

A Little Healthy Competition:
The Effects of Press-Government Competition on Institutional Trust

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Abstract

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This dissertation examined the relationship between the press and the government, and what effect competition between the two institutions has on trust in government and the news media. To do so, it combined a content analysis of attacks in press coverage of politics and journalism from 1982 to 2010 with public opinion data from the same period. It found that trust in government and trust in the press are related over time, and a major turning point for these attitudes was 1991. The content analysis found that attacks on the news media were more likely to be found in articles about journalism rather than about politics, indicating that press criticism comes less often from politicians than it does from the press itself, and that most attacks were on the press as an institution rather than individual reporters or publications. When the two data sources were combined, analyses found a set of advantages and disadvantages for each actor strongly related to normative expectations for the press, Congress, and White House. Results and implications for studies of institutional trust and the press are discussed.

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Chapter 1

Introduction: Fighting Words

When former Speaker of the House Newt Gingrich decided to run for president in 2012, he could have expected that the press would bring up some of the controversies that had dogged him since his days in Congress. Heading into the crucial primary in South Carolina in early January, however, his campaign was going strong, with most polls putting him second behind Mitt Romney (RealClearPolitics, 2012).

Then, on January 19—two days before the election, and with a debate scheduled for later in the day—ABC News announced that Gingrich's second ex-wife, Marianne, had said in an interview with *Nightline* that Gingrich asked her for an open marriage when she discovered his extramarital affair (Ross & Schwartz, 2012). At the nationally televised debate that night, CNN anchor John King put the first question to Gingrich, asking the former Speaker about the allegations. Instead of leading with a denial, Gingrich opted to criticize King himself and the news media more generally:

KING: She said she asked you, sir, to enter into an open marriage. Would you like to take some time to respond to that?

GINGRICH: No. But I will. [APPLAUSE]

I think the destructive, vicious, negative nature of much of the news media makes it harder to govern this country, harder to attract decent people to run for public office, and I am appalled that you would begin a presidential debate on a topic like that...

To take an ex-wife and make it, two days before the primary, a significant question in a presidential campaign, is as close to despicable as anything I can imagine.

My two daughters wrote the head of ABC and made the point that it was wrong, that they should pull it. And I am frankly astounded that CNN would take trash like that and use it to open a presidential debate. [APPLAUSE]

KING: As you noted, Mr. Speaker, this story did not come from our network. As you also know, it is the subject of conversation on the campaign. I'm not...I take your point...

[BOOS]

GINGRICH: [pointing] John, it was repeated by your network. You chose to start the debate with it, don't try to blame somebody else. You and your staff chose to start the debate with it...

[The press] would like to attack any Republican. They're attacking the Governor [Romney], they're attacking me, I'm sure they'll probably get around to Senator Santorum and Congressman Paul. I am tired of the elite media protecting Barack Obama by attacking Republicans. [APPLAUSE]

Gingrich's performance became the major story out of the debate, and the attack on the media was widely covered. Two days later, Gingrich won the primary decisively, beating Romney by 12 points.

As earnest criticism, Gingrich's argument did not make much sense. Gingrich's treatment of his ex-wife during their divorce had long been a story. ABC's source was not hearsay but firsthand testimony from one of the two people directly involved. And anyone with even a

passing familiarity with press norms would agree that the story was a perfect scandal: Novel, timed for maximum effect, carefully sourced, damaging to the subject's reputation, and titillating. In the abstract, Gingrich seemed to be asking the press to behave differently. But as a seasoned politician, he surely knew that this behavior is standard journalistic practice. What could he hope to achieve?

But even though Gingrich's criticism was addressed to John King, the press was not the true audience for his remarks. Elected officials certainly attempt to influence the press' coverage directly by talking with reporters or editors, as with the State department preemptively asking editors not to cover a certain story for national security reasons. And indeed, the Gingrich family had taken this route, with his daughters writing a letter asking ABC to retract the story.

When Gingrich goes beyond this, to make a public display of the request, the argument is no longer aimed at the press. Instead, it is aimed at the public. His denunciation was meant to blunt the effect of the ABC story by damaging the credibility of the story's source. But he went beyond just ABC. His criticism encompassed both John King and CNN, the network that was currently carrying his remarks, as well as "the elite media" more generally. This was an attack not on the particulars but on the entire idea of an adversarial press.

Given that it was being directly criticized by a public figure of some prominence, the press responded in an odd way. When Gingrich challenged King, King replied not by arguing for the story's validity or by defending his own choices in asking the question. Instead, he essentially granted Gingrich's point and protested merely that the problem was with ABC, not CNN. *It's not us, it's everyone else*—"conversation on the campaign," as King puts it.

The rest of the press, meanwhile, reacted to the criticism by simply repeating Gingrich's remarks. Despite adding some slightly negative notes to the coverage—*Politico* said Gingrich

"duck[ed the] ex-wife question" (Burns, 2012) —this would not seem the most tactically shrewd response, especially given that Gingrich's criticism had clearly resonated with the public: Referring to one of the Speaker's previous attack on the news media, a woman at a Gingrich rally praised him for "putting Mr. Juan Williams in his place" (Peters, 2012). Wouldn't the press, whose reputation among the public has sunk to historic lows in recent years (Morales, 2012), be better off if it defended itself?

Of course, from Gingrich's perspective, the press had struck first by airing the scandal. Indeed, news coverage of politics has grown increasingly negative over the last half-century (Patterson, 1994), and the reputation of politicians has also reached historic lows (Pew, 2013). If Gingrich was attacking the press by criticizing its practices, then surely the press is attacking government. And if Gingrich gained some advantage by attacking the press, then perhaps the press gains some advantage by attacking government.

Press-Government Competition and Trust

This study is about the relationship between the press and the government in the United States, and about the effects of competition between the two. But it is not immediately apparent what, exactly, the press and government are competing *for*. Political figures, after all, seek votes and policy victories, while the press seeks readers and scoops.

However, there is one common quality that benefits both: The public's trust. Since neither elected officials nor political journalists provide a service of immediate utility, as grocers or nurses might, the public must instead trust that both are enhancing the quality of democratic life, as both the press and government are normatively expected to do. But given the adversarial relationship that is expected to exist between journalists and the public officials they cover, such

trust provides key benefits in the context of this relationship as well. If the press is trusted more than the government, then their stories of government malfeasance may have more weight than the government's response, enhancing the value of news as a product. If the government has more confidence than the press, however, reports of scandals in the press would have far less weight, making the news less valuable than political information gotten directly from elected officials. And since this confidence is something that has been measured in public opinion surveys, an analysis can use this as the basis for evaluating the effects of press-state competition.

Such a relationship has been analyzed in the past. In *The Confidence Gap*, political scientists Seymour Martin Lipset and William Schneider (1987) note that through the 1970s, confidence in the press and confidence in the government ran inversely, so that when one went up, the other went down. "This modest but noticeable see-saw relationship between 'the executive branch' and 'the press' suggests that the public had become conscious of a kind of adversary relationship between the two," they write. "In the 1970s, at least, the public tended to reward rather than punish the messenger when it brought bad news" (p. 55).

Using these attitudes as the metric, this study will analyze public perceptions of the relationship between the press and the government, as well as what effect competition has on public opinion. If, as Lipset and Schneider (1987) argue, a "see-saw" relationship between aggregate trust in government and aggregate trust in the press indicates a perception that the press is acting as a *watchdog*, then a relationship in which the two move in unison suggests that the public perceives the press and the government as persistently similar in their interests, actions, outcomes, and values—i.e., that the press is acting as a *lapdog*. When was the former pattern apparent, and when was the latter? The next step is to discern the level of competition between the press and government. How much did the press and government attack one another,

and themselves, and how has this changed over time? The final step is to bring the two together: How do different amounts and types of competition affect the public's perceptions of the press and the government?

Chapter two will begin by examining the issues addressed in past research on trust and press-state relations. Trust is a vital concept, but a complex one, and this chapter will examine the issues in defining and measuring trust, while also presenting an overview of findings on media effects on trust. It will also argue for the utility of looking at the press as an institution, and further specify why the press and the government can be seen as linked.

Chapter three will track the movement of these two attitudes across time. What emerges is that the perception of a watchdog role for the press observed by Lipset and Schneider (1987) was not in evidence through the 1980s or beyond. Instead, the relationship changes over time, running sometimes in opposite directions and sometimes in the same direction. The chapter explores what dynamics may be driving this relationship, and suggests that historical moments may mark key turning points.

The degree to which competition has been evident over time is the subject of chapter four. Using a content analysis, it tracks the degree to which attacks on the government and the press have appeared in news articles. What becomes clear is that, while the press actively attacks the government, the main critic of the press is the press itself. As John King does in the example above, the press seems to respond to the public's dissatisfaction by placing the blame elsewhere, both on rival news organizations and, most frequently, on the news media in general.

Finally, chapter five brings together the content analysis and survey data to show how this competition affects public perception of the press and the government, as well as how the public views the press' fulfillment of a democratically normative watchdog role. It finds that the

press and government both have advantages and disadvantages in this competition. But in the current context, gaining the public's trust is more difficult for the press. The accumulated findings and their implications are examined in chapter six.

Chapter 2

Frightening the Horses: Press-State Relations and Public Trust in Democratic Institutions

As democratic states are legitimated by the consent of the governed, democratic institutions that lack public confidence would seem to be in a crisis of legitimacy. (In many parliamentary systems, heads of government are removed through a "vote of no confidence.") And yet, as many have noted (Cappella & Jamieson, 1997; Hibbing & Theiss-Morse, 2002), both the government and the democratic institution of the press are given incentives to act in ways that would seem to undermine the public's confidence in them. In order to represent the interests of their constituents, elected officials must act strategically and attack the opposition; in order to bring relevant political information to citizens, reporters must pry into secrets and reveal details about private lives. Both of these actions would be reasonable grounds for distrust.

Were these inherently distrustful behaviors to occur solely behind closed doors, perhaps the public would not have grounds for concern. But instead, these conflicts play out in public, for all to see. And due to the changing nature of the U.S. press, coverage of the strategic aspects of governing increased markedly over the latter half of the twentieth century (Patterson, 1992); at the same time, criticism of press conduct from both politicians and the public seems to have increased as well (Watts, Domke, Shah, & Fan, 1999). As a result, researchers have found that the press can have an impact on public confidence in institutions. Researchers have also argued that the press and government are institutions linked in a shared pursuit. This chapter will first lay out the existing research on confidence in the press and government, as well as how media content can have an effect on these attitudes. It will then argue for the press and government as linked institutions, and examine the primary issues brought up by such linkage.

Trust in Government

While some distrust of any democratic system is healthy (Gamson, 1968; Hardin, 1999; Hart, 1978; Misztal, 2001; Ullman-Margalit, 2004), low trust is a democratically problematic condition for any government formed through popular consent. While such low trust may not indicate the imminent collapse of such a government, it does strongly suggest that citizens do not fundamentally believe in the political system. Trust, in other words, is "a necessary but insufficient condition for the healthy functioning of any democratic system" (Moy & Scheufele, 2000, p. 744). Low trust has significant practical consequences for government as well, making it increasingly difficult for elected officials to stay in office or accomplish their legislative goals (Chanley, Rudolph & Rahn, 2000; Cooper, 1999; Hetherington, 1998; Misztal, 2001).

Early conceptions of political trust tied it closely to the presumed negative outcomes of such attitudes. Examinations of cynicism, malaise, or apathy used low trust as one indication of these conditions, and presumed low trust would result in lack of political engagement, a relationship that later studies confirmed (Gastil & Xenos, 2010). As political trust began to emerge as a distinct concept, concerns were raised that findings of low trust in government in a particular study merely reflected confidence in the administration in power at the time the study was conducted (Citrin, 1974; Gamson, 1968). But as administrations changed, trust shifted in ways that were not solely tied to approval of individual leaders, and the view that trust reflected an assessment of satisfaction with the system in general began to find consensus (Hart, 1978; Lipset & Schneider, 1987; Miller, 1974b). As such, trust became an attitude of interest in and of itself, rather than as it related to certain outcomes.

Measurement of trust in government has been relatively consistent, as the American National Elections Study (ANES) has included a four-item "trust in government" scale since 1956, and the General Social Survey (GSS) has asked about confidence in institutions since 1973. However, there has been robust disagreement as to whether such "trust in government" assessment reflects an attitude about current government actors (Citrin, 1974; Gamson, 1968; Owen & Dennis, 2001) or about the system as a whole (Catterberg & Moreno, 2006; Miller, 1974b; Mishler & Rose, 1997). Trust has sometimes been linked to satisfaction with the outcomes produced by government (Hart, 1978; Hetherington, 2005; Listhaug, 1995; Miller, 1974a) or governmental processes (Funk, 2001; Kweit & Kweit, 2007; Newton & Norris, 2000; Nilson & Nilson, 1980; Tyler, 1998). And, finally, trust may be assessed on the basis on whether government's behavior accords with one's self-interest (Hardin, 2002; Scholz & Lubell, 1998; Uslaner, 2002) or with one's normative attitudes about how government should be behaving (Bouckaert & van der Walle, 2003; Gaber, 2007; Hart, 1978; Sigelman, Sigelman & Walkosz, 1992).

Each of these conceptions was originally presented as being the exclusive definition of political trust, but given that no clear empirical evidence exists to endorse one over the other, it seems more productive to note their commonalities. Each specifies trust as satisfaction with some quality of some aspect of government, with those qualities limited to processes and outcomes, and those aspects limited to political institutions and political actors. Furthermore, satisfaction is presumed to be relative to some preexisting standard, whether that standard be substantive outcomes or normative preferences. Taken together, they justify defining trust in government as satisfaction with the process of and outcomes produced by political institutions and actors relative to one's self-interested preferences and normative expectations.

Effects on political trust

While research has identified some effects on political trust from demographic characteristics or political orientation, one of the most productive strains of research has examined media effects on trust. The initial wave of research was driven by news coverage of government scandals in the early 1970s. An early series of studies found links between exposure to news coverage of the Watergate scandal (Robinson, 1974) or a documentary on military mismanagement (Robinson, 1976) to decreased trust. These studies indicated that highly deviant coverage depicting government misdeeds at length had effects, but did not indicate whether routine coverage would be linked to trust. A study examining the effects of newspaper use on trust (Miller, Goldenberg, & Erbring, 1979) found that such use did indeed have effects on trust in government. Measuring respondents' political attitudes as well as the specific newspapers they used regularly, and combining these data with an analysis of the content of those specific papers, the authors found that negative coverage was associated with negative opinions about government, including in citizens' political trust. However, other studies found that newspaper readership overall had a more salutary effect on trust than did television viewership (Becker & Whitney, 1980). While negativity drove trust, it appeared that variations in how different forms of news media covered politics also produced effects.

Subsequent research using this combination of cross-sectional survey data and content analysis of news sources was able to further refine the relationship between negative coverage and mistrust. The government and press were seen as locked in a "spiral of cynicism," with each following their institutional imperatives toward practices that drove trust progressively lower

(Cappella & Jamieson, 1997). But this effect is not uniform across all types of media. Television viewing is generally positively related to evaluations of institutions once its effects on learning and interest are taken into account (Chan, 1997; Moy & Pfau, 2000). Additionally, Jamieson and Cappella argue that this is essentially a one-sided contest, with increased cynicism about the press resulting not from deliberate attacks from politicians but from the public's unhappiness with excessive strategic coverage: "The strategy frame frames the messenger," as they put it (p. 234).

Alongside this research looking at political trust at specific moments in time lies longitudinal research on trust. A study of trends in trust from 1930 to 1980 (Lipset & Schneider, 1987) found that trust rose from the 1930s through the 1960s, perhaps due to increasing affluence, and fell off following that period. This falloff was not linked to changes in the population; indeed, demographic factors, including partisanship, have only inconsistently been linked to trust. Instead, trust in one institution was mainly related to trust in other institutions. At first, this seems to be a matter of tradeoffs: Increased support for the government results in decreased support for the press, and vice versa. But after a certain point, this relationship ceased to hold, and trust simply decreased across the board. This change may be due to press negativity, but others have argued that changes in the nature of politics are a better explanation (Norris, 2000).

The most common mechanism by which media effects are supposed to take place on trust is cultivation (Gerbner, Gross, Morgan, & Signorelli, 1980). This theory expanded media effects beyond the impact of any single instance to encompass the effect of being a persistent consumer of media content. Those individuals who were heavy users of television were found to have more negative views of the world, in accord with television's generally negative portrayal of reality.

Within this perspective, however, a few different options exist for what persistent behavior is having the effect. The most common is, generally, tone: The more negatively the press portrays the government, the more negatively people will feel about government (Miller et al., 1979; Moy & Pfau, 2000; Robinson, 1974; Robinson, 1976). Another possibility implicates specific types of frames, particularly press coverage that paints politics as a "game" by emphasizing the strategic dimension of officials' actions rather than their substantive policy proposals (Cappella & Jamieson, 1997; Patterson, 1994). Finally, there is also the matter of format. Presenting persistent kinds of depictions of government through particular visual devices (Mutz & Reeves, 2005) or entertainment programming (Pfau, Moy, & Szabo, 2001; Tsfat, Tukachinsky & Peri 2009) may account for decreased trust as well.

Outside the framework of cultivation, a few other possible mechanisms exist. The most prominent is that of knowledge (Becker & Whitney, 1980; Moy & Pfau, 2000), which mediates the relationship between media content and trust. This echoes findings that distrust is often driven by misinformation (Hibbing & Theiss-Morse, 2002). On the one hand, certain kinds of media may enhance or restrict knowledge formation, thus affecting trust; on the other hand, different levels of knowledge are associated with different types of media preferences, thus explaining why different media have been found to affect trust in different ways. This phenomenon is the driving force behind another possible mechanism: The nature of different media may be affecting trust regardless of content or audience characteristics. Television, as a "cool" medium, encourages feelings of dissociation and distance, and TV's rise coincides neatly with trust's fall.

Regardless of the mechanism, what outside factor could be driving the changes we see in press behavior? One possibility is that trust has declined because the government has acted in a

steadily less trustworthy fashion, with particular emphasis put on Watergate and Vietnam (Citrin, 1974; Norris, 2000). This explanation is intended to absolve the news media of blame for trust's decline, but this move seems questionable given the news media's activist role in pursuing these stories and presenting them in a negative light, and is rejected by much research on trust (Bouckaert & van de Walle, 2003; Cappella & Jamieson, 1997; Cooper, 1999; Moy & Pfau, 2000). Governmental performance does seem to be a strong predictor of trust outside the U.S., especially in young democracies (Misher & Rose, 1997; Newton & Norris, 2000), but corruption is not a common issue in U.S. politics. Performance may be having some impact, but such impact has been hard to locate empirically.

The primary explanation for the news media's trust-damaging behavior is an economic one (Cappella & Jamieson, 1997). It is in the press's self-interest to portray government negatively, since the less credible government appears, the most valuable the press is as an independent arbiter of government conduct. At the same time, economic pressures on individual reporters encourage such negativity as momentary failures are more newsworthy than consistent success. Bad news is more valuable than good news, and so the press emphasizes bad news to enable production of its primary product. Such behavior has also been tied, however, to large-scale trends in the political system, such as the extended campaign schedule necessitated by the expansion of primary and caucus systems, which gave the press an opportunity to push its negative coverage for a longer period of time (Patterson, 1994). And finally, increased polarization may be a factor, as the dynamics of Congress make cross-party collaboration less rewarding while alienating the public (though see Hibbing & Theiss-Morse, 2002).

More importantly for the present study, what accounts for the differences observed in findings about media effects on trust? Two things are clear about this relationship. On the one

hand, trust in government shows dramatic swings over time. The ANES trust-in-government index registered a mean score of 61 out of 100 in 1966, while in the most recent reading (2008) it had fallen to 26, and seems to have stayed there in the years since (Pew, 2013; Rasmussen, 2013). At the same time, some four decades of empirical research into the sources of trust in government at any given point in time has produced only modest results, with no single factor or group of factors able to explain individual-level variance in political trust (see, for instance, Nye's [1997] list of identified influences on trust). Other trust attitudes are closely related to political trust, but we lack much knowledge about the individual-level factors of those attitudes as well.

Studies looking at the movements of trust over time (Chanley, Rudolph & Rahn, 2000; Lipset & Schneider, 1987; Miller & Borrelli, 1991; Norris, 2000) have been able to track large shifts and even identify some strong correlates of political trust. However, studies examining the predictors of trust for a single person at a single point in time (Becker & Whitney, 1980; Cole, 1973; Miller, 1974a; Miller et al., 1979; Moy & Pfau, 2000; Moy & Scheufele, 2000; Robinson, 1976) have had difficulty finding a coherent set of influences. Experimental studies (Cappella & Jamieson, 1997; Mutz & Reeves, 2005; Sigelman et al., 1992) have been able to isolate strong effects, but as with all experimental studies, the question of external validity looms large, especially given that the effects they have found are not as apparent in survey research. In short, the individual effects identified do not seem significant enough to explain the dramatic large-scale shifts. The differences we see between these studies, then, are largely a matter of whether scholars are looking at trust over time or at a single point. Looking at trust over time is the best approach at this point to determine media effects on trust. But the news media play a role beyond

that of merely affecting citizens' level of political trust. This study is concerned equally with public sentiment toward the news media, an area discussed next.

Trust in the Press

As the press's primary purpose is to provide information on events that its audience did not directly witness, maintaining the audience's trust is a vital task. If the public suspects that the information provided by the press is either inaccurate or biased, this would diminish the value of the news media's primary product. Since the news media are regarded as a democratic institution, just as for the government, some skepticism of their practices and products is considered healthy (Pingree, Quenette, Tchernev, & Dickinson, 2013). However, severe mistrust of the press would be damaging to its economic wellbeing. Indeed, the fragmentation and steady diminution of the audience for mainstream news has been blamed on such mistrust (Ladd, 2012).

Media trust is sometimes included under the concept of media credibility (Tsfati, 2011), or the degree to which the audience for news considers the news believable. This concept, however, does not match up with the concept of political trust already offered. Instead, media trust should be understood as one aspect of media credibility that is being examined in isolation. This concept of trust in the press as an institution is evident in many normative theories of the news media (Bakir & Barlow, 2007). The relationship outlined between government, the media, and the public in Habermas' public sphere theory (1991), for instance, matches up with the fundamentally trust-based understanding of certain relationships in political theory, risk management, and economics (Fukuyama, 1995; Giddens, 1990; Luhmann, 1988). As such, trust will continue to be the central term, although it is sometimes not the term used in studies cited in this section.

Additionally, media trust or credibility has been conceptualized in ways that accord with our understanding of political trust. A common definition of the concept (Gaziano & McGrath, 1986; Meyer, 1988) considers credibility in terms of both believability and community affiliation. A definition of media trust that focuses solely on the quality of press content would not accord with the concept of trust in government. It should also concern itself with expectations of the news media's future behavior. Understandings of the press as a democratic institution expect it not only to provide reliable information to the public after events happen, but to act as the public's proxy in interactions with government actors, holding them to account. Thus, trust in news media involves not only whether the public believes news stories, but whether the public believes the press will act as we want it to in the future. The definition for press trust can mirror the one offered for trust in government: One's satisfaction with the process of and outcomes produced by news media organizations and actors relative to one's self-interested preferences and normative expectations.

Effects on media trust

As could be expected, news media content is one of the primary influences on trust in the media (Gunther, 1992). This effect has often been found to work through some of the same mechanisms and practices that have been identified in media effects on trust in government. The press's persistent negativity of coverage, as well as its emphasis on "strategy" frames, both have been found to influence public trust in the press. The negativity of political coverage has been linked to decreased trust in the press (Cappella & Jamieson, 1997; Moy & Pfau, 2000), and this relationship will be discussed in more detail below. When the press covers itself, this coverage tends to be negative, and such self-criticism has been found to decrease trust (Pingree et al.,

2013). Even negative comments left by users on online news articles can decrease trust (Thorson, Vraga, & Ekdale, 2010).

Nonacademic discussion of the sources of press distrust has often focused on the idea that the news media are biased toward one political party (Alterman, 2003; Goldberg, 2002). In this view, the press is failing to live up to its norm of objectivity and is "slanting" coverage to favor one party or side in a political conflict. Though such bias has not generally been found to exist in a systematic way, the perception of such bias, and elite cues activating concerns about bias, have been found to influence press trust (Watts et al., 1999).

Perceptions of press bias are not universal in terms of the "side" being favored. The most visible charges of press bias have accused the news media of being overly liberal, from a 1970 speech by Republican Vice President Spiro Agnew's calling the press "nattering nabobs of negativity" to Newt Gingrich's attacks in the 2012 debates. Nevertheless, individuals tend to see the news media as biased against their particular group, a phenomenon known as "hostile media perception" (Vallone, Ross, & Lepper, 1985). Through selective information retention (Giner-Sorolla & Chaiken, 1994) prompted by the message's place in a distrusted medium (Gunther & Schmitt, 2004), only that which confirms the existing bias against the press is processed. As a result, though individuals have different beliefs about the "side" toward which the press is biased, they believe that the majority of evidence supports their opinion, a condition known as pluralistic ignorance (Gunther & Chia, 2001). No matter what the press does, the public sees it as biased, and consequently trusts it less.

These relationships are not necessarily consistent across different media. Surveys have asked about the relative credibility of radio, television, and newspapers since the advent of television, and have found that television was frequently the most trusted medium, but this was

likely more due to question wording and television's technical qualities than actual trustworthiness of news coverage (Gantz, 1981; Newhagen & Nass, 1989). As the media landscape has evolved, research frequently found online news sources to be highly credible (Johnson & Kaye, 1998). Overall, however, newspapers have consistently been considered the most credible medium (Flanagin & Metzger, 2000). The features of each medium and professional environment have accounted for these differences: The presence of an identifiable newscaster on TV news, the organizational prestige of newspapers, and the different use of visuals in print and broadcast mediums have all been linked to credibility assessments.

The news environment has undergone dramatic changes over the last half-century, and these structural shifts can be expected to have some effect on media trust. Most notably, the audience for mainstream news has shrunk due to increased competition from entertainment programming and alternative news media outlets (Prior, 2007). Ladd (2012) argues that this fight for audience led the press to adopt tactics that decreased trust. In addition, the influence of online news in the last decade has changed newsroom practices across media, resulting in greater personalization, the functional blurring of news and opinion, and greater niche news. All of these shifts have been found to influence trust, and can be expected to do so when the attitude is examined over time.

While there have been demonstrable media effects on trust in government, it could also be said that there are governmental effects on trust in the media. Watts, Domke, Shah and Fan (1999) found that the primary driver of perceptions of news media bias was not actual media bias but charges of such bias by elites. Ladd (2012) makes a similar argument, presenting evidence that the temporary lack of political polarization during the mid-20th century allowed the news

media to operate without being subject to charges of partisanship, and that once such attacks resumed during the Nixon administration, trust began to decline.

The News Media and the Government as Linked Institutions

Legitimate disagreement exists as to whether the press can accurately be said to constitute an institution. Though widely recognized as a significant force in political life, it lacks both the legal status of the government or courts as well as the long-standing permanence of institutions like organized religion or the family. For some time, then, the press was considered to be a profession but not an institution. However, work by "new institutional" scholars (Cook, 1998; Sparrow, 1999) formed the basis for consideration of the press as a meso-level entity. The press as an institution could not only possess its own internal dynamics, but also was capable of interacting with other institutions in meaningful ways.

However, within this new institutional consensus, scholars differ as to whether the news media constitute a *strong* institution or a *weak* institution. The strong-institution view takes the press' status as a political institution, sometimes called "mediatization," to be a threat to the autonomy of government; the weak-institution view takes the press's intertwining with the government to be a threat to democracy. Cook (1998) regards the press as a fundamentally powerful political actor, capable of altering the behavior of government in dangerous ways, and thus in need of control. Sparrow (1999), on the other hand, considers the news media to be entirely subordinate to government actors, and believes this to be a worrisomely anti-democratic neutering of the press' ability to perform its adversarial role.

In the strong institutional perspective, reporters are a central presence not only in electioneering and politicking, but in policymaking as well, distributing information about policy

debates to the public but doing so through its own distorting preferences and practices. However, journalists have an interest in concealing their status as political actors, making the public more likely to trust their coverage as unbiased and neutral. Despite the shift to objectivity, the U.S. press originally existed as an outlet for political parties, and there is no reason why the news media should have ceased to act politically, especially given the extent to which the press relies on the government for news (Cook, 1998).

Mediatization expands this notion of the news media as an institution to encompass the historical process of a political system adopting to the demands of the media rather than vice versa. To some, this seems to have negative connotations, making politics into merely a form of public relations. Regardless, it is a perspective centered around the idea of the press as a strong institution, and the press's ability to influence policymaking has been demonstrated empirically. In a series of surveys and interviews with policymakers in Finland (Reunanen, Kunelius, & Noppari, 2010), researchers found, in support of "mediatization," significant concern about the way news media imperatives affect governmental actions and decisions. Many officials report adjusting their behavior to fit media routines and expectations. That this is true of Finland, a country whose political system is still very much an era of consensus, suggests that this effect may be even more pronounced in other democracies.

Other scholarship in this area, however, depicts the press as a generally weak political actor. While the press is normatively intended to have a relationship with government, these scholars believe that this relationship should be adversarial (Sparrow, 1999). The press wants to fulfill this role but is unable to do so due to its institutional characteristics and resources. The news media, in this view, are unable to offer an effective political counter to government for many of the same reasons why reporters' power to effect change is limited (Gans, 1979; Kaplan,

2002): Market forces provide a strong motivation for the press to reinforce the status quo by deferring to official sources.

This view is echoed by subsequent work demonstrating the ways professional norms make it difficult for journalists to operate strategically within the context of government (Patterson, 1998). Since journalists are driven by news imperatives rather than political imperatives, they operate in pursuit of the story rather than policy goals, and lack a unifying ideology that could give their actions meaning beyond the market logic of news media organizations. Though interpretive journalism has become widespread, this may not be an effective counter, since journalists lack the political knowledge necessary to make informed judgments.

Regardless, what all these perspectives share is a focus on the government and press as linked institutions—and institutions that are in competition with one another, whether to get away with or expose government wrongdoing (in the weak-institution perspective) or to make policy (in the strong-institution perspective). As such, the public's attitudes toward the press and the government would also be linked. Yet these two attitudes have not often been examined in relation to one another, perhaps due to the conceptual mismatch of generalized press trust being referred to primarily as "credibility." However, some studies have looked at this relationship, and have often found significant cross-attitudinal influences. In addition to Lipset and Schneider's (1987) findings, studies have found that trust in the government is a primary influence on trust in the media (Jones, 2004).

Conclusion

This chapter has established the basis for the quantitative analysis that will follow. The press is an institution, and is linked institutionally to the government. Moreover, whether taking the strong- or weak-institution perspective, the two are in competition, with the government seeking to damage the press's ability to expose wrongdoing and the press attempting to influence the policymaking process. Though the press is not a formal part of government, its actions nevertheless have a significant effect on governmental behavior.

More specifically, the actions of the press, especially press negativity, affect both trust in government and trust in the press. This provides a common metric by which to measure the effects of this competition. But it is also meaningful in and of itself. Confidence in these key democratic institutions is vital to democratic life. In specifying how self-interested competition is linked to the decline in trust observed over the last half-century, we might discover particular areas where policy changes could have beneficial effects.

Finally, the best way to study these changes is to observe them over time. While the drop in confidence has been dramatic over five decades, the change at any individual moment is fairly small; these small changes simply add up, respondent over respondent, year over year, into something large. Consequently, studies examining influences on trust at a single moment in time have only been able to detect modest influences. Studies examining changes in trust over time, however, have identified intriguing trends, but have mostly only been able to speculate at their causes. An approach that combines time-series analysis of public opinion data with media effects based on a content analysis can harness the strengths of each. This is what appears in chapter five.

Chapter 3:

Watchdog or Lapdog: Public Perceptions of the Press and Government Over Time

The previous chapter made the case for examining trust over time: While studies examining influences on trust using a cross-sectional design have found some effects, the most dramatic effects have been seen when data are analyzed longitudinally. Given the history of the press and government in the U.S., this is not surprising. Since the 1970s, the press has expanded onto cable and the web while exhibiting increased negativity and use of strategic framing. In government, meanwhile, the last few decades have seen the emergence of the modern conservative movement, the retaking of the House by Republicans for the first time in a half-century, and the increasing polarization of the parties.

Later chapters will test the theory that competition between the press and government affected trust in these institutions on an individual level. However, past work has indicated the value of examining aggregate trust attitudes. Lipset and Schneider (1987) argued that if aggregate trust in the press goes up when aggregate trust in the government goes down, the public perceives a watchdog role for the press, as if the press is being rewarded for delivering negative news about the government. Similarly, if the two attitudes move in the same direction from one year to the next, the public may be seeing the press as acting more like a "lapdog," and the press and government as linked in their interests and actions. This chapter will examine the survey data in the aggregate and explore possible explanations for the trends that are evident, as well as drawing some initial conclusions about what historical shifts might be responsible for changing public perceptions about the relationship between the press and government. This approach seems particularly productive given the major changes in the press and government

that have accompanied the gradual decline of institutional trust over the postwar period. Before examining how press-government competition is linked to individuals' trust attitudes, it is important to understand the broad trends in the data.

Data

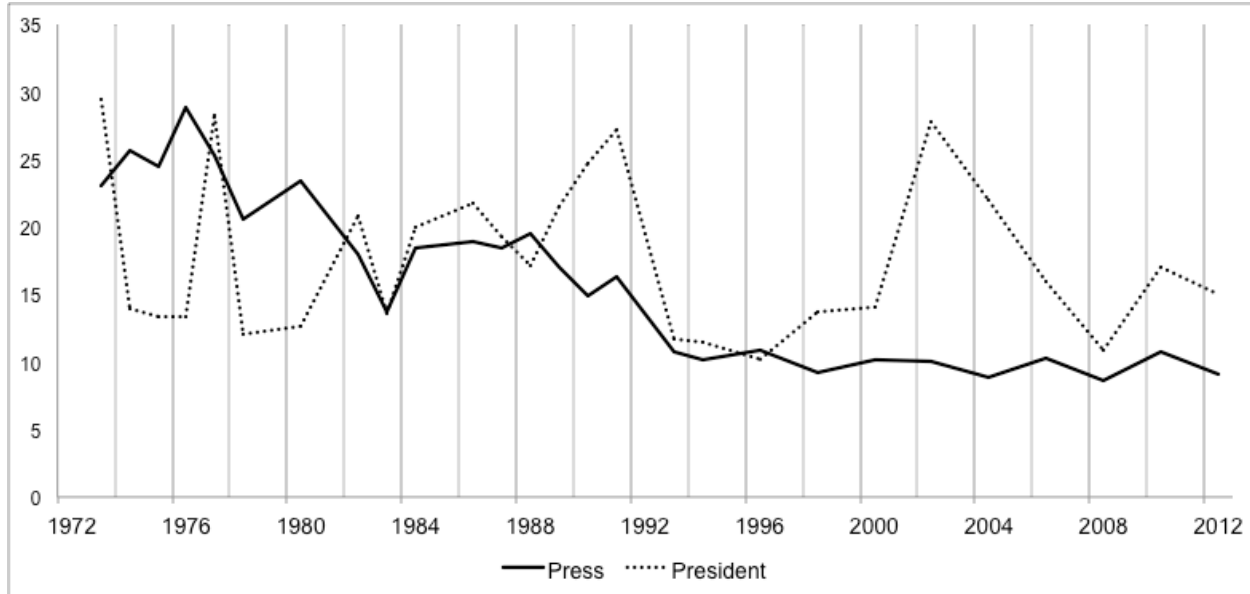
The data come from the General Social Survey, a survey of the U.S. population administered by the National Opinion Research Center at the University of Chicago. It has been administered either yearly or biannually since 1973 using a representative nationwide sample of people aged 18 or older living in households in the United States. Data are collected almost exclusively through face-to-face interviews, with telephone interviewing used only when it is difficult to arrange an in-person interview with the sampled respondent. Until 2004, only those able to take the survey in English were included, but the survey has been administered in Spanish as well since 2006. Interviews usually last 90 minutes. Until 1993, the target sample was 1,500, while since 1994 the target has been 3,000, split into two samples of 1,500 respondents each.

Many questions have been asked consistently over time. From 1988 to 2000, these repeating questions were asked of a random two-thirds of respondents, while since 2002, the repeated questions were asked of only one of the two split samples. One of these repeatedly asked sets of questions concerns confidence in institutions. (Confidence is considered to be conceptually equivalent to trust [Misztal, 1996].) All take the form of "I am going to name some institutions in this country. As far as the people running these institutions are concerned, would you say you have a great deal of confidence, only some confidence, or hardly any confidence at all in them?". These questions address business, religion, and the military, but also ask about confidence in "the executive branch of the federal government," "Congress," and "the press."

Overall relationships

Using data on trust from both Gallup and the GSS through the 1960s and 70s, Lipset and Schneider (1987) observed only an inverse relationship, indicating that the public perceived the press to be fulfilling a watchdog role. Looking at GSS data in the years since Lipset and Scheider's analysis, that inverse relationship is no longer consistently observed. Figure 3.1 shows the percentage of respondents responding "a great deal" to questions about confidence in the press and presidency. While an inverse relationship is evident in some periods, in others the two attitudes ran very much in parallel: As trust in government fell, trust in government fell, too. Given Lipset and Schneider's conclusions, this suggests that in some periods the public perceived an attack dog role for the press, while in others a lapdog role was evident. The following analysis will specify the nature of this relationship, track particular moments when the relationship shifted, and look for possible explanations over time.

Figure 3.1: Relationship Between Trust in the Press and Trust in the Presidency, 1972-2012



Working with 27 data points presents a challenge to analysis. As the goal will be to detect changes in the relationship's direction over various periods, the number of points examined for some analyses will be small. As such, it is important to first establish that the attitudes under investigation are, in fact, related. By first demonstrating that trust in the press has some demonstrable effect on trust in government, and vice versa, we can proceed with these finer-grained analyses assured of the fact that any differences we detect can be reliably said to reflect persistent trends.

One way to demonstrate this relationship would be a simple correlation, but this would not be appropriate given the study's aims. A correlation would reflect a relationship between two variables that does not shift over time. Trust in the press and trust in government, however, very much do. While in some cases there is a positive relationship, in other periods the relationship is an inverse, or negative, one. These differences could possibly cancel one another out and result in a null finding for a correlation test even though the variables are very much related.

Since the data here are time series data, an analysis suited to that type of data would be more useful. One statistic available for these purposes is the Granger causality test (Toda & Phillips, 1994). This is an analysis used in econometrics to test whether two variables affect one another over time. For instance, a Granger test could be used to show that an increase in housing prices causes an increase in employment, or that lowered wages caused decreased consumer confidence. The test assesses whether the past values of the first variable can be seen to predict the future values of the second variable.

First, for each value of each variable, a lag value is calculated. This is the value of the variable at a previous point in time. So, at a lag of one study, the lag value of trust in the press for 1984 is the value for trust in the press in 1983, while at a lag of two studies it would be the value in 1982. Due to the GSS being administered at irregular intervals, a "lag" here means the amount of time since the previous survey, which can range from one to two years.

After the lag values are calculated, the Granger test can be performed, which allows one to determine whether the value a given variable at any given point can be better explained solely by its own past values, or if including the past values of another variable adds significant predictive power. So if the best predictor of trust in the press was past values of trust in the press, there would be no evidence of causality. If, however, it was predicted more precisely by past values of trust in Congress in combination with past values of trust in the press, then we could say that past trust in Congress is a useful predictor of future trust in the press. The test can then be reversed to see if trust in the press is a predictor of future trust in Congress.

In technical terms, the result of regressing the dependent variable on its own lag terms is compared to the result of regressing the dependent variable on the lag terms of both itself and the independent variable, generating an F statistic. To show that there is a reciprocal relationship, the

process is repeated with the independent variable and dependent variable switched. If both tests are found to be significant, a reciprocal relationship can be said to exist. If only the first test is significant, a unidirectional relationship is found. This test can be done with various lag periods to show the amount of time it takes for the effect to be felt.

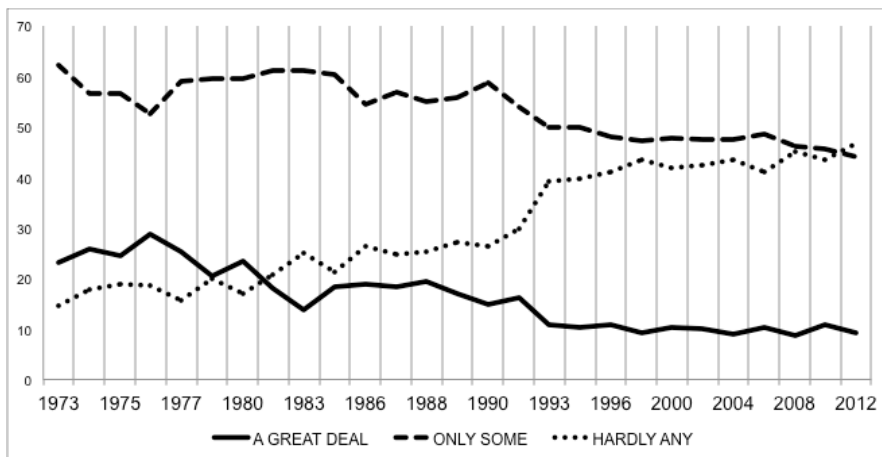
In the case of trust in the press and trust in government, these relationships were found to be significant. Trust in the press and trust in the presidency was not significant at a lag of one period (unidirectional: $F = 0.07$, $df = 23$, $p = 0.99$; bidirectional: $F = 0.05$, $df = 23$, $p = 0.99$), but at a lag of two periods a strong indication of Granger causality was found (unidirectional: $F = 8.69$, $df = 22$, $p < .01$; bidirectional: $F = 4.05$, $df = 22$, $p < .01$). A similar pattern was observed for trust in the press and trust in Congress. No relationship was found for the effect on trust in the press ($F = 0.01$, $df = 23$, $p = .99$), but a relationship was found at this lag for the effect on trust in Congress ($F = 2.36$, $df = 23$, $p < .05$). At a lag of two periods, however, a significant relationship was found for both (unidirectional: $F = 9.22$, $df = 22$, $p < .01$; bidirectional: $F = 12.91$, $df = 22$, $p < .01$).

Two things should be noted from this analysis. The first is simply that trust in the press and trust in the government affect one another. The Granger test gives no indication of the directionality of this relationship, but does show that it is a reciprocal relationship, such that each attitude influences the other. The other finding of note is that this effect is not immediately felt. While trust in the press does seem to have an immediate effect on trust in Congress, overall the relationship is most evident at a gap or two to four years. Thus, we can proceed knowing that these attitudes are demonstrably related, but that the effect is most evident over a longer period of time.

The Press

Figure 3.2 shows the percentage of respondents in each of the three response categories for the GSS question about confidence in the press. The gradual decrease in positive feelings and increase in positive feelings from the 1970s to the present noted in other studies (Ladd, 2012) is evident; trust in the press has declined even more steeply over this period than for other institutions. However, the trend looks markedly different after 2000. The change year-over-year is much less, especially so for the response category "a great deal." Is it true that trust in the press was relatively steady during this period, or is there a confounding factor?

Figure 3.2: Confidence in the Press, 1972-2012



Given that criticism of the U.S. press has taken a strongly partisan bent, one possible confounding factor is partisanship. Former television reporter Bernard Goldberg's 2002 book *Bias: A CBS Insider Exposes How the Media Distorts the News* capped a decade's worth of charges from the right that the primary problem with the news media was a liberal bias (see also Watts et al., 1999). As such, we could expect that Democrats and Republicans would think about confidence in the press in different ways once they had been given different elite partisan cues

about how to do so. Republicans would likely have more negative views of the press following this partisan effort to discredit the news media as biased toward the other side.

This appears to be the case. Figure 3.3 shows the difference between Democrats and Republicans giving each response over time. (More specifically, it shows the absolute difference in each year between the percentage of self-identified Democrats and self-identified Republicans giving each response.) It shows that partisan differences generally stayed below ten percentage points until 1998. After that year, however, they increased sharply, with "hardly any" in particular experiencing 15- to 25-point differentials between Democrats and Republicans. "Only some" and "a great deal" experienced similar rises, albeit less dramatic ones. This breakdown shows that partisan differences can mask real shifts over time. As can be seen in figure 3.4, which shows only those giving "hardly any" as a response, major changes in Democrats' and Republicans' responses averaged out to little net change, especially after 1998.

Figure 3.3: Absolute Difference Between Partisan Responses to Press Trust, 1977-2012

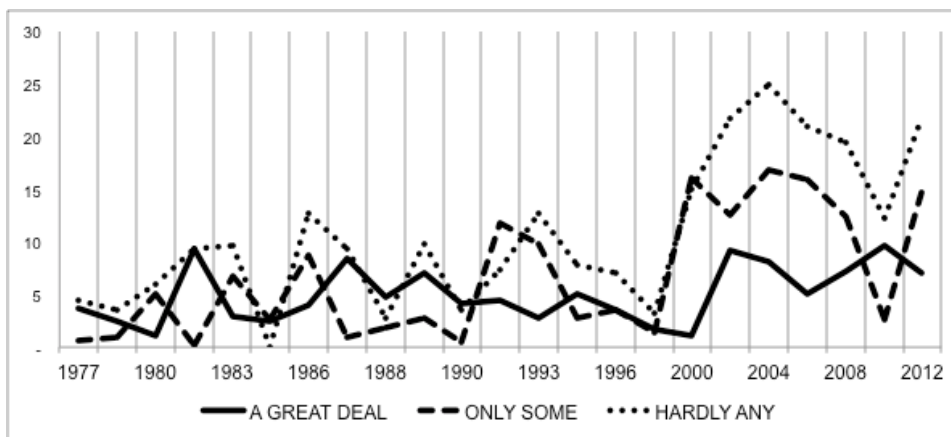
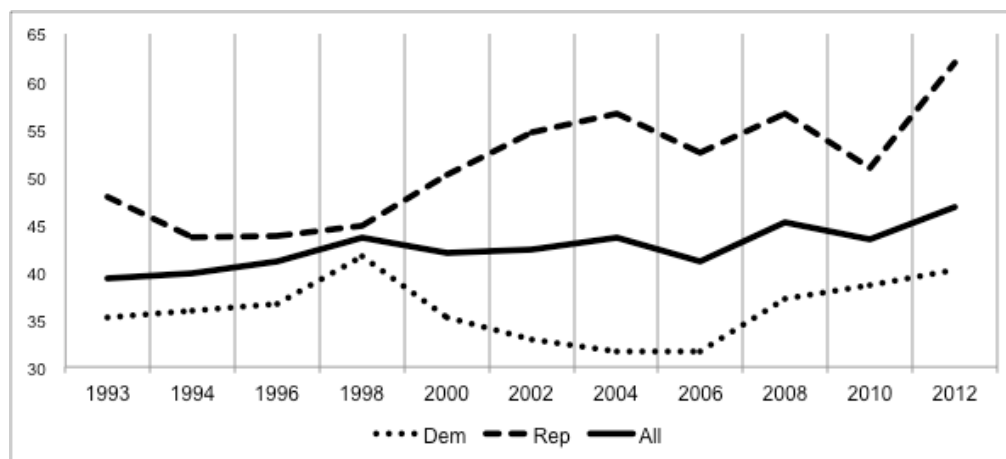


Figure 3.4: Partisan Differences in Press Trust Producing Little Net Change, 1993-2012



Before examining the relationships between trust in the press and trust in government, it is necessary to keep in mind the findings of Ladd (2012), who argued that increased political polarization and news media competition had a strong effect on trust in the press, while the decline of trust in institutions in general was not related. To test whether the effects of trust in government go beyond (or at least have an additional effect beyond) these factors, three separate regressions were run using trust in the press as the dependent variable. Additionally, a single regression including all factors was run for the sake of comparison, but given the low number of data points and the lack of comprehensive controls, the individual models do a better job of demonstrating factor-by-factor influences.

The first tested political polarization, measured by polarization of the House and the Senate using Poole's (2013) measure of how often members of each party vote with the opposition on major economic issues. This measure is calculated by assigning a score to each legislator in Congress based on their roll call votes, assigning that vote a -1 for endorsing a liberal policy stance and a +1 for endorsing a conservative policy stance (Carroll et al., 2009). Their average score across the session is then calculated. For each Congress, the average score for all Republican members and all Democratic members can be calculated. The distance each of

these averages is from 0 indicates the degree to which members of each party voted in ideologically similar ways. A final measure of total polarization for each Congress can be calculated by subtracting the score for Democrats from the score for Republicans. Higher numbers indicate greater polarization. Since 1879, the score has ranged from 0.42 to 1.07.

The second model tested confidence of all other institutions, measured by averaging each GSS respondent's confidence in business, the military, the educational system, organized religion, medicine, organized labor, and the justice system and taking the mean across all respondents for each year. The score for each respondent's confidence in each institution could range from 1 to 3, and the average confidence in all institutions ranged, in the years analyzed, from 1.73 to 1.90.

The final model examined the influence of news competition. No clear measure exists for news competition beyond the observable fact that the number of national news outlets has been increasing over time. However, one of the ways in which competition has been discussed in the past (Prior, 2007) is that, as there was greater competition from alternative news outlets, the audience for nightly network news broadcasts declined. As such, the audience for network news was used as a proxy for news competition, utilizing data from Pew (2012) since 1980; data for the years prior to 1980 were imputed by taking the average yearly change and adding this to the total for 1980 to get the total for 1979, and repeating this for each subsequent year.

The results of the regression can be seen in table 3.1. This shows that trust in government remains a predictor of trust in the press, and so the relationships observed using the Granger test in the prior section are not masking the effect of an external factor. In addition, the results here confirm Ladd's (2012) finding that press trust moves independently of any generalized decline in trust, as well as his emphasis on the effect of increasing media competition, which suggests the

theoretical focus on inter-institutional competition is a promising one to explore. It does not, however, give support to the idea that increasing political polarization is driving press trust.

Table 3.1. Predicting Aggregate Press Trust by Trust in Government and Structural Factors

	β	β	β	β
Trust in the Presidency	-.27#	-.55*	-.16	-.19
Trust in Congress	.43*	.78*	.30 ^a	.30
Polarization in the House	-.79			-.08
Polarization in the Senate	.05			-.14
General institutional confidence		-.29		-.05
News audience			.79**	.56
R ² (%)	83.2	49.1	85.1	85.5

Note: # p < .10; * p < .05; ** p < .01

N = 26

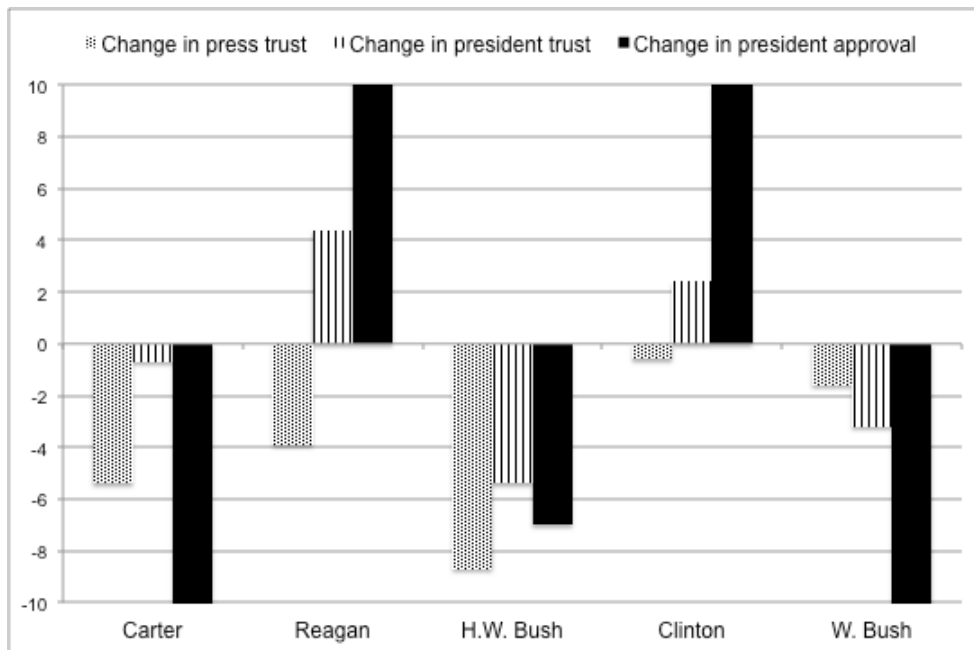
The Presidency

As noted above, the relationship between trust in the press and trust in the executive branch since 1980 does not conform to the inverse relationship observed through the 1970s. (See figure 3.1.) There is no consistent trend over this time suggesting a continued perception of the press and the government as oppositional institutions. The Granger test, however, suggests that there is some relationship, and that this relationship tends to happen at a lag of two to four years. Partisan differences also play a role. In all, this gives rise to the possibility that, when it comes to the presidency, the relationship might vary based on the administration in power.

This notion is explored in figure 3.5, which shows changes in trust by president. The changes in trust are calculated by subtracting the trust in press and trust in the executive in the year of the president's first election from the trust during the year of either their final election or the election of their successor, whichever is later. This shows the overall movement of trust over this longer period in which an effect might be apparent. The figure also shows the change in approval for each president. This is calculated using Gallup polls (American Presidency, 2013)

and taking the approval rating at the time of each president's losing reelection or the election of their successor and subtracting it from the approval of their predecessor when he left office. This is done because the focus here is on the presidency as an institution, rather than individual leaders, and the change from prior administrations is more important than the movement within a single administration.

Figure 3.5: Relationship Between Trust and Government and Press Differs by Presidential Approval



Here, a clear relationship emerges. For popular presidents such as Ronald Reagan and Bill Clinton, who finished their administrations with higher approval than did their predecessors, the relationship is a negative or oppositional one, with the public trusting the press less as they trust the presidency more. For unpopular presidents, however, the relationship is a positive one, with attitudes toward the press and presidency moving (relatively) in concert with one another.¹ This would indicate that, for unpopular presidents, the press and government are seen as more tightly linked, and acting in concert rather than adversarially. One might question to this finding by noting that trust in the press has declined for each period. As the Granger test found, however,

¹ GSS data for 2012 shows a deviation from this trend: for Obama, press trust has gone up (modestly) as has presidential trust and presidential approval. Thus, he would be a popular president for whom the attitudes moved in parallel. For proper congruence with this analysis, however, this cannot be finalized until the end of his second term, and the historically low level press trust reached in 2008 may have simply represented a floor from which it could only rise. Nevertheless, it is a trend worth monitoring.

trust in the press and trust in the presidency predict one another overall, both when presidential trust is going up and when it is going down.

The adversarial relationship during popular administrations is different than the relationship observed through the tumultuous period of the 1960s and early 1970s (Lipset & Schneider, 1987). During this period, a press delivering "bad news" about presidential misdeeds could drive down trust in government while driving up trust in the press. Since then, however, the press has continued to produce primarily (and increasingly) negative news, regardless of the state of the presidency (Patterson, 2000). It would seem that this has proven problematic when the public has positive feelings about the president being reported on. In the case of President Clinton and the Lewinsky affair, for instance, the relentlessly negative press coverage resulted in rising presidential approval ratings (Zaller, 1998), indicating that a press delivering "bad news" has been punished with reduced confidence. When a president is able to resist this negative coverage, then, the public may lose confidence in the press for continuing to insist on negativity; the press is seen as properly adversarial, but is not rewarded for it.

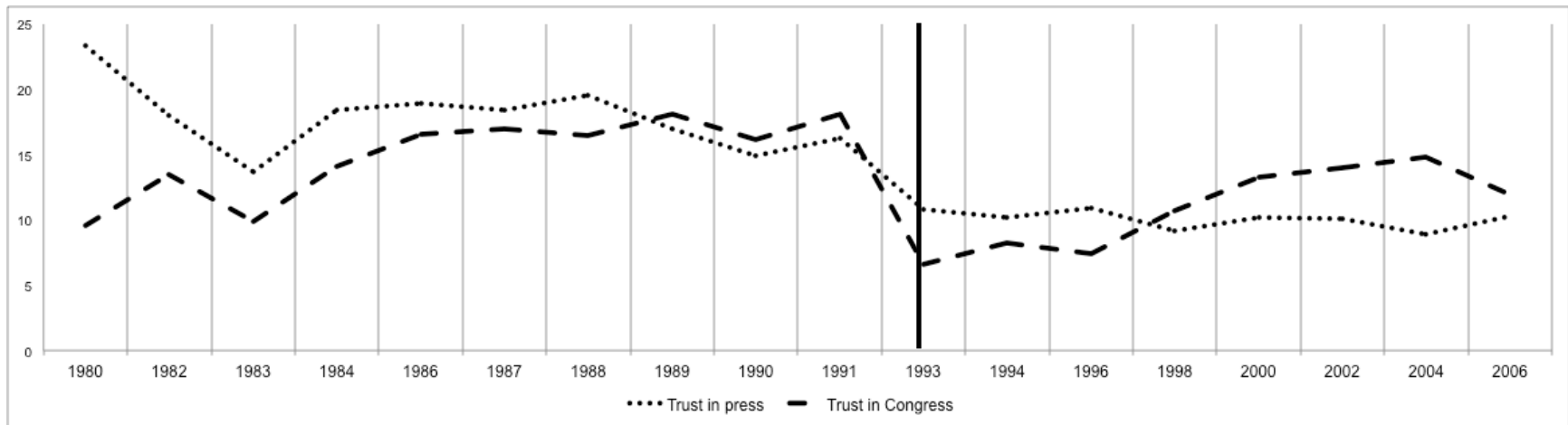
The "lapdog" relationship seen during unpopular administrations is also a notable shift from the trend during the 1970s, when during the unpopular administrations of Johnson and Nixon an adversarial relationship between press and administration trust was observed. In the case of post-Watergate administrations that were unpopular, the public does not reward the press for providing useful information about administrations misdeeds. Instead, the press seems to be implicated in these negative feelings toward the political system—"punish[ing] the messenger," as Lipset and Schneider (1987) put it. Persistent negative feelings toward the press may lead to it being linked with the government more when feelings about the government are themselves primarily negative.

Taken together, these do not paint an encouraging picture, resembling nothing so much as a modified "spiral of cynicism" (Cappella & Jamieson, 1997) in which cynicism about the press either leads to cynicism about government or to outrage about the press's negativity. The press's complicity in the larger political system, in other words, is seen most strongly when views about that system align with the generally low view of the press. Competition between institutions here seems to be swinging strongly in the government's favor.

Congress

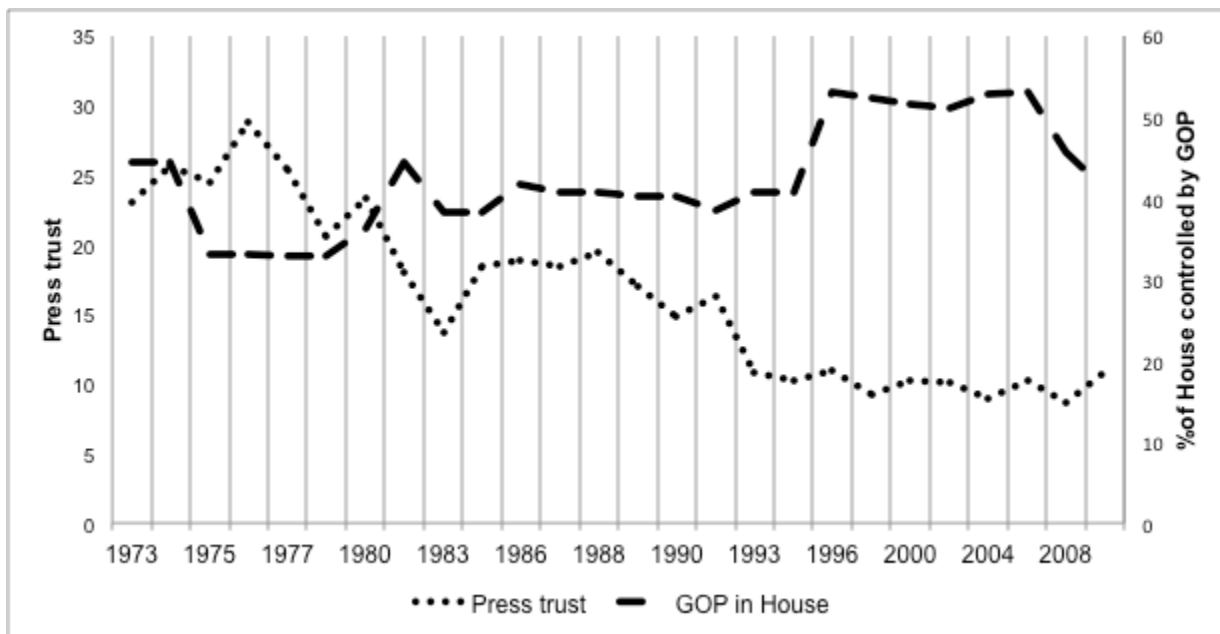
Having examined the relationship between trust in the press and trust in the presidency, the next step is to examine the relationship between trust in Congress and trust in the press. This can be done initially by simply graphing the attitudes over time. As shown in figure 3.6, which plots the percentage of respondents indicating "a great deal" of trust in the press (dotted line) and Congress (dashed line), the relationship between trust in the press and government is both longer-term and more partisan when it comes to Congress. Until 1993, the relationship is a positive one, with the public seemingly viewing the two institutions as acting in supportive ways toward one another. After 1993, however, the relationship shifts to a clearly negative one, with trust in the press rising as trust in Congress falls, and vice versa. The major shift that occurs in 1994 is that Republicans take control of the House of Representatives and hold it, with the exception of four years, until the present day.

Figure 3.6: Relationship Between Trust in Press and Trust in Congress Before and After Republican Takeover of House



And indeed, the percentage of House seats held by Republicans varies inversely with trust in the press ($r = -.70, p < .01$), as does the percentage of Senate seats ($r = -.59, p < .01$). This relationship can be seen in figure 3.7, which shows the percentage of respondents indicating "a great deal" of trust in the press (graphed on the left-hand axis, and shown as a dotted line) alongside the percentage of seats in Congress held by Republicans (graphed on the right-hand axis, and shown as a dashed line). The inverse relationship is clear.

Figure 3.7: Trust in Press Inversely Related to Republican Control of Congress



This finding aligns strongly with ideas of institutional competition. Since Spiro Agnew's 1970 "nattering nabobs" speech, Republicans have pursued a strategy of attacking the press for political gain, and the primary perception of press bias is that it is liberal (Alterman, 2003). What this finding suggests is that their strategy has been largely successful. Republicans may have linked Democrats and the press so strongly that when Democrats are in power, the public sees

the government and the press as working together, whereas Republican-controlled government is seen as having an oppositional relationship with the press.

Breakpoint analysis

One weakness of using correlation and regression analyses in examining time series data is that these tests assume consistent relationships across time. However, if a major structural shift occurs, before and after which different patterns and relationships are in place, a single correlation or regression analysis can negate these differences and produce misleading results. For instance, consider the hypothetical example of an analysis looking at whether greater government spending on anti-terrorism efforts resulted in greater minutes devoted to stories about terrorism on the nightly news between 1991 and 2010. A standard regression or even correlation analysis over this time would find a very strong relationship. But this would be a problematic conclusion, because we know that an external factor had a far stronger effect on the amount of terrorism coverage: The September 11, 2001 attacks. Thus, it would be far more sensible to perform two separate analyses, one from 1991 to August 2001, and another from September 2001 to 2010, in order to determine whether increased spending on terrorism really resulted in greater coverage.

If we know that such a structural change occurred that might have an impact on the analysis, this can be incorporated into the analytical strategy. But in the present case, it is unclear when such structural changes would have occurred. However, a statistical test called a *breakpoint* analysis (Bai & Perron, 2003) can take time-series data and identify points at which the pattern changed. In the preceding example, the breakpoint analysis could be given the data on the number of minutes network news devoted to terrorism coverage every day from 1991 to

2010. This data would, of course, rise and fall over time in response to news events. But it would show a sharp increase in September 2001, after which the level of terrorism coverage would be generally higher. The breakpoint analysis could tell us that on a date around September 11, 2001 some structural change affected the pattern of network news coverage of terrorism. Applying this technique to levels of trust in the press and government year by year can reveal historical moments at which some structural shift may have fundamentally altered the public's way of thinking about trust in these institutions.

Technically speaking, a breakpoint analysis tests the null hypothesis that a particular linear regression model has no structural shifts, and if the null hypothesis is rejected, identifies the optimal number and location of these structural shifts. This test has been implemented in the "strucchange" package for the R system for statistical computing (Zeileis, Kleiber, Krämer, & Hornik, 2003). A standard regression attempts to calculate a constant model across all points, and an F statistic is calculated for the variance from the constant at each point in time. Points at which the F statistic "peaks" may represent moments of structural change. (Note that Keileis et al. [2003] do not consider significance tests to be meaningful in the context of this analysis.)

The results of breakpoint analyses for trust in the press, Congress, and the presidency identify the optimal number of breakpoints in the data, and then reports what those points are. For the press, two points were identified at which the structural pattern of trust changed: 1982 and 1991. For Congress, only a single point was identified (1991), while for the presidency, no point could be reliably identified. Figures 3.8 through 3.10 plot the movement of "a great deal" responses over time, with the dashed line representing the overall average trust, the dash-dot line representing the average trust before and after each breakpoint, and the dotted vertical lines showing the break points. For the press and Congress, 1991 appears to be a key year: Something

shifted structurally to change the way the public thought about confidence in these two institutions. And as the figures show, after 1991 trust attitudes dropped sharply.

Figure 3.8: Breakpoint in "Great Deal" of Trust in Congress

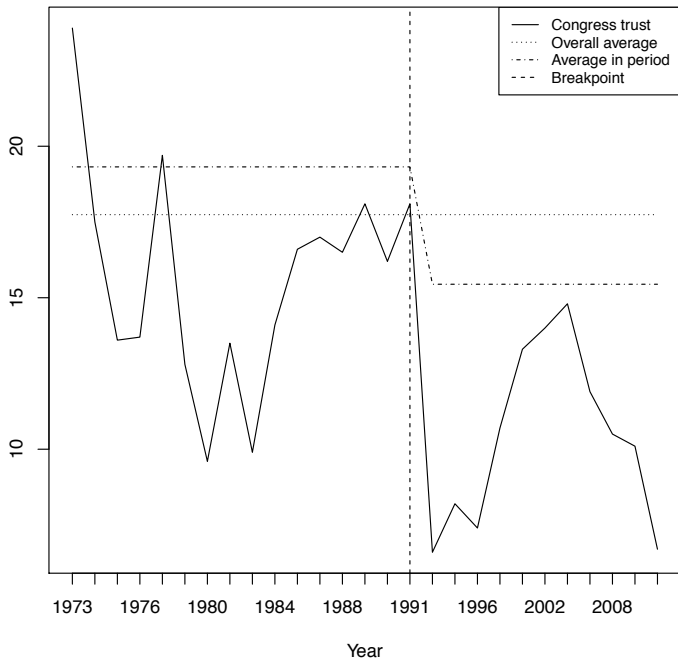


Figure 3.9: Breakpoints in "Great Deal" of Trust in Press

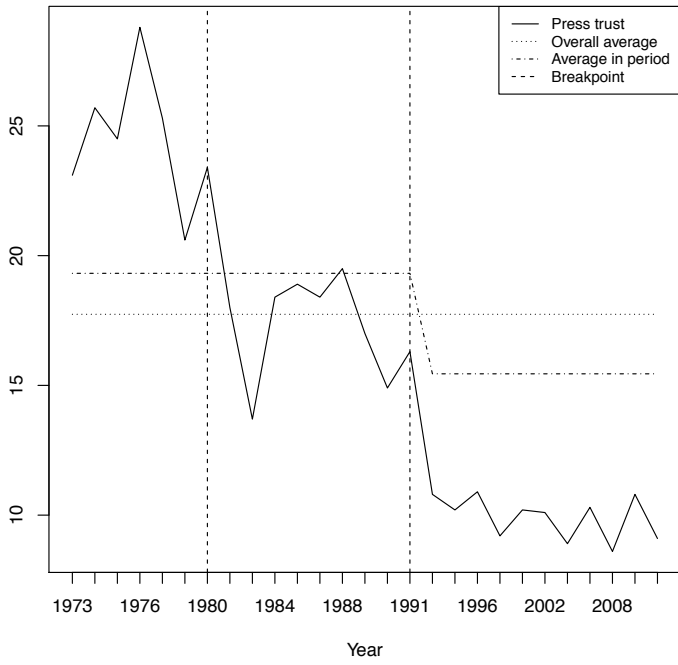
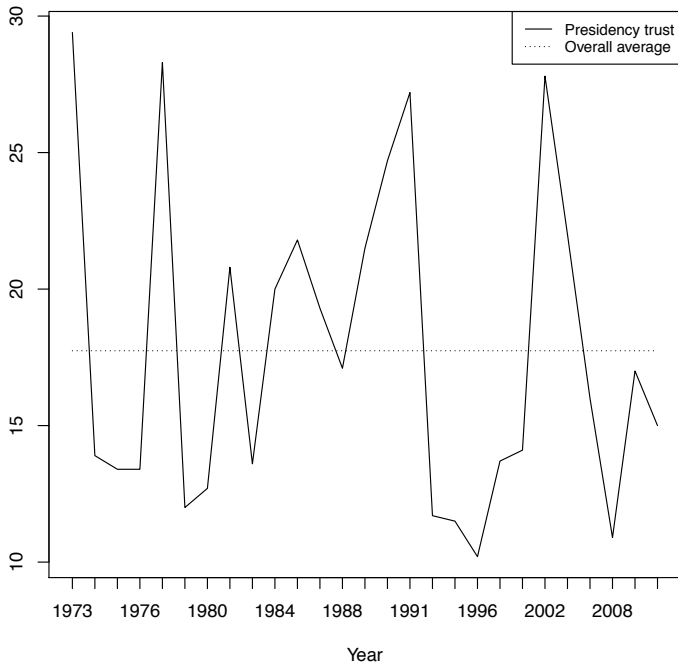


Figure 3.10: Trust in Presidency, No Breakpoints



Conclusion

This examination of aggregate trends has served to foreground certain concerns for the content analysis that is taken up in the following chapter. First, partisan differences matter, and the level of competition exhibited by particular parties may be having a strong influence on the dynamics of these trust relationships. Second, different institutions display different relationships. The particular nature of the presidency shapes how the public views its relationship with the press, as does Congress. And finally, there are meaningful divisions by era as well. However, the primary focus of the study is the effect of press-government competition on these attitudes. Thus, these concerns will be taken into consideration in the design and analysis that follows, but evidence of competition will be the primary focus going forward.

Chapter 4

Throwing Stones: Evidence of Competition in the Press

Incidents like Newt Gingrich's attack on the press in the 2012 presidential debates show that the press and government sometimes compete with one another through direct criticism. A more systematic examination, however, is necessary to determine the frequency of such competition. This analysis can also illuminate the finer details of such competition, such as where the attack is directed at a specific actor, a branch of government or news organization more broadly, or simply the press and government as institutions.

Several findings from the previous chapter add context. For one, trust in the press declines as the audience for network television news declines. Trust in the press is linked inversely to the number of Republicans in Congress. Finally, breakpoint analysis identified 1991 as a year in which the nature of trust in the press and government shifted downward in a systematic way.

This study set out to examine competition between the press and the government in the United States and its effect as measured by public trust in each institution. However, this leaves open the question of where to look for such competition. Competition between the government and the press could be found in a number of different forms. Politicians' public addresses sometimes contain attacks on the press, and elected officials pursue deliberate public relations strategies in order to affect press coverage. Official sources' decisions about disclosing information also represents a form of strategic resource management on the part of the government: By controlling the supply of information, politicians can set the "price" journalists are willing to pay for news. Journalists exert influence over the government in what stories they

choose to cover, how they cover them, and whom they quote. And competition between the press and government plays out directly in off-the-record discussions and negotiations between reporters and official sources.

None of these forms of competition, however, can be measured in such a way as to determine their influence on public opinion. Behind-the-scenes strategic decisions may produce publicly visible results in terms of coverage, but as we do not have access to the decisions behind this coverage, we do not know when such coverage is the result of institutional competition. And while political speeches are visible to the public, it is impossible to know how many members of the public were exposed to these speeches, unlike news coverage. Competition can only have an effect on public opinion when the public sees and knows that competition is taking place. The public is most visibly and most regularly exposed to competition between the press and government, then, in the place where they receive the majority of their political information: In press content itself. And because the public cannot otherwise know that competition is taking place unless explicitly cued, this content must take the form of direct attacks or criticism of government or the press.

Methods

Data

This chapter uses as data coverage of national politics and the press from the *New York Times*. The *New York Times* is the best single source to use for this study. Coverage of the news media was relatively rare in U.S. journalism prior to the early 1990s (Watts, Domke, Shah & Fan, 1999), and given that the goal is to examine historical trends, the *Times'* early and regular attention to the news media provides the broadest opportunity to survey differences over time.

Located in New York, the "capital" of U.S. print media, the *Times* gives more attention to the news media than other national publications. (The *Times*, for example, has a dedicated "Media" section published every Monday, unique among national newspapers.) And though network news programs are also created in New York, their relatively smaller "news holes" make them far less likely to cover the media than the *Times*. The *Times* also covers national politics through a dedicated bureau in Washington, and since the objects of the government trust attitudes are Congress and the presidency, this national focus would allow for a close concordance between the press content and public opinion data. While an ideal study would include multiple outlets in its sample, the need to systematically examine content from 19 separate years made this impractical. The *Times* offers the greatest variation and greatest reach of any of the available options.

In order to link press coverage to changes in public opinion, only those years in which survey data are available were analyzed, resulting in a population of 19 separate years between 1982 and 2010. Data were downloaded from the Lexis-Nexis database using the "Topic" field to identify articles about politics and the press. Politics articles consisted of all those with the topic code "Elections and Politics" and originating from either the National Desk or the Editorial Desk. Press articles consisted of all those with the topic code "Journalism" and appearing in any section.

A constructed two-week sample was drawn for each year (Riffe, Aust & Lacy, 1993). Dates were selected at random from the calendar year until the sample contained 14 dates, with each day of the week represented exactly twice. For each date, the full text of every article fitting the search criteria for both politics and press articles was downloaded. This resulted in a total initial sample of 4470 politics articles and 812 press articles.

Coders then filtered articles for applicability. Since the survey questions ask about trust in the U.S. press and federal government, and the goal of the content analysis was to identify press content that might reasonably have an impact on the public's trust in the U.S. press and government, focus on the U.S. news media or federal government needed to be central to the article. Articles not primarily about the U.S. government at the federal level (such as the mayoral race in Cleveland, peace negotiations between Israel and Iran, or disputes between Ford Motors and the United Auto Workers) were removed from the set of politics articles. Those not primarily about present-day happenings in the U.S. news media (such as articles about threats to press freedom in China, or a book review of a *Washington Post* editor's memoirs) were removed from the set of articles. Articles that mentioned any of these things merely in passing (such as an article about Israeli peace negotiations with the headline "Israeli, Iranian Envoys Begin Negotiation" that mentioned the U.S. ambassador to Israel once, in the sixth paragraph) were excluded.

Coders also excluded brief and non-news articles from analysis. Articles shorter than 250 words were excluded, since these would, in standard journalistic practice, be considered minor stories. Given that the survey data do not include an indication of which press sources the respondents consume, it is reasonable to assume that prominent *New York Times* stories would have circulated to whatever news source they did consume. Stories that only warranted 250 or fewer words in the country's most prominent news source, however, could not reliably be assumed to have been given coverage in other sources. Additionally, non-news items such as TV listings, obituaries, and news quizzes were excluded.

Finally, those articles that did not contain attacks were also removed, as press content that does not contain any evidence of competition is not expected to have an influence on trust.

Attacks, which are central to the analysis that follows, were defined as **a specific person or group making an explicit criticism of some other person or thing**. "The President seems determined to ruin the American health care system" is an example of an attack. Bare statements of fact that carry negative connotations were not considered attacks. "The President's health plan is opposed by the AARP" would not be considered an attack, though "The President's health care plan, which is even opposed by the AARP, is a grave political misstep" would be considered an attack. In news stories, the "specific person" had to be someone quoted in the text. In the case of editorials, however, this "specific person" could also be the author of the article, since editorials are considered to be statements of opinion coming from a particular person (or, in the case of unsigned editorials, a particular news organization).

After this filtering, the set of articles to be coded consisted of 1195 for politics and 130 for press, or 27% and 16% of the initial samples, respectively. As such, it is important to keep in mind that the percentages in the results section are based on all articles with attacks.

Additionally, so that attack-heavy articles would not be overrepresented in the analysis, coders recorded only the first three attacks in each article. Though the article is the unit of observation, the majority of the analyses that follow use attack as the unit of analysis (N=2295 attacks in politics articles and 241 attacks in press articles). A breakdown of the year-by-year sample can be seen in table 4.1.

Table 4.1: Sample Composition by Year

Year	Politics articles			Press articles		
	Total	Coded	Attacks	Total	Coded	Attacks
1982	193	59	96	36	3	5
1983	184	31	44	40	12	20
1984	264	76	143	43	5	8
1986	171	58	114	53	4	6
1987	187	51	104	24	6	14
1988	249	95	186	45	4	8
1989	148	54	74	48	9	21
1990	125	53	95	30	3	6
1991	137	53	132	46	13	23
1993	166	26	35	29	1	3
1994	158	61	136	32	9	21
1996	216	78	142	48	8	12
1998	222	76	165	50	10	20
2000	259	88	206	52	7	12
2002	620	98	185	38	7	11
2004	645	44	56	44	7	13
2006	147	56	127	55	7	14
2008	208	83	178	40	8	11
2010	171	55	77	59	7	13
Total	4470	1195	2295	812	130	241

Coding

Once an article was determined to be codeable, coders recorded two article-level qualities. First they recorded the article's tone as positive, negative, or ambivalent, as tone has been found to be important when examining media effects on press trust (Shah et al., 1999). Articles primarily about "bad news" were considered negative; laudatory or praising articles were considered positive; and neutral reports, or articles with a roughly equal amount of positive and negative content, were considered ambivalent.

For politics articles, coders also recorded whether the article was focused on process, policy, or neither. This quality was similar to the idea of a "game frame" or "strategy frame" (Aalberg, Strömbäck & de Vreese, 2012) versus a policy frame. Instead of focusing on the article's framing, however, coders looked at the article's overall content and determined whether

it was primarily about political processes, about governmental policy, or not clearly about either. By so doing, analysis of public opinion data could use this variable to test the idea that perceptions of political processes have an effect on trust (Funk, 2001). As perceptions of bias have been shown to be strongly tied to trust in the press (Watts et al., 1999), coders recorded whether there were claims of press bias in press articles, and if so, whether the bias was supposed to be in favor of liberals or conservatives.

Coders also recorded identifying information about each article, noting the date, article number assigned by Lexis-Nexis, section, and the first three words of the headline.

Finally, coders recorded the attacks found within each article. In the politics sample, 33% of articles were coded with the maximum number of three attacks, while this was true for 28% of press articles. A full breakdown can be found in table 4.2.

Table 4.2: Percentage of articles in politics and press samples with 1, 2, or 3 attacks

	Number of attacks			Mean	SD
	1	2	3		
Politics	40.2%	26.8%	32.8%	1.92	0.86
Press	43.1%	28.5%	28.5%	1.85	0.84

For each attack, coders first recorded the first three words of the attack for ease of identification and validation. They then recorded the identity of the attacker (the person or organization making the attack) and the target (the person or group at which the attack was aimed). If either the attacker or target was part of the political system, coders recorded to which branch of the federal government, if any, he or she belonged. Coders also recorded whether each was an individual or an organization, and the political party to which the attacker and target belonged, if any. Private and foreign citizens and representatives of businesses and non-governmental organizations were each recorded in their own categories. Participants in the

political system who were not members of the federal government were recorded as being representatives of a party. These included party officials, such as the chair of the Republican National Committee, as well as former elected officials not currently holding any office. If the target or attacker was a member of the press, coders recorded whether he or she was an individual or organization, and whether his or her organization was the same or different from that in which the article appeared, in order to measure competition. Attacks in unsigned editorials were coded as originating from the media organization.

Coders determined identities primarily on the basis of how each was identified within the article. For instance, a 2010 article quoting Condoleezza Rice, then a professor at Stanford, but identifying her as "Secretary of State under George W. Bush" would result in Rice being identified as a member of a Republican presidential administration. If the article did not identify an individual's party membership, coders consulted standard reference materials to make this determination. Individuals speaking as official representatives of an organization (a spokesperson for the National Rifle Association, for instance) were coded as the organization itself.

A substantial number of attacks were aimed not at individuals or organizations but policies, such as proposed or existing laws. For these, coders determined whom the article identified as sponsoring the policy. For instance, attackers might condemn "President Obama's health care act" or "the Baucus bill." These were coded by appending POL- to the code the policy's sponsor would receive if they themselves were the target. If no clear sponsor was identified, the target was recorded as POL-OTHER.

The intercoder reliability took place in two phases. The first phase was conducted in order to confirm the viability and reliability of the coding scheme and was performed by the

researcher and an assistant. Each coded all politics articles from two randomly chosen years. The test sample consisted of 443 articles, or 10% of the total sample. Intercoder agreement ranged from 75% to 84% (Krippendorff's alpha: .62 to .78). Then, to verify the reliability of the work of coders doing the data collection, a second intercoder reliability was performed among the three undergraduate coders. Training took place over four weeks in early 2013. Intercoder reliability among these three coders, using a sample of 50 articles not included in the coded sample, ranged from 70% to 92% (Krippendorff's Alpha: .69 to .84). A full summary can be found in table 4.3.

Table 4.3: Intercoder reliability

	Test coding		Three coders	
	<i>Agreement (%)</i>	<i>Alpha</i>	<i>Agreement (%)</i>	<i>Alpha</i>
Article coded	79	0.78	92	0.84
Tone	82	0.66	84	0.76
Policy / process	84	0.74	87	0.80
No. of attacks	75	0.62	85	0.78
Attacker	79	0.69	72	0.70
Target	77	0.66	70	0.69

Note: "Alpha" represents Krippendorff's Alpha.
For three coders, "Agreement" represents average pairwise agreement.

Results

General Trends in Attacks

The sources and targets of attacks in all articles can be seen in table 4.4, which divides the results between the press and politics articles. In articles in the politics sample, the press was rarely the target (3% of all attacks had the press as the target), but was the attacker relatively often (27% of all attacks). The opposite was true for the White House: It was frequently the target (34% of all attacks) but rarely the attacker (10%). Congress, meanwhile, was roughly equally likely to be the attacker (27%) and the target (23%).

These findings demonstrate certain competitive aspects of who journalists choose to—or are allowed to—quote. Despite the low regard in which politicians hold the press, and the competitive benefits they would gain from attacking an already-hated institution, either the press rarely choose to print their attacks or politicians rarely go "on record" with journalists about their unhappiness with the press's behavior. The White House, due to the primacy of the president as a subject for news but relative lesser availability to the press as a source, can frequently be attacked but is far less often used as the source of an attack. Congress, with its highly competitive internal politics and the relatively weak control of any one Congressional actor over the institutional voice in the press, appears to be the most reliable source of political attacks in the press.

Additionally, attacks frequently involved groups outside the press or government (22% of attackers, 19% of targets) or representatives of political parties who were not members of the government (14% of attackers, 12% of targets). Attacks targeted policies in 14% of the cases. Articles were primarily negative in tone (62% of articles) and focused primarily on process (68%). 71% of articles were from the news section, while 29% were from editorials.

In articles about the press, the most common target was the press (59% of all targets), but the press was also the most common attacker (53% of all attacks). The White House was occasionally the attacker (8%) or target (12%) but Congress was rarely mentioned (less than 3% of all attacks). Parties or non-governmental party representatives were occasionally attackers (8%), but almost never targets. The second highest level of attacks came from those outside the government and press (30% of attackers, 19% of targets), with 7% of all attacks coming from private citizens and 5% coming from NGOs, while foreign governments or citizens were 4% of all targets. As in the politics sample, articles were primarily negative (62%) and focused on

process (68%), but few articles included explicit accusations of press bias (11%). Articles rarely appeared in the opinion section (13%) but were equally likely to appear in news (42%) or other sections (45%) such as arts and culture or business.

Table 4.4: Sources and Targets of Attacks, by Sample

	Politics sample		Press sample	
	<i>As Source (%)</i>	<i>As Target (%)</i>	<i>As Source (%)</i>	<i>As Target (%)</i>
Press	27	3	53	59
White House	10	34	8	12
Congress	27	23	3	3
Parties	14	12	8	3
Policy	-	14	-	6
Other	22	19	30	19
χ^2	1052.90		28.57	
df	5		5	
p	< .01		< .01	
<i>Party</i>				
Democratic	28	25	6	8
Republican	25	39	12	7
χ^2	47.09		3.34	
df	1		1	
p	< .01		.07	
<i>Level</i>				
Individual	74	43	68	25
Organization	12	21	6	17
Institution		17		42
χ^2	579.16		154.67	
df	2		2	
p	< .01		.01	

Note: Figures may not sum to 100% because "policy" category can overlap with other categories, and because not all qualities were coded for each attack.

N = 2295 (politics sample); N = 241 (press sample)

Chi-square tests were run to determine if the observed distributions in each matrix under which they appear differs from the expected distribution.

Attacks on the Press

Table 4.5 shows the percentage of attacks on the press coming from each source, and compares that to the percentage of all attacks coming from that source. In articles about journalism, the biggest attacker of the press is, by far, the press itself: 48% of attacks on the press are from journalists or representatives of media organizations. Few are from the government (8%) or parties (10%). Non-governmental, non-press actors again make up the second-highest category, with 35% of all attacks on the press coming from private citizens (9%), NGOs (8%), private business (4%), foreign sources (3%), the judicial system (2%) and other sources (8%). It is notable here that attacks on the press tend not to be credited to government actors. This could mean that government officials are reluctant to put their complaints about the press on the record. However, it could also indicate that such complaints are being routed through non-governmental sources such as representatives of political parties or NGOs. Both government and the press may gain competitive advantages from this strategy: The press can put criticism of its actions in the mouths of sources with less authority than elected representatives, while government officials can avoid appearing aggressive or ungracious in the face of criticism.

Table 4.5: Sources of Attacks on the Press in Press Sample

	Proportion of attacks from each source targeted at...	
	<i>The press (%)</i>	<i>All others (%)</i>
Press	48	60
White House	7	9
Congress	1	5
Parties	10	4
Other	35	21
χ^2	12.80	
df	4	
p	.01	
<i>Party</i>		
Democratic	5	8
Republican	13	10
χ^2	1.25	
df	1	
p	.26	

Note: Figures may not sum to 100% because not all qualities were coded for each attack.

N = 143

Chi-square tests were run to determine if the observed distributions in each matrix under which they appear differs from the expected distribution.

As table 4.6 shows, the most common target for attacks on the press was not any individual media organization. Rather, it was the news media as a whole. A full third of all attacks found in journalism articles were on the news media, and 55% of all attacks on the press targeted not a specific entity but the general bundle of practices and organizations that make up the press as an institution. This was the case even though most articles were about specific examples of reporting. In a 1983 article about a court decision forcing CBS News to disclose its sources in an investigation of an army general's conduct in Vietnam, a source is quoted as saying "reporters were often unfair and irresponsible." This specific turns quickly to the general. Moreover, the previous chapter's break point analysis identified 1991 as a year in which the

structural pattern of trust in the press shifted. In the press sample, there was a more than 50% jump in attacks on the news media in general before and after 1991 (25% of all attacks before, 40% of all attacks after; $t = -2.02, p < .05$).

Table 4.6: Sources and Targets of Attacks on the Press in Press Sample

	<i>As Source</i> (%)	<i>As Target</i> (%)
Same organization	19	2
Different organization	29	43
"The media"	-	55
χ^2	82.83	
df	2	
p	< .01	

Note: Figures may not sum to 100% because not all qualities were coded for each attack.

N = 143

Chi-square tests were run to determine if the observed distributions in each matrix under which they appear differs from the expected distribution.

Attacks on Government

Table 4.7 shows attacks on government and parties found in politics articles. The highest number originated from members of Congress (29%) or the press (29%). A substantial amount also originated from those outside government and media (18%) and nongovernmental representatives of political parties (15%). The fewest originated from the White House (9%).

Attacks on government that targeted government in general (11%) were far less common than were attacks on the news media that targeted the media in general (55%). However, attacks on the White House and Congress disproportionately originated from individuals but had organizational-level targets. In attacks on Congress, 68% originate from individuals but target individuals in only 24% of cases; for the White House, these figures are 72% and 20%,

respectively. It appears that members of government have found a strategy to be slightly more diffuse in their attacks without implicating government as a whole in their critique.

Table 4.7: Sources and Targets of Attacks on Government and Parties in Politics Sample

	<i>As Source (%)</i>	<i>As Target (%)</i>
Press	29	-
White House	9	49
Congress	29	33
Parties	15	18
Policy	-	8
Other	18	18
χ^2	481.27	
df	5	
p	< .01	
<i>Party</i>		
Democratic	29	35
Republican	25	54
χ^2	53.69	
df	1	
p	< .01	
<i>Level</i>		
Individual	74	60
Organization	13	28
Institution	-	11
χ^2	352.87	
df	2	
p	< .01	

Note: Figures may not sum to 100% because not all qualities were coded for each attack.

N = 2219

Chi-square tests were run to determine if the observed distributions in each matrix under which they appear differs from the expected distribution.

Evidence of Competition

The press and government

Table 4.8 shows the percentage of press attacks targeted at each source. These were roughly similar to the distribution of attacks from other sources. The press is most likely to attack the White House (35% of press attacks in the politics sample, vs. 34% of all attacks) and Congress (27%, vs. 23% overall). It is least likely to attack policy (10%, vs. 14% overall). News media attacks were on individuals, organizations, and institutions in general at roughly the same rate as attacks from all sources. One major difference emerged here, and it had to do with political parties. In the full sample, attacks were more likely to target Republicans (38%) than Democrats (24%), but this was even more pronounced in attacks from press sources: 46% of press attacks targeted Republicans or Republican policies, while 20% targeted Democrats or Democratic policies.

Table 4.8: Targets of Attacks from Press in Politics Sample vs. All Sources

	<i>From press (%)</i>	<i>From all (%)</i>
Press	2	3
White House	35	34
Congress	27	23
Parties	12	12
Policy	11	14
Other	17	19
χ^2	3358.91	
df	5	
p	< .01	
<i>Party</i>		
Democratic	21	25
Republican	45	39
χ^2	7.84	
df	2	
p	< .01	

Note: Figures may not sum to 100% because not all qualities were coded for each attack.

N = 643 (attacks from press); N = 2295 (attacks from all)

Chi-square tests were run to determine if the observed distributions in each matrix under which they appear differs from the expected distribution.

Again examining the break point of 1991, most relationships remained stable. The one exception was attacks from the press, which jumped from 20% of all attacks before 1991 to 32% of all attacks after 1991. At the same time, the percentage of editorials, where 90% of all attacks from the press could be found, rose from 24% before 1991 to 31% after 1991. This provides additional evidence for 1991 as a break point.

While attacks on the press made up a small proportion of the attacks in politics articles (3%), especially compared to their prominence in press articles (59%), the relatively larger pool of attacks in the politics sample means that there is far less difference in the absolute number of attacks: 76 in politics articles, compared to 143 in press articles. Given that there are considerable differences in the pattern of attacks in these two samples, they are worth comparing.

Table 4.9 shows attacks on the press in politics articles. These came most commonly not from the press itself, but from the White House. A fifth of attacks on the press came from the White House, a far higher proportion than the 10% of all attacks originating from the executive branch. Attacks are also more likely to come from non-governmental and non-press sources (29%, vs. 21% overall) and from non-governmental members of political parties (18%, vs. 14% overall). Attacks were less likely to come from Congress (13%, vs. 27% overall) and, notably, the press itself (18%, vs. 27% overall).

Table 4.9: Sources of Attacks on Press in Politics Sample vs. Source of Attacks on All Sources

	<i>On press (%)</i>	<i>On all (%)</i>
Press	18	27
White House	21	10
Congress	13	27
Parties	18	14
Other	29	22
χ^2	18.43	
df	4	
p	< .01	
<i>Party</i>		
Democratic	25	28
Republican	32	25
χ^2	1.13	
df	1	
p	.29	
<i>Level</i>		
Individual	83	74
Organization	1	12
χ^2	8.76	
df	1	
p	< .01	

Note: Figures may not sum to 100% because not all qualities were coded for each attack.

N = 76 (attacks on press); N = 2295 (attacks on all sources)

Chi-square tests were run to determine if the observed distributions in each matrix under which they appear differs from the expected distribution.

Just as the press was more likely to attack Republicans than Democrats, the parties disproportionately targeted the press. A third of attacks on the press originated from Republicans, as compared to 25% of all attacks, while 25% originated from Democrats (vs. 28% of all attacks). This difference was not statistically significant, suggesting that the parties treat the press as essentially another institution to be attacked as they would Congress, the opposition, or the President.

This picture of reciprocal competition between the press and the parties is complicated somewhat by an analysis of what happens when Republicans gain power. The previous chapter showed how increasing prominence of Republicans in Congress was strongly linked to decreased trust in the press, suggesting that greater political prominence of Republicans would provide them a more effective platform to launch criticisms of the press. Using data from the content analysis, an analysis shows that as the percentage of Republicans in Congress increases, press attacks of Congressional Republicans also increases ($r = .32, p < .01$). At the same time, press attacks on Congressional Democrats went down ($r = -.25, p < .01$)—but at a slower rate than attacks on the majority party rose. And as Republicans gained more power in Congress, press attacks on Congress went down ($r = -.38, p < .01$). The press, then, seems to be competing with parties more so than with institutions.

In addition, the previous chapter found that trust in the press divided on partisan lines after 1998, with Democrats having consistently higher trust in the press than Republicans. This finding is mirrored in the content analysis data. After 1998, press attacks on Democrats decreased from 20% of all press attacks to 17%. But attacks on Republicans rose, from 40% of all press attacks to 50%.

Inter- and intra-organizational competition

As noted above, 48% of attacks on the press in the journalism sample came from other press sources. Within these attacks, the majority showed a clear pattern of competition: Only 5% of attacks on the news media were attacks on the *Times*, while 28% were of the *Times* attacking other organizations, and 22% were other organizations attacking each other. The other half of attacks on the press were attacks on the news media in general, with 35% originating from media organizations other than the *New York Times*, and 12% originating from the *Times* itself (see table 4.5 above; $\chi^2 = 82.83$, $df = 2$, $p < .01$).

Within the government, there was evidence of competition between parties. As could be expected, more attacks targeted members of different parties (25% of all attacks) than members of the same party (11%; $\chi^2 = 123.93$, $df = 1$, $p < .01$).

Conclusion

The content analysis found that attacks on the press were more commonly found in articles primarily about journalism and the press than in articles primarily about politics. While there were attacks on the press from government evident in the politics articles, these were less common across both samples than either attacks from the press or attacks from other sources such as private citizens and NGOs. This suggests that either the press is more willing to print attacks on the news media that originate from within the media (and, especially, from organizations other than the one in which the article appears) than from government, or journalists are more willing to go on record attacking the press than are politicians. The evidence here, then, is primarily of intra-institutional competition. But it is of an unusual nature: Nearly a majority of attacks on the press were attacks on "the media" in general, or as an institution.

In terms of attacks on government, the press was frequently an attacker, but so was Congress, while the White House was relatively rarely the source of attacks. The White House was also more prone to attacking itself, suggesting that differences between confidence in Congress and the Presidency may emerge in subsequent chapters. Additionally, attacks on government tended to be more specific than attacks on the press, with relatively few attacks on "government" in general, and more targeting of individuals.

Competition emerged primarily between Republicans and the press. The press attacks Republicans disproportionately, and Republicans attacks the press disproportionately as well. This trend increased after 1998, after which year the public's attitude toward the press sharply polarized. As could be expected, the press attacks Republicans more as they gain power in Congress, but attack Congress less, suggesting that the relationship may be a key one. And attacks on the press frequently come from outside government, suggesting the possibility that attacks on the press are coming through proxies, allowing elected officials to remain above the fray.

There is some initial evidence here that distrust is produced not by being the target of attacks, but by launching them. The press and Congress were each responsible for around 25% of all attacks, and according to the survey data, both enjoy notably low levels of confidence (47% "hardly any" trust in the press in 2012; 49% "hardly any" trust in Congress). The White House, however, while being the most frequent target—a third of all attacks found in politics articles—launched only 10% of attacks. In the survey data, the presidency has considerably higher confidence than the press or Congress (37% "hardly any" trust in the presidency in 2012). This will inform the analyses in the subsequent chapter, which will apply the press content analyzed here to the survey data discussed in chapter three.

Chapter 5

Two to Tango: The Influence of Competition on Perceptions of Democratic Institutions

Having established the relationship between trust in the government and press over time in chapter three, and the incidence of competition between the press and government in chapter four, this chapter will examine how the former is shaped by the latter. In so doing, the hope is to illuminate the effectiveness and consequences of competition. There have been large swings in institutional trust over time (Lipset & Schneider, 1987; Miller & Borrelli, 1991; Patterson, 1994; Norris, 2000; Chanley, Rudolph & Rahn, 2000), while qualities of media content have been linked to differences in trust in cross-sectional studies (Cappella & Jamieson, 1997; Mutz & Reeves, 2005; Sigelman, Sigelman & Walkosz, 1992). By combining survey and content analysis data, this chapter would provide the first direct examination of media effects on trust over time, adding to exploratory work by Norris (2000) and Patterson (1994).

Additionally, scholars have observed that trust in government and trust in the media seem to be related (Lipset & Schneider, 1987), a relationship that was confirmed empirically in chapter three, while others have argued that the media and government are linked institutions (Cook, 1998; Sparrow, 1999). There is little consensus as to whether the news media is at an advantage (Cook) or a disadvantage (Sparrow) in this relationship, and few indications about what might be driving the public's perception of this relationship. By looking at the two attitudes together, this chapter would also provide the first empirical evidence in this regard.

Methods

Dependent Variables

While the public opinion data had been previously discussed in chapter three, a brief summary may be useful here. The data originate from the General Social Survey, nationally representative public opinion surveys carried out by the University of Chicago's National Opinion Research Center. The surveys are taken every one to two years. While the analysis in chapter three, which looked at aggregate attitudes by year, consisted of 27 data points ranging from 1973 to 2012, this chapter uses individual-level data from the years for which press content was analyzed. Consequently, the data now come from the 19 surveys conducted between 1982 and 2010.² There are 41,353 total respondents over the 19 surveys. Table 5.1 shows the number of cases per year.

The trust measures are present in almost every survey since 1973. The questions are phrased as follows: "I am going to name some institutions in this country. As far as the people running these institutions are concerned, would you say you have a great deal of confidence, only some confidence, or hardly any confidence at all in them?" The three institutions used in the analysis here are referred to in the GSS as "the executive branch of the federal government," "Congress," and "the press." The response options for these questions are "a great deal," "only some," or "hardly any."

Each of these three variables was reverse-coded so that lower values would reflect less trust. Not all respondents were asked the confidence questions, and an additional portion chose not to respond. These were dropped from analysis. The total number of valid cases was 26,094 for trust in the President, 26,114 for trust in Congress, and 26,319 for trust in the press. Table 5.1 also shows a full breakdown of the number of missing cases per year.

² GSS data for 2012 were not available at the time the content analysis was conducted, and so press content from this year was not analyzed.

Table 5.1: Number of Cases Per Year for Trust and Differences in Trust Variables

Year	Total	Trust in Presidency	Trust in Congress	Trust in Press	Presidency- Press difference	Congress- Press difference
1982	1,859	1,801	1,807	1,804	1,769	1,777
1983	1,599	1,545	1,545	1,564	1,529	1,532
1984	1,473	954	957	959	944	949
1986	1,466	1,424	1,424	1,434	1,410	1,412
1987	1,819	1,750	1,751	1,769	1,727	1,727
1988	1,481	960	962	961	943	943
1989	1,530	981	996	999	969	986
1990	1,371	869	869	867	852	853
1991	1,502	979	971	982	968	960
1993	1,605	1,019	1,028	1,031	1,005	1,015
1994	2,989	1,960	1,948	1,969	1,943	1,929
1996	2,900	1,853	1,856	1,864	1,816	1,824
1998	2,822	1,837	1,834	1,855	1,808	1,809
2000	2,802	1,797	1,795	1,828	1,768	1,770
2002	2,747	885	886	893	876	879
2004	2,812	862	863	873	859	860
2006	4,510	1,941	1,938	1,965	1,931	1,929
2008	2,023	1,332	1,338	1,348	1,321	1,326
2010	2,043	1,345	1,346	1,354	1,333	1,337
Total	41,353	26,094	26,114	26,319	25,771	25,817

When looking at the relationship between trust in the press and government over time, Lipset and Schneider (1987) examined these two measures in the aggregate (as was done earlier in this study). They drew their conclusions based on movement year-to-year, arguing that the public perceived the two institutions as working together when the two attitudes moved in parallel and perceived a contentious relationship when the two attitudes moved in opposite directions. Such an analysis is impossible to conduct on the individual level with the GSS data, as each survey relies on a unique sample and the change in individual's attitudes cannot be tracked from year to year.

As such, the dependent variable for analysis looking at the effects of attacks on the relationship between trust in the press and trust in the government will be *whether the respondent indicated a different level of trust in the government and press*. If the respondent

responded "a great deal" when asked about confidence in the press and confidence in Congress, they received a "0" for this measure, while if the response for confidence in the press was "a great deal" but confidence in Congress was "some," they received a "1". This measure does not take into account the direction of the difference, i.e. whether the respondent had higher trust in one institution than another. In Lipset and Schneider's (1987) conception, an "attack dog" perception is reflected in respondents merely having *different* attitudes about the two institutions, regardless of the directionality. As such, it is not taken into account in this measure.

This measure was calculated for both the difference between trust in Congress and the press (47% different trust/"1", 53% same trust/"0") and the difference in trust in the president and the press (53% different trust/"1", 47% same trust/"0"). Doing so resulted in slightly higher levels of missing data for these measures, since those respondents who answered one question but not the other were now additionally dropped from analysis. The total number of cases was 25,817 for the difference in trust between the press and Congress, and 25,771 for the difference between the press and presidency.

Independent Variables

The primary influence of interest is press content, and so the measures detailed in the previous chapter serve as the main independent variables for the analysis. The two samples (journalism articles and politics articles) have been combined, as there is no theoretical reason to think an attack on the White House in an article about the press would have any meaningfully different influence on public opinion than if such an attack came in the context of an article about government. These measures were constructed on two different levels. The first analysis (referred to as the "institution" model below) indicates the number of attacks that come from or

that target each of the three institutions within the given time period. The second and third sets of analyses use the number of attacks within each category used in the analyses in chapter four (the press, the presidency, Congress, non-governmental political figures, Democrats, and Republicans) with the given institution as either source or target.

The content analysis, following accepted best practices, sampled a constructed two weeks' worth of articles from each of the 19 years in the sample. This was used to calculate a measure of press content for each individual respondent in the data set. As it would not make sense to include data on attacks in October of 1991 for someone who took the survey in April of 1991, respondents' measure of exposure to attacks was the average number of attacks per day on the days in the sample within the 6 months prior to the day on which the survey was conducted. (Data collection for each GSS takes place over roughly six months.) While the data give no indication of a respondent's exposure to the *New York Times* specifically, the content analysis was intended to measure the general level of attacks from and on different sources, and so the level of attacks for each respondent should be taken as an indication of the relative number of attacks they would have been exposed to in the given time period.

As the press content was sampled at random, and was not analyzed for every year, there are some respondents whose interview date fell more than 6 months away from any date in the sample. For these respondents, no measure was calculated. As a result, measures of press content were calculated for 39,661 of the 41,353 respondents in the original data set, or 96%. Measures were also constructed for roughly the same percentage of those answering questions about trust.

Control Variables

Each analysis additionally included a set of standard demographic controls. *Age* is measured by the GSS as a continuous variable from 18 to 88, with 89 indicating "89 or older." *Gender* was converted into a factor such that higher values are associated with "female," and thus in the tables below this has been labeled "Female" for clarity. *Race* was converted into White and non-White, with higher values indicating "White" and labeled as such. (Until 2000, the GSS measured race by the interviewer's observation, while from 2002 respondents were asked to indicate their race.) *Education* is measured as a continuous variable indicating number of years of completed education. *Party identification* is measured as a scale from 0 "Strong Democrat" to 6 "Strong Republican," such that higher values are associated with greater strength of identification with the Republican Party. (Those choosing "Other party" were excluded from analysis, representing 1.4 of the total cases.) In all cases, those answering "don't know" were excluded from analysis using listwise deletion.

Two additional control variables were included. The first, included in all analyses, was *newspaper use*. This is measured by the GSS by asking "How often do you read the newspaper - every day, a few times a week, once a week, less than once a week, or never?" This item was reverse-coded so that higher values were associated with higher levels of newspaper use. As approximately half the respondents were not asked this question, missing values were imputed for those respondents who were asked the confidence questions but not asked the newspaper use questions, using the *mi* package in R (Su, Gelman, Hill, & Yajima, 2011). The imputation process took the demographic information from all respondents in a given year who were asked about their newspaper use and built a regression model to predict their newspaper use, drawing on past findings that demographic factors are strongly linked to newspaper use (Bogart, 1989; Burgoon & Burgoon, 1980). The imputation process then applied this model to those

respondents who were not asked about newspaper use, and generated imputed values for each. By incorporating a random factor into the model, the process was able to ensure that all individuals with similar demographic characteristics were not assumed to have the same level of newspaper use. Instead, using the variance detected in the original regression, two low-income young White women would have a random chance of differing on their imputed news use, ensuring that the data would not exhibit reduced variance due to the imputation.

Second, as some have argued that trust in government is largely synonymous with approval of government (Miller, 1974a), controlling for respondents' approval of the various institutions would enhance the validity of the findings. While no direct measure of approval exists within the data, in the case of the presidency, "tracking polls" of job approval give at least an indication of the general approval of the President at the time of the interview. For each respondent, then, a measure was calculated of the percentage approving of the president's job, based on Gallup polls, in the poll taken most recently before the interview date. As approval of Congress is assessed considerably less regularly, no measure of Congressional approval was included.

Analysis

The analyses for this chapter are divided into two primary pieces. The first is an analysis of the influence of press coverage on confidence in the press, presidency, and Congress separately. The second is how attacks in the press affect the relationship between trust in the press and trust in government. While, broadly speaking, each is a regression analysis, some further specification is necessary.

Trust. The response categories for the confidence questions pose certain problems for analysis. While the responses can be ordered logically from low trust to high trust, it is unclear

that "None at all," "Some," and "A great deal" are spaced equidistant from one another, as is implied by converting them to the numerical values 1, 2, and 3. However, a statistical procedure exists to account for this issue. An *ordered logistic regression* takes a categorical dependent variable and attempts to locate a continuous measure that is latent within the observable data, then conducts a paired logistic regression on the basis of this latent variable (Agresti, 2002).

This technique was successfully applied to the three trust measures. The best indication of whether a latent variable can be sensibly inferred from the observed data is to examine the intercepts for each level of the dependent variable. If the intercept for the analysis of the first and second levels of the variable is lower than the intercept for the analysis of the second and third levels, the latent measure has detected a successfully ordered variable. As can be seen in table 5.2 below, this is the case for all three trust variables.

The coefficients resulting from the analysis are log-likelihood measures, which are converted to odds ratios for ease of comprehension. These can be best understood as the odds that a given respondent will have higher trust, rather than lower trust.³ Like all odds ratios, they have a value greater than zero, and a value of one indicates that a given factor has no effect (or, technically, makes a respondent no more or less likely to have higher trust). While no R-squared statistic can be calculated for a logistic regression, a "pseudo R-squared" can be, and in the tables below Cragg and Uhler's R-squared has been reported, as this is the measure that best approximates a traditional R-squared under the current conditions (Long, 1997). This measure can be taken as an indication of the goodness of fit of the model.⁴ The analyses were conducted

³ More specifically, each represents the odds that, given a one unit change in the independent variable, a respondent will answer "2" rather than "1," or "3" rather than "2." The odds that a respondent would answer "3" rather than "1" are equal to the odds ratio squared.

⁴ More specifically, Cragg and Uhler's R-squared represents the difference in the sum of errors between the null model (one with no predictors) and the given model, and improves upon previous measures using this approach by allowing the value to extend from 0 to 1.

in the R statistical environment using the "POLR" package for the ordered logistic regression and the "pR2" package for the pseudo R-squared.

Two models were tested. The first model, the "institution" model, tests only whether attacks on or from each institution have an effect on trust above and beyond the control variables. The model for trust in the press also includes a measure of the level of attacks on the press as an institution, as evidence from the previous chapters suggested this might be a key factor. The "competition" model includes separate measures for each institution's attacks on and from the categories in chapter four: The press, the White House, Congress, non-governmental political actors (referred to as "Party" in the tables), and all other actors, as well as Democrats and Republicans separately.

Relationship between trust in press and government. As detailed above, a measure was calculated of the relationship between each respondent's trust in government and the press. To analyze the effect of press content on this quality, a traditional logistic regression was used. This produced the same odds ratios and pseudo R-squareds discussed in the previous section. Higher odds for a given category indicate that, given a one-unit increase in the number of attacks in that category, a respondent is more likely to perceive that the press and the government are in an oppositional relationship. Only a competition model was tested for these outcome variables, given that the focus was on interactions between the institutions rather than the inherent qualities of the institutions themselves.

Results

Trust

Institution model. Results for the analysis of the institution model can be seen in table 5.2. In each case, attacks on and from each institution had significant effects on trust, but this pattern was different for government and the press. In the case of the presidency and Congress, launching attacks tended to drive trust higher. For every additional attack from Congress in the press, respondents were 7% more likely to have higher trust in Congress, while for each additional attack that originated from the White House respondents would be 10% more likely to have higher trust in the executive branch. When these institutions were the target of attacks, however, trust tended to go down. Each additional attack from the respective institution made respondents 7% less likely to trust the presidency and 10% less likely to trust Congress.

The opposite was true in the case of the press. When the press launched attacks, this tended to decrease trust in the press. Respondents were 10% less likely to trust the press for each additional attack made. But when the press was the subject of attacks, this increased the likelihood of press trust by 11%. However, this was not the case when the target of the attack was the press in general, rather than a specific journalist or media outlet. In these cases, respondents were 28% less likely to trust the press.

In this model, the press appears to have both significant advantages and drawbacks. Unlike attacks on the government, attacking the press tends to increase trust in the press as an institution. But when the press attacks, trust in the press tends to go down, again the opposite behavior as seen for the government. As criticizing public figures is one of the press' primary duties, this would seem to be a significant problem. And while criticizing the press does not generally damage trust, criticizing the press as an institution very much does. Given that the content analysis data showed that the press' self-criticism overwhelmingly targets itself as an institution, this would again prove problematic.

Table 5.2: Institution model: Effects from Attacks on and from Each Institution on Trust in the Press, Presidency, and Congress

	Press			Presidency			Congress		
	B	SE(B)	Odds	B	SE(B)	Odds	B	SE(B)	Odds
Age	0.00	(0.00)**	1.00	0.00	(0.00)**	1.00	-0.01	(0.00)**	0.99
Female	0.04	(0.02)#	1.04	0.07	(0.02)**	1.07	0.19	(0.03)**	1.21
White	-0.06	(0.03)*	0.94	-0.10	(0.03)**	0.91	-0.13	(0.03)**	0.88
Education	-0.03	(0.00)**	0.97	0.00	(0.00)	1.00	-0.03	(0.00)**	0.97
Republican	-0.10	(0.01)**	0.91	0.07	(0.01)**	1.07	-0.02	(0.01)**	0.98
Newspaper use	0.06	(0.01)**	1.06	0.03	(0.01)**	1.03	0.04	(0.01)**	1.04
Attacks from institution	-0.11	(0.01)**	0.90	0.10	(0.02)**	1.10	0.07	(0.01)**	1.07
Attacks on institution	0.10	(0.02)**	1.11	-0.08	(0.01)**	0.93	-0.10	(0.01)**	0.90
Attacks on media as institution ("the media")	-0.33	(0.04)**	0.72						
Pseudo R-squared (%)	14.8			12.3			12.1		
N	25,047			24,826			24,841		
Intercepts:									
1 2	-1.55			-0.65			-1.50		
2 3	1.05			1.73			1.33		

Note: # p < .10; * p < .05; ** p < .01
P-values are based on one-tailed t-tests.

Competition model. Results for the competition model can be seen in tables 5.3 through 5.5. These tables show the odds that a respondent will have greater trust in each institution given greater attacks on or from each institution in the categories listed. So, for example, in the "Democrats" row of table 5.3, the 1.01 under "Press as source" indicates that the press launching attacks on Democrats has no effect on trust in the press, while the 0.46 under "Press as target" indicates that for each additional attack Democrats launch more attacks on the press, respondents are 54% less likely to trust the press.

As shown in table 5.3, the news media appear to suffer no ill consequences from attacking government, a notable finding given that criticizing government actions is one of the press' primary purposes under the normative framework in the U.S. At the same time, the media can drive down trust in other institutions, as attacks from the press drop the likelihood of trusting the presidency by 7% and Congress by 31%. Moreover, being attacked by those within the political system tends to increase trust in the press; attacks from the White House make trusting the press 128% more likely, while attacks from non-governmental political actors makes trust in the press 122% more likely.

However, three weaknesses are also apparent. First, attacks from Democrats make trusting the press 54% less likely, perhaps because the press is so strongly identified as the "liberal media" in the U.S. Secondly, while the news media do not suffer when they criticize themselves in general, we see again that attacks on the press as an institution make trust in the press 33% less likely. Since half of the press' self-criticism is directed at the media in general, this may be a concern. And finally, though the press' attacks only resulted in lessened press trust when aimed at non-governmental political figures and non-political figures, we know from the institution model that, in general, when the press attacks, it drives down trust in itself. Taken

together with the finding that the press suffers no immediate effects from criticizing the government, this may indicate that the press is given a false enticement to criticize others, resulting in few negative consequences at the time but creating a cumulative effect of decreasing trust.

Table 5.3: Competition Model of Effects on Trust in the Press by Attacks on and from the Press

	<i>B</i>	<i>SE(B)</i>	<i>Odds</i>			
Age	0.00	(0.00)**	1.00			
Female	0.04	(0.02)#	1.04			
White	-0.07	(0.03)*	0.94			
Education	-0.02	(0.00)**	0.98			
Republican	-0.10	(0.01)**	0.91			
Newspaper use	0.06	(0.01)**	1.06			
Election	-0.03	(0.05)	0.97			
	Press as source			Press as target		
	<i>B</i>	<i>SE(B)</i>	<i>Odds</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>SE(B)</i>	<i>Odds</i>
Press	-0.03	(0.06)	0.97	--	--	--
Presidency	-0.07	(0.09)	0.93	0.83	(0.24)**	2.28
Congress	-0.03	(0.07)	0.97	0.29	(0.52)	1.34
Party	-0.32	(0.13)**	0.72	0.80	(0.21)**	2.22
Other	-0.07	(0.04)*	0.93	0.35	(0.09)**	1.42
Democrats	0.01	(0.09)	1.01	-0.78	(0.28)**	0.46
Republicans	-0.03	(0.09)	0.98	-0.16	(0.17)	0.85
Institution				-0.41	(0.08)**	0.67
Pseudo R-squared (%)	15.2					
N	25,047					
Intercepts:						
1 2	-1.44					
2 3	1.17					

Note: # $p < .10$; * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$
P-values are based on one-tailed t-tests.

The pattern for the presidency, seen in table 5.4, is less ambiguous. The White House's criticism of other political figures is associated with greatly increased odds of trusting the presidency: Trust in the presidency is 649% more likely when the executive branch criticizes Congress, 1313% more likely when the White House criticizes non-governmental political figures, and even 571% more likely when the White House criticizes itself. The executive branch also has the ability to drive trust in Congress down, making such trust 55% less likely. However, problems arise when the White House steps outside these formal political contexts. When the White House criticizes the press, it tends to make trust in the presidency less likely, by 45%. And when the executive branch launches attacks on particular parties, it is notably damaging to trust in the presidency. Attacks on Democrats make trust in the executive branch 88% less likely, while attacks on Republicans make trust in the presidency 90% less likely.

Table 5.4: Competition Model of Effects on Trust in the Presidency by Attacks on and from the Presidency

	<i>B</i>	<i>SE(B)</i>	<i>Odds</i>			
Age	0.00	(0.00)*	1.00			
Female	0.06	(0.02)**	1.06			
White	-0.10	(0.03)**	0.91			
Education	0.01	(0.00)*	1.01			
Republican	0.07	(0.01)**	1.07			
Newspaper use	0.02	(0.01)*	1.02			
Election	0.00	(0.04)	1.00			
Approval	0.01	(0.00)**	1.01			
	Presidency as source			Presidency as target		
	<i>B</i>	<i>SE(B)</i>	<i>Odds</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>SE(B)</i>	<i>Odds</i>
Press	-0.59	(0.12)**	0.55	-0.07	(0.02)**	0.93
Presidency	1.90	(0.24)**	6.71	--	--	--
Congress	2.01	(0.25)**	7.49	-0.08	(0.10)	0.92
Party	2.65	(0.31)**	14.13	-0.32	(0.10)**	0.73
Other	0.08	(0.03)*	1.08	0.13	(0.06)*	1.14
Democrats	-2.15	(0.25)**	0.12	0.13	(0.09)#	1.14
Republicans	-2.34	(0.26)**	0.10	0.05	(0.10)	1.06
Pseudo R-squared (%)	14.0					
N	24,826					
Intercepts:						
1 2	-0.11					
2 3	2.30					

Note: # $p < .10$; * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$
P-values are based on one-tailed t-tests.

Congress appears to be a far more tenuous position, as table 5.5 illustrates. Attacks from Congress have no effect on trust in the press or the presidency, while attacks from both the press and presidency have the ability to make trust in Congress less likely. Trust in Congress also decreases as Congress attacks itself, becoming 75% less likely—a problematic relationship given how frequently members of Congress have need to criticize their fellow representatives in the normal course of policy debates. Some trust may be gained by criticizing those outside the government, but the biggest gains in Congressional trust are seen when Congress is criticized by

particular parties. Republican criticism of Congress makes trust in Congress 252% more likely, while Democratic criticism increases the odds by 342%.

Table 5.5: Competition Model of Effects on Trust in Congress by Attacks on and from Congress

	<i>B</i>	<i>SE(B)</i>	<i>Odds</i>			
Age	-0.01	(0.00)**	0.99			
Female	0.19	(0.03)**	1.21			
White	-0.15	(0.03)**	0.86			
Education	-0.02	(0.00)**	0.98			
Republican	-0.02	(0.01)**	0.98			
Newspaper use	0.02	(0.01)#	1.02			
Election	0.10	(0.04)**	1.11			
	Congress as source			Congress as target		
	<i>B</i>	<i>SE(B)</i>	<i>Odds</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>SE(B)</i>	<i>Odds</i>
Press	-0.39	(0.23)*	0.68	-0.37	(0.04)**	0.69
Presidency	-0.04	(0.08)	0.96	-0.79	(0.20)**	0.45
Congress	-1.39	(0.19)**	0.25	--	--	--
Party	0.33	(0.09)**	1.39	-1.84	(0.19)**	0.16
Other	0.10	(0.05)*	1.10	0.45	(0.09)**	1.57
Democrats	-0.31	(0.10)**	0.73	1.49	(0.19)**	4.42
Republicans	0.10	(0.09)	1.11	1.26	(0.18)**	3.52
Pseudo R-squared (%)	14.3					
N	24,841					
Intercepts:						
1 2	-1.45					
2 3	1.43					

Note: # $p < .10$; * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$
P-values are based on one-tailed t-tests.

Emerging here are different models for how the public expects each institution to behave. The White House, as executor of laws and primary player in policy disputes, is rewarded handsomely for criticizing other government institutions, even itself; the public expects the executive branch to fulfill its regulatory role. But as the head of state (as well as the head of government), the President is our national representative. Given that the White House

experiences dramatic drop-offs in trust from criticizing specific parties, the public wants to see the executive as "above the fray" to a certain extent—or, at the very least, above partisan politics.

Congress, in contrast, is very much expected to be partisan. It is much more likely to be trusted when being attacked by specific parties, and it gains too from criticizing party figures outside the government. But it is also expected to act as a functioning institution. Congress is likely to lose trust when it criticizes the White House or the news media, and most likely when it criticizes itself, emphasizing the public's distaste for intra-institutional bickering.

As for the press, it apparently has the ability to range fairly widely in their criticisms without suffering much diminution in trust. The public reacts to the press criticizing government by trusting government less without changing their opinion on the press, and government attacks on the press tend to increase media trust. Two primary dangers lurk for the press, however, both of which have been issues in recent years. The first is in being the target of partisan criticism, especially from Democrats: As press behavior has been a sustained focus of critique from the left over the past decade or more, this can be expected to have had serious consequences for trust. At the same time, while attacks on the press in general are beneficial to trust (as emerged in the institution model), attacks on the press as an institution are likely to damage trust. This issue is largely the press' own: When the press criticizes itself, it primarily targets the press as an institution, and as these attacks have increased over time, the news media have done much work to frame itself as an institution over the past thirty years—and, thus, open itself up to damaging criticism.

Relationship between trust in press and government

The results for the analysis of influences on the relationship between respondents' trust in the press and government can be seen in tables 5.6 and 5.7. The first table shows the relationship between the press and the presidency, while the second shows the same analysis for the press and Congress. Each cell shows **the odds that a respondent will have different trust in the two institutions**. It can be read in the same way as tables 5.3 through 5.5: To see the effects of attacks from the press on the White House on the relationship between trust in the press and trust in the presidency, one can look at the upper-left quadrant of table 5.6. Read down the "Press as source" column, read over from the "Presidency" row, and see that the odds ratio is 1.17, meaning that press attacks on Congress make respondents 17% more likely to have different levels of trust in the press and the presidency, though this relationship is not significant.

In terms of the relationship between the press and the presidency seen in table 5.6, press self-criticism has a significant influence (see the upper-left quadrant). This is surprising given that such self-criticism was not found to have any effect on trust in the press itself. That it does have an effect on the press' relationship with government suggests that press self-criticism violates the norm of press neutrality. As the press criticizes itself it is seen as acting less like the neutral, objective provider of information that it has been recently conceived of in the U.S. and more like a political institution, internally competitive, fractious, and self-interested. The press criticizing Congress, however, drives the perception that the press and government are separate: The press is here fulfilling its role as government watchdog.

When examining attacks on and from the White House (see the bottom two quadrants of table 5.6), it is clear that as the press plays host to greater competition within and between government institutions this drives the perception that the press and government are linked. The presence of increased attacks on the White House from Congress makes respondents 31% more

likely to see the press and White House as linked, while each additional attack on the presidency from non-governmental political actors make trust 37% more likely. But when the press covers criticism of the presidency from specific parties, this makes respondents more likely to see the press and government as separate.

Taken together, these findings suggest an indirect relationship is driving perceptions of the relationship between the press and White House. Little effect is seen from the press or White House directly criticizing each other. As the press criticizes itself, however, this encourages comparisons to government institutions and suggests the two are similar. A similar effect occurs when the press plays host to competition between government institutions, as it inserts itself into these debates in what can appear like a similar role. But when the press enables the government to criticize parties, the public sees the press and government as in a more oppositional relationship, perhaps because it regards criticism of partisans as a more proper role for the press than playing host to intra-governmental squabbles.

Table 5.6: Effects on Relationship Between Trust in the Press and Presidency

	<i>B</i>	<i>SE(B)</i>	<i>Odds</i>			
Age	0.00	(0.00)**	1.00			
Female	-0.05	(0.03)*	0.95			
White	0.12	(0.03)**	1.12			
Education	0.01	(0.00)	1.01			
Republican	0.01	(0.01)	1.01			
Newspaper use	0.01	(0.01)	1.01			
Election	0.08	(0.07)	1.08			
Approval	0.00	(0.00)	1.00			
	Press as source			Press as target		
	<i>B</i>	<i>SE(B)</i>	<i>Odds</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>SE(B)</i>	<i>Odds</i>
Press	-0.36	(0.11)**	0.70	--	--	--
Presidency	0.15	(0.11)	1.17	-0.23	(0.33)	0.79
Congress	0.15	(0.08)	1.16	-0.82	(0.70)	0.44
Party	0.19	(0.16)	1.21	0.03	(0.32)	1.03
Other	-0.05	(0.05)	0.95	-0.03	(0.09)	0.97
Democrats	-0.17	(0.11)	0.84	0.44	(0.38)	1.56
Republicans	-0.01	(0.11)	0.99	0.09	(0.27)	1.10
	Presidency as source			Presidency as target		
	<i>B</i>	<i>SE(B)</i>	<i>Odds</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>SE(B)</i>	<i>Odds</i>
Press	--	--	--	--	--	--
Presidency	-0.64	(0.35)#	0.53	--	--	--
Congress	0.14	(0.36)	1.15	-0.36	(0.14)**	0.69
Party	0.24	(0.52)	1.28	-0.46	(0.16)**	0.63
Other	-0.11	(0.04)*	0.90	-0.06	(0.08)	0.95
Democrats	0.00	(0.41)	1.00	0.34	(0.14)*	1.41
Republicans	0.34	(0.46)	1.41	0.34	(0.14)*	1.40
Pseudo R-squared (%)	9.5					
N	24,535					

Note: # $p < .10$; * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$
P-values are based on one-tailed t-tests.

The relationship between trust in the press and trust in Congress (as seen in table 5.7) is considerably more direct. The strongest influence comes from Congressional attacks on the press (seen in the upper-right quadrant, under "Press as target"), which result in a 79% greater likelihood that respondents will see the press and government as linked. This gives Congress a notable advantage: By criticizing the press as failing to abide by professional norms, they create an impression that the press is simply another political institution rather than a selfless champion of truth. Press attacks on government seem to encourage similar associations, as each additional attack from the press on the presidency (see the upper-left quadrant, under "Press as source") results in a 22% greater chance that the press and government will be linked, and while press attacks on non-governmental political actors result in a 39% greater chance of the press and government being seen as linked.

As in the prior analysis, however, the press can mitigate this tendency somewhat by criticizing specific parties. As partisan politics may be seen as emblematic of everything wrong with government, press criticism of the Democrats and Republicans specifically could increase the perception that the press is a neutral actor. And aside from criticizing the press, nothing Congress does (or has done to it) much affects this relationship. Only the press' criticism of Congress and Congress' criticism of the press drives this perception.

Table 5.7: Effects on Relationship between Trust in the Press and Congress

	<i>B</i>	<i>SE(B)</i>	<i>Odds</i>			
Age	-0.01	(0.00)**	0.99			
Female	-0.03	(0.03)	0.97			
White	0.16	(0.03)**	1.17			
Education	-0.01	(0.00)	0.99			
Republican	0.00	(0.01)	1.00			
Newspaper use	0.00	(0.01)	1.00			
Election	0.03	(0.06)	1.03			
	Press as source			Press as target		
	<i>B</i>	<i>SE(B)</i>	<i>Odds</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>SE(B)</i>	<i>Odds</i>
Press	0.02	(0.11)	1.02	--	--	--
Presidency	-0.25	(0.12)*	0.78	0.03	(0.35)	1.03
Congress	-0.16	(0.09)#	0.85	-1.56	(0.58)**	0.21
Party	-0.50	(0.17)**	0.61	0.36	(0.31)	1.44
Other	-0.04	(0.04)	0.96	0.25	(0.10)*	1.28
Democrats	0.29	(0.13)*	1.33	0.10	(0.35)	1.10
Republicans	0.36	(0.12)**	1.43	0.06	(0.23)	1.06
	Congress as source			Congress as target		
	<i>B</i>	<i>SE(B)</i>	<i>Odds</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>SE(B)</i>	<i>Odds</i>
Press	--	--	--	--	--	--
Presidency	-0.10	(0.13)#	0.90	-0.55	(0.30)	0.58
Congress	-0.46	(0.32)	0.63	--	--	--
Party	-0.18	(0.13)	0.84	-0.18	(0.29)	0.83
Other	0.03	(0.10)	1.04	0.09	(0.10)	1.09
Democrats	0.06	(0.15)	1.06	0.31	(0.28)	1.37
Republicans	0.09	(0.12)	1.10	0.27	(0.26)	1.31
Pseudo R-squared (%)	9.4					
N	24,575					

Note: # $p < .10$; * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$
P-values are based on one-tailed t-tests.

This chapter has combined the data from the two previous chapters to produce a comprehensive analysis of how press content affects trust, and the relationship between trust in the press and trust in government. The following chapter will present an overview of the findings from all three data chapters to draw conclusions about the nature of this relationship and how public trust is affected by the behavior of both the press and politicians.

Chapter 6

A Matter of Trust: Conclusion

Democratic institutions must maintain the public's trust, or else their legitimacy is severely threatened. Public trust in the press and the government has fallen precipitously over the past half-century, and researchers have not isolated a consistent cause, though media content is one of the strongest explanatory mechanisms. Additionally, the press is normatively supposed to act as a "watchdog" on the government, monitoring political actions for malfeasance. If the public does not perceive that the press is fulfilling this role, this would be an additional threat to its legitimacy.

This study set out to examine the relationship between trust in the government and trust in the press over time and how competition between the two institutions might affect that relationship. This final chapter will summarize the findings that have emerged in the three prior data chapters and how they contribute to the body of scholarship investigating media effects on trust. It will examine three conclusions in detail.

First, scholars of new institutionalism and mediatization (Cook, 1998; Sparrow, 1999) have made arguments about the relative power of the press and government. The findings here give empirical support to a model of press-government relations in which each side has specific advantages and disadvantages. But it is not true that both institutions have equal ability to leverage those advantages through their actions. Instead, the particular conditions of the present political moment tend to make the press's disadvantages far more damaging.

Second, while the news media's status as an institution is moving toward acceptance (including by the public, given the commonality of terms like "the media" to describe the

propagators of specific journalistic practices), this identity is one that only slowly emerged in the twentieth century. The evidence here suggests that the media themselves played a key role in creating the idea of the news media as an institution. Moreover, this transformation has created problems for journalists' credibility.

Finally, this study took as one of its central aims the identification of specific historical reasons for changes in trust in the press and government. In examining the survey and press data, it appears that the most likely explanation is changes in the media environment. As new forms of journalism emerged, particularly 24-hour cable news and political blogs, journalistic practices changed, and this resulted in different sorts of effects on trust.

Advantages and Disadvantages in Press-Government Relations

In theories of the relationship between the press and government, the press is ultimately held to be either superior or subordinate to the government. Sparrow (1999) portrayed the press as the less powerful partner, incapable of fulfilling a strong adversarial role due to its weakly organized structure. This assumption can be found in the work of many press scholars. Bennett's indexing theory (1990), for instance, portrays journalists as capable only of replicating the discourses of elites, not consciously shaping their own frames. This portrayal of journalistic interests being subordinated to political ones recurs frequently throughout the communication literature, all the way up to Ladd's (2012) theory of trust in the U.S. media being related far more to political polarization than to any behavior on the part of the press.

Another strain of research, especially prominent in European scholarship, holds that the press has the power to shape political processes and policy. Mediatization research frequently paints the news media as a "strong institution," capable of altering the way elected officials

communicate with the public and with one another. This finds a counterpart in Cook's (1998) version of new institutionalism, which emphasizes the U.S. press' past status as the political communication arm of parties and argues that journalists should be limited in their political activities. Even outside these explicit arguments for the press as a strong institution, critical media scholarship assumes the media capable of strong effects on attitudes, as do social scientific arguments against the "minimal effects" paradigm.

This study argued for a model of press/government relations that made fewer normative assumptions. Neither should the press be expected to act with its watchdog role primarily in mind (as Sparrow would have it) nor should government be expected to spend its time simply making good policy (as Cook would have it). Instead, these institutions—each set up, after all, to encourage its actors to seek power, whether political power in the case of the government or economic power in the case of the U.S. press—should be assumed to be in competition with one another. Specifically, the press, White House, and Congress are all competing to be the most widely trusted source of political information.

This competition can take place directly, through criticism that attempts to damage public trust in each institution. In this sense, the press would seem to have an advantage, given that is normatively expected to be critical of the government. The government, however, has an additional avenue to compete with the credibility of the press. Since the press (in the U.S., at least) is normatively expected to be independent of the government, criticism that pushes the public to see the press and government as linked institutions would also have a damaging effect on the press' ability to operate freely.

But such inter-institutional competition is not the primary focus of any individual actor. Instead, advantage within each institution can be assumed to be the primary moment-to-moment

pursuit: reporters want to scoop other reporters, elected officials want to beat their opponents in elections, and media organizations want greater audiences. As such, the analysis looked at both how the press and government criticized one another as well as how competition was displayed within each institution.

Initial analyses of public opinion data both confirmed and complicated the relationship between trust in government and the press suggested by Lipset and Schneider (1987). Trust in one was clearly related to trust in the other, with each attitude "following" the other at a remove or two to three years. However, the directionality of the relationship varied over time. One way to examine how the relationship shifted was to look for particular moments when shifts in the attitudes were evident. A breakpoint analysis found that 1991 was a particularly significant year for all three attitudes, and that the pattern of trust before 1991 was different than what is seen after 1991.

Once press content was incorporated into the analysis, however, a set of advantages and disadvantages unique to each institution emerged, each linked to normative ideas about how each should act. In the model focused on the institutions' own actions, it is clear that the press is expected to act differently than the government: While the news media are less likely to be trusted for each attack they launch, the opposite is true for the government; while the government is less likely to be trusted for every attack made on it, the opposite is true for the press. The press has a defensive advantage, gaining trust when it is attacked, but the government has an offensive advantage, making it more capable of attacking rivals without losing public support.

In the competition model, the details speak to even more specific advantages and disadvantages specifically in terms of press-government relations. While the press suffers from launching attacks in general, it does not lose trust from attacking any particular political or

government actor, and in fact has the ability to damage trust in many of these actors and institutions. This reflects normative expectations for the press's watchdog role. Taken together with the institutional model, however, it suggests a disadvantage for the press in the current context: Given the ever-expanding news hole that has come along with 24-hour news and always-on online news, there is an economic impetus to expand the targets of criticism beyond elected officials. Additionally, partisan criticism, particularly from Democrats, can drive down press trust as well, creating another disadvantage for the press.

The government's advantages and disadvantages are tied to citizens' normative expectations as well. The White House gains markedly from criticizing other political actors, even itself, but loses from criticizing parties, reflecting an expectation that it execute the laws neutrally and stay above the partisan fray. The presidency, then, has a vulnerability to partisan assault. Congress gains from attacking or being attacked by others, but loses most when it criticizes itself, reflecting unhappiness with partisan bickering. Given that internal competition is key to Congressional activity, this seems like a key vulnerability.

Finally, when it comes to the relationship between trust in the government and trust in the press, launching attacks is clearly disadvantageous for the press, as press self-criticism or press criticism of non-governmental political figures encourages the perception that the press and government are linked institutions. This perception is also encouraged when the press serves as a venue for political figures to criticize one another, and Congress has the power to drive this perception directly by criticizing the press. Where the press can reverse the trend is in criticizing specific parties, which drives the perception that the press and government are separate by counteracting perceptions of media bias.

Taken together, the picture is of the press as neither a strong nor a weak institution. Instead, it has certain qualities that benefit it and qualities that make it more vulnerable, and the historical conditions in which it finds itself shape whether its behavior will be beneficial or harmful. Over the period of study, it appears that these conditions have played more to its weaknesses than its strengths. The increased news hole has encouraged criticism that targets other actors besides the government, which damages trust, as well as increased self-criticism, which drives perceptions that the press and government are acting in concert. Conservative criticism of the press as liberally biased has encouraged a matching liberal critique of the press as overly conservative, and these Democratic-sourced attacks damage trust. At the same time, charges of media bias have made the press wary of engaging in criticism of partisans, even though this behavior would encourage perceptions that the press is fulfilling its watchdog role. Meanwhile, Congress can criticize the press, successfully damaging its reputation, without suffering any penalty itself. While the press still has the advantage of benefitting from criticism from the White House, as well as criticism in general, this does not seem to be enough to overcome its significant disadvantages.

The Creation of (the Idea of) the Institutional Press

The press as a political institution is still a contested idea. As Michael Schudson wrote in a 2002 article, "Journalism is a constituent of political life that political science for the most part has neglected" (2002, p. 249). Indeed, in the mid-twentieth century it seems that neither the public nor politicians or even journalists themselves thought of the press as an institution. Certainly individual media organizations such as the *New York Times* or BBC could be "institutions" in the vernacular sense, but they were not necessarily considered to be part of any

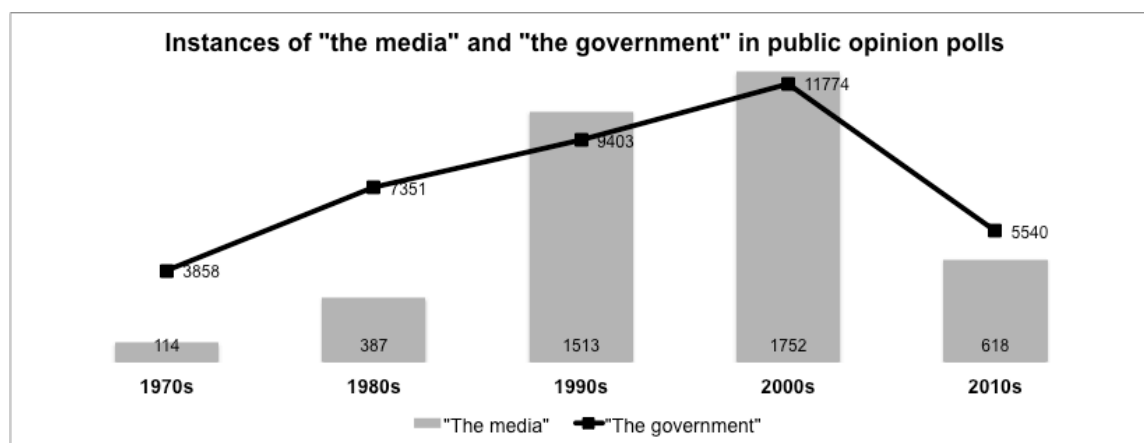
larger system. As Schudson points out, Walter Lippmann's *Public Opinion* was far more concerned with the press as a social force, shaping our perceptions of the world, than a political one, helping to make policy.

When politicians did criticize the news media publicly, they tended to focus on particular outlets or stories rather than the press as a whole. When Spiro Agnew criticized the press, he used the term "Eastern establishment," and conservative press criticism in the 1990s tended to focus on the "liberal media." Both paint the press not as a force in its own right, but identify a subset of the press as one outgrowth of a larger problem. The press, in this depiction, is not acting politically; its most prominent outlets are merely aping a particular ideology. It is a mouthpiece, not an actor in its own right.

Nevertheless, over the last 30 years the idea that the press is an institution seems to have taken root. This is most obvious in the widespread use of the term "the media." While criticizing a particular publication ("the New York Times") or newswriters in general ("journalists") implies a critique of particular, concrete practices, "the media" (or "the news media") implies an institution with overarching norms and interests. One demonstration of the increased prominence of the perception of an institutional press comes from a simple search of the Roper Center's iPoll database of public opinion surveys for the terms "the media" and "the government." The results can be seen in figure 6.1, which shows the number of times "the media" and "the government" appear in public opinion poll questions in each decade. (The categories are plotted on different axes to enable comparison; actual values are shown next to each data point.) From the 1990s onward, pollsters used the two terms at roughly the same rate. But before the 1990s, "the media" was used much less frequently than "the government." Expressed as a percentage of poll questions using the term "the government," instances of "the media" jump from 5% in the 1980s

to 16% in the 1990s. For some reason, "the media" became a term that had far more resonance with the public starting in the 1990s. And to refer to the media as an institution encourages thinking about the media as an institution. Synecdoche, here, is destiny.

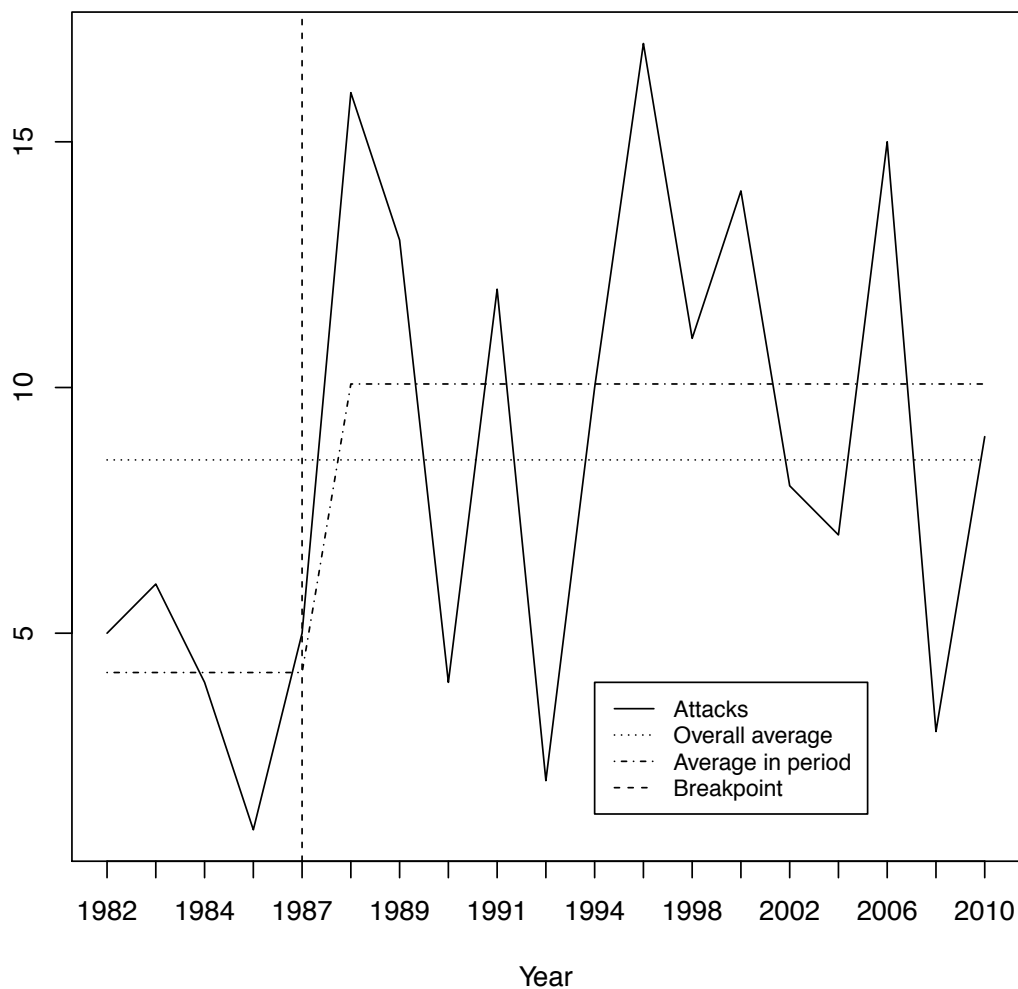
Figure 6.1: Greater Assumption of Press as Institution in Poll Questions, 1970s–Present



While researchers and politicians deserve some credit for the rise of this idea, the current data suggest that the press itself did much work to create the idea of the press as an institution. In the analysis of media content, the majority of attacks on the press did not target a specific organization, like the *New York Times*, or a specific story. While Newt Gingrich's criticism of the press' focus on his ex-wife in the 2012 primary debates may be the most prominent form of news media criticism, these sorts of attacks are very much in the minority overall. Instead, the majority of attacks targeted the press, or press practices, as a whole. Half of all attacks on the press in journalism articles (55%) targeted the news media as an institution, making up a third of all attacks in journalism articles. And these attacks were not coming from the government, or outside sources: Half of all attacks on the news media came from the media itself. Media criticism consists primarily of the media criticizing itself as an institution.

Moreover, the level of these attacks on the news media as an institution changed over time. Before the key year of 1991, identified in the breakpoint analysis of opinion trends in chapter two, attacks on the news media in general made up 25% of all attacks in the press sample; after 1991, they made up 40% of all attacks. A breakpoint analysis of the press content data, visualized in figure 6.2, identified a clear point at which the cyclical pattern of attacks on the news media in general changed: 1987, after which point attacks jumped sharply. This mirrors the pattern in Figure 1, which showed a major uptick in evocations of the press as an institution in the 1990s.

Figure 6.2: Breakpoint in Attacks on the Press as an Institution



The historical record suggests a few possible explanations for this rise. One could be the increasing professionalization of the media. While the U.S. press has always been "weakly professionalized" compared to occupations like the law or medicine, from the formation of formal press organizations to the news media's formal integration into the government's political communication, with reporters formally accredited to attend presidential press conferences, the twentieth century was one in which journalism became increasingly official as a pursuit. It would be entirely understandable that increasingly professionalized journalists would devote more attention to their occupation as a unified practice and interconnected set of organizations rather than individual outlets or reporters. It is also true, as previously noted, that press organizations have had increasingly greater space to fill, and one way to do that is to expand (or even create) coverage of the news media; certainly many of the major new press outlets, especially blogs and partisan cable news channels, have made media criticism a central focus.

It is also possible that this new focus came from outside the profession. Conservative politicians launched a series of assaults on the news media beginning in the early 1970s, and conservative commentators picked up on this theme. A similar discourse exists on the left, where critics have constructed an argument about the press as hostile to democracy. Given that the press is unusually porous as a profession, given more to reporting what others say than to speaking for itself, these criticisms may have simply been incorporated into media coverage because of their increasing presence in popular and elite discourse about the press.

Whatever the cause, the effect is clear. In the media effects analysis, increased attacks on the news media as an institution had a clear negative effect. Each additional attack made respondents around 30% less likely to trust the media. In creating an image of itself as an institution, the press has essentially presented its subjects with a more prominent target to attack.

In many ways, increased discussion of the press' institutional status is good, given the scholarly interest in analyzing the media from that perspective. But in terms of democratic healthiness, the trend seems to have decidedly negative consequences.

The Changing Media Environment and its Effects

As the goal of this study was to examine media effects on trust in institutions over three decades, the media source chosen had to have been produced continuously over that period. Some of the most drastic changes in U.S. journalism, however, happened elsewhere. CNN, founded in 1980, was initially available only to 1.7 million viewers (Küng-Shankleman, 2000), but through its live coverage of the "baby Jessica" incident and the first Gulf War, became the standard for live news coverage (Belkin, 1995). Once the network was available in most American households, news was simply available 24 hours a day; no longer did networks have to decide to break into their coverage to cover a major story.

Cable news shifted again with the premiere of Fox News in 1996. The network took the longstanding form of opinionated commentary shows from conservative talk radio and put them in the more respectable context of television news. The network wielded apparent political power during the George W. Bush administration, and its model was so successful that rival channel MSNBC, initially launched to ape the neutral model of CNN, changed its format in 2008 to become the liberal version of Fox.

Most recently, the Internet has had a major influence on the practice of journalism. While the Drudge Report's breaking of the Lewinsky affair in 1998 marks the beginning of the web's influence on politics, a more systemic transformation only took hold in the early 2000s. The initial influence of blogs suggested a possible revolution in citizen journalism as amateur

bloggers broke major stories. But as online journalism has professionalized and moved into new forms like Twitter, what has emerged is a bundle of practices markedly different from traditional journalism.

How did these changes show up in the data here? While the *Times*, broadly speaking, follows the same form of newspaper journalism that has been in place for decades, in the nearly 30 years' worth of articles analyzed for this study, clear, systematic differences were evident between articles from 1982 and articles from 2010, even when the byline remained the same. Changes elsewhere in the media environment alter the professional conditions of journalism as it is practiced universally, and thus have an impact on practices at the *Times*. (This applies in reverse as well, which is why trends in coverage at the *Times* might have an effect on the attitudes of people who have never read the *Times*.) While the paper was less affected by the changes in TV news, the emergence of online news as a significant area was embraced wholeheartedly by the paper, and they have developed features that mimic those developed on online-only publications, such as single-author blogs, user comments, and social networking.

The cumulative effect of these changes in the news media can be summarized in three broad shifts. The first is that the space available for news has expanded dramatically. The cumulative "news hole" in American journalism shrunk through the middle twentieth century, as metropolitan areas that once had multiple papers publishing in the morning, afternoon, and evening instead had only one, and TV news was limited to a single half-hour broadcast per evening. The advent of 24 hour cable news and the internet expanded the available space massively, and even at the conservative *Times* their more than 40 blogs (as of the end of 2013) publishing one to five closely edited stories per day significant expand the amount of space *Times* journalists have to get information to the public.

The second is the increasing acceptance of opinionated journalism. While Fox News' openly ideological reporting and commentary have provoked much complaint, blogs took a similarly opinionated tone, and generally a sense that the "strategic ritual" of objectivity might be outdated has emerged (Rosen, 2010). While the *Times* has resisted this shift to a certain degree, the increasing presence of semi-opinionated "analysis" articles outside the official Op-Ed section became so widespread that the paper began indicating columns with what they referred to as a "point of view" by left-justifying the text (Hoyt, 2008).

Finally, the speed at which news is produced has increased markedly, a shift noticed by journalists themselves (Cassidy, 2005; Schudson & Anderson, 2009). Cable news begins interpreting a story before having a complete picture of the facts; blogs can be updated any minute of the day, and reporters say they face pressure from editors to do so; and Twitter increases the flow of information to second-by-second. The *Times* now updates the online version of breaking stories multiple times, and reporters' Twitter feeds serve as definitive sources of information.

Taken together, the result is a series of changes in how journalism is practiced, which, given that attitudes about the press are affected in large part by the press' actions, can be expected to have some effect on public attitudes. That these changes are universal is what makes them potentially dangerous. Greater speed, opinion, and content may make sense in the context of online-only publications. But in the context of the venerable *Times*, it could violate expectations held by readers. While the public might applaud greater coverage of breaking news, or greater opinionated commentary about elections, this may not be the case for everyday reporting on the workings of government. Additionally, as these changes move normal press practices away from the normative ideal, solidly located in mid-twentieth century press practices

and the age of political consensus, the impact on public trust may be more pronounced. At the same time, all of these shifts in what is considered standard journalistic practice change the basis on which assessments of press criticism are made in articles about journalism. Changing standards, along with the increased emphasis on commentary and the larger news hole, also encourage greater frequency of media criticism.

The data here offer some clues as to what effect this shift might be having. As previously discussed, breakpoints in both the patterns of press coverage and trends in trust show clear differences around the times of these major shifts in the media environment. Most notably, the pattern of attacks originating from news sources shifted at two points, both times becoming more common: 1988, when CNN became a major force; and 2004, when blogs began to play a political role, as visualized in figure 6.3. At the same time, attacks *on* the press went up in 1988 (shown in figure 6.4), and attacks on the press as an institution went up in 1987 (see figure 6.2, above).

Figure 6.3: Breakpoints in Attacks from the Press

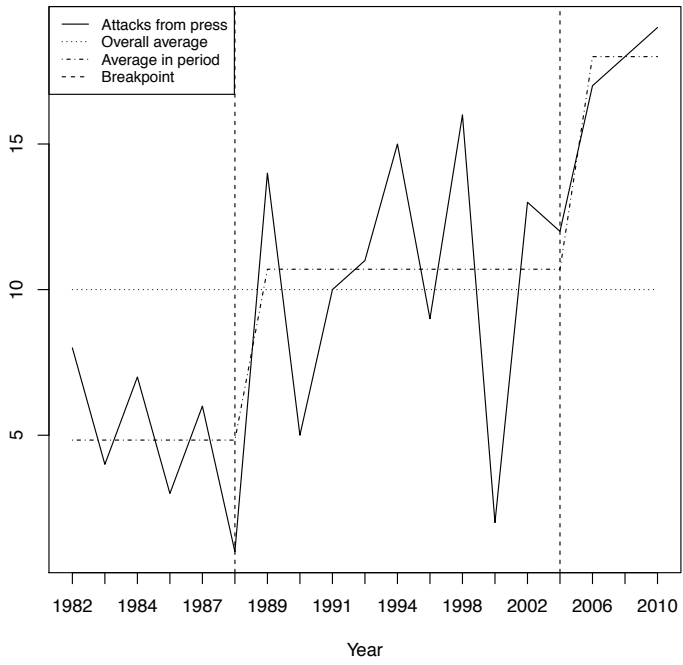
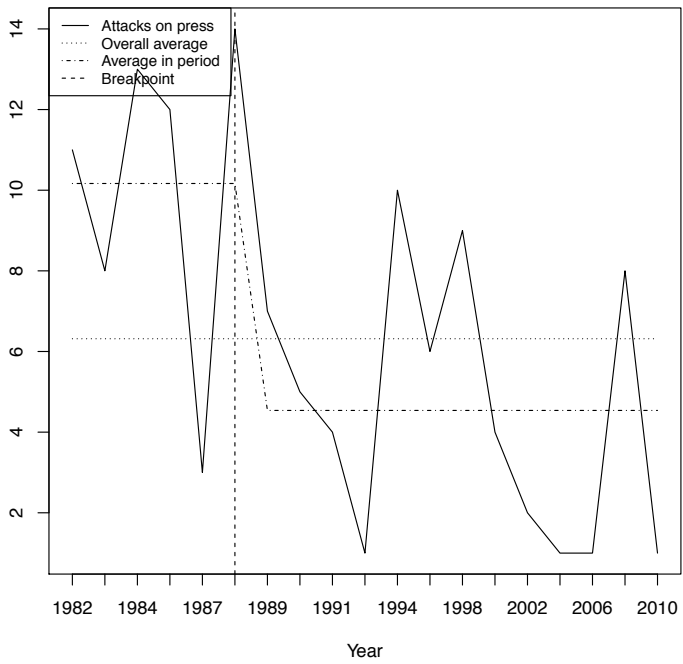


Figure 6.4: Breakpoint in Attacks on the Press



These shifts in press practices can be linked to shifts in effects. In chapter three, a breakpoint analysis found that 1991 was a turning point for patterns of trust. This suggested that separate regression analyses should be run before and after that point. Doing so produced few differences from the overall analyses. However, what did emerge was notable. While the competition model of trust in the press found no relationship overall with the press attacking itself, this was not the case when the regression is done solely on respondents from 1991 and earlier. In this case, media self-criticism drives trust in the press up.

What this analysis shows is that changes in the media environment produced a context less amenable to press trust. As cable news became a major force, other press outlets began to launch attacks more frequently (relative to the frequency with which they printed attacks from non-press sources). The content analysis showed that many of these press attacks were focused on the press itself. When these attacks were relatively rare, pre-cable news, such attacks had a salubrious effect on trust, perhaps encouraging greater instances of such self-criticism. But as cable news makes such criticism more common, that effect disappears. Instead, as we know from other regressions, media self-criticism encourages perceptions that the government and press are closely aligned, violating the public's normative expectations. Changes in the media environment thus caused problems for the press overall.

Conclusion

This study set out to determine the prominence and effect of competition between the press and government. What emerged was a complex set of trends and influences. As the prior discussion illuminates, however, three clear conclusions could be drawn: While each institution has its own sets of advantages and disadvantages, the current historical context most

disadvantages the press; over the course of the last fifty years, the press worked to create an image of itself as an institution, with problematic results; and changes in the media environment have altered the way the public perceives the relationship between the press and the government.

Some weaknesses should be noted. Unlike many prior studies that linked press content and survey data, the polling data here lacked any indication of the specific media sources respondents consumed. As such, the content analysis data should be understood as showing the relative presence of such attacks in the information environment, using the *New York Times* as a proxy. At the same time, the *Times* may not be the best source for press criticism if we are willing to look beyond print newspapers. The most prominent examples of press self-criticism seem to come in the form of books, talk radio, cable TV news, and blogs. Such forms, not all of which are practically available, pose higher practical barriers to analysis. Nevertheless, these are worth pursuing in future work.

Another possible limitation concerns the nature of the time-series data; namely, how "the press" has changed drastically over time. While this may have an effect on institutional trust (as discussed above), it also may shape how respondents understand the question used to measure the dependent variable. Consequently, there may be validity issues with comparing responses in 2010 that equate "the media" with cable news and blogs in 2010 to responses in 1982 that are based on print newspapers and network newscasts. Time series measures asking about confidence in news media that have been relatively consistent over time would be able to address this issue.

Finally, there are additional structural factors not incorporated into these models that could have affected not only on trust in these institutions, but also in institutional trust more generally, which declined steadily over the latter half of the twentieth century. While such

considerations were outside the scope of this study, certainly an analysis that was able to pair individual trust measures with economic factors such as unemployment would be valuable. At the same time, while the measures of attacks on and from different parties found significant differences, this analysis did not control for the party in power at the time, which could reasonably be assumed to attract more attacks than the party in opposition.

Nevertheless, the findings here are substantial. This study argued for the value of looking at media effects on perceptions of institutions over time, noting that studies taking a longitudinal approach to analysis had often found more robust relationships than those taking a cross-sectional sample. The results of the analyses supported this idea. Even though the survey data gave no indication of whether the respondents had been exposed to the media content analyzed, the measures of attacks were successfully able to indicate a feature of the information environment that could have an effect on the survey respondents. That effects on public opinion could be found even without any indication of whether respondents had been exposed to the press content shows that the press content was a reliable indicator of the presence of attacks in the information environment, as well as how strong the effects are. It also demonstrates the value of examining media effects on public opinion over time.

The conclusions here suggest the need for future study, especially of the press's creation of its own institutional image. But they also stand on their own. Media effects on trust in the government and the press have frequently been the object of study in communication research. And recent research has shown interest in the effects of media self-criticism. This study contributes substantively to these bodies of literature.

A current debate in the field concerns what methods are best used to understand mediated human communication, with a particular emphasis on moving away from traditional survey-

based methodology. Some urge a focus on micro-level message processing as observed through experimental studies (Lang, 2013), while others call for more qualitative political communication, arguing that only close observation of complex, real-world communication processes can produce meaningful theory (Karpf, Kreiss, & Nelson, 2013). And a further strain of research on "big data" makes a case for moving beyond sample-based observation entirely, instead using the rich stream of impressions from social media and other digital sources to gain a holistic understanding of human communication (though see boyd & Crawford, 2012).

What the current study suggests is that there is life left in the old methods yet—they just may need to be leveraged in new ways. One of the great strengths of communication as a discipline is that it frequently operates at the cutting edge of new technological and social developments. The creation of new media technologies has produced novel objects of study at a consistent clip, and researchers have taken advantage of the opportunity to produce a stream of new research on new tools for mediated communication. While this has made for a vital and vibrant field, some have charged that communication has difficulty developing theory that goes beyond the media technology of the moment (Lang, 2013; Trumbo, 2004).

What is missing from these three suggested approaches to revitalizing communication research is much of a sense of the deep historical resources now available to the field. The past, in these approaches, seems best left behind in a search for new data and new observations. Though ostensibly visionary, these approaches suffer from a worrisome shortsightedness. When the field was founded, researchers had no archival data to draw from in order to place their new observations into the context of how humans communicated in the past. We now know that to be a weakness of this otherwise-revolutionary early research. To take but one example, the limited effects paradigm was necessarily the product of an era of highly centralized public

communication and political consensus (Gitlin, 1978). With more historical perspective, researchers might have concluded that this is a temporary effect of the particular media environment in which their research was conducted. Given that this work encompassed some of the earliest broadcast technologies, however, such perspective was out of reach.

Now, however, communication researchers have the benefit of vast archives of historical data from both opinion surveys and the mass media. What are lacking are reliable methods to analyze these data. The overwhelming majority of communication research is still cross-sectional, looking at only a single moment in time. (Work such as Norris's [2000] and Prior's [2007] remains the exception.) In large part—as the current study amply demonstrates—that is because the data make traditional time-series analyses problematic. Unlike the data used by economists, demographers, or public health researchers, measures of political attitudes and media use are taken both irregularly and inconsistently. One cannot easily apply existing methodologies to the historical data available. This should not deter scholars, however, from undertaking such efforts.

The results of this study speak to the worth of this quantitative historical analysis. Public trust in democratic institutions is considered vital to maintaining their legitimacy, yet determining why trust has changed so dramatically over time has proven difficult. This study shows that conceptualizing the press and government as linked yet competitive institutions is vital to this analysis. Trust in the press, Congress, and presidency are closely linked, and past levels of trust in one can predict future trust in others. But they behave differently, and the public has different normative expectations for each. Though this relationship has been constant over time, what has changed is the makeup of the press itself, and as a result, trust seems to be threatened in new and worrisome ways. Though press criticism and transparency has been touted

as democratically desirable, this suggests that such criticism needs to be modulated carefully lest public confidence actually be eroded rather than restored. Moreover, while changes in the media environment may be driven primarily by the private sector, these changes have an effect on democratic life. Taken together, the study's findings show that a free press and public trust are related in complex ways, but that we can begin to parse out this relationship given the right focus—and the right tools.

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Selecting articles

You **will not be coding every article**. Before you begin entering data, the first task is to see if the article should be coded.

In general, only examine **substantial** articles that explicitly concern **politics** at the **national/domestic** (i.e. U.S.) level. This political and national focus should be **central** to the article. Only code articles that **contain attacks**.

1. Substantial

Only code **substantial news articles**. Articles that are only a paragraph long should not be coded. Do not code any articles less than 250 words long. (You can see the word count by looking at the beginning of the article.) Things that should not be coded:

- TV listings
- The answers to a quiz
- Letters to the editor
- "National briefing" articles
- Obituaries
- Reproductions of official documents with no additional commentary added by the publication (printing the text of the president's speech, the text of an indictment, etc.)

Generally, for something to be substantial, it must be about current events, not things that happened in the past.

2. "Politics"

"Politics" means things involving the government (making laws, political campaigns) and/or the issues government deals with (war, the economy, public health, the environment, etc.). This would generally exclude articles about: 1) sports, entertainment, human interest, or other "soft news" stories; 2) business stories; and 3) stories about the weather. However, stories of these types would be included if they involved the government in a major way: if, for example, the story was about how Exxon's profits are being affected by new federal environmental regulations, or how the federal government is responding to a hurricane in Georgia. The important thing to look for is a focus on either 1) the government, or 2) national nonprofit organizations like the NRA. When in doubt about the importance of a nonprofit, look them up at opensecrets.org.

3. National/federal/US Focus

An article should only be coded if it involved national politics. This would be things like:

- Presidential or Congressional elections
- Laws being considered by Congress
- Policies of the U.S. (federal/national) government
- Social problems in America, like immigration, drugs, poverty, gay marriage, agriculture, etc.

- Issues like terrorism or war, but **only if the primary focus is on American involvement**. So an article about Israeli-Palestinian conflict **would not** be coded, but an article about the US's involvement in Mideast peace talks **would** be coded.

Do not code articles primarily about a single state or city. Articles about a drought in Kansas or a heat wave in Chicago **would not** be coded. However, articles about how those things have been affected by the federal government's environmental policies, or how the federal government is responding to these crises, **would** be coded because they specifically address government involvement.

4. Centrality

The political focus and the American and/or national concerns should be a **major focus** of the article, mentioned in the headline and/or the first paragraph. Articles in which American or national concerns are briefly mentioned should not be coded. Articles in which the political/governmental interest is only briefly mentioned should also not be coded.

Examples

Some examples of articles that *would* be coded:

- "U.S. Plans to Open More of Alaska for Drilling" (about Alaska, but primary focus is on the U.S. government's actions)
- "Bush's Smiles Meet Some Frowns in Europe" (about Europe, but primary focus is on its relationship with America)
- "The White Panthers" (see <http://www.nytimes.com/1999/02/06/opinion/journal-the-white-panthers.html>) Article is not about government actions, but is about national political issues (war, abortion) and focus is on federal government (mentions of Bill Clinton, Richard Nixon, Newt Gingrich, etc.)

Some examples of articles that *would not* be coded:

- "Perestroika's Perilous Spinoffs" (see <http://www.nytimes.com/1988/09/02/opinion/perestroika-s-perilous-spinoffs.html>): Article about issues in Europe/Russia, America only mentioned briefly, near end
- "With Chicago Calm, Daley Glides Toward Primary" Article about election of mayor of Chicago, national concerns not mentioned
- "Battered Men Sounding Equal-Rights Battle Cry" (see <http://www.nytimes.com/1992/04/20/us/battered-men-sounding-equal-rights-battle-cry.html>) Domestic abuse is a political issue, and so the article would not be excluded for that reason. However, the focus is on state governments and smaller nonprofit organizations, and the federal government is not mentioned. Therefore, it would be excluded.

ONLY CODE ARTICLES WITH CODEABLE QUOTES (see next section)

New York Times stories have been filtered to include only national stories and editorials about politics/government. However, not all articles specifically address politics so still use the criteria from above for article selection. Avoid articles that are "quiz answers," obituaries, and letters to the editor (will begin with "To The Editor:").

At a certain point, you will start to see the online versions of articles included along with the print version of the article. You will see, in the same day's worth of articles, two pieces on the same subject, by the same author. Only code one of these. If possible, figure out which one is the print version, which you will be able to see by looking at the "SECTION" line in the header: if there is a section listed, then it's the print version. It doesn't matter too much, though. When in doubt, just code the first version of the story you see.

Selecting quotes

In general, we are looking for...

1. Quotes

- a. One or more sentences surrounded by quote marks
- b. Spoken by a single person
- c. Interrupted only by identifying information about the person and/or short descriptive statements clarifying what is being said
OR
- d. A summary of what someone said. For example: "Judith A. Stein, director of the Center for Medicare Advocacy, a nonprofit group that counsels beneficiaries, said the rules allowed immense complexity and variation in benefits."

That are...

2. Not being said by the host or author of the article

And are...

3. Criticizing a person or thing.

Unless...

4. If it is an editorial, anything written in the text of the article can count as an attack.
 - a. A "quote" in the context of an editorial is a **single paragraph**. If you see a paragraph in an editorial that contains an attack, code it as you would a quote. If a paragraph contains multiple attacks, code the first target.

(See **EXAMPLES** section for demonstrations)

If there are no attacks in the article, do not code the article.

Code only the first three attacks you find in the article.

The definition of "attack" in this context is "to criticize or oppose publicly." The speaker should be taking a clear stance **against** someone or something. This can be explicitly stated or reasonably inferred. The accusation/attack can be either a fact or an opinion. However, an attack is not a mere statement of fact that something negative happened. It should be a **specific person or group making an explicit criticism of some other person or thing**. This should not be a subtle criticism; it should be very easy to detect from a quick reading.

Some examples of attacks:

- *The rule limiting flights "is a major impediment to better air service for communities all over the country," said Jeffrey N. Shane, an aviation lawyer who represents Access Air, a new carrier, based in Omaha, that wants to fly its three Boeing 737's to La Guardia.*

The speaker is offering a criticism of a government policy.

- *If you're looking for pure hatred of government and the 'elites' that run it -- the anger aimed at Robert McNamara and the rest of the Ivy-League-educated Vietnam policy*

architects of the 60's -- look only as far as the anti-establishment barking of Tom DeLay, Bob Barr and other warriors of the Contract With America Congress that shut down the Government during Newt Gingrich's short-lived 'revolution.'

Use of derogatory term "barking" indicates criticism of DeLay and Barr; use of "scare quotes" ("revolution" "elites") indicates criticism of their ideas.

- *"Mr. DeLay has largely avoided public comment about the scandal. Asked about it this week, his senior aide, Michael Scanlon, dismissed accounts of it as 'distorted and being circulated by Mr. DeLay's political enemies.' Mr. Scanlon said that there were reasons why he could not respond in detail now but that 'eventually the truth will come out.'"*

Use of "distorted" and "political enemies" implies a criticism of information that is being used to fuel the scandal.

Some things that are **not** attacks:

- *"It's very important that this be the product of the Senate and not have White House participation," said Mrs. Feinstein, who in a telephone interview refused to disclose any details of the plan. "We're trying to make the strongest statement possible that the conduct was wrongful and unacceptable."*

This quote, which was given about Congress working to craft a statement criticizing Bill Clinton for his conduct in the Lewinsky affair, would not be an attack. While the statement is intended to be critical, the quote itself is not, and is merely a statement of fact.

- *Ms. Lewinsky, in particular, repeatedly refused opportunities to pass judgment on the President, declining to discuss his motives or to characterize the truthfulness of his prior testimony. While she said she now had "mixed feelings" about Mr. Clinton, she would not elaborate on her reservations about him and said she admired the job he had done as President.
"I think what you need to know is that my grand jury testimony is truthful irrespective of whatever those mixed feelings are," she responded when pressed to describe her current attitude toward Mr. Clinton.*

While there is some implied criticism in the statement ("mixed feelings") by and large it is a statement of fact and does not pursue the criticism very strongly. This would not be considered an attack because it is not clear enough that an attack was intended.

Entering data

Identifying Information for Article

Year - Enter the year (4 digits)

Month - Enter the month (three letters):

JAN/FEB/MAR/APR/MAY/JUN/JUL/AUG/SEP/OCT/NOV/DEC)

Day - Enter the day of the month.

Headline - Put down the first THREE WORDS of the headline or segment name.

Article# - According to the header on the first page of the article, what number is it? (NYT/WAPO only)

Section - Does the article come from the NEWS or EDITORIAL section?

Article/Segment Qualities

Tone - Would you classify the general attitude toward **government/politics** in the article as **positive**, **negative**, or **ambivalent**? If you would clearly say the article is an example of *bad news*, its tone is negative, and you should put "N." If the article is clearly an example of *good news*, this would be positive, and you should put "P." If you cannot tell, if it is a relatively even mix of good and bad news, or if it is neither good nor bad news, put "A" for ambivalent (another way of saying **neutral**). Here is one person's explanation of this difference:

Potential indicators of a predominantly negative tone are, for example, accounts on disastrous, threatening, disputing, criticizing, fiasco-centered discussions or references to defeatism. On the other hand, depictions of political success, achievement or prosperity may serve as indicators of a predominantly positive portrayal of politics.

Some examples of articles that are **negative**:

- Congress or the president is failing to do something (pass a law, act appropriately)
- A scandal (bribery, adultery, gaffes)
- Something is going wrong and the government is failing to deal with it (poverty, homelessness, pollution)
- A policy is having a negative effect
- A candidate is pursuing a losing strategy
- Questions about a candidate's past
- An editorial that criticizes the Supreme Court's actions

Some examples of articles that are **ambivalent**:

- A report on the progress of a campaign
- Reports on a new law that focus primarily on its intended effects without calling into question its worth
- Neutral reports on news events

Some examples of articles that are **positive**:

- A natural disaster has occurred and the government is helping those affected
- A new idea offers hope to solve an existing problem
- A largely positive profile of a public figure

Process/Policy - Is the article generally about a *political* or *journalistic* process, about a political policy or the policies of a media organization, or neither? ("Proc" or "Policy" or "Neither") Process articles can be thought of as articles that **are not about policy**. An article about the details of a proposed change in Medicare policy would NOT be a process article, while an article about the political fighting over changes to Medicare WOULD be a process article.

- *Politics articles:*
 - Put "Proc" if the article is **primarily** about *how* or *why* politicians or government officials are doing something, like making a campaign video or speech, cutting deals to get a law passed, "playing politics," strategizing, etc. This could be about "horse race" coverage, the process of nominating officials or getting a law passed, or what advantage a politician gets from doing things a certain way. If the article is primarily about how people are trying to turn things to their political advantage, this is a process article.
 - Put "Policy" if the article is **primarily** about the details of a policy, the substance of a problem that should be addressed, or otherwise not mainly about a political process.
 - Put "Neither" if it's hard to tell, equally about both, or not at all about either.
- *Press articles:*
 - Put "Proc" if the article is **primarily** about *how* or *why* a story was written / produced, the "behind the scenes" workings of a news organization.
 - Put "Policy" if the article is **primarily** about the ethics of a particular story, the business dealings of a media company, or some other subject unrelated to how news gets made.
 - Put "Neither" if it's hard to tell, equally about both, or not at all about either.

Claim of bias - (Press stories only) The primary way government attacks the press is to accuse it of bias. The press is said to be biased when it is failing to be objective and/or neutral.

Accusations of bias might center on perceptions that the press is being unfairly harsh to a particular candidate, that they are ignoring certain points of view or issues, or that they favor a particular political party or political ideology. "The press are a bunch of liberals" is the most basic accusation, although recall the 2008 election, in which the media was said to be "in the tank for Obama."

Does someone make a claim that the news is biased in a particular direction?

- Put "DEM" if the claim is that the media is biased toward the Democrats, the left, or liberals, in general, or a particular candidate/politician who is a Democrat
- Put "GOP" if the claim is that the media is biased toward Republicans, conservatives, or the right, or a particular candidate/politician who is Republican
- Put "OTHER" if it is a general bias claim, or unclear, or if no single party can be singled out

- Put "N" if there is no bias claim

For information about coding quotes, see following section.

Notes - if you have questions, put them here. Also, if you encounter a particularly interesting / useful / noteworthy quote, indicate that here. We can use this later to highlight quotes that do a good job illustrating attacks.

Sample data - when you reach the end of each day's worth of articles for that outlet, click over to the second tab in the data sheet. ("Sample data") Enter the year, month, day, and source as you would for an article. Then enter the total number of articles for that day - **not the # of articles you coded, but the total possible articles you could have coded**. This is most easily found by going to the top of any article for that day and looking at where it says "6 of 28 DOCUMENTS" (or whatever numbers are in there). Put the second number.

Quotes

Once you have identified a quote that is also an attack, put the first three words of the quote in the column labeled "Quote."

Then for each quote, identify the speaker and the target of their attack. The **SPEAKER** is the person the quote is attributed to (for newspaper articles) or the person indicated in the transcript as speaking. The **TARGET** is the person or thing being spoken about. If there are multiple possible targets, indicate their primary target. When in doubt, use the more specific classification. Code for the position the person is identified as holding in the article.

Then identify what category these people fall into. This can be done by reading before and after the quote; everyone speaking or being spoken about should be introduced at some point. Indicate on the data sheet who the speaker and target are by picking from the following list.

In many cases, you are asked to identify the party a speaker/target belongs to. If this is not explicitly mentioned in the text, use context clues to determine which party they are affiliated with. Feel free to use Wikipedia to see which party they are generally thought to identify with. When in doubt, use "IND" if appropriate.

Repeat until you have reached the end of the article or coded three quotes. Only code the first three qualifying quotes you find in the article/segment.

The coding scheme asks you to classify each speaker/target in one or more ways, which can be seen in the chart below.

Not every quote will have every characteristic.

<i>Characteristic</i>	<i>Types</i>
General group	MEDIA: The media GOV: The government in general WH: The executive branch CONG: Congress COURT: The Supreme Court or the federal courts PARTY: A political person or organization who is not a member of government NGO: A non-governmental political organization: a NGO, charity, lobbying/advocacy group, etc. POL: A policy Miscellaneous: PRIVATE (private citizen), BIZ (business), FOR, OTHER
Level	GEN: An institution in general (the media, government, Congress) ORG: An organization (company, political party, group) within an institution PER: A person
Party / Company	DEM: Democrats REP: Republicans SAME: The same media company as the one in which the article appears DIFF: A different media company from the one where the article appears

The Media

- MEDIA-GEN: The media or press in general; terms may include "the media," "the press corps," "reporters," "the press"

- MEDIA-ORG-SAME: One or more specific media organizations, like the New York Times, NBC News, Newsweek, etc. If SPEAKER, the speaker is not identified as a person BY NAME, but as a representative of a media company, like "a spokesperson for the New York Times" or "an editor at Newsweek." The organization is the SAME ORGANIZATION as where the article is being published (i.e. an article in the New York Times is quoting someone representing the New York Times).
- MEDIA-ORG-DIFF: As above, but the speaker/target is a different organization than the one where the article appears.
- MEDIA-PER-SAME: One or more individuals who work for the press and are identified by name. The person works for the SAME ORGANIZATION as where the article is being published (i.e. an article in the Times is quoting a reporter at the Times).
- MEDIA-PER-DIFF: As above, but the person works for a different organization than the one in which the article appears.

NOTE ON EDITORIALS: When coding attacks in editorials, the "speaker" is the writer of the editorial (unless they are quoting someone). If it is by a regular columnist for the publication, you would put MEDIA-PER-SAME; whether or not they are a regular columnist should be clear from the context, or else their Wikipedia entry. If it is an "unsigned" editorial (i.e. there is no author listed), the speaker is MEDIA-ORG-SAME, since they are speaking on behalf of the publication as a whole. If it is an op-ed with a listed author, look at the author bio (usually at the bottom of the editorial) to find out who the writer is. Then code as per the codes here. (So an op-ed by Mitt Romney would be coded PARTY-REP.)

Government

- GOV-GEN: "Government" or "politicians" in general

Executive Branch

(Note: the executive branch is everything in the federal government that's not Congress or the courts: the president, the presidential administration [chief of staff, press secretary, etc.] and all the departments like the State Department, Treasury, IRS, FBI, the military, etc.)

- WH-GEN: the White House or Presidency as something larger than a particular administration or agency.
- WH-ORG-DEM: Either a Democratic presidential administration in general or someone representing a particular agency or department. Terms may include "The White House," "the administration," "an official with the State Department," "a senior White House official," etc.
- WH-ORG-REP: As above, but for a Republican administration.
- WH-PREZ-DEM: The president, who is a Democrat, or the press secretary of a Democrat
- WH-PREZ-REP: The Republican president, or the press secretary of a Republican
- WH-PER-DEM: A named (either by their actual name, or by their title, like "the Vice President" or "the Secretary of State") individual who works in the White House or any other governmental agency that is not Congress or the Supreme Court - unless that person is the president, or the press secretary. This person (or the administration) is a Democrat.
- WH-PER-REP: As above, but for Republicans

Congress

- CONG-GEN: Congress in general, or any person who is associated with Congress, unnamed, and not identified in terms of their party.
- CONG-ORG-DEM: Democrats in Congress (either the House, the Senate, or Congress as a whole)
- CONG-ORG-REP: Republicans in Congress (either the House, the Senate, or Congress as a whole)
- CONG-PER-DEM: A Democratic member of Congress, named or unnamed.
- CONG-PER-REP: A Republican member of Congress, named or unnamed.
(Note: independent members of Congress should be classified in terms of the party they caucused with, which can be found on their Wikipedia entry)

Supreme Court

- COURT-GEN: The courts in general.
- COURT-ORG: The Supreme Court or a US District Court as a whole.
- COURT-PER: An individual member of the court.

Political Parties

- PARTY-ORG-DEM: The Democratic party
- PARTY-ORG-REP: The Republican party
- PARTY-PER-DEM: A member or affiliate of the Democratic party who is not part of the federal government
- PARTY-PER-REP: A member or affiliate of the Republican party who is not part of the federal government
- PARTY-PER-IND: A political person not in the federal government and whose party affiliation is not identified

Non-Governmental Political Organizations

- NGO-GEN: Lobbyists, non-profits, or some other type of non-governmental political organization in general
- NGO-ORG-DEM: An individual nonprofit or lobbying group, which leans Democratic
- NGO-ORG-REP: As above, but leans Republican
- NGO-ORG-IND: As above, but is independent/nonpartisan
- NGO-PER-DEM: An activist or lobbyist (or other non-governmental and non-party political actor) who leans Democratic/liberal
- NGO-PER-REP: As above, but leans Republican/conservative
- NGO-PER-IND: As above, but independent/nonprofit [OR UNCLEAR]

In determining the partisan alignment of a NGO, consult Wikipedia or [opensecrets.org](https://www.opensecrets.org).

Policy

In many cases you will find that the target of an attack is not a person or group but a particular policy. For example:

- A Republican member of Congress is attacking a proposed change in the tax code put forth by Congressional Democrats.
- In a presidential election, the President is attacking his Republican opponent's proposed immigration policy.

In this case, determine who is sponsoring the policy; that is, who proposed the policy, or who would like the policy to be passed. Then code as you would above, but put "POL-" before the code. So the examples above would be coded POL-CONG-ORG-DEM and POL-PARTY-REP, respectively.

If you cannot determine who is sponsoring a policy, use this code:

- POL-OTHER

Other

- PRIVATE: A private citizen not identified as part of an organization: a diner owner, an auto worker, someone randomly interviewed on the street, etc.
- BIZ: A business or representative of a company
- FOREIGN: A foreign government or organization, or a representative thereof
- PUBLIC: The public in general ("people," "the American people," "the public")
- OTHER: Someone who does not fit into these categories, or whose identity you can't easily figure out