnm). Their most famous anchorperson is Peter Van de Veire.

Q-Music started as the first nationwide radio channel of the commercial broadcaster (VMMa at the time, later Medialaan) in November 2001. It quickly became the most popular radio channel in Flanders in the age group 18 to 34 years with a market share of 26.7% (CIM, 2014). The channel presents itself as ‘a surprising music channel for everyone who loves music, fun and action’, summarized in the slogan “Q is good for you”. (medialaan.net/radio-advertising/once-merken/q-music). Also Q-Music boasts its own celebrities with (news) anchors Wim Oosterlinck, Sven Ornelis, Kurt Rogiers, Anke Buckinx and Showbizz Bart.

In 2007, VMMa/Medialaan took commercial radio 4FM under its wings. Two years later the name was changed to JOE fm. The market share (8.46%) (cim.be, 2013) is similar to that of MNM but JOE fm focuses on a slightly older group of 30 to 40 years old. Music plays a central role, expressed in its baseline “Your greatest hits” (medialaan.net/radio-advertising/once-merken/joe-fm). Well-known anchors are Raf Van Brussel, Leen Demaré, Truus Druyts, Tess Goossens and Alexandra Potvin.

Studio Brussel and MNM started to operate on Twitter in 2009, Studio Brussel in 2010 and JOE fm in 2011. According to its digital head Vincent Vangeel, the social medium Facebook is far more important to reach the listeners of JOE fm than is Twitter. The same goes for MNM, according to MNM producer Ruth Degraeve. At the moment of the study in April 2013, Studio Brussel (@stubru) had 158.000 followers on Twitter, Q-Music (@Qmusic_BE) 72.600, MNM (@MNMbe) 63.500 and, finally, JOE fm (@joe_fm) 2.500. Behind the accounts @Qmusic_BE and @joe_fm are hidden two persons who jointly manage both accounts. @StuBru is managed by two persons as well. Behind the account @MNMbe, however, sits the whole team ‘from dj’s and reporters to producers’.

How do these channels make use of Twitter: to inform the public about newsworthy events (news dissemination tool) or to inform them about their own brand and products (marketing tool)? Do they, in the words of Lowry and Woo (2012), behave more as ‘institutions’ or as ‘businesses’?
3.2 Method

A multi-method approach was adopted to find an answer to these questions, combining content analysis with expert interviews. The bulk of the research consists of a quantitative content analysis of the tweet output of the general organizational accounts of the four radio channels during a two-week period (1-15 April 2013, extended to 1 February-15 April 2013 for JOE fm due to the low number of tweets) (N= 1003). To get an idea of the number of tweets posted by the channels per month, the program Tweetstats (www.tweetstats.com) was used. On the basis of these figures, we extended the two-week period (Q-Music, Studio Brussel, MNM) for JOE fm with an extra two months (February and March 2013). Tweets were collected with the program Snapbird (www.snapbird.org). Only the general organizational accounts of the radio channels were studied. Q-Music posted 370 tweets, MNM 180 tweets, and Studio Brussel 281 tweets between April, 1 and April, 15. JOE fm posted in the original two week period only 19 tweets, but in the extended period 172 tweets. The two-week period can be considered a typical sub-universe and every channel had some ‘special actions’. Studio Brussel celebrated its 30th birthday on April 1, 2013 with ‘Dirty Thirty partyboat’. In the same period also the final of a Flemish talent contest (‘De nieuwe lichting’) took place. Q-Music had ‘Wie wordt de nieuwe festivalchick?’ (Who becomes the new festivalchick?). Q-Music sent a female listener to all major Belgian festivals to act as an ambassador of the channel. MNM promoted ‘De strafste school van Vlaanderen’ wherein the radio channel organized a search for the most remarkable school in Flanders. JOE fm, at last, had ‘de grootste klasreünie ooit’ (the greatest class reunion ever).

The unit of analysis was each individual tweet posted by the network’s main twitter account. We analyzed each tweet on the basis of its descriptive information (i.e. date, time, channel) as well as variables such as type of tweet (original tweet, retweet, modified retweet, reply), content of tweet (news facts, promotion of programs, events, contests, calls to action), actors referred to in the tweet (anchors, celebrities, singers,..), the presence or absence of hashtags, links and multimedia materials, the use of colored words, emoticons, capitals and punctuation, the number of retweets and favorites. The codebook contained 36 variables and was loosely inspired by the coding instrument of Castillo, Mendoza and Poblete (2011) and Verweij (2010). The results were analyzed using SPSS version 21.

By definition, content analysis quantifies and analyzes the presence or absence of elements, based on a predetermined set of categories (Krippendorff, 2004). In addition, we conducted open interviews with the heads of the digital media departments and the social media editors - “the newsroom liaisons to the digital world” (Waiske, 2013) – of Studio Brussel (VRT), MNM (VRT) and Q-Music/JOE fm (Medialaan). Due to the close cooperation of Q-Music and JOE fm, only one person
(Vincent Vangeel) heads the digital media policy of both channels. MNM was represented by producer Ruth Degraeve and Stijn Van Kerkhove spoke for Studio Brussel. The interviews took place on October, 28 and 29, 2013. They were transcribed and coded via the phases of open, axial and selective coding. In this article, the section ‘results’ is largely confined to the content analysis’ results. The findings of the interviews are discussed in confrontation with the results in the ‘discussion’ section.

4. Results

4.1 Content of tweets

Tweets were coded for the presence or absence of stating own programs (own channel), programs on other channels, news facts (hard and soft news), self-contained amusement (not related to the channels’ programs), events and contests organized by the channel or with participation of the channel, and calls to action. Among all tweets (N= 1003), references to the channels’ own programs was the most frequent category. In half of the tweets (50%), a radio program of the own channel was referred to. One in four tweets (25%) contained a call to the audience (call to action), often in connection with contests organized by the channel. The category of ‘contests’ (20.5%), therefore not surprisingly, comes third. News facts were found to be present in (only) 15.6% of tweets whereas events (festivals, parties) were referred to in 15% of tweets. Less important is the dissemination of self-contained amusement such as funny videos and pictures not connected to its programs (5.2%) as well as references to programs on concurrent channels (5.2%) (see Table 1).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>PUBLIC %</th>
<th>COMMERCIAL %</th>
<th>TOTAL %</th>
<th>CHI-SQUARE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Own Programs</td>
<td>42.7</td>
<td>56.1</td>
<td>50.0</td>
<td>$X^2 = 17.773$, df=1, p=0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>News Facts</td>
<td>21.0</td>
<td>10.9</td>
<td>15.6</td>
<td>$X^2 = 19.562$, df=1, p=0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Programs</td>
<td>6.1</td>
<td>4.4</td>
<td>5.2</td>
<td>$X^2 = 1.373$, df=1, p&gt;0.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amusement</td>
<td>7.8</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>5.2</td>
<td>$X^2 = 11.956$, df=1, p&lt;0.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Events</td>
<td>20.8</td>
<td>10.0</td>
<td>15.0</td>
<td>$X^2 = 23.106$, df=1, p=0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contests</td>
<td>16.3</td>
<td>24.2</td>
<td>20.5</td>
<td>$X^2 = 9.528$, df=1, p&lt;0.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Calls to Action</td>
<td>22.2</td>
<td>27.5</td>
<td>25.0</td>
<td>$X^2 = 3.746$, df=1, p&gt;0.05</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There is a significant relationship between the type of channel (public or commercial) and the attention to news dissemination (see Table 1). Only 10.9% of tweets posted by commercial
channels (Q-Music and JOE fm) contain news facts, in comparison to 21% of tweets posted by public channels (Studio Brussel and MNM). There are, however, significant differences between the individual channels as well (see Table 2). Studio Brussel devotes as much as 28.1% of tweets to news facts, but MNM only 10%. Among the commercial channels, JOE fm reaches 15.1% but Q-Music only 8.9%. Differences between the individual channels are statistically significant ($X^2 = 50.404$, df= 3, $p= 0$).

Strikingly, the channels do not only limit their news output but also their definition of “news”. News is largely equated with music related news. Q-Music focuses on music and celebrities. In addition, the radio channel distributes exclusively positive news. JOE fm focuses on music and cultural news (e.g. movies) in general. Studio Brussel, though a public service broadcaster, has no attention to “hard news” either and focuses equally on music. Studio Brussel has a daily program “Popnews” (5.30 p.m.) but also posts updates throughout the day with the hashtag #popnieuws. General news facts (e.g. American elections) are only present on public television channel MNM. MNM also pays attention to sports (e.g. Ronde van Vlaanderen) and negative news items (e.g. the bombing in Boston).

| Table 2: content of tweets posted by Studio Brussel, MNM, JOE fm and Q-Music (N= 1003) |
|-----------------------------------------------|--|--|--|--|--|---|
| STUBRU  | MNM  | JOE FM  | Q-MUSIC  | TOTAL  | CHI-SQUARE |
| OWN PROGRAMS | 39.5%  | 47.8%  | 69.2%  | 50%  | 50.0%  | $p= 0$ |
| NEWS FACTS | 28.1%  | 10%  | 15.1%  | 8.9%  | 15.6%  | $p= 0$ |
| OTHER PROGRAMS | 3.9%  | 9.4%  | 3.5%  | 4.9%  | 5.2%  | $p < 0.05$ |
| AMUSEMENT | 9.6%  | 5.0%  | 6.4%  | 1.4%  | 5.2%  | $p= 0$ |
| EVENTS | 22.1%  | 18.9%  | 13.4%  | 8.4%  | 15%  | $p= 0$ |
| CONTESTS | 15.7%  | 17.2%  | 15.7%  | 28.1%  | 20.5%  | $p= 0$ |
| CALLS TO ACTION | 25.7%  | 16.7%  | 39.0%  | 22.2%  | 25%  | $p= 0$ |

All channels use Twitter predominantly in order to promote their own programs. The difference between public (42.7%) and commercial (56.1%) channels is statistically significant ($X^2 = 17.773$, df= 1, $p= 0$), but also the difference between individual channels ($X^2 = 38.068$, df= 3, $p= 0$) though both public channels Studio Brussel (39.5%) and MNM (47.8%) score lower on program naming than the commercial broadcasters Q-Music (50%) and JOE fm (69.2%). The data on the time of tweets show that tweeting peaks around (before and during) the channels’ major programs such
as *Ochtendshow* on MNM or *Ornelis & Vancoillie* on Q-Music. Q-Music even dares to look back on programs though looking back is less popular than announcing the program. Referring to other programs than its own, is done significantly more by MNM (9.4%) than by the three other radio channels. What is more, commercial broadcasters JOE fm and Q-Music as well as public broadcaster Studio Brussels only refer to programs of the same group (respectively Medialaan and VRT) they both radio and television programs, while MNM refers to programs both from VRT and the rival Medialaan.

There seems to emerge a pattern off public broadcasters paying more attention to disjointed amusement and events (which could be called ‘news’ in a broad sense) and commercial broadcasters preferring contests and calls to action (connected to ‘branding’). Differences between the individual channels though are more decisive than differences between broadcaster type. Concerning contests Q-Music (28.1%) stands out. ‘Calls to action’ is an important category for all channels (on average one to four of all tweets) but JOE fm (39%) clearly heads this category. Events such as festivals and performances are more important for the public channels Studio Brussel (22.1%) and MNM (18.9%) than for commercial channels JOE fm (13.4%) and Q-Music (8.4%). All channels have a clear preference for self-organized events such as ‘The greatest class reunion ever’ on JOE fm, ‘The new generation’ and ‘Dirty Thirty partyboat’ on Studio Brussel, or the QParty on Q-Music. MNM also pays attention to sport events. The channel MNM has a relatively large amount of loose amusement (9.6%) such as funny videos and entertaining tweets, disconnected from the channels’ programs. The opposite channel in this area is Q-Music with only 1.4% amusement.

**Table 3: the presence of actors on the public and commercial channels (N= 624)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ACTORS</th>
<th>PUBLIC</th>
<th>COMMERCIAL</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Guests in programs</td>
<td>2.2%</td>
<td>1.7%</td>
<td>1.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Famous people</td>
<td>17.6%</td>
<td>9.9%</td>
<td>13.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presenters, Anchors</td>
<td>16.2%</td>
<td>40.3%</td>
<td>29.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Singers, Groups</td>
<td>51.8%</td>
<td>27.3%</td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Combinations</td>
<td>12.1%</td>
<td>20.7%</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(X^2 = 68.173, \text{ df} = 4, p = 0\)

Tweets were also coded for the presence or absence of actors. In six to ten tweets (62.2%) a mention is made of an actor. As is evident in Table 3, especially commercial channels (40.3%) focus on the own radio presenters and anchors in their tweets. This is true for both Q-Music (32.4%) and JOE fm (53.8%) in comparison to public broadcasters Studio Brussel (16.8%) and MNM (15.3%) (see Table 4). Public broadcasters in contrast pay more attention to singers (and groups of singers) (51.8%)
and ‘famous people’ (17.6%) than commercial broadcasters do (27.3% and 9.9% respectively). Singers and groups are especially important to Studio Brussel (59.6%) which may be explained by its daily program ‘Popnews’. Famous people, in comparison, are relatively more important to MNM (25.2%) which may be explained by the broader news angle of the channel. Guests (on average 1.9%) are a minor actor mentioned in radio channels’ tweets.

Table 4: the presence of actors on Studio Brussel, MNM, JOE fm and Q-Music (N= 624)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>STUBRU</th>
<th>MNM</th>
<th>JOE FM</th>
<th>Q-MUSIC</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>GUESTS</td>
<td>3.1%</td>
<td>0.9%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>2.7%</td>
<td>1.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FAMOUS PEOPLE</td>
<td>12.4%</td>
<td>25.2%</td>
<td>9.2%</td>
<td>10.4%</td>
<td>13.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PRESENTERS</td>
<td>16.8%</td>
<td>15.3%</td>
<td>53.8%</td>
<td>32.4%</td>
<td>29.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SINGERS</td>
<td>59.6%</td>
<td>40.5%</td>
<td>17.7%</td>
<td>32.9%</td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COMBINED</td>
<td>8.1%</td>
<td>18.0%</td>
<td>19.2%</td>
<td>21.6%</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(X^2= 109.166, \text{ df}= 12, p= 0\)

4.2 Type of tweets

For every tweet we encoded the categories ‘original tweet’, ‘retweet’, ‘modified retweet’ and ‘reply’. Retweets occur when a tweet of someone else is forwarded by the main radio accounts to their follower list. Modified retweets are retweets with an additional comment added. A reply is an answer to a message, not necessarily a question, of someone else, directed to the radio channel or to a third party.

Table 5: type of tweets posted by public and commercial radio channels (N= 1003)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>PUBLIC</th>
<th>COMMERCIAL</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ORIGINAL TWEET</td>
<td>84.6%</td>
<td>76.8%</td>
<td>80.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(MODIFIED) RETWEET</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>7.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>REPLY</td>
<td>2.4%</td>
<td>20.3%</td>
<td>12.1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(X^2= 101.433, \text{ df}=2, p=0\)

Of the 1003 tweets, 806 (80.4%) were original posts, 121 (12.1%) were replies, 53 (5.3%) were retweets and 23 (2.3%) were modified retweets. The bulk of the tweets, therefore, are original. This observation applies to all channels though the share of original tweets varies from only 69.2% at Q-Music over 80% at MNM and 87.5% at Studio Brussel to 93% at JOE fm (see Table 6). In general, replies outweigh retweets. On closer inspection, however, there is a significant relationship between
the type of transmitter and the choice of reply or retweet (see Table 5). The commercial broadcasters clearly prefer replies above retweets while the public broadcasters prefer retweets above replies.

Table 6: type of tweets posted by Studio Brussel, MNM, JOE fm and Q-Music (N= 1003)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Studio Brussel</th>
<th>MNM</th>
<th>JOE FM</th>
<th>Q-Music</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Original Tweet</td>
<td>87.5%</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>93%</td>
<td>69.2%</td>
<td>80.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retweet</td>
<td>6.4%</td>
<td>17.2%</td>
<td>2.3%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>5.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Modified RT</td>
<td>2.8%</td>
<td>1.7%</td>
<td>0.6%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>2.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reply</td>
<td>3.2%</td>
<td>1.1%</td>
<td>4.1%</td>
<td>27.8%</td>
<td>12.1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(X^2 = 179.338, \text{ df}=6, p=0\)

Q-Music stands out as the most ‘replying’ radio channel: 27.8% of its tweets fall into this category. When the channel retweets, it always opt for the ‘modified retweet’. The three other channels retweet more often without a comment added to the forwarded tweet. To the public channels Studio Brussel and MNM, the category ‘replies’ is of minor importance. Though JOE fm only posts 4.1% replies, they still outweigh the retweets.

4.3 Constituents of tweets

The tweets were coded for the presence or absence of hashtags, links to the own website or other websites, (links to) videos and pictures, references to other Twitter accounts. All radio channels have in common that they frequently link (38.1% of all tweets) to their own website (see Table 7). There is no significant relationship between type of broadcaster – public (36.2%) versus commercial (39.7%) – and the practice of linking to the own website \(X^2 = 1.252, \text{ df}= 1, p= 0.263\). Both types do refer to the same extent to their websites. The relationship between the type of broadcaster and the use of hashtags, however, is statistically significant. Commercial broadcasters (49.3%) make use of hashtags more often than public ones (39.3%) \(X^2 = 10.078, \text{ df}= 1, p= 0.002\). The majority of hashtags refers to the own channels and their programs. Frequently used hashtags on any Twitter account are the names of programs (e.g. #Ochtendshow, #ochtendJOE, #DNL, #iTT30). Q-Music also uses the hashtag “now on Q-Music” (#nuopQ). Studio Brussel groups its music news around the hashtag #popnieuws.
Table 7: use of hashtags, links and references in tweets posted by Studio Brussel, MNM, JOE fm and Q-Music (N= 1003)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>STUBRU</th>
<th>MNM</th>
<th>JOE FM</th>
<th>Q-MUSIC</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
<th>CHI-SQUARE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>HASHTAGS</td>
<td>35.6%</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>54.1%</td>
<td>47.0%</td>
<td>44.7%</td>
<td>P&lt;0.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OWN WEBSITE</td>
<td>39.1%</td>
<td>31.7%</td>
<td>42.4%</td>
<td>38.4%</td>
<td>38.1%</td>
<td>p&gt;0.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OTHER WEBSITES</td>
<td>27.0%</td>
<td>16.1%</td>
<td>41.9%</td>
<td>10.0%</td>
<td>21.3%</td>
<td>P=0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VIDEOS</td>
<td>26.3%</td>
<td>8.9%</td>
<td>22.1%</td>
<td>10.3%</td>
<td>16.6%</td>
<td>P=0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PICTURES</td>
<td>24.2%</td>
<td>10.0%</td>
<td>24.4%</td>
<td>3.2%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>P=0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COMBINATIONS</td>
<td>2.8%</td>
<td>0.6%</td>
<td>5.2%</td>
<td>0.5%</td>
<td>2.0%</td>
<td>P&lt;0.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TWITTER ACCOUNTS</td>
<td>44.5%</td>
<td>48.9%</td>
<td>54.7%</td>
<td>68.6%</td>
<td>55.9%</td>
<td>P=0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A significant difference between commercial (64.2%) and public (46.2%) radio channels is also found for the mentions to twitter accounts ($X^2 = 32.756$, df= 1, $p= 0$) but this last difference can be traced largely to the difference between ‘replies’ and ‘retweets’ on both types (see 4.2). Presenters, anchors and ‘famous people’ are also frequently referred to with their twitter account. For the other constituents, individual channel differences are more important than type differences. Commercial JOE fm, for example, stands out in linking to third party websites (41.9%) while the other commercial channel, Q-Music (10%) links the least. The inclusion of (music) videos and photos is unevenly scattered among the channels, but indifferently to the type of channel. Photos are mainly used by the channels to give followers a look behind the scenes. They picture the studio, presenters and guests by which they give the radio a face.

4.4 ‘Tone of voice’ of tweets

We counted the number of ‘positive’ (e.g. ‘wonderful’, ‘Hurray!’) and ‘negative’ (e.g. ‘merciless’, ‘hate’) words in the tweets as well as the presence and absence of positive (e.g. ‘☺’) and negative (e.g. 😞) emoticons, the use of punctuation (?, !), capitals (e.g. ‘WOEHOE’), quotation marks and metaphors, and the mention of criticism.

Public (M= 0.38) and commercial (M= 0.34) channels do not differ from one another in the use of positive words ($t= 0.950$, df= 1001, $p= 0.342$). The Anova-test with post hoc Bonferroni test, however, revealed differences between the individual channels crossing the different types. Public channel Studio Brussel (M= 0.49) and commercial channel JOE fm (M= 0.45) do not differ significantly from one another. The same applies to public MNM (M= 0.21) and commercial Q-Music (M= 0.05).
Both pairs however differ significantly from the channels of the other pair. Studio Brussel and JOE fm use positive words more frequently than do MNM and Q-Music.

### Table 8: number of ‘positive’ words per channel and per type of channel (N= 1003)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Channel</th>
<th>MEAN</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>MAX</th>
<th>N</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>STUDIO BRUSSEL</td>
<td>0.49</td>
<td>0.677</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>281</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MNM</td>
<td>0.21</td>
<td>0.445</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>180</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JOE FM</td>
<td>0.45</td>
<td>0.660</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>172</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q-MUSIC</td>
<td>0.05</td>
<td>0.221</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>370</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PUBLIC</td>
<td>0.38</td>
<td>0.612</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>461</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COMMERCIAL</td>
<td>0.34</td>
<td>0.599</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>542</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The difference between public (M= 0.12) and commercial (M= 0.07) channels concerning the use of negative words is statistically significant (t= 2.249, df= 800.895, p= 0.025). Commercial channels make even less use of negative words than public channels. The Anova test (with Bonferroni ad hoc test) reveals that Studio Brussel (M= 0.18) differs significantly from both MNM (M= 0.02) and Q-Music (M= 0.05) but not from JOE fm (M= 0.11). JOE fm does not differ significantly from any other channel.

### Table 9: number of ‘negative’ words per channel and per type of channel (N= 1003)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Channel</th>
<th>MEAN</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>MAX</th>
<th>N</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>STUDIO BRUSSEL</td>
<td>0.18</td>
<td>0.459</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>281</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MNM</td>
<td>0.02</td>
<td>0.148</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>180</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JOE FM</td>
<td>0.11</td>
<td>0.332</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>172</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q-MUSIC</td>
<td>0.05</td>
<td>0.221</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>370</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PUBLIC</td>
<td>0.12</td>
<td>0.378</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>461</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COMMERCIAL</td>
<td>0.07</td>
<td>0.263</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>542</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The preference for positive language and aversion to negative attitudes is confirmed by other data on language use. Negative emoticons are not used at all, not by public nor by commercial channels. Traces of criticism were not or hardly retrieved. Positive emoticons, however, are not used a lot either. Commercial channels (4.1%) use them more often than public broadcasters (1.1%). The relationship is statistically significant (X²= 8.414, df= 1, p= 0.004). Figurative language is not the standard language used in tweets. Public channels (4.6%) do not use metaphors more often than
commercial broadcasters (3.3%) \( (X^2 = 1.016, \text{df}= 1, \ p= 0.314) \), but public channel Studio Brussel (7.5%) does make use of metaphors significantly more often than the other public channel MNM (0.0%) \( (X^2 = 17.431, \text{df}= 3, \ p= 0.001) \).

Table 10: use of positive and negative emoticons, punctuation, capitals, metaphors, criticism by Studio Brussel, MNM, JOE fm and Q-Music (N= 1003)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>STUBRU</th>
<th>MNM</th>
<th>JOE FM</th>
<th>Q-MUSIC</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
<th>CHI-SQUARE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>POSITIVE EMOTICONS</td>
<td>0.4%</td>
<td>2.2%</td>
<td>1.7%</td>
<td>5.1%</td>
<td>2.7%</td>
<td>P=0.002</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NEGATIVE EMOTICONS</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“?”</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>23.3%</td>
<td>41.3%</td>
<td>22.2%</td>
<td>25.3%</td>
<td>P= 0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“!”</td>
<td>45.6%</td>
<td>38.9%</td>
<td>38.4%</td>
<td>53.5%</td>
<td>46.1%</td>
<td>P=0.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CAPITALS</td>
<td>3.9%</td>
<td>2.2%</td>
<td>4.1%</td>
<td>2.2%</td>
<td>3.0%</td>
<td>p&gt;0.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>METAPHOR</td>
<td>7.5%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>3.5%</td>
<td>3.2%</td>
<td>3.9%</td>
<td>P= 0.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“ “</td>
<td>14.6%</td>
<td>13.9%</td>
<td>1.2%</td>
<td>6.5%</td>
<td>9.2%</td>
<td>P= 0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CRITICISM</td>
<td>1.4%</td>
<td>1.1%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0.6%</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Punctuation is more widely used with exclamation marks (46.1%) more common than question marks (25.3%). Both question marks and exclamation marks are used in calls to action (e.g. ‘Take part!’), ‘You want to take part?’); exclamation marks are also used to express enthusiasm (e.g. ‘Yes!’). The difference between type of channel and use of the exclamation mark (43% of tweets of public channels, 48.7% of tweets of commercial channels) is not statistically significant \( (X^2 = 3.325, \text{df}= 1, \ p= 0.068) \). The relationship between use of the question mark and the type of channel (21.9% of tweets of public channels and 28.2% of tweets of commercial channels) however is significant \( (X^2 = 5.261, \text{df}= 1, \ p= 0.022) \). JOE fm in particular (41.3%) stands out in using the question mark in its tweets. Quotation marks, at last, are used more often by public channels (14.3%) than by commercial ones (4.8%) \( (X^2 = 27.098, \text{df}= 1, \ p= 0) \).

4.5 Popularity of tweets

We counted the number of times a tweet was retweeted and the number of times a tweet has been designated as a favorite. Tweets of public radio channels (Studio Brussel and MNM) were retweeted on average 4.48 times in comparison to tweets of commercial radio channels (JOE fm and Q-Music) which were retweeted on average 0.89 times. An independent samples t-test \( (t= 4.969, \text{df}= \)
revealed that the mean difference is statistically significant. We also conducted an Anova-test with post hoc Bonferroni test which revealed that both public broadcasters do not significantly differ from one another and neither do the commercial channels.

Table 11: number of retweets per channel and per type of channel (N= 1003)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MEAN</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>MAX</th>
<th>N</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>STUDIO BRUSSEL</td>
<td>3.49</td>
<td>4.075</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MNM</td>
<td>6.01</td>
<td>24.036</td>
<td>228</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JOE FM</td>
<td>0.31</td>
<td>0.533</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q-MUSIC</td>
<td>1.17</td>
<td>2.257</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PUBLIC</td>
<td>4.48</td>
<td>15.377</td>
<td>228</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COMMERCIAL</td>
<td>0.89</td>
<td>1.930</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Tweets of public radio channels were also more frequently designated as favorite (M= 5.10) than tweets of commercial radio channels (M= 0.64). An independent samples t-test (t= 13.506, df= 489, p= 0) revealed that the mean difference is statistically significant. In addition, the Anova-test with post hoc Bonferroni test revealed a significant mean difference between public broadcasters Studio Brussel (M= 6.73) and MNM (M= 2.56). The commercial broadcasters JOE fm (M= 0.09) and Q-Music (M= 0.90) do not significantly differ from one another but they do differ from both Studio Brussel and MNM.

Table 12: number of favorites per channel and per type of channel (N= 1003)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MEAN</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>MAX</th>
<th>N</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>STUDIO BRUSSEL</td>
<td>6.73</td>
<td>5.712</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MNM</td>
<td>2.56</td>
<td>7.978</td>
<td>91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JOE FM</td>
<td>0.09</td>
<td>0.346</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q-MUSIC</td>
<td>0.90</td>
<td>1.544</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PUBLIC</td>
<td>5.10</td>
<td>6.984</td>
<td>91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COMMERCIAL</td>
<td>0.64</td>
<td>1.344</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5. Discussion

5.1 Why do the radio channels tweet?

All channels in the study present themselves on Twitter more as “businesses” than as “institutions” (Lowry and Woo, 2010). Branding and marketing goals outweigh news dissemination:
in half of all tweets a radio program of the own channel was referred to while news facts were found to be present in only one to six tweets. In short, Twitter became the new program guide: teasing the audience, promoting the programs, and extending their lifespan. Not surprisingly, the main twitter accounts post their tweets mainly around (this is before and during) the radio programs.

All channels use Twitter predominantly in order to promote their own programs but commercial channels do it significantly more than public ones. The former also use hashtags significantly more often than the latter. One to two tweets posted by commercial radio channels Q-Music and JOE fm contains a hashtag, usually a program name (e.g. #ochtendJOE, #iTT30). Hashtags promote the visibility of the programs and by implication the visibility of the transmitter (Page, 2012, p. 181). Q-Music (e.g. #foute128), MNM (e.g. #vertaaldeleyrics) and Studio Brussel (e.g. #vandejaren90, #deafrekening) have reached with their hashtags already the list of trending topics in Belgium which can be considered a signal of status and influence (Page, 2012, p. 185). As Page (2012, p. 199) states: ‘This form of branding [use of hashtags] is clearly in line with the discourse of marketing, which use strategies of amplification to promote commodities.’ Another tool for branding is the use of presenters and anchors (Kim, Baek & Martin, 2010). Again, especially the commercial stations Q-Music and JOE fm play their personalities. Four to ten tweets of commercial channels mention the radio presenters which is double that of public channels. Photos of studio activity serve the same goal: “to show people what we are doing and to show that it is amusing” (Vincent Vangeel, Q-Music/JOE fm).

In linking to the own website, public and commercial radio channels are each other’s equals. More than one to three tweets aspires to generate traffic to the website. This finding is consistent with the motivations to tweet, as expressed in the interviews by social media editors. “We find that people no longer easily found their way to our website, so (...) we exported our content to places where people do sit like Facebook and Twitter” says Stijn Van Kerkhove (Studio Brussel). Ruth Degraeve (MNM) calls Twitter “an additional access point” by analogy with the concept of Yan (2011). Both Degraeve (MNM) and Vangeel (Q-Music/JOE fm) see higher numbers of visitors to the site through Twitter.

5.2 How do the radio channels tweet?

In line with the aim of using Twitter for branding, the tone of voice is very optimistic. Media products are experience goods (Lis & Berz, 2011) and the experience pursued is evidently a positive one. “The tone of our tweets is very cheerful, very positive (...) sometimes we even think that we are too positive” says Vangeel (Q-Music/JOE fm). That shows itself for example in the fact that Q/JOE does not give reviews of artists that they do not consider ‘good’. Van Kerkhove (Studio Brussel)
agrees: “we avoid to release negative things.” Their statements are confirmed by the results of the analysis, which are in line with earlier studies on television (e.g. Lin & Peña, 2011). The channels keep away from negativism and criticism (e.g. absence of negative emoticons, absence of criticism). Commercial channels make use of negative words even less than public channels, but use positive emoticons (smileys) more often. Exclamation marks are used in half of the tweets to express enthusiasm. In general, the language used is quite straightforward. Metaphors and figurative language are avoided because it might cause confusion or misunderstanding. Videos and pictures are used to increase the attractiveness of tweets. All interviewees agree that the ‘social media voice’ has to equal the ‘radio voice’. Both are strikingly positive.

Written policy documents (do’s and don’ts) do exist within VRT and Medialaan only for television. Radio is left to the parties concerned. Only radio channel MNM has made a written policy document of its own with detailed instructions of ‘how to twitter’. The document stipulates how much and how frequently they post, what topics are covered, what voice of tone is used, what type of videos and photos are used, and so on. The document is felt to be necessary because everyone of MNM ‘from dj’s and reporters to producers’ (Ruth Degraeve) post tweets. On the other channels, only two persons manage the twitter account in close consultation. Oral agreements are considered sufficient to them. Behavior on twitter, it appears, depends on individuals rather than on organizations or organizational policy, with formal rules less developed for radio than for television.

5.3 How do the radio channels interact with their audience on Twitter?

The ‘call to action’ is an important category for all channels. On average one to four of all tweets falls into this category (e.g. ask listeners for their opinion, incite them to listen to a program or encourage participation in a contest) with no significant difference between public and commercial channels. JOE fm however, stands out as the champion in ‘calling’. Likewise JOE fm stands out in using the question mark in its tweets. Next to the question mark, calls to action make use of the imperative as well. Q-Music, for example, prefers the exclamation mark above the question mark to encourage the followers to action while Studio Brussel and MNM tend to prefer the question mark.

Two to ten tweets fall into the categories of (modified) retweet or reply which can be considered two ways to communicate with the audience. There is a clear link between the preference for one or the other and the type of channel. The commercial broadcasters JOE fm and especially Q-Music prefer replies above retweets while the public broadcasters Studio Brussel and MNM prefer retweets above replies. The reason why public broadcasters opt for retweeting instead of replying seems motivated by negative selection. According to Van Kerkhove, Studio Brussel gets so
many responses to a tweet that it is impossible to respond anywhere. MNM does not answer all the questions systematically but “only the decent questions” (Ruth Degraeve). Retweeting, then, is a valid alternative to replying. Studio Brussel choses to retweet or ‘favorite’ a tweet, because” it is less time-consuming.” What is important is to give the listener the feeling that he is appreciated. MNM describes retweeting as “a form of appreciation which the follower interpret as ‘MNM finds my opinion important’”. The commercial channels Q-Music and JOE fm make a positive choice for replying instead of retweeting: “Our goal is to answer everyone within 4 hours. Sometimes I only send a smiley back to still give people the feeling that their tweet is important.” says Vincent Vangeel. Customer care (Barnes, 2008) is thus more taken to heart by the commercial broadcasting than in public broadcasting.

When Q-Music retweets, it always opt for the ‘modified retweet’ in contrast to the three other channels who retweet more often without a comment added to the forwarded tweet. In the terminology of Boyd, Golder and Lotan (2010) Q-Music is clearly an “adapter”, the three other channels are “preservers”. “Preservers” maintain the original intent, context, and content when retweeting while “adapters” are willing to remove various parts of the tweet to suit their own purposes. They tend to write their own text that paraphrases the original tweet or they keep, for example, the link and remove some or all of the comments. ‘In editing, a retweeter can change the intellectual ownership of the substantive content of the message, and retweeters sometimes serve more as “authors” of ideas than “curators” of others’ work’ according to Boyd, Golder and Lotan (2010, p. 5). Q-Music clearly wants to maintain the power relationship (Page, 2012, p. 198): “It is important that our own avatar is visible in tweets, if we just retweet, it’s their picture that accompanies the tweet.” (Vincent Vangeel).

Twitter is also mentioned as a research tool, or a mere instrument of market research: “For us, social media are a source of inspiration for our programs. It enables us to see what’s going on, what the listeners are interested in, what works, and what does not work properly.” (Vincent Vangeel). Vangeel explicitly compares the social media of today to the user and listen panels of the past.

5.4 How are the radio channels’ tweets appreciated by the audience?

At the moment of the study in April 2013, Studio Brussel (@stubru) had 158.000 followers on Twitter, Q-Music (@Qmusic_BE) 72.600, MNM (@MNMbe) 63.500 and, finally, JOE fm (@joe_fm) 2.500. According to the number of followers, Studio Brussel appears as the most popular network. Visibility on Twitter, however, depends not only on the number of followers. An important factor is also the further dissemination (retweeting) of the messages originating from the account (Bruns,
Retweets are driven by the content value of the tweet, say Lin and Peña (2011), and retweeting can be considered an indicator of popularity and influence (p. 25). In this area, the public radio stations are more successful than their commercial rivals. Tweets of public radio channels Studio Brussel and MNM are retweeted on average 4.48 times in comparison to tweets of commercial radio channels JOE fm and Q-Music which were retweeted on average 0.89 times. One element of explanation for this popularity is the own ‘retweet-behavior’ of the channels. The commercial channels do not retweet themselves, but the public channels frequently retweet messages from ‘famous people’, provoking new retweeting. An example: MNM retweets a tweet from Gers Pardoel, a Dutch singer. The tweet was retweeted 222 times. This way, MNM benefits from the notoriety of the Dutch singer. Tweets of public radio channels were also more frequently designated as favorite (M= 5.10) than tweets of commercial radio channels (M= 0.64). Studio Brussel stands out as the most ‘liked’ channel judging from the number of favorited tweets.

6. Concluding note

The findings of the content analysis and interviews show similarities but also differences between the different radio channels. All channels are in accord in using Twitter mainly for marketing reasons (e.g. promoting own programs, linking to own website, calls to action, positive tone of voice) rather than news dissemination. Some findings (e.g. audience interaction, radio personalities, use of hashtags) give proof to a fault line between public service broadcasting and commercial broadcasting but as often this line is crossed by even larger differences between individual channels (e.g. individual accents and profiling). Behavior on twitter depends on individuals rather than on organizations or organizational policy, with formal rules less developed for radio than for television.

Our research is limited to the main twitter accounts of the four radio channels Studio Brussel, MNM, Q-Music and JOE fm in Flanders. We cannot conclude anything about individual journalists working for these channels and their behavior on Twitter. As for the media organizations we can conclude that their tweets are the expression of a hybrid form of journalism and marketing in which marketing goals prevail.

References


Hybridity and news tickers: An introduction to a TV news genre

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ABSTRACT This paper introduces some of the key topics of an ongoing PhD research project, focusing on a particular textual genre of TV newscasts, which was first displayed on the morning of 9/11. The genre under investigation is that of news tickers, the string of texts that crawl in the lower third space of a TV screen on certain TV news channels and programmes, displaying a summary of the major news stories. Through a corpus-based analysis, we will try to better understand which phenomena of hybridization can be identified in this genre (i.e., hybridization between TV and Web contents); and what kind of phenomena of colonization can be noticed (i.e., TV contents colonized by advertising discourse).

KEYWORDS Hybridity, Genre Analysis, Corpus Linguistics, Crawlers, Broadcast News

Introduction
On the morning of 9/11, there was more news than could fit on a TV screen (Poniewozik, 2010, November 24). Indeed, news reports and rumours abounded of new attacks, blood donations wanted for the Red Cross, buildings being evacuated, and so on. In other words, there was too much information to send through the aural channel alone and the typical graphic layout of TV news screens was too small to show all this information at once. Thus, in order to deal with the problem of information overload, each of the 24-hour American news channels implemented news tickers (also referred to as ‘crawlers’, ‘scrollers’ or ‘ticker tape’) at the bottom of their screens.

After 9/11, news tickers remained at the bottom of certain TV newscasts, becoming a way to convey to the audience a sense of never-ending emergency, which keeps viewers in front of the TV screen, waiting for more, waiting for a breaking news story, which may or may not appear.

In this respect, news tickers seem to perfectly compete with digital media, such as social networking systems. In particular, news tickers can be seen as the predecessors of Twitter (‘The truth about news tickers’, 2011, March 9), since they both share the basic purpose to give viewers and followers the most information in the least amount of time and
space. And in a social context where digital media are increasingly becoming new ways of delivering the news to viewers, news tickers seem to emulate them on a TV screen.

Finally, news tickers seem to tacitly imply that there is simply too much information to send through one channel alone. In a society where attention span is at stake since we are more and more accustomed to jump from one subject to another, news tickers can be compared to multiple windows opened on a computer screen (Poniewozik, 2010, November 24). This allows viewers, at the same time, to listen to the anchor, read the headlines of each news report and, finally, read the news tickers that are crawling at the bottom of the screen. This process seems to keep viewers in a constant state of frenzy and hunger for more information that must be satisfied in any which way.

In the following paragraphs, we are going to outline a preliminary introduction to news tickers. In particular, this analysis will highlight phenomena of hybridization (Fairclough, 1992, 2011; see also Bhatia, 2004; Kraidy, 2005) found in the genre under investigation. Indeed, as we will see, during their development, news tickers have come to share with other genres given characteristics, creating a colony in which we can distinguish between macro-genres and their textual realizations, identified in terms of the communicative purposes that they tend to serve. And these communicative purposes can be ascribed to a change in journalistic practices, which are trying to adjust to new social needs and demands.

1. Fluid journalism in TV news broadcasts

As Bauman (2000, 2005) explains, our lives and social institutions are constantly in flux, creating “[...] a society in which the conditions under which its members act change faster than it takes the ways of acting to consolidate into habits and routines” (Bauman, 2005: 1). The ceaseless fluctuation of social practices has inevitable consequences on the genres and discourses created by social institutions, since genres and discourses are socially and linguistically significant entities (Fairclough, 2011). As our society becomes characterised more and more by forms of “liquidity” (Bauman, 2000, 2005), social practices are also changing in order to stay up-to-date within this constant state of flux.

Given this picture, journalistic practices and genres “should be understood within the wider context of liquidity” (Bivens, 2014: 77), as practices which try to incorporate in their routines and in their genres the liquidity of contemporary society. However, since liquid modernity is unrestrainable, journalistic practices try to convey this flow of ever-changing
information by relying on their traditional boundaries and formats. Indeed, “[...] journalism still depends on its established mode of production, through which it largely (and unreflexively) reproduces the institutional contours of high (or “solid”) modernity” (Deuze, 2008: 856). Therefore, contemporary journalism is at the mercy of two opposite forces. The first one constraints journalism within its traditional norms of production and reproduction, while the second one leads it to new forms of fluid contents and the implementation of digital media.

As for TV news journalism, a compromise between these two divergent forces has been found in the increasing implementation of the graphic layout of TV newscasts. This information reception context has increased in its complexity in the last 30 years in TV news programmes, “such that visual stimuli are presented diversely in the visual space” in order to “provide extra information or additional messages to complement the anchor and news video” (Rodrigues, Veloso & Mealha, 2012: 357). Just as an online webpage, TV news broadcasts tend to assign to designated areas of the TV screen given functions, since viewers need to recognise immediately what they are looking at from the place where the textual element is displayed (Figure 1).

Figure 2 A screenshot taken from the programme GMT aired on February 3, 2014, showing the different graphic elements typical of the BBC World News channel.

Thus, TV news graphic layout tend to be strict in the placement of textual elements. In the following paragraph, we are going to focus on the most frequently displayed graphic elements, in order to place them in a specific area of the TV screen but, more importantly, in order to define their function(s).
1.1 Graphic elements of TV news broadcasts

Firstly, the most common and known graphic element of TV news broadcasts is represented by lower thirds, in the US also referred to as superbars (or simply supers) or as chyrons, “due to the popularity of Chyron Corporation’s Chiron I character generator, an early digital solution developed in the 1970s for rendering lower thirds” (‘Lower Third’, 2005, March 26). Even though the name of this graphic element refers to the space at the bottom of the TV screen, lower thirds rarely occupy this entire space. Typically, we can distinguish between three types of lower thirds (Rodrigues, Veloso & Mealha, 2012):

a. one-tier lower thirds: they usually present a headline of the news story currently being presented by the anchor. One-tier lower thirds are also used in order to display the name of the anchor or correspondent.

b. two-tier lower thirds: they are comprised of two lines. In the first one, the headline of the news story being presented by the anchor is displayed, while in the second one a subheadline is placed in order to add additional information about the news story. Two-tier lower thirds may also be used in order to display the name of the anchor or correspondent (in the first line) and his/her affiliation (in the second line).

c. three-tier lower thirds: even though nowadays they are rarely used during TV news broadcasts, since they seem to clutter the screen with too much information, three-tier lower thirds show, in the first line, the headline of the news story being presented by the anchor; in the second line, a subhead is added to elaborate on the main headline; and, finally, in the third line, the place and/or time the news report was originally broadcasted is displayed.

One-tier, two-tier and three-tier lower thirds are also known as local ticker texts (Jindal, Tiwari & Ghosh, 2011). This name does not refer to the relevance of the news story from a geopolitical point of view. Indeed, the adjective ‘local’ is used in order to underline that the graphic content being displayed is in sync with the news story being presented by the anchor. In other words, in the case of local ticker texts, the aural and visual channels work together in delivering the news.

Global ticker texts, on the other hand, are defined by Jindal, Tiwari & Ghosh (2011: 460) as displaying “the highlights of all important stories in the news program”, while scrolling texts provide “the gist of relatively unimportant news”.
However, we would like to point out that the definitions provided for global ticker texts and scrolling texts are too specific to the TV news channel (i.e., the TV channel *Times Now*) the authors have chosen to analyse (and, in the case of scrolling texts, we can also notice a bias towards this graphic element). Indeed, from the observation of a corpus of newscasts collected from various TV news channels and programmes (i.e., BBC World News, Fox News, CNN, ABC’s *Good Morning America* and CBS’ *This Morning*), we suggest that a more general definition of global ticker texts is needed. In this respect, global ticker texts can be defined as all the graphic elements that display news stories which are not directly related to and/or in sync with the news story being presented by the anchor. Scrolling ticker texts (also known as news tickers, crawlers or ticker tape) are a particular form of global ticker texts, which can be identified by the way they are displayed on the screen, that is, as graphic elements that scroll from the right to the left bottom of the screen. And the degree of newsworthiness of the news stories conveyed by scrolling ticker texts is bound to the journalistic practices specific to each network station.

Other typical graphic elements of TV news layout are the so-called DOGs and the locator. The DOG, which stands for Digital On-screen Graphic (Porter, 2007), is generally used in order to display the TV channel’s logo and/or the name of a particular TV news programme (Meech, 1999). Since they are static graphic elements, DOGs are also referred to as bugs, a term which metaphorically refers to their overlaying a given screen-area. DOGs are typically found at the bottom of the screen, near or as part of the lower third area. The locator, on the other hand, is a graphic element displaying the location and/or the local time of a correspondent being interviewed by the anchor (typically placed up to the left screen corner).

Given this picture on the graphic elements that are typically used during TV newscasts, our previous comment on how TV news layout has become more complex in its implementation of the information conveyed by the anchor and the news video is quite confirmed. However, we must underline that, while TV news channels and TV news programmes have increasingly been using graphic elements in the past few years, from a discourse analysis point of view, very few studies have been conducted on the topic.

An exception is represented by the work of Montgomery (2007), who focuses his attention on the discourse of two sets of headlines in TV newscasts: the first one represented by “the opening of a standard evening bulletin programme, ITN’s News at Ten”,

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and the second one by “a lunchtime BBC news programme” (Montgomery, 2007: 78). In analysing these two sets of TV headlines, Montgomery (2007) offers some interesting generalisations on the semantics and lexicogrammar of this TV broadcast genre. Another important analysis of TV news headlines is represented by the work of Bednarek & Caple (2012), who offer some examples of linguistic structures typical of TV headlines compared to the ones found in print newspapers.

Even though these analyses do offer some important insights on the nature of TV news headlines, they do not regard other graphic elements, such as subheadlines, news tickers, breaking news headlines, etc. This may be due to two reasons. Firstly, since there are no available OCR technologies that allow researchers to automatically collect large corpora of TV news graphics, their analyses tend only to focus on particular case studies, which cannot offer significant generalisations. Secondly, because some graphic elements (e.g., headlines and subheadlines) are also found in other genres (i.e., print and online newspapers), researchers tend not to regard them as elements of analysis. This can be ascribed to the fact that they misleadingly hypothesise that the observations made for print newspapers’ headlines, for instances, will also be valid for TV headlines, disregarding the fact that different media will require different genres, since their communicative purposes vary.

TV news graphics, on the other hand, have attracted the attention of some scholars belonging to the field of reception studies, where the analysis of TV news graphic layout has been most flourishing in the last few years.

1.2 When is enough . . . enough? Reception studies in the context of TV news graphic layout

As previously said, while discourse analysts have quite neglected the analysis of TV news graphic layout or focused their attention only on particular instances of them, in the field of reception studies these elements of broadcast journalism have been at the centre of numerous research studies.

For instance, Josephson & Holmes (2006) have investigated whether the attention spent by participants in different areas of the TV screen (crawler, headline, title, globe and main area) varied in three versions of the same news story. In the first version, the news story was presented without any textual contents. In the second one, the video and audio of the news story was accompanied by unrelated textual contents (i.e., crawlers). Finally, in the
third version of the news story, the video and audio was presented with both related and unrelated textual contents (i.e., headlines and crawlers). From the analysis of the data collected from an eye tracker, the results of this study suggested that the presence of unrelated textual contents (i.e., crawlers) “produced more fixation time at bottom of the screen”, while the presence of related textual contents (i.e., headlines) “drew more visual attention to that area of the screen” (Josephson & Holmes, 2006: 161). However, in both cases, the presence of related or unrelated items draw away the attention of the viewers from the main screen area, that is, from the anchor and the audio content.

Given these results, Josephson & Holmes (2006) also tested whether the information recall for audio contents of the TV news story was influenced by the presence of on-screen visual enhancements. The results of this part of their research suggested that the presence of related textual elements (i.e., headlines) enhanced the recall of key information in the news story, while unrelated textual elements (i.e., crawlers) did not diminish the recall of key information in the news story. However, “diminished recall of non-headline content suggests an interference effect as well” (Josephson & Holmes, 2006: 161). In other words, the more the screen is cluttered, the more difficult is for viewers to recall other story points, exhibiting an information interference effect.

Josephson & Holmes’ (2006) results are confirmed by Matsukawa, Miyata & Ueda’s (2009) study, whose purpose was to better understand the information redundancy effect of graphic elements in TV news programmes on viewers by using eye-tracking technology. The study was comprised of two moments: in the first one, viewers were asked to watch a TV news broadcast with eye tracking technology; in the second one, the degree to which viewers understood the contents presented in the TV news broadcast was tested. The participants to this study were divided into two groups: a first group watched the TV news broadcast with telops (in Japan, the term is used to indicate the text superimposed on a screen), while the second group watched the TV news broadcast without any telops. The analysis of the understanding of the news stories showed that the correct answer rates of the telop group were higher than those of the no-telop group. However, Matsukawa, Miyata & Ueda (2009) noticed that telops induced some misunderstandings of some questions when they tended to clutter the TV screen, thus, confirming Josephson & Holmes’ (2006) findings.
In the studies reviewed so far, we have concentrated our attention on whether TV news layout affects viewers’ understanding of the news stories being presented by the anchor. However, amongst the various TV news graphics at the centre of these studies, no distinction has been made between them in terms of which ones are viewed and, thus, used the most by viewers during TV newscasts. This is the reason why we would like to briefly review the research study conducted by Rodrigues, Veloso & Mealha (2012), who investigated which graphics during TV news broadcasts were viewed the most in terms of number of fixations as well as fixation time by analysing the data gathered from an eye tracker. The result of this study was that, in terms of visual behaviour, viewers spend more visual attention on the graphic elements that move, that is to say, the anchor (fixation points: 30.1%; fixation time: 41%) and the news ticker (fixation points: 28.6%; fixation time: 15.3%), as we can see from Figure 2.

Figure 3 Rodrigues, Veloso & Mealha (2012: 361) show the most focused elements during a TV newscast in terms of fixation time.

Thus, the analysis offered by Rodrigues, Veloso & Mealha (2012) seems to point out that, from a visual behaviour point of view, the most viewed and used graphic during TV news broadcasts is represented by news tickers, the graphic element at the centre of our investigation. This important insight justifies our interest in them. Indeed, since viewers’ attention is partly caught by crawlers, these elements of TV newscasts seem to work together with the aural channel in order to convey the news stories presented by TV news channels and programmes. Thus, an analysis of this genre is needed so as to better
understand which peculiar discursive strategies are identifiable. However, before turning our attention to some of these characteristics, a brief history of crawlers’ development will be drawn. This little excurssus in their evolution and development during the years will help us uncover some of the most interesting aspects of this genre.

2. A history of news tickers
As previously said, news tickers’ modern layout was first displayed on TV news broadcasts on the morning of 9/11. However, their development has been slow and has taken half a century to become what we now see during TV newscasts. And even though Sella (2001, December 9) argues that “the Crawl’s origins are a minor mystery in the news world”, in the following pages, we will try to solve this mystery. And we can start by explaining why they are also generally referred to as ‘news tickers’.

This term draws its origins from the ticker tape, the first mechanical instrument through which stock prices were conveyed over long distance telegraph wiring (Deese, 2011). As Deese (2011: 75) explains, Thomas Edison in 1870 “used his knowledge of telegraphy to construct the Universal Stock Ticker”, the first mechanical instrument through which stock prices were conveyed over long distance telegraph wiring. Once stock prices were telegraphed, the Universal Stock Ticker printed them at the speed of one Morse symbol per second on a rolling piece of paper called the ticker tape (‘Ticker Tape’, 2014, March 19).

Thus, the idea behind news tickers was to reproduce the tick-tacking of the Universal Stock Ticker to daily convey the most important news stories to viewers. The real-life Motograph News Bulletin, better known as the ‘zipper’, represented one of the first examples of real-life ticker tape. Built in 1928 on the One Times Square skyscraper, it was used by the New York Times to display major news headlines (McKendry, 2011). In this way, the genre of news tickers was slowly taking its form.

Nonetheless, only on January 14, 1952 news tickers were used for the first time on a TV news programme. Indeed, the NBC Today Show, during its debut, used a news ticker bar in order to display a summary of the news stories presented by the anchor. This earliest form of crawlers consisted of typewritten headlines on a piece of semi-transparent paper superimposed on the bottom third of the TV screen during the live show (Deese, 2011). Thus, this initial form of news tickers was in sync with the video content and, due to lack of technological development, key features of their modern layout (e.g., their scrolling from
the right to the left bottom corner of the TV screen) were absent. However, since this initial form of news tickers lacked in popularity, it was soon dropped by the NBC.

We will have to wait until the early 1980s to see news tickers brought back on TV news channels and programmes, but they once again evolved and fulfilled a new function (‘The truth about news tickers’, 2011, March 9). Indeed, in northern parts of the US, many local television stations started using a news ticker during their newscasts to pass along information on, for instance, school closing due to severe weather conditions. The start of the ticker’s cycle was accompanied by an audio signal, such as warning tones or a small jingle from the station’s news theme.

Two important changes in news tickers due to this new evolution of the genre must be underlined. Firstly, while news tickers were initially superimposed during TV newscasts, their migration in order to display emergency alerts brought a change in the space they were assigned to. Indeed, since emergency alerts were generally announced in the ways we have previously described (i.e., an audio signal followed by the emergency message), news tickers were forced to occupy their own space at the end of a newscast or they interrupted a newscast to convey a weather alert. Thus, they were presented as a sort of breaking news stories that interrupted the scripted flow of news delivering. In this way, news tickers started to be associated with the idea of unrelated items to the news stories being presented by the anchor.

A second change in their nature is linked to viewers’ perception of news tickers. Indeed, since they were presented as breaking news stories, viewers associated them with the idea of urgency and abruptness. Therefore, news tickers were viewed and perceived as linked to rapid and unforeseen changes in social routines.

This explains why their future developments are connected to rapid economic changes (i.e., stock market indexes) and sports results. Indeed, while ESPN in the mid-1980s brought back tickers in order to display sports results and news updates at the beginning or in the middle of each hour (the so-called ‘:28/:58 update’), in the late 1980s, CNN Headline News started using a continuous ticker, featuring stock prices during trading hours in order to compete with the Financial News Network. In this way, news tickers migrated again to their original environment, that is, they were once more used to convey stock prices over long distance. However, up until 1996, these stock tickers were manually transcribed, thus,
showing recurring human mistakes. Only in 1996, the CNNfn network started using a fully automated stock ticker.

In December 1993, HLN Sports tested the first 24/7 ticker on the GCTV cable system. The most important innovation of the HLN Sports ticker was the fully automated combination of computer-generated graphics with a wire news service that worked as follows: a computer-based software recognized the conventions and labels in the wire service data and converted them into the words and symbols displayed along the screen. Following the same path taken by HLN Sports, in 1996, ESPN2 debuted a ticker, presented as the ‘BottomLine’, which featured non-stop sport results and news.

However, we must underline that news tickers’ layout, up until 9/11, was more similar to news’ headlines, popping up from the bottom of the screen with major news or sport scores. Only on 9/11 their typical layout was developed, that is to say, a string of texts ‘crawling’ at the bottom of the TV screen from the right to the left corner (reproducing the ‘zipper’ that crowns One Times Square in New York City). Fox News was the first news network to employ news tickers on 9/11, starting a running ticker at 10:49 a.m. It was followed by CNN approximately at 11:11 a.m. and MSNBC at 2:00 p.m. (Moore, 2001, December 27).

In the UK, the development and appearance of news tickers on TV news networks and programmes was quite late compared to the US scenario. Indeed, only on November 15, 2004, the BBC World News, implemented crawlers during news broadcasting due to a radical makeover started in 2003.

While the genre of news tickers was slowly making its appearance on various TV networks, the demonstration that its conventions were recognised by viewers and associated with specific functions of the daily routine of TV newscasts is demonstrated by some examples where the genre was parodically used on TV satire programmes.

When introducing the notion of intertextuality, Fairclough (1992: 103) argues that “the intertextuality of a text can be seen as incorporating the potentially complex relationships it has with the conventions […] which are structured together to constitute an order of discourse”. In this sense, “texts may not only draw upon such conventions in a relatively straightforward way, but may also ‘reaccentuate’ them by, for example, using them ironically, parodically, or irreverently” (Fairclough, 1992: 103). Therefore, parodying a genre means recognising its conventions and use them in an exacerbated way in order to
provoke a comic reaction. In the words of Gray (2006: 47), “To laugh at parody is to acknowledge comprehension of those conventions under attack, and hence is also an acknowledgement of a genre’s artificiality”. The Australian TV programme CNNNN represents one of the most famous examples of a parodic use of news tickers. The programme, aired from September 19, 2002 to October 23, 2003 on ABC Television, represented a parody of American news channels CNN and Fox News.

![Figure 4 A screenshot taken from the first episode of the TV programme CNNNN aired on September 19, 2002 on ABC Television.](image)

Besides overtly mocking CNN and Fox News’ journalistic practices, CNNNN also featured a newsbar, where unrelated news tickers displayed fake news stories (e.g., one of them announced to viewers that “PINOCCHIO STUCK IN ABUSIVE RELATIONSHIP WITH TERMITE”; another example can be seen in Figure 3). One of the most important characteristics of news tickers which was parodied in this TV programme is represented by the exacerbation of their typical purpose of displaying ancillary news stories which, conversely, were perceived as unrelated items compared to what the news anchor was saying.

The example of the CNNNN’s parody of the genre of news tickers is, therefore, a demonstration that this genre, already in 2002, was recognised as part of the genres of TV newscasts, so blended in this news routine that in parodying one the other was subsequently parodied.

3. Hybridity and news tickers

In the brief history on the evolution of news tickers outlined in the previous paragraph, we have seen that they were first developed in order to convey economic updates. They were,
then, used in order to announce sport results and, so, they primarily dealt with numbers or they were used only under particular circumstances to display emergency alerts. Their introduction in broadcast journalism represented the final step in their evolving nature, bringing with them some of the conventions they borrowed from other genres.

Given this picture on the development of news tickers, it is no wonder that hybridity is intrinsic to their nature. Hybridity has been defined by Bhatia (2004) as the “[...] invasion of the integrity of one genre by another genre or genre convention, often leading to the creation of a hybrid form” (Bhatia, 2004: 66). Therefore, we can consider crawlers as a hybrid macro-genre (and a subgenre of broadcast journalism) since, during their development, they have come to share with other genres given characteristics, creating a colony in which we can distinguish between micro-genres and their textual realizations, identified in terms of the communicative purposes that they tend to serve.

In order to better understand this, we can metaphorically think of news tickers as flowing water. However, chemically, water is made of the combination of two molecules, hydrogen and oxygen, which have their own characteristics. Going back to our analysis, we can view news tickers as a macro-genre, which is made up of a constellation of various micro-genres. However, these micro-genres are per se macro-genres with their own generic form.

Therefore, these members of the colony fashion the macro-genre of news tickers in certain ways and with given purposes. Amongst these purposes, we are going to focus on a particular aspect of crawlers, which is nonetheless a general trend of contemporary journalism. However, as we will see, this aspect is realised in news tickers in a particular way.

3.1 Marketizing the news

In an era where user-generated contents, online news blogs and social networking systems are increasingly becoming new ways of delivering the news to the public, TV news networks are struggling to allure viewers through new forms of hybrid journalism. As BBC presenter George Alagiah confirms (as cited in Bivens, 2014: 73):

[...] we’re constantly being told that the attention span of our average viewer is about 20 seconds and if we don’t grab people – and we’ve looked at the figures – the number of
people who shift channels around in my programme now at six o’clock, there’s a movement of about 3 million people in that first minute, coming in and out.

One of the most common strategies used in order to catch viewers’ attention is represented by what has been defined as the infotainment (or conversationalization) of the news, that is, “the colonization of the discursive practices of the media by private domain practices” (Fairclough 1995: 89). This is particularly evident in nowadays political interviews, where “a mixing of the language of private-domain relationships with the language of public-domain relationships, and a mixing of the language of face-to-face interaction with the language of mass communication” can be noticed (Fairclough, 1995: 89-90).

However, one of the most pervasive colonisations of TV news genres is represented by forms of marketization, “the process whereby social domains and institutions, whose concern is not producing commodities in the narrower economic sense of goods for sale, come nevertheless to be organised and conceptualised in terms of commodity production, distribution and consumption” (Fairclough 1992: 207). In particular, in the case of crawlers, we can see these phenomena of marketization of the news in two textual realizations.

The first one is represented by the message that continuously signals the end of a complete round of tickers. In our corpus, which lists the news tickers displayed on the news channel BBC World News from March 2013 to April 2014, up until December 17, 2013, two messages were continuously displayed at the end of each round of tickers:

(a) **WEBSITE**
MORE ON ALL THESE STORIES AT bbc.com/news TWITTER FOR LATEST FOLLOW US VIA @bbcworld AND @bbcbreaking

(b) **CONTACT US**
HAVE YOUR SAY AT facebook/bbcworldnews WEBSITE: bbc.com/haveyoursay EMAIL: haveyoursay@bbc.co.uk SEND YOUR VIDEOS TO: whysvideo@bbc.co.uk FOR TERMS ON SENDING PICTURES AND VIDEOS: bbc.com/terms

From December 18, 2013 these two messages were merged together in the following scrolling text:

(c) MORE NEWS AT bbc.com/news facebook.com/bbcworldnews TWITTER @bbcworld AND @bbcbreaking SEND YOUR PICTURES & VIDEOS yourpics@bbc.co.uk
In (a), the news network promotes its online contents, signalling a shift in news promotion, since news networks are not treating their Web presence as an advertisement for the offline products (Deuze 2008), but as an extension and implementation of the offline contents. This is also in line with what Meech (1999) defines as ‘brandcasting’, since in the competitive multichannel, multiplatform environment of contemporary journalism, “multiplatform offerings have been shown to result in positive attitudes, repeat viewings of the network and its sister properties, and audience satisfaction” (Coffey & Cleary, 2011: 162).

In (b), on the other hand, viewers’ participation in the production of the news is elicited. However, while the news network seems to promote a relationship with the viewers that shifts from a vertical to a horizontal one, data sent to the BBC create traffic on their website, thus, turning them into product sales and advertising income for the news network.

The two different messages streamed at the end of each round of new tickers up until December 17, 2013 also fulfilled a second function. Indeed, the two messages were used in order to distinguish between two different rounds of tickers. In order to better understand this, an example of a complete round of tickers will be offered, taken from the recording of the BBC World News programme GMT, aired on July 9, 2013 at 12:00 p.m. (British local time). In this example, each news section (i.e., HEADLINES, BUSINESS, MARKETS, CURRENCIES and SPORT) will be underlined to reproduce how they are highlighted in the BBC news tickers (while the news stories are written in a white character on a deep red background, each section is written in deep red on a white background). The use of a symbol (i.e., ●), on the other hand, differentiates each news story from the others, like in a typical round of news tickers:

(d) HEADLINES
- SENIOR OFFICIALS IN EGYPT’S MUSLIM BROTHERHOOD REJECT A TIMETABLE FOR NEW ELECTIONS PUT FORWARD BY INTERIM PRESIDENT ADLY MANSOUR
- A CAR BOMB ATTACK INJURES DOZENS OF PEOPLE IN A STRONGHOLD OF LEBANON’S SHIA MILITANT GROUP HEZBOLLAH IN SOUTHERN BEIRUT
- THE TRIAL OF CAPTAIN FRANCESCO SCHETTINO, WHOSE CRUISE SHIP COSTA CONCORDIA RAN AGROUND OFF ITALY WITH THE LOSS OF 32 LIVES, IS OPENED AND ADJOURNED
• A LEAKED PAKISTAN GOVERNMENT REPORT INTO THE KILLING OF OSAMA BIN LADEN IN 2011 ACCUSES INTELLIGENCE SERVICES OF INCOMPETENCE AND NEGLIGENCE
• LATE NIGHTS AND OVERLY LAX BEDTIME ROUTINES CAN BLUNT YOUNG CHILDREN’S MINDS, A MAJOR BRITISH STUDY CONCLUDES
• CHINA’S POLICY OF GIVING FREE COAL FOR HEATING TO RESIDENTS IN THE NORTH HAS CONTRIBUTED TO SHAVING 5.5 YEARS OFF LIFE EXPECTANCY, A STUDY SAYS

BUSINESS
• MORE THAN ONE IN TWO PEOPLE THINK CORRUPTION HAS WORSENED OVER THE LAST TWO YEARS, SAYS A PUBLIC OPINION SURVEY BY TRANSPARENCY INTERNATIONAL
• CHINA’S INFLATION RATE ROSE BY MORE THAN EXPECTED IN JUNE, INCREASING TO 2.7% FROM 2.1% THE MONTH BEFORE
• EUROPE’S LARGEST OIL COMPANY ROYAL DUTCH SHELL ANNOUNCES THAT BAN VAN BEURDEN IS TO BE ITS NEW CHIEF EXECUTIVE

MARKETS
• DOW 15224.69 ^ 88.85
• NASDAQ 3484.63 ^ 5.45
• FTSE 100 6504.01 ^ 53.94
• DAX 8028.65 ^ 60.11
• NIKKEI 14472.9 ^ 363.56
• CAC 3841.68 ^ 17.85
• HANG SENG 20683.01 ^ 100.82
• SINGAPORE STI 3178.63 ^ 23.16

CURRENCIES
• £:EURO 1.1548
• £:$ 1.4856
• £:HK$ 11.5251
• EURO:£ 0.8657
• EURO:$ 1.2863
• $:YEN 101.17

SPORT
• ANDREW FLINTOFF SAYS ENGLAND’S ABILITY TO COPE WITH BEING FAVOURITES WILL BE KEY TO WINNING THE ASHES
• ROBBIE DEANS STEPS DOWN FROM HIS ROLE AS AUSTRALIA COACH AND IS REPLACED BY EWEN MCKENZIE FROM QUEENSLAND REDS

WEBSITE
MORE ON ALL THESE STORIES AT bbc.com/news

TWITTER
HEADLINES

- SENIOR OFFICIALS IN EGYPT’S MUSLIM BROTHERHOOD REJECT A TIMETABLE FOR NEW ELECTIONS PUT FORWARD BY INTERIM PRESIDENT ADLY MANSOUR
- A CAR BOMB ATTACK INJURES DOZENS OF PEOPLE IN A STRONGHOLD OF LEBANON’S SHIA MILITANT GROUP HEZBOLLAH IN SOUTHERN BEIRUT
- CHINA’S POLICY OF GIVING FREE COAL FOR HEATING TO RESIDENTS IN THE NORTH HAS CONTRIBUTED TO SHAVING 5.5 YEARS OFF LIFE EXPECTANCY, A STUDY SAYS
- THE HEAD OF RUSSIA’S BOLSHOI THEATRE IS REMOVED FROM HIS POST, FOLLOWING A SERIES OF SCANDALS INCLUDING AN ACID ATTACK ON A DIRECTOR
- THE WHOLE LIFE TARIFFS GIVEN TO MURDERER JEREMY BAMBER AND TWO OTHER KILLERS BREACHED THEIR HUMAN RIGHTS, THE EUROPEAN COURT OF HUMAN RIGHTS RULES
- THE CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC (CAR) HAS BEEN ABANDONED TO COPE WITH A “HUMANITARIAN EMERGENCY” SINCE REBELS SEIZED POWER IN MARCH, A MEDICAL AGENCY SAYS
- INVESTIGATORS REACH PARTS OF THE QUEBEC TOWN LEVELLED ON SATURDAY WHEN A RUNAWAY CRUDE OIL TRAIN EXPLODED, AS THE TOLL OF DEAD AND MISSING RISES TO 50

BUSINESS

- MORE THAN ONE IN TWO PEOPLE THINK CORRUPTION HAS WORSENED OVER THE LAST TWO YEARS, SAYS A PUBLIC OPINION SURVEY BY TRANSPARENCY INTERNATIONAL
- SHARES IN LVMH RISE BY MORE THAN 2% AFTER IT BUYS 80% OF ITALIAN LUXURY CASHMERE CLOTHING BRAND LORO PIANA FOR £1.7BN
- THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE OF US BOOKSTORE CHAIN BARNES & NOBLE, WILLIAM LYNCH, RESIGNS AS SALES OF ITS NOOK E-BOOKS AND DEVICES CONTINUE TO FALL

SPORT

- ASTON VILLA STRIKER CHRISTIAN BENTEKE SUBMITS A TRANSFER REQUEST BUT THE CLUB STILL EXPECT HIM TO STAY
- FORMER PACE BOWLER GLENN MCGRATH SAYS AUSTRALIA CAN OVERTAKE THEIR UNDERDOG STATUS TO BEAT ENGLAND AND REGAIN THE ASHES

CONTACT US

HAVE YOUR SAY AT facebook/bbcworldnews
WEBSITE: bbc.com/haveyoursay
EMAIL: haveyoursay@bbc.co.uk
SEND YOUR VIDEOS TO: whysvideo@bbc.co.uk
FOR TERMS ON SENDING PICTURES AND VIDEOS: bbc.com/terms
As we can see from this example, a complete round of tickers, up until December 17, 2013, was comprised of two parts.

In the first part, which ended with the message (a), five sections were differentiated. In the section HEADLINES, a number of six major news stories were displayed (the term ‘headlines’ is used here to signal that the news stories displayed in this section were the ones introduced by the anchor at the beginning of the news programme; however, this section often featured other news stories that were not announced by the anchor). The HEADLINES section was followed by the BUSINESS section, where three major economic news stories were displayed. The peculiarity of this first part of a complete round of tickers is represented by the sections MARKETS and CURRENCIES, where stock indexes and the value of foreign exchange rates were presented. Finally, this first part ended with the SPORT section, where two major sport updates were shown.

Once message (a) scrolled, announcing the end of the first part, a second part was introduced, showing again some of the sections displayed in the first round of tickers. The section HEADLINES of the second round usually introduced seven major news stories. The first two news stories were the same first two displayed in the first round of tickers, while the third news story was the last one presented in the section HEADLINES of the first round. These three news stories were followed by further four news updates that were not previously presented. The section BUSINESS displayed as its first news story the same first one presented in the section BUSINESS of the first round of tickers, followed by two new economic updates that were not previously displayed. Finally, the BUSINESS section was followed directly by the SPORT section, where two new sport updates were displayed.

This quite complicated routine was dropped on December 18, 2013, when a simpler and much shorter round of tickers was developed and displayed. Indeed, the MARKET and CURRENCIES sections were dropped and only the section HEADLINES and BUSINESS survived in this new format of news tickers, as we can see from this example taken from the BBC World News programme GMT aired on March 5, 2014 at 12:00 p.m. (British local time):

(e) **HEADLINES**

- DIPLOMATIC EFFORTS TO RESOLVE THE CRISIS IN UKRAINE ARE STEPPED UP AS THE FOREIGN MINISTERS OF RUSSIA AND THE US PREPARE TO HOLD TALKS IN PARIS
• ISRAEL HAS INTERCEPTED A SHIP IN INTERNATIONAL WATERS TRANSPORTING IRANIAN WEAPONS TO GAZA, ISRAELI DEFENCE OFFICIALS SAY
• EXPOSURE TO PASSIVE SMOKING IN CHILDHOOD CAUSES LASTING DAMAGE TO THE STRUCTURE OF CHILDREN'S ARTERIES, SAY RESEARCHERS
• INDIA'S ELECTION WILL TAKE PLACE FROM 7 APRIL TO 12 MAY, OFFICIALS ANNOUNCE, IN A RACE PITTING RAHUL GANDHI'S CONGRESS PARTY AGAINST THE NARENDRA MODI-LED BJP
• A WITNESS AT THE MURDER TRIAL OF OSCAR PISTORIUS SAYS THE SOUTH AFRICAN ATHLETE WAS RESPONSIBLE FOR A WEAPON BEING FIRED AT A RESTAURANT LAST YEAR

BUSINESS
• CHINA SETS ITS ECONOMIC GROWTH TARGET FOR THE YEAR AT 7.5 AND ITS INFLATION GOAL AT 3.5% AS IT LOOKS TO CONTINUE ITS EFFORTS TO STABILISE THE ECONOMY
• CROSS-CHANNEL TRAIN OPERATOR EUROSTAR SAYS IT CARRIED MORE THAN 10 MILLION PASSENGERS LAST YEAR FOR THE FIRST TIME, AS THE ECONOMIC RECOVERY LIFTED DEMAND FOR BUSINESS TRAVEL
• THE BANK OF ENGLAND SUSPENDS A MEMBER OF STAFF AFTER INVESTIGATING POTENTIAL RIGGING OF THE FOREIGN EXCHANGE MARKETS

MORE NEWS AT bbc.com/news facebook.com/bbcworldnews TWITTER @bbcworld AND @bbcbreaking
SEND YOUR PICTURES & VIDEOS yourpics@bbc.co.uk

The changes brought about in news tickers on December 18, 2013 are part of a wider change in the BBC World News graphic layout due to its implementation of HD technologies in the broadcasting of the news (BBC launches five new HD channels, December 9, 2013). However, even though the number of news stories was reduced, at the end of each round of tickers the BBC kept a message promoting its online contents and viewers’ participation in the production of the news, confirming the trend previously highlighted.

3.2 Branding and legitimizing the news

Another interesting phenomenon of marketization of the news can be found in the frequent use of the news network authority in order to legitimise the newsworthiness of the news stories displayed in news tickers. We can ascribe this type of authority to what van Leeuwen (2007) defines as expert authority, that is, when “[...] legitimacy is provided by expertise rather than status” and “Typically, expert legitimation takes the form of ‘verbal process clauses’ or ‘mental process clauses’ [...] with the expert as subject” (van Leeuwen, 2007: 94-
In order to better understand this strategy, the following examples have been taken from our corpus:

(f) ONE OF THE SUSPECTS IN THE BOSTON BOMBINGS WAS IN POSSESSION OF US RIGHT-WING EXTREMIST LITERATURE IN THE RUN-UP TO THE ATTACK, THE BBC HAS LEARNT

(g) FORMER CO-OP BANK CHAIRMAN PAUL FLOWERS HAS BEEN ARRESTED IN MERSEYSIDE IN CONNECTION WITH A “DRUGS SUPPLY INVESTIGATION”, THE BBC UNDERSTANDS

(h) THE UNITED NATIONS IS LIKELY TO WARN GOVERNMENTS THAT A “DASH FOR GAS” WILL NOT SOLVE CLIMATE CHANGE, THE BBC’S ROGER HARRABIN REPORTS

(i) A BRITISH WOMAN TELLS THE BBC THAT SHE SHOUTED FOR HELP FOR MORE THAN AN HOUR BEFORE JUMPING FROM A HOTEL BALCONY IN INDIA FEARING A SEXUAL ASSAULT

In (f) and (g), van Leeuwen’s (2007) description of the typical form of expert authority is confirmed. Indeed, in both cases, the BBC is the subject of a mental process clause, which is placed at the end of the news story in order to legitimise its newsworthiness. Additionally, in these two examples (and in example (i) as well) the BBC seems to be used as a membership categorisation device (Sacks, 1972; see also Montgomery, 2007). According to Montgomery (2007: 78), “Persons in headlines are designated by expressions that refer to them not so much as particular individuals but as members of significant groups or institutions”. However, membership categorisation devices depend on the degree of popularity of the person presented in the headline. If the person is well-known to the viewers/readers, then no membership categorisation device is needed. When, on the other hand, the person is not well-known, then membership categorisation devices are applied.

In the case of the examples (f) and (g), the name of the reporter should have been displayed. This hypothesis is supported by the fact that, in collecting a reference corpus of all the news stories published on the BBC website from June to August 2014, we have noticed that, on the website, the name of the reporter is displayed in lieu of the news network. Thus, in the multi-platform authoring environment (Bivens, 2014) of the BBC, when a content is migrated from one platform to the other, some transformations will occur. In news tickers,
since it is impossible to add a byline with all the information on the reporter and, as previously seen, since crawlers represent a prolific environment for strategies of marketization, the news network is displayed as the source of the news story.

Example (h), however, displays the name of the reporter of the content displayed in the news ticker. However, as we can see, he is still presented as working and belonging to the BBC. Thus, the authority of the reporter in legitimising the newsworthiness and trustworthiness of the news story is still linked to the watchful eye of the news network.

Finally, example (i) is inconsistent with van Leeuwen’s (2007) definition of expert authority. Indeed, in this case, the subject of the verbal process clause is an unknown and generic woman, while the BBC plays the role of the indirect object of this clause. However, the presence of the news network underlines that the news story being presented in the ticker has been proofread and, thus, is newsworthy but, more importantly, is true.

In conclusion, we can say that, in all the cases previously analysed, while at first it seems that the underlined strategy is being used in order to convey the source of the news, it also has a second purpose: the authority of the news network is being used in order to legitimise the news. In other words, the news must be considered true and newsworthy given the authority of the BBC. Additionally, in this process, we also have a subconscious representation in the viewers’ mind of the BBC as a source of reliability and trustworthiness. Thus, in evaluating the news through the use of the BBC authority, this particular strategy found in our corpus also seems to underline the marketization features of news tickers.

We must, however, say that this strategy is not peculiar of news tickers. Indeed, it is also found in lead paragraphs of newspapers. But, given the continuous repetition of the (same) strings of texts in the news tickers, this aspect, combined with the message at the end of each round of tickers, acquires a promotional nuance.

4. Conclusions

In this paper, we have tried to offer a preliminary introduction to a graphic element of TV news broadcasts that seems to have been created by assembling different genres and different communicative purposes, creating a colony that has acquired its own status as a genre. As we have seen, the birth and development of this textual element of TV news broadcasts can be ascribed to a fluid social context that has demanded a change in journalistic practices and in new ways of receiving and consuming the news.
References


**Websites**


Looking in Different Directions.
‘Positionality’ as core point of difference between alternative and mainstream media. A case study: The environmental justice frame

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ABSTRACT Positionality - people’s “location within the larger social formation” (Taylor, 2000, p. 509) - is a core point of difference between mainstream and alternative media. While the former are defined by a top-down hegemonic - positionality when it comes to their sponsors (context), sources (content) and media producers (production process), the latter are characterized by a bottom-up positionality, aligning with the perspective of ordinary citizens or grassroots movements. These diverging positionalities affect the way mainstream and alternative outlets frame issues: reproducing or rather counterbalancing hegemonic frames. Pulido and Pena (1998) claim positionality is also key to the way environmental issues are interpreted. Therefore, drawing on our assumptions concerning mainstream-alternative demarcations, we conducted a qualitative micro-scale framing analysis of an alternative case study article on environmental justice and compared it to mainstream accounts. This analysis illustrates vividly how the alternative bottom-up positionality, amplifying the voices of the ‘Southern’ victims, inverts the top-down positionality of the mainstream frame. While the latter fails to look beyond the hegemonic ‘Western’ development model, notably in terms of solutions, the former denounces the belief in ‘Western’ values, identifying them as causes of multilayered inequity. This deconstruction of hegemonic thinking takes place alongside the construction of an alternative reality, based on non-hegemonic values such as equality. Summarizing, furthermore, the unique reversal of (agent/patient - us/them) roles in the alternative frame, we introduce the ‘reversed’ ideological square (van Dijk, 1998, p. 33) and a comprehensive frame matrix as contributions to our field of research.

KEYWORDS Positionality, Alternative media, Mainstream media, Media framing, Environmental justice

1 Introduction

The social world is a “kaleidoscope of potential realities, any of which can be readily evoked” (Edelman, 1993, p. 232). However, some realities - particular frames - are more dominant than others: those reflecting the (hegemonic) ideologies and interests of the elite. Most people accept these mainstream ‘truths’ as common sense (Tankard, 2001). Indeed, as Graber (1988) argues, we tend to build quite stereotypical mental schemata of the world: As we lack personal experiences of many issues, our schemata largely draw on education or the omnipresent (mainstream) mass media, which reproduce hegemonic thinking (frames). Dominant thinking might, however, change (Graber, 1988, 187):

“For timely major changes that are not forced by major events, society therefore depends on the small group of people who are willing to form and propound schemata [or frames, RM] that diverge widely from cultural norms. Unique experiences and a bent for nonconformist thoughts and actions characterize these people.”
In other words, we need people who are able to look beyond, and criticize, the status-quo, due to diverging life experiences, interests, values, a different perspective or context. In short, people who have a diverging ‘positionality’. Positionality can be defined as the location a person or group occupies in terms of class relations or hierarchies within a society or between societies (Dahlgren & Chakrapani, 1982, p. 62; Taylor, 2000, p. 509) (at a particular moment in time). We contend that alternative media are characterized by such an alternative - bottom-up - positionality. As such, they may counterbalance the - top-down, elite - positionality of mainstream media, and their representations of reality. Oppositions can, among others, be found in sponsors (context), sources (content) as well media producers (production process).

Positionality being core point of difference between mainstream and alternative media, and their framing-building (Scheufele, 1991), will be illustrated in a case study on the coverage of climate change. Indeed, according to Pulido and Pena (1998) positionality is key to the way environmental issues are interpreted. We will, more specifically, focus on environmental justice (EJ): the unequal distribution of the burdens and benefits of climate change, among and within ‘Western’ and ‘Southern’ nations (Rees & Westra, 2003, p. 100). The ‘West’ bears the major responsibility for GHG emissions, causing climate change (and its consequences like more extreme weather or sea level rise). That is due to the fact that it adheres to its development model of liberalism and Euro-American centered globalization, which stimulates (a strong belief in) scientific innovation, economic wealth, and a world governed by a ‘Western elite’. The ‘South’, however, pays the price, especially the most vulnerable within ‘Southern’ nations.

The concept of EJ is quite generally accepted in mainstream media (e.g., Farbotko, 2005), politics and public opinion. This is, for instance, illustrated by climate surveys in Belgium (Klimaatenquête, 2014), a high-income country at the heart of the European Union with an ecological footprint ranging among the highest in the world (Ewing et al., 2010). Lorenzoni and Pidgeon (2006) discuss comparable findings for other ‘Western’ countries. Citizens do, however, oppose to far-reaching economic measures. (Inter)national politics have, furthermore, shown an increase in rhetoric and legislation addressing environmental decay and injustice (Agyeman and Evans, 2004). A crucial international agreement is the Kyoto Protocol (1997). This has been raising awareness concerning the ‘West’s’ responsibilities towards the ‘needy South’ - in terms of mitigation and the guiding/financing
of adaptation - in response to the former’s historical debt, as well as its capability to act due to a ‘dominating position in the world’s hierarchy of nations’ (Darnton & Kirk, 2011). However, “economic growth remains the focal item on the political agenda” (Rees & Westra, 2003, p. 109). Indeed, the ‘West’ refrains from commitments that might severely harm economic and/or power interests and even abides by economic fixes, such as the emission trading system. Since these values are at the roots of the problems, this thinking is clearly fallacious (McLaren, 2003, pp. 32-34).

Given this state of affairs, Rees and Westra (2003) conclude that “[s]ince in the real world wealth is very much equated with power, those who would ‘save the world’ will have to overcome the resistance of those who perceive that their interests lie with a status-quo” (p. 107). As stated, alternative media might, due to their bottom-up positionality, counterbalance this thinking, deconstruct it and construct an alternative. Indeed, these outlets may grant those who can look beyond this status-quo more power to raise their voices: the poor, ‘Southern victims’, drawing on very different life experiences and values (i.e., an oppositional positionality). As such, the EJ claims (frame) of the latter might be reinforced (Hopke, 2012).

Drawing on literature, we will first define in detail alternative and mainstream media, as well as our definition of framing, focusing on the role of positionality. To illustrate our theoretical discussion, we will then provide a case study on the coverage of environmental justice. After discussing crucial concepts - environmental justice and environmental justice frames - and our methodology, we will turn to an in-depth qualitative discussion of an article, published on the alternative Flemish (the Dutch-speaking part of Belgium) website ‘DeWereldMorgen’. We will continually compare it to mainstream accounts. Our insights draw, however, largely on findings from a larger qualitative framing analysis (see below). To the best of our knowledge, no research has yet been conducted into the operationalization of the grassroots EJ frame, in alternative media accounts on climate change. We will, thus, attempt to fill this void and provide a comprehensive frame matrix. While demonstrating how the alternative outlet attempts to reframe mainstream perceptions, we will discuss the role of positionality in the interaction between media, frames and frame sponsors. A ‘reversed ideological square’ (based on van Dijk, 1998, p. 33), underlying the alternative EJ frame matrix, will summarize our conclusions vividly.
2 Mainstream and alternative framing

2.1 Defining mainstream and alternative media

The concept of alternative media is often problematized as being oxymoronic. After all, “everything, at some point, is alternative to something else”, according to Downing (2001, p. ix). Furthermore, the opposition between mainstream and alternative media is not clear-cut. For the sake of clarity, however, our definition, derived from the secondary literature (Atton, 2002, 2003; Downing, 2001, 2003; Hamilton, 2000; Harcup, 2003; Hopke, 2012; Kenix, 2009), does take the ‘counter-hegemonic’ qualities of the alternative media as its starting point:

Alternative media tend to be non-commercial and de-institutionalized. This context allows them to be radical in terms of content and production process: While they challenge (journalistic as well as social, political, economic or cultural) traditions and advocate change, they enact this change in their non-hierarchical and de-professionalized organization. As a result, alternative media constitute an alternative public sphere.

As stated, we contend that the opposition between mainstream and alternative media crystallizes in the concept ‘positionality’. Indeed, as table 1 illustrates, the top-down positionality of sponsors (context), sources (content), media producers (production process)... defines a mainstream character, while bottom-up positionalities can be found in alternative outlets. This is further elaborated below.

Table 1. Positionality in mainstream and alternative media.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Mainstream media</th>
<th>Alternative media</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Top-down positionality</strong></td>
<td><em>Commercial, institutionalized:</em> (<strong>elite</strong> corporate/political pressures and values)</td>
<td><em>Anti-commercial, de-institutionalized:</em> cooperation with (<strong>grassroots</strong>) movements, depending on foundation grants and sponsoring</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Context</strong></td>
<td><em>(elite)</em></td>
<td><em>(grassroots)</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Content</strong></td>
<td>Routines and news values (serving <strong>top-down</strong> (commercial) pressures and) creating decontextualized, stereotypical representations</td>
<td>Abandoning mainstream routines and values</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>For instance, hierarchy of access: (small group of) <strong>elites</strong> and their - hegemonic - frames</td>
<td>For instance, reversed hierarchy of access: (<strong>grassroots</strong>) movements, ordinary people, minorities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Production process</strong></td>
<td>Small (<strong>elite</strong>) group of <strong>professionals</strong>, <strong>hierarchical</strong></td>
<td><strong>Citizen-journalists</strong> (and professionals), <strong>egalitarianism</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In terms of context, we define alternative media as non- or anti-commercial, lacking the mainstream commercial way of thinking, economic or profit-making goals. Besides, their de-institutionalized character makes them different from the highly market-driven and (multi-national) corporate institutions of the mainstream field, which often maintain close links with other institutions (Atton, 2002, p. 25; Atton, 2003, pp. 268-269). Compared to mainstream outlets, alternative media therefore experience less pressure, from within or outside the (hierarchical) organization, to maximize audiences or to gain advertising revenue, for instance, by adhering to certain routines (Atton, 2002, p. 25; Kenix, 2009, p. 791). Although this grants them more freedom, it does not mean they are completely independent. On the contrary, (most) alternative outlets, backed by social movements or drawing on donations or foundation grants to survive, are highly ideological, subjective and engaged (Atton, 2002, pp. 36-37; Downing, 2003, pp. 635-637).

Within their counter-hegemonic context alternative outlets attempt to take up social responsibility and stir social change, in content as well as in production process. Alternative media content can be described as both deconstructive and constructive. While these outlets produce critical content that advocates change in society and challenges hegemonic values (Atton, 2002, p. 15), they also tend to debate an alternative social order (Hamilton, 2000, p. 363) as well as “information about and interpretations of the world which we might not otherwise see and information about the world that we simply will not find anywhere else” (Atton, 2002, pp. 11-12). That is largely due to the fact that alternative media do not adhere to traditional media routines, particularly ‘hierarchy of access’ (Atton, 2002, Hamilton, 2000; Harcup, 2003).

Indeed, mainstream outlets usually grant routine access to elite frame sponsors, reproducing similar - hegemonic - frames which act “to foreclose discussion before it could go beyond the boundaries of the dominant ideological field” (Harcup, 2003, p. 263). Furthermore, even if they represent the perspective of non-elite sources, they often frame their case in a hegemonic way. Alternative media, however, truly give precedence to alternative ‘primary definers’ (Harcup, 2003, pp. 361-363), like (grassroots) movements, ordinary people, minorities or resource-poor social groups (Atton, 2002, pp. 10-11). The sustainable relationships they are able to build up, and the authoritative voice they are granted, empowers these ‘neglected groups’ to counterbalance hegemonic reporting (Hopke, 2012, pp. 5-6).
In his research on mainstream and alternative coverage of riots, Harcup (2003, pp. 361-367) also demonstrates alternative outlet’s abandoning of other news routines and values, which serve commercial pressures and the reproduction of stereotypical news stories, such as the preference for dramatic, ‘consonant’ (with hegemonic ideology) or nearby (‘proximity’) events. This allows them - more than mainstream outlets - to discern and cover long-term processes, provide more context or cover “stories not normally considered as news (…)” (Atton, 2002, p. 11).

Despite the fact that alternative media’s discussion of the alternative and (social) change (content) is very important, several authors contend that the enactment of this change in the production process of alternative media is even more crucial in their pursuit of an alternative society (Atton, 2002; 2003; Downing, 2003; Hamilton, 2000). Mass media are ‘mass’ in terms of reach, but they are narrow in terms of production, reducing the role of the audience to objects, observers, consumers or even ‘ears’ and ‘eyeballs’ to be sold to advertisers (Hamilton, 2000, p. 358). Thus, while the public is silenced (for the larger part), a small (hierarchically organized) elite group of professionals controls the media. However, in order to incite change and to empower (ordinary) people, media need to become more egalitarian and non-hierarchical. Indeed, alternative media often work with “native-journalists”: “members of a community” become “the media”, “recorders of their own reality” (Atton, 2003, p. 269), who often employ a very personal, subjective style and first person ‘I’. Usually these employees fulfill several - traditionally separated - roles (Downing, 2001).

As such, alternative media constitute an alternative public sphere (Atton, 2002; 2003). On the one hand, this alternative sphere empowers ordinary people, allows them to portray their own life and gives them a voice in a public debate that is not predefined by hegemonic ideologies (Harcup, 2003, pp. 370-372). On the other hand, Harcup (2003) posits that “(...) alternative media may offer the possibility of subverting the dominant discourse” (p. 371) by offering alternative perspectives, voices, arguments and frames. Indeed, alternative media try to initiate change by urging readers (including, possibly, mainstream journalists) to take a more critical outlook on hegemonic frames.

2.2 Framing
According to Entman (2004) framing remains an “imprecise catchall that means slightly different things to each researcher employing it” (p. 5) (see among others Edelman, 1993; Entman, 1991; 1993; 2004; Gamson & Modigliani, 1989; Graber, 1988; Pan & Kosicki, 1993; Tankard, 2001). Trying to overcome these flaws, Van Gorp (2006) draws on the common grounds of the multiplicity of views. We ascribe to this definition:

A media frame is a persistent, meta-communicative message that represents the structuring idea which bestows coherence and meaning on a news text. Framing involves selecting, omitting, expanding and giving salience to particular aspects of a perceived reality in a news text, providing context and suggesting a particular problem definition, causal responsibility, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation to readers or listeners (based on: Van Gorp, 2006).

Thus, we understand ‘frame’ in its meaning of ‘window frame’, showing - or even emphasizing - particular aspects of ‘reality’, while leaving out (or downplaying) others. But it is also a ‘building frame’, as skeleton holding together, structuring, connecting elements, in a larger whole. As latent structures ‘around’ texts, frames are made immanent by framing devices (textual and/or visual cues) and reasoning devices (problem definition, causal responsibility, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation) (Entman, 1993, 2004; Pan & Kosicki, 1993).

Borrowing once more Edelman’s (1993, 232) illuminating metaphor, we consider the social world as a “kaleidoscope of potential realities”. Depending on the positionality of those controlling the framing process - as well as other contextual factors - particular “realities” (frames) are, however, more dominant in a certain outlet than are others. Indeed, frame-building (Scheufele, 1991) is the result of frame sponsors, attempting to get their frames - and thus, ideologies - covered, interacting with journalists and their media organizations, practices and values (see the ‘Hierarchy-of-influences Model’ by Reese (2001)).

As discussed, both sources and media in the mainstream field tend to have a top-down positionality, promoting hegemonic values and ideologies (and thus, frames). The bottom-up positionality that characterizes alternative sources, journalists and media organizations, however, is much more likely to feed into quite different frames (and thus, non-hegemonic - often overlooked or discarded - ideologies). (Gamson & Modigliani, 1989; Hopke, 2012; Pan & Kosicki, 1993; Van Gorp, 2006; Trumbo, 1996).

Given the media’s potential to influence audience perceptions, attitudes and behavior, including the support for particular policies (frame-setting) (Scheufele, 1991),
frame-building can have far-reaching consequences. Indeed, the small elite group that controls (most) frame choices in the - omnipresent - mass media has the power to construct common sense views of events (Lakoff, 2010). Therefore, alternative media might play a crucial role in counterbalancing this skewed, one-sided reality. Nuancing this, however, it is important to remember that there is no one-to-one correspondence between the intended (counter-)frame and the interpretation of individuals, as the latter might reject media frames, depending on their ideologies, knowledge or experiences (Pan & Kosicki, 1993).

3 Environmental justice in mainstream and alternative media

3.1 Environmental justice

EJ - a “master frame” that has been used to link injustice and environment in a wide variety of contexts (Taylor, 2000) - has many layers and definitions. One of its definitions in relation to climate change seems to be quite generally accepted, judging on its presence in the discourse of (mainstream) politicians or media (see, for instance, Farbotko (2005)). It is, however, usually not named as such. Clearly the Kyoto Protocol (1997) and its 2015 successor have raised awareness and streamlined views. Based on the latter and a literature review (Čapek, 1993; IPCC, 2014; Kasperson & Kasperson, 2001; Sze & London, 2008; Taylor, 2000), we outline this definition as follows:

While the powerful and rich groups in society bear the largest responsibility for the GHG emissions causing climate change, the poorest and most vulnerable will suffer earlier and most severely from climate change consequences such as droughts, storms or sea-level rise. Therefore, the former have the duty to reduce their emissions and assist the latter to adapt.

This unequal burden is due to an unequal distribution of vulnerability. The IPCC report (2014) defines the vulnerability of systems as depending on their sensitivity (the degree to which they respond to changes) and their capability to adapt: Rich countries and elite groups in society are more resilient and possess the means to address fall-outs. Poor countries and groups (especially the poor majorities in low-income countries), however, already suffer multiple threats and vulnerabilities, such as poor housing or unsustainable economic systems. Further, they usually lack the human, social or political capital to adapt (IPCC, 2014). In other words, climate change only exacerbates existing difficulties.
As previously mentioned, positionality strongly affects the way people interpret environmental issues (Pulido and Pena, 1998). We distinguish here between two crude geographically defined positionalities: the ‘West’ and the ‘South’ (McLaren, 2003, p. 35). The ‘West’ consists of the small consumer class living in the ‘dominant global regions’ (most Europeans and Northern Americans belong to this group), the ones “who benefit most from the prevailing development model” but “are isolated by distance and wealth from its negative consequences” (Rees & Westra, 2003, p. 107). The ‘South’ equates the vast “subsistence class” (Durning, 1992, as cited in McLaren, 2003, p. 35) which suffers from economic and social inequity, as well as the climate consequences the development model imposes on it.

Consequently, the top-down positionality of the ‘West’, even if addressing EJ, seems to prevent it from detecting or acknowledging more profound layers of the problem which seem to be more straightforward from the bottom-up positionality of the victims and grassroots organizations; clearly, this is where the roots of the concept lie (Čapek, 1993; Taylor, 2000). We will discuss these layers when encountering them during the discussion of our results.

3.2 Mainstream and alternative frames

A literature review (e.g., Boykoff, 2008; Ereaut & Segnit, 2006; Nisbet, 2009) and the preliminary results of our deductive-inductive qualitative research (see below), yield a number of dominant climate change frames in mainstream media, reproducing, and thus reinforcing, ‘Western’ hegemonic values: economic loss or profit, technological fix, human (‘Western’) control/domination, and the like. Clearly, this is influenced by their hegemonic context, including the positionality of those affecting the framing choices. Indeed, Darnton and Kirk (2011, pp. 83-86) identify a number of ‘deep frames’, like ‘free market thinking’, ‘elite (‘Western’) governance’ or ‘moral order’ (e.g. the assumed hierarchy of ‘Western’ versus ‘non-Western’ cultures) in ‘Western’ (NGO) thinking. Hopke (2012), Farbotko (2005) and our research in progress demonstrate, however, that a (minority) EJ frame also appears in mainstream coverage. However, even this frame largely fails to question ‘Western’ values as the cause (rather than solution) of climate change and injustice. To avoid any misinterpretation, we introduce the following mainstream EJ frame matrix, drawing on
our preliminary research results, Hopke (2012), Chouliaraki (2006), Farbotko (2005) and the generally distributed views of the Kyoto Protocol. We consider this the hegemonic frame in terms of EJ:

Table 2. The mainstream EJ frame matrix (based on Van Gorp (2006)).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Problem definition</th>
<th>Causal responsibility</th>
<th>Solution / action perspective</th>
<th>Moral basis</th>
<th>Key terms</th>
<th>Framing devices</th>
<th>Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>While they do not bear the largest responsibility for the GHG emissions which cause climate change, the poor (regions) in society/the ‘South’ suffer(s) the major part of climate change consequences (e.g., flooding or more extreme weather).</td>
<td>The most powerful (‘West’) bear(s) the major historical debt in terms of disproportionate GHG emissions (due to economic interests). The victims are (highly) vulnerable to any change due to multiple difficulties they already suffer (lack of development), which makes them less resilient. Besides, they lack the means to adapt.</td>
<td>The (top-down) solution lies for the larger part with the most powerful (‘West’) who have/has the duty as well as the means to act for the sake of the helpless victims: They need to reduce their GHG emissions (mitigation) and aid the most vulnerable groups/countries to (develop in order to) adapt. Both goals are primarily addressed with economic means or ‘constructions’.</td>
<td>Wrongs - in terms of GHG emissions - have to be rectified for the sake of the helpless ‘other’. Those who have the power/means have the duty to help the powerless. Charity.</td>
<td>-The ‘West’ versus the ‘South’, the responsible ones versus the victims, the hero versus the helpless, the powerful versus the powerless, give and take, space-time of safety versus space-time of unsafety -Development, aid, charity</td>
<td>Rhetorical devices: -Metaphors: the flood victims of Kiribati, the (‘Western’) hero, the plundering population after a climate disaster... -Contrasting Lexical/grammatical choices: -Agency: agents versus patients -‘Us (‘West’) versus them (‘South’)’ -The ‘South’: generalization and abstracting (distancing) rather than humanization (identification) -‘Unequal distribution of benefits and burdens’ -‘(Historical) GHG emissions/debt’ -‘Development’, ‘aid’, ‘charity’ Quoted sources: -‘Western’ (elite) voices: officials, politicians, ‘Western’ NGOs...</td>
<td>-“The developed countries promised to contribute 100 billion dollars to the Green Climate Fund yearly, starting from 2020 onwards. The fund aims to help developing countries to adapt.” -“We are faced with new challenges in terms of development aid: A combination of climate change and nonexistent development makes large regions extremely vulnerable.” -“The question of historical debt has been a major bone of contention at numerous UN Climate Summits.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Contrariwise, the anti-hegemonic character of alternative media, particularly the ‘alternative positionality’ of those affecting the framing process, does feed into counter-frames, like the grassroots EJ frame (Hopke, 2012). Our preliminary research results prove its salience in the alternative coverage (see below). This is due to the fact that these outlets share the bottom-up positionality that also determines the EJ claims of the (‘Southern’) victims (Pulido & Pena, 1998; Taylor, 2000). Indeed, Hopke (2012) considers alternative outlets to be tools that can amplify the grassroots EJ claims, “reframing dominant narratives” in an attempt “to discursively break a cycle of environmental inequity” (p. 2).

After discussing our research design, we will turn to the results of our in-depth qualitative analysis. This will allow us to get a more detailed insight into this alternative
frame and the crucial role of positionality in frame-building. Comparing the anti-hegemonic frame, furthermore, to the mainstream view, will expose the flaws of the latter.

3.3 Research design

3.3.1 Material

As stated, this study is part of a larger project on climate change frames, based on a corpus comprising articles of four Flemish media outlets: three mainstream newspapers (‘De Standaard’ (broadsheet, centrist), ‘De Morgen’ (broadsheet, leftist) and ‘Het Laatste Nieuws’ (popular)) and one alternative website (‘DeWereldMorgen’ (leftist)). All articles featuring climate change during the period February 28, 2012 to February 28, 2014 were collected. Drawing on a qualitative deductive-inductive framing analysis, one dominant frame is determined for each article and comprehensive frame matrices are designed. Preliminary results reveal that mainstream and alternative media both apply the (mainstream) EJ frame to a certain extent. The alternative EJ frame, however, is only salient in the alternative outlet (appearing in about one out of ten articles), while the mainstream media do not employ it at all. These findings were the incentive for the current research.

Given its - apparently - unique position as an alternative media frame, as well as the scarcity of descriptions in literature, we decided to provide a comprehensive discussion of this frame, based on one article of our corpus, as a case study. ‘De Filippijnen getroffen door tyfoon Haiyan: de ene ramp verbergt een andere’ (‘The Philippines hit by typhoon Haiyan: one disaster covers another’) describes and contextualizes typhoon Haiyan, which destroyed parts of the Philippines in late 2013, allocating responsibilities for the disaster. Soon after the events many media outlets started to describe the typhoon as a ‘climate catastrophe.’ The article is written by a native-journalist, who represents a human rights organization that is active in the region. It was published on November 11, 2013 on the Flemish alternative website ‘DeWereldMorgen’ (literal translation: ‘TheWorldTomorrow’), and retrieved from the outlet’s archive and saved on April 7, 2014, along with the other articles of our data collection.

‘DeWereldMorgen’, founded in March 2010 and currently reaching 15.000 readers a day, was selected based on its status as major alternative news platform in Flanders, as well as its prototypical alternative character in terms of context, content and production process.
Particularly interesting is, moreover, the fact that although ‘DeWereldMorgen’ claims to be pluralistic, its background (the Flemish communist party is a founding partner) and tight collaboration with certain movements (e.g., north-south movements, environmental movements) suggest a (far) leftist engagement. This is expressed, among others, in content features, source selection and staff recruitment.

3.3.2 Analytic method

Meta-textual frames are made manifest in the text through framing and reasoning devices. Therefore, we can reconstruct frames analyzing these devices (Van Gorp, 2006, pp. 51-53). We draw, in particular, on Van Gorp’s methodology, supplemented with views from Entman (1991, 1993, 2004) and Tankard (2001). Following, for instance, Boykoff (2008, pp. 554-556) we consider it useful to bring in some views of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), drawing, especially, on Richardson (2007) and van Dijk (1988; 1998). Indeed, as Carvalho (2007, p. 277) postulates, both theories are strongly related, with CDA allowing for an even sharper analysis of (con)text.

We will identify and discuss in detail the reasoning devices identified by Entman (1993, 2004) and Van Gorp (2006), except for ‘moral evaluation’ which we consider to be sufficiently covered in the description of the other devices. However, given the fact that we deem positionality of particular importance, we will focus on (causal and treatment) responsibility. Furthermore, we will introduce some devices identified in Entman’s (1991) earlier work: agency, identification, categorization and generalization. Acknowledging the importance of making our rules for identifying frames as explicit as possible (Tankard, 2001), we propose the following (verbal) devices for inductively excavating the EJ frame:

- Characters and quoted sources, and their background
- Word choice: nouns, adjectives, adverbs, verbs
- Stock phrases, one-liners, stereotypes
- Exemplars
- Grammatical choices: personal pronouns and agency
- Metaphors
- Sentences that share particular evaluations of facts
- (Inter-textual) references
Since “[t]he essence of framing is sizing – magnifying or shrinking elements of the depicted reality to make them more or less salient” (Entman, 1991, p. 9), we will also devote attention to the following salience enhancing devices (Entman, 1991, 1993, 2004; Van Gorp, 2006, pp. 79-80):

• Repetition
• The placement of devices within the format of the article:
  • Headlines
  • Subheads
  • Leads
  • Photo captions
  • Lay-out
  • Conclusions

With the matrices of Van Gorp (2006) as useful models, we will summarize and abstract our findings in a comprehensive frame matrix, outlining and exemplifying the reasoning and framing devices through which the grassroots EJ frame is made manifest. Although drawing on findings from our broader research, the examples provided will be based on the case study. Throughout our discussions, we will continually refer to and make comparisons with the previously defined ‘mainstream’ EJ frame (matrix).

3.3.3 Case study

We do realize that a case study of one article is fairly limited. This choice is, however, based on a number of considerations. Firstly, the topic of the selected article, typhoon Haiyan, constitutes a key event. As part of the collective memory its underlying frame is very likely to feed into subsequent framing of comparable events (Van Gorp, 2006, p. 70). Also, we consider this instance of the alternative EJ frame to be prototypical and well developed (making it highly salient). As such, it constitutes a perfect case for our goal: discussing comprehensively the frame that demarcates alternative from mainstream media coverage. Furthermore, focusing on one example allows for a full qualitative micro-scale analysis: We will illustrate in detail our identification of the “signature elements for a given frame”, which make it possible to find “phenotypic expressions that can be reliably coded” (Gamson, 1989, p. 159). This will clarify and ‘visualize’ the more abstract term ‘EJ frame’, and its matrix, and allow for more transparency, reliability and validity.
3.4 Results

3.4.1 Causal responsibility - level 1

The article starts out (headline, lead and first paragraphs) with (non-human) ‘super typhoon’ Haiyan depicted as the sole agent (active verbs), a devastating climate disaster.

On November 8 super typhoon Haiyan made his way through the central islands of the Philippine archipelago, creating a trace of death and destruction.

At the first glance, however, a (largely implicit) minor frame (Entman, 1991), ‘Like the Dutch windmills’ (named after the powerful metaphor in the first subtitle), seems to counter this perspective, normalizing Haiyan: it is just one of the many typhoons (though stronger), that define the Philippines and its identity. This is reinforced through numbers and names (e.g., its local name ‘Yolande’, with ‘Y’ referring to it being the 25th typhoon of the year). As does a reference to the typhoon “having been announced well ahead”, all these verbal cues raise questions concerning the status of Haiyan as an exceptional - i.e., as being indicative of climate change - phenomenon. Furthermore, the Philippines’ preparations are doubted. This frame is likely to resonate with (skeptical) believes some people in the ‘West’ hold.

However, the counter-frame never profoundly counters the major frame. On the contrary, contrasted with the journalist’s - or at least scientific - ‘truth’, it is immediately brought down. As such, it even reinforces the major frame. Comparatives and superlatives (e.g., “the fourth place in the list of most powerful typhoons of all time”), numbers (e.g., “390 kilometers an hour”) and illuminating exemplars (“more than powerful enough to crush glass and eradicate trees”) make the extraordinary and unpredictable nature of ‘super typhoon’ Haiyan highly salient. Telling, as well, is the inter-textual reference describing Haiyan as “more powerful than Katrina that hit New Orleans [and thus, the ‘West’] in 2005”. As a key event itself (Van Gorp, 2006, p. 70) Katrina might work as a powerful frame, inciting associations of disaster within the audience. These, it is suggested, pale in significance when compared to the consequences of Haiyan. Clearly, this ‘South-West’ opposition reinforces the message that the ‘South’ is faced with disproportionate threats.

Echoing the last, salient statement of the lead - “this is more than just a natural phenomenon that got out of control” - the introduction nevertheless implies the presence of an underlying, ‘actual’ agent (Weik von Mossner, 2011). The subtitle “Warning for Warsaw”
makes this explicit, introducing the ‘West’, in particular the most powerful nations at the 2013 Climate Summit in Warsaw, which coincided with the disaster. Indeed, “changing climate may directly harm innocent, economically marginalized peoples, but the underlying cause is often the unsustainable lifestyles of the world’s wealthy” (Rees & Westra, 2013, p. 112):

The prosperous West bears a heavy responsibility. (...) [T]he development model of Europe and the US, based on the unlimited use of fossil fuels, is responsible for the phenomenon of climate change.

Like several other sentences sharing a particular evaluation of ‘responsibility’ and employing active verbs, this clearly coincides with the main premise - “the ‘West’s’ ecological debt” (McLaren, 2003, p. 30) - found in the generally accepted EJ definition. However, while the extent of the ‘West’s’ responsibility, compared to that of developing countries, often remains the subject of debate from a ‘Western’ perspective, the article clearly aligns with the ‘Southern’ view, as for the full and undeniable responsibility of the ‘West’ (Billett, 2010). This is, no doubt, inspired by the positionality of Yeb Saño, lead negotiator of the Philippine delegation in Warsaw and voice of the Philippines, whose carbon footprint is a fraction of the ‘Western’. Saño is quoted several times.

The ‘Western’ hunger for economic wealth and power has, however, even more fundamental consequences, both through its past (colonialism and imperialism) as well as its current expressions (as a system of debt and oligopolism maintaining inequality). As the frame matrix shows, though, this is usually not acknowledged by the mainstream. Indeed, while the latter fails to contextualize (Chouliaraki, 2006) the ‘South’s’ vulnerability and presents it as an eternal essence (Dalhgren & Chakrapani, 1982), due to ‘a lower - ’backward’ - position in the moral order of nations/cultures’ (Darnton & Kirk, 2011, pp. 83-86), the alternative article signals Haiyan as “a disaster covering another disaster” (lead and headline). Put differently, the grassroots EJ frame does provide a contextual background of “political, social, and economic interactions” (Sze & London, 2008, p. 1333). As such it depicts the ‘West’ as guilty of making the Philippines disproportionately sensitive and largely unable to adapt. Clearly, this echoes The ‘Principles of Environmental Justice’, an important statement in which the threatened communities speak for themselves (in Taylor (2000)).

Very telling, for instance, is the use of the following metaphor:
The prosperous West could only grow by sucking out the colonies like a parasite, till there was nothing left.

This strong accusation, depicting the ‘West’ as a greedy predator, is endorsed by other words and (active) verbs like “repression”, “exploitation”, or “made profit”. Several sentences touch on, for example, the deforestations by the colonizing ‘West’ or its introducing of (unsustainable) social and economic systems of inequality (feudalism). Furthermore, there are references to more recent cash-cropping that low-income countries are forced to apply in their attempts to meet international debt charges. Both have deprived the latter of valuable natural climate change mitigation and adaptation systems, have damaged local communities, driven farmers to the - more vulnerable - cities and coasts (McLaren, 2003, p. 3).

To conclude, it is clear that the article adopts a ‘Southern’ perspective that ‘others’ (Billett, 2010) responsibility entirely to external human forces (rather than natural forces): the ‘West’. This distancing, which discourages identification, is reinforced through the absence of ‘Western’ sources voicing a different perspective, and the generalization - and thus, dehumanization - of the ‘West’ as a faceless power block, employing labels such as ‘the prosperous West’ or ‘the delegations’ (only singling out the US and Spain) (Chouliaraki, 2006). Additionally, we contend that the ‘West’ is depicted as committing crimes against humanity. Although the label ‘crime’ is never used, presenting the ‘West’ as an active and self-conscious ‘predator’, as opposed to - or even worse than - accidental natural forces, clearly implies this view (Entman, 1991).

3.4.2 Problem definition (patients) - level 1

The ‘Philippine people’ are, in the first part of the article, consistently depicted as passive victims of the ‘Western’ behavior. The idea is reflected in the subtitle “vulnerability”, the choice of similar (often repeated) nouns and adjectives (e.g., “defenseless”) and prepositional phrases or passive verbs (e.g., “Philippines hit by typhoon Haiyan” (headline), “the city has been wiped off the map”). Therefore, the following instance of an active sentence stands out:

The better the local population can protect itself against the impact of natural disasters, the smaller the chances people get killed or hurt.
However, being subverted in subsequent sentences, this active sentence only reinforces the major idea. Indeed, in a step-by-step process the ‘once active and self-conscious’ Philippines are submitted to linguistic passivization. This echoes their actual victimization during, and after, colonization, with the ‘West’ taking over control. First the focus shifts from the initial agent role to a focalized patient role, with a ‘Western’ agent that is deleted or only present at the rear of the sentence (e.g., “The country got seriously weakened during a 500 year history of repression by Spain and the US.”). Then, the agent is put before the victims and thus focalized, stressing its responsibility (“Due to the Spanish, the Philippines were forced to convert to the catholic faith.”). Eventually, the victims are completely ousted and omitted, imposing full agency on the ‘West’ (“The US introduced modern production techniques in order to exploit the natural resources of the archipelago.”).

Very powerful is also the presence and characterization of Yeb Saño as a source, representing the victims of his country in Warsaw. Helplessness is implied in noun, adverb and verb choice (e.g., “he begged in vain”, “frustration”) and enforced by direct quotes (“Cried all night in my Warsaw hotel room as information trickled in.”). It is, nevertheless, telling that Saño is quoted several times at the expense of the ‘Western’ agents described above. Indeed, although the lead negotiator is an elite source within the Philippine context, he is not in the mainstream ‘Western’ media, which tend to focus on domestic elites, or at least the most powerful of the ‘hegemonic global’, like the US (Nossek & Kunelius, 2012). Despite his elite role, Saño is - as the article stresses - closely connected to the victims through his family living in the affected area. Thus, we might very well consider his quotes as representing the voices of the grassroots population undergoing the disaster. The vulnerable groups, who are often denied the possibility to speak for themselves in mainstream media (being depicted as passive and voiceless victims), are thus restored to a full source position in the alternative article/frame.

3.4.3 Problem definition and causal responsibility - level 2

EJ might comprise inequalities on two levels: between and within nations. The article touches upon this second, local level as well. The - very salient and strong - patient (victim) role of the poor majority, reflecting a precarious situation, is conveyed through (often repeated) nouns and adjectives expressing helplessness and poverty and sentences sharing comparable evaluations (e.g., “poor, landless peasants, living in rickety constructions”, “The
poorest live in the low-lying coastal areas because these are the only places where they are able to build a shack.”), as well as passive verbs (“were hit”, “was washed down”). Again, an inter-textual reference to a key event, the 2004 Tsunami in Thailand, is very likely to function as powerful frame awakening readers’ collective memory, reinforcing the current frame. Note that, contrary to the ‘Katrina frame’, there is no (or not primarily) contrasting with ‘Western’/elite suffering but rather a comparison, and thus identification, with the extreme burden on other poor communities living in coastal areas. As such, the event is contextualized as a large-scale problem (Chouliaraki, 2006; Dalhgren & Chakrapani, 1982).

The internal agent role, although implied, is, however, largely obscured through the use of particular sentences, passive verbs, agent deletion or prepositional phrases, and non-human subjects (e.g., “Woods were cleared and replaced with large-scale mining projects and plantations.”, “Little has changed since independency due to the obsequious attitude of the Philippine government towards [the ‘West’].”). This suggests that the local elites, who maintain inequality and add to the poor’s vulnerability, are themselves victims of circumstance (i.e., colonial history and current economic inequality and debt), and not the main agents to be blamed. Thus, victimizing patients and agents alike, level two only amplifies the accusations the ‘West’ is charged with.

Clearly, the alternative - bottom-up - positionality aligning with those experiencing several forms of injustice, again allows to dig out certain layers usually ignored or discarded from the top-down point of view. The encouragement to look through the eyes of the most vulnerable (identification) is furthermore reinforced through the adoption of quite detailed descriptions of individualized “fishermen, seasonal workers, house maids and street vendors” and their living conditions (as opposed to the generalized faceless ‘West’), which humanizes them. Again this clearly opposes the mainstream’s ‘othering’ of abstracted faceless and voiceless victim groups (Chouliaraki, 2006).

3.4.4 Treatment recommendations (responsibility)
In diametrical opposition to the victim role the Philippines play in the first part of the article, however, their part is completely different at the end, when it comes to solutions: Suddenly they become a very active and independent agent. The message of the subtitle “Resistant grassroots movement” is, in comparable wordings, repeated several times throughout the concluding paragraphs (e.g, “powerful, resistant grassroots movements are most capable of
repairing the resilience of the people”). The agent role is further reflected through active verbs conveying power and self-efficacy (e.g., “they combined their efforts”, “they will take the lead”), and reinforced by (active) quotes like “We are setting up a crisis center.”.

The use of the personal pronoun ‘we’ in this quote indicates the (grassroots) positionality of the source. Indeed, the second quoted source is again Philippine: Renato Reyes, general secretary of BAYAN (the central organization of grassroots movements). Although Reyes holds a somewhat elite status within the local organization, his position close to the ordinary people definitely allows him to voice the bottom-up ‘Southern’ view.

Furthermore, the journalist introduces - explicitly - a hegemonic counter-frame (Entman, 1991), ‘white hero’, that also underpins the mainstream EJ frame (Weik von Mossner, 2011):

While the local population starts plundering, help is being organized ‘all over the world’ (read: in the prosperous West) and American marines are flown in.

This view suggests that the ‘helpless and unorganized South’ completely depends on the ‘West’ to cope with climate consequences. In short, ‘the powerful ‘West’ is the solution’. By invoking this frame and identifying it immediately, and explicitly, as “stereotypical” and “cynical” (the first idea is given more salience through an inter-textual reference to the ‘Western’ (mainstream) coverage of the 2010 earthquake in Port-au-Prince; the cynicism is also reflected in the subtitle, “Deprived plunderers”), it is, however, delegitimized. As such, it only helps to reinforce the perspective of the author, who aligns with the grassroots voices: The role of the ‘West’ (and thus, the ‘Western’ development values) in the adaptation story is not constructive, with its “disaster assistance” only “jeopardizing” the “valuable social network”. Nevertheless, this stark view is somewhat toned down in the last sentence: There is some room for the ‘West’ to support these initiatives. Besides, this support might, but does not need to, be financial, as suggested by hegemonic free market thinking (Darnton & Kirk, 2011, pp. 83-86).

Clearly, the article touches upon a layer that is not usually acknowledged from a ‘Western’ perspective, bred by (a history of/belief in) ‘Western’ domination and control (e.g., Farbotko, 2005). Indeed, the concept of ‘procedural’ fairness - next to ‘substantive fairness’ as described in our definition of EJ above - implies that all communities are to be recognized as full and independent stakeholders who have equal rights to be heard,
consulted and informed, and to make decisions (Čapek, 1993). Put differently, the ‘South’ and the ‘West’ are equal partners in the battle against climate change. This clearly coincides with the claim of Kaspersion and Kaspersion (2001, p. 14): While calling upon the ‘West’ to take initial responsibility, compensating for its wrongs (mitigation), they contend that vulnerable communities themselves should be acknowledged as main architects of (global) solutions (adaptation), based on their experiences with prior changes in their living conditions. Thus, although the article stresses the ‘South’ is still being victimized when it comes to the causes of injustice, which lie largely beyond its control, it does not accept this (hegemonic) victim role at the solution side, at least for those factors it can control.

4 Discussion and conclusions

According to Taylor (2000, p. 511) the ‘collective action frames’ of grassroots movements, encompassing EJ, (1) create an ‘in-group’ (us) and an ‘out-group’ (them), (2) express moral outrage and aim at disclosing injustice (by the out-group), and (3) endorse the agency and efficacy of the ‘in-group’. Clearly the EJ media frame that is revealed in this research fits this - adversarial - profile perfectly. Our findings thus underpin our hypothesis: The bottom-up positionality of alternative media constitutes a fruitful context for the EJ view of grassroots movements and climate victims, denouncing and reversing hegemonic views. This is clearly evident when we combine the ideological square of van Dijk (1998, p. 33) with our findings:

Table 3. The (‘reversed’) ideological square. Based on the ideological square of van Dijk (1998, p. 33)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Positive</th>
<th>The ‘South’</th>
<th>The ‘West’</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>= Us (in-group article) / = Them (out-group audience)</td>
<td>= Them (out-group article) / = Us (in-group audience)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Emphasized | • Victims (of the ‘West’), but not helpless  
               • The efficacy of resilient grassroots movements; drawing on local social structures and experience  
               • Equal actors | Backgrounded /delegitimized  
               • Disaster assistance |
According to van Dijk’s ideological square, the positive characteristics of the us-group are usually emphasized, while its negative sides are downplayed. The opposite is true for the them-group. The allocation of characteristics here clearly illustrates the ‘oppositional positionality’ of the article/frame: the resilient ‘Southern’ in-group is put in a positive light. The ‘Western’ out-group, however, is presented as the root of all problems. Clearly, this goes counter to the (in-group) perspective most (elite) ‘Western’ readers, as well as mainstream media, hold, bred by a top-down positionality. Therefore, we claim that the above representation could be interpreted as an ‘reversed’ ideological square’ as well, delegitimizing the hegemonic point of view.

These findings echo well-developed theories in literature (e.g., Dalhgren and Chakrapani, 1982) about Western hierarchical representations of the world based on clear demarcations: ‘us’ (‘West’) versus ‘them’ (‘South’), developed versus undeveloped, heroes versus victims, stable versus chaotic/unstable, wealthy versus poor, and the like. These oppositions - historically rooted in imperialism and colonialism - serve the ‘West’s’ ‘self-definition’, as well as the legitimation, reproduction and naturalization of its (‘superior’) values and, thus, superior position in the world’s hierarchy of nations. In other words, the ‘West’ keeps reproducing the values underlying the previously mentioned ‘deep frames’ (Darnton & Kirk, 2011): ‘free market thinking’, ‘elite ‘Western’ governance’ and ‘moral order’. The ‘South’s’ oppositional positionality, however, deconstructs this outlook and constructs an alternative - reversed - view.

As frame-building is likewise affected by positionality, it is, of course, no coincidence that we recognize the patterns of the ideological square in the alternative EJ frame matrix. The latter is based on our case study, endorsed by previous research, and findings of a larger
study in progress (see above). Indeed, while the mainstream frame recognizes the first layer responsibility - the greater responsibility of the ‘West’ in terms of GHG emissions - the fundamental flaws of ‘Western’ thinking are usually left unconsidered: Economic means are not problematized as solutions. Furthermore, the ‘South’s’ vulnerability is usually considered to be an internal feature (cause), a (decontextualized, and thus eternal) essence (Dalhgren & Chakrapani, 1982), ‘due to the ‘South’s’ lower (i.e., ‘backward’) status’ in the ‘moral order’ of cultures. From this perspective, the solution can only lie with an external force, ‘the White hero’ (seen as ‘morally superior’, the ‘elite’ who has to lead and govern the helpless victims).

This thinking is even reflected in widely used and accepted nouns, such as ‘development’ (with the ‘West’ as example), ‘(financial) aid’ or ‘charity’ (Darnton & Kirk, 2011, p. 90), which can be considered as “signature elements” for the mainstream frame (Gamson, 1989, p. 159).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Problem definition</th>
<th>Causal responsibility</th>
<th>Solution / action perspective</th>
<th>Moral basis</th>
<th>Key terms</th>
<th>Framing devices</th>
<th>Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Some groups and people in society - the ‘South’, the poor (regions) - are affected most severely by climate change consequences (e.g., flooding or more extreme weather). While they do not carry any responsibility for climate change, they are largely deprived (by the dominating groups/the ‘West’) of the means to improve their situation, or to adapt.</td>
<td>The dominating groups/‘West’ bear(s) a multilayered responsibility, due to an (economic) development model of liberalism and (Euro-American centered) globalization. Firstly, their disproportionate GHG emissions, supporting luxurious lifestyles and economic interests, cause climate change. Secondly, they have brought about inequality: They have created or maintain weak and/or unjust social/economic structures (due to past domination and exploitation), which make certain groups more vulnerable, and/or they do not acknowledge the most vulnerable as full agents (partners) in decision making.</td>
<td>The solution lies in the dismissing of the (fallacious) development model. The responsible groups and the victims need to work together as equal partners. The former have the responsibility to rectify their wrongs, particularly in terms of mitigation (GHG emissions are to be reduced). The latter hold valuable knowledge and/or resilient social structures which are key to (local) adaptation (and possibly mitigation) and/or are highly valuable in (international) decision making. The most powerful (‘West’), however, might support the latter, by taking down possible (financial or other) obstructions (they have created).</td>
<td>Fallacious thinking, causing inequality and suffering, needs to be rectified (debt and penance). Democracy, equality, self-efficacy.</td>
<td>-The ‘South’ versus the ‘West’, the victims versus the responsible ones, inequality -Multi-layered (environmental) debt, fallacious (economic) thinking -Equality, resilience, self-determination, grass-roots movement, local adaptation</td>
<td>Rhetorical devices: -Metaphors: “2004 Tsunami in Thailand, the dominating groups/‘West’ as parasite, ‘crime’ -Contrasting Lexical/grammatical choices: -Agency: agents versus patients -‘Us (South’) versus them (‘West’) -The ‘South’: humanization (identification). The ‘West’: abstracting and generalization (distancing) - ‘(Historical) responsibility’, ‘man-made (context) factors’ -Unequal responsibilities/burdens’, ‘(un)equal partners’ -Resilience’, ‘efficacy’ -Local grassroots movements’ Quoted sources: -‘Southern’ grassroots voices: locals, grassroots organizations or officials (‘Western’) organizations speaking on their behalf</td>
<td>“The prosperous ‘West’ bears a heavy responsibility. It could only grow by sucking out the colonies like a parasite, till there was nothing left.” -“The development model of Europe and the US, based on the unlimited use of fossil fuels, is responsible for the phenomenon of climate change.” -“The high death toll is due to the socio-economic history of the country.” -“The poorest live in the low-lying coastal areas because these are the only places where they are able to build a shack.” -“Local structures are most capable of repairing the resilience of the people.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 4. The alternative EJ frame matrix (based on Van Gorp (2006))

The reversed positionality of the ‘Southern’ groups, however, challenges this thinking, exposing layers and views overlooked from the top-down position: While both the suffering of ‘Southern’ nations as well as their vulnerability and denied independence are completely due to external forces (cause) - (environmental) debt - the victims hold a superior position when it comes to adaptation, thanks to their grassroots (‘internal’) experiences (solution). In short, ‘the ‘West(ern’ ideology) is the problem’. It is no coincidence, clearly, that Darnton and Kirk (2011, pp. 83-86) claim that ‘Western’ thinking needs to evolve towards alternative, often overlooked or even discarded fundamental (‘Southern’) values (frames): (1) ‘shared prosperity’, with a shared care for common (natural) support systems, as source of wealth, (2) ‘participatory democracy’, calling for the recognition of the knowledge, insights and self-determination of the (‘Southern’) people, and (3) ‘egalitarian principles’, which are already observed in grassroots organizations and South-South partnerships. Clearly, it is neither a coincidence that all of these are underlying values of many alternative media projects as well.

Therefore, while the mainstream frame has a certain merit in that it signals injustice, Rees and Westra (2013) warn that “calls for (…) reform, per se, tend to draw attention away from the structural economic forces, the ecological dysfunction, and, most important, the cultural values at cause of the problem” (p. 100). Indeed, the credit of the alternative frame is its (profound) contextualization compared to the mainstream version: If problems are contextualized as general societal outcomes, responsibility is more likely to be assigned to society (and, as a result, the audience is more likely to make a link with their own lives). A lack of broader context, contrariwise, suggests that the responsibility lies with the individual (Iyengar, 1990). This recognition of debt - ‘Western’ thinking as an act of violence on the poor – therefore is a precondition for public concern and action, the development and (public) acceptance of political agreements which are based on principles of true equity and justice (McLaren, 2003; Rees & Westra, 2013).

In summary, this article, in particular our case study, clearly demonstrates that positionality is a crucial point of difference between mainstream and alternative media.
Mainstream media often fail to look beyond hegemonic ‘truths’, such as ‘Western’ ideologies of liberalism and imperialism, due to a top-down positionality characterizing context, content and production process. Introducing alternative experiences and perspectives - a bottom-up positionality - alternative media, however, can counterbalance this mainstream thinking. Functioning, for instance, as amplifiers of the EJ frame of the victims suffering under the ‘Western’ values, they denounce the adherence to the latter and construct an alternative. As “[t]ruth must be framed effectively to be seen at all” (Lakoff, 2010, p. 80), the alternative outlet’s distributing of (salient) alternative frames might be crucial in opening up public debate to ‘truths’ often overlooked from ‘above’.

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Hybrid styles in popular reporting on science: A study of New Scientist’s headlines

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ABSTRACT This project explores some current trends in journalistic textual practices that reflect media outlets’ increased need to engage readers through hybridized forms of coverage. It aims to demonstrate to what extent popular journalism has been assimilated by science communication. It examines a sample of 250 headlines collected over the period of eight months from the list of five “most-read” articles as displayed on the webpage of the international magazine New Scientist. The linguistic, stylistic and rhetorical properties of these headlines are examined quantitatively and qualitatively. The analysis focuses on the ways in which scientific research is popularized through hybrid styles, including those that instantiate, e.g., domestication, celebration, emotionalization, personalization or conversationalization of science, as well as the implications of involving various proportions of academic and popular styles in science reporting.

KEYWORDS Headlines, Popular journalism, Science communication, Linguistic style, Hybridity

Introduction

This project explores some current trends in journalistic textual practices that reflect media outlets’ increased need to engage readers’/viewers’ senses through hybridized forms of coverage. Sensationalism is understood as a discursive strategy of re-presenting and re-packaging information in such a way as to make it appear as more attractive, relevant and interesting than might be the case (Molek-Kozakowska, 2013). It has so far been documented that popular journalism is largely characterized by thematic preoccupation with extraordinary events and dramatic human-interest narratives (Ekstrom, 2002), by simplified and stereotyped representations and colloquial idiom (Conboy, 2006), or by emotion-laden evaluative language (Bednarek & Caple, 2012). Such journalistic style, formerly characteristic only of the tabloids, has also been noted to have colonized more “serious,” even scientific coverage (Casamiglia & van Dijk, 2004; Myers, 2003). For example, popular science writers and reporters aim to “recontextualize” science from the highest level of abstraction into the lives of the ordinary receivers.

Popularization of science involves not only simpler narratives and understandable idioms, but also such processes as selection of newsworthy issues, framing of scientific work
and interpretation of research results so as to avoid alienating the non-scientific audiences. While the democratizing and educational effects of popular science are appreciated here, attention is paid to how, in such a coverage, science is represented in ways that are likely to attract and keep news consumers. The textual intricacies of representation are inevitably linked with the question of credibility of science communication. That is why, besides examining the stylistic layer of popular science headlines, this study reflects on the journalistic potential for legitimization of peculiar discursive representations of science-related items.

This study explores the hybrid rhetoric of science popularization in the context of newsworthiness. The empirical material is a corpus of science-related headlines, because it is assumed that headlines have a specific role not only to announce the issue and attract attention, but also to shape the audience’s perception and interpretation of scientific work. Again, headline editorship is appreciated here for the craft and sophistication in the application of various means of appeal to engender audience engagement; however, it is believed that headline also deserves continual critical scrutiny. We examine here a sample of 250 headlines collected over the period of eight months (October 2013 – June 2014) from the webpage of the international magazine *New Scientist*. The headlines were randomly drawn every week from the top of the “most-read” list of articles featured by the outlet. This selective procedure helped to downsize the number of headlines to take into consideration only those that proved to be popular with the readers. The analysis is to reveal how popular journalism renders science by drawing on hybrid styles that instantiate, for example, domestication, celebration, emotionalization, personalization or conversationalization of science. These styles are hybrid because they also retain properties aimed at enhancing credibility, rationalization, and legitimization characteristic of science communication. The study also discusses implications of possible cumulative effects emerging from hybridization of headline styles in terms of, for example, media agendas or newsworthiness criteria that might ultimately misrepresent scientific work.

This paper consists of four main parts. The first section defines popular journalism, revisits the dilemmas related to journalistic practices in market-driven contexts and characterizes the main discursive and stylistic properties of popular journalism. The second section focuses on science communication: its aims, formats and the role of the journalist as a mediator. It also reviews recent research devoted to discursive characteristics of science
popularization, which is, in effect, a domain of mediated communication that has appropriated and hybridized styles originating with scientific and popular discourses. The implications of hybridity in the case of science popularization are then discussed from a critical (CDA) perspective. The third part operationalizes the notions of hybridity and style to the purposes of the present study, which focuses on science news reporting. The notion of style adopted derives from Fairclough’s (1995; 2000) framework for media discourse analysis and involves a distinct repertoire of linguistic forms that construct particular identities (of communicators/recipient) and relationships (between them) in discourse. The fourth part presents the design of the empirical study, its procedures and quantitative findings, with special attention paid to the distribution and functions of linguistic forms with marked “keyness.” The qualitative analysis is devoted to identifying and interrogating hybrid styles as discursive strategies for representing science in New Scientist’s headlines that cut across the public discourse/private lifeworld divide. The section discusses repertoires and patterns that instantiate domestication and celebration of science, as well as emotionalization and conversationalization of science reporting with elements of speculation, personalization and (self)-promotion that hybridize with their stylistic counterparts, namely scientific abstraction, rationality and formality, or journalistic balance, factuality, institutionalization and informativeness.

1. Popular journalism

   Journalism, at any point in time, can be perceived as a set of dominant conventions and inherited traditions for reporting and relating information within a particular institutional framework and with the aid of available technologies of mediation. Driven by technical and social developments, journalistic practices are constantly shifting and the dynamics of this transformation depends on a wide array of factors. For example, in his book on the history of journalism, Conboy (2011) traces the evolution of journalistic practices, particularly throughout the last century, in order to problematize some of the preconceptions about the current state of the news media in Britain. In the chapter on popular journalism he provides an overview of the complex constellation of economic factors, technological developments, political influences and cultural expectations that have oriented contemporary journalism towards a popular, mass-appeal medium. Importantly, Conboy (2011, p. 109-124) demystifies the easy dichotomies (e.g., press vs. broadcast
journalism, elite vs. tabloid press, objective vs. advocacy reporting) that dominate the critical debates in Journalism Studies. It can be concluded that hybrid forms of journalism lie at the basis of evolution of journalistic practices.

Nowadays scholars point out that our postmodern media-saturated social reality is marked for complexity as well as transience (Harcup, 2009). Since journalism is a marketable commodity, reporters, editors and managers must be constantly attuned to the shifting preferences of the publics (McManus, 1994). Critics of the market-driven journalism consider the increase in tabloid formats and narrowing of the news agenda in the context of entertainment and sensation-oriented coverage to be a threat to democracy and journalism itself (Barnett, 2008; Curran & Seaton, 2003). But is serious, formal, elitist and specialized coverage of current affairs a viable alternative for a democracy? Without downplaying the vital role of journalism in scrutinizing and elucidating the issues of public concern, the public should accept the market realities of news outlets and scale down its unrealistic expectations of journalistic impartiality and objectivity (Ekstrom, 2002; Molek-Kozakowska, 2015; Richardson, 2007). The public should be aware of the fact that the discursive construction of the public agenda, as offered by media outlets, reproduces the perspective and conventions of the profit-seeking media system predicated on attracting the attention of the mass consumer.

This study is less interested in the long-term social implications of tabloidization and more in the description of the rhetorical and particularly linguistic aspects of this process, followed by the description of hybrid forms of current journalism. It is argued that these are not only related to the shift in content and focus of presented news items towards more human-interest stories, infotainment (mind the hybrid), scandal and drama (McLachlan & Golding, 2000), but also to a significant change of style (Conboy, 2006). Popular journalism involves not only more shortened texts, visuals and emotional headlines, but also more consumer and lifestyle features, more personalization of reporting and domestication of abstract issues (Fowler, 1991), more conversationalized formats (Fairclough, 1995), as well as more “negative, journalist dominated points of view” (instead of balanced politician/expert/witness-centered communication) (Conboy, 2011, p. 119). Predictably, science reporting, which is studied here, could not remain untouched by such intense changes. These include looking for “sellable stories,” selection and interpretation of news, as well as brevity and colour in reporting (Conboy, 2011, p. 120). In due course, journalism
cannot be claimed to remain separated from larger entertainment-driven popular culture (Dahlgren, 1992).

It seems that assessment of what constitutes a “sellable story” depends on the configuration of news values that determine its newsworthiness. Newsworthiness is directly linked to such professional practices of tabloid reporters and editors as selecting, shaping and re-presenting some facts. Despite discrepancies in their classifications of news values, researchers agree that there is a priority given to news issues that are recent and can be broken as latest developments (timeliness), wide in scope and scale (impact) and relevant to readers (proximity). Newsworthy news focuses on “maximizing or intensifying particular aspects of an event” (Bednarek & Caple, 2012, p. 44) (superlativeness). News items that involve conflict or drama (negativity), and concern individuals, particularly elite persons and powerful institutions or countries (personalization, prominence) are more likely to be covered. News that attracts most interest should be unexpected (novelty), and yet “unambiguous and clear-cut rather than cloudy and complex” (Montgomery, 2007, p. 9). In addition, it should fit in with audience’s experience (consonance), be compatible with standard schemas of coverage and bear some kind of cultural relevance. Moreover, some criteria specify how news stories are to be designed and written (Bell, 1991, p. 53–57; Harcup & O’Neill, 2001, p. 279). This relates to whether the story is “exclusive” to one outlet or is widely covered, whether it takes up a new issue or continues a previously signaled one, whether it uses predicable patterns of information arrangement or offers a mixture of thematic threads. Harcup and O’Neill (2001, p. 279) argue for recognizing such additional newsworthiness criteria as entertainment (encompassing human-interest in the event, humour and wit in the presentation, and aesthetic value of imagery) and media agenda (stories selected to fit the news organization’s own political, commercial or social stance). In terms of textual composition, it matters if a story is not too lengthy, too complicated or too time-consuming for the reporter to prepare. The so-called “writing objectives” also include: balance, accuracy, precision and colour (Bednarek & Caple, 2012; Richardson, 2007). In addition, Bednarek and Caple (2012, p. 44) argue that events can be constructed as newsworthy with specific application of images and linguistic devices. Much of language-oriented research confirms the practices of emotionalizing, polarizing, simplifying of news stories for the purpose of increasing audience appeal (Bednarek & Caple, 2012; Molek-
Kozakowska, 2013; Montgomery, 2007; Richardson, 2007). This study will also look at how hybrid forms and styles might engender newsworthiness.

2. Science communication and popularization

Trumbo (1999, p. 410) considers science communication as “including communication among scientists and mediated communication from scientists to the public.” Science communication specialists use verbal and visual representation to make scientific data clearer and easier to understand, to explain concepts and involve the public in consuming that information through different media technologies. Because of the diversity of this domain of communication, it is worth distinguishing scientific communication from science communication. The best known scientific communication genres are reports, journal articles, monographs, theses, abstracts, speeches or demonstrations. This group also includes review papers, book chapters, poster presentations and popularization formats designed for sponsors, administrators or hobbyists. Science communication is a hybridized domain with genres evolving and multiplying to more effectively share new information, report discoveries, and to disseminate knowledge more broadly addressing a non-scientific audience.

With the professionalization of scientists and their reluctance to engage with the general public in the early twentieth century (Bowler, 2009), the role of the mediator between the science world and the world of the public has become increasingly important. As a result, the hybrid domain of “popular science” writing includes mostly texts created by writers or scholars aimed at non-scientists with a basic scientific knowledge. In addition, popular scientific texts can be posted not only by scientists or professional scientific journalists, but also by non-scientists whose way of interpreting and understanding the subject may differ from that of specialists. Popular science books, magazines, articles, news reports, documentaries, TV programs or websites are supposed to bring science from the highest level of abstraction into the life of the ordinary receivers; to bridge the public domain of science and the private experience of acquiring new information.

In this vein, Broks (2006) sees popular science as “a connector” between scientific literature as a professional medium of scientific research and the domains of popular political and cultural discourse. In accordance with the principles of newsworthiness, for example, science reporters need to convey scientific knowledge in clear, concise and
palatable ways. Their task is to “recontextualize” scientific discourse into popular journalistic discourse (Myers, 2003). At the same time they must avoid misinterpreting the results, omitting some crucial points, failing to explain issues and, above all, alienating the readers. Unlike most science communication, which focuses on recent scientific developments, popular science writing deals with broad-ranging topics that are judged to have been selected for their significance for the public. The popular science reporter’s position is thus “between the linguistic output of the scientific group and the supposed public of the particular branch of media concerned” (Moirand, 2003, p. 179). That is why popularization of science is no longer to be seen as a linear process of recontextualization of scientific discourse into the domain of popular journalism. Increasingly, popular science is an arena of competing discourses and multiple voices, where the so-called “enunciative standpoints” (of researchers, institutions, experts, governments, citizen organizations and media outlets) may be given more or less rhetorical potency (Moirand, 2003). By being provided with multiple voices in science reporting, a reflective audience may have an opportunity to interpret new facts from the vantage points of different identity positions. But science communicators also act as gate-keepers and interpreters on behalf of the public. Hence, popular science not only represents the research findings and scientific work in a more accessible idiom, but also highlights, frames and legitimizes some scientific activities (Calsamiglia, 2003; Calsamiglia & van Dijk, 2004).

In the context of science popularization the reporter is sometimes claimed to have a special social responsibility not only to inform but also to educate the public. Indeed, popular science journalists struggle to recast technical information into words and images accessible to people who do not have the specialized training and vocabulary of working scientists (Trumbo, 1999). This type of writing demands skills of bridging scientific knowledge with a private lifeworlds of readers by adopting a less formal, narrative, or even conversational style. According to scientific literacy practitioners, to fulfill their pedagogical function, popular science texts should be deprived of scientific jargon, but still should strictly adhere to scientific facts and logics (Gjedde, 2000). Popular science writers need to be able to devise representations and accounts which their audience can understand, but it is important not to lower the level of complexity in the narration. According to Gjedde (2000), an ordinary audience is unlikely to have much of a scientific background, but treating them as total laypersons may have the undesired result in a loss of attention. That is why in
popular science reporting journalists need to take into consideration the characteristics of their target audience (the monitoring of online traffic helps here). In the online environment, if the readers are interested in science, technology, environment or medicine, they access specific thematic websites that focus on scientific information. A real challenge is to attract readers to science themes when they use only general daily news providers. In a pun, Gjedde (2000) says that it is essential to replace the “eye” of the scientist with the “I” of the “mediating” writer, with whom the reader could identify more. In a sense, this project aims to explore how the “pedagogical” responsibilities of science popularizers can be reconciled with newsworthiness imperatives. It is not denied that the hybrid stylistic repertoires identified in this study might have a long-range positive consequence in terms of increasing science literacy through democratizing the public access to science communication.

There is much research into how science popularizers apply linguistic means, rhetorical devices, or discursive strategies in reporting on scientific advancements in their attempts at attracting targeted audiences and keeping them interested in the results, implications and the consequences of scientific work. Over the years, some patterns in popular scientific writing have crystallized as far as the general features of the style of reporting is concerned. Regarding headlines, for example, passive voice is to be omitted if possible, and phraseology needs to be intriguing, even ambiguous (Mazzi, 2012; Saxena, 2006; 2013). If visuals illustrating scientific principles are given, they need to engage the audience not only intellectually, but also emotionally, in order to help them understand and remember complex information better (Trumbo, 1999; Bednarek & Caple, 2012). Composition and design of such multimodal ensembles in science reporting (e.g., headlines, bylines, leads, texts, graphs, figures, images) needs to reflect recipients’ preferences for “reading paths” (Kress & van Leeuwen, 1996; 1998). Moreover, it is the narrative arrangement of scientific information that, more than any other technique of presentation, enhances scientific literacy (Halliday & Martin, 1993). In popularization genres, Moirand (2003) mentions the possible uses of indirect speech and subject-verb inversion to emphasize the emotions of the speakers whose statements or public appearances are reported, while a systematic use of inverted commas lets the mediators distance themselves from what has been claimed. Motta-Roth and Marcuzzo (2010) analyze generic features and choice of verbs patterning in scientific popularization texts to show how scientific rationalization may be achieved. These findings constitute a backdrop against which it will
be possible in this study to operationalize the notion of style as a distinct linguistic repertoire and apply it in search of hybridized stylistic patterns in science news reporting.

From a more rhetorical perspective, Fahnestock (2005) recognizes some other properties of popular science, namely, its capability to stress singularity, individuality and generality by taking a tone of authentic potency absent from much of scientific literature. Her comparisons between original scientific reports, science journalism and popular science typically show some levels of deformation, simplification and dramatization, even as regards politically neutral scientific subject matter. While the aim of scientific literature is to provide information and persuade peers “as to the validity of observations and conclusions and the forensic efficacy of methods”, popular science focuses on convincing “scientific strangers” of the importance of data and conclusions and on celebrating the results (Fahnestock, 2005, p. 22). For example, popular science often translates qualified and tentative statements found in scientific literature into simpler descriptions of results, more straightforward expressions of cause-and-effect linkages, more dogmatic conclusions, and more personal narratives of doing science. The question that may arise at this point (but is not going to be addressed in this paper) is how this celebratory rhetoric of popular science may impede readers’ critical reflection as to the accuracy, validity, but, most of all, of necessity and social legitimacy of a given type of scientific research.

Distortions in popular scientific writing are also likely to arise as a result of the general trend towards sensationalism, which pervades most domains of journalism, including such domains as politics, economy, diplomacy or social affairs. Sensationalism involves many aspects of media content and style that are bound to collect attention, excite the sensory system or inflame emotions (Molek-Kozakowska, 2013; 2014), and is not exclusive to reports on crime, disaster, scandal and celebrity (Uribe and Gunter, 2007). In this sense, “science sensationalism” may be a by-product of news media commercialization and tabloidization, predicated on the principle that the more appealing the reporting, the more profit it is possible to derive. Due to the proliferation of online news outlets and scientific and pseudo-scientific websites, one should also acknowledge the growth in sensationalist trends in the more “authoritative” science journalism (Myers, 2003; Saxena, 2013). Stylistically, according to Saxena (2013), a sensational text may make more use of adverbs and adjectives to give a projection of an intriguing topic, a must-know information, or a drama. Such reports may end up framing scientific news as having more of an impact on bigger parts of the public, as is the case with announcements of medical “breakthroughs,” “revolutionary” technologies or “apocalyptic” predictions about the future of the planet. That is why science news items are likely to
be emotionally marked and negative, despite the fact that science communication is by definition a report on the progress of humanity (Conboy, 2011).

To conclude, although popular science writing is not seen as proper scientific register and sometimes is criticized for providing information that is “distorted, simplified, hyped up or dumbed down” (Myers, 2003, p. 266), it continues to constitute an important part of journalism. In addition, critical discourse analysts and rhetorical scholars emphasize the fact that mediators tend to interpret (not only relate) scientific news and celebrate science, and that news outlets seek newsworthy information to boost readerships and may sideline information that does not have news value (Calsamiglia & van Dijk, 2004; Fahnestock, 2005). This is because popular scientific reporting is governed by the rules of newsworthiness, which determine which stories make it into a publication, podcast or website. (In fact, popular scientific journalism may have its own criteria of newsworthiness with such news values as impact, novelty and superlativeness being more prominent than negativity or proximity, but the issue of news value hierarchies is not addressed here.) Whereas sometimes newsworthiness is clear, e.g., when the item is connected with discoveries that preclude natural disasters or loss of life, the newsworthiness of a routine scientific finding is usually not very obvious. This study looks at how linguistic means, including hybrid stylistic patterns, come in handy to enhance validity, relevance or emotivity of the science news item.

3. Hybridity and style in news discourse

Hybridity is a salient concept in cultural studies, particularly in postcolonial theory, which nevertheless has been criticized as an analytic category, due to its alleged potential to sustain cultural hegemony through naturalizing the processes of assimilation (or annihilation) of the other into the mainstream. Also, because all forms of culture can be claimed to be hybrid, the concept needs to be clearly delineated and theoretically grounded lest it loses its applicability. Indeed, Kavoori (1998, p. 201) notes that the use of the term hybridity may be more revealing about the people who deploy it than about the things described with it.

Beyond its “pragmatic” application to trace mixed genres, bilingual identities or textual heteroglossia, hybridity can also be used in communication studies to refer to “cultural groundings” of communication processes behind negotiations of identities, articulations of meanings, authorizations of stances, or amalgamations of forms. Again, these can be either criticized as “contaminations,” or celebrated as having empowering and
democratizing effects (Joseph & Fink, 1999). In media studies, on the one hand, hybridized practices can reveal the tensions between structures of media systems and human agency; on the other, they can be the end-result of co-option, or the hegemonic construction of forms that uphold the dominance of the (corporate media) elites by incorporating some features of the non-elites (Ahmad, 1992). The orientation towards hybridity espoused in this project is multifaceted: it takes into consideration not only the textual realizations of hybridity (in the following section), but also the contextual (professional, cultural, ideological, economic) contexts that enable it (in the previous sections). That is why the contexts of market-driven popular journalism and science popularization were expounded in some detail above.

To bridge the contextual and textual level of this project’s approach to hybridity, and operationalize the notion of hybrid styles, I turn to Fairclough’s framework (1989; 1992; 1995; 2000). In his outline of critical discourse analysis of the media, Fairclough (1995, p. 5) envisions three sets of research questions about media output: how the world tends to be represented, what identities/relationships are set up, and which linguistic resources are drawn from to compose media texts. He notes the tensions arising from media discourse being a domain where it is not only information and entertainment, but also the private and the public, the individual and the collective, the real and the imaginary, the extraordinary and the routine, the formal and the casual aspects of representation, interaction and texture that are fused (1995, p. 5-15). Fairclough’s approach is said to be specifically designed to address these various tensions which result in media products being increasingly “hybrid” texts.

At the level of representations, Fairclough (2000, p. 14) distinguishes various discourses that compete to naturalize/legitimize a given version of reality; at the level of identities and relationships, he sees various linguistic styles being developed to perform them; at the textual level, he notes a variety of genres which influence how language is conventionally used as a means of expression. Needless to say, they all operate simultaneously and are flexible, which is highlighted in Fairclough’s framework accounting for interdiscursivity, stylistic hybridization and intertextuality respectively. With this conceptual framework, Fairclough (1992; 1995; 2000) proceeds to analyze the linguistic facets of such larger processes as the marketization and technologization of media output, the conversationalization of reporting, or the de-formalization of mediated political rhetoric.
The framework is believed to be useful for this project to trace hybrid styles in science reporting.

The notion of style as adopted in this paper can be deduced from Fairclough’s (1995) conceptual distinctions. Style is treated as a distinctive repertoire of forms of language that are used to enact a relatively stable identity (of the communicator, projected reader, community), which is underpinned by a set of values (professional, institutional, cultural). Styles are also instrumental for projecting or modelling a (preferred) relationship between the producers and the receivers. As can be assumed, in popular science reporting this relationship is predicated on readers’ first of all devoting their attention (through being attracted by a headline) and then developing a long-term preference, loyalty or habit to follow science-related coverage (cf. Harcup and O’Neill’s (2001) notion of media agenda as a news value). Most news outlets tend to style their institutional identities in terms of such characteristics as credibility and competence in reporting, as well as relevance to readers’ interests. At the same time to attract broader audiences they have to construct newsworthiness of covered issues which, as claimed above (cf. Bednarek & Caple, 2012), is largely a discursive strategy. The task of stylistic analysis of popular science journalism is made challenging due to the inherent hybridity of linguistic styles typical of science communication and popular journalism, and, in this project, due to the additional overlap with the stylistic constraints of the headlines.

4. Hybrid styles in science reporting: the study of headlines

In popular journalism, the headline is treated as the main “hook” for the reader. Indeed, it is sometimes so ambiguous or convoluted that one needs to rely on the subheadline and the lead-in to decipher its meaning. Since the information in the headline tends to be fairly compressed and thus ambiguous or vague, readers are expected to proceed to the article to understand what the item is about. Researchers also stress the multifunctionality of headlines, which are to (1) summarize content, (2) attract attention, and (3) frame interpretation (Bell, 1991; van Dijk, 1988). However, studies of political coverage for example demonstrate that, increasingly, headlines are not accurate reflections of the stories they precede, because other imperatives – such as the pursuit of a reader’s attention or the need to reflect the editorial line – cause systematic misrepresentations of
the issues presented subsequently in articles (Andrew, 2007; Richardson, 2007; van Dijk, 2006).

In their analysis of news discourse, Bednarek and Caple (2012, p. 100-104) list some of the linguistic characteristics that make headlines different from other journalistic styles. These include the omission of function words, frequent premodifications and nominalizations, the use of untensed phrases instead of clauses, the use of the present tense to increase timeliness, the increased frequency of adverbs of manner, the decreased frequency of attributions and time specifications, the use of marked/emotional/evaluative words, the intertextual references in the form of pseudodirect quotes or allusions, as well as such patterns as proverbs, idioms and puns. Headline style has also been noted for its capacity to attract attention and cue humor through creativity, diction, wordplay, or styling of the oral mode (Chovanec, 2008; Conboy, 2006; Lennon, 2004;). The function of many stylistic choices is that of routine sensationalization of trivial issues (cf. Molek-Kozakowska, 2013; 2014). However, it must be stressed that headlines is marked for its variability and changeability, thus studies of hybrid styles in headlines seem well-justified. Also with the evolving news communication technologies (e.g., live news updates, podcasts, newsbites, tweets), headline style tends to be more creative than ever. However, as indicated above, any results of empirical studies must be interpreted against the backdrop of specific journalistic practices of the time. This study focuses on the capacity of science headlines to discursively construct newsworthiness using hybrid styles. In the remaining part of the article, it is demonstrated how this has been done in one of the popular international science magazines New Scientist.

4.1. Design of the study

As has been outlined in the introduction, this study examines the linguistic patterns and stylistic properties in a sample of 250 headlines collected over the period of eight months (October 2013 – June 2014) from the webpage of the international English-language science magazine New Scientist. The headlines were randomly drawn every week from the top of the “most-read” list of articles featured by the outlet. This selective procedure helped to downsize the number of headlines and isolate only those that actually were popular with the readers. The average length of the headlines in the sample is 8.06 words. The aim is to examine quantitatively the linguistic patterns and qualitatively the various styles that may be
interpreted as constructing newsworthiness (Bednarek & Caple, 2012), with attention to
devices that can be said to have been used to package information to appear as more
interesting, relevant or attractive (Molek-Kozakowska, 2013). Thus, the analysis aims to
uncover the ways in which routine scientific work is represented more appealingly through
hybrid styles. Results of the quantitative and qualitative analysis discussed below will be
illustrated with examples of headlines numbered in the order of appearance in the corpus
(i.e., 1-250).

4.2. Quantitative results

Despite the fact that the sample is relatively small, and the research tasks set out
above can be best completed in the course of qualitative analysis, we used WordSmith Tools
(Scott, 2014) to get to know the frequency and keyness of particular lexical items. The table
below reproduces the keyword list in the order of frequency with respect to tokens that
appear three times or more in the corpus. Keyness is defined as relative salience of an item
vis-à-vis a reference corpus.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No in order of frequency</th>
<th>Token</th>
<th>Frequency in the sample</th>
<th>Keyness</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>THE</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>-52.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>AND</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>-37.36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>MAY</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>30.45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>YOUR</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>25.699</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>FIRST</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>24.82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>LIFE</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>25.584</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>BRAIN</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>54.859</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>DRUGS</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>44.132</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>SCIENCE</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>34.768</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>HUMAN</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>26.662</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>EARTH</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>30.621</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>BLOOD</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>28.872</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>COSMIC</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>54.208</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>DIABETES</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>48.952</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>QUANTUM</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>46.375</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The keyword list is a filter that provides us with some specific information about the corpus. Firstly, the evidence for the elliptic style characteristic of headlinese is provided, with unusually low numbers of such function words as articles, prepositions and copula (8. Mars air turned to stone to cool planet); secondly, the low number of verbs proves the fact that, syntactically, some headlines are phrases rather than clauses (24. Inside the minds of the JFK conspiracy theorists). The presence of AND as the most common linking device demonstrates the pervasiveness of parataxis or phraseological co-ordination (123. Gunshot victims to be suspended between life and death), enumeration (112. Batteries of ice, iron and glass store renewable power) and meaning compression (142. Beware of yeti, and spurious science too). The scarce number of adverbs testifies to them being relatively superfluous in the compressed structure of a headline; however, if adverbs do appear they construct extraordinary nature of the news item, as in 20. Vastly diluted bleach may have protective
effect on skin; or 203. Let’s finally condemn smallpox virus to extinction. The only modal verb in the WS keyword list is MAY, which suggests that exponents of epistemic modality can be indeed used to position speculative claims within the scope of legitimate science reporting (12. Exoplanet hunters may find ET by glut of alien corpses; 71. Long-lost lake may have helped humans out of Africa). Admittedly, by mitigating some outrageous assertions with MAY, the outlet is also able to appear as credible, up-to-date and cutting-edge, as it positions itself as reporting on the issues that are just being verified by scientists.

The high keyness of the pronoun YOUR may be a telling sign of the attempt to present science news as relevant to the consumer, to personalize abstract issues and to engage the reader through a direct address (15. Can a computer virus communicate via your speakers?; 79. Scratch a mirror image of your itch to bring relief). The use of YOU/YOUR is related to other properties of headlines that build up newsworthiness. Firstly, addressing the reader directly (through personal pronouns, questions, imperatives) arguably increases interest and attention, as the headline’s illocution may have the force of advice, warning or order (63. Drink two espressos to enhance long-term memory; 83. Sugar on trial: What you really need to know; 135. Rosacea may be caused by mite faeces in your pores). Secondly, in due course, this technique constructs newsworthiness by mixing such values as impact, proximity, personalization and consonance. With such headlines as 115. Your voice betrays your personality in a split second, or 136. Meet your unborn child – before it’s even conceived individuals may be induced to exploring how this piece of scientific research could be used in their own life. They could conclude that science is not always as abstract and irrelevant as they had thought, which can be useful in building a long-time engagement with science reporting and particularly loyalty to the outlet.

The high frequency of the word FIRST in headlines is not quite surprising, as novelty and superlativeness are important news values. In fact, the word FIRST has a range of applications in the sample: sometimes it takes readers on a trip back in time (11. Ancient mural may be first picture of volcanic blast; 44. First ever animals were made of jelly, not sponge), into the experimental lab (64. Mindscapes: The first recording of hallucinated music; 156. First exomoon glimpsed – 1800 light years from Earth), or to see the most advanced applications of scientific research (13. First fungal farmers found harvesting bacteria; 47. Replacement artificial heart keeps first patient alive). Success in the scientific world is customarily predicated on a completion of pioneer, innovative or unprecedented tasks (e.g.,
Engineered vaginas grown in women for the first time. The promises of “discovery” or “breakthrough” are the main legitimizing mechanisms of costly scientific endeavours. Novelty, as signaled by the uses of FIRST (and analogous vocabulary) also happens to be a highly cherished aspect of news media business. In fact, except from sheer plagiarism, all kinds of routine scientific work potentially add something new to the pool of knowledge. Notwithstanding that, scientific headlines seem to celebrate scientific progress as extraordinary and thus worth attending to.

The WordSmith keyword list helps to identify broad thematic fields favored by the outlet and its patrons. Apart from fairly general lexemes, such as LIFE, SCIENCE, HUMAN, EVOLUTION, EARTH, CLIMATE, which may be applied to discuss advancements in a variety of scientific disciplines, we can identify a high frequency of terms that pertain to reporting specifically on biology and medicine, e.g., BRAIN, DRUGS, BLOOD, DIABETES, CURE, VIRUS, ALZHEIMER’S, as well as physics and astronomy, e.g., COSMIC, QUANTUM, EXOPLANET, MARS, SOLAR, ASTROPHILE, MULTIVERSE. The marked keyness of the above technical jargon indicates the fact that New Scientist seems to go against the grain of general public expectation in focusing on this scientific discipline. The preoccupation with medicine and health sciences is more understandable in the context of fostering public health awareness and a demand for information about medical progress. Admittedly, this emergent pattern of the magazine’s profiling needs verification vis-à-vis a bigger sample, but the frequency and keyness data provide a rationale for a closer reflection on why space exploration and medicine are imagined here to be “prototypical” scientific disciplines with other disciplines to be located more on the periphery of what might be called a valid scientific pursuit.

Summarizing this part of quantitative analysis, it could be noted that the constraints of headlinese as a stylistic variety of journalistic discourse apply to popular science reporting with simple, short, elliptic patterns that generically do not differ much from most headline styles of mainstream popular outlets. As regards scientific jargon, there is a tendency to keep to general well-known abstract vocabulary rather than to technical terms, which nevertheless are sometimes deployed to spice up the coverage, add the technological edge to the reporting and, arguably, hierarchize scientific disciplines in terms of more or less important disciplines. Finally, keyword analysis has revealed the frequency of forms characteristic of casual, personalized and celebratory style. These evidence the hybrid stylizations in popular science reporting that bridge the official authority of science as an
institution with the orientation towards domestic(ated) applications of scientific research in private contexts. Domestication of formal science is performed through devices that highlight personal relevance and emotional appeal of scientific work. In addition, this celebratory (and sometimes even speculative) tone adopted by *New Scientist* legitimizes both science as a social domain and popular science reporting as newsworthy media division. These preliminary conclusions will now be confronted with more interpretive findings emerging from a close reading of the corpus.

### 4.3. Qualitative analysis

The downsizing procedure adopted in the corpus compilation was designed to make it not only representative of the headlines that drew audience’s attention, but also to be manageable as regards a more interpretive analysis. One of the lenses that could constitute a working analytic template for a qualitative analysis is the typology of news values. Another way of accessing the material is through salient linguistic patterning and discursive devices that cumulatively enhance newsworthiness or even construct sensational news. Both are pursued below. Additionally, as is inherent in Fairclough’s (1995) framework appropriated here, descriptions of linguistic patterns will be followed by interpretations of discursive practices, and, if possible, explanations of social implications of those practices at the end of each paragraph.

Apart from novelty, as well as impact/proximity value inherent in personal address, described above, superlativeness is one of the news values cherished by media outlets that converges with the interests of science communicators vying for audiences. Identifying the extraordinariness or extremity of an issue equals larger chances of drawing attention. For example in 82. *Extraordinary stem cell method tested in human tissue*, the initial word functions to artificially enhance the news, since it is most likely that all genetic experiments modify tissues in unprecedented ways. Linguistically, the value of increased scope and importance may be constructed through the use of superlative adjectival forms, as well as such lexemes as (all from the sample) *world’s, universal, global, record, gigantic, giant, massive, vital, superhuman, ultimate, most, much, best*. Aware of the elliptic forms in headlines, we searched for all instances of *st superlative suffixes in the sample finding 19 cases of superlative collocates: fastest aging (2), oldest human genome (3), best books (40); biggest void (247), slowest evolution (61), strongest vortex for 1000 years (194), best milk
(95), greatest minds (101), biggest-ever virus (99), world’s oldest woman (176), largest wind
farm (145), most skillful predator (22), hardest material (192), world’s oldest string (152),
best health (128), biggest building (122), fiercest meteor shower (38), hottest year on record
(189), longest-running experiment (244). We can observe the construction of many natural
phenomena and humankind-related issues that scientists have to confront in terms of
enormity or in terms of unprecedented challenge. This is a stylistic pattern characteristic of
popular (sensational) journalism that largely trumps the stylistic conventions of scientific
journals, where conclusions are typically phrased in more tentative ways and feature
numerous disclaimers. The reason why this might be the case in New Scientist is probably
the promotional, not only informational nature of the mediation that is undertaken here.

According to Bednarek and Caple (2012), one of the main linguistic resources with
which outlets construct newsworthiness is emotive vocabulary. Emotive words usually entail
evaluation (either positive or negative), but they differ from neutral terminology in terms of
producing a sensory effect, triggering emotions or visual images and strengthening
psychological reactions, including better memorization. In headlines, such words may well
be used to render scientific research more exciting, successful, attractive, or even dangerous
to those who carry it out. This is the rhetoric of celebrating science identified by Fahnestock
(2005) mixed with a dosage of drama that sells popular magazines. The following
collocations and phrases illustrate the high emotivity levels of some headlines, e.g. volcanic
blast (11), exoplanet hunters (12), unsinkable rafts (30), icy fortress of solitude (37), grand
finale (39), deviant behavior (50), liver vacation (56), elephant shark (61), hallucinated music
(64), quantum master bit (75), the dairy paradox (95), mutant sperm (97), push-button
pleasure (102), death attack (117), climate shock (143), untested drug combo (149), lab-
grown vaginas (173), severed nerves (191), superbug crisis (203), Venus death dive (223).

One issue related to emotivity is how complex and controversial scientific problems may be
rendered as one-dimensional, having a singular explanation, and then become either
amplified or simplified (Fahnestock, 2005). It is not actually questioned here that something
is labelled “deviant behavior” or that we are experiencing a “superbug crisis”. Rhetoricians
often claim that exciting stronger emotions helps impede critical judgment, so studying the
emotive character of science coverage requires looking not only at what is being
communicated, but also at what is being obscured.
The stylistic constraints on headlines make the use of verbs quite specific. The variety of verb forms and derivations as well as the non-clausal syntactic patterns may be treated as indication of the fact that some action, activity and agency is not expressed, maybe even deliberately obscured. If verbs do not technically occur, as in 24. *Inside the minds of the JFK conspiracy theorists*; 55. *Stonehenge Man: not just a pretty face*; 80. *Rethinking schizophrenia: taming demons without drugs*; 87. *Chemical cures for the lovesick*; 97. *Testicular time bombs: Older dads’ mutant sperm*; 102. *Push-button pleasure*, scientific claims may be made into timeless facts established, or rather emerging, by themselves, not as results of particular, contested studies. If verbs do occur, for one, they are short and usually in the present simple tense (unless they report on history), for another, they are semantically precise and evoke specific connotations. The main collocations include *may/could help*, and *help(s) to X* (e.g., 158. *Flu vaccine helps unravel complex causes of narcolepsy*; 151. *Helium-filled airplane could help in disaster zones*). These, as well as their synonyms and other infinitives of purpose, can be seen as stylistic devices that project science as useful, applicable and purposeful, even though this is hardly the case in some examples: 91. *Cure for love: Fall for a robot to fend off heartache*; 195. *Real-life Inception: Zap your brain to control dreams*.

In terms of their semantic potential to project agency, most verbs in the sample denote material and behavioural processes. This helps to represent scientific work as not only learning about the properties of the natural world, but mostly as bringing change in the world. In addition, when put besides inanimate subjects (abstract notions, substances, organic matter, objects), some material verbs can be used to personify them, e.g., 17. *Sugary drinks tinker with vital proteins in the brain*; 32. *Hints of cold dark matter pop up in 10-year-old circuit*; 77. *Water found in stardust suggests life is universal*; 103. *Bionic arm gives cyborg drummer superhuman skills*; 132. *DNA nanobots deliver drugs in living cockroaches*. This stylistic pattern may be used to intimate that (1) nature has been brought largely under control by scientists; (2) the context of scientific work is largely devoid of human or axiological factors.

It should also be noted that headline sometimes includes metaphoric or metonymic mechanisms of amplification of emotivity and/or agency. For example, abstract or distant entities are characterized by modifiers that normally qualify tangible, everyday objects or two domains that have little in common are blended, e.g., *cosmological Wild West*.
(84), Big bang birthday (93), testicular time bomb (97), plasma shield (110), consciousness on-off switch (242). In addition, metaphors, just like presuppositions, may be important rationalization devices. They may represent scientific work in such a way as to merge elite interests with general interests. In metaphorical expressions that reveal that “substances are born” “diseases are fought” “sugar is put on trial,” and “brain’s functions are reawakened” the issue of who pays for or profits from a given type of discovery is not usually foregrounded.

Idiomatic expressions and frozen metaphors are also not uncommon resources to increase expressiveness, e.g., 28. Cancer meets its nemesis in reprogrammed blood cells; 229. Bionic pancreas frees people from shackles of diabetes. However, it is mostly through novel collocations that newsworthiness is projected, as in 155. Dark matter no-show puts WIMPs in a bind; 244. Longest-running experiment gets a fast-forward. These examples illustrate another hybrid property of the style of popular science labelled by Fairclough (1995, p. 11) as conversationalization: “the large-scale merging of private and public practices” which shift consuming news more towards entertainment, but also offer “an opening up and democratization of social relations, a new public prestige for ‘ordinary’ values and practices, popular culture, including ‘ordinary’ conversation” in place of authority-based discourses of knowledge.

Conclusion

The analysis conducted above aimed at identifying and interrogating hybrid styles as discursive strategies for representing science in New Scientist’s headlines that cut across the public discourse/private lifeworld divide. The linguistic repertoires and salient patterns of expression characteristic of the sample have been captured with the aid of keyword analysis and manual qualitative analysis. New Scientist’s headlines have been demonstrated to largely conform to the constraints and conventional compositions characteristic of headlines in popular journalism. On closer inspection of the corpus of headlines, we found representative examples that instantiate domestication and celebration of science, as well as emotionalization and conversationalization of science reporting with elements of speculation, personalization and (self)-promotion. These stylistic patterns are typical of popular journalism and, in the sample, tended to edge out their stylistic counterparts.
characteristic of science communication, namely scientific abstraction, rationality and formality, or journalistic balance, factuality, institutionalization and informativeness.

It must be concluded that the hybrid styles used in science reporting are indicative of craft and sophistication. They are also attuned to audience needs and mostly frame science in ways that are palatable and enjoying, without necessarily diminishing it. Newsworthiness of scientific endeavors is constructed through novelty, superlativeness, proximity and impact, with fewer negative aspects that in mainstream popular journalism. What needs to be confronted in a more critical way, however, is the relative frequency of emotive and personalized modes of stylistic positioning of the receiver, which are instrumental to collecting attention and instigating engagement, but which might divert critical reflection as to the validity, necessity and wider social implications of certain kinds of scientific work. Also the stylistic means of domestication of science for consumption in the private sphere of infotainment, or of celebrating some science activities beyond their merits (exaggerating their advantages and backgrounding the costs) should also be interrogated critically. While deployed to foster long-term engagement with science reporting, and particularly with the outlet, these hybrid forms may alienate audiences from serious scientific communication genres and have the adverse effect of dysfunctional perception of science as “being in almost total control of the natural world.”

The cumulative effects emerging from hybridization of headline styles also need to be examined not only on the textual level, but also on the contextual plane. The media agenda, particularly the imperative to construct science news as newsworthy, might ultimately misrepresent scientific work, despite the potential democratizing effects of enabling access to scientific knowledge and highlighting science literacy. Certainly, market-driven sensationalist coverage that replaces science reporting with pseudo-science is not in the interest of the public (even though it is sometimes legitimized with figures that purportedly demonstrated that this is what the public wants).

Additionally, further questions are raised, though not addressed, in this paper, particularly the issue of credibility of science popularization via online media outlets (where hierarchies of knowledge are sometimes determined by web traffic or clickstream). Another facet of the problem is the journalistic potential for (de)legitimization of (some) scientific work, with loyal audiences’ accepting validation or invalidation of scientific research, methods, priorities, or spending. That is possible through journalists’ narrowing the range of
coverage and/or attributing validity to some disciplines that constitute “prototypical” science.

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Digital discourse and changing forms of political engagement: A case study of two separate episodes in contrasting mediaspheres- “Binders full of women” in the US and “Watchgate” in the PRC

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ABSTRACT This paper draws upon two case studies from contrasting mediaspheres, the U.S. and the PRC, to explore the role of digital discourse in micro-blogs on social media platforms as an enactment or extension of the public sphere. The first case study is based on data from the U.S second presidential debate, 2012, where Mitt Romney made an ill-judged reference to ‘binders full of women’. It explores how the phrase was immediately picked up on Twitter and became the focus for memes and threads in the days that followed. The second case study is based on data from China where a press photograph of a public official looking relaxed at the scene of a fatal accident led to widespread comment amongst China’s netizens, to such an extent that the official not only lost his position, but was subsequently investigated for breaches of party discipline. In both case studies we see an interaction between ‘old’ and ‘new’ media. Each episode, indeed, begins with what might be called an ‘old media’ event: a televised debate in the US and a news report in the press in the PRC. But in each case the public response is widely dispersed through micro-blogging on social media. A comparison of these two cases leads to reflections on the potentialities of the mediated public sphere in the age of the internet. But it also deals with two kinds of body politic in process in two very different societies. Nonetheless, the comparison throws interesting light on how a similar mediated genre – the micro-blog – can be inflected in different ways and to different ends in the two major societies of our time.

KEYWORDS Digital Discourses, Microblogging, Public Sphere, Political Engagement

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1.0 Introduction

The rise of personal and social media, sometimes referred to as ‘new media’, has seen a growing interest in the ways in which the internet may be actively re-shaping the public sphere, as well as challenging the ways we think about it. The public sphere, after all, in Habermas’s classic definition was particularly associated - in its bourgeois form at least - with the rise of the press and with a critical reading public who could converse about it in the salons and coffee houses of 18th Century London (1991, p. 29-30). By and large, however, ‘old’ media, including the later forms of broadcasting, were media of mass communication, disseminating messages created and packaged by specialist elites using capital and resource-intensive means of production and circulation.

‘New’ media, by contrast, communicate between individuals and groups and between multiple and overlapping communities in arrangements and on platforms which allow us to participate as active producers as well as receivers of messages. As forms of communication, therefore, new media are generally held to be more interactive, more reciprocal, more participatory, than old media. These very different institutional and technological arrangements create quite different senses of public. And – it is the contention of this paper – they also offer different kinds of potentiality for political engagement and political action.

If new media prompt a radical re-definition of the public sphere they also have the potential to recast the relation between the public sphere and the body politic. In the classic case discussed by Habermas the role of the public sphere bore comparison with the notion of the Fourth Estate (1991, p. 80). The actions of government could be held up to scrutiny by the instruments and institutions of the public sphere and in that way made accountable and subject to the court of public opinion. ‘Old’ media played an important role in informing and shaping public opinion through report, commentary and interview. However, in Western democracies at least, many commentators and studies comment upon an increasing alienation of the public sphere from the political process as measured for instance in falling electoral participations. Coincidentally, major institutional supports for the public sphere amongst old media – such as the press – face several kinds of difficulty. Also coincidentally, we witness a general crisis of legitimation throughout the west in which the political class and its associated political institutions (along with other major institutions of modern life) seem increasingly moribund and so are held in increasing contempt. By contrast, in the People’s Republic of China the Communist Party’s firm control of ‘old’ media, such as press and broadcasting, limits their potential to play the role of a public sphere as understood in the West. The rise and popularity of new media,
however, particularly Renren and Weibo, prompt some to see China’s social media as opening up an incipient public sphere where limited criticism of the body politic (particularly at local level) and parts of the state apparatus (for example, state-controlled enterprises) is possible.

Against this background the new media in some accounts seem to offer ways for a revival of politics, political engagement and political action. As Rebecca Stolnit (2013) observed recently: Facebook was instrumental in the Arab Spring’s initial phase in 2011; Occupy Wall Street was originally a Twitter hashtag. WikiLeaks uploaded Bradley Manning’s leaked data to a place where its subjects could read it, which is said to have played a role in the Arab Spring too.

As Elihu Katz remarked recently, “‘old’ media took politics into the home; ‘new’ media have taken politics into the street.”

(See also: http://www.yourmediaconsulting.ch/comunicazione/television-is-dead-the-future-belongs-to-social-media/)

This article will draw upon case studies from contrasting mediaspheres, the U.S. and the PRC, to explore the role of digital discourse in micro-blogs on social media platforms as an enactment or extension of the public sphere. In both cases we see an interaction between old media and new media, since a significant amount of participation in both the U.S. and China comes not just from members of the public but from established journalists accredited to what might be called ‘old’ media news institutions. Each episode, indeed, begins with what might be called an old media event: a televised debate in the US and a news report in the press in the PRC. But in each case the public response is widely dispersed through micro-blogging on social media.

The first case study is based on data from the second presidential debate of the U.S. Presidential Election, 2012, where the Republican candidate, Mitt Romney, made an ill-judged reference to ‘binders full of women’. It explores how the phrase was immediately picked up on Twitter and became the focus for memes and threads in the days that followed. The second case study is based on data from China where a press photograph of a public official looking relaxed at the scene of a fatal accident led to widespread comment amongst China’s netizens, to such an extent that the official not only lost his position (as regional head of work safety), but was subsequently investigated for breaches of party discipline.

A comparison of these two cases leads to reflections on the potentialities of the mediated public sphere in the age of the internet. But it also deals with two kinds of body politic in process in two
very different societies. Nonetheless, the comparison throws interesting light on how a similar mediated genre – the micro-blog – can be inflected in different ways and to different ends in the two major societies of our time.

Indeed, Twitter and Weibo are very similar in many aspects. Twitter is a free microblogging service online that enables users to post or read short messages or “tweets”; what is more, as a social networking it allows users to subscribe to other user’s tweets, which is also known as following. For each tweet, it may not only include text message limited to 140 characters, but also multimedia content such as image, url shortening, etc. Weibo as the microblogging counterpart in China shares the basic social functioning such as posting, following, retweeting, commenting etc. It also has the same 140-character limit for each message. Nevertheless, it is significant to be noted that 140 English letters are not equivalent to 140 Chinese characters, between the two the latter usually having an inherent linguistic advantage which enables more meaning affordance. Both Twitter and Weibo provide verification service a voluntary basis for their highly sought users in many key interest areas, such as music, government, politics, media, business, etc., in a way making it easier for other users to identify who they're looking for.

2.0 The American case: “Binders-full of women”.

During the second Presidential debate in 2012, Mitt Romney was asked about pay equity for women and drew upon his own experience appointing a cabinet as Governor of Massachusetts in framing his fairly lengthy reply. In the course of his answer he described how he sought the advice of women’s groups to find suitably qualified women and “they brought us whole binders full of erer women”. (See appendix 1.0 for full transcript)

2.1 The evolution of a meme: #bindersfullofwomen

As soon as Romney uttered the phrase, “binders full of women”, at between 21:38 to 21:39 Oct 16\textsuperscript{th}, 2012 EST, reactions can be found on Twitter, Facebook, and Tumblr, etc. Within a very short while, humorous commentary and images with captions related to the phrase began to circulate, and continuous threads of reaction began to establish themselves online. Instrumental in this process is the early emergence of the hashtag “#bindersfullofwomen”.

The use of the hashtag, as a prefix to a phrase, is common on Twitter (and on other social networking sites, such as Tumblr and Flickr ), and provides a resource for users to single out a phrase, prospectively, as likely to be of interest to other users. Once adopted it retrospectively becomes a metadata tag – a search device- that allows for easy searching on an item so that messages that
share the hashtaged phrase can be grouped together. Simply by searching on the hashtaged phrase on Twitter it is possible to build a temporally organized corpus of online reactions. On Twitter, for example, when a hashtaged phrase becomes frequent in Twitter postings, Twitter itself will single it out as a ‘trending topic’ on a user’s homepage, thereby promoting further interest in it.

This is what happened in the case of “#bindersfullofwomen”. Within one minute of Romney using the phrase it surfaces on Twitter with the hashtag prefix. For the purposes of this research, all subsequent occurrences between then, 18:40 on the 16th October, until 17th October 24:00 pm PST, a period lasting for 29 hours and 20 minutes, were collected. The sheer popularity of the hashtaged phrase meant that more than 3700 tweets could be collected using a keyword search into a data base in which about 1400 tweets are from October 16th and the other 2300 are from October 17th.

2.1 Categories of micro-blogger
These 3700 tweets are diverse in kind, not least in terms of their origins. Some seem to come from directly, and apparently spontaneously, from ordinary users of the internet, while others emanate from news organizations and professionals who work within them using micro-blogging in tandem with other news platforms and outlets.

In order to explore the extent to which the characteristic form and content of micro-blogging varies according to ostensible source or user, we developed a preliminary coding scheme based upon the self-introduction to the user’s account, as follows.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Categories</th>
<th>Illustration</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ordinary ‘O’</td>
<td>• Ordinary individual (not media/communication professional)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• No clear identification</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ordinary, ‘Ox’</td>
<td>• Professional writer and story-teller (but not overtly from within the media industries)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Journalist ‘J’</td>
<td>• Journalist, reporter, correspondent (either freelance or with clearly indicated affiliations)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Journalist, ‘Jx’</td>
<td>• Potentially media/communication professional</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Digital strategist, community strategist, communication specialist,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• social media specialist/strategist, CEO of xxx media group/social media,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• social media pusher/influencer, social media analytic, etc.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

44 Due to the different time zone that our Twitter server was located in (China/Pacific), for the present paper we use Pacific Time (PST) instead of EST to measure the time. Therefore the corresponding collecting time in EST is from 21:40 pm, 16th to 3:00 am, 18th.
This taxonomy was applied manually to code every tweet collected on 16th October and one in every two on 17th October: in other words around 2550 postings (1400 from 16th and 1150 from 17th) were coded into the different categories for further analysis.

There are, of course, several difficulties with this taxonomy that need to be noted here. First, in some cases the blogger cannot be clearly identified on the basis of the self-introduction. In these doubtful or uncertain cases, he or she is put into the ‘O’ category by default. The probability of that happening is less than one in every twenty ⁴⁵, and so there should not be any significant influence on the overall results if miscoding has taken place. Second, the reason for having the categories as ‘O’, ‘J’ and ‘J’ is that there is always a certain grey area between clearly defined categories. There is, for instance, a group of people working as writers or story-tellers, ‘O’, for whom tweeting gives them the opportunity directly to publicize their work. For them, tweeting may be neither purely ordinary, since they have established some kind of independent public profile, nor purely journalistic inasmuch as their public profile is separate from the news industry. What makes ‘J’, distinct from ‘J’ is that within social media, there is a significant group of people who work as, or claim for themselves particular status as, social media professionals. The nature of their work may be, to some extent, similar to those journalists who worked for traditional media, such as editors or correspondents, etc; but the platform on which they habitually work is different. These people clearly identify themselves as social media pushers, digital communication specialists, social media strategists, etc., and as such appear in our data with clear affiliations. Meanwhile there are significant proportions for both of two identified groups presented in our data.

However, for the purposes of the present analysis both ‘O’ and ‘O’ have been combined to make one group. In a similar way, ‘J’ and ‘J’ have been combined to form another broad journalistic group, including not only journalists in the strict sense of the word but also media professionals related to the news industries, as well as the news institutions themselves. Hopefully, the distinctions, ‘O’ and

⁴⁵ We make a note on every uncertain case that put into ‘O’ by default. The total amount of it is less than 120. Therefore the probability of this happening is less than 120/2550 (the total amount of tweets we looked through), which is about 1/21.
‘O’ on the one hand, and ‘J’ and ‘J’, on the other, may yield further findings at a later stage when our analysis goes into greater detail.

2.3 Preliminary Findings
After coding the collected tweets into different categories, we can see the overall distribution of all the categories in the following pie charts.

Diagram 1

Diagram 2

‘O’ takes up the largest proportion, 57% of the total, followed by ‘J’ at 11%. ‘F’ does not emerge as a key category in the present study and will not therefore be discussed further in this paper. ‘J’, ‘I’ and ‘O’ take up 9%, 7% and 6% respectively. In the simplified diagram 2, we can see clearly that the combined grouping ‘J’ + ‘J’ + ‘I’ (JOURNALIST) holds up to 27%, while the combined ‘O’ + ‘O’ (ORDINARY) holds up to 63%, which is about 2.3 times of the proportion of the former. However, further inspection of the data shows significant variation over time, with opposing trend lines for the two groupings. These are captured in Diagram 3, below.
It can be seen from the diagram that the proportional frequency of the broad ORDINARY group is ascending, from the lowest position at the time section 18:40-19:00, 16th to the highest percentage at 22:00-23:00 16th. By contrast, the proportional frequency of the broad JOURNALIST group develops in an opposite way: the percentage peaks near the outset of the cycle and drops gradually over time. Indeed, at the particular moment from 18:40-19:00 the number of tweets from the JOURNALIST group is higher than those from the ORDINARY group.

So far, we have seen the statistical differences between the groups, including their general proportions and proportional frequencies. Overall, the total amount of tweets from the combined ORDINARY group is more than those from the combined JOURNALIST group. Although at the beginning or the emerging stage of the meme journalists contribute more tweets than the ordinary group, the ORDINARY group pick up the meme and amplify it while the JOURNALIST group pay proportionally less and decreasing attention to it once it has become established. In the following part we would like to take the analysis further to the actual examples, so that we could see not only the statistics or the tendencies, but also how the form and content of tweets from different groups may vary accordingly.

2.4 Examples of Tweets: their form and content
From the first hour (18:40-19:40) on the 16th October, two samples of Tweets are taken for analysis: 139 consecutive tweets from the broad JOURNALIST group (‘J’ + ‘J’) and 167 from the broad ORDINARY group (‘O’ + ‘O’). Several major types of content have been identified.
2.4.1 Reflexive comment

In this kind of tweet the focus of interest is on the emergence of the hashtagged phrase itself and the speed with which, or the degree to which, it has become a prevalent object of comment and citation. In other words, these tweets do not make a first-order comment on the accuracy, advisability or appropriacy of the phrase itself but rather on the fact that phrase itself is trending. The kind of stance adopted, here, is reflexive in the sense that it is oriented to the workings of the internet and social media rather than on the ‘real-world’ implications of the event within a presidential election.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Set 1</th>
<th>Jim Utter @jim_utter</th>
<th>You know #BindersfullofWomen is trending ... Gotta be</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>erickohn @erickohn</td>
<td>#bindersfullofwomen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>&quot;@ttamaton: @erickohn @BirgetTweets</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>already registered. That was FAST.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These reflexive tweets are not restricted to one group or the other over the course of this first hour but may be found in both. Nonetheless, at the outset, although the hashtagged phrase comes from an ‘ordinary’ source, reflexive comment on it comes primarily from the JOURNALIST group.

Thus, out of a sequence of 12 tweets by social media specialists ‘\(J, Y\)’ (see example 2 below), 8 of them are reflexive, commenting on the internet dissemination; and only 3 comment on the hash-tagged phrase as meaningful information; and only one seems to be a direct comment.

From the earlier discussion it was clear that the initial 20 minutes contained more hash-tagged tweets from the broad JOURNALIST group than from the broad ORDINARY group. The reason why this happens can be explained partly by the large number of reflexive tweets published by the media professionals (‘\(J, Y\)’) in the early stages of the evolution of the trending meme. There is a paradox here, to which we will return later, inasmuch as the emergence of the hash-tagged phrase, as an apparently spontaneous reaction to Mitt Romney’s answer in broadcast debate, is reinforced by the reflexive attention of media professionals, whose very interest in the phrase in its early life helps to elevate it to the status of a trending meme, as in, “trending nationally” (see for example, 6 and 7 below).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Set 2</th>
<th>Arune Singh, Eh @arune</th>
<th>#bindersfullofwomen</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Jamison Foser</td>
<td>RT @BradAndersonIA: #bindersfullofwomen</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3. Liza Sabater @blogdiva
   THE MEME OF #Debates2012 ---> RT @Justin_Ling: #bindersfullofwomen

4. Anne Alderete @TunaToast
   Thinking #BindersFullOfWomen would make a good band name.

5. edwardboches @edwardboches
   #bindersfullofwomen trending.

6. Ben LaBolt @BenLaBolt
   #sketchydeal and #bindersfullofwomen both trending nationally

7. Joe Rospars @rospars
   RT @BenLaBolt: #sketchydeal and #bindersfullofwomen both trending nationally

8. JennPedde @JPedde
   Amazing. hahaha RT @Jennasakwa: #bindersfullofwomen officially trending worldwide pic.twitter.com/9UV4Jx5Z

9. GolnazEsfandiari @GEsfandiari
   It's here! #bindersfullofwomen RT @RomneysBinder Boy, I'm full of women! #debates

10. Chris Abraham @chrisabraham
    “@teddygoff: #sketchydeal and #bindersfullofwomen both trending nationally"

11. Dayngr @Dayngr
    #bindersfullofwomen trending #debate2012

12. Matthew Slutsky @MatthewSlutsky
    RT @jpscasteras: @MatthewSlutsky #BindersFullOfWomen

2.4.2 The second main type of tweet takes the form of a comment, direct or otherwise, on Romney’s phrase itself. Some of these are oblique and humorous or ironic, as for example the tongue in cheek comment from Katie MacBride in Set 3, 3, below: “Sally and I want to know where we can get binders full of women”. Alternatively, they may take the form of a direct comment on Romney’s choice of the phrase, as in Set 3,2 below: “wow. worst ever answer re: equal pay for women”.

Although these types of comment occur in both groups, JOURNALIST and ORDINARY, there are numerically more common among the ORDINARY group, where they also tend to be more deliberately playful.
These are examples of commentary type from the journalist group.

Set 4

1. Sara Johnson @SaraFeed .@MittRomney's so smooth he doesn't have a little black book, he has #BindersFullOfWomen...? #debates
2. Julian E. Barnes @julianbarnes #bindersfullofwomen the gender gap just returned.
3. Waymon Hudson @WaymonHudson I feel like #BindersFullOfWomen might be this debate's #BigBird. Just sayin...

2.4.3 The third type is the tweet/retweet with only the hash-tagged phrase in it (example 1, 2 and 3). Again we can find this type in both groups. It is hard to decide whether this particular type is simply aimed at promoting the prevalence of the meme as the first reflexive kinds of comment do, or that the echoic nature of this repetition carries itself ironic undertones (See Sperber and Wilson, 1986/1995 on echoic mention and repetition).

Set 5

1. Margaret Talev @margarettalev #bindersfullofwomen
2. Justin Ling @Justin_Ling #bindersfullofwomen
3. Jamison Foser @jamisonfoser RT @BradAndersonIA: #BindersFullOfWomen

3.0 The Chinese case

3.1 ‘Watch Brother’, ‘Watchgate’ and the fight against corruption
The Chinese case shares some resemblance with Romney’s gaffe in the way that it was firstly picked up by Weibo users (China’s Twitter) and soon circulated on this micro-blogging platform.
In the afternoon of August 26, 2012, a serious bus crash, with 36 fatalities, occurred in Central China. The event received national coverage in the traditional media, which focused initially on the efforts of the rescue workers. Among this coverage, a press photograph was published showing officials and workers gathered at the accident scene. Within a short time, an enlarged version of part of this press photograph began to circulate on Weibo, drawing attention to one official on the scene of the fatal accident who seemed to be smiling in a relaxed fashion. Once in circulation, this enlarged photo drew substantial comment, with the image being tweeted and re-tweeted up to 26,000 times. This in turn led to what is dubbed infamously in China as a ‘human-flesh search’ directed at the local official. Within three hours, he was identified as Yang Dacai, the Chief Director of the provincial Bureau of Work Safety (hence his attendance at the accident scene); in addition, however, it was noticed that the watch he was wearing appeared to be an Omega Constellation, usually retailing at 38,000 euros, and difficult to afford on his pay scale. Negative comment accelerated after a succession of photos began to circulate showing Yang in various situations wearing expensive watches, belts and shoes.

Chief Director of the Bureau of Work Safety Yang and his luxury wardrobe remained a leading topic on Weibo during the next few days. Using the Weibo search engine, it appears that on Aug. 27 and 28 (the two days immediately following the incident) messages on Yang totaled 184,576 and 201,056 respectively. Chief Director Yang gained the ironic appellation, ‘Watch Brother’; and the whole incident came to be dubbed ‘Watchgate’. This extensive (and wholly negative) publicity began to transfer from the new media into the traditional news media, so that the unfortunate Yang eventually made news headlines on the state-owned news agency, Xinhua News.

Both traditional (and official) news media and informal social media adopted a critical tone on Yang, urging an explanation. Faced with such pressure, the government promised to conduct a fair and impartial investigation on Yang. Eventually, on Sep. 21, 2012, Yang was first found guilty of violating party discipline and stripped of his post. In the immediate aftermath of this announcement, discussions on Weibo reached a record high with up to 408,704 messages on the same day. However, Yang’s trial was not concluded until on the recent day, Sep.5, 2013, when he was sentenced to 14 years in prison for corruption, a singular outcome of a surprising process in which new media and old

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46 In focusing initially on the efforts of rescue workers, the Chinese news media followed a news script or trajectory common also in the Western media.
media seemed to have made common cause in a joint battle on behalf of the people against corruption.47

3.2 Categories of micro-bloggers

Micro-bloggers have been the major force in the anti-corruption movement. In this way they have an impact on the political process in China on a significant scale – at least as great as the impact on the US Presidential election as micro-blogging about #bindersfullofwomen. In order to have a clear sense of their online interactions, particularly to know who or which institutions get involved, a series of samples are collected based on the keyword search using the official’s name ‘杨达才’ among four critical periods of ‘Watchgate’:

(i) Aug. 27 (the outbreak of the incident);
(ii) Aug. 28 (the professional evaluation of Yang’s luxury watches);
(iii) Aug. 29 (Yang’s first response to the public accusation); and
(iv) Sep.21 (the dismissal of Yang from his position).

On each day, two hours (10am-11am; 4pm-5pm) were selected to provide a manageable sample of data. And, very similar to the twitter data, micro-bloggers are roughly categorized into six major groups, by their different degrees of being engaged in media/communication industry. The six categories are identified based on the verification system of Weibo users, as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Categories</th>
<th>Illustration</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ordinary ‘O’</td>
<td>Ordinary individual (not media/communication professional)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ordinaryx ‘Ox’</td>
<td>Professional writer, story-teller and commentator (but not overtly from within the media industries)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Journalist ‘J’</td>
<td>Journalist, reporter, correspondent (with clearly indicated affiliations)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>News Institution ‘I’</td>
<td>News institution/website</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

47 It is one thing for official circles to initiate and lead a fight against corruption – witness Jinping Xi’s frequent announcements on this topic since assuming the leadership role, as well, of course, as the recent trial and sentencing of Xilai Bo for bribery, embezzlement and the abuse of power. It is quite another for nearly half a million netizens to make the pace against corruption – mostly anonymously - on a popular social networking site.
Due to Weibo verification system, it is much easier to identify who are the people or what are the institutions in play on the micro-blogging platform. News institutions, journalists, and more commonly Weibo celebrities are usually verified and tagged with a logo ‘V’ right after their user accounts. Therefore, as compared to twitter, there are of course less grey areas between clearly defined categories. For those who are not verified but might be the potential journalists, they are examined by both their self-introduction and the content of their Weibo messages. The amount of those uncertain cases are very marginal which are not supposed to have significant influence on the overall results if miscoding hags taken place.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Aug.27 (380)</th>
<th>Aug.28 (394)</th>
<th>Aug.29 (378)</th>
<th>Sep.21 (326)</th>
<th>Total (1478)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ordinary</td>
<td>358</td>
<td>338</td>
<td>334</td>
<td>287</td>
<td>1317</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘O’</td>
<td>(94.1%)</td>
<td>(85.8%)</td>
<td>(88.3%)</td>
<td>(88%)</td>
<td>(89.1%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ordinaryx</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘Ox’</td>
<td>(1.1%)</td>
<td>(0.9%)</td>
<td>(0.6%)</td>
<td>(0.3%)</td>
<td>(0.6%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Journalist</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘J’</td>
<td>(2.4%)</td>
<td>(2.5%)</td>
<td>(1.8%)</td>
<td>(3.1%)</td>
<td>(2.5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>News Institution</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘I’</td>
<td>(0.3%)</td>
<td>(4.5%)</td>
<td>(3.2%)</td>
<td>(2.8%)</td>
<td>(2.7%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Forum</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘F’</td>
<td>(2.1%)</td>
<td>(6.3%)</td>
<td>(6.1%)</td>
<td>(5.8%)</td>
<td>(5.1%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The above table presents the proportional distributions of each category’s Weibo messages among the four critical periods. As outlined in the table, it appears that on each day, during the two-hour period, the number of Weibo messages are very similar, with a slight decrease on the last day. The most salient and striking fact is that ordinary individuals accounted for around 90% of the total every day. News institutions and professional journalists, on the other hand, play only the minor role. Nevertheless, there is a slight increase of the journalistic participation (including both news institutions and journalists) following the first exposure of Yang. On Aug. 27, only 10 messages out of the total 380 were circulated by accredited journalists and news institutions. During the following three days, however, the number rose to 28, 19, and 19 respectively. Between the two sub-
categories of journalistic participants, news institutions contributed more than individual named journalists. Overall, however, unlike the coverage of Romney’s gaffe in the US, news institutions in China seemed initially hesitant to report or comment on Yang’s inappropriate demeanor, although as ‘Watchgate’ evolved and more photos were uncovered, the news institutions were then motivated to further reports.

From the data, therefore, it is very clear that ordinary individuals are the staple players on the micro-blogging platform. They react, comment, and circulate the information among various online communities and in a very real sense both drive and shape the story through their own information gathering and detection. Although nowadays traditional media in China, like their western counterparts, have begun to expand their presence on new media platforms, particularly in the social media, the Watchgate scandal seems to demonstrate that the netizens working together on Weibo are capable of delivering a potent and effective form of independent investigative journalism which leaves traditional media following hesitantly in their wake.

3.3 Form and content of micro-blogging examples

Professional journalistic participants and ordinary individuals on Weibo differ not only in the relative frequency of their posts. They also differ in the style and types of message that they post.

In very basic terms, the messages posted by news institutions and journalists are more formal and serious than those of individuals. In short news pieces we find few instances of linguistic playfulness to match what can be found in ordinary postings. Instead they have their own distinctive characteristics. In example 1, the word limit of 140 characters is efficiently utilized to narrate how ‘watchgate’ evolved. The language is attentive closely to the incident itself. Another interesting point would be the direct reference to the source providers in the news by coding @. Two actions were accomplished, acknowledging the news source while at the same time notifying the source provider. This would not be feasible without the technological affordance of Weibo.
Example 1:

Translation: 都市快报:【The smiling official was ‘human-fleshed (exposed )’ as having several expensive watches】Yang Dacai, the Chief Director of the Bureau of Work Safety in Shaanxi province, was photographed smiling at the bus crash site and this has brought quite a few complaints. Being human-fleshed (exposed ) by the netizens, Chief Yang was discovered to have several expensive watches. The CEO of 5LUX.COM Sun Duofei pointed out that the five watches in the photo were a Rolex, an Omega (two), a VacheronConstantin and a Rado. @花总丢了金箍棒 estimated that the total price would be at least 200,000RMB. Nandu News.

Interestingly, the focus of this posting is on the story of the ‘human-flesh’ search carried out by the netizens themselves. Otherwise, the postings produced by news institutions and journalists seem to either partially or fully duplicate what is published on other news platforms. In example 2, two different news institutions updated the same Weibo news on Yang’s disclosure. This repetitive phenomenon can be easily found in other journalistic messages on Weibo, in a way implying the excessive reliance of Weibo journalistic accounts on the same news source, and their lack of editorial initiative and independence in re-versioning the news.

Examples 2:
By contrast, the individual messages from ordinary Weibo users exhibit various interesting characteristics. For one thing, there is no obligation to report the event, simply to react to it in a variety of ways. Consequently we find personal and evaluative lexis prominent in the data. Many of them are simply directed at Yang himself. For instance, in example 3 and 4, both messages contain strong negative evaluation: Yang is termed a ‘dog official’, has a ‘fat head fat belly’ and is ‘really abnormal’. This kind of personal invective surfaces in many places in the data.

Example 3:

Translation: Britine: fat head, fat belly, not a good thing obviously!!//@K 小叔://@此姑娘://@海纳百川不加V: Chief Yang, you are going to be hot. Your mom calls you to go back home to open a watch shop!!!!!!
Example 4:

Yang’s smile is really sweet! //@声音法治周刊: Comrade Yang Dacai, Director-General of the Safety Department in Shaanxi Province, on such an occasion, you really shouldn’t laugh! @于建嵘

In addition to explicit negative evaluation there is a high degree of verbal playfulness which can range from various kinds of irony and sarcasm to the use of humorous nicknames.

In example 5, an elaborate nomenclature is developed for Yang. His array of watches earns him various nicknames containing ‘表’, the Chinese phoneme for ‘watch.’ In the first pun, Yang is called ‘人大代表表表’ (‘people’s representative’), which sounds like the term given to representatives to China’s National People’s Congress. In the second pun, Yang was called ‘表哥’ whose literary meaning is one’s cousin, but here specifically designates him as the ‘watch brother’, where ‘brother’ has long been encoded with an ironic meaning of ‘powerful man’ (a little like Orwell’s ‘Big Brother’). The third pun, ‘三个代表’, is associated with the Communist Party’s core values - Three Represents - and implies that Yang is one of the advanced representatives of the Party. The fourth pun ‘表子’ veers towards direct personal abuse: Yang is the son of a ‘bitch’.
Example 5:

雪中浮_阿明：【网友神评，太有才了！】陕西省安监局局长杨达才名表照曝光后，网友评论太搞笑了！1. 他是人大代表“表”。2. 他是我“表”哥。3. 他在行三个代表“表”。4. 他是“表”子养的！

Translation: [Netizens’ comments, what a talent!] After the disclosure of the expensive watches of Yang Dacai, Chief Director of the Bureau of Work Safety Supervision of Shaanxi Province, the netizens’ comments are so funny! 1. He is the people’s ‘Representative’. 2. He is my ‘watch’ brother. 3. He is exercising Three ‘Represents’. 4. He is the son of a ‘bitch’.

Irony and sarcasm are also frequently used by individuals in commenting on Yang, as in the following (see example 6):

‘Director Yang’s smile is really sweet!’

In this case the irony is heavily counterpointed by the verbal context. It is preceded by ‘Dog official’ and followed by the injunction ‘Comrade Yang Dacai, Director-General of the Safety Department in Shaanxi Province, on such an occasion, you really shouldn’t laugh!’ though here the elaborate unfolding of his title (no doubt accurate) takes on itself ironic overtones. Others also comment ironically on his inappropriate smile (‘a great virtue’ and ‘sweet’). In example 7, his range of watches is treated ironically as a sign of virtue, sartorial elegance or competence:

‘This dude should not be underestimated. He knows how to find the right watch for different clothes.’

In example 8 below, the invented phrase ‘watch brother’ was even borrowed and blended with other words. ‘Watch brother’ becomes a typical sign for corruption, which can also be replaced by the various ‘belt brothers, shoe brothers, suit brothers, cigar brothers, wine brothers, house brothers, and car brothers...’
Example 6:

Translation: 唐源显示他磨啊磨: smiling is a great virtue//@韩仁均叔叔//@徐昕//@假装是法官: What a sweet smile that Chief Yang has shown!/ @法政时评:@声法法制周刊: Comrade Yang Dacai, Chief Director of the Bureau of Work Safety Supervision, on this occasion, you shouldn’t laugh! @于建嵘@薛蛮子@邓飞@袁裕来律师@韩均仁叔叔

Example 7:

Translation: 开心四海: This dude should not be underestimated. He knows how to find the right watch for different clothes.

Example 8:
Translation: 李文宪：Watch brother Yang Dacai was removed from his post. Although one watch brother went away, there are thousands of watch brothers and sisters. What is more, there are belt brothers, shoe brothers, suit brothers, cigar brothers, wine brothers, house brothers, and car brothers...

Furthermore, ordinary individuals’ Weibo messages are also likely to invoke moral standards since in those messages, Yang was mainly judged based on what can be counted as appropriate and inappropriate to the dreadful bus accident, and to be an honest public servant.

In ‘Watchgate’, the micro-blogging is the main battlefield for anti-corruption efforts and it is this efficient, transparent and virtual public sphere has made all the individual’s efforts plausibly triumphant. However, little reflexive comments on Weibo were found. Only a few people noticed the strength and weakness that the micro-blogging platform could possibly bring.

4.0 Comparison and conclusions: the internet, the fifth estate and the public sphere

4.1 Similarities and differences between the PRC and the US.

Most commentary assumes that the nature of politics is quite different in the PRC and the USA. The common characterization would hold that the USA is a multi-party state with democratic assemblies and with separation of powers between various branches and arms of government (e.g. the executive, the legislature and the judiciary) and were the individual’s relationship to the political process is expressed on an occasional basis through voting and the ballot box while their individual rights are protected by the Constitution and its Amendments which in turn provide for freedom of speech, religion, etc. The PRC on the other hand is characterized (in the West at least) as a one-party state where the legislative branch, the judiciary, and the army are all subject to the leading role of the party. In this arrangement individual rights and liberties are carefully controlled so that the exercise of these is managed in such a way as not to threaten the leading role of the party and where ultimately power is concentrated in the hands of the Politbureau Standing Committee of the Communist Party of China.

Given the great differences between the political arrangements of the two countries it is clearly problematic to talk of the public sphere as a common element of their respective ‘body politics’. As we noted at the outset, however, the communicative affordances of the internet have opened up a public space that is distinctly different from that offered by old media – and yet at the same time these affordances offer strikingly similar opportunities for ‘ordinary people’ in the two realms. However much the Party in China may try to contain the communicative energies released by the
internet, our data seems to show a vigorous and outspoken public expressing their views in trenchant style. Indeed, it is our contention that by studying the emergence of two memes in relation to events that may be broadly understood as ‘political’ in the two spheres we may come to a better understanding about the emergence of the digital public sphere in the two countries. While the two events and the reactions to them may seem in some ways difficult to compare they are underpinned by the same kind of micro-blogging and social networking site.

4.2 A comparison of the two events

Our US example is triggered by an event that takes place within the broadcast medium involving a staple of politics in the broadcast age – a verbal gaffe in the flow of the live broadcast televised debate. This is the common currency of media coverage of political campaigning in the West. What is new about this kind of event in the internet age is the speed and clarity with which the gaffe is identified and fixed as such by the general public as much as by media professionals. Prior to the internet the primary definer of a broadcast gaffe would be media professionals; and the degree to which the general public assented to this definition was never clear, though much commentary would link such events to the ultimate outcome of the campaign itself. In our U.S. case, in the minutes and hours that unfolded from the moment of utterance in the presidential debate, it is clear that ordinary members of the public are either ahead of, or not far behind, the media professionals. And it is them who define the meaning of the gaffe in political terms. The role of journalism seems to consist more in noting and reflecting on the gaffe as an emerging meme rather than in defining the significance of the event itself. Much of journalistic commentary, indeed, may be seen as reflexive: the story for journalism is not the gaffe as such but the speed and extent of the internet response to the gaffe. Of course, for “binders full of women” to trend so quickly as a meme it needs to have some special characteristics; and much can be made of the nature of the phrase itself.

(womens groups) brought us whole BINDers full of ererWOmen

In the first instance, it is susceptible to two rival paraphrasings:

(a) They brought us many (=binders full of) women
(b) They brought us binders which were full of women

There is not much doubt from the context that Romney intended to mean that women’s groups, precisely because of his invitation to them, were able to bring the names of many women to his

48 For an earlier example, long predating the emergence of the internet, see Garton, Montgomery and Tolson (1992)
attention and so he was able to appoint a more balanced cabinet. In this reading ‘binders full of’ is merely a quantifier in a partitive construction where ‘women’ is the head-word of a noun phrase and takes the primary focus. In the rival parsing, however, ‘binders’ is the head word and what they were full of (‘women’) becomes part of the qualifier to the head word. This has the unfortunate effect (from Romney’s perspective) of objectifying women as entities that you contain in binders. The sense of incongruity here is doubtless what caught people’s attention, especially if it fit within an overall impression of Romney as flat-footed and uncertain on ‘women’s issues’. However, the nature of hashtagging – #bindersfullofwomen – has the added effect of condensing elements of a more complex argument into a single (incongruous) item. An event within a realm already ‘pre-coded’ as politics is instantly inflected and fixed with uncomfortable results for the challenger, Romney.

Our Chinese example also starts with an event in the real world, a road accident with many fatalities, but not as such pre-coded as ‘political’. Indeed, the initial media coverage in China seems to follow a recognizable template of disaster coverage: scale of event as measured by fatalities; cause of the event; location of blame; and so on. Here, however, the trigger for the event becoming in some sense political is visual rather than verbal. Media coverage includes a routine photo taken at the crash site but this common place of journalism includes as a relatively small detail the relaxed demeanour of a regional safety official. This detail is then enlarged by a sharp-eyed netizen and then recirculated on the internet to call attention to inappropriate behaviour. Within this enlargement, however, a further small detail attracts attention, namely the expensive watch on the official’s wrist, leading to the birth of the watchgate scandal: how can a regional official afford a whole repertoire of expensive watches?

In China the initial event is not ostensibly political; it becomes so through sharp-sighted investigative work by ordinary netizens. The material here is visual, in the first instance, rather than verbal as in the case of the Romney gaffe.

However, there are similarities between the cases. Both depend on a ‘target’, a chief protagonist, whose behaviour in some way attracts a judgment of inappropriacy. One target uses an inappropriate phrase in a public debate; the other appears relaxed in the face of fatalities. And in both cases there is the sense of a telling detail, whether visual or verbal, that fixes the properties of a moment from the perspective of a certain audience.
It is hard to overestimate the significance of the use of visual detail in the Chinese case. From the initial enlarged image of the Yang’s behaviour at the crash scene to the detail of the many watches that he owns, the visual record can seem to speak for itself offering apparently incontrovertible evidence that defies re-interpretation. Yang himself, for instance, never tries to deny that he has worn the watches depicted by several images of him at social and public events. Having established the facts visually, so to speak, the door is opened for netizens of various kinds to offer trenchant comment.

4.3 Comparison of the discourses around the two events on Twitter and Weibo

In the U.S. case, there are four main kinds of micro-blog in response to Romney’s gaffe.

4.3.1 Simple hashtag and recirculation (re-tweet)

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Margaret Talev @margarettalev</td>
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4.3.2 Simple hashtag, recirculation plus comment

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Julian E. Barnes @julianbarnes</td>
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</table>

4.3.3 Hashtag embedded within comment about prevalence on the internet

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<tr>
<td>13.</td>
<td>Dayngr @Dayngr</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14.</td>
<td>edwardboches @edwardboches</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.3.4 Hashtagged phrase and humorous comment

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<tr>
<td>15.</td>
<td>Anne Alderete @TunaToast</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Katie MacBride @msmacb</td>
</tr>
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4.3.5 Hashtagged phrase and serious comment

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<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>Jared Geller @jaredgeller</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.3.6 Hashtagged phrase and visual joke

In more general terms they are marked by idiomatic uses of language ("ain't got shit on"), spoken language markers ("you know"), expressive particles and lexis ("wow", "pssh", "Amazing") as well as typography ("gotta be", "EVAR", "that was FAST") that reflect real-time speech. Despite the fact that any contribution to Twitter will be entered by a keyboard associated with the written mode, these features mimic the exigencies of the co-present speech situation. Indeed, there is a quality of cryptic and elliptic allusiveness about the comments which is more characteristic of speech than of writing:

“Thinking #BindersFullOfWomen would make a good band name.”

“I feel like #BindersFullOfWomen might be this debate's #BigBird. Just sayin...”

They presuppose a degree of shared knowledge with an audience that is often difficult to recover at any distance of time and space. The comment about Big Bird, for instance, only makes sense in the light of the micro-blogging reaction to a previous debate in which Romney threatened to cut funding for PBS, the American, publically-funded television station, famous (among other things) for making the children’s programme Sesame Street which features the character “Big Bird”. He would cut the funding, declared Romney, even though he “loved Big Bird”.

Indeed, the whole range of tweeted comment is sensitive to the particular concerns of an assumed and imagined but invisible audience that these tweets simultaneously summon into being as if they were co-present parties to the communication in real-time. They adopt and project a highly specific evaluative stance (“wow. worst answer re: equal pay for women EVAR.”) secure in the assumption that there are large numbers of others, invisibly attending to the same event in the current moment, who share it.

The hashtag itself, of course, is a potent indicator of the presence of that audience and many tweets simply note that that the phrase is trending both “nationally” and then “internationally”. To reference the presence of a like-minded audience in this way may seem to be simply the action of ‘following’ something already established and in existence. But to recycle (re-tweet) the phrase is both following and creating the trend whose growing numbers symbolize the audience at large. In short, much of what happens in the world of micro-blogging that reacts to Romney’s gaffe is highly reflexive, highly allusive and ‘knowing’ about its audience is ways which seem to be quite unprecedented.
Despite the huge differences in culture, and in language, and in the nature of the body politic, much the same can be said about the Chinese case. Irony depends absolutely on a secure sense of audience and the Chinese examples rely heavily on it:

Director Yang’s smile is really sweet!

This dude should not be underestimated. He knows how to find the right watch for different clothes.

They are also – especially in their use of puns – highly allusive.

1. He is the people’s ‘Representative’. 2. He is my ‘watch’ brother. 3. He is exercising Three ‘Represents’. 4. He is the son of a ‘bitch’.

Despite the general sense that political freedoms in China are highly constrained and that the internet itself is closely policed for subversive context, many posts adopt a highly evaluative and negative stance to this public official. Again, it is difficult to make sense of this except insofar as each contribution is secure in the assumption that many others will share the same position and be prepared to express it. Indeed, there is no way to understand this material except as a counter discourse quite deliberately at odds with official accounts and relying on a highly developed rhetorical armoury of ridicule, irony and even invective.

In this respect the Chinese material may well be different from the American. It manifests what might be best described as a very well defined and unambiguous moral line:

fat head, fat belly, not a good thing obviously!

on such an occasion, you really shouldn’t laugh

really abnormal

4.4 The digital public sphere

In conclusion we would argue that these complementary case studies cast light on changing character of the public sphere in the internet age. Cooper (2006) and Dutton (2009) have both argued that the internet has the potential to be considered as a fifth estate (the press having traditionally been considered to be the ‘fourth estate’ (e.g. Gentzkow, Glaeser & Goldin, 2006; Hunt, 1850; Lewis, Williams & Franklin, 2008; Schultz, 1998)). In our material it is noticeable, of course, that the two estates overlap. Traditional news institutions (BBC, CBS, China Daily) use the internet to refer the public to their own news outlets and platforms. But these in turn also now need to respond to stories that are breaking independently of them on the world-wide-web. This is very clear in the case of ‘Watchgate’ where the traditional media only tentatively take up the thread begun and driven by the ‘netizens’.
In addition, however, it is also clear that there are two kinds of cultural logic at work in our material. One kind of cultural logic is defined by the very affordances of the internet and the nature of the micro-blogging platform itself - restricted, for instance, to 140 characters and offering a hashtag facility. Some of the qualities of cryptic allusiveness, and a strong and immediate sense of audience, may be traced to the constraints of the prompt on Twitter and Weibo. Moreover, the sense of an available, but unseen, like-minded audience and the potential for instant mediated interaction with that audience grows out the embedded affordances of the internet itself.

However, there is also the sense of a second kind of cultural logic in our material that owes much to the national culture and the institutional arrangements of two very different nation-states. The sense of audience encountered in the data is too dense and complex to work easily at international level (though note ‘trending nationally and internationally’ in the US data.) By way of illustration, it is very hard to imagine a US blogger posting a micro-blog beginning with the phrase, “dog official”, used as a form of direct address. Indeed, the relation of the posts to the target is somewhat different in the two public spheres. Romney appears in the US data as the third person target of mild ridicule. In the Chinese data, Chief Yang is quite frequently the directly addressed target of criticism, ridiculer even invective.

Chief Yang, you are going to be hot. Your mom calls you to go back home to open a watch shop!!!!!!

In other words, there is a double logic at work: in the first place, a communicative or cultural logic that grows out of the technological affordances of the internet and its associated platforms; and in the second place an inflection of this logic in terms of the cultural and communicative norms of the nation that hosts the platform – the US in terms of Twitter, and China in terms of Weibo.

Finally, therefore, our case studies lead to the inevitable conclusion that despite the global implications of the world-wide-web, there is not one internet but many. And that while, undoubtedly, the internet in its local forms can hold the powerful to account, it does so by adopting particularly local characteristics and norms.

References


Appendix

1 CROWLEY : Governor Romney (.) pay equity for WOmen.
2 ROMNEY : Thank you (.) and er (.) imPORtant topic (0.8) and one which I learned a great deal about hhh (.) um particularly as I was SERving as governor of my STATE (.) because I had th: the chance to (0.6) pull together a cabinet (0.6) A:nd um (0.6) ALL the applicants seemed to be MEN(.) and I and I went to my staff (.) and I said how come all the people for these jobs are (.) are all MEN they said well these are the people that have the we qualifications and I said well gosh can't we (1.0) can't find some (0.8) some women that are also QUAlified ↑(0.9)And (0.8) and so we (0.7)we took a concerted effort to go out and find WOMEN (0.6) who had BACKgrounds that could be qualified to become members of our cabinet(.) I went to a number of women's groups and said can you help us find folks and they brought us (.) whole BINDERs full of er um WOMen (.) I was proud of the FACT (.) that after I (.) STAFFed my cabinet and my SEnior STAFF (.) that the university of new york er (.) in Albany (0.6) did a survey of ALL FIty states (0.8) and concluded that MINE had more women in SEnior leadership positions than any other state in America.

Transcript symbols:
(.) stands for pause measured less than 0.5 second
(0.8) stands for pause measured in second
hhh stands for exhalation
Capitalisation accented syllables or words
↑ stands for rising tone
Hybridity in Italian sports journalism: from sportswomen to celebrities*

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ABSTRACT Hybridity represents one of the main features of Italian sports journalism since its beginning at the end of the 19th Century. However, only in the last two decades this phenomenon has become structural and massive. On one hand, in fact, the journalistic tale about sports blends with other journalistic genres (politics, economics, society, culture, show-business, medicine, etc.): on the other hand, human interest becomes the most important news value when the journalistic tale has to be both informative and attractive to the public.

The paper presents the results of a qualitative research aimed to analyse the hybridity of Italian sports journalism. The research focuses on the journalistic coverage of three famous Italian athletes: the fencer Valentina Vezzali, the gymnast Carlotta Ferlito and the swimmer Federica Pellegrini. The research shows that, in respect of the analysed athletes, hybridity in Italian sports journalism takes shape certainly referring to the contents (sports news blends especially with gossip news) and to the way in which the news are covered (human interest emerges as the most important news value), not to say about a growing third level of hybridity, which takes shape when social networks become primary source for sports journalism. The research also shows that the tendency to hybridity is strictly linked to the athlete’s charisma, in a perspective in which hybrid coverage marks the shift from “sportswomen” to “celebrities”.

KEYWORDS Hybridity, Sports Journalism, Human interest, Italian newspapers, Celebrities

1. Introduction

Sports journalism is one of the oldest journalistic genres in the wide scenario of Italian journalism (Bergamini, 2013; Murialdi, 2006); at the same time it is one of the most original ones, a shape and a mirror of journalistic phenomena developments, starting from the tendency to hybridity (Sorrentino, Bianda, 2013).

In fact, the history of Italian sports journalism presents several examples of sports news blending with other kind of newsworthiness (Cucci, Germano, 2003; Spalletta, Ugolini, 2013): referring to cycling, Gino Bartali’s victories in the 1948 Tour de France are still considered as one of the main factors that contributed to ward off a coup d’état in Italy after the assassination attempt to the Communist Party leader Palmiro Togliatti; the extramarital relationship between Fausto Coppi

* This article is the joint work of both authors. In particular, Marica Spalletta wrote paragraphs 2, 2.3 and 3; Lorenzo Ugolini wrote paragraphs 1, 2.2 and 2.2.
and Giulia Occhini (the so-called “White Lady”) was one of the most controversial scandals in the conservative Italian society of the Fifties (Bergonzi, Trifari, 2009).

Nonetheless, it is only by the advent of the new millennium that the hybridity of sports journalism became a massive and structural phenomenon (Spalletta, Ugolini, 2013). As well as other journalistic genres (such as political journalism above all), the way in which today journalism covers sports news depends on its mediatization (especially spectacularization, personalization and leaderization) (Mazzoleni, Schulz, 1999; Mazzoleni, 2012) and popularization (Mazzoleni, Sfardini, 2009; Van Zoonen, 2005). As a consequence, the traditional boundaries between journalistic genres tend to vanish (Sorrentino, Bianda, 2013; De Bortoli, 2008), and thereby sports journalism is now hybridized with several other journalistic genres, such as political, financial, crime, scientific, television and gossip news. The Italian media system looks to sports system to find any kind of newsworthiness (related to politics, economics, society, culture, show-business, medicine, etc.) in the sports events; at the same time, this tendency is fully accepted by the athletes and the world of sports, which become more and more acknowledged of their appeal on the audiences by their journalistic coverage (Spalletta, Ugolini, 2013).

As well as the content, the hybridization of Italian sports journalism takes shape also referring to the way in which sports news are reported: from this point of view, the coverage respects the logic of infotainment, especially focusing on the news value of human interest (Morcellini, 2011; Sorrentino, 2002).

The paper aims to highlight the hybridity of Italian sports journalism by presenting the results of a research concerning the journalistic coverage of three Italian athletes: Valentina Vezzali, Federica Pellegrini and Carlotta Ferlito. We chose these athletes because they are three champions of disciplines (respectively fencing, swimming and artistic gymnastics), which are of paramount importance in the history of Italian sports (Spalletta, 2013a, 2013b; Ugolini, 2013). Fencing is the most representative and winning discipline, since the first Olympic Games in 1896; artistic gymnastics has a long tradition of practice and successes and, after a period of crisis, starting from the second half of the Nineties it has grown again thanks to the achievements of Jury Chechi; even if it is not a traditionally successful sport (with only few exceptions), swimming has experienced a significant growth since the 2000 Sydney Olympic Games, when athletes like Massimiliano Rosolino and Domenico Fioravanti became the first Italian Olympic champions in swimming events.

The research focused on two of the most important Italian newspapers: the Corriere della Sera and La Gazzetta dello Sport. We chose these two newspapers for several reasons. First of all, both are among the most historical and influential newspapers in Italy, and their circulation is similar and comparable (www.primaonline.it). Furthermore, the Corriere della Sera is considered the most
important general interest daily Italian newspaper, as well as La Gazzetta dello Sport is the most important Italian sports daily newspaper (Bergamini, 2013; Murialdi, 2006). This allows us to analyse in depth the double nature of the athlete’s newsworthiness: its sports dimension (which is supposed to be prominent in a sports newspaper) and its non-sports one (which is supposed to be better analysed in a general interest newspaper). Considering both approaches will allow us to better understand what really makes the news about the three athletes, and at the same time will consent us to identify the main characteristics of the journalistic hybridity in those newspapers.

We analysed all the articles where Valentina Vezzali, Federica Pellegrini and Carlotta Ferlito are quoted, published in both newspapers’ printed editions from 1st January 2008 to 30th September 2014. We decided to focus our research on that period, because it includes two Summer Olympic Games (Beijing 2008 and London 2012) and several relevant competitions for all the three considered athletes (World Championships, European Championships, national competitions, Youth Olympic Games, Mediterranean Games, etc.). Moreover, in this period the phenomenon of the hybridization in sports journalism can be considered as established in its main features in the news coverage of fencing, swimming and artistic gymnastics (Della Corte, 2013; Di Mauro, 2013; Spalletta, 2013c; Ugolini, 2013).

As far as methodology is concerned, we preferred a qualitative approach to the subject over a quantitative one. Rather than focusing on statistics and hard numbers, we are more interested in highlighting the main topics and trends that are meaningful to reflect about hybridity in sports journalism (Altheide, Schneider 2013; Corbetta, 2003a, 2003b; Macnamara 2005).

Three are the questions the paper aims to answer:
1. Is there a different approach to hybridity between the general interest newspaper and the sports newspaper?
2. In which way hybridity takes shape in the journalistic coverage of the three analysed athletes?
3. Is there a relationship between the athlete’s personality and the features of news hybridity (considering also the usual features of the news coverage of their discipline)?

2. The research

The analysed corpus consists of 3,530 articles: 759 from the Corriere della Sera and 2,771 from La Gazzetta dello Sport. Several interesting trends in the journalistic coverage emerge from the data analysis and it’s useful focusing on them before starting the qualitative analysis.

First of all, La Gazzetta dello Sport deals more extensively with the three analysed athletes in respect of the Corriere della Sera (Tab. 1). According to us, it certainly depends on the different
typology of analysed newspapers: in fact, La Gazzetta dello Sport is a sports newspaper while the Corriere della Sera is a general interest newspaper. Therefore, the first one allows a wider newsworthiness to disciplines far cry from soccer or cycling, which are the most covered sports by Italian journalism (Cucci, Germano, 2003). On the contrary, the coverage offered by the Corriere della Sera is obviously less extensive but – as we can see going on in our analysis – not less in depth.

Tab. 1 – Articles’ distribution on the two newspapers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Vezzali</th>
<th>Pellegrini</th>
<th>Ferlito</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Corriere della Sera</td>
<td>251</td>
<td>486</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>759</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>La Gazzetta dello Sport</td>
<td>885</td>
<td>1.748</td>
<td>138</td>
<td>2.771</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Secondly, the journalistic coverage tends to peak in the “Olympic years”, and especially in 2012 (Tab. 2). According to us, it happens because – even though fencing, swimming and artistic gymnastics are not those sports about which the newspapers normally talk “once every four years” (Della Corte, 2013; Di Mauro, 2013; Spalletta, 2013c; Ugolini 2013) – the Olympic Games nonetheless still represents a media event (Dayan, Katz, 1994), which influences the journalistic coverage of sport. At the same time, during every year, the coverage grows up when an important competition (especially World or European Championships) is scheduled.

Tab. 2 – Articles’ distribution year after year

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Corriere della Sera</th>
<th>La Gazzetta dello Sport</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>127</td>
<td>474</td>
<td>601</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>129</td>
<td>338</td>
<td>467</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>284</td>
<td>359</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>408</td>
<td>508</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>177</td>
<td>622</td>
<td>799</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>435</td>
<td>534</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>210</td>
<td>262</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Thirdly, a significant difference emerges in respect of the three athletes’ newsworthiness (Tab. 3). According to us, it happens because they differ in age (Vezzali was born in 1974, Pellegrini in 1988, Ferlito in 1995) and thereby in the career phase they were going through in the period considered in our research. At the beginning of 2008, Vezzali was already one of the most winning fencers of all time, and was – theoretically – starting the final part of her career. Pellegrini stood out for the first time in 2004 in Athens Olympic Games, but achieved the most important results of her career between 2008 and 2011; on the contrary, Ferlito is now in the central phase of her activity, which started in 2009 with the first successes in youth competitions.
### Tab. 3 – Articles’ distribution in respect of the three athletes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Vezzali</th>
<th>Pellegrini</th>
<th>Ferlito</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>CdS</td>
<td>LGdS</td>
<td>CdS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>167</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>117</td>
<td>93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>109</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>239</td>
<td>111</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>106</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1.136</td>
<td>2.234</td>
<td>160</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Finally, the analysed corpus can be divided in two main categories: the articles which belong to the first one are those in which the athletes are merely quoted; the second category consists of the articles in which the athletes’ activity represents the main issue (or one of the main issues) or, at the very least, their activity was a topic shortly discussed or analysed by the journalist (Tab. 4).

### Tab. 4 – Articles’ distribution in respect of their typology

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Vezzali</th>
<th>Pellegrini</th>
<th>Ferlito</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Only quoted</td>
<td>796</td>
<td>1.518</td>
<td>113</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Main issue</td>
<td>340</td>
<td>716</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1.136</td>
<td>2.234</td>
<td>160</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Focusing on the second category, we can observe two typologies of hybridity, which take shape differently in respect of the three analysed athletes:

- a) The first one refers to the contents, and concerns all the not agonistic topics involved in sports news;
- b) The second one consists of the way in which sports news is narrated, especially in respect of the infotainment’s phenomenon.

#### 2.1. Valentina Vezzali

At the beginning of the analysed period, Vezzali (born in 1974) was already one of the most winning fencers (with the weapon of foil) of all time, and was – theoretically – starting the final part of her career. Before 2008, indeed, she won 9 Fencing World Cups, 16 medals (among which 5 individual gold medals) in the Fencing World Championships, 11 medals (3 individual gold medals) in the Fencing European Championships, and above all 5 Olympic medals (individual bronze medal and team gold medal in Atlanta 1996, individual and team gold medals in Sydney 2000, individual gold medal in Athens 2004). In 2008, she was the favourite of the foil competitions (individual and team...
events). Moreover, it is interesting to underline that in 2005 she won the gold medal at the Fencing World Championships in Leipzig just four months after she had her first baby.

Her athletic career went on since 2008, and even if she was supposed to face a decreasing phase, on the contrary she continued to win a large amount of international competitions, included an individual bronze medal and a team gold medal at the 2012 Olympic Games in London, where she was the Italian flag-bearer. After having her second baby in 2013, she won other important competitions (including the gold medal in the 2013 World Fencing Championship foil team event, less than 3 months after the childbirth). In 2014, she won 2 individual bronze medals and 2 team gold medals in the European and World Fencing Championships. Besides her athletic career, two other elements are to be highlighted. In 2009, she participated to the TV show Ballando Con Le Stelle (the Italian version of Strictly Come Dancing) and, above all, in 2013 she became a member of the Italian Chamber of Deputies (in the “Scelta Civica” party).

Concerning the first category in which we split our textual corpus, Valentina Vezzali is quoted for a large amount of reasons, the more meaningful of which can be related to five main features: a winning woman, a winning mother, a record holder of victories, an enduring winning athlete and, after 2009, an athlete participating to TV-shows.

The presence of these features in articles which are not strictly related to Valentina Vezzali underlines how she was (and still is) considered as a model and a touchstone for the entire Italian sports movement, of which she is an ascertained symbol. This element can be confirmed by two specific additional features that can be identified in 2012 before, during and after the Olympic Games: Vezzali is quoted as the Italian flag-bearer (including a controversy involving Federica Pellegrini and the Italian National Olympic Committee), and as a record holder of victories and enduring winning athlete in the Olympic games. In fact, if she would have won the individual gold medal, she would become the first woman winning 4 consecutive Olympic gold medals in the same discipline (individual foil); by winning actually the individual bronze medal and the team gold medal, she became the second most winning Italian athlete in Olympic Games (the first woman) and the 22nd of all time: all these potential or accomplished records were frequently quoted even in the articles non-strictly related to Vezzali.

These five features represent the foundation of Vezzali’s journalistic coverage. In fact, considering the second category in which the analysed articles were split, all the news and the events deepened by journalists have in the spotlight one or more of these highlighted aspects. On both newspapers, the news coverage of Valentina Vezzali as a record holder of victories (in Olympic Games and in general), as a winning woman and as an enduring winning athlete is focused in particular on her technical characteristics, on her motivations and on her mental attitude towards
fencing and winning. These attitudes are as well considered from a negative point of view: Vezzali’s professionalism in fencing is also a reason of controversies opposing her to the Italian directors of foil or to her teammates Giovanna Trillini, Elisa Di Francisca and Arianna Errigo.

A particular attention is paid to her trainers (her first master Ezio Triccoli and her current one Giulio Tommasini), to the fencing tradition she comes from (the so-called “scuola di Jesi”, one of the most winning fencing schools in Italy, situated in the town of Jesi) and above all to the Italian female fencing team, whose victories since the Eighties and especially since 1994 (when Vezzali joined the team) pushed the journalists to call it the “Dream Team”.

Therefore, the news coverage concerning Valentina Vezzali on both newspapers is strongly sport-centred. On the contrary, several differences between the analysed newspapers emerge when the sports coverage blends with other journalistic genres. In La Gazzetta dello Sport the theoretically non-athletic features tend to be analysed in relationship with Vezzali’s athletic career. The news coverage concerning her participation to the TV-show is centred on how it will affect her athletic training, or on how her mental attitude towards fencing can be identified also towards dancing; the coverage concerning her political career (since 2013) is very limited and focused on her law proposal concerning sports.

On the other hand, the shift from the agonistic topics to the not agonistic ones appears stronger in the Corriere della Sera. The most significant example is represented by the cross talk between Vezzali and the former Italian Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi at the end of 2008: during the famous TV talk show Porta a Porta, Vezzali addressed a “double entendres” to Berlusconi, and her statement led off a wide debate in Italian public opinion, in which several athletes were involved, not to say about the critics towards Vezzali and the anchor-man Bruno Vespa. The Corriere della Sera covered in depth this topic (both in its sports section and in the political one), focusing especially on the reply of the then-president of the Italian National Olympic Committee, Gianni Petrucci (“When an athlete wins an Olympic gold medal, he/she is right”), and on the critics coming from Italian politics (“It is no good when politics and sport blend with one another”, the President of Italian Democratic Party Rosy Bindi argued, while her colleague Anna Paola Concia said that “Vezzali’s play has to be considered as a representation of female obeisance towards male power, and it was useless and detrimental because it came from an Olympic winning symbol”).

Another interesting difference emerges in respect of the way in which the analysed newspapers narrated Vezzali as a winning mother. On both newspapers, while talking about her family (and in particular about her first son, Pietro), Vezzali appears less as a determinate, winning, tough athlete, and more as an affectionate and sensitive woman, wife and mother. Referring to La Gazzetta dello Sport this is the only case where the usual process of newsworthiness is somehow
reversed: in the previous cases, Vezzali was a better dancer/politician because she is a great athlete; in this one, Vezzali is a better athlete because she is a happy wife and mother. In the Corriere della Sera, the involvement of this topic in the journalistic tale carries out a clear function: it allows journalists to involve the news value of human interest in their articles, which become more attractive to the public. In this way, the coverage of a very technical sport like fencing becomes more “personal”, and also their protagonists were “humanised”. In other words, this is the way in which the Corriere della Sera transform the information about fencing in infotainment.

2.2. Carlotta Ferlito

Carlotta Ferlito (born in 1995) is the youngest of the athletes we analysed. She is as present one of the most talented Italian gymnasts within the growing movement born after the victories of Jury Chechi, Igor Cassina and especially Vanessa Ferrari, who is a Ferlito’s teammate and the most representative and winning athlete of Italian female artistic gymnastics of all time. Ferlito started to achieve some important athletic results in 2009 and 2010, in several youth competitions, in particular the 2010 Youth Olympic Games in Singapore where she won three individual medals. Between 2010 and 2012, she affirmed herself as one of the most gifted young athletes in the Italian and European senior circuit, by winning two medals at the European Championships, and six medals (among which three gold medals) in the Italian championships. Moreover, she participated at the 2012 Olympic Games in London, where she qualified for the individual event final.

Besides her athletic activity, Carlotta Ferlito is also well known because she is one of the protagonists of the documentary-style reality television show Ginnaste – Vite parallele, whose title (which literal meaning would be lost in translation) includes two wordplays: parallele is translatable as a noun which refers to the artistic gymnastics apparatus of the bars; at the same time, the TV-show (aired by Mtv Italy since the end of 2011) is centred on the private and public life of young gymnasts, and highlights the difficulty for these young girls to practice a strongly demanding discipline, that forces them to have somehow two different lives at the same time (which is one of the possible translations of “parallele”, as an adjective). Carlotta Ferlito is one of the most popular amongst them: this show led her to become a TV-star and also a social network star, in particular for a teen-aged audience.

Her journalistic coverage began in 2009, as La Gazzetta dello Sport reported her first victories in youth competitions. The first articles where her activity was shortly deepened were referred to her affirmations during the 2010 Youth Olympic Games: for the first time, she was presented by La Gazzetta dello Sport as one of the most promising athletes of Italian artistic gymnastics.
Starting from 2011, the news coverage concerning Carlotta Ferlito has taken the shape it will keep until now; since then, the differences between the two newspapers referred to “what makes the news” about Ferlito have appeared explicitly. On one side, the Corriere della Sera covered Ferlito with very few articles, and related any coverage of her activity to her participation to the TV-show Ginnaste. According to us, this is strictly linked to the general purpose nature of the newspaper: compared to Valentina Vezzali and Federica Pellegrini, Carlotta Ferlito didn’t achieve sports accomplishment whose newsworthiness could be able to stand out between other sports results; her appeal to a general purpose public was represented quite entirely by her participation to a popular TV-show. From this point of view, it’s meaningful that, in the Corriere della Sera, Ginnaste and therefore Carlotta Ferlito were more frequently covered by the media columnist Aldo Grasso than by Arianna Ravelli, who is the newspaper’s gymnastics specialist.

On the contrary, the coverage proposed by La Gazzetta dello Sport is more centred on Ferlito’s sports achievement, but shows also some interesting things in common with the Corriere della Sera. In fact, in both of the categories we identified (“only quoted”/“main issue”), the articles include clearly the distinction between the newsworthiness based on her athletic achievements, and the one centred on her role of TV-star. So, the articles inform on one hand about her participation to a competition or her results; on the other hand about her presence to a non-sport event as its patroness. In the articles offering a deeper analysis of her activity, the difference is, if possible, more explicit, because the authors of the articles change. The articles that deepen the athletic performance of the young gymnast are written by Federica Cocchi (who is La Gazzetta dello Sport specialist about gymnastics), whereas the articles centred on the TV-show are realised by other journalists.

It is meaningful of La Gazzetta dello Sport’s attitude that Federica Cocchi refers rarely and generically to the show, and quite only in the few interviews describing in depth Ferlito’s personality, in particular the one after a controversy that involved the Italian athlete in October 2013, when she was accused of making a racist comment. But, with the excepted of these few cases, the analysis of Carlotta Ferlito’s activity in La Gazzetta dello Sport is strictly divided: on one side, the articles concerning sports; on the other side, the ones concerning TV and show business. In our opinion, it is meaningful that the only article where Federica Cocchi describes in depth the main topics of the TV-show success (i.e. the friendship between Carlotta Ferlito and the other young gymnast Elisabetta Preziosa, their feelings, their passions, their popularity on Facebook) was published on April 2011, months before the beginning of the show: at that time it represented the human interest in sports journalism, after the success of the show it would have represented a sport-related appeal within a non-sport article.
2.3. Federica Pellegrini

Federica Pellegrini (born in 1988) is the first female Olympic champion in the history of Italian swimming (Beijing 2008), and the first woman who ever breached the 4 minutes barrier in 400m freestyle (Rome 2009); still today, she holds the 200m freestyle world records. She won her first Olympic medal in 2004 at the age of 16, becoming the youngest Italian athlete ever to win an Olympic medal in an individual event. In the following four-years period, she confirmed herself with several significant athletic performances (2 silver medals and 2 bronze medals in four World Championships; 1 gold medal, 2 silver medals and 1 bronze medal in three European Championships), but the 2008 agonistic season represented her career’s turning point: in fact, during the Eindhoven European Championships she set her first world record (400m freestyle); some months later, she won the gold medal in 200m freestyle event at the Beijing Olympic Games, breaking her own world record.

From 2009 to 2011 Pellegrini became the uncontested “swimming queen”, winning 8 gold medals and 4 bronze medals in the international championships in which she participated. However, at the 2012 Summer Olympics Games in London she failed to medal in 200m and 400m freestyle events. The following year, she scaled again the 200m freestyle podium at the Barcelona World Championship (silver medal), while in the 2014 European Champions she won for the third consecutive time the 200m freestyle event (first woman in the history of this event), not to say about her incredible come back in the 4x200m freestyle (where Italian team won the gold medal) and in the 4x100m freestyle (bronze medal).

Over all the analysed period, both newspapers reported in depth all the news concerning Federica Pellegrini, as confirmed by the high number of articles focused on her or in which she is only quoted. Referring to this second category, we can highlight five meaningful topics about which journalists often quoted the Italian swimmer: 1) the Italian female sports movement, of which Pellegrini (as well as Valentina Vezzali) represents an ascertained symbol; 2) Italian athletes’ great agonistic performances, reporting which journalists seem “to be forced to quote” the world records Pellegrini broke or still today holds; 3) the sports society which she belongs to (Team Aniene) or its president Giovanni Malagò, who became President of the Italian National Olympic Committee in 2013; 4) the blamed polyurethane swimsuits (banished after the 2009 World Championship), which allowed Pellegrini to achieve her incredible world records; 5) finally, her involvements as guest in television broadcasts or fashion shows.
Some other recurrent topics about which Pellegrini is frequently quoted can be identified: the ones refer to her by talking about her competitors, in swimming (for example the athletes which break – or try to – her world records), in private life (the other prominent athletes from the personality point of view, for example Alessia Filippi) or in both (the main example, that will be deepen shortly, is the French swimmer Laure Manaudou, who has been a strong competitor in sports and in sentimental relationships). In *La Gazzetta dello Sport*, she represents also a recurrent reference while covering attractive or sexy athletes.

In respect of those articles in which Federica Pellegrini is the main issue or one of the main issues, over all the analysed period the articles have tended to present a double level of hybridity: in respect of the way in which the news are covered (focusing on the topics strictly related to human interest rather than on the athletic performances) and in respect of the contents (sports news always blends with gossip news).

Referring to the first level of hybridity, human interest tends to be the most important news value in the journalistic coverage about Pellegrini. It happens certainly in those articles which talk about her agonistic performances, for example reporting the panic attacks she suffered during several important competitions. In those cases, in the journalistic coverage Pellegrini’s image shifts from *winning champion* to *frail girl*; however, while in Vezzali’s coverage, referring to human interest allows journalists to “humanize” the athlete’s image, when they talk about Pellegrini it seems maybe to reinforce her winning image. We can also observe a consistent coverage of human-interest topics in those articles focused on Pellegrini’s coach Alberto Castagnetti. His sudden death in 2009 deeply affected Pellegrini, and journalists often argue that it has been the cause of the controversial relationships with her following trainers.

Referring to the second level of hybridity, the news about Federica Pellegrini’s private life characterizes all the journalistic coverage. According to us, it depends on three different reasons:

a) First of all, because it involves other important athletes of Italian swimming team (in fact, from 2007 to 2011 Pellegrini was engaged with her teammate Luca Marin while, starting from 2011, she has been in relationship with her teammate Filippo Magnini) and French swimming team (Luca Marin was engaged with the French swimmer Laure Manaudou when he started his relationship with Pellegrini);

b) Secondly, because the events that take shape in Pellegrini’s private life often represent the most effective and efficient interpretation of her agonistic performances and of the ones of the other involved athletes. From this point of view, the most meaningful example refers to the 2011 World Championships. In fact, several articles argue that the very bad performances of Luca Marin and
Filippo Magnini can be explained only considering that, during that competition, Marin (who was Pellegrini’s boyfriend) discovered the relationship between her girlfriend and their teammate Filippo Magnini, and he clashed with Magnini the day before their events;

c) Thirdly, because Federica Pellegrini herself very often refers to her private life in the interviews or in her statements. Especially in La Gazzetta dello Sport, the coverage of Pellegrini is very often supported by interviews: any particular issue concerning her activity (of any nature) is reinforced by her own words. Whether it consists of few words or, quite frequently, of a full interview, Pellegrini speaks with journalists very often (even four or five times during a single swimming event), facing any issue that could be related to her in that moment (athletic results, personal interests, love stories, relationship with other athletes, etc.). Finally, La Gazzetta dello Sport frequently covers the interviews Federica Pellegrini granted to other newspapers, in particular to the non-sports centred magazines. In these cases, the issues Pellegrini talks about are mainly related to her personal life, her feelings and her fears, her wishes for her future life after swimming, and her private life and her relationships.

The last reason we have mentioned introduces ourselves to another meaningful feature of Pellegrini’s coverage, which especially refers to what she says in the interviews or in her statements. From this point of view, we can observe a crescendo over all the analysed period:

a) When our research starts, Pellegrini was only 20-years-old, but she already presented a strong personality: she was very confident, sometimes aggressive and disapproving, whether she talks about the results and the diligence of her teammates (in particular as a member of the Italian freestyle and medley relay teams), about her competitors (the main example is again Manaudou, who faced an athletic and personal crisis after Luca Marin started his relationship with Pellegrini: her words have never been sympathetic towards Manaudou’s situation) or even about her sponsors and the Italian Swimming Federation;

b) During her “golden age” (2009-2011), the journalistic coverage was always more affected by Pellegrini’s charisma, and often journalists asked her comments on several situations that not always refer to swimming. She always answered their questions, and journalists reported in depth her digs, mouths or cracks. In several cases, she took a stand on her own initiative, and journalists were forced to report her statements. According to us, the most meaningful example is represented by
the above-mentioned debate about the Italian flag-bearer at the 2012 Olympics Games: “If they proposed me to be the flag-bearer, I would deny”, she declared, causing several indignant reactions, covered in depth by both newspapers;

c) Starting from 2012, the most important source of Pellegrini’s statements becomes her Twitter official account, and on both newspapers several articles reported her tweets. The most significant example is certainly represented by the figure skater Carolina Kostner’s recent involvement in the doping case of her former boyfriend, the Italian race walker Alex Schwazer. After newspapers reported Pellegrini’s statement (“If it happened to Filippo Magnini, I would stop our relationship”), several athletes blamed Federica because she was so severe in respect of Carolina Kostner; after few hours, Pellegrini answered all critics on Twitter (“But if I am against doping, why I should state otherwise?”).

3. Conclusion

In the paper’s introduction we stated that hybridity represents one of the main features of Italian sports journalism since its beginning at the end of the 19th Century. However, only in the last two decades this phenomenon has became structural and massive. The research we have presented in this paper generally confirms this trend, even if it shows that talking generically about the “hybridity of Italian sports journalism” is always very difficult, sometimes impossible, often unproductive. Therefore, even if we certainly can affirm that there is a strong hybridity in Italian sports journalism, nonetheless we have to distinguish the different ways in which it takes shape.

From this point of view, it is very useful trying to answer the three questions we asked at the end of the paper’s introduction.

1) Is there a different approach to hybridity between the general interest newspaper and the sports newspaper? Our research shows a predictable quantitative difference between the two analysed newspapers: La Gazzetta dello Sport covers Valentina Vezzali, Carlotta Ferlito and Federica Pellegrini with a lot of articles, while the Corriere della Sera’s coverage is normally less extended. On the contrary, we can observe several analogies in a qualitative perspective: there is a meaningful sameness in respect of the reported topics and of the way in which they are covered. Therefore, hybridity affects both newspapers’ coverage and the most evident differences depend on the attitude of journalists who cover the news: on both newspapers we find journalists used to proposed and hybridized tale and journalists less inclined to a “hybridity logic”.

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2) In which way the hybridity takes shape in the journalistic coverage of the three analysed athletes?

Answering to this question forces us to distinguish the three analysed athletes, because giving a general answer is really difficult, and perhaps impossible. Referring to Valentina Vezzali, the journalistic coverage’s hybridity emerges certainly in respect of the contents, but in this case the non-athletic features tend to be brought back to the sports contest: on both newspapers, in fact, the journalistic tale appears strongly sport-centred. However, the most meaningful typology of hybridity takes shape in respect of the way in which the news is covered: a perspective focused on the news value of human-interest. On one hand, in the Corriere della Sera “Mamma Valentina” becomes a “brand” characterized by a strong newsworthiness and more appeal to the public in respect of “Valentina, the Cobra”; on the other hand, La Gazzetta dello Sport always quotes Valentina Vezzali referring to the Italian foil female team: a “Dream Team” winning and cohesive, and in which rivalries and dislikes are put aside ahead the team.

Concerning Carlotta Ferlito, first of all we have to notice that she hasn’t a comparable level of newsworthiness in respect of Vezzali and Pellegrini, and this happens even though she is certainly very famous in Italy because she is one of the main protagonists of the TV broadcast Ginnaste – Vite parallele. Our research shows that the non-athletic newsworthiness of Carlotta Ferlito doesn’t hand over to sports contests; on the contrary, it often takes the place of her sports newsworthiness. The way in which this happens is different in the analysed newspapers. While La Gazzetta dello Sport tends to split clearly the athletic news about Ferlito from the ones in which she is covered because of her TV newsworthiness, in the Corriere della Sera Ferlito’s newsworthiness takes shape almost only in media section and not in sports section.

The hybridity of sports journalism peaks in the case of Federica Pellegrini: in the articles focused on the Italian swimmer, in fact, hybridity becomes structural and unavoidable, because of a journalists’ clear choice and because Pellegrini often allows and sometimes propels this tendency. Our research shows three levels of hybridity in the journalistic tale about Pellegrini:

a) First of all, in respect of contents: sports news continually blends with gossip news, and the boundaries between these two typologies of news tend to become always more mixed up. However, even if sometimes the hybridity is essential in the journalistic tale because it gives a meaningful interpretation of the events (as confirmed by the above-mentioned ménage a trois between Federica Pellegrini and her teammates Filippo Magnini and Luca Marin, that took shape during the 2011 World Championships), there are several cases in which the journalist himself chooses freely whether and how offering to the readers a hybridized tale;

b) Secondly, in respect of the way in which the news are covered: the coverage focuses always on the human interest, because Federica Pellegrini is a very “talkative” person and
journalists appear often forced to report her statements, which normally focus on her private life, her opinions, her feelings about the competitions or about all that is more or less linked to her as an athlete. It is also interesting to underline that, in the analysed period, Pellegrini is normally covered always by the same journalists (Roberto Perrone in the *Corriere della Sera*, Stefano Arcobelli and Riccardo Crivelli in *La Gazzetta dello Sport*): from this point of view, a coverage focused on human interest depends of the “intimacy” which grows between an athlete and a journalist who covers her since she was a child;

c) Finally, the coverage of Federica Pellegrini shows a third level of hybridity, which refers to the use of social networks as primary source of journalism. As we stated in another research (Spalletta, *forthcoming*), the official Twitter account of Federica Pellegrini can be considered the space in which she takes a stand about very different situations, not always referred to swimming or, in general, to sport, and journalists often report what she argued on the social network, as they usually have done referring to her statements or her interviews. On the contrary, we can’t find the same typology of hybridity in the journalistic coverage of Vezzali and Ferlito, even if they have two active official accounts on Twitter; as we argued in the quoted research, it happens because their account is respectively too much “institutional” and “personal”, while in the Pellegrini’s one the private dimension blends totally with the public one. The present research confirms that only when Twitter represents a news source we can talk about a third level of hybridity.

3) *Is there a relationship between the athlete’s personality and the features of news hybridity (considering also the usual features of the news coverage of their discipline)?* The answer to third question represents also the ideal conclusion of our work, introducing us to the idea of “celebrity” in sports journalism. Talking about the established relationship between celebrity and political action, Mark Wheeler (2013: 60-61) states that it takes shape in two different ways: on one hand, we have “celebrity politicians that employed marketing techniques to achieve electoral office”; on the other hand there are “politicized celebrities [that] utilized their fame as a form of political capital to endorse candidates or propagate partisan ideologies”. If we try to apply this model to sport, and especially to sports journalism, our research shows that often athletes like Federica Pellegrini employ their charisma to achieve hybrid and wider newsworthiness. On the contrary, it doesn’t happen when the analysis move from Pellegrini and focuses on Vezzali and Ferlito. Which is the reason why? According to us it totally depends on the different personalities of these three athletes. The research shows that the athlete’s personality as women and as sportswomen plays the main role in gathering together the athletic newsworthiness and the non-athletic one. As Vezzali’s hybrid news coverage is
anyhow sports-centred, and as Ferlito’s one is characterized only by her media status, the news coverage of Federica Pellegrini mixes both aspects at high levels. Thanks to her “charisma”, Federica Pellegrini can certainly be considered as a “sports celebrity”.

References
Searchable talk as discourse practice on the Internet: The case of “Binders full of women”

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ABSTRACT This paper explores the phrase “binders full of women” as an example of searchable talk in the microblogging sphere of Twitter. Drawing on the concept of embedding, the article explores distinctions between averred and attributed utterances and between interactive and autonomous planes of discourse. This paper suggests that operations of the discourse item “binders full of women” - when collected and sampled in terms of its temporal development on Twitter - can be distinguished as three categories. First, “binders full of women” can operate as a meme on the interactive plane. Second, “binders full of women” can operate as a recontextualized discourse practice on the autonomous plane. Third, “binders full of women” can operate on the indeterminate plane. Two subtypes are identified in each category, demonstrating further variations of discourse function for the averral “binders full of women.” The characterization of “binders full of women” as searchable talk offers insights into how averrals are communicated in the interactive context of the microblogging sphere and provides an exemplary description for how other themed discourses emerge in the heteroglossic context of social media.

KEYWORDS searchable talk, averral, attribution, planes of discourse, Twitter discourse

Introduction

Searchable talk refers to online discourse where people render their comments searchable through the use of hashtags (Zappavigna, 2012). The hashtag as a prefix to a phrase is a form of metadata tag that emerged on Twitter and other social networking sites to provide a means whereby users can identify phrases that may be of interest to other users. Hashtags allow users to search for all comments that contain a specific phrase so that messages that share the hashtagged phrase can be grouped together to create a community-based discourse on any given topic.

On October 16, 2012 during the Second U.S. Presidential Debate, Mitt Romney was asked about pay equity for women, and he responded by referring to his past experiences in forming a new cabinet as the Governor of Massachusetts. In his response, Romney described how he solicited the advice of women’s groups in his search for qualified women and received “whole binders full of women” (see Appendix 1.0 for a copy of the full transcript).
Shortly after Romney uttered this phrase at 21:38 EST, reactions were posted on Twitter, Facebook, Tumblr, and other social media sites. Within a very short while, commentary and images with captions related to the phrase began to circulate, and numerous threads discussing the phrase began to appear. This process was greatly facilitated by the early emergence of the hashtag #bindersfullofwomen.

**Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study is to explore the phrase “binders full of women” as an example of searchable talk. Specifically, using the example “binders full of women,” we explore the remarkable ability of Twitter to create discourse through the use of hashtags. We investigate how this phrase worked to influence communication within the overall microblogging sphere, which Dutton (2008, 2009) referred to as the fifth estate.

In this study, we distinguish between averral and attribution, as defined by Sinclair (1986). Sinclair makes this distinction in terms of the relationship between fact and its verbalization:

> An ‘averral’ is an utterance; therefore, it is said by someone to someone on some occasion. It is relatable to other utterances in a discourse or a text, in that it may come after some utterance and be related to it by cohesive ties, or it may prospect forward to other utterances or possible utterances. It is also relatable to other members of the paradigm that it represents—the population from which it has been chosen. (Sinclair, 1986, p. 44)

The phrase “binders full of women” is an averral that is attributed to Mitt Romney. When an utterance is repeated, or re-averred, its meaning may change to become endowed with new values. Accordingly, the averral “binders full of women” works in the overall discourse as a cohesive tie that relates one utterance to the next. The process of moving from verbal production to verbal reproduction involves ideological workings and re-workings that propel the communication forward.

As a main platform of social networking, Twitter affords users with opportunities for participatory practices. As described by Goffman (1981), “Those who happen to be in perceptual range of the event will have some sort of participation status relative to it” (p. 2). Thus, the participatory practices surrounding verbal communication of “binders full of women” is a worthwhile topic of exploration for this study.

The present study draws on Goffman’s (1981) notions of “embedding”. The discourse on Twitter surrounding the phrase “binders full of women” is embedded within diverse voices from various sources, both individual and institutional. However, all postings in this
discourse have in common, either implicitly or explicitly, the subject of “binders full of women.” In other words, the embedding of “binders full of women” within each subjective expression comprises a heteroglossia (Bakhtin, 1981) of Twitter discourse. Few qualitative studies are found in the literature that examine the embedding of a verbal item in heteroglossic utterances within the sphere of microblogging. Accordingly, the aim of this study is to characterize how the averral “binders full of women” is reported by other Twitter users in community-based discourse with a searchable topic. In addition, we attempt to categorize the verbal performances of the averral within a heteroglossic context.

Theoretical Considerations

This research rests heavily on the distinction made by Sinclair (1981) between two planes of discourse: interactive and autonomous. In a general sense, the interactive plane of discourse is involved with “continuous negotiation between participants” (Sinclair, 1981, p. 71) whereas the autonomous plane of discourse stands as “a developing record of experience” that is concerned with “language only and not with the means by which language is related to the world outside.” (Sinclair, 1981, pp. 71-72). Both planes of discourse are assumed to be aspects of language that work simultaneously, as described by Sinclair (1981):

As we put language to use, we make text by negotiating our affairs with each other. At any one point, the decisions about what effect utterances should aim at, what acts they should perform, or what features of the world they should incorporate, are decisions on the interactive plane. Each segment of activity thus has an existential quality. But at the same time it is building up from text that has gone before, readjusting, working in the new material with the old, and maintaining records, moment by moment. Decisions in this intra-textual area are made on the autonomous plane. (p. 73)

Sinclair further suggests that “different aims in human affairs will lead to text that emphasizes one of these planes more than the other” (p. 73). In other words, while an utterance works simultaneously on both planes, extra weight may be given to one plane at certain times based on the communicative aim.

As noted by Hunston (2000), the distinction between interactive and autonomous planes may be thought of in terms of the role relationship between writer and reader. On the autonomous plane of discourse, the writer acts as the informer and the reader is informed about the content of the text, whereas on the interactive plane of discourse, the
role of the writer is to construct the text and the reader is informed about the structure of the text.

Based on the above, Twitter postings can be distinguished into different types based on their communication aims. Messages that are posted to inform audiences about attitudes or opinions may be considered as operating on the autonomous plane, whereas messages that are posted primarily to draw the attention of other Twitter users to a topic or to share an interest may be considered as operating on the interactive plane. However, due to the participatory and interactive nature of communication through social media, the distinction between interactive and autonomous planes may become blurred. Some informative messages interact with other users to arouse ambient affiliation (Zappavigna 2011, 2012) among audiences; messages of this sort may be considered as operating on the indeterminate plane.

Data and Sampling
Within one minute of Mitt Romney using the phrase “binders full of women,” it surfaced on Twitter with the hashtag prefix. Accordingly, for the purposes of this research, we collected all occurrences of the hashtag between 18:40 PST on October 16, 2012 until 24:00 PST on October 17, 2012 (total time: 29 hours and 20 minutes). Over 3,700 tweets were collected using a keyword search into a database, of which approximately 1,400 were dated October 16, 2012 and approximately 2,300 were dated October 17, 2012. From this sample, 585 tweets were collected for analysis based on the time of the tweet. Specifically, we sampled the first hour following Romney’s utterance, from 18:40 to 19:40 PST, and collected 337 tweets. We also collected 248 tweets that were posted between 10:00 and 11:00 am (morning), 11:00 am and 12:00 pm (noon), and 17:00 to 21:00 pm (evening) PST, on October 17, 2012. These periods were chosen because they represent prime times for Twitter use.

Discourse Categorization
The verbal utterance of “binders full of women” was produced by Mitt Romney during the initial event of the Second U.S. Presidential Debate. The Twitter discourse that followed is viewed as the social practice of recontextualizing the initial event with special reference to the verbal utterance. The discourse on “binders full of women” that emerged on Twitter was categorized according to the use of the phrase, as shown in Table 1.
Table 1

**Use of “Binders Full of Women” in the Twitter Discourse**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Evaluation</th>
<th>Plane of Discourse</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>meme</td>
<td>discourse entity</td>
<td>interactive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>recontextualized</td>
<td>discourse world</td>
<td>autonomous</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>实践</td>
<td>entity</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>indeterminate</td>
<td>discourse entity or world entity</td>
<td>autonomous interactive and</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The three categories are evaluated as follows: (1) meme, an interactive message oriented to “binders full of women” where the target is a discourse entity; (2) a recontextualized discourse practice, an informative message oriented to “binders full of women” where the target is a world entity; and (3) indeterminate, an informative message that responds to information available on other sources, such as media outlets, where the target is either a discourse entity or a world entity (Thetela, 1997).

**Category 1: Meme**

The first category of the Twitter discourse surrounding “binders full of women” is *meme*, which operates on the interactive plane of discourse. This category of discourse is interactive rather than informative in the sense that Internet memes are deployed for social bonding rather than for sharing information (Zappavigna, 2013). Searchable talk that contains the phrase “binder full of women” indicates that the phrase is operating as a meme in the Twitter microblogging sphere. The four-word phrase is hashtagged to mark the topic of a tweet because “hashtags can set up an attributive relationship between the tweet as a targeted token and the label as its type” (Zappavigna, 2012, p. 84). The hashtagged meme establishes a referential or intertextual relationship between this semiotic sign and Mitt Romney’s gaffe in the 2012 U.S presidential debate. Furthermore, the hashtag facilitates a shared interest in communal discourse by aligning with an ambient audience.

Internet memes are deployed for social bonding rather than for sharing information (Zappavigna, 2012). Hashtagged memes offer Twitter users the opportunity to render their utterances more findable and relatable, which creates a sense of commonality through shared values and interests and thereby reinforces interpersonal bonding. In other words,
when the hashtag #bindersfullofwomen is referred to as the tweet topic, it enacts a social relation in the microblogging sphere that prompts users to “search the topic and affiliate with it” (Zappavigna, 2012, p. 91).

The meme category of discourse on “binders full of women” can be subdivided into two types: bare tweets are those where the phrase “binders full of women” appears merely as a hashtag in the formal structure of a tweet, while contextual tweets are those where the phrase “binders full of women” appears with other elements that interact with Twitter users.

**Type 1: Bare tweets.** Messages of this type involve only the hashtag and reflect the interest of Twitter users on that topic. The data set for bare tweets is presented in Table 2.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Twitter user</th>
<th>Tweet</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Username 1@user</td>
<td>#bindersfullofwomen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Username 2@user</td>
<td>#bindersfullofwomen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Username 3@user</td>
<td>#bindersfullofwomen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Username 4@user</td>
<td>#bindersfullofwomen #bindersfullofwomen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>#bindersfullofwomen #bindersfullofwomen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>#bindersfullofwomen #bindersfullofwomen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>#bindersfullofwomen #bindersfullofwomen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Username 5@user</td>
<td>#bindersfullofwomen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Username 6@user</td>
<td>#BindersFullOfWomen / #MineHadMoreWomen /</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>#SoManyGoodWomen / #MoreFlexible ;)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This table features the phrase “binders full of women” as a hashtag posted by Twitter users. This discourse act may be viewed as a strategy for supporting bonding relationships between the ambient audience and this shared interest. In addition, the hashtagged phrase “bindersfullofwomen” is not modified by any element in the text. The hashtag may appear as a single meme, it may be repeated (e.g., username 4@user in Table 2), or it may interact with other hashtagged phrases (e.g., username 6@user in Table 2). These other hashtags may survive alone or be propagated along with the hashtag “bindersfullofwomen.” The discourse function of bare tweets is to signify a bond between the audience and the communal interest and thus to engage the audience in sharing the interest. Messages
operating as a discourse entity are not intended to inform but rather to interact with other Twitter users (ambient or specific).

**Type 2: Contextual tweets.** In this category, the hashtag #bindersfullofwomen does not stand alone, but is associated with other textual elements. The data set for contextual tweets is presented in Table 3.

**Table 3**

*Data Set for Type 2: Contextual Tweets*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Twitter user</th>
<th>Tweet</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Username 1@user</td>
<td>You know #BindersfullofWomen is trending ... Gotta be</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Username 2@user</td>
<td>RT @TimAeppel: #bindersfullofwomen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Username 3@user</td>
<td>Trending on Twitter: #bindersfullofwomen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Username 4@user</td>
<td>RT @Malbonnington #bindersfullofwomen trending globally</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Username 5@user</td>
<td>#bindersfullofwomen is trending worldwide.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Username 6@user</td>
<td>#BindersFullOfWomen - go.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Username 7@user</td>
<td>#bindersfullofwomen already has it's own tumblr. LOL, internet. <a href="http://bindersfullofwomen.tumblr.com/">http://bindersfullofwomen.tumblr.com/</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Username 8@user</td>
<td>@RomneyBinders has surpassed 30,000 followers and #bindersfullofwomen has its own Tumblr: usat.ly/V7InPf #HofstraDebate #debates</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Username 9@user</td>
<td>Trapper Keep-her? Mitt Romney’s ‘Binder Full of Women’ Gets Meme’d on.mash.to/RDDSaV #bindersfullofwomen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Username 10@user</td>
<td>#BindersFullOfWomen is going to be the next @Pinterest album we create. #TSA</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
This table shows the phrase “binders full of women” evaluated as a discourse entity rather than a world entity. Specifically, the topic of the hashtag #bindersfullofwomen is an evaluated target that is employed by Twitter users to promote the spread of the hashtagged meme on the Internet. This can be demonstrated through tweets such as “#bindersfullofwomen is trending worldwide” or “#BindersFullOfWomen - go.” The messages are usually intended to promote the audience’s interest or to invoke reactions using evaluative elements such as “trending worldwide,” “go,” “go virally,” and “looking for ‘bindersfullofwomen’?”

The phrase “binders full of women” can operate in conjunction with other discourse such as address markers or reference markers. Examples of reference markers are @, RT (retweeting), other hashtags, and hyperlinks. In this way, messages containing the phrase “binders full of women” are communicated using different convention markers to establish various relationships among Twitter users. In some cases, the hashtag #bindersfullofwomen is used as a reflexive message, usually with an indicator such as a hyperlink, as in the following: “#bindersfullofwomen already has its own tumblr. LOL, internet. http://bindersfullofwomen.tumblr.com/” (see username 8 in Table 3). In other cases, messages are posted with promotional expressions that invite access to a blog or website via a hyperlink: “Trapper Keep-her?; Watch the video of @MittRomney's "I Have Whole Binders Full Of Women" moment” (see username 7 in Table 3). Regardless, messages in this subcategory are intended to invite audiences to share an interest in the meme.

Within a heteroglossia, the phrase “bindersfullofwomen,” when used as a meme, is uttered by Twitter users to address different kinds of audiences and may involve one-to-one interactions (see usernames 2, 5, and 6 in Table 3) or one-to-many interactions (see usernames 1, 3, and 4 in Table 3). In the dataset shown in Table 3, one-to-one interactions usually contain an address marker (@user), whereby external voices are brought into the tweet message by the act of retweeting. This attributive property allows the user who is retweeting the message to become affiliated with the communal discourse. Interestingly,
within the one-to-many interactions, the phrase “binders full of women” is handled as a phenomenon, as described by Martin and White (2005). This phenomenon is represented positively by Twitter users, as reflected in lexical choices such as “trending,” “trending globally,” “trending worldwide,” and “go.” This kind of evaluation tends to evoke attitudes that cause ambient Twitter users to become affiliated and aligned with the discourse topic.

Another feature that characterizes the hashtagged meme “binders full of women” as a discourse entity is the use of reflexive responses that contain hyperlinks to blogs or websites. The use of a hyperlink reveals that the tweet topic is affiliated and supported by Twitter users through evidential means, and the Twitter users are actively engaged with the speedy transmission of the meme on the Internet. In addition, in the heteroglossia context of the Twitter microblogging sphere, the meme is functionally vulnerable to being promoted, which makes it accessible to other blogs and web communications for derivative uses. In this way, Twitter, a social media platform, is able to network with other media platforms.

**Category 2: Recontextualized Discourse Practice**

Unlike the first category, where “binders full of women” is a meme that operates on an interactive plane, in this category of discourse, “binders full of women” is a recontextualized discourse practice that operates on an autonomous plane of discourse. Specifically, the discourse on “binders full of women” is realized as informative direct speech that is posted by Twitter users. The direct speech usually stands as a complete utterance that informs the audience and aims to recontextualize the initial discourse practice.

Informative discourse on “binders full of women” that is communicated in the sphere of Twitter microblogging can be viewed to some extent as mediation (Silverstone, 1999) or movement of meaning (Fairclough, 2006). Twitter users attempt to recontextualize the verbal slip of “binders full of women” uttered by Mitt Romney through discourse practices. The social practice—the 2012 U.S. presidential debate—was contextualized by virtue of being televised and transmitted globally. However, the original meanings or concepts may undergo movement or mediation through representation and re-representation as part of participatory communication on the Internet. Twitter users are able to make use of the blogging sphere to express informative messages regarding the actual, initial practice. In other words, elements of the initial social practice (i.e., the 2012 presidential debate),
specifically the gaffe made by Mitt Romney, are necessarily subject to discursive transformations as they are transmitted through Twitter conversations regarding “binders full of women.”

Based on close observation, this category of “binders full of women” as a recontextualized discourse practice can be subdivided into two types: messages with and without the phrase “binders full of women.” These are added to the first two types from Category 1 and are thus named Type 3 and Type 4.

**Type 3: Tweets containing the phrase “binders full of women.”** Three main discursive characteristics are found in tweets in this category, as shown in Table 4. First, the phrase “binder full of women” is employed textually as an essential element in an utterance, collaborating with other grammatical components to create and structure the meaning. Second, the averral “binders full of women” is re-averred and re-contextualised. Third, the phrase “binders full of women” is evaluated as a world entity and not a discourse entity, and a new communicative value is added in the process of creating meaning.

Table 4
Data Set for Type 3: Tweets Containing the Phrase “Binders Full of Women”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Twitter user</th>
<th>Tweet</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Username 1@user</td>
<td>Ugh, I don't want to make dinner! If only I had #bindersfullofwomen to help me!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Username 2@user</td>
<td>The #bindersfullofwomen came from an independent group, was <em>not</em> requested by Romney as he lied last night dailykos.com/story/2012/10/…</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Username 3@user</td>
<td>While we were looking through the #bindersfullofwomen, &quot;Mr. Me Too&quot; became the top worldwide trend. Obama just pinned a nickname on Romney.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Username 4@user</td>
<td>Great question by this lady. They must have found her in a #bindersfullofwomen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Username 5@user</td>
<td>I feel like #BindersFullOfWomen might be this debate's #BigBird. Just sayin...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Username 6@user</td>
<td>Gang-bangers and #bindersfullofwomen - this isn't a debate, it's a rap song #debates #uspoli</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Username 7@user</td>
<td>You can tell Romney wants to put her in a binder. #debates</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Username 8@user</td>
<td>Wondering if Mitt Romney has a binder full of (legal)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In the first example, “Ugh, I don't want to make dinner! If only I had #bindersfullofwomen to help me!,” the hashtag #bindersfullofwomen appears as object of the predicate had that completes the sense of the utterance. Its original meaning is also adapted by the Twitter user to construct a subjunctive sentiment by using the phrase if only. Although we take this entire utterance as an averral, use of the hashtag informs the audience that the phrase “binders full of women” is attributed to Mitt Romney, with added meanings to the original social practice contributed by the Twitter user “username 1@user.”

In the second example, username 2@user recontextualises “binders full of women” in an assertive tone: “The #bindersfullofwomen came from an independent group, was *not* requested by Romney as he lied last night.” In this case, the verbal element “binders full of women” and the participant (Romney) are re-arranged in order to serve a persuasive purpose, but this re-evaluation of both verbal elements breaks down the reference to those elements in the original social practice. Likewise, in the other examples, the phrase “binders full of women” remains a compulsory component for meaning production, but works with other elements to construct a new semiotic reality in the microblogging sphere.

Slight differences may be noted for the tweets by username 7@user and username 8@user. In those cases, the phrase “binders full of women” does not appear intact with other grammatical components in creating the meaning of the tweet, but the texts clearly refer to Romney and binder, which are readily associated with “binders full of women” as originally averred by Mitt Romney. Discourse of this type demonstrates that the actual social practice has undergone various recontexualisations during which the phrase “binders full of women” has been colonised and re-articulated from one context to another. This re-articulation of “binder full of women” forms a tension of subjectivity that shifts from the original source (Mitt Romney) to the speaker (self).

**Type 4: Tweets without the phrase “binders full of women.”** In these tweets, the phrase “binders full of women” is implied rather than directly referenced. The examples in Table 5 demonstrate a relatively independent expression of speech without the phrase “binder full of women.”

Table 5
**Data Set for Type 4: Tweets that Lack the Phrase “Binders Full of Women”**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Twitter user</th>
<th>Tweet</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Username 1@user</td>
<td>If you liked it then you shoulda put three rings on it #bindersfullofwomen [pinterest.com](<a href="http://pinterest.com/pin/2115988824">http://pinterest.com/pin/2115988824</a>...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Username 2@user</td>
<td>Must resist making a 50 Shades joke #bindersfullofwomen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Username 3@user</td>
<td>Shit, do I have to lose weight to fit in? #bindersfullofwomen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Username 4@user</td>
<td>This is why we watch debates. #BindersFullofWomen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Username 5@user</td>
<td>Mitt Romney said he wanted more women on his staff so he assembled #BindersFullOfWomen [amazon.com](<a href="http://amazon.com/Avery-Durable-">http://amazon.com/Avery-Durable-</a>... ...<a href="http://bit.ly/Wxtrrk">bit.ly</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Username 6@user</td>
<td>Have to admit I'm not yet watching debates, but sounds like Staples should get on this. #bindersfullofwomen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Username 7@user</td>
<td>We are listening to the debate on the radio like its 1940!! #bindersfullofwomen</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As shown, the tweets make minimal reference to the hashtagged phrase “binders full of women” to perform an informative function. The meaning of each utterance is situated in a different dimension of expression through reframing a scenario in connection with the initial social practice. For example, the use of third person pronouns such as *it*, *that* (with *guy*), and *his* (with *way*), represents a referential connection to some elements of the original social practice. However, the speakers then distance themselves from the original social practice in one of two ways. First, they use a direct or indirect evaluation of the participants of the actual social practice; for example, “Mitt Romney said he wanted more women on his staff so he assembled...” (username 5@user in Table 5) and “shit, do I have to lose weight to fit in?” (username 3@user in Table 5). Second, the speakers make reference to the initial social practice; for example, “this is why we watch debates” (usernames 4 and 7 in Table 5).

In terms of author subjectivity, communal discourse of this type tends to build up a more intertextual, but distancing, relationship between the per se of each utterance and the actual social practice, since direct reference to the phrase “binders full of women” is avoided. In this way, an expansive subjectivity is independently reflected through articulation. In other words, recontextualisation of this type distances the initial verbal occurance of
“binders full of women” and expands the possibilities for expressing ideologies of different kinds.

**Category 3: Indeterminate Plane**

Messages in this category are informative messages that are re-arranged through semiosis or social media activities to “remix electronic texts such as image, verbiage, audio and video manipulation to produce many derivatives of an original concept” (Zappavigna, 2012, p. 100). The sign processes may include explicit linguistic signs or typographic dispositions. In Twitter discourse, linguistic signs vary according to their different functions. As discussed earlier, @ and RT are the most common interactive signs, and they perform different discourse acts in an explicit way.

Hyperlinks in searchable text indicate a hypertextual relationship between the message and the web link. The relationships are hypertextual because the messages posted may be reactive to the link through retweeting or replying. However, links sometimes fail to explicitly invite the audience to be involved with its interaction unless they are suggested by directive locutions such as “chk it out now” in the tweet “Inspired by Mitt’s #bindersfullofwomen, my #Zazzle friend, Kate Taylor created this awesome binder. Chk it out now! zazzle.com/binder_full_of...” and “Chew on that” in the tweet “Romney’s answer to gender pay inequity is flexible schedules so #bindersfullofwomen can go home & cook. Chew on that. dailykos.com/story/2012/10/...”

Besides linguistic signs, some typographic dispositions exist that make the informative message interactive in the sense of entertaining audiences. For example, a message may be posted using forward slashes as punctuation marks throughout the message: “So much depends/upon/a red three-ring/binder/filled with/women/beside the white/people. –WCW.” This message carries a complete sense of ridiculing Mitt Romney and “binders full of women”; however, it presents itself with a unique typographic design.

Based on the above considerations, two more types are added as subcategories of Category 3. Type 5 are tweets with information in play, and Type 6 are tweets that play with information on blogs or news outlets.

**Type 5: Information in play.** This type of message is interactive and takes the form of a dialogue between two specific users. Examples from the data set are shown in Table 6.
Table 6
Data Set for Type 5: Information in Play

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Twitter user</th>
<th>Tweet</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Username 1@user</td>
<td>It's here! #bindersfullofwomen RT @RomneysBinder. Boy, I'm full of women! #debates</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Username 2@user</td>
<td>#BindersFullOfWomen -&gt; RT @atavistian: @SuicideGirls If I know one thing, it's that Suicide Girls are best unbound.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Username 3@user</td>
<td>Yes. You can buy our #BindersFullOfWomen with Visa --&gt; RT @wackstar2: @SuicideGirls Do ya take visa ??? lol</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Username 4@user</td>
<td>.@MittRomney's so smooth he doesn't have a little black book, he has #BindersFullOfWomen...? #debates</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The appearance of an address marker (@ user) in the messages simulates the action of speaking to someone. Messages of this kind may represent one-way communication (see username 1@user in Table 6) or two-way communication (see usernames 2 and 3 in Table 6). In the first example in Table 6, @RomneysBinder is retweeted by Username 1@user with a posting “It's here! Boy, I'm full of women!” This posting is meant to amuse the user “@RomneysBinder” In the second example in Table 6, the informative message “If I know one thing, it’s that Suicide Girls are best unbound” is sent by the user @atavistian to @SuicideGirls as entertainment, but rather than being a reply, the message is a retweet (shown as RT). A speaker may reply with a message, as in the third example in Table 6: “Yes. You can buy our #BindersFullOfWomen with Visa,” in response to an utterance by @wackstar2 “Do ya take visa??? lol.” The messages are conversational because they are not merely spreading the meme but also exchanging information. Informative messages become interactive in a form of simulated dialogue between or among specific Twitter users.

In the fourth example in Table 6, the message smartly makes use of Twitter’s dual functions of mention and address (@ user) to post the message, but in this way seems to direct the message to two audiences: one addresses the specific user @MittRomney, while the other addresses the ambient audience. In this form of dialogue, the phrase “binders full of women” is communicated between or among specific Twitter users.

These types of messages shares some commonalities. First, the messages are conversational because they are not merely spreading a meme but also exchanging information. The Twitter user provides informative and meaningful elements and is oriented to inform other Twitter users. Second, the addressee is overtly indicated by the conventional
marker @, which turns the message into a mini-conversation or dialogue between or among individual Twitter users.

**Type 6: Tweets that play with information.** Like Type 5 messages, Type 6 messages are shared to be informative and interactive. However, unlike Type 5 messages, Type 6 messages are responsive to messages from other websites, such as blogs or news outlets. Messages of this kind are posted in order to play or interact with messages available on other Internet sources. Examples from the data set are shown in Table 7.

Table 7
Data Set for Type 5: Tweets that Play with Information

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Twitter user</th>
<th>Tweet</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Username 1@user | Let Hillary explain this whole binders thing. #bindersfullofwomen  
http://bindersfullofwomen.tumblr.com/post/33749506896 ...|
| Username 2@user | Romney’s #bindersfullofwomen was “a Freudian slip, a filibuster and a falsehood,” says the @guardian’s Shortcuts Blog  
gu.com/p/3b75q/tw|
| Username 3@user | The Obama campaign has already bought a sponsored tweet for the #bindersfullofwomen hashtag. pic.Twitter.com/i4qQbdTH |
Examples in this table display interactions among Twitter users that take place through the act of remixing or embedding another source of information posted by other Twitter users. The information available on the other source, typically blogs or news websites, is considered as a recontextualized discourse practice for the phrase “binders full of women.” The tweet may be responsive or evaluative to the discourse as a recontextualized practice for sources such as blogs or news websites. In this sense, the informative posting is assumed to play with other sources and, therefore, to remain interactive.

Each tweet of this type has an interactive relationship with information available on the other source. These relationships may be responsive (e.g., username 1@user), attributive (e.g., username 2@user), interpretative (e.g., username 3@user), or other types. The bond created with discourse as recontextualized practice establishes a connection to the message tweeted with “binders full of women” or the initial social practice. In addition, it generates a derivative meaning that is different from the initial concept on the Internet. For example, a photo of Hillary Clinton is used in a blog on Tumblr to add amusement to the meme “binders full of women.” The tweeting of this blog makes this practice an interpretive working of a diverse kind.

The second example in Table 7 displays a fragmentary message attributed to a news comment on the website of The Guardian newspaper. In this way, the fragmented information tweeted by this Twitter user and reader of The Guardian serves to circulate news information in the microblogging sphere. In the third example in Table 7, the posting attempts a new interpretive possibility on Obama’s campaign that is a derivative of the original concept of “binders full of women.” In this type, the evaluated phrase “binders full
of women” may be targeted as a discourse entity (e.g., username 1@user in Table 7) or a world entity (e.g., username 2@user in Table 7) to construct a complete meaning.

In this type of communication, the discourse action (i.e., remixing or embedding) extends from one media outlet to another. The process appears more complex because it involves a convergence of media and a convergence of derivative interpretations of “binders full of women” that push the phrase to go viral on the Internet. On Twitter, two discourse functions are involved in this kind of interaction. One function acts to recontextualise the phrase “binders full of women” in a circular way, inviting many voices to interact via the Twitter platform, and the other function regards Twitter as a platform for promoting other media institutions in order to engage more ordinary audiences.

**Discussion and Conclusions**

In terms of its role in social communication, Twitter, as a form of social media, has been contextualized in different ways, such as democratization (Turner, 2010), event-driven society (Therborn, 2000), or a cultural community for homophily (i.e., birds of a feather stick together; McPherson et al., 2001). Nevertheless, one of the social functions of microblogging is to represent an existing social reality, and Twitter provides a new form for social agents to communicate social issues or shared interests. In social networking, social agents are connected through verbal performances to enact social practice.

The case of “binders full of women” provides an example of participatory social networking to engage in a social political issue. The types of tweets or postings that are embedded within this participatory communication are not so much diverse as they are imbued with communicative values. Sorting out tweets can help to construct how tweeting practices operate in the social-cultural context of a U.S. presidential election and how a publicly engaged political issue is discursively realized in the new media—the fifth estate.

Our categorization of Twitter messages in the case of “binders full of women” is based on distinctions between autonomous and interactive planes of discourse (Sinclair, 1981). Going beyond this distinction, we advance three categories of messages: meme, recontextualized discourse practice, and indeterminate. Messages operating on the indeterminate plane represent a new category where messages are both informative and interactive.
As a discourse entity, the phrase “binders full of women” can operate as a meme that is oriented toward interactions with other Twitter users, but less information, personal attitudes, or opinions are involved in the messages. Twitter users are considered more as constructors of the text than as informers (Hunston, 2000). The main communicative purpose is to activate the Twitter topic to engage other ambient audiences and arouse their interest in participating in this communal discourse. However, the speech averral “binders full of women” can be recontextualized in an utterance so that attitudes and ideas can be conveyed by working with the phrase. In this case, the Twitter user plays the role of informer and the communicative function of the message is mainly oriented toward informing audiences, which imposes subjective evaluations to the phrase “binder full of women.” In addition, the phrase sometimes works on the indeterminate plane, because a Twitter message is informative but has a certain responsive bond with other Twitter users. Unfortunately, due to space limitations, we are unable to comprehensively capture the multifaceted and complicated communicative functions brought by this category of discourse.

The three different categories that coexist in the Twitter microblogging sphere construct a pool of different positions and voices that interplay with each other. We sought to track the performance and temporal development of these three categories in the context of heteroglossia. Thus, 585 messages were sampled from tweets that emerged in the first two days following Romney’s utterance “binders full of women.” We categorized the tweets into three groups based on definable features. The distribution of tweets is shown in Table 8.

Table 8
Distribution of Tweets in the Data Sample (N =585)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Categorization</th>
<th>October 16, 2012&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</th>
<th>October 17, 2012&lt;sup&gt;b&lt;/sup&gt;</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Category 1 (interactive)</td>
<td>187 (55.5)</td>
<td>23 (9.3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Category 2 (informative)</td>
<td>83 (24.6)</td>
<td>66 (26.6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Category 3 (informative and interactive)</td>
<td>67 (19.9)</td>
<td>159 (64.1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>337 (100)</td>
<td>248 (100)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<sup>a</sup> sampled from 18:40 to 19:40 PST
<sup>b</sup> sampled from 10:00 to 12:00 and from 17:00 to 21:00 PST
As shown in Table 8, in the first hour following Romney’s utterance, 55.5% of tweets were Category 1 messages, while only 19.9% were Category 3 messages. On the second day, the distribution of tweets across the three categories was inverse to that on the first day, with 64.1% of tweets belonging to Category 3 and only 9.3% of tweets in Category 1. Category 2, which is composed of informative messages, was stable across both days (24.6% vs. 26.6% on October 16 and 17, respectively), which indicates that most Twitter users actively participated in the shared discourse on an interactive level to spread the Twitter topic with personal opinions. Later on the second day, more postings were tweeted in response to the recontextualized practices of “binders full of women” that were available on other media sites including blogs and news websites. Messages of this type are considered both informative and interactive.

In conclusion, this study profiles the verbal performance of “binders full of women” operating on Twitter. Some limitations and implications in this study leave room for further research. The characterizations in this study outline a prototypical description for each category, and most of the Twitter postings were identifiable in terms of these definitions. This study is based on data sampled from all tweets during the defined period; accordingly, deviations in our category definitions may exist due to the interactive properties of social media that allow for various reflexive responses to embedded materials and due to the limited data sampled for observation in this study. Nevertheless, our attempts to locate the discourse functions of Twitter postings through categorization using the example of “binders full of women” may inform future studies. Recommendations for further study include figuring out how social roles or agents, such as ordinary, institutional, or journalistic Twitter users, are engaged with political realms or social movements through verbal performance in the microblogging sphere of Twitter communications, or identifying how a discourse item verbally performs in a topicalized Twitter discourse.
References


**Author Biography**

Hongqiang Zhu is currently a Ph.D candidate in the department of English at the University of Macau under the supervision of Prof. Martin Montgomery. His research focuses on media discourse with a special interest in stance and evaluation in news discourse.
Appendix 1.0

Transcript for Romney’s “binders full of women”

1. CROWLE: governor romney (.) pay equity for Women (1.0)
2. ROMNEY : thank you (.)and er (.) imPORTant topic (0.8)
3. hhhh and one which I
4. learned a great deal about (hhhh) (.)um particularly as I was (.)
5. SERving as governor of my STATE(.)
6. because I had th the chance
7. to (0.6) pull together a cabinet (0.6)
8. A:nd um(0.6) ALL the
9. applicants (.) seemed to be MEN(.)
10. and I and I went to my staff (.)
11. and I said how come all the people for these jobs are (.)
12. are all MEN they said well these are
13. the people that have the
14. qualifications and I said well gosh can't we (1.0)
15. can't we find some (0.8)
16. some women that are also QUAlified↑(0.9)
17. And er (0.8) and so we (0.7)
18. we took a concerted effort to go out and find
19. WOMEN(0.6) who had BACKgrounds
20. that could be qualified to
21. become members of our cabinet(.)
22. I went to a number of
23. women's groups and said
24. can you help us find folks and they brought us (.)
25. whole BINDERs full of er er WOmen (.) I was
26. proud of the FACT(.) that after I (.)
27. STAFFed my cabinet and my Senior STAFF (.)
28. that the university of new york er (.)
29. in Albany (0.6) did a survey of ALL FiFty states (0.8) and
30. concluded that MINE had more women in SErior (.) leadership
31. positions than any other state in America.
Transcript symbols:
(.) stands for pause measured less than 0.5 second
(0.8) stands for pause measured in second
hhhh stands for inhalation
(hhhh) stands for aspiration
Capitalisation: accented syllables or words
↑ stands for rising tone