Abstract and Keywords

In the past fifty years or so, research in two traditions has emerged that studies media bias, broadly defined. The first, which is generally quantitative, examines media bias at the outlet-level. The second, which is generally qualitative, examines media bias at the country-level. This article begins by discussing the various definitions and operationalizations of media bias at both levels of analysis. It then reviews the relevant literature on the effects of media bias from a variety of fields, including communication, economics, and political science. Third, it provides an overview of the various methods scholars have used to measure media bias at the outlet- and country-level. Fourth, it describes why some outlets and countries are more likely to have biased media than other countries. In particular, it discusses economic, cultural, and structural explanations for media bias. Finally, the article offers up potential avenues for future research.

Keywords: media bias, comparative political communication, political polarization, selection bias, content bias, political parallelism

The advent of Fox News and online partisan media sites corresponds to a sharp rise in scholarly interest in media bias. Less than one article per year was written on the subject according to a Web of Science search of the phrases "media bias," "partisan media," "news bias," or "partisan media" between 1956 (the first available year of the Social Science Citation Index) and the early 1990s. One or two articles per year appeared in the mid 1990s, and roughly 72 percent of articles in the partisan media academic corpus were written after 2010. While the rise in academic interest in partisan media corresponds to the re-emergence in partisan media in the United States, it does not correspond to the availability of partisan media worldwide. Bias has been a constant feature in many countries, despite the lack of scholarly attention.

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country-level. In this chapter, I provide a critical overview of the literature on media bias from these two perspectives. Because each set of literature has developed in relative silos, in each section I discuss ways in which these can be bridged.

The chapter proceeds as follows. In the first section, I discuss the various definitions and operationalizations of media bias at both levels of analysis. Then, I review the relevant literature on the effects of media bias. Third, I provide an overview of the various methods scholars have used to measure media bias at the outlet- and country-level. Fourth, I describe why some outlets and countries are more likely to have biased media than other countries. Finally, I offer some potential avenues for future research.

(p. 573) Defining Media Bias: National and Comparative Perspectives

Comparative and single nation research approach the concept of media bias very differently. Single nation studies generally focus on what does or does not appear in print. These scholars have defined media bias in a variety of ways. For instance, Groeling (2013) defines media bias as coverage that is "is significantly and systematically (not randomly) distorted" (p. 133). Gentzkow and Shapiro (2006) argue that, "All media accounts are based on the same set of underlying facts. Yet by the selective omission, choice of words, and varying credibility ascribed to the primary source, each conveys a radically different impression of what actually happened. The choice to slant information in this way is what we . . . mean . . . by media bias (p. 281)."[1]

At the outlet level, scholars have differentiated between at least two different forms of media bias: selection bias and content bias. Selection bias, which some call gate-keeping bias (D'Alessio and Allen 2000) or agenda bias (Eberl, Boomgaarden, and Wagner 2017), happens when outlets publish stories that are favorable to one party or unfavorable to another party. For instance, media outlets can focus on issues that are typically "owned" by parties (Eberl, Boomgaarden, and Wagner 2017; Petrocik 1996). Puglisi (2011) finds that the *New York Times* devoted more coverage to issues traditionally owned by the Democratic Party (e.g., civil rights and health care) than to issues traditionally owned by the Republican party (e.g., crime and defense). Similarly, media outlets can give more attention to information when that information is good for one party. Larcinese (2007) finds that papers that typically endorse Democratic candidates focus on high unemployment when the president is a Republican. Finally, Puglisi and Snyder (2011) show that papers that were more likely to endorse the Republican [Democratic] party candidates devoted more coverage to scandals involving Democratic [Republican] candidates.

Media bias may also appear in the content of a story, rather than the choice of story. Groeling (2013) refers to this as presentation bias, which is defined as "consistent patterns in the framing of mediated communication that promote the influence of one side in conflicts over the use of government power" (Entman 2007, 166). Presentation bias can also appear in a variety of ways. In its most explicit form, media bias appears in the edito-

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rial section, where editorial teams may consistently endorse members from a single party or choose columnists and letters to the editor that do not represent a diversity of viewpoints (Butler and Schofield 2010; Ho 2008; Puglisi and Snyder 2015). Ho (2008) measures bias in US newspapers by modeling their editorial stances on Supreme Court cases using item response models that are typically used, in political science, to rank order members of Congress.

Relatedly, some define media bias in terms of language similarity between outlets and partisan actors. For instance, Gentzkow and Shapiro (2010) assume an outlet is more biased if the language it uses is similar to that of more extreme US members of congress. **(p. 574)** Groseclose and Milyo (2005) and Gans and Leigh (2012) measure bias by calculating the relative prevalence of quotes from intellectuals associated with the left or right. Similarly, Durante and Knight (2012) find that stations owned by Silvio Berlusconi, the right-wing former prime minister of Italy, featured more right-wing politicians than left-wing politicians.

Much of the comparative political communication literature does not look solely at bias in one outlet but rather assesses whether the majority of outlets in a country tend to be biased. Comparative political communication scholars have dubbed this press-party parallelism or political parallelism (Hallin and Mancini 2004; Seymour-Üre 1974). In its original formulation—press-party parallelism—a newspaper paralleled a party if it was "closely linked to that party by organization, loyalty to party goals, and the partisanship of its readers" (Seymour-Üre 1974, 173). For instance, every city in Denmark had four newspapers; one for each political party (Hallin and Mancini 2004, 27). When newspapers in a country generally parallel the parties in a country, the system is said to be high in press-party parallelism.

Hallin and Mancini (2004) adopted the wider term "political parallelism" as it also included parallelism between outlets and broader "political tendencies." For instance, newspapers in many European countries are no longer committed to a particular party as much as a particular ideology. *Politiken* in Denmark, for instance, was closely linked to the Danish Social Liberal Party for much of the twentieth century. While it is no longer tied to that party, the paper still exhibits a liberal bias. Similarly, in Germany, the *Frankfurter Allgemeine* leans to the right, while *Suddeutsche Zeitung* leans to the left.

Hallin and Mancini (2004) argue that political parallelism is marked by several features. First, political parallelism captures the degree to which media content strays from objectivity and toward political slant. This dimension of political parallelism aggregates one or more type of media bias reviewed earlier across outlets.

Second, political parallelism also appears in the organizational links between media outlets and political actors. In countries with high levels of political parallelism, parties either own or subsidize media outlet. Across the world, parties have owned newspapers and media outlets for centuries. In Scandinavian countries, for instance, political parties owned between 7 percent (in Sweden) and 92 percent (in Denmark) of dailies. In the Netherlands, each pillar of society, made up of liberals, socialists, Catholics, and Protes-

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tants, had their own political parties, newspapers, and broadcasting stations for television and radio (Mancini 2015). Today, political parties control outlets, directly or indirectly, across the world. For instance, the *Hindustan Times* in India, which has a daily circulation of roughly one million, is run by serving members of the Congress Party. Breitbart News is heavily subsidized by the Mercer family, which is closely linked to Donald Trump and the Republican Party, and run by Steve Bannon, Trump's former chief strategist. For a number of years, a major media company in Turkey was run by son-in-law of the prime minister, Recep Tayipp Erdogan.

Third, a country is said to be politically parallel if the readership of various media outlets is made up of the supporters of one party or coalition of parties (Van Kempen 2006). For instance, Hallin and Mancini (2004, 105) present a strong correlation between (p. 575) newspaper choice and vote choice in Spain. Van Kempen (2006) finds that outlet choice predicts roughly 20 percent of the variance in party choice in Greece, and only 1 percent of the variance in vote choice in Germany, making the former more politically parallel than the latter.

Fourth, high levels of political parallelism is associated with different role orientations of journalists than low levels of political parallelism. Journalists living in countries with high levels of political parallelism seek to influence public opinion through commentary and interpretation rather than simply "telegraph" information to the public, as one would see in countries with low levels of political parallelism (Hallin and Mancini 2004). Voltmer (2000) describes the media in Russia:

> For western journalists actuality is one of the most prominent news values (Ettema et al. 1987; Schulz 1982); for Russian journalists it is only of marginal relevance. Instead, a unique journalistic genre has evolved: ortshek which can be translates as "essay" or "treatise" (Geißlinger 1997, 354). This kind of journalistic essay is characterized by an in-depth discussion of a particular problem in which the author expresses his or her own thoughts and emotions and aims to evoke the emotions of the reader.

The concept of political parallelism has not gone unchallenged; a number of authors have argued that the concept does not apply outside of the Western world. In many countries, media systems are not arrayed along ideological lines but along other cleavages, such as ethnicity, language, or religion (Voltmer 2011). Media systems can also reflect "power and privilege in national regional and local arenas" rather than ideology (Chakravartty and Roy 2013, 351). Albuquerque (2013) argues that the press can take an active political role and advocate for policies without aligning themselves with any party.

Both national and comparative perspectives on media bias offer useful perspectives on media bias. The outlet-level research has developed a clear set of indicators and a typology of media bias. The comparative research has looked beyond simply content and offered a broader but fuzzier definition of media bias. Outlet-level research could gain some insight by analyzing some of these country-level indicators. For instance, most research on Fox News in the United States has focused on the content of the network. Focusing

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solely on content misses important organizational links between the outlet and political parties that have appeared in recent years and may have important political implications: Donald Trump and the Fox News host Sean Hannity regularly speak on the phone (Nuzzi 2018); Sean Hannity was also a client of Donald Trump's former lawyer, Michael Cohen, and gave very positive coverage to the Trump Administration's Housing and Urban Development secretary, whose policies helped Hannity's own real estate empire. Incorporating these insights into a broader discussion of the media landscape helps us understand the incentives of media organizations. On the other hand, the comparative literature could benefit from more careful explication of its indicators of media bias. What counts as an organizational link between media and party, for instance?

Relatedly, grouping a variety of causes and effects of content bias substantially muddies the concept of political parallelism, e.g., organizational links may cause content bias and (p. 576) audience ideology may be an effect of content bias. Understanding the relationship between the components of political parallelism would certainly offer a clearer picture of media bias.

Why Does It Matter?

While the importance of media bias has been a major focus of outlet-level research, it is less central to the country-level research. As far as I know, country-level research has not clearly explained why measuring each indicator of political parallelism is particularly important. Instead, the cross-national research has been primarily descriptive. Research that does examine the impact of country-level political parallelism generally uses one facet of the measure rather than the agglomeration.

With regards to the effect of outlet-level bias, perhaps the most discussed potential effect of media bias relates to political polarization. By reinforcing prior attitudes and bashing the other side, exposure to like-minded media will "foster extreme views by augmenting argument repertoires, boosting confidence in one's beliefs, intensifying feelings, and exacerbating ingroup sentiments" (Conroy-Krutz and Moehler 2015, 576). In line with this idea, Stroud (2011) finds that those who reported consuming more partisan media in one time period were more ideologically polarized in a later time period. Additionally, Kelly Garrett et al. (2014), Levendusky (2013a), and Levendusky (2013b) find that exposure to partisan media increases inter-party animosity.

The effects of partisan media on polarization may depend on country-level conditions, however. Exposure to dissonant information causes polarization primarily among those with strong attachments who are able to counter-argue information that challenges their worldviews (Taber and Lodge 2006). Such counter-argumentation requires a high level of political sophistication. In countries that are newly democratic, "political actors and parties are new, voters' experience with competitive politics is limited, and education rates are lower" (Conroy-Krutz and Moehler 2015, 577). Hence, political attachments are weaker and political sophistication is lower. Conroy-Krutz and Moehler (2015) demonstrate this with a field experiment in Ghana, a relatively new democracy. They recruited tro-tro

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drivers (shared minibuses) and randomly assigned each tro-tro to play radio stations that were either pro-government, pro-opposition, or neutral stations. After riding for forty minutes, passengers were given a political survey. Media bias, in this context, led to attitude depolarization, which is consistent with the theory that motivated reasoning is dependent on the interaction between country- and individual-level characteristics.

Media bias also impacts vote choice. In a randomized control trial, Gerber, Karlan, and Bergan (2009) gave free subscriptions to individuals living in Virginia of either the somewhat liberal *Washington Post* or the somewhat conservative *Washington Times* during the 2005 Virginia gubernatorial campaign. While both papers increased support for the Democratic candidate compared to a control group, the effect was larger for those who received the *Washington Post*.

(p. 577) A number of studies have examined the impact of Fox News on vote choice. Using the quasi-random roll-out of Fox News across the United States, Della Vigna and Kaplan (2007) and Hopkins and Ladd (2014) have shown that its effect was to increase support for Republicans. Martin and Yurukoglu (2017) use random variation in channel position across regions, which affects the probability one watches a channel, to estimate the effect of cable news on vote choice. Among those affected by channel position, Fox News had large effects on voting for the Republican candidate and on political polarization, while MSNBC had virtually no effect on voting for the Democratic candidate. Hence, all biased cable news is not equally effective in persuading potential voters (see also Dilliplane 2011). Using a similar identification strategy in Russia, Enikolopov, Petrova, and Zhuravskaya (2011) find that access to non-government-controlled media increased support for the opposition party.

Fox News impacts policymakers as well. Using the quasi-random roll-out of Fox News to identify the effects of the channel, Clinton and Enamorado (2014) and Arceneaux et al. (2016) show that Fox News caused both Republican and Democratic members of congress to take more conservative positions. Additionally, Fox News availability altered the perceptions of the Republican Party's electoral strength, causing high-quality Republicans to challenge vulnerable Democratic incumbents (Arceneaux et al. 2018).

In countries that are on the precipice of conflict, biased media can exacerbate tensions. In the months before the genocide in Rwanda in 1994 that resulted in the murders of roughly eight hundred thousand Tutsi and moderate Hutu citizens, one radio station (Radio Télévision Libre des Mille Collines) broadcasted particularly inflammatory anti-Tutsi rhetoric. Yanagizawa-drott (2014) matched radio propagation data with data on the number of people prosecuted for violent crimes in each village. The author finds that a 1 standard deviation increase in radio coverage predicted a roughly 12–14 percent increase in participation in the violence. Using a similar identification strategy, Della Vigna et al. (2014) examine the effects of nationalist Serbian radio on Croatian behavior in post-conflict Croatia. Croatian villages with Serbian radio reception vote for extremist nationalist parties at a higher rate than villages without radio reception. Additionally, anti-Serbian graffiti is more likely to appear in villages where Serbian radio is available. Finally, Adena

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(2015) finds that the availability of pro-Weimar government radio in the 1920s decreased the popularity of the Nazi party, while the availability of pro-Nazi radio in the 1930s increased the number of Nazi party members and led to anti-Semitic acts.

There have been far fewer studies that examine the relationship between country-level political parallelism and various macro-level political outcomes. Many of these studies focus on the way attitudes are more likely to be reinforced in countries with high levels of political parallelism. Goldman and Mutz (2011) find that high levels of political parallelism is associated with high levels of exposure to like-minded media. Van Kempen (2006) argues that by reinforcing prior attitudes, political parallelism motivates political participation. In her fifteen-country study, she finds a positive relationship between a country's political parallelism and self-reported voting. The relationship is stronger among those who are less interested in politics. In her analysis of seventy-four countries, Baek (2009b) does not find a link between turnout and political parallelism. (p. 578) Additionally, Horwitz and Nir (2015) find that partisanship is stronger in countries with high levels of political parallelism.

Lelkes (2016) examines another potential implication of a system with high levels of political parallelism. A crucial feature of a functioning democracy is that those who lose elections continue to trust the government and play by the rules. Partisan media, however, may widen the gap between electoral winners and losers by raising the stakes of losing and making it seem like the other team did not win fairly. The analysis shows that the gap in political trust between winners and losers is higher among those living in countries with high levels of political parallelism. This relationship is much stronger for those who consume more media.

One issue with the country-level media bias effects research is that little effort has gone into causally identifying the impact of country-level research. This work has, as far as I know, only offered correlations. Researchers could get closer to plausible causal statements by leveraging cross-national variation in political parallelism. As an instrument, they could utilize exogenous shocks to countries that may also affect political parallelism, such as changes in media regulations or influxes of advertising. Finally, comparative research would benefit from examining the effects of each component of political parallelism rather than the amalgamation of the components.

Measuring Media Bias and Political Parallelism

Researchers have used a variety of public opinion survey-based methods—which ask respondents to report their ideology and their favored newspapers—area expert survey methods, or content analysis methods to measure media bias at both the country and outlet level. At the outlet level, scholars have employed a number of methods to measure media bias. One broad set of methods can be categorized under the general definition of content analysis. Eberl, Boomgaarden, and Wagner (2017) conducted a manual content analysis of statements made by political actors in eight Austrian newspapers and calculated two different forms of content bias: visibility bias (the amount of coverage a party gets

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relative to other parties) and tonality bias (the tone of the coverage each party receives relative to the other parties). They also calculated gate-keeping bias by correlating coverage of issues in a newspaper with the coverage of issues in party press-releases. A newspaper is considered more biased toward one party if the correlation between newspaper and party press releases is closer to one. If the correlation is small, newspapers aren't covering the issues that parties would like them to cover.

Gentzkow and Shapiro (2010) conducted an automated content analysis of media bias by determining how often outlets use phrases that are used by members of congress. Outlets that use phrases used more often by more conservative [liberal] politicians more often are considered more right-wing [left-wing]. For instance, more conservative (p. 579) politicians were more likely to use the phrase "death tax," while more liberal politicians were more likely to use the phrase "estate tax."

Another set of content analysis studies compare content to an objective benchmark. Baum and Groeling (2010) and Aday (2010) benchmarked news coverage to real-world indicators in Iraq and Afghanistan, such as causality rates and suicide bombings. Aday (2010), for instance, argues that Fox News was less biased against the wars than NBC because NBC coverage was more likely to discuss the negative indicators. Additionally, a number of scholars have benchmarked coverage to economic indicators (Larcinese, Puglisi, and Snyder 2011; Lowry 2008; Soroka 2012). Lowry (2008), for instance, measured selection and content bias by correlating the amount of coverage and the tone of coverage between network news and the Dow Jones for Bill Clinton and George W. Bush, ultimately arguing that network news is pro-Democrat since the correlation was larger under Clinton.

Budak, Goel, and Rao (2016) crowd-sourced the task of identifying media bias in roughly ten thousand articles by recruiting workers in an online labor market (Mechanical Turk). Workers were asked whether the article title and first hundred words of each article was slanted toward the Democratic or Republican party. The authors then aggregated articles to the issue topic, outlet, and outlet section to determine bias.

Scholars have also used a variety of "audience-based measures" of political bias. For instance, the self-reported ideology or party identification of outlet consumers is used as a measure of media bias (Tewksbury 2005). Flaxman, Goel, and Rao (2016) generate media slant scores based on the popularity of a new site in a county and the percent of the county that voted for Mitt Romney in 2012. Using Facebook data, Bakshy, Messing, and Adamic (2015) define media alignment as the average self-reported ideology of users who share that content. Messing, Kessel, and Adam (2017) measure media alignment by calculating the average DW-Nominate score—a measure of ideology generated using congressional roll call data—of politicians that share an outlet.

Researchers have also used the perceived slant of an outlet as an indicator of media bias. Dilliplane 2011 generates a media bias score by using survey data that asks respondents whether they believe the coverage favors the Democratic or Republican presidential can-

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didates. According to her definition, an outlet is biased if more than 25 percent of respondents say that the outlet favors one side.

Content analyses of media bias becomes logistically difficult when one is assessing the content of many outlets across many countries, as it would involve gathering and parsing text of news in different languages. Researchers have devised other methods that utilize surveys of audiences, surveys of experts, surveys of journalists, and social networks.

The first method is based on the ideology of the audience of an outlet and uses cross-national surveys to generate country-level scores under the assumption, supported by empirical evidence (e.g., Seymour-Ure 1974), that the ideology of the audience reflects the ideology of the newspaper. Van Kempen (2006) creates a measure she calls Media-Party Parallelism (MPP), which indicates how well self-reported media use explains party preferences—that is, a country has higher MPP scores if reading particular outlets is more strongly correlated with voting for a particular party. She uses the (p. 580) 1999 fifteen-country European Election Study (EES), which includes measures of both respondents' self-reported media use for a number of national newspapers and television programs in each country in the EES and their political party preference scores: that is, a self-reported probability that a respondent will vote for party. For each *party$_i$* in *country$_j$*, *party$_i$* preference scores are regressed on self-reported newspaper and television *exposure$_j$* scores. The adjusted explained variances ($r^2_{i,j}$) are extracted from each of these regressions. Then, $w_{i,j} \times r^2_{i,j}$ is averaged across parties, where $w_{i,j}$ is the weight given to the electoral success of the party (to downweight the importance of minor parties). One limitation of this method is that it assumes that the audience of an outlet is analogous to other indicators of media bias. Given high correlations between outlet audience and media content, this assumption may be reasonable, however. Another limitation is that it requires probability surveys in many countries that ask about vote choice and specific outlet media use.

A second methodology relies on country-level experts. The European Media Systems Survey (EMSS), conducted in 2010, 2013, and 2016, asked hundreds of media and politics experts in roughly thirty (depending on year) European countries to indicate, for the major outlets in each country, the degree to which coverage is "influenced by a party or parties to which it is close," the extent to which each outlet "advocate*s* particular views and policies," and the left-right placement of each outlet. The EMSS also contains many other questions pertaining to other features of media systems as described by Hallin and Mancini (2004). By weighting by audience share and averaging across outlets, Popescu et al. (2013) derive country-level scores for media bias.

The Worlds of Journalism project is another expert survey that can potentially be used to determine whether the press in a country is geared toward bias or not. The 2012–2016 survey of 27,500 journalists in 67 countries asks a variety of questions about journalist's perceptions of their perceived role in society, ethics, and autonomy. A number of questions tap into the concept of political parallelism. For instance, journalists are asked whether they see themselves as objective or "detached observers." They are also asked

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whether they see politicians as influential in their work and whether they believe it is important for journalists to "influence public opinion."

Baek (2009a) relies on published descriptions of media outlets in each country from the *World Press Encyclopedia* in her categorization of the partisan press in seventy-five countries. She defines a country as having high levels of political parallelism if "a country's press is explicitly partisan in the news content, and/or affiliated with political organizations, and/or under strong government intervention" (48).

Barberá, Vaccari, and Valeriani (2017) utilize the social media platform Twitter to estimate whether outlets in Spain, England, and Italy are perceived to ideological. Relying on a method developed by Barberá et al. (2015), they calculate the ideal point of journalists and outlets in each country by analyzing the follower network of each account. If an outlet has many followers that also follow, say, a conservative politician, that outlet would be considered more conservative than an outlet that has a large number of followers that also follow a liberal politician. These ideal points from each outlet can be aggregated to the country level by weighting each actor by its audience share.

(p. 581) Another possible measure of political parallelism comes from the Press Freedom Index data set (Reporters without Borders 2018), which measures media freedom in 199 countries starting in 1980. Scores are assigned to countries by regional experts based on a variety of sources. Each country receives an aggregate press freedom score as well as sub-component score based on "1) laws and regulations that influence media content, 2) political pressures and controls on media content, 3) economic influences over media content and 4) repressive actions such as physical violence against journalists or facilities, censorship etc." Clearly, the aggregate dimension captures far more than just partisan bias, but sub-component 2 does tap into partisan bias. For instance, one question that analysts are asked to determine in sub-component 2 is "to what extent are media outlets' news and information content determined by the government or a particular partisan interest," additionally, analysts are asked to determine whether "people have access to media coverage and a range of news and information that is robust and reflects a diversity of viewpoints." Other questions in this sub-component, however, do not explicitly capture political parallelism, e.g., "Are both local and foreign journalists able to cover the news freely and safely in terms of physical access and on-the-ground reporting." While the press freedom index is certainly problematic because it includes irrelevant content, it has the advantage of including many countries over a long time period, which potentially makes it more useful for questions of cause and effect in the media bias literature.

Each of these measures have advantages and disadvantages. For instance, measuring media bias using the ideology of the readers is fairly easy, as media consumption questions are often asked in large national and cross-national surveys. However, this method assumes that the content is biased. Since readers often turn to partisan outlets for non-news content (Iyengar and Hahn 2009), this may not actually be the case. On the other hand, content-based measures, which actually measure bias, are far more difficult to calculate and involve collecting and coding thousands of articles. Luckily, content-, survey-,

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and audience-based measures are highly correlated (Bakshy, Messing, and Adamic 2015; Budak, Goel, and Rao 2016; Lelkes 2016). For instance, Budak, Goel, and Rao (2016) find that the correlation between their content-based measure of media bias and various survey- and audience-based measures of media bias ranges between 0.77 and 0.82.

What Explains Variation in Media Bias?

In general, the majority of the literature on outlet-level media bias takes an economic perspective. That is, supply, demand, and competition drive media bias. One reason partisan media outlets appeared in the first place is that they were run and paid for by political parties, either directly or indirectly through subsidies. For much of the nineteenth century, for instance, journalism in the United States was overwhelmingly partisan: "Before the Civil War, parties actually subsidized the operations of many newspapers. Sometimes directly, sometimes through government printing contracts. (p. 582) In many cases, the subsidies were indirect and unknown to readers. Editors or their reporters worked part-time for state legislators or members of Congress" (Baughman 2011).

Parties lose their grip on media outlets when they no longer fund them. For a number of interrelated reasons, newspapers in Europe needed to increase revenue due to secularization, or the "the decline of a political and social order based on the Church, trade unions, and political parties, and its replacement by a more fragmented and individualized society" Hallin and Mancini (2004, 263). As political parties lost strength (e.g., Dalton and Wattenberg 2002) and had fewer paying members, they were no longer able to fund party newspapers. As a result, these newspapers either increased their reliance on advertising or were driven out of the market by commercial papers (Hallin and Mancini 2004).

To date, most of the evidence linking party decline and advertising profitability to media objectivity has been theoretical (Besley and Prat 2006; Gabszewicz, Laussel, and Sonnac 2001) or qualitative (Bagdikian 2004). One paper finds causal evidence linking increased advertising profitability in the United States at the end of the nineteenth century to newspaper independence using local outdoor advertising and newspaper distribution as an instrument for local advertising rates (Petrova 2011).

Newspapers may forgo advertising, even when facing a dwindling membership pool, if the state subsidizes the media. This may affect media bias in two ways. First, it shields outlets from market pressures that force them to become less biased. Second, subsidies may give government officials significant leverage over media outlets.

Another economic factor related to media bias is the amount of competition an outlet faces, although the direction of the effect is somewhat unclear. Gentzkow and Shapiro (2008) argue that increased competition provides a check on biased media: if outlet A provides information that is inaccurate, outlet B will correct it, which harms the reputation of outlet A. Mullainathan and Shleifer (2002), on the other hand, argue that when consumers have heterogeneous preferences, competition forces outlets to differentiate,

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which increases bias. Hence, various factors that affect competition, such as technology and regulation of media cross-ownership, interact with the distribution of preferences in a society. For instance, the proliferation of cable television in the United States, which increased competition, coupled with an increasingly polarized electorate, opened the door for biased cable news, such as Fox and MSNBC. It should be noted, however, that despite the recent emergence of biased outlets, the United States media system is still decisively objective (Budak, Goel, and Rao 2016)

Although researchers don't necessarily agree on the exact mechanism, the outlet-level research indicates that commercialization decreases media bias. There is more debate at the country level. In line with the political economy literature, some of the research claims that as countries commercialize, media outlets become less tied to political parties and less biased (Hallin and Mancini 2004). Other researchers are less convinced that the commercialization of the media will decrease media bias. Instead, commercialization allows objective and non-objective media to coexist (Allern and Blach-Ørsten 2011).

Change in journalism culture may also facilitate the rise in media bias. Schudson (2001) believes that the rise of objectivity in US journalism was linked to shifting beliefs among journalists regarding their proper place in society. When newspapers became (p. 583) free of political parties, journalists increasingly saw themselves as "as an occupational group [that] developed loyalties more to their audiences and to themselves as an occupational community than to their publishers or their publishers' favored political parties" (162). Subsequently, journalists adopted professional rules and norms, and a rule of objectivity would be proof that their main goal was to provide the audience with unbiased truth.

Finally, structural factors may also influence the amount of biased media in a country. For instance, countries with deeper social cleavages are more likely to have high levels of political parallelism, as each social group will be drawn to outlets echoing viewpoints favorable to their side. Nowhere is this better exemplified than the Netherlands in the mid-twentieth century. Countries with stable multiparty systems also are more likely to have higher levels of political parallelism. In a majoritarian system, both media outlets and political parties tend to go after the median voter. Therefore, coverage tends to be more objective. In a multiparty system, both outlets and parties tend to reach niche audiences.

Again, a major issue with the comparative media bias literature is its lack of focus on causal identification. Many of the features identified by qualitative and comparative scholars as important for the development of political parallelism are highly correlated with other variables. For instance, media professionalism, rational-legal authority, multiparty systems, proportional democracy, and political cleavages can all be predictors of media bias as well as of one another. Without more careful analysis, it's impossible to know which of these causes media bias.

Additionally, both sets of literature have not adequately addressed the role of media fragmentation and political bias, at least empirically. For instance, many predict that increased commercialization will yield more objective media. However, theories of product differentiation imply that the increased media fragmentation of the past thirty years or so

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will also give rise to media across the political spectrum. While there are theoretical models that indicate that increased fragmentation and competition has given rise to a broader array of media (Mullainathan and Shleifer 2002), there is little empirical work substantiating this idea. Cross-national differences over time could help in this regard, as countries vary with regards to cable and internet availability as well as media competition.

Remaining Questions and Concluding Thoughts

Despite a surge of interest due to the rise of media bias in the United States, media bias is an incredibly common phenomenon across the world. Many blame US society's ills on Fox News and its variants, but other countries have experienced stable and prosperous democracies while simultaneously having a highly partisan press. One reason Scandinavian countries, for instance, may have both stability and biased media is its (p. 584) political system. While individual outlets of years past presented only single viewpoints, the political system was geared toward consensus, which forced policymakers to genuinely weigh and discuss alternate viewpoints. Deliberation and consensus are less prevalent majoritarian political systems, as in the United States. Hence, citizens and policymakers never hear the other side. Media bias may be a bigger problem for some countries than in others.

Because the outlet-level literature has primarily focused on economic explanations for media bias, scholars may have missed some potential avenues for reform that have been discussed in the comparative literature. For instance, the comparative work has discussed the importance of journalism culture in perpetuating media bias (Hanitzsch et al. 2011). Researchers may consider whether the presence of journalism schools and other professionalization programs also diminishes media bias.

It should be noted that there may be benefits to media bias, especially when outlets are available across the ideological spectrum. For instance, Dilliplane 2011 find that consuming media from partisan sources increases political engagement. It is debatable whether we want those who are more polarized (via partisan news) to be more engaged, however.

Throughout this chapter, I've discussed the measurement and impact of and explanations for the prevalence of media bias. Open questions remain for each of these topics. For instance, we know fairly little about other indicators of validity as well as the reliability of each of these measures. Questions of reliability also raise the question: How stable is media bias and political parallelism over time? How quickly does it react to economic and non-economic forces? Similarly, we do not know if each of these constructs and their components have a similar impact on various outcomes, such as polarization.

Learning about the stability of media bias overtime would also help answer a core research question in the comparative political communication literature. Hallin and Mancini (2004) have argued that countries will converge toward a commercial system with high

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levels of media objectivity. If media bias remains unchanged over time, we would have quantifiable evidence that countries are or are not converging.

Additionally, many explanations for media bias are based on theoretical models rather than empirical data. The empirical evidence in favor of these models generally focuses on a single country. However, examining media bias at the country level offers opportunities to fully test many of these theoretical models. Mullainathan and Shleifer (2002) and Gentzkow and Shapiro (2008) offer different models for the effects of media competition on media bias. Examining this question at the country—rather than outlet—level provides an opportunity to leverage differences in mass polarization and media competitiveness for which sub-national data might be more difficult to get.

Finally, cross-national comparisons also offer an opportunity to empirically test Schudson's (2001) theory that media bias is more often driven by culture of professionalism than economics, which is based on a qualitative analysis of a single country. One could compare the impact of changes in rational-legal authority versus changes in advertising on media bias.

Information environments are shifting and fragmenting due to changes in technology, globalization, regulations, and audiences. It is vital that we understand media bias, (p. 585) which is increasingly replacing widespread media objectivity, which is itself a historical anomaly. Thankfully, after lying dormant for a number of years, research in the area is now growing rapidly.

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Notes:

(1.) See Groeling (2013) for an overview of various definitions of media bias.

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