# Polarization in the Spanish press: A study of political sectarianism during the COVID-19 pandemic

*Roberto A. Valdeón*
South China Business College (SCBC), Guangzhou, China;
University of Oviedo, Spain; University of the Free State, South Africa
valdeon@uniovi.es

## Abstract

Drawing on the concept of "political sectarianism" proposed by Finkel et al. and on Entman's classification of media biases, this paper aims to study polarization in three mainstream Spanish news websites, i.e. *El País*, *El Mundo* and *Abc*, during the COVID-19 pandemic through a cross-sectional analysis. For that purpose, a corpus of 900 articles was gathered during June 2020, following the end of the state of emergency and the strict lockdown enforced by the central government to fight the COVID-19 pandemic. The analysis relies on concepts used by communication and discourse analysts, i.e. framing and narratives. I have also drawn on the work of Bednarek on semantic choices. The study, which focuses on the headlines and the leads, shows that *El Mundo* and *Abc* were more critical of the central government's handling of the health crisis, while *El País* was critical of Madrid's conservative government. This points to the existence of distortion and content bias in the three newspapers. However, the most significant finding is the fact that *El País* is the only medium that clearly opted for a selection bias, omitting any news that could have been construed as critical of the central coalition government.

**Keywords:** Polarization, political sectarianism, media biases, *El Mundo, El País, Abc*.

## Resumen

Partiendo del concepto de "sectarismo político" de Finkel et al, así como de la clasificación de los tipos de parcialidad en los medios de comunicación de Entman, este artículo lleva a cabo un estudio transversal de la polarización en tres medios españoles, i.e. *El País*, *El Mundo* and *Abc*, durante la pandemia de COVID-19. Para ello, se reunió

un corpus de 900 artículos publicados en el mes de junio de 2020, tras el fin del estadio de emergencia y el confinamiento estricto decretado por el gobierno central. El análisis se centra en conceptos utilizados en estudios de comunicación y análisis del discurso, tales como enmarcado y narrativa, así como el trabajo de Bednarek para el análisis de los elementos semánticos. El estudio, que se centra en los titulares y las entradas, revela que *El Mundo* y *Abc* fueron más críticos con el gobierno central mientras que *El País* fue especialmente crítico con el gobierno regional madrileño. Esto refleja la existencia de dos elementos de parcialidad: de distorsión y de contenido. Sin embargo, el resultado más importante es el hecho de que *El País* es el único que se caracteriza por parcialidad en la selección de la información al eliminar toda noticia que pudiera interpretarse como crítica con el gobierno central.

**Palabras clave:** Polarización, sectarismo político, parcialidad de los medios, *El Mundo, El País, Abc.*

## 1. Introduction

In countries such as the United States, the United Kingdom, Italy, Greece and Spain, politics has become a battle ground for antagonistic debates and confrontation. Spain's political system has been polarized since the economic recession of 2008 and the emergence of two competing forms of populism (Vampa, 2020): far-left *Podemos* (literally "We can") and, more recently, far-right Vox ("Voice" in Latin). *Podemos*, a party characterized by its many ideological contradictions (Caravantes, 2021), had stood out as the only far-left party to play a key role in Europe (Ramiro and Gómez, 2016), and was the only populist national party in Spain until the electoral success of far-right Vox in 2018 (Turnbull-Dugarte, 2019) and 2019 (Turnbull-Dugarte, Rama and Santana, 2020). The polarization resulting from (or reflected by) the appearance of these two parties in Spain differs from political polarization in the US, where the division between the Democrats and the Republicans remains the driving force of American politics. In contrast, Spanish politics has been radically transformed not only by incorporating extremist political parties in its parliament, but especially in its government. In December 2019, Spain's Socialist Party reached an agreement with *Podemos*, whose leaders have been linked to the authoritarian regimes of Latin America and Iran (Torre, 2017), to form the first coalition government since Spain's return to democracy.

Thus, events such as the polarisation of Spanish politics caused by the recession, the economic measures taken by the conservative government of the Popular Party after winning a landslide election following the failed economic policies of the Socialist Party (Martín and Urquizu-Sancho, 2012; Salmon, 2017), the emergence of the *indignados* movement (Perugorría and Tejerina, 2013) and the creation of the extreme-left party

*Podemos* first and far-right Vox later (Turnbull-Dugarte, 2019; Turnbull-Dugarte, Rama and Santana, 2020) as well as a number of other political problems such as the Catalan secessionist crisis have produced a media climate where news companies seem to be more interested in addressing their own partisan readership than in offering reliable information, which has led readerships to mistrust the information provided by news media, e. g. during the COVID-19 pandemic (Martín-Llaguno et al., 2022).

Ideological affinity between editors and political parties seems to be another crucial factor in the increased sectarianism of news media in Spain (for a discussion see Valdeón, 2022). Indeed, public institutions and private corporations have typically attempted to influence gatekeeping decisions (Champagne, 2005; Vos & Finneman, 2017) for a number of reasons, including the existence of ideological affinity between their leaders and the possibility to obtain financial gain and exert power. In Spain, for instance, the controversy over to the (in)efficiency of the measures taken by the central government and the allegations that Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez and deputy Prime Minister Pablo Iglesias took advantage of the health crisis to impose undemocratic measures was widely reported by news outlets (Martín-Llaguno et al., 2022), although the representation and interpretations of those measures have varied considerably.

To be sure, political polarization in Spain is reflected in both public and private media, including companies such as *Libertal Digital* and *Público*, which support *Vox* and *Podemos* respectively. More recently *Podemos* launched a party-controlled digital medium called *La Última Hora*, edited by controversial party member Dina Bousselham (see below). This article does not aim to study these media, but rather to analyze how political sectarianism has permeated through mainstream news outlets and how it is reflected in the on-line versions of three mainstream national newspapers: *Abc*, *El País* and *El Mundo*. They are the three major print newspapers whose internet circulation is also among the highest. *El Confidencial*, an online only medium, comes close to *Abc*, but I decided to select only those with both print and internet editions.

Founded in 1903, *Abc* has had a tumultuous history. It has traditionally supported the Spanish monarchy, it was banned during the Spanish republican period[1], and, after Spain's return to democracy, has been associated with the conservative Popular Party. In contrast, *El País*, founded in 1976, was the first left-leaning newspaper to appear after the death of dictator Francisco Franco. From its inception, the name of the newspaper was accompanied by the slogan "Diario independiente de la manaña" [Independent morning newspaper], recently replaced by "El periódico global" [The

---

1 See *Gaceta de Madrid* (22 October 1931) which published a law banning "la apología del régimen monárquico" [the defense of the monarchy] (p. 420).

global newspaper]. *El País* has been traditionally supportive of the Socialist Party. Finally, *El Mundo*, first published in October 1989, is a centre-right daily that has exposed a number of corruption scandals, both in the Popular and the Socialist Parties. *El Mundo* has been involved in a controversy over the allegations that the Basque terrorist organization ETA was linked to Madrid's 2004 Islamic terrorist attacks.

## 2. Theoretical framework

In connection with the tendency towards political polarization, Finkel et al. (2020) have proposed the term "political sectarianism" to describe the situation in the United States. Defined as "the tendency to adopt a moralized identification with one political group and against another" (2020: 533), Finkel and his colleagues identified three core ingredients of political sectarianism, namely othering, aversion and moralization. Othering refers to the "tendency to view opposing partisans as essentially different or alien to oneself", aversion is "the tendency to dislike and distrust opposing partisans" and moralization considers "opposing partisans as iniquitous" (2020: 533). Although Finkel et al. discuss these elements in relation to US party politics, they can also be related to news media as "people who are already sectarian selectively seek out congenial news, but consuming such content also amplifies their sectarianism" (2020: 534).

In fact, this article aims to analyze sectarianism in three mainstream news media in Spain. Since Finkel et al.'s proposal is at an initial stage, I would like to suggest that political sectarianism can be studied in connection with the notion of "bias", which Entman (2007) posited as being crucial in media production. Entman mentioned three different types of bias, namely distortion bias (referring to a process that distorts or falsifies reality), content bias (which favors one side rather than providing balanced treatment to two or more sides of a political conflict) and decision-making bias (which is related to the reasons why journalists select specific material). Entman used this concept to integrate three other notions widely used in communication studies: agenda-setting, framing and priming. In this article, I will draw on the tripartite concept of bias to explore political sectarianism in three mainstream Spanish media in relation to framing, which will be studied from the perspective of narrative theory.

The focus was on the headlines and the leads. Following Molek-Kozakowska (2013: 185), my assumption was that lexical choices and syntactic patterns might be crucial to present the topics, since headlines do not only include names and concepts with high 'news value' (Dor, 2003: 712-713) and 'connect' the story to previously known facts and events (2003: 714), they also *frame* the story in an appropriate fashion (2003: 715). In connection with this, Dor has noted that headlines normally try to answer:

What kind of story is this? Is this, for example, a politics-oriented story, a human interest story, an entertainment story? As everybody who has ever worked with journalistic materials knows, the answer to these questions does not lie in the objective world, but *in the construction of the story by its writer and editor* (my italics) (2003: 715).

This means that headline writers are responsible for the framing mechanisms, following the editorial line of the newspaper. In fact, and given the features of today's information society, readers very often have their first and only impressions from headlines (Jovanović, 2018: 5).

For this purpose, the concept of framing was used to complement those of polarization and bias. This concept has been widely applied in journalism and in other disciplines in the social sciences and the humanities. Framing is related to gatekeeping processes as journalists select some aspects of a perceived reality to make them more salient (Entman, 1993: 52). These processes influence the way in which audiences interpret events and, consequently, contribute to shaping their opinions (De Vreese, 2005). Entman (2007: 164) has refined the concept as "the process of culling a few elements of perceive reality and assembling a narrative that highlights connections among them to promote a particular interpretation".

As gatekeeping involves selecting news, on a macrolevel I will also draw on narrative theory. Based on Somers & Gibson's sociological approach (1994), discourse scholars (e.g. Baker, 2006) have studied the construction of public narratives in a variety of texts, including the news. Narratives are built by selecting a small number of events from the vast number available to writers or, as Baker puts it, "to elaborate a coherent narrative, it is inevitable that some elements of experience are excluded and others privileged" (2006: 71). Thus, media (and other institutions and individuals) resort to selective appropriation of topics to disseminate a narrative by repeatedly exposing audiences to them. The elaboration of these narratives results from or is related to framing mechanisms. In this paper, I will consider the selection and deselection of news events as well as the textual (linguistic and visual) mechanisms used to promote specific frames. This will serve to understand the features and functions of frames as the "organizing principles that are socially shared and persistent over time, that work symbolically to meaningfully structure the social world" (Reese, 2001: 11). Accordingly, framing is related to and can contribute to analyzing the tripartite notion of bias mentioned above.

On a microlevel, framing can be realized by various mechanisms, linguistic (e.g. headlines, leads) and non-linguistic (e.g. charts, photographs). The use of specific terms to refer to news actors or events are examples of labelling (Baker, 2006: 122) or framing. Reese mentions the use of terms such as the "war on terror" rather than the

"war on terrorism" and "prolife" rather than "prochoice" as examples of competing frames (Reese, 2007: 152). Also of relevance is the work by Bednarek and Caple (2019: 60-61), who have identified negativity and evaluative language as features capable of constructing negative representation of facts. Bednarek and Caple argue that negative vocabulary (such as confusion, damage, deaths) does not "automatically and expressly tell us that the writer disapproves of the reported events" (2019: 60) since "negativity" is one of core values of news production. However, they also point out that negative items can be used to express evaluation of various types (2019: 232), including likes, dislikes, preferences and anxieties (Bednarek, 2015: 47). Visual elements are not the focus of this article, but references to them will draw on the work by Kress and van Leeuwen (2006). Both Bednarek and Caple (2019) and Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) draw on Halliday's functional linguistics, which will also be used here.

## 3. Research questions and methodology

In line with the above and drawing on Finkel et al.'s notion of sectarianism (2020) and Entman's concept of bias, this paper aims to analyze the extent to which political polarization is reflected in *Abc*, *El País* and *El Mundo* in the wake of the lifting of the state of emergency declared by the Spanish central government to fight the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic. For that purpose, I will examine the news items published by the three newspapers during June 2020. The declaration of the state of emergency on March 14th was a highly controversial decision that followed the government's initial refusal to ban mass public gatherings despite repeated warnings and recommendations by international organizations (Martín-Llaguno et al., 2022). In May 2020, after the state of emergency was lifted, the country entered the period referred to as "nueva normalidad" [new normal], in which the strict lockdown was gradually eased. However, for the study it was decided that May was too close to the state of emergence while by June the polarization resulting from "denying and minimizing COVID-19" first (Martín-Llaguno et al., 2022: 412) and declaring the state of emergency later might have subsided (for a discussion of the polarization during the month of March see the valuable research by Martín-Llaguno et al., 2022).

The initial assumption was that *El País* would be critical of Madrid's regional conservative government and support the left/far left-leaning positions of the central government. Recent studies have in fact underscored the ideological affinity between the current leaders of the Socialist-led coalition government and the editorship of *El País*. In contrast, *Abc* and *El Mundo* were more likely to be more critical of the central government than of Madrid's conservative regional cabinet. To put these initial assumptions to the test, three research questions aimed to consider the topics that the newspapers focused on and the ways in which these media framed the health,

economic, social and political crises resulting from the pandemic. Thus, research questions focused on topics and events rather than on journalistic text types. More precisely the questions were phrased as follows:

R1. Did the three newspapers report on similar issues, even if from a different perspective, or did they focus on different news events or topics?

R2. How did the newspapers frame the news events or topics?

R3. What type of biases defined the three newspapers?

In order to answer these questions, a corpus of 900 articles[2] comprising the top ten articles published every day for the whole of June (300 per newspaper) was collected. The "top ten articles" label refers to those that occupy the most prominent positions in the webpage of the newspapers, that is, they were the first articles that their respective readerships would see before scrolling down their web pages.

After gathering the corpus, the main topic of every article was used for a preliminary topic-based classification. Although initially the classification comprised fifteen distinct topics and an additional miscellaneous section under the label "others", the number of articles for seven of those categories was negligible, so they were finally moved to the "others" section (see table 1). Subsequently, a qualitative analysis of the texts was conducted drawing on the theoretical framework mentioned above. The analysis was divided into macro- and micro-levels.

## 4. Results and analysis

### 4.1 Macrolevel: selection and deselection of news events

As mentioned, and based on the main topic of every article, the final classification comprises eight categories, namely COVID-19, central government, education, economy, Madrid's government, 8M-related news texts, scandals in *Podemos*, nepotism/corruption allegations against the central government, as well as the miscellaneous section called "others". The following table summarizes the numbers and percentages of articles devoted to each of these topics by the three newspapers.

---

2 As the corpus contains copyrighted material, it cannot be published as supplementary material. However, it is available to anyone interested in validating the study and can be sent privately.

**Table 1:** Topic-based classification of articles

|  | COVID | Government | Education | Economy | Madrid | 8M-related | Podemos-related scandals | Nepotism/ Corruption | Other topics |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| *El País* | 83 (27,6%) | 32 (10.6%) | 12 (4%) | 30 (10%) | 17 (5.6%) | 4 (1.3%) | 1 (0.3%) | 0 (0%) | 121 (40.3%) |
| *El Mundo* | 85 (28.3%) | 21 (7%) | 12 (4%) | 44 (14.6%) | 8 (2.6%) | 15 (5%) | 27 (9%) | 5 (1.6%) | 83 (27.6%) |
| *Abc* | 109 (36.3%) | 24 (8%) | 4 (1.3%) | 36 (12%) | 10 (3.3%) | 7 (2.3%) | 17 (5.7%) | 11 (3.7%) | 82 (27.3%) |

It should also be noted that there is bound to be thematic overlapping among the articles included in these categories, notably among those in the first six. All six are somehow related to the COVID-19 pandemic. However, to differentiate the articles thematically the most salient topic was selected to decide the specific category. For example, the article entitled "El forense del 'caso 8-M' señala a miembros del Gobierno pese a no estar investigados" [The forensic expert of the '8-M case' points to cabinet members even though they are not being investigated] reports on the investigation into those responsible for the spread of the virus during the so-called feminist demonstrations of March 8, 2020, but the central topic is the role that these gatherings may have played in the pandemic.

As regards the main findings, the table shows that the main topic in the three newspapers was the COVID-19 crisis. The information in these articles covers a variety of issues such as the number of people infected and deaths, articles about symptoms and recent research developments, the evolution of the virus outside Spain as well as in specific Spanish regions and so on. The second category broadly refers to the actions taken by the central government during the crisis. On the whole, the first four categories account for 52.2% of the articles in *El País*, 53.9% in *El Mundo* and 56.6% in *Abc*, which means that all three newspapers devoted over 50% of their texts to these issues.

This is interesting when compared with the number of articles under the miscellaneous category "Others", which is almost 13 points higher in the case of *El País* than *El Mundo* and *Abc*. Also of interest is the fact that, while some of the "other" articles in *El País* dealt with serious news events (such as the Black Lives Matter demonstrations in the US), a sizeable part provided information and/or comments about human-interest stories or celebrity news, such as the financial difficulties of Montreal-based Cirque du Soleil, the death of the Spanish novelist Carlos Ruiz Zafón, information about the problems in the Annapurna, soap operas, and news pertaining to actor Antonio Banderas and New York-based movie director Woody Allen as

well as one of *El País*'s pet topics, that is, the former dictator Francisco Franco. In contrast, the number of human-interest stories of this type in the other newspapers is considerably smaller. For example, *El Mundo* reported on the latest news about the disappearance of three-year old Madelaine McCann in Portugal and two other similar events, while *Abc* provided its readership with information about the death of a Spanish singer and a Spanish actress, about the way in which the pandemic affected the lives of prostitutes, and the difficulties Chinese citizens in Spain faced in the early months of the pandemic. The tendency to focus on human-interest stories has been referred to as a tabloidization process of the press (Winston, 2002) and can be related to a deselection process of COVID-19 related information in favor of other issues (Baker, 2006: 122; Entman, 2007) that, in the case of *El País*, may have served to divert the attention from the controversies affecting the central government to be discussed below. The selection and deselection of material, or selective appropriation in Baker's terms (2006), is the principal mechanism used by the three newspapers to provide their readerships with interpretive frameworks. This exemplifies at least two of Entman's biases (2007), namely content and decision-making.

Consequently, the overall impression is that the information about the pandemic in its many facets appears more diluted in *El País* than in the two newspapers. In fact, on specific days articles focusing on other topics outnumbered those about the pandemic, e.g. on June 30 three texts dealt with the political situation in Venezuela and three more were devoted Hong Kong. Conversely, on that same day COVID-19 related texts were reduced to three. On June 11th, 14th, 18th and 19th, *El País* also published a larger number of articles about other topics rather than about the pandemic. In contrast, both *El Mundo* and *Abc* focused on COVID-19 related topics during the whole month.

In addition, *El País* on the one hand and *El Mundo* and *Abc* on the other differed in the treatment of the topics in four other categories. In March 2020, as the pandemic was spreading across the European continent, calls were made to ban mass rallies and meetings in line with the World Health Organization's recommendations[3]. However, Spain's government allowed political, cultural and sports gatherings until March 8, the date when feminist demonstrations had been called across the country. These events, particularly Madrid's rally, were later blamed for the contagion in the capital by opposition parties, who claimed that the coalition government was more interested in showcasing ideology than in public health (Martín-Llaguno et al., 2022). The controversy also affected Madrid's conservative regional government, which in

---

3 On February 25, WHO reminded governments that the strict measures taken in China were being effective to stop the spread of the virus. On March 3, it warned of a likely shortage of medical supplies putting health workers in danger if effective measures were not taken. On March 5, it encouraged governments to take aggressive measures against the spread of the virus because "this is not a drill".

turn became the target of the central government's criticisms. This controversy was differently reflected in the three newspapers selected for this study: *El País* omitted all references to it, while *El Mundo* and *Abc* devoted front pages to this issue, particularly in the first week of June, when the Ministry for Equality acknowledged in an off-the-record comment that the relative failure of Madrid's feminist rally may have been due to the fear of becoming infected by the coronavirus. *El País*'s deselection of any references to the controversy demonstrates a decision-making bias that does not stem solely from individual journalists as partisan actors (Patterson and Donsbagh, 1996), but rather from the combination of the institutional and media forces at play (Entman, 2007: 167).

In fact, between June 1st and 9th *El Mundo* published eleven texts reporting or commenting on the allegations that the feminist demonstrations may have been the cause of the fast spread of the virus in the capital. On June 3, the main headline read: "8-M: Cónclave en la Fiscalía General al más alto nivel para fijar la posición sobre la manisfestación" [8-M: High-level meeting at the Attorney General's office to agree on an official position about the demonstration] followed by an op-ed column entitled "La bola de nieve del 8-M: antes matar a Montesquieu que rectificar" [The 8-M snowball: rather kill Montesquieu than rectify]. The texts were accompanied by a photograph of the demonstration where the Prime Minister's wife, occupying the central position, is surrounded by Pedro Sánchez's female ministers. The photograph did not only serve to illustrate the news event, in fact it dominated the website to present the essence of the news text, thus offering an interpretive framework (Kress and van Leeuwen, 2006: 30) which becomes the evidence of the newspaper's narrative (Bednarek & Caple, 2019: 118-119): government members are responsible for the spread of the pandemic as they allowed the demonstration to take place. As regards the linguistic components, the first article reported on a meeting at the Attorney General's Office in which the main news actors met to agree on an official position concerning the demonstration: here the word "conclave" [conclave] points to an act of faith rather than an act of justice. The accompanying opinion column by Juanma Lamet largely contributed to underscore *El Mundo*'s position: the government preferred to kill Montesquieu rather than to admit to their mistake. The metaphorical reference to the separation of the legislative, the executive and the judiciary served the newspaper to frame the government negatively: metaphors such as "conclave" and "kill Montesquieu" are part of what has been called the "frame package" (van Gorp, 2007: 64) and are also examples of what Baker described as labelling (2006: 122) as a procedure contributing to framing news events for the readers. Labelling also allows writers to present a specific position within the interpretative framework used by the writer and the newspapers, exemplifying the structures of anticipation discussed by Baker (2006: 106) as crucial in framing events.

As regards *Abc*, seven articles were devoted to the controversy surrounding the Minister of Equality's off-the-record admission that the feminist demonstration had been a failure, and to report about the Civil Guard's investigation into allegations that the government had been aware of the dangers of allowing mass public gatherings of any type. For example, on June 5th *Abc* published a report questioning the decisions taken by the government in light of the information available in the month prior to the demonstrations. The article was complemented with a video of those gatherings. Thus, the framing process encompassed linguistic and visual components, the value of the video resulting from the editing process, which depicted both political rallies and sports meetings, providing a clear frame of interpretation for the intended audience (Kress and van Leeuwen, 2006: 203). This also related to the notion of framing space that, drawing on Goffman, Baker discusses (2006: 109). In Baker's view the different interactions of the participants, including the news actors but also the journalists, can be presented in ways that will serve to allocate the frame space allocated to the writer and what is acceptable in each medium. Official information and visual elements allow in the case on *Abc* and *El Mundo* to provide information within their own space frame and interpretative framework.

On the other hand, *El País* did not publish any texts about this topic. This is a clear example of deselection of information, pointing to the fact that the editorial line of the newspaper might have sided with the government's position: *El País* prioritized the interest of "particular holders of power" (Entman, 2007: 166) over the right to information (Martín-Llaguno et al., 2022). By omitting information *El País* elaborated on patterns of omission and addition that are meant to suppress or accentuate certain narratives (Baker, 2006: 114). Paradoxically, while the allegations against the government's decisions and the ensuing investigation were conspicuously absent from *El País*, the newspaper published two reports with these headlines on June 9th: "La Abogacía acusa a la juez del 'caso 8-M' de lanzarse a 'una búsqueda voraz de indicios' contra el Gobierno" [The state lawyer accuses the judge in charge of the '8-M' case to embark on a rapacious search for evidence] and "El forense del 'caso 8-M' señala a miembros del Gobierno pese a no estar investigados" [The forensic expert in the '8-M case' points his finger at cabinet members even though they are not being investigated]. In these articles, the newspaper pointed its finger at the judge and the forensic team, presenting the information as a vendetta against the government. In other words, the newspaper deselected information about the investigation into the case, but selected information involving the critique of the investigation. Thus, a selection bias is combined with distortion biases in order to produce specific views of the news event (Entman, 2007: 163).

In contrast, on June 9th *El Mundo* and *Abc* opted for providing their readerships with the highlights of a 2,000-page report produced by the investigators, totally absent

from *El País*. On the 9th *Abc*'s main article was entitled "La fiscalía quiere cerrar el 8-M mientras el forense ve una 'hecatombe' predecible" [The General Attorney's office wants to close the 8-M investigation while the forensic expert believes the 'disaster' was predictable], which reported on the state lawyers's attempts to undermine the judge's mandate to carry out the investigation. *Abc* complemented the text with an editorial column denouncing the government's efforts to control the Prosecutor's Office following the appointment of an outspoken and controversial former Socialist Minister of Justice as the new General Prosecutor.

During the same period, *El País*'s gave salience to Madrid's conservative government's handling of the pandemic. For instance, on June 6th two articles reported on allegations that the regional government prioritized younger patients over the elderly. The newspaper claimed that Madrid's regional government might have instructed doctors to ignore older patients and those living in nursing homes. Surprisingly, *El País* reported that the far-right party *Vox* demanded an inquest into the matter. Otherwise, *Vox* does not normally receive much coverage in the newspaper. A third text with little information was a rhetorical exercise over the future of Madrid's premier Isabel Díaz Ayuso. On June 18th, *El País* published an interview with the central government's representative in Madrid's region. The headline included a direct quotation that read "José Manuel Franco: 'La causa del 8-M iba dirigida a erosionar al gobierno'" [José Manuel Franco: 'The 8-M case aimed to undermine the position of the government]. The question-answer format allowed the interviewee to criticize his political opponents unabatedly and fiercely, and to defend all of the central government's decisions. Direct quotations, and interviews tend to be more emotional than reported speech (Bednarek and Caple, 2019: 58), but also to favour personal views to the detriment of information. More importantly, the interview served to give voice to the central government.

In addition to these issues, one of the most popular topics during the first month of the so-called de-escalation process was of political nature, i.e. a series of allegations of corruption against *Podemos*. These allegations tainted the Deputy Prime Minister, who was accused of tampering with a SIM card belonging to a female member of the party, which allegedly contained confidential and damaging information. Party members dismissed the allegations as unethical attempts by conservative institutions such as the judiciary and mainstream media, which *Podemos* consistently accused of being run by the extreme right, to undermine his position within the government. In fact, *Podemos* has used several metaphors such as "la casta" [the caste] (Briziarelli, 2016; Sanders et al., 2017: 552) to stigmatize traditional politicians, and "las cloacas" [the cesspit of the State] to denigrate some institutions. Repeated exposure (Baker, 2006: 72-73) to these words has familiarized readers with their intended meaning.

The approach to these allegations were very differently dealt with by the three newspapers. The most significant finding was the fact that *El País* did not to publish any articles on this topic. Conversely, *Abc* and *El Mundo* provided their readers with comprehensive information about the scandal as well as several op-ed columns. This clearly points to decision-making biases whose aim was to prevent exposure to this news event in the former and to provide repeated exposure in the case of the latter (Baker, 2006: 72-73), thus framing *Podemos* and, consequently the government, very differently. *Abc* and *El Mundo* published a total of 17 and 26 articles about the topic respectively. In other words, during the period under examination 5.7% and 9% of the top ten articles in these newspapers were devoted to allegations of corruption in *Podemos*. These articles provided information about the evolution of the investigation and gave prominence to the contradictions within the party's publicized ethical stance. Both newspapers underscored the fact that *Podemos* had gone from being the whip of the Socialist and the Popular parties to unashamedly share in the privileges of the system. Interestingly, *Abc* also included articles about corruption in conservative parties (e.g. on the 20th it posted an article about a financial scandal in Foro, a spin-off of the conservative Popular Party in the northern region of Asturias).

Particularly noteworthy is the three-day period June 26-28. On the 26th *El Mundo* reported that it was in 2016 when *Podemos* first became aware of the damage that the missing SIM card could inflict on the party. A second article unveiled another political scandal: *Podemos*'s lawyer has been in contact with the State Prosecutor, who might have disclosed confidential information to benefit the party. On the same day, *Abc* reported on the judge's attempt to replace the prosecutor in charge of the case because of the latter's close connection with *Podemos*. This was complemented with an op-ed in which journalist Carlos Herrera appropriated *Podemos*'s own terminology in a text titled "La cloaca eres tú" [The cesspit is you], where Herrera described Pablo Iglesias as a corrupt leader by placing "cesspit" as the Theme of the headline and the informal "tú" to refer to Iglesias as the Rheme. This selection of elements in a typical Theme-Rheme structure has been described as crucial in framing news events and actors (Fowler, 1991), even though the Theme here is known rather than new information (Halliday, 2004: 93). However, placing "cesspit" presupposes the readers' familiarity with a word that Podemos has repeatedly used.

In stark contrast, during the same period, *El País* focused on the COVID-19 pandemic in the US, on the writer Carlos García Gual, and on whether the movie *Cinema Paradiso* had become a modern classic. The only article about corruption in *Podemos* during this period was posted on June 27. The text, entitled "La sombra de Villarejo persigue a Iglesias" [Villarejo's shadow threatens Iglesias], presented Pablo Iglesias as a victim, or the Goal (Halliday, 2004: 184). The article served to claim that

the opposition parties were taking advantage of the situation to attack the Deputy Prime Minister. Conversely, in *El Mundo* and *Abc*, Iglesias appears as the Actor (Halliday, 2004: 180) rather as the passive recipient of Villarejo's actions: "Iglesias carga contra el juez..." [Iglesias criticises the judge] "Iglesias burla al juez..." [Iglesias makes fun of the judge] respectively. Interestingly, the following day, *El País* deselected the topic, while *El Mundo* provided detailed information about how the whole news story had unraveled in the previous months, and *Abc* offered its readership new information about the latest developments in the case.

In addition to the articles about the SIM card and other scandals concerning *Podemos*, *El Mundo* and *Abc* also published various texts on cases of corruption and/or nepotism in the Socialist Party: seven and eleven texts respectively. Most of these texts reported on the appointments of friends and relatives of members of the central government to highly paid public jobs with no merits other than being related to the Prime Minister or his ministers. In total, corruption scandals in *Podemos* and reports of nepotism featured in 10.6% of *El Mundo*'s articles and 9.4% of *Abc*'s. *El País* only devoted one article to these issues, a negligeable 0.3% of the total. The selection and deselection of information in the three newspapers is closely related to the requirements that Harcup and O'Neill (2017: 1471) have identified for news stories. While *Abc* and *El Mundo* selected topics that concerned the power elite and were relevant for the audience, *El País* chose to avoid them. These decision biases reflect the agendas of the newspapers (Harcup and O'Neill, 2001: 278-279).

To sum up, on a macrolevel we have seen that biases affect all three newspapers, with a decision-making bias exclusive to *El País*'s decision not to report about the scandals of corruption and nepotism tainting the coalition government. All three exhibit content and distortion biases by positioning themselves in favor or against the central government and Madrid's regional government. The decision-making bias in the case of *El País* also contributes to diluting the magnitude of the pandemic as human-interest stories regarding writers, actors and so on are given prominence.

Let us now consider the articles at a microlevel, focusing on the lexical choices and the strategies to present the news in the three newspapers.

### 4.2 Microlevel: lexical and grammatical choices

As exemplified in the previous section, on a microlevel, framing mechanisms in *Abc* and *El Mundo*, on the one hand, and in *El País*, on the other, differ considerable. In this section, I will illustrate in more detail the centrality of lexical and grammatical choices as framing devices capable of accentuating the narratives of the three newspapers.

As discussed in the previous section, the three media are characterized by decision-making biases, albeit in different ways. Decision biases are complemented with framing mechanisms that provide larger interpretive frameworks. For example, *Abc*'s decision to publish an article on the creation of a government agency for Ignacio Carnicero, one of Sánchez´s closest friends, was presented with a headline that stressed political nepotism by means of factual vocabulary (June 4): "Sánchez crea un nueva dirección general en Transportes para colocar a su mejor amigo" [Sánchez creates a new national transport agency for his best friend], where Sánchez is the Actor and Carnicero the Recipient (Halliday, 2004: 190-191). In addition, the lead provided the readers with background information about the appointment: Carnicero and Sánchez played in the same basketball team in their youth, and Carnicero appeared in some of Sánchez's electoral videos. The articles were accompanied by an editorial entitled "Un escudo social para el amigo de Sánchez" and an opinion column titled "¡Gracias, Pedrín!" [Thanks, Pete!]. The former used the metaphoric phrase "escudo social" [social shield], widely used during the pandemic by the coalition government to defend the laws passed aimed at providing financial aid to the unemployed. The writer subverted it in a radical manner (Baker, 2006: 94) in order to criticize the creation of a highly paid position for the Prime Minister's friend at a time when thousands of people were losing their jobs. This shows the importance of the use of stock phrases and keywords in the creation and consolidation of clusters of facts and judgements (Entman, 1993: 55) and exemplifies the importance of headlines in the construction of interpretive frameworks for new stories (Dor, 2003: 715). In addition, the choice of nouns contributes to the evaluation of the news story. While it has been pointed out that evaluation is typically provided by means of adjectives, adverbs and modal verbs (Bednarek and Caple, 2019: 190-191), these headlines illustrate the use of nouns ("amigo") and noun phrases ("escudo social") for the same purpose. The use of the diminutive ("Pedrín") adds a sarcastic tone to the negative evaluation present in the noun phrases. On the whole, these choices relate to what Bednarek and Caple call the parameter of emotivity in news writing (2019: 178-179), which in turn is associated with the ideological stance of the news organization.

Similarly, the visual elements are of paramount importance, especially after the shift from the text-dominated news to the consolidation of the image as central in news production. In line with this, it has been pointed out that images function as symbolic representations of the news content and the way in which a news company might want to present it to its target audience (Kress and van Leeuwen, 2006: 105-108, Bednarek and Caple, 2019: 138-139). For instance, the article entitled "Sánchez crea un nueva dirección general en Transportes para colocar a su mejor amigo" was accompanied by a powerful visual element: a combined image of two photographs in which the main actors, Prime Minister Sánchez and his friend Carnicero, who

look remarkably similar, wearing informal clothes and impeccably trimmed hair. In line with Kress and van Leeuwen's grammar of visual content, this photograph is characterized by the carriers (that is, the two politicians), and the possessive attributes (that is, their physical attributes, which serve to project the critical interpretation) (Kress and van Leeuwen, 2019: 107). This image is meant to impact readers: as has been argued, the visual element in a news text is not merely a given, but rather it has immense political significance related to questions of power (Frosh, 2011: 95) and, in this case, the newspaper's denunciation of the abuse of power.

In addition, *Abc* used two other mechanisms to present the government in a negative way, namely opinion columns and the inclusion of direct quotations in the headlines. Let us consider a few examples:

> González: "A veces el Gobierno se parece mucho al camarote de los hermanos Marx"
>
> [González: Sometimes the government looks like the Marx Brothers's cabin] (11 June)
>
> Ayuso: "Iglesias nunca llamó para ayudar, siempre que pudo ha echado gasolina"
>
> [Ayuso: Iglesias never called to help, he has added fuel to the fire] (14 June)
>
> "El gobierno nunca ha tenido un plan contra el Covid"
>
> [The government has never had an anti-COVID plan] (21 June)

These headlines correspond to hard news in which a number of politicians provided critical views of the central government, including former Socialist leaders. The use of quotes in the headlines has several functions. Direct quotations may indicate that the journalist has not manipulated the source texts providing readers with the 'voice of experience'. However, quotes also allow news workers to include indirect evaluation by selecting the words of the news actors (Bednarek & Caple, 2019: 112) that would better contribute to the framing process. Bednarek and Caple point out that the way in which the quotes are integrated is also crucial: in these examples, quotes are given prominence as they are used as *the* headlines, rather than as part of the headlines. Thus, the text is constructed around what politicians say (Bell, 1991: 153). In this case, *Abc* quoted the conservative leaders of Madrid and Andalucía to point out that the central government lacked a plan against the pandemic, and that the Deputy Prime Minister never provided any assistance during the process. More importantly, *Abc* quoted former Socialist Prime Minister Felipe González, who is credited with the modernization of Spain during the 1980s and much of the 1990s, in order to undermine the measures taken by the coalition government. In this quotation, González compares the coalition government with the famous scene of *A Night at the Opera*, a 1935 movie by Sam Wood with the Marx brothers, to highlight that the cabinet ministers kept contracting each other.

As regards *El País*, during the period analyzed, its headlines showed a much greater preference for evaluative lexis and syntax than *Abc* and *El Mundo*. Let us consider a few examples:

España inicia una nueva era: reduce sus tropas en Irak y las retira de Afganistán (1 June)

[Spain begins a new era: it reduces the number of troops in Iraq and withdraws its troops from Afghanistan]

Una reconocida abogada fichada por La Moncloa dirigirá la CNMV (1 June)

[A renowned lawyer appointed by Moncloa will head the CNMV]

Sánchez: "El enemigo es el virus y la política debe combatirlo unida" (3 June)

[Sánchez: "The enemy is the virus and politicians should unite to fight it]

Salvador Illa: "Visto lo visto todos llegamos tarde a esto" (7 June)

[Salvador Illa: "Given what we now know, everyone was late for this]

Sánchez a Casado: "¿Va a perseverar en la bronca o va a tomar el camino de la unidad?" (10 June)

[Sánchez a Casado: "Will you continue to use confrontation or will you take the road to unity]

These examples point in two directions. First, as was the case of *Abc* and *El Mundo, El País* on quotations by senior officials to produce news texts. However, *El País* depended almost exclusively on government sources. This has been explained through the notion of bureaucratic affinity (Fishman, 1988) between governments and the media, and has also been linked to the need to provide a feeling of authenticity to the news story (Bednarek & Caple, 2019: 111). It also contributes to the legitimization of specific narratives by selecting words that are given credence as a result of "someone said it" (Halliday, 2004: 446), and which reflect the ideological affinity between a specific news company and a government. Bednarek and Caple (2019: 265) have shown that quoting premiers such as Barack Obama serves to construe the newsworthiness of a news event. But in the case of *El País*, the sources quoted, i.e. the Spanish Prime Minister and Health Minister Salvador Illa, were used to support the government's positions and to undermine the leader of the opposition.

As regards the other two headlines, they were used to legitimize the government by means of positive evaluative adjectives, highlighting the actions of the government in a positive manner: the government's decision to withdraw Spanish troops from Afghanistan point to a new era ("nueva era") and the new government appointee is described as a "renowned lawyer", reminiscent of the feelgood stories used by the popular

press (Conboy, 2002: 174). In other words, these attitudinal epithets (Halliday, 2004: 319) are used as discursive practices that allow writers to construe or accentuate specific narratives by framing participants in a negative or positive way (Baker, 2006: 122).

Other notable examples of the use of quotations to provide readers with specific narratives of the events are "Las instrucciones en un hospital en Madrid: 'Vamos a denegar la cama a los pacientes con más riesgo de morir'" [Instructions in a hospital in Madrid: 'We will not give a bed to patients with the highest risk of dying'] (June 18) and "El asesor sanitario de Ayuso: 'Los ancianos quedaron abandonados a su suerte'" [Ayuso's health advisor: 'The elderly were left to their own devices'] (June 23). These headlines, which introduced the main stories of the day, focused on quotations that apportion the blame to Madrid's government by having recourse to officials accepting the blame or giving controversial instructions. Named sources tend to be preferred in these contexts, as in the second case, but unnamed sources may be used when named ones are not available or to avoid accusations of defamation (Bednarek & Caple, 2019: 111). However, these headlines are characterized by forceful statements that show agency on the part of the authorities ("Vamos a denegar") and passivity on the patients ("ancianos quedaron abandonados") (van Leeuwen, 2008: 23), where agency is expressed via a causative (Halliday, 2004: 513).

## 5. Concluding discussion

In this article, I set out to study whether and how polarization was reflected in three major Spanish newspapers after the Spanish central government lifted the state of emergency enforced in the first months of the COVID-19 pandemic. I aimed to explore whether these media exemplified "the tendency to adopt a moralized identification with one political group and against another" (Finkel et al., 2020: 533) by means of three questions. As Finkel et al.'s discussion of political sectarianism is at an early stage, I have drawn on Entman's notion of bias and narrative theory with regards to framing the actors and actions of news events as well as on the Bednarek and Caple's framework for the analysis of news discourse (2019) and Kress and van Leeuwen's grammar of visual content (2006).

The study has clearly shown that the three media opted to report on specific topics (Entman, 1993: 52) for the benefit of their intended audiences: they reflected clear decision-making biases (Entman, 2007). Thus, specific events were prioritized to the detriment of others in order to present the political situation in a way that served to "dislike and distrust opposing partisans" (Finkel et al., 2020: 533). The study has shown that *El País* supported the Socialist-led coalition government, whereas *Abc* and *El Mundo* were critical of the political, economic and health measures put forward by the central government.

As regards the framing of the events and news actors, two aspects are of particular interest. First, while *Abc* opted for macrolevel mechanisms that favored the selection of specific news events such as the negative effect of the measures taken by the government, it retained features of objectivity on a microlevel as the lexical choices included fewer evaluative words in the headlines than in the case of *El País*. In other words, the interpretive frames were shaped by the reiteration of topics that highlighted the incompetence of the government rather than on lexical choices. *El País*, on the other hand, opted for the deselection of news topics that could impact the central government (e.g. corruption and nepotism scandals), and the headlines of its articles included a high number of negative verbs, nouns and adjectives that framed the opposition negatively, while those applied to the government were positive. In this sense, as mentioned, the results fall in line with the ideological position of the three media: *El Mundo* and *Abc* were critical of the central government, *El País* was more complacent with its policies.

Although the influence of biases on news production is not new (Entman, 2007: 165), the most conspicuous finding regarding the third question is the fact that *El País* displays a greater number of bias markers. On a macrolevel, this newspaper opted for the suppression of news events that might have undermined the central government's credibility. This means that information about the allegations of political corruption in *Podemos* were absent in the newspaper's daily most prominent newsfeed. Criticism of the government's handling of the health and economic crises was also minimal, while negative reporting of Madrid's conservative government occupied a central position. Thus, *El País* favored one political side over the other (Finkel et al., 2020) illustrating both content and decision-making biases (Entman, 2007), while, on a microlevel, its news writers selected negative words (notably adjectives, but also verbs and nouns) that reinforced the negative presentation of Madrid's government and the positive representation of the central government. This exemplifies the concept of "othering" introduced by Finkel et al (2020: 533).

These selection/deselection processes are particularly noteworthy, as they are not merely examples of the *news slant* that characterizes news reports and editorials and which favor "one side over the other in a current or potential dispute" (Entman, 2007: 165). In fact, news slant can be observed in all three newspapers. It is observable in *Abc*'s and *El Mundo*'s reporting of the allegations of corruption against the central government and in their presentation of the measures taken by the central government and Madrid's regional government. However, it is *El País* that better illustrates decision-making biases as this newspaper completely deselected any news related to allegations of corruption and nepotism, and focused on a critique of Madrid's conservative government, whose decisions were in permanent conflict with those of the central government. This takes us to Finkel et al.'s notion of sectarianism as a sign not only of

the political situation in countries such as the US and Spain, but also of the media's alarming loss of objectivity at a time when the governments of a number of European national governments are attempting to control (or have effectively controlled news media).

Starting from Finkel et al's preliminary proposal of the concept of "political sectarianism", this article has applied it to news articles in three major Spanish newspapers. It has combined concepts used in communication studies, such as bias and framing, with the analysis of language and multimodal elements from a discourse studies perspective. As Finkel et al's proposal requires elaboration and was primarily applied to American political, I have suggested a possible expansion that may, in the future, be refined or redesigned in order to study polarization in other media, in different languages and to carry out diachronic studies.

## 6. References

Baker, M. (2006). *Translation and conflict. A narrative account.* London: Routledge.

Bednarek, M. (2015). *Emotion talk across corpora.* Basingtoke: Palgrave MacMillan.

Bednarek, M. & Caple, H. (2019[2012]). *News discourse.* London: Bloomsbury.

Bell, A. (1991). *The language of news media.* Oxford: Blackwell.

Briziarelli, M. (2016). To 'feel' and to 'understand' political struggle: The national-popular rhetoric of Podemos. *Journal of Communication Inquiry*, *40*(3), 287-304.

Caravantes, P. (2021). Tensions between populist and feminist politics: The case of the Spanish left populist party Podemos. *International Political Science Review*, *42*(5), 596-612.

Champagne P. (2005). The 'double dependency': The journalistic field between politics and markets. In R. Benson & E. Neveu (Eds.), *Bourdieu and the journalistic field* (pp. 48-63). Malden, MA: Polity.

Conboy, M. (2002). *The new and popular press.* London: Sage.

De Vreese, C.H. (2005). News framing: Theory and typology. *Information Design Journal + Document Design*, *13*(1), 51–62.

Dor, D. (2003). On newspaper headlines as relevance optimizers. *Journal of Pragmatics*, *35*(5), 695-721.

Entman, R.M. (1993). Framing toward clarification of a fractured paradigm. *Journal of Communication*, *10*(2), 155–173.

Entman, R.M. (2007). Framing bias: Media in the distribution of power. *Journal of Communication*, *57*, 163-173.

Finkel, E.J., Bail, C.E., Cikara, M. et al. (2020). Political sectarianism in America. *Science*, *370*, 533-536.

Fishman, M. (1988). *Manufacturing the news*. Austin: University of Texas Press.

Fowler, R. (1991). *Language in the news: Discourse and ideology in the press*. London: Routledge.

Frosh, P. (2011). Framing pictures, picturing frames: Visual metaphors in political communications research. *Journal of Communication Inquiry*, *35*(2), 91-114.

Halliday, M.A.K. (2004). *An introduction to functional grammar*. London: Hodder Arnold.

Harcup, T. & O'Neill, D. (2001). What is news? Galtung and Ruge revisited. *Journalism Studies*, *2*(2), 261–280.

Harcup, T. & O'Neill, D. (2017). What is news? News values revisited (again). *Journalism Studies*, *18*(2), 1470-1488.

Jovanović, S.M. (2018). Headlines as fake news: Discursive deception in Serbia's *Daily Informer* (2012–2018). *Central and Eastern European Review*, *12*, 1–22.

Kress, G. & van Leeuwen, T. (2006). *Reading images. The grammar of visual design*. London: Routledge.

Martín, I. & Urquizu-Sancho, I. (2012). The 2011 general election in Spain: The collapse of the Socialist Party. *South European Society & Politics*, *17*(2), 347-363.

Martín-Llaguno, M., Ballestar, M.T., Sainz, J. & Cuerdo-Mir, M. (2022). From ignorance to distrust: The public "discovery" of COVID-19 around International Women's Day in Spain. *International Journal of Communication, 16*, 409-436.

Molek-Kozakowska, K. (2013). Towards a pragma-linguistic framework for the study of sensationalism in news headlines. *Discourse & Communication*, *7*(2), 173–197.

Patterson, T. E. & Donsbagh, W. (1996). News decisions: Journalists as partisan actors. *Political Communication*, *13*(4), 455-468.

Perugorría, I. & Tejerina, B. (2013). Politics of the encounter: Cognition, emotions, and networks in the Spanish 15M. *Current Sociology*, *61*(4), 424-442.

Ramiro, L. & Gómez, R. (2016). Radical-left populism during the great recession: Podemos and its competition with the established radical left. *Political Studies*, *65*(1), 108-126.

Reese, S.S. (2001). Framing public life: A bridging model for media research. In S.S. Reese, O. Gandy & A. Grant (Eds.), *Framing Public Life* (pp. 7-31). Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum.

Reese, S.S. (2007). The Framing project: a bridging model for media research revisited. *Journal of Communication*, *57*(1), 148-154.

Salmon, K. (2017). A decade of lost growth: Economic policy in Spain through the great recession. *South European Society and Politics*, *22*(2), 239-260.

Sanders, K., Molina Hurtado, M.J., & Zoragastua, J. (2017). Populism and exclusionary narratives: The 'Other' on Podemos's 2014 European Union election campaign. *European Journal of Communication*, *32*(6), 552-557.

Somers, M. R., & Gibson, G. D. (1994). Reclaiming the epistemological "Other": Narrative and the social constitution of identity. In C. Calhoun (Ed.), *Social theory and the politics of identity* (pp. 37-99). Oxford: Blackwell.

Torre, C. (2017). Hugo Chávez and the diffusion of Bolivarianism. *Democratization*, *24*(7), 1271-1288.

Turnbull-Dugarte, S.J. (2019). Explaining the end of Spanish exceptionalism and electoral support for Vox. *Research & Politics*, *6*(2), 1-8.

Turnbull-Dugarte, S.J., Rama, J. & Santana, A. (2020). The Baskerville's Dog suddenly started barking: Voting for Vox in the 2019 Spanish general elections. *Political Research Exchange*, *2*(1), 1-21.

Valdeón, R.A. (2022). Gatekeeping, ideological affinity and journalistic translation. *Journalism*, *23*(1), 117-133.

Vampa, D. (2020). Competing forms of populism and territorial politics: The cases of Vox and Podemos in Spain. *Journal of Contemporary European Studies*, *20*(3), 304-321.

van Leeuwen, T. (2008). *Discourse and Practice*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

van Gorp, B. (2007). The constructionist approach to framing. *Journal of Communication*, *57*(1), 60-78.

Vos, T. P. & Finneman, T. (2017). The early historical construction of journalism's gatekeeping role. *Journalism*, *18*(3), 265-280.

Winston, B. (2002). Towards tabloidization? Glasgow revisited, 1975-2001. *Journalism Studies*, *3*(1), 5-20.