Original Article

Contextualizing media behavior: Media environments and individuals' media use in the European Union

Matthew Loveless
UNIVERSITY OF KENT, UNITED KINGDOM

ABSTRACT: Individuals in "freer" media environments are assumed to have better choices among media and are thus able to make better and more efficient use of media. Using the European Parliamentary Elections of 2009 as a highly visible political event, we find that, as expected, individuals use media to satisfy informational needs about the elections in highly "free" media environments (Hallin & Mancini, 2004). In addition, we find strong *prima facie* evidence that in "less free" media environments — distinguished by the strong alignment of parties, social and political cleavages, and media outlets — individuals also respond with higher information-seeking media behavior. For comparative media studies, by linking specific media environments to specific individual-level media behaviors, where media is used tells us more about how media is used.

KEYWORDS: media, political communication, European Union, political behavior, media effects, democracy

INTRODUCTION

All forms of the "free press theory" align a free and plural press with a free and rational society (assumed to be a democracy; McQuail 1987, p. 113; see also Bartels, 1993; Swanson & Mancini, 1996; Schmitt-Beck, 1998; Norris, 2000; Mutz & Martin, 2001; Habermas, 1995). As such, many researchers of media — mainly print and broadcast — assume that as long as media are legislatively protected from undue political and economic pressure, operated in a competitive market, preserve the rights of journalists, and are free from control by political actors, media are a positive contribution to democratic political culture and thus democracy. Individuals in these "free" media environments are assumed to have better choices among media from which they can make better and more efficient use of media for, as an example, searching for political information. Thus, using this "original normative assumption" (ONA) to understand how individuals engage with media (e.g. to search for

information), we would simply need a continuum of the level of "media freedom" in media environments. Yet media systems in different democracies have functionally equivalent institutions — if various forms. Thus, do all democracies merely need to "free" their media to provide appropriate media environments for their citizens? Or, is the ONA applicable to only some media environments?

Hallin & Mancini (2004) codify a set of dimensions by which media systems can be reasonably compared and develop media models constituted by the countries of Europe. We use this framework to investigate whether macro-settings do in fact exert an impact on individuals' media choices and how this linkage might function. We find that differences in individuals' use of media to seek out information about the European Parliamentary elections in 2009 in the European Union (EU) countries can be partially explained by the media environment in which the individuals are embedded. However, while most media environments conform to the ONA, ideological or more clearly partisan media environments can also conduce higher levels of information-seeking media behavior even as they are "less free." Thus, how people use media can begin to be better understood by knowing where they use it.

MEDIA ENVIRONMENTS

To conceptualize the multilevel linkage between media environments and individuals' media use, we rely on hypothetical ideal types. At one extreme, a country's media environment might be characterized by a media market driven by fair competition, free from overt and certainly excessive political influence, and legally safeguarded from within and without. In this environment, journalists, broadcasters, and editors are not intimidated and act as contentious participants in the country's political discourse. At the other extreme, political actors intimidate or co-opt journalists, editors, and other media participants. Competition is limited to ideological monopolies (or where ownership is murky) and there are few legislative protections for media.

In the former and given the ONA, we normatively assume that citizens interested in politics or events of the day would be able to choose and move freely between sources of objective and available information. This improves their ability to understand and make choices about politics. By contrast, in the latter, we imagine citizens subjected to strongly biased noise, and unable or un-eager to distinguish between information and opinion. They would increasingly disengage media for the useful task of gathering information about politics, or even disengage from politics entirely. But extremes are likely to reveal stark differences in media use behavior by individuals. Given that changes in the media environment of a democracy over time affect political behavior (Prior, 2007), have we ignored variations in media environments among different democracies?

Hallin & Mancini (2004) provide a theoretical and comparative model of media environments based on four dimensions which in turn produce three models: the Liberal Model, the Democratic Corporatist Model, and the Polarized Pluralist Model. For broader Europe, they argue that while Western Europe can be fairly reliably used to constitute their multi-dimensional framework, Eastern Europe is more complicated. To them, South-East Europe (Romania and Bulgaria) fits the Mediterranean or Polarized Pluralist model and the Czech Republic, Hungary, and Poland are better identified by the Democratic Corporatist model (Hallin & Mancini, 2004, p. 305). However, even the authors themselves recognize that, as these models of media institutional arrangement are linked to the historical development of party systems that are still somewhat institutionally fluid (Hallin & Mancini, 2004, p. 300), these assignments may be premature (see Jakubowicz, 2007; Gross, 2002; Mungiu-Pippidi, 2003).[1]

Like our first ideal type above, we expect the link between media freedom in the Democratic Corporatist and Liberal models and individuals' normative media behavior to be strongest but weaken in the Polarized Pluralist model (although it will also adhere to the ONA; Hallin & Mancini, 2004, p. 247). This is simply an ordering of these models along a continuum of media freedom rather than suggesting any specific deviations from it (see Figure 1).

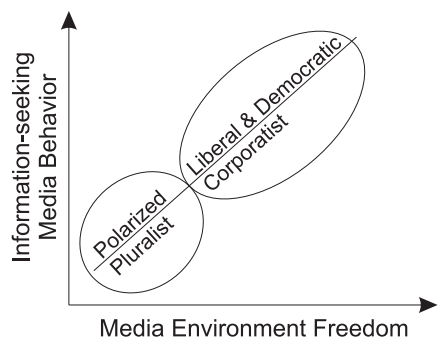

Figure 1. Normative media theory and Hallin & Mancini (2004) media models

Source: author.

Although Hallin & Mancini include some general, cross-model differences that may produce discernible differences in aggregate media behavior, they do not generate specific hypotheses of individual media behavior. Thus, while this framework is effective in differentiating media systems, these media models are less clear in suggesting how these different settings might shape media behavior. To

[1] While work has been done to extend the Hallin and Mancini (2004) model (see Hallin & Mancini, 2012; Gross & Jakubowicz, 2012), these are collections of case studies rather than systematic refinements of the original idea.

their credit, Hallin & Mancini recognize this and note that the reliance on this assumption (i.e. ONA) has produced a highly ethnocentric in the comparative media literature which resembles normative ascription; that is, applying the normative ideal of the "watchdog" and "social communicative" functions to all media environments (Hallin & Mancini, 2004, pp. 2–3). However, they offer no alternative, allowing their comparative media framework to align along a continuum of "freedom" represented by legislative, political, and economic freedom from (state) imposition and journalistic autonomy. In this case, their media models may be of little utility as a means to describe group countries' media environments. Formally,

H_1: *In "freer" media environments, we should see more deliberate media behavior such as information-seeking about politics at the individual-level.*

However, individuals' media use has been argued to not necessarily need "free" media environments to be effective for the purpose of seeking information or making sense of politics. Downs (1957) offers an alternative assertion that, given the varied costs of gathering data, the unequal distribution of information, and relative (low) utility of participating in democracy, it was possible that individuals resort to the highly efficient method of information collection through partisan/ideological cues. These "shortcuts" allow citizens to gather information with relatively low search costs (Sniderman et al., 1991, "satisficers" use their media for information). In contrast to the often asserted "needs" of individuals in democratic societies (often theorized to be information-seeking based on the individual concept of media of media freedom, i.e. communication-as-transmission model; McQuail, 1987), some can search for information, while others instead seek ideological congruence, seeking confirmation rather than information (the functional form of communication-as-ritual; Carey, 2009).

Hallin & Mancini propose the ideological media environment in which this might occur. According to them, the countries of the Polarized Pluralist model are the lowest functioning of the set of models (in terms of the relationship between democracy and media). Individuals' media choices in this media environment could originate from this proposed alternative heuristic value, i.e. ideological congruence between audience member and outlet. In fact, in these societies with high levels of political parallelism and entrenched and aligned social and political cleavages (i.e. low levels of media freedom according to the ONA), we might find individuals using more of these media for exactly that reason. In other words, biased or strongly ideological media is not "bad" but merely biased and ideological. Therefore, the following hypothesis:

H_2: *In media environments increasingly characteristic of the Polarized Pluralist model, we expect stronger correlation between information-seeking and media consumption.*

INDIVIDUAL MEDIA BEHAVIOR

If media environments are important to individuals' media behavior, what constitutes this behavior? While Almond and Verba (1963) assert the "democratic citizen" hypothesis that citizens must be informed and actively engaged, the "democratic-participant" theory requires an audience that is actively involved in political life (McQuail, 1987, p. 122). Therefore, one means to capture individuals' meaningful media use is to choose a period or event in which individuals are likely to consume media more conspicuously and elicit from the individuals themselves not merely "media use," but "deliberate media use." Deliberate media use describes individuals' media use that is directed, as in a choice to consume for a reason (e.g., information-seeking). In other words, deliberate media choices are made in a way that general or non-specific media uses are not (Chaffee & Kanihan, 1997, pp. 425–426). For example, we know that changes in individuals' deliberate media use behavior can to some degree be explained by periods of stress or uncertainty (e.g. political transition, in Central and Eastern Europe, see Loveless, 2008, 2010; Voltmer & Schmitt-Beck, 2006). This is relevant to this study as this externalizes the relationship between media and the individual such that in periods of uncertainty or change, individuals do not simply find themselves using media at different levels but that they deliberately seek to use media in a specific way (e.g. higher levels of seeking information).

By using the 2009 EU Parliamentary elections as a setting in which a Europe-wide event is shared and visible, we are not attempting to assess how much information individuals get from media about the EU elections. Rather, it is an event of heightened importance to individuals. Noted by de Vreese et al. (2006, p. 480): "[…] increased visibility of the elections in the news gives voters an indication of the salience or importance of the election." In conjunction with several other authors, de Vreese goes on to note that news coverage of EU affairs is much more visible than in "routine periods" especially in the final weeks of the campaign (de Vreese & Semetko, 2004; see also de Vreese & Boomgaarden, 2006; Peter & de Vreese, 2004, emphasis M.L.).

Additionally, the European elections as second order elections separate those interested to find information from those that do not care to (Bennett & Entman, 2001) and regardless of what is covered in the media or not (assuming a truly non-zero level) information-seeking media behavior takes place. That is not to say that individuals get much out of their media choice but the use of media to seek out information is, by definition, information-seeking media behavior. Further, it does not matter that EU topics and actors account for an extremely small proportion of the reporting in national media (Peter & De Vreese, 2004; Machill et al., 2006; de Vreese et al., 2006) as even a strong national orientation of news — in the period of the EU elections — is important as the sources of individuals' opinions concerning the EU remain highly relevant on national or individual level factors

(see Rohrschneider & Loveless, 2010). However, we are interested in neither extensions to media effects (e.g. political behavior) nor the assessment of information that individuals actually get from media about the EU (*pace* de Vreese & Boomgaarden, 2006). We simply suggest that in contrast to "routine periods" the EU parliamentary elections incentivize individuals to gather information such that the EU elections are an impetus to information-seeking, and not an end product of information-seeking.

METHODOLOGY

To evaluate the central claims of this paper, namely that individual-level media behavior is embedded in a multi-level model of media models rather than uniformly along a continuum of media freedom, we must allow for the covariance of the information-seeking/media use relationship to be predicted by the media environments. To estimate this cross-level interaction of individuals' media choices and media system "freedom," we use a random intercept, random slope hierarchical linear model (HLM).[2]

The individual-level data for this analysis come from the European Elections Study 2009 (see Measurement Appendix for details of all data and variables). This allows us to approach this question in a number of ways. Using countries in the EU from the election period gives us cross-national — or more specifically cross-media model explanatory leverage. As Hallin & Mancini link the countries of Western Europe to their media models, we can use this to identify differences between them (including the CEE countries as a group, the Accession States).[3] Finally, we can assess any cross-medium leverage as this analysis incorporates both television and newspaper consumption measures.[4]

As we are not looking to assess what or how much information is received from the media, we use the dependent variable of the level of media used by individuals just prior to the upcoming elections ("frequency" of media use alone is a relevant

[2] The intraclass correlation coefficient (ICC) suggests that the higher the within-study correlation (the degree of resemblance between lower level units belonging to the same level-two unit, i.e. random effects), the more appropriate hierarchical modeling. For 2009, the ICC's from the "empty models" were 0.039 and 0.085 (television and newspaper, respectively). While somewhat low, the proportional reductions of variance in the full models demonstrated preliminary plausibility for using cross-level interactions (i.e. random slopes): For 2009, 22 per cent and 17 per cent (television and newspaper, respectively). I used the xtmixed commands in STATA 10.

[3] Both Cyprus and Malta are excluded from this analysis due to a low number of useable observations.

[4] Despite the obvious need to better understand digital media and their possible effects on European citizens (see for example, Dimitrova et al., 2011), the data here do not provide sufficiently meaningful digital use questions to use. More importantly, we adhere to Hallin and Mancini's theory designed around print and broadcast media.

indicator of media behavior, Schmitt-Beck, 2004).[5] This media choice is regressed on individuals' level of interest in the elections just prior to the elections, ideology, socio-economic and demographic variables. For the cross-level assessment of media environments' effect on individuals' media behavior, the beta coefficient between the respondents' levels of interest in the election and their media use just prior to the elections serves as the strength of information-seeking behavior (i.e. seeking information about the European elections); such that, a higher beta coefficient represents a higher coordination between media use just before the election and the level of information-seeking about the election. Loveless (2008, 2010) has theoretically and empirically linked political interest to media choices in Eastern Europe and others have found similar and supportive evidence Europe-wide (Shehata & Strömbäck, 2010). Yet, again, the relationship between interest in the European elections and media use here are not argued to be causally linked but merely a metric (via the regression coefficient) as to the strength of that relationship.

To examine the variability of this relationship in different media contexts, we can also distinguish media characteristics among the countries under investigation. Derived from the discussion above, we operationalize the media environments along the dimensions included in the theoretical framework of Hallin & Mancini and thus use Freedom House's Freedom of the Press scores (as is the literature norm, see Morlino, 2011).

Freedom House's (FH) legal environment is an assessment of a country's set of regulatory and legal codes for media (in the form of their rights and restrictions) and media practitioners (in the form of protection of free speech). This matches Hallin & Mancini's measure of the extent of state intervention in media. FH's economic environment evaluates the actual market of media on the basis of ownership (tendencies toward monopolization) and transparency as well as the influence of money on production via corruption (from state subsidy to outside influences), satisfying Hallin & Mancini's economic dimension: development of the media market. Finally, FH's political category is concerned primarily with the influence of the government's ability to shape media to fit its demands, including both public and private media. This matches Hallin & Mancini's measure of the degree and nature of political parallelism.

The theoretical framework of Hallin & Mancini contains a fourth dimension: journalistic autonomy and professionalism. Conceptually, this might be thought of as the level at which journalists adhere to some form of industry established norms established either by professional membership or, more loosely, union membership; however, cross-national variation in the enforcement of these norms varies. Given

[5] Unfortunately, the use of specific channels for media use — which the European Election Studies offer — lowers the useable number of respondents substantially and somewhat erratically cross-nationally, diminishing our cross-national analysis.

the lack of cross-nationally consistent measurements,[6] we instead estimate to what level journalists are perceived to be professional and autonomous (i.e. free from undue editorial constraint, free from persecution, non-biased). If journalists are seen as acting freely (within reasonable legal and ethical constraints) and professionally, citizens are likely to be more trusting of the media. To do so, we use Eurobarometer surveys in 2009 (EB72.4) to aggregate citizens combined responses to questions about how trustworthy they find the press, radio, and television (Cronbach's alpha of 0.80).[7] Summing these four dimensions, we arrive at an Overall Media Score (OMS) of media freedom.[8]

In Table 1, not only do the Accession States not occupy the extreme positions but the older member states show a wide variation in the quality of freedom of their media as measured by the aggregate score. In other words, while the accession states do not occupy the "most free" positions, they are at the same time, not all in the "least free" either (except Bulgaria and Romania). Thus, the sample of countries provides significant variation in the dimensions of the traditional media across both East and West.

Table 1. Overall media scores 2009: the European Union

Country	2009 OMS
Romania	74
Italy	81
Greece	83
Bulgaria	83
Spain	90
Czech Rep.	91
France	92
Poland	92
Britain	94
Latvia	94
Slovenia	95
Slovakia	98
Lithuania	98
Austria	99

[6] As an example, for the newest EU member states, relatively basic newspaper circulation figures are inconsistent.

[7] The results are the same with and without "radio." It is included here for greater variation.

[8] The media trust variable was transformed to match the scale of the Freedom House scores, which were reversed. This makes the findings more intuitive.

Germany	101
Hungary	102
Ireland	104
Sweden	104
Estonia	104
Portugal	105
Belgium	107
Netherlands	107
Luxembourg	108
Denmark	108
Finland	111

Source: Freedom House: Freedom of the Press Rankings.

These operational dimensions do not provide one-to-one matches to the dimensions of Hallin & Mancini's model, instead serving as rough proxies. Furthermore, it would be problematic to attempt to disaggregate the theoretical model using these operational dimensions. However, they represent the fundamental character of the theorized differences between media environments. In other words, taken together, they are likely to sufficiently capture the nature of each of the individual media environments and thus the differences between them.

Another limitation is that we cannot directly test the implications of a Downsian alternative; namely, that individuals are information-seeking but are doing so not within a market of available choices but rather from their own, ideologically congruent, media outlet, to the more substantial ONA as no configuration of ideology is available. And, while a "far" left or "far" right position may be less common, it does not imply that they are more strongly held than someone who puts themselves in another ideological location. That is, we cannot elicit intensity of ideology (whether "radical" or steadfast "centrist") as a motivator.

Finally, to further test the potential salience of the media models to contextualize individual media behavior and to address the concern that these effects and changes may be a function of other macro forces, we use the media model dummies (using the Democratic Corporatist model as the natural reference category), GDP *per capita*, and "Regulatory Quality" from the Governance Scores at the World Bank at the macro-level.

FINDINGS

The use of standard individual-level variables to explain media use is common in this literature (e.g. age, gender, education level, and income, see Elvestad & Blekesaune, 2008; Shehata & Strömbäck, 2011) and we use them here. There are three

models each for television and newspaper usage. The first is a pooled, cross-national model; the second includes the OMS, GDP *per capita*, and Regulatory Quality, with a cross-level interaction on the interest in the European Election variable to capture cross-national variation in the strength of the relationship between interest and media usage. The third model includes the macro-level variables from Model 2 and the Hallin & Mancini media models.

In Table 2, for television and newspaper consumption just prior to the European elections in 2009, respondents' levels of interest, income, and age are all positively correlated and statistically significant.[9] Both men and those who ideologically identify with far left and right positions consume more media. However, an interesting change shows up. Education is only (and positively) related to newspaper consumption. In addition, while those who live in a mid-sized location use more of both media than those in rural areas, urban dwellers read newspapers less (than rural residents).

Table 2. Interest in European Election and TV/Newspaper use in 2009

	Television before European Election 2009	Newspaper before European Election 2009			
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 1	Model 2
Interest in European Elections	0.307***	0.307***	0.309***	0.265***	0.268***
	(67.94)	-(27.43)	(22.80)	(54.21)	(29.31)
Macro-variables					
GDPpc 2009		0.000002	0.000003*		-0.0000
		(1.21)	(1.97)		(-0.14)
RQ 2009		-0.181	-0.257		0.441***
		(-1.26)	(-1.50)		(3.32)
Overall Media Score (OMS)		0.0004	-0.0017		-0.0033
		(0.08)	(-0.38)		(-0.75)
Interest*OMS		-0.0006	-0.0021		0.0024*
		(-0.50)	(-0.80)		(2.52)
Media Models					
Interest*Lib*OMS			0.0088		
			(1.30)		

[9] We note that the positive correlation with age is likely related to the movement of youth away from traditional media towards the internet.

Liberal			-0.0626		
			(-0.63)		
Interest*PolPlural*OMS			0.0001		
			(0.03)		
Polarized Pluralist			-0.212*		
			(-2.19)		
Interest*AccStates*OMS			0.0027		
			(0.82)		
Accession States			-0.0189		
			(-0.22)		
Socio-demographic controls					
Left ID	0.0284**	0.0270*	0.0272*	0.0778***	0.0790***
	-2.68	-2.55	-2.57	-6.78	-6.9
Right ID	0.0584***	0.0547***	0.0548***	0.0267*	0.0295*
	-5.5	-5.16	-5.17	-2.32	-2.57
Education	0,000462	0,000472	0,000457	0.0110***	0.0108***
	-0.62	-0.64	-0.62	-13.69	-13.5
Gender	-0.0615***	-0.0607***	-0.0606***	-0.121***	-0.121***
	(-7.59)	(-7.51)	(-7.50)	(-13.84)	(-13.80)
Income	0.0145***	0.0144***	0.0143***	0.0391***	0.0390***
	-3.95	-3.92	-3.91	-9.84	-9.81
Age	0.00691***	0.00684***	0.00683***	0.00276***	0.00272***
	-28.02	-27.75	-27.72	-10.35	-10.19
Urban	0.000015	-0.000133	-0.000188	-0.0242***	-0.0249***
	0	(-0.04)	(-0.05)	(-6.10)	(-6.27)
Midsize	0.0327***	0.0319***	0.0323***	0.0358***	0.0356***
	-3.37	-3.31	-3.34	-3.41	-3.4
Level 1 Constant	0.839***	0.969**	1.288***	0.827***	0.599
	-21.12	-2.69	-3.62	-17.06	-1.82
Level 2 Constant	-1.980***	-2.972***	-2.980***	-1.679***	-3.259***
	(-13.71)	(-17.51)	(-17.08)	(-11.70)	(-16.35)
N	23920	23920	23920	23894	23894
t statistics in parentheses; * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$					

For television usage just before the European elections in 2009, GDP *per capita* is positively related to television use ($p \leq 0.05$). We find no effect from the OMS or the media models although the fixed-effect of the *Polarized Pluralist* model indicates that the mean level of television election usage is lower in those countries than in the others.

Graphically, we generate a coefficient of interest and media use in each country (controlling for the individual-level variables) and correlate this beta coefficient with the national-level media system scores, and group them by theoretical media model.[10] A new and distinct pattern emerges.

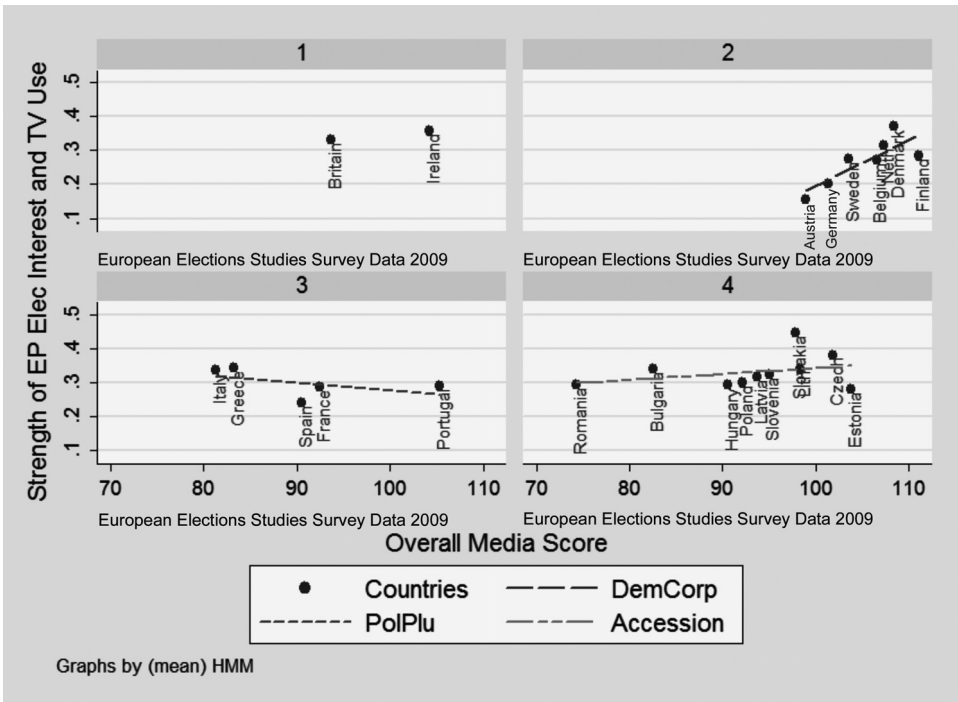

Figure 2. Television use, Interest in European Election, and Media Environments 2009

Source: European Election Studies 2009.

In Figure 2, for television, the Democratic Corporatist model is nearly ideal: $r = 0.82$, $p \leq 0.03$, $N = 7$) and drawing from Table 2, we know that both the Polarized Pluralist and Accession States models are not significantly different from this, although their contribution to the Democratic Corporatist model's positive and high correlation is weak — if not counter-productive: ($r = -0.51$,

[10] This is a close approximation of the HLM approach see Achen (2005).

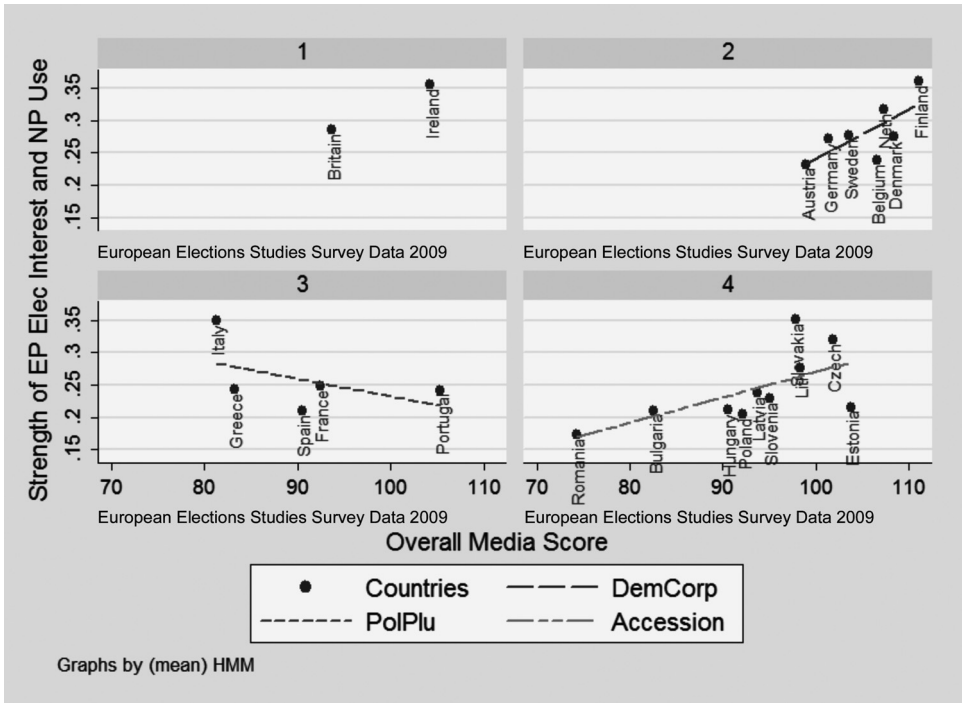

Figure 3. Newspaper use, Interest in European Election, and Media Environments 2009

Source: European Election Studies 2009.

$p \leq 0.38$, $N = 5$ and $r = 0.30$, $p \leq 0.40$, $N = 10$; respectively),[11] suggesting divergent correlational patterns that are less clear coherence under the ONA.

For newspaper usage just before the European election (Figure 3), a dimension of the OMS, "economic influences over media content" is positively related to overall newspaper usage ($p \leq 0.05$). We find the same for Regulatory Quality ($p \leq 0.05$). The strength of the relationship between interest in the European elections and newspaper usage just before the elections also varies in accordance with the OMS, becoming stronger as media freedom levels rise ($p \leq 0.05$); however, for the Polarized Pluralist model, this slope (the strength of this relationship) is diminished ($p \leq 0.05$).

For newspapers, the Democratic Corporatist model is the standard: $r = 0.72$ ($p \leq 0.07$, $N = 7$). However, two distinct patterns emerge. One, the Accession States models are not significantly different from this and produce a similar pattern ($r = 0.62$, $p \leq 0.05$, $N = 10$). In Figure 3, we can see that this is not merely the introduction of Bulgaria and Romania but that the overall pattern of the Ac-

[11] The Liberal model has two members, the United Kingdom and Ireland, limiting our empirical comparison.

cession States has moved into a clear positive slope pattern. Two, the Polarized Pluralist is statistically different from these, and in the opposite direction (r = -0.49, $p \leq 0.40$, N = 5). That is, as media freedoms increase, in these countries, newspaper use for the election declines.

Overall, it was newspaper usage just before the European elections in 2009 that demonstrated the clearest media model effects. This is not unexpected, as newspaper reading is considered a more substantive news source (Patterson & McClure, 1976) and for the analysis here, a more likely source of "information-seeking" and corresponds to existing work which takes a more focused perspective on newspaper consumption (Elvestad & Blekesaune, 2008; Shehata & Strömbäck, 2011). In all of the cases, however, this shows the power of the media models to predict individuals' media behavior, even controlling for economic and political factors.

DISCUSSION

The results confront a central and normative assumption underpinning comparative media studies and provide a preliminary empirical look at the linkage between individual's media choices and media environments. We see the theoretical and empirical utility of Hallin & Mancini's comparative media framework. For our posited hypotheses, we have found evidence of $\mathbf{H}_1$ in which individuals do engage in information-seeking as media environments are freer. However, we have also found evidence for $\mathbf{H}_2$ which defines media environments in which higher levels of media environmental freedom produce less information-seeking (specifically, the Polarized Pluralist model). Taken together, this suggests that passive reliance on the ONA may be obscuring significant variation in media models ultimately hindering a deeper understanding of the linkage between media systems and individual media choice in comparative media studies.

Regarding the first hypothesis, we found a small positive effect of GDP *per capita* for television; such that, in countries with higher GDP *per capita*, one was likely to observe an increase in television use just before the European elections. This could be the result of simply more possibilities to watch television in richer countries as well as the attendant leisure time to do so. Yet, we hesitate to reconcile this finding without further analysis.[12] Regulatory Quality is also positively correlated with aggregate newspaper consumption cross-nationally, which is conceptually congruent to the notion that legal and legislative frameworks interact with media markets to protect journalists and editors, freeing them to be "watchdogs." These findings however are, unlike the media output, relatively scattered thus weakening the suggestion that they are clear alternative explanations.

[12] The models were also run with cross-level interaction between interest (at the individual-level) and the non-media macro-level variables (GDP *per capita* and Regulation Quality). There were no effects and were excluded here.

For the second hypothesis, media environments in which media are tied to organized social and political groups and have active but legally constrained state intervention or are characterized by the dominance of market mechanisms and of commercial media (i.e. Democratic Corporatist and the Liberal Model, respectively) "look" like what is taught in journalism and political communications courses. These findings support the assumed "proper" function of media in democratic societies and while both are in accordance with existing work and provide confidence in the analysis and data here, they are not the extent of the findings. Yet, media environments defined by highly integrated politics and media with low or weak commercialization of media markets and a strong state role (i.e. less "free" environments) can also produce greater reliance on media as a source of information about politics (i.e. Polarized Pluralist model).

One possible reason for the distinctiveness of the Democratic Corporatist and Polarized Pluralist models may be that despite similar — if not equal — levels of political parallelism, only in the latter is the strength of social and political alignments significant and indicative of the Downsian confirmation-seeker. While we are unable to distinguish the use of media as information/confirmation, this linkage further allows us to identify in which media environments this reliance is more likely to occur, and possibly for whom. Alternatively, in the Democratic Corporatist model, media tend toward explicit (open, not exaggerated) bias. Individual consumption here is likely to be less overtly ideological (i.e. there are fewer reinforcing social and political cleavages). In other words, in some cases (which we expect to be highly ideological media environments), ideological "shortcuts" replace individuals' cost/benefit approach that takes place in a media market of competition, journalistic and editorial freedom, and protection from political and economic influence.

Undoubtedly, there is substantial limitation in fully exploring the macro-micro relationship here. One, the theoretical mechanisms associated with the media models of Hallin & Mancini require a much higher degree of conceptual specificity about how institutional arrangements might produce these individual differences, not to mention which combination(s) of institutions are responsible. As but two clear examples, whether political parallelism consists of single or multi-party alignment (Bajomi-Lazar, 2013) media plurality refers to internal or external plurality (Hallin & Mancini, 2004, p. 29). Because of this low conceptual specificity, a higher degree of operational precision cannot be achieved (in addition to the clear data limitations across dimensions, time, and mediums, see Curran et al., 2009). This leads to a second substantial limitation.

Hallin & Mancini's argument rests on the idea that media structures and political institutions co-evolve, versus the traditional understanding of uni-directional influence exerted by political institutions as well as economic markets on media and those that use them. Given these models incorporation the historical development of each country's media institutions (however completely), they include elements of broader media culture and national media history. Thus, their media models may be

holistically explanatory rather than functions of underlying dimensions. Thus, more work is needed in order to identify underlying or latent causal mechanisms.

CONCLUSIONS

There is a longstanding normative understanding of media and democracy such that media enforce good governance and perform a social communicative function. These goals are contingent on the "proper" function of media institutions so that individuals can use media to orient themselves to politics (McQuail, 1987; Bartels, 1993; Swanson & Mancini, 1996; Schmitt-Beck, 1998; Norris, 2000; Mutz & Martin, 2001; Habermas, 1995). As a multi-level linkage, this suggests that some media environments are normatively "better" than others at meeting the assumed needs of individuals; such that in "freer" media environments, individuals are able to take fuller advantage of media in gathering political information (Bartels, 1993; Schmitt-Beck, 1998; Norris, 2000). However, the evidence here suggests that, while this is apparent in some media environments, it is not uniformly applicable.

Our analysis has very little to say about the European Parliamentary elections. They are simply a shared and visible event during which we have tried to discern individuals' media behavior across several countries at the same time. However, the empirical evidence here suggests that differences in individuals' media use — as an explanatory or explained variable — cannot be considered cross-nationally (or cross-media model-ly) consistent: how media is used depends on where media is used. Thus, while preliminary and in contrast the ideal types often maintained, it suggests when to consider possible alternatives to the normative press theory in order to make analytical and theoretical progress in non-western, cross-national media studies. Despite our efforts here, this requires further theoretical and methodological unpacking.

As a springboard for future research, we can say that these media models and their micro-level linkage are a mixed message. Future consideration should be given to the independent effects of each dimension as well as the arrays of effects such that these dimensions may work in concert. Increased precision is also needed for distinguishing between institutional or cultural explanations of dynamism and/or stasis. Future work should also consider broader examinations of the alignment of EU parliamentary elections with national elections that affect both parties' electoral strategies (i.e. (non-) association with EU matters thus highlighting its importance) and turnout[13] and determining whether the argument here of mediated "deliberate" media strategies can be extended to both more specific and more general media usage and new media usage as well.

[13] With turnout in EU parliamentary elections decreasing in general, it would be worth knowing if media play a role in counteracting or contributing to this. Election turnout source: website of the European Union: http://europa.eu/.

MEASUREMENT APPENDIX

INDIVIDUAL-LEVEL VARIABLES:

DATA USED: **European Election Studies 2009:** all EU member countries. European Parliament Election Study 2009, Voter Study, Advance Release, 7 April 2010. European Parliament Election Study 2009 [Voter Study] Advance Release 16/04/2010 (www.piredeu.eu).

Dependent Variable	
Media Use prior to European Elections	**2009:** TV: "q16"; Newspaper: "q17"; How often did you watch TV [read a newspaper] during the three or four weeks before the European election? 1 Never 2 Sometimes 3 Often. DK's recoded to missing
Independent Variables	
Interest in the European Elections	**2009:** "q23"; Thinking back to just before the elections for the European Parliament were held, how interested were you in the campaign for those elections: very, somewhat, a little, or not at all? Reverse coded; DK's recoded to missing
Ideology	**2009:** "q46"; In political matters people talk of "the left" and "the right." What is your position? Please indicate your views using any number on a 10-point-scale. On this scale, where 1 means "left" and 10 means "right," which number best describes your position? Right is ideology = 8, 9, 10; Middle is ideology = 4, 5, 6, 7. Left is the reference category. DK's recoded to missing
Education:	**2009:** "q100"; Age finished education
Gender	**2009:** "q102"; 0 Male, 1 Female
Income	**2009:** "q120": subjective standard of living
Age	**2009:** year of birth: 2009-"q103"
Urbanity	**2009:** "q115"; Three categories: Rural, Middle, Urban (from the EES). Rural residence is the reference category.

NATIONAL-LEVEL:

GDP *per capita*: Source: World Bank.

World Bank Governance Score: Regulatory Quality. Source*:* Daniel Kaufmann, Aart Kraay and Massimo Mastruzzi (2010). *The Worldwide Governance Indicators: A Summary of Methodology, Data and Analytical Issues*. World Bank Policy Research Working Paper No. 5430.

Freedom House: Freedom of the Press: Laws*:* Laws and regulations that influence media content (0–30); Economic Influence*:* Economic influences over media

content (0–40); Political Pressure: Political pressures and controls on media content (0–30). For this analysis, all of the scores have been reversed to make the results more intuitive. Source: http://www.freedomhouse.org/report-types/freedom-press.

Media trust (Journalism Professionalism and Autonomy): EB 72.4: 2009: I would like to ask you a question about how much trust you have in certain institutions. For each of the following institutions, please tell me if you tend to trust it or tend not to trust it. Q.A10_1 The press; Q.A10_2 Radio; Q.A10_3 Television. Response Categories: 1 Tend to trust, 2 Tend not to trust, 3 DK; recoded so that DK and "not to trust" = 0. Then summed to produce a variable ranging from 0–3 in which 3 is a high level of trust. Source: European Commission, Brussels: **Eurobarometer 72.4,** October-November 2009. TNS OPINION & SOCIAL, Brussels [Producer]; GESIS, Cologne [Publisher]: ZA4994, dataset version 3.0.0, doi: 10.4232/1.11141.

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