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Shaping politics: mediatization and media interventionism

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Shaping Politics: Mediatization AND Media Interventionism

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McCAIN DEBATING OBAMA[1]

The notion that politics has become mediated (Bennett and Entman 2001; Nimmo and Combs 1983; Silverstone 2007) and mediatized (Cottle 2006; Kepplinger 2002; Mazzoleni and Schulz 1999; Schulz 2004) has gained currency over the last couple of decades. Although these concepts are often used, they are, however, more often referred to than properly defined or thoroughly discussed. Before engaging in our conceptual analysis, let us turn to an example to suggest how the media shape the portrayals and perceptions of political events.

The three televised debates between Senators John McCain and Barack Obama during the 2008 U.S. presidential election campaign took place largely due to the presence of the media and their willingness to broadcast the events. Although political candidates faced off in debates before the advent of mass media, the presence of mass media—not the least, television—increased the potential audience dramatically and gave these events a new quality as major campaign events. The media also turned these debates into national events instead of local events focused primarily on those physically attending the debates. Televised political debates are thus typical examples of "media events" (Dayan and Katz 1992) and "pseudo-events" (Boorstin 1961), set up to suit the demands of the

mass media, celebrated as being of major significance, and aimed first and fore-most at a distant, imagined although real, audience of mainly passive spectators.

When political debates became televised, their formats successively changed to suit the demands of the media rather than the demands of the contenders or the electorate (Esaiasson and Håkansson 2002; Kraus 2000). This is particularly the case when televised debates have become institutionalized, and political candidates, pragmatically if not theoretically, have no choice but to participate. This is not to say that political candidates and parties do not have a say (Schroeder 2000), but rather that, nowadays, the broadcasting media in many countries have the final say with respect to how the debates are staged, produced, and broadcast.

To those present at the presidential debates between McCain and Obama, the events were unmediated in the sense that they could witness the debates directly. Nevertheless, the media set up the ground rules that the physically present audience had to abide by; for example, they were instructed to be silent during the first and third debates.

For most people, watching in their homes or in public places, the debates were mediated; that is, transmitted by the broadcasting media from the locale of the debates to the audiences wherever they were located. In this sense, and conceptually speaking, mediation should be understood as "a natural, preordained mission of mass media to convey meaning from communicators to their target audiences" (Mazzoleni 2008a, pp. 3047–3048). Politics is thus mediated whenever people experience it through media rather than directly and through their own experiences (Strömbäck 2008).

However, the media did not transmit the debates neutrally. Instead, for several days before the debates, the media speculated about the debates and their importance, thus shaping people's expectations. The candidates and their staffs participated in this "expectation game," but regardless of whether the media were driving the expectation game, the media put their independent mark on it by adding their own speculations and bringing in commentators and pundits to talk about it. Thus, when people sat down to watch the debates and the candidates' performances, their expectations were to a significant degree shaped by the media. The candidates were also aware that the outcome—how the debates finally would be perceived—depended as much on how the media and their commentators interpreted the debates as on any actual or objective reality. They were furthermore aware that their performances would be judged against the media-shaped expectations and that the post-debate analysis might be as important as the debate in itself as to how people perceived who won or came across better. As shown by research on debate effects, the indirect effects, following from the post-debate analysis in the media, might be as important as, or more important than, the direct effects following from a debate in itself (Patterson 1980; Blais

and Boyer 1996). Hence, the candidates' target audience was not only, or even primarily, the public at large, but also journalists and media commentators. This arguably had effects on their debate preparations and strategies.

Equally important, during the 2008 debates, the media intervened in various ways. Whether by using split screens, encouraging people to text-message who they think won before the debates were even over, or showing real-time audience responses on the screen during the debates, the end result was that those watching the debates on TV did not see them unfiltered. CNN, for example, chose to continuously track and *show* people's responses to the debates, using real-time response measurements. Instead of transmitting the first debates as neutrally as possible, CNN intervened in a way that inhibited people's opportunity to judge for themselves how the candidates performed. In other words, people saw the debates as the media shaped them, and these media interventions likely affected how the people perceived the candidates and their performances. This is but one example of how modern politics has become not only mediated but also, partly through active and intended media interventionism, increasingly mediatized.

MEDIATION AND MEDIATIZATION

In the literature, the concepts of mediation and mediatization are often used interchangeably to denote approximately the same phenomena and processes. For example, when Altheide and Snow (1988, pp. 196–197) explicate their theory on how "social life is constituted by and through a communication process" and how media logic increasingly shapes the workings and understandings of society, they term this a process of *mediation*, while acknowledging (p. 195) that some prefer the term *mediatization*. Nimmo and Combs (1983) also used the term *mediation* rather than *mediatization* to denote the dynamic processes through which media communication shape and reshape society and our understandings of it. The same is true of Silverstone's recent analysis on the rise of the "Mediapolis" (2007).

The concepts of mediation and mediatization should not, however, be understood as synonymous (Couldry 2008; Hjarvard 2008; Strömbäck 2008). Arguably, *mediation* can be used both to denote a neutral act of transmitting messages through the media and as denoting "the overall effect of media institutions existing in contemporary societies, the overall difference that media make by being there in our social world" (Couldry 2008). However, the essence of mediation as a concept is the rather neutral act of transmitting messages (Mazzoleni 2008a). Using *mediation* to denote both the neutral act of transmitting messages and the active, ever-present, and increased media influence makes the concept less precise and hence less useful.

Mediated communication should therefore primarily be understood as opposed to direct, first-hand, or face-to-face communication, whereas mediated politics primarily should be understood as politics communicated via and experienced through different media (Bennett and Entman 2001; Asp 1986). When politics has become mediated, people depend on the media for information about politics and society in a broad sense of the words, just as politicians and other powerful elites depend on the media for information about people's opinions and trends in society, and for reaching out to people. When politics has become mediated, the media mediate between the citizenry on the one hand, and the institutions involved in government, electoral processes or, more generally, opinion formation, on the other. The media might also mediate between different actors and institutions *within* the governing or political communication system more broadly. Conceptually speaking, the most important aspect related to the mediation of politics is hence whether people, located in various parts of and playing different roles within the political communication system, depend on the media for information and communication with each other (Strömbäck 2008).

In this understanding, the concept of mediated politics is basically a rather static concept. This is not to denigrate it—from a descriptive point of view, it is indeed very important. This is only to suggest that it fails to capture the dynamics of political communication processes and the interrelationships between media and politics and how media influence has increased over time.

Mediatization, in contrast, is an inherently process-oriented concept, focused on how media influence has increased in a number of different respects. Thus, mediatization as a general theory is not focused solely on politics. Rather, mediatization has been conceptualized as being on par with other major societal change processes such as modernization, individualization, and globalization (Hjarvard 2008; Krotz 2007; Mazzoleni 2008b). Mediatization is thus a process affecting all parts of society, either directly or indirectly, albeit to different degrees within or across different societies. As noted by Mazzoleni:

> In brief, the concept of "mediatization of society" indicates an extension of the influence of the media into all societal spheres. Therefore, it is important to see what are the (main) domains that are influenced by the media system (remembering that the media system is both a cultural technology and an economic organization). In broad and general terms, all the main societal domains are affected by the connection between media and society: sex/gender and generational relationships, deviance, control and surveillance, religious and ritual dimensions, power relationships, urban environment and city life, localization and globalization processes, and so on. (Mazzoleni 2008b, p. 3053)

The mediatization of politics is thus part of the more general process of mediatization of and in societies—at least highly developed, post-industrial, and

democratic societies. The degree of mediatization might vary, as the degree of modernization, individualization, and globalization also might, but it still affects society—including politics—in numerous and fundamental ways.

MEDIATIZATION AS MEDIA INFLUENCE

At its core, mediatization is a process-oriented concept that is about "changes associated with communication media and their development" (Schulz 2004, p. 88) or, to quote Hjarvard (2008, also 2004), "the process whereby society to an increasing degree is submitted to, or becomes dependent on, the media and their logic." Asp and Esaiasson (1996, pp. 80–81) similarly note that mediatization is a process "in which there is a development toward increasing media influence."

In this context, the media should be understood not only as single operations, formats, or outlets, even though all these aspects are important. The media should rather be understood as an ever-present social and cultural system of production, broadcast, circulation, and dissemination of symbols, signs, messages, meanings, and values. The media should be understood as an institution (Cook 2005). The various media companies, outlets, types, formats, and contents constitute the building blocks of this overall social and cultural system, but the sum is arguably greater than its parts, and the rules and norms that govern the media taken as a whole are often more important than what distinguishes one media company, outlet, type, or format from another (Mazzoleni 2008b; Hjarvard 2008; Altheide and Snow 1979, 1988, 1991; Nimmo and Combs 1983). This is not to say that there are no significant differences among, say, elite newspapers, public service news, and commercial TV news, but rather that the commonalities, from the perspective of mediatization, are more important than the differences.

Stated differently, mediatization means that the media form a system in its own right, *independent* although *interdependent* on other social systems such as the political system (Altheide and Snow 1988; Cook 2005; Hjarvard 2008; Mazzoleni 2008b; Strömbäck 2008). Within this media system, there are hierarchies, with some media being more important in shaping the overall media logic and the configuration of the media system than other media are. For example, during the last decades, television has arguably been the most influential medium. Although some believe that the Internet will change this, thus far, the Internet has not replaced the dominant media and media logic (Schulz 2004), and television still constitutes the most influential medium.

What makes the media so important is not only that they have come to constitute an independent although interdependent social and cultural system in society, but also that the media have become "an omnipresent symbolic environment

creating an essential part of the societal definitions of reality," to quote Schulz (2004, p. 93). Hence, the media permeate all spheres of contemporary societies and have become the most important source of information about all matters beyond people's everyday experiences. As noted by Silverstone (2007, p. 5), "The media are becoming environmental." He also notes, "We have become dependent on the media for the conduct of everyday life."

This is a consequence of the notion that people's everyday experiences are heavily shaped by the media, as people react to and interpret phenomena they encounter through the lenses of prior information or schemata (Fiske and Taylor 1991), and as these, to a significant degree, are shaped by information received through various media. Our knowledge or impressions of politicians, political issues, and people or places beyond our own experiences comes primarily from the media. Where would this knowledge otherwise come from? What would we know about John McCain, South Africa, HIV, or any other distant person, place, or issue, were it not for the media and whatever we have learned from various media accounts, ranging from news to documentaries to fictional dramas? In this context, it matters less whether people's understanding is correct in that it corresponds to the actual reality. What matters most is that people base their knowledge, understandings, and opinions on the "fantasy reality" (Nimmo and Combs 1983) or "pseudo-environment" (Lippmann 1997) largely created by the media.

If people are guided by their social constructions or reality, the building blocks of these social constructions are heavily shaped by the media's social constructions. Ample evidence of this can be found in research on the media's ability to influence their audiences through, for example, the processes of agenda setting (McCombs 2004), framing (Iyengar 1991), priming (Iyengar and Kinder 1987), and cultivation (Shanahan and Morgan 1999).

At the same time, a proper understanding of the media's influence requires going beyond theories on their effects on individual perceptions and opinions. These theories depend on a causal logic in which it is possible to make a distinction between dependent and independent variables (Schulz 2004), and they also assume that media effects largely follow from the content of media messages. From the perspective of mediatization theory, the media content cannot, however, be treated as isolated from media formats and media grammar (Altheide and Snow 1979). Furthermore, the omnipresence of the media makes it virtually impossible to separate them from people's everyday life, just as the media cannot be conceived of as being separate from other social, political, or cultural processes. Media effect theories also fail to recognize the reciprocal effects of the media on the subjects and processes of media coverage (Kepplinger 2007), how various social actors beyond "the audience in general" use and are affected by the media (Davis 2007), and how social actors accommodate to the media. This is why

Silverstone's expression that the media have become environmental is enlightening: The environment is always present, and human beings cannot be perceived as being located outside of the environment. Just as birds are dependent on air and fish are dependent on water, the human being lives in and interacts with the environment, and it does not make much sense to ask what the effect of air is on birds, of water on fish, or of environment on the human being. The effects are tremendous and still virtually impossible to isolate and capture.

In other words, if the media permeate and are intertwined with basically all social, cultural, and political processes, and if media content cannot be conceived of as isolated from media formats and grammar, the logic of separating dependent from independent variables is challenged, and the established media effect theories are insufficient for an understanding of the full extent of the media's influence. The media effect theories are important but insufficient. As noted by Schulz (2004, p. 90), "mediatization as a concept both transcends and includes media effects."

This does not mean, however, that it is impossible to get at a greater understanding of the mediatization of society in general or of politics. As suggested by Schulz (2004, pp. 88–90), at least four processes of social change following from the media can be identified: extension, substitution, amalgamation, and accommodation.

First of all, the media *extend* human communication capabilities across both space and time. Second, the media "partly or completely *substitute* social activities and social institutions and thus change their character" (Schulz 2004, p. 88). Things that were previously done in a face-to-face manner or that required physical presence can now be done or experienced through various media. Third, media activities *merge* and mingle with non-media activities or processes, thus becoming an integral part of, and making it all the more difficult to separate the media from, these other activities and processes. Similarly, information gained from media merges and mingles with information gained through interpersonal communication or experiences. As this happens, "the media's definition of reality amalgamates with the social definition of reality." Fourth, as the media become increasingly important, different social actors have to adapt to and alter their behaviors to *accommodate* the media's logic and standards of newsworthiness (Schulz 2004; Strömbäck 2008). In addition to these four processes following from the media, one should add *creation*. Not only do the media create events in the form of texts and programs, the importance of the media makes other social actors *create* events with the main or sole purpose of being covered by the media. This is what Boorstin (1961) refers to as "pseudo-events."

Five crucial social change processes that form part of mediatization and that follow from the media and their influence are thus extension, substitution,

amalgamation, accommodation, and creation. These affect society on all levels, from the individual (psychological) to the institutional (sociological). The same is true of media logic, a concept that has already been referred to but that needs to be explicated.

THE CONCEPTS OF MEDIA LOGIC AND POLITICAL LOGIC

Similar to the concepts of mediation and mediatization, media logic is referred to more often than it is properly defined. At the same time, media logic can be conceived of as one important force in the mediatization of society (Mazzoleni 2008c), suggesting that an understanding of media logic is a prerequisite for an understanding of mediatization.

The first to use the concept of media logic was Altheide and Snow (1979, 1988, 1991), and according to their definition:

> Media logic consists of a form of communication; the process through which media present and transmit information. Elements of this form include the various media and the formats used by these media. Format consists, in part, of how material is organized, the style in which it is presented, the focus or emphasis on particular characteristics of behavior, and the grammar of media communication. Format becomes a framework or a perspective that is used to present as well as interpret phenomena. (Altheide and Snow 1979, p. 10)

Although this definition is elusive, media logic can be understood as a particular way of seeing, covering, and interpreting social, cultural, and political phenomena. According to the theory, the various media formats, the production processes and routines, and the media's own need for compelling, attention-grabbing, and dramatic stories shape how the media perceive, cover, and interpret social affairs. In other words, the media have certain formats, processes, and routines, and they need to be competitive in the struggle to capture people's attention. This shapes what the media cover and how they cover it. For example, as a visual medium, television requires good visuals; hence, television news favor stories where there are good or strong visuals (Bucy and Grabe 2007). The media also favor stories that include conflict, as conflict lends itself to more dramatic storytelling (McManus 1994). The media's need for stories that are dramatic and have the potential to capture people's attention might explain their propensity to focus on scandals (Sabato, Stencel, and Lichter 2000) to frame politics as a horse race or strategic game rather than as issues (Patterson 1993; Cappella and Jamieson 1997; Strömbäck and Kaid 2008) and to apply episodic and concrete frames rather than thematic and abstract frames (Iyengar 1991). The growth of the information

society turned information scarcity into information surplus (Hernes 1978), creating a need for the media both to reduce information and to turn information into as compelling news stories as possible. Storytelling techniques used to achieve this include simplification, polarization, intensification, personalization, visualization, stereotyping, and particular ways of framing the news (Hernes 1978; Asp 1986; Strömbäck 2000; Esser 2008; Mazzoleni 1987; Patterson 1993). In all these cases, the media content is "molded by a format logic," to quote Altheide and Snow (1988, p. 201), who also note that some important format considerations for events on U.S. network TV news include accessibility, visual quality, drama and action, audience relevance, and thematic encapsulation. Format considerations such as these guide both selection and production of news events and are important for understanding the media's news values and standards of newsworthiness.

While the concept of media logic is important in itself, it also highlights the notion that the media are not guided by logics external to the media themselves. There is one exception, in the sense that media logic is overlapping with that of commercial logic. As most media are run as commercial businesses, media logic both follows from, and is adapted to, commercial logic (Mazzoleni 2008c; Hamilton 2004; McManus 1994). This affects even public service media when they have to compete for audiences with commercial media.

More important, in the context of the mediatization of politics, is that media logic can be conceived of as opposed to political logic (Mazzoleni 1987; Meyer 2002; Strömbäck 2008; Brants and Praag 2006). Although the concept of political logic is less developed than that of media logic, it is crucial for an understanding of how mediatization shapes and reshapes politics.

At the heart of any conceptualization of political logic lies the fact that politics ultimately is about collective and authoritative decision making as well as the implementation of political decisions. This includes the processes of distributing political power; the processes of political deliberation, bargaining, and decision making; the processes of implementing political decisions; and the question of power as it relates to "who gets what, when, and how" (Lasswell 1950). More precisely, political logic consists of at least the following six dimensions (see Lasswell 1950; Meyer 2002; Jones and Baumgartner 2005; Stoker 2006):

- A power allocation dimension: the efforts to, and processes of, distributing and allocating political power through elections or appointments.
- A partisan dimension: the efforts to win partisan advantages, mainly although not exclusively through elections.
- A policy dimension: the efforts to, and processes of, defining problems that require political solutions, and of finding solutions for politically defined problems.

- A deliberation dimension: the efforts to, and processes of, deliberating, building consensus, or compromising between different policy proposals, and of making authoritative decisions.
- An implementation dimension: the efforts to, and processes of, implementing political decisions.
- An accountability dimension: the efforts to, and processes of, monitoring political decision making and implementation, and holding those responsible accountable for their conduct.

While power is an integral and inevitable part of politics, politics is also about policies and programs for solving societal problems that require political decisions, and for reforming society according to various value systems or ideologies. The focus of most political processes is thus on issues; that is, societal problems and suggestions with respect to how these can or should be addressed. Some might argue that power is the ultimate goal, and policy programs and promises are the means to reach that goal (Downs 1957). But others might argue that, while power is the means, being able to enact policies according to their own value system or ideology is the ultimate goal (Sjöblom 1968). The conflict between these two positions will probably never be resolved, but it is important to recognize that politics cannot be reduced to one dimension or to being about either policies or power. Politics is about both power and policies.

More importantly, politics is also about communication, and media communication is an integral part of all the dimensions that form what politics is about. Political actors, located within political institutions, consequently need to take the media into consideration, and the media might independently intervene, in all the processes and along all of the dimensions that form politics. In societies that have become increasingly mediatized, this arguably creates a very real tension and conflicts between media logic and political logic in political communication and governing processes (Mazzoleni 1987; Meyer 2002; Strömbäck 2008; Brants and Praag 2006).

In other words, politics and political communication in a particular society can be governed *mainly* by either media logic or political logic. In the former case, the requirements of the media take center stage and shape the means by which political communication and governing is played out by political actors, covered by the media, and understood by the people. In the latter case, the needs of the political system and political institutions take center stage and shape how political communication is played out, covered, and understood. In the former case, what people find interesting and what is commercially viable for media companies take precedence. In the latter case, what is important for people to know, as interpreted mainly by political actors and institutions, takes precedence. In the former

case, media are essentially perceived of as commercial enterprises with no particular obligation apart from catering to the wants and needs of their audiences. In the latter case, media are perceived as political or democratic institutions, with some kind of moral, if not legal, obligation to assist in making democracy work (Croteau and Hoynes 2001; Meyer 2002; Strömbäck 2005; Ferree et al. 2002).

In reality, of course, there are many gray areas between politics and political communication governed by either media logic or political logic. For analytical purposes, the dichotomy is nevertheless helpful, not least because it might allow empirical investigations on the degree to which politics, across time, countries, and political institutions, has become mediatized.

MEDIATIZATION OF POLITICS AS A FOUR-DIMENSIONAL CONCEPT

As suggested by the discussion above, mediatization of politics is a multidimensional concept where at least four separate dimensions can be identified (Strömbäck 2008). The first dimension is concerned with the extent to which the media constitute the most important or dominant source of information and channel of communication. The second dimension is concerned with the media's independence from other social institutions, not least political institutions. Although all institutions, from a social systems perspective, should be perceived of as interdependent, for the media to have an independent impact on other social or political actors or institutions, they have to form an institution or a social system in their own right. The third dimension is concerned with media content—most importantly, news and nonfictional content—and the degree to which media content is governed by media logic or political logic. The fourth dimension focuses on political actors and the degree to which they are governed by media logic or political logic. As political actors are always located within political institutions, this dimension also includes political institutions and how they are governed, although the process of mediatization arguably has less impact on political institutions than on political actors. The four dimensions are depicted as continuums in Figure 1 (Strömbäck 2008).

Taken together and on the aggregate, we believe these dimensions determine the degree to which politics in a particular setting is mediatized. Each dimension could be broken down further into subdimensions, not least to facilitate empirical investigations on how media interventionism along each of the dimensions shapes and reshapes politics and contributes to the mediatization of politics. We will return to this point shortly. Before that, however, some other implications need to be highlighted. First, while the four dimensions of are highly intercorrelated, the breakdown of the concept into separate dimensions might help clarify
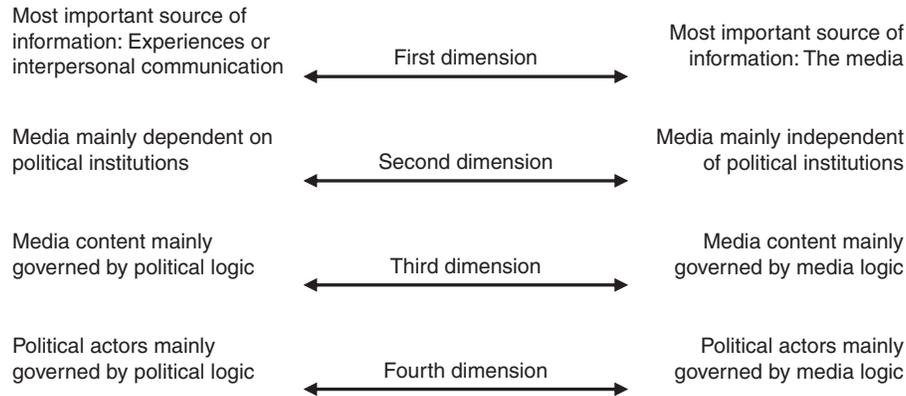
Most important source of information: Experiences or interpersonal communication	← First dimension →	Most important source of information: The media
Media mainly dependent on political institutions	← Second dimension →	Media mainly independent of political institutions
Media content mainly governed by political logic	← Third dimension →	Media content mainly governed by media logic
Political actors mainly governed by political logic	← Fourth dimension →	Political actors mainly governed by media logic

Figure 1: A four-dimensional conceptualization of the mediatization of politics.

the concept and aid in assessments of the degree to which politics in a particular setting is mediatized. Second, as the mediatization of politics should be understood as a process, it should be possible to distinguish between different phases of mediatization (Strömbäck 2008). This does not, however, implicate that the process of mediatization must be linear or unidirectional. It is certainly conceivable that the impact of media logic on political actors, located within political institutions, varies both within and across countries and across time and circumstances. For example, some political actors are more powerful than others in terms of their influence over the political agenda and how the media frame political issues. Hence, some political actors have a greater need to accommodate and adapt to the media logic than others, while the media and media logic have more influence over some political actors and institutions than others. There might also be important differences across countries depending, among other things, on political news cultures (Esser 2008) and on whether they belong to the liberal, the democratic corporatist, or the polarized pluralist model of media and politics (Hallin and Mancini 2004; see below).

In this context, the concept of media interventionism is crucial. As suggested above, it is through media interventionism, intended or inadvertent, that media logic trumps political logic with respect to how the media cover politics. Providing that the first and the second dimensions of mediatization function as prerequisites for the third dimension, and the third dimension as a prerequisite for the fourth dimension, media interventionism helps shape and reshape politics as it is covered by, the media and consequently understood by, the people. But it also affects how political actors actually think and act, and how political processes are played out. As suggested by Cook (2005), Schulz (2004), and others, increasing mediatization forces politicians to adapt to, and even adopt (Strömbäck 2008), media logic

and the media's standards of newsworthiness. The end result in such cases is that "politicians may then win the daily battles with the news media, by getting into the news as they wish, but end up losing the war as standards of newsworthiness begin to become prime criteria to evaluate issues, policies, and politics" (Cook 2005, p. 163).

MEDIA INTERVENTIONISM AS CONCEPT AND ENGINE OF MEDIATIZATION

Conceptually speaking, media interventionism refers to a media-centered political reporting style in which, increasingly, journalists and media actors become the stories' main newsmakers rather than politicians or other social actors. It can be interpreted as a professionally motivated behavior by journalists to increase their influence, authority and prestige—and, ultimately, their control over the news content. Its theoretical underpinnings are the concepts of "media intrusion" developed by Davis (1990; see also Baran and Davis 2006, pp. 345–348) and "media's discretionary power" or "journalistic intervention" developed by Blumler and Gurevitch (1995, pp. 86–96; see also Blumler and Gurevitch 2001). To take just one example of media interventionism at work, media interventionism in election campaigns is high when journalists report on politics in their own words, scenarios, and assessments—and when they, for example, grant politicians only limited opportunities to present themselves with their own voices in the news.

Media interventionism refers directly to the third dimension of mediatization and has indirect implications for the fourth dimension. As shown in Figure 1, the third dimension asks whether media content is governed mainly by political logic or media logic. The third dimension thus approaches mediatization from a symbolic interactionist perspective: It asks how political reality is defined and constructed by the news media and, due to increasing mediatization, expects this construction process to be guided by media-specific frames and formats that will influence readers' political worldviews (Mazzoleni and Schulz 1999, pp. 249–252; Johnson-Cartee 2005, pp. 1–41).

To predict the extent to which news organizations will actively format and frame political reality according to autonomous media logic, however, their structural and cultural context needs to be taken into account. The seminal studies by Blumler and Gurevitch (1995, 2001) point at two factors of the *structural environment* that aid journalistic intervention, and hence mediatization along the third dimension, to spread. The first is a political system characterized by weak party organizations, weak party loyalties in the electorate, and weak influence of party ideologies. The second is a media system that is subject to only light state

regulation, in which broadcasters are guided less by public service obligations and more by commercial considerations, profit orientations, and competitive market pressures. In addition, Blumler and Gurevitch (1995, 2001) hint at two crucial *cultural factors*. First, they claim that journalistic attitudes toward interventionism thrive in political cultures where public opinion is more cynical and distrustful of political institutions. This is because it creates a climate in which adversarial journalism seems socially acceptable. Second, they argue that it will grow in news cultures that do not consider politicians' statements as intrinsically important, and rather insist that political material should fight its way into news programs on its news value alone, and in consideration of the newsworthiness of competing stories. Aside from structural and cultural influences, Blumler and Gurevitch (1995, 2001) also allude to *professional determinants*. Journalistic intervention is more likely to be triggered by a campaigning industry that exhibits high level of professionalization in their use of media manipulation and news management strategies. On the media side, the level of professionalization is also a factor. Interventionism is more likely to expand in journalistic communities that have achieved a high degree of professional independence and are eager to preserve it against outside interference, and that cherish power-distant role perceptions such as interpreter, critic, watchdog, or entertainer.

On the national level, the media system typology of Hallin and Mancini (2004) leads us to classify the United States as a national news culture whose contextual setting favors the largest degree of journalistic intervention (Blumler and Gurevitch 2001; Strömbäck and Dimitrova 2006). At the other extreme of the spectrum is France, a prototype of the polarized pluralist model of media–politics relations (Hallin and Mancini 2004), where we would expect the least inclination to journalistic intervention. France's history of government-controlled broadcasting hindered the development of a strong and independent journalistic culture and, up to this day, has bred a symbiotic, nonadversarial connivance between journalists and politicians (Chalaby 2005).

These assumptions were recently tested with content analysis of political reporting styles in the United States, France, Germany, and England. It discovered, indeed, evidence of a more interventionist U.S. approach and a noninterventionist French approach (Esser 2008). The degree of interventionism was operationalized as the extent to which journalists grant politicians opportunities in TV news programs to present themselves in their own words (i.e., in their own sound bites). The study found that, over two election cycles, candidate sound bites in campaign news stories were consistently shorter in the United States than in Europe. At the same time that U.S. journalists were found to compress candidates' on-air statements the most, it emerged that U.S. candidates fought by far the most tightly scripted campaigns. This correlation indicates that the more

strenuously politicians try to control news coverage, the more journalists resist covering them according to the wishes of politicians, instead reporting something different that gives expression to the journalistic voice. The relationship between assertive news management style and assertive journalistic response (i.e., journalistic intervention) was found to constitute an important dimension of political news cultures. The French news culture appeared as the least independent-minded. French election stories displayed a more passive, yielding reporting style; French election stories were more structured by political logic (and the candidates' policy messages) than by interventionist media logic (that would, at times, be less willing to recycle those messages).

This suggests that the concept of media interventionism is useful and even crucial for a full understanding of how, and through what venues, the media shape news content according to media logic and consequently create strong incentives for political actors to adapt to or adopt media logic and the media's standards of newsworthiness. Or, alternatively, it is important in understanding how media intervene in the dimensions that form part of political logic. This also suggests that, conceptually, mediatization and media interventionism are closely related and can help inform each other, while media interventionism simultaneously can be conceived of as an engine of the mediatization of politics.

CONCLUSION

Both mediatization and media interventionism refer, although not exclusively, to the question of how "political reality" is constructed for the wider public, and the consequences thereof. Both concepts are, furthermore, dynamic and process oriented, which makes them useful for comparisons across time and space. For example, research indicates that news production in the past used to be guided by a higher degree of political logic (serving the needs of political actors, institutions, as well as the democracy as a whole), while today it is more closely linked to a media logic that is driven by media formats and grammar, professional norms and values, and commercial incentives and motives. This suggests increasing media interventionism as well as increasing mediatization; that the concepts are closely related and can inform each other; and how media interventionism works as an engine of the mediatization of politics.

The concept of, and research on, media interventionism are also important, because they suggest how the third dimension of mediatization (media's representation of political reality) can be operationalized and investigated empirically, and how it is connected to the fourth dimension (politicians' publicity strategies) and first dimensions (people's political perceptions). The discussion of interventionism

also demonstrates that the second dimension (journalists' professional and institutional autonomy) is an important prerequisite to the entire mediatization process.

It is obvious that linkages to other fields of research, especially to media commercialism, media professionalism, and political public relations, need to be taken into account. For example, commercial motives toward a media-centered reporting style—a reporting style that is guided by media logic rather than political logic—stem to a significant degree from competitive pressures to find attractive, captivating stories. Professional motives toward a media-centered reporting style similarly result from the increasing autonomy of journalists as an occupational group as well as from the increasing autonomy of the news media as a collective institution. This autonomy has led media organizations to become more politically assertive, which has encouraged political actors to professionalize their political public relations and news management. This in turn has created incentives for continued or stronger media interventionism and hence mediatization with respect to both the media content and, at the next stage, political actors and institutions. Thus, there is an interdependent relationship between professionalized political public relations (as a reflexive response to journalistic assertiveness) and media interventionism (as a reflexive response to professionalized political public relations). Both these phenomena are integral parts of the mediatization of politics, further underlining the notion that mediatization research needs to go beyond the classic media effects literature because mediatization is transcending the causal logic of independent and dependent variables.

In other words, the relationships between media and politics are characterized by dynamic interactions and complex interdependencies along various levels and dimensions. As the media have become the most important source of information, and as the media have gained independence from political and other media-external social institutions, media interventionism has become more pronounced, and media content has become increasingly governed by media logic as opposed to political logic. This process creates incentives for political actors and institutions to adapt to the predominance of media logic with respect to the media content, either by increasing their efforts and skills at political public relations and news management or by adopting and internalizing media logic in their own thinking and behavior.

In more and more areas, media logic trumps political logic. Increasingly, the constructions of reality conveyed by the media and shaped by media logic matter more than any actual reality, as it is the only reality to which people have access and thus treat as real. In either case, it is a sign of increasing mediatization of politics.

Ultimately, though, the degree of mediatization and media interventionism is an empirical question. More research is thus clearly needed with respect to, for example, the linkages between mediatization and other theories on political communication and journalism; the antecedents, manifestations, and consequences of

media interventionism and mediatization; variations across time and space; what causes these variations; and, ultimately, how and to what extent media shape and reshape politics.

NOTE

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