The Media and National Identity: Local Newspapers' Coverage of Scottish Independence during the Campaign of the 2014 Scottish Independence Referendum

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Introduction

Since the Acts of the Union in 1707, Scotland has struggled to varying degrees for independence. Over the last few decades, the demand for Scottish independence grew stronger, which epitomized in the Scottish National Party's landslide victory in the 2011 elections to the Scottish Parliament. Once in power, the SNP, under the leadership of First Minister Alex Salmond, began to work on the fulfilment of its campaign pledge to smoothen the way toward a public vote on Scottish independence (Mitchell, 2016). As a result, Scots were given the right to choose whether or not Scotland should be an independent country in the Scottish independence referendum on September 18th, 2014.

This chapter takes the Scottish independence referendum as a case study of local media coverage of political processes. The aim is to explore how local Scottish newspapers portrayed Scottish independence during the campaign of the referendum. Historically, the local media are seen as "product and reproducer" of Scottish national identity (Dekavalla, 2015). Given this strong linkage, the independence referendum is here understood as a unique opportunity for the local press to restate and reaffirm its reciprocal relation to Scottish distinctiveness. Hence, the chapter builds on the content analysis of news coverage by the Dundee-based newspapers *The Courier* and *Evening Telegraph* during the referendum campaign as an assessment of the way in which these local papers framed Scottish independence. These newspapers were chosen because Dundee is an especially interesting case as it was the constituency with the highest percentage (57.3%) of 'Yes votes' in the 2014 referendum (Elections Scotland, 2016). More specifically, the methods employed in this study led to the identification of several issue-specific valence frames news makers used to write about the independence referendum, the referendum campaign, and the future of an independent Scotland. This framing analysis shows that the two local newspapers employed mostly negative news frames when reporting on Scottish independence.

By analysing the news content of local newspapers, the chapter aims at providing a starting point for the discovery of news frames that the local media used to describe the prospect of an independent Scotland during the campaign of the referendum. The chapter can only provide a starting point for such exploration as it does not test the prevalence of these frames among news makers or the public. Assessing whether the news frames that this chapter explores were extant among journalists and audiences remains an important task for future research.

The remainder of this chapter is structured as follows. The next section reviews the literature on local media and national identity in Scotland and thereby explores the close relationship between the press and Scottish distinctiveness. Drawing on framing theory, the third part outlines the theoretical framework of the study and positions it within the related literature. The chapter then briefly reviews content analysis and coding as the core methods used in this study and introduces the data gathering process. Before concluding, the fifth part of the chapter discusses the findings of the study and positions them in the wider literature on the 2014 Scottish independence referendum.

The Media and National Identity in Scotland

As noted by a number of scholars, the media are becoming more and more influential in all aspects of daily human life (for example, Lundby, 2009; Mazzoleni and Schulz, 1999). With respect to the political realm, this process of mediatization is defined more specifically as the "long-term process through which the importance of the media and their spill-over effects on political processes, institutions, organizations and actors have increased" (Strömbäck and Esser, 2014: 6). This mediatization of politics forms a challenge to the established political process and transforms the relationship between political elites and voters (Kriesi, 2014). Consequently, the media have recently moved into the focus of many studies that attempt to contribute to a better understanding of political processes such as elections and referenda (for example, Esser and Strömbäck, 2014). Regarding the United Kingdom, there is strong scholarly consensus that the media play a significant role in electoral politics (for example, Brandenburg, 2002, 2006; Harris *et al.*, 1999, 2005, 2006). Moreover, studies of news coverage of elections and referenda find that the press is partisan and biased (Seymour-Ure, 1978; Wring and Deacon, 2010). Wring and Deacon (2010: 436), for instance, state that "the British newspaper industry has been a notable political actor; it has been as controversial as it has been overtly partisan".

Recent studies of the role of the media in electoral contexts tend to pay attention to valence politics (for example, Clarke, 2004; Johns *et al.*, 2009; Johnston and Pattie, 2011; Pattie *et al.*,

2015). In contrast to the traditional view that ideology and party affiliation determine voting behaviour, studies on valence politics claim that voters' evaluations of each party's performance in specific policy areas are the most influential factor of voting choices (Mitchell, 2016). Due to this shift from partisan identification to evaluation, the news media become relatively more important as the information that voters receive about politicians, parties, and policies becomes a more central component of the voters' decision-making process (Hjarvard, 2013; Kriesi *et al.*, 2013). According to Pattie *et al.* (2015: 1562-1563), valence politics refers to "policy areas on which virtually all members of a society agree: all want prosperity, security, good health, and so on". In their study of the 2007 Scottish parliamentary elections, Johns *et al.* (2009) find that valence politics is especially relevant in Scotland due to the dissolution of social classes within the Scottish society and the ideological convergence of Scottish parties. The authors perceive valence politics as the key reason of the SNP's win in the 2007 elections (Johns *et al.*, 2009).[1]

In contrast to the vast body of literature that discusses media-politics relations at the national level, studies with a specific focus on the role of local media in electoral contexts are small in number. Moreover, scholars who look at subnational levels tend to concentrate on regional patterns of news coverage juxtaposing news content in Scottish and English media (for example, Banducci and Stevens, 2011; Rosie *et al.*, 2004). Brandenburg *et al.* (2015) point out that the lack of content analysis and readership data of local newspapers makes investigations into the local media's relation to elections, campaigns, and voters difficult to undertake. As a result, the literature on the local media in Scotland is mostly descriptive in that studies discuss the local media landscape (for example, Blain and Hutchison, 2016; Scottish Universities Insight Institute, 2010), and its challenges and changes (for example, Dekavalla, 2015; Schlesinger and Benchimol, 2015). In Scotland, there are "indigenous titles and others which, with or without Scottish editions, are London newspapers that circulate throughout the UK" (Blain and Hutchison, 2016: 19). According to Rosie *et al.* (2004), the 1997 devolution of power from Westminster to Holyrood and the subsequent institutional and constitutional changes in the political system had also an impact on the Scottish media landscape. Moreover, print media in Scotland have recently experienced a dramatic decline in circulation due to the rise of online news and social media, as well as the competitiveness of the Scottish newspaper market (Dekavalla, 2015; Schlesinger and Benchimol, 2015). Although many Scottish newspapers have an

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[1] It is, however, important to note that Scottish independence is, by definition, not an issue of valence politics: not all Scots want Scottish independence or have only a Scottish identity and there is therefore no cross-societal agreement on the matter of separation from the UK.

online presence, they struggle to utilize digital platforms in a way that compensates for the financial loss resulting from declining circulation (Blain and Hutchison, 2016; Dekavalla, 2015). However, many regional titles, such as *The Courier* and *Evening Telegraph* analysed in this chapter, are less affected by these economic pressures (Blain and Hutchison, 2016). Dekavalla (2015: 109) suggests that "the uniqueness of content and specialization in a geographical niche might be part of the relative success" of regional titles. In contrast, Blain and Hutchison (2016: 20) argue that local newspapers are more resilient "because of the skill with which they blend local, Scottish and UK material".

The sense of the growing impact of the media on all aspects of human interaction, and the mediatization of politics, is paired with a body of literature that discusses the interrelation between the media and national identity (for example, Anderson, 1991; Billig, 1995; Rosie *et al.*, 2004; Schlesinger, 1991). Writing about the United Kingdom, Schlesinger (1991: 138) argues that "the media must be important [in relation to national identity] because they are so prevalent". In *Imagined Communities*, Anderson (1991) emphasises the ability of newspapers to give their readers a shared feeling of national community based on a sense of temporal synchronicity. Similarly, Billig (1995) argues that the British daily press functions as a (re)producer of an imagined national identity. Scotland's media are furthermore seen as "part of the range of institutions that have been the substratum of Scottish distinctiveness within the UK" (Schlesinger, 1998: 61; see also Connell, 2003; Higgins, 2004, 2006; MacInnes, 1992; Scottish Universities Insight Institute, 2010; Smith, 1994). In the words of Meech and Kilborn (1992, quoted in Schlesinger, 1998: 62), "the media in Scotland have their own distinctive characteristics and can be said to contribute, particularly in the case of the press, to Scotland's self-perception as a nation". Research furthermore shows that voters refer to this contribution as they turn to Scottish indigenous newspapers for cues during elections and referenda (Denver, 2002).

Studies on the relationship between the press and national identity in Quebec and Catalonia draw similar inferences. In their study of newspaper coverage of the 1995 Quebec Referendum, Bright *et al.* (1999) for example conclude that ethnic newspapers represent perspectives that are unique to the readership they address. Moreover, Castello and Capdevila's (2013) research on the framing of the independence issue during the campaigns of Scottish and Catalan elections shows that regional newspapers (those based in Scotland/Catalonia) tend to report positively on the prospect of independence, whereas negative frames were evident in the coverage of national newspapers (those based in the rest of the United Kingdom/Spain). Writing about

the Scottish press, Schlesinger (1998: 62) concludes that "there is an intimate reciprocal connection between the media consumption patterns of the Scottish public and Scottish national and regional identities". In the words of Dekavalla (2015: 108), the "Scottish indigenous press … [is] a product and reproducer of Scottish national identity".

To summarize this brief review, the literature ascribes the media a central role in election and referenda in the United Kingdom. Moreover, the media, and especially the local press, are said to have a reciprocal relationship with national identity in Scotland. Finally, the rise of new media such as social media and online-based news formats create a highly competitive media landscape in which local titles struggle to maintain their market share. In light of these conditions, the 2014 Scottish independence referendum offered local newspapers a unique opportunity to frame Scottish independence in a particular manner that reinforces their influence on Scottish distinctiveness and secures their position in the media market. This gives reason to examine how *The Courier* and *Evening Telegraph* framed Scottish independence during the campaign of the 2014 referendum in order to assess if local indigenous titles capitalised on this opportunity. Consequently, this chapter asks: *did The Courier and Evening Telegraph take a clear position on the issue of Scottish independence by framing the issue at hand in positive or negative terms?*

News Frames and Scottish Independence

To answer this research question, it is necessary to identify a theoretical framework that allows for the analysis of news content and its meaning in relation to the media, politics, and audiences. Framing theory provides such a theoretical approach to studying the relation between the media and politics in general, and to analysing news content in particular.[2] Like all theories of mass communication, framing is ultimately based on the presumption "that the media have significant effects" (McQuail, 1994: 327). More specifically, framing "is based on the assumption that how an issue is characterized in news reports can have an influence on how it is understood by audiences" (Scheufele and Tewksbury, 2007: 11). Nelson *et al.* (1997: 567) argue that "framing is the process by which a communication source, such as a news organization, defines and constructs a political issue or public controversy". Reviews of framing research (Matthes, 2009; Borah, 2011) show that most framing studies use Entman's (1993) definition of framing:

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[2] The theories of agenda-setting and priming are alternative approaches to studies of communication processes (for example, Johnson-Cartee, 2005; Scheufele, 2000; Scheufele and Tewksbury, 2007; Weaver, 2007).

> To frame is to select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation for the item described (Entman, 1993: 52, emphasis removed).

This study applies Entman's conceptualisation to the context of Scottish independence by identifying frames based on their problem definitions, causal interpretations, moral evaluations, and treatment recommendations in relation to an independent Scotland as presented in newspaper articles. Matthes (2012: 251) argues that framing "refers to an active process of creating, selecting, and shaping … frames" which necessitates a closer look at what exactly frames are. According to Reese (2001: 11), frames "are organizing principles that are socially shared and persistent over time, that work symbolically to meaningfully structure the social world". Thus, frames are "structures that draw boundaries, set up categories, [and] define some ideas as out and others in" (Reese, 2007: 150). Similarly, Hertog and McLeod (2001: 140) define frames as "structures of meaning made up of a number of concepts and the relation among those concepts". These definitions share the understanding of frames as constructs that structure and organise the sum of ideas persistent in society by offering definitions and categorisations of issues at hand.

Several scholars have introduced differentiations between types of frames in order to help conceptualize the framing process (for example, Borah, 2011; de Vreese, 2012). Based on a psychological or sociological foundation of framing theory (Borah, 2011; Scheufele and Tewksbury, 2007), frames can be classified as either "frames in thought" or "frames in communication" (Druckman, 2001). Frames in thought refer to a conception of framing that is mainly concerned with the psychological processes of framing and are understood as "mentally stored clusters of ideas that guide individuals' processing of information" (Entman, 1993: 53). Frames in communication – also referred to as news or media frames – are defined as organising devices (Gamson and Modigliani, 1987) used by journalists to identify and classify information (Scheufele, 1999). D'Angelo (2002: 873) perceives news frames as "themes within news stories that are carried by various kinds of framing devices". Several empirical studies have attempted to define different types of such framing devices (for example, Gamson and Modigliani, 1989; Shah *et al.*, 2002), with Tankard's (2001) list of framing mechanisms, including headlines, photos, quotes, and logos, being the most comprehensive one (see also de Vreese, 2005, 2012).

As the primary concern of this study is to detect news frames embedded in media coverage of Scottish independence, the focus is on news frames as opposed to frames in thought. The literature offers numerous definitions of various types of frames in communication that can be categorized differently.[3] In response to the research question and based on the context of the Scottish independence referendum, this study focusses particularly on issue-specific valence frames. Issue-specific frames are "pertinent only to specific topics or events", as opposed to generic frames that "transcend thematic limitations and can be identified in relation to different topics" (de Vreese, 2012: 368). For this study, the event is the 2014 Scottish independence referendum and the issue is that of Scottish independence. Nelson and Willey (2001: 247) understand issue frames as "descriptions of social policies or problems that shape the public's understanding of how a problem came to be and the important criteria by which policy solutions should be evaluated". Hence, this study looks for news frames that define the origin of and suggest solutions to issues relating to an independent Scotland. Moreover, the focus here is on valence and valence frames. Castello and Capdevila (2013: 982) define valence frames as frames referring "positively or negatively to an issue". In the context of this study, valence frames are thus frames that positively or negatively refer to Scottish independence. Synthesising these definitions of issue-specific frames and valence frames, this study understands issue-specific valence frames as frames that explain the origin of and offer solutions to problems related to Scottish independence and, by doing so, express a positive or negative point of view on the prospect of an independent Scotland.

In order to better understand the local press' use of issue-specific valence frame in the context of Scottish independence, it is necessary to theorise about the origins of news frames and to position frame building within a model of the entire framing process. The conceptualisation of the origins of news frames depends on the framing paradigm a study is situated in. As D'Angelo (2002) points out, the framing process can be approached from three different perspectives: *cognitive*, *critical*, and *constructionist*.[4] Predominantly based on psychological concepts, the *cognitive* paradigm is concerned with the psychological processes that occur when news frames

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[3] Such categorisations include the differentiations between symbolic and pragmatic frames (Castello and Capdevila, 2013), between advocacy and journalistic frames (de Vreese, 2005, 2012), between episodic and thematic frames (Iyengar, 1991), between strategy and issue frames (Cappella and Jamieson, 1997) and between collection action, decision, news and issue frames (Nelson and Willey, 2001).

[4] Matthes and Kohring (2008) offer an alternative categorisation of approaches to framing research based on methodological characteristics. They differentiate between "a hermeneutic approach, a linguistic approach, a manual holistic approach, a computer-assisted approach, and a deductive approach" (Matthes and Kohring, 2008: 259). This study best fits the characteristics of the manual holistic approach which Matthes and Kohring (2008) define as the combination of the qualitative identification of news frames and the quantitative analysis of these frames in the media content examined.

activate opinions, attitudes and beliefs stored in an individual's mind (D'Angelo, 2002). Focussing on the interplay between "frames in thought" and "frames in communication" (Druckman, 2001), this understanding perceives framing effects as direct outcomes of the "negotiation" between the audience's prior knowledge and the information the audience is exposed to (D'Angelo, 2002: 875). The *critical* perspective on framing states that frames constructed by political elites and the media dominate audiences in that they direct the audience's opinions and attitudes (D'Angelo, 2002). The critical paradigm is based on the idea that power is distributed unequally, that the media exert hegemonic influence on the audience's political behaviour, and that frames are "tied to larger elite structures" (Reese, 2007: 149). Finally, proponents of the *constructionist* paradigm "hold that journalists are information processors" interpreting the information constructed by political actors (D'Angelo, 2002: 877). In this way, the media provide a selection of frames as "relatively benign sources" the audience can choose from to make up their own mind in a process of co-optation (Reese, 2007: 149).

Some scholars argue that research community's concentration on the cognitive perspective has resulted in a "neglect of power" within framing research (Carragee and Roefs, 2004; Reese, 2007). Including critical and constructionist perspectives allows framing researchers to examine the origins of frames and to assess the extent to which the media play an influential role in the production of frames in communication and thought. The specific paradigm within which a study of framing is conducted determines what principles, definitions, and concepts the study draws on (D'Angelo, 2002). This paper builds upon the *constructionist* paradigm. Since the focus is on the occurrence of media frames in news content, as opposed to their effects on audiences, concepts and definitions provided by the *cognitive* perspective are considered less relevant. Moreover, the principles and conceptions of the *critical* paradigm of framing research are perceived as less suitable as this paper is not concerned with power structures underlying the production of media frames. Instead, the research is concerned with how news frames are embedded in media content. Based on a *constructionist* understanding of framing, journalists are perceived as key actors who select news items and construct media frames as part of their journalistic work.

The creation of various news frames including issue-specific valence frames is commonly described as frame building (Scheufele, 1999). The theory of frame building is itself only one component of the framing research which has been called a "fractured paradigm" (Entman,

1993: 51; see also de Vreese, 2012; Johnson-Cartee, 2005).[5] In an attempt to synthesise different research strands, to integrate differing definitions of frames, and to bridge several components of the framing process, several scholars have developed models that illustrate framing practices as communication processes between political actors, media agents, and the public (de Vreese, 2005; Matthes, 2012; Scheufele, 1999). Such integrative framing models provide methodological guidance for observing frames within text, within the mind of the frame producer, and within the mind of the frame receiver (D'Angelo, 2012). This study positions itself within Scheufele's (1999) integrated process model of framing.[6] As shown in Figure 1, the model divides the practice of framing into inputs, processes, and outcomes on both the media
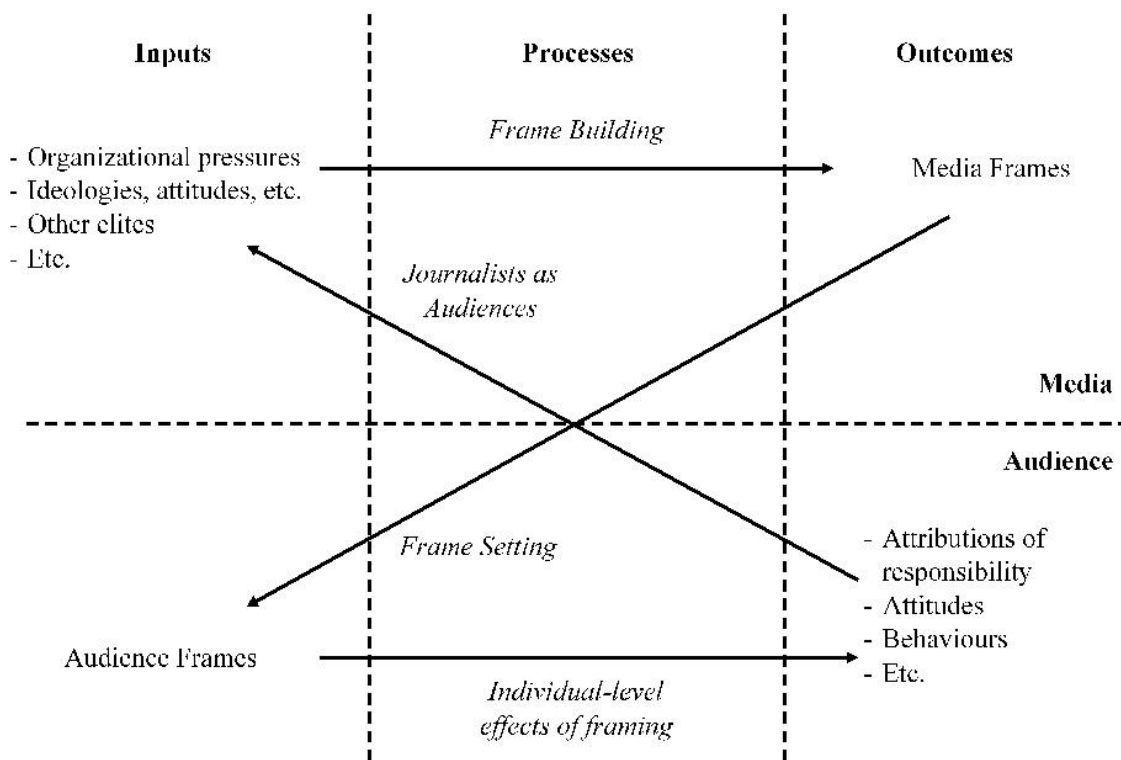

Figure 1: Scheufele's (1999) framing model describing framing as a cyclic process containing four sub-processes.

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[5] The fractured nature of framing research is seen as both a strength and a weakness of this sub-discipline of communication science (Matthes, 2012). Some scholars claim that the diversity of framing research facilitates a holistic understanding of the framing process by connecting the analytical approaches and methods of various related areas of research (for example, D'Angelo, 2012; Reese, 2007). Most researchers, however, argue that the framing research programme suffers from the absence of an approved set of definitions and concepts framing studies could build upon (for example, de Vreese, 2012; Entman, 1993; Matthes, 2012; Scheufele, 1999). These scholars call for an integrative approach to framing, one that helps develop a "common understanding of the concept of frames" (Entman, 1993: 56) and "serve[s] as a tool for theory building" (Scheufele, 1999: 108-109).

[6] This model was chosen because, compared to other framing models, it perceives framing as a continuous cyclic process in which media frames and audience frames are both origin and result of the framing process. Although de Vreese's (2005) framing model combines several sub-processes of framing, it fails to recognise that framing is a continuous process in that outcomes of some sub-processes function as inputs of other sub-processes. Matthes' (2012) model appreciates the continuous nature of framing but lacks the definition of specific sub-processes of framing and a distinction between the media as producers of frames and the audience as receivers of frames.

and the audience side of the communication process. Based on an understanding of framing as a continuous cycle, "outcomes of a certain process serve as inputs for subsequent processes" (Scheufele, 1999: 114). The model identifies four separate sub-processes of framing. The first, "frame building", refers to the process through which factors of news decision making (input) determine what frames are included in the media (outcome).[7] The sub-process of "frame setting" is concerned with the ways in which media frames (input) influence audiences and thus become audience frames (outcome). The third sub-process of framing describes individual-level effects of framing in that it conceptualises the impact of audience frames (input) on the audience's opinions, attitudes and behaviours (outcome). Finally, "journalists as audiences" builds upon the understanding that journalists are also part of audiences and are therefore affected by the process through which individual opinions, attitudes, and behaviours (input) translate into factors of news decision making (outcome). These four sub-processes close the cycle of framing and their interrelation through inputs and outcomes gives reason to perceive framing as an integrated, continuous process. Instead of focussing on the entire framing process, this study concentrates on frame building as one particular component of the framing cycle. As outlined above, the study is more specifically concerned with issue-specific valence frames and their occurrence in Scottish print media during the 2014 Scottish independence referendum.

Methodology and Data: Operationalising Issue-specific Valence Frames[8]

Content analysis and Coding

The data used for the assessment of the local media's portrayal of Scottish independence was generated through the analysis of news content. The methodological strength of content analysis lies in its ability to produce reliable and valid results (Krippendorff, 2013; Trimble and Treiberg, 2015). The method can be defined as "a technique which aims at describing, with optimum objectivity, precision, and generality, what is said on a given subject in a given place at a given time" (Lasswell *et al.*, 1952: 34). Neuman (1997: 272-273) describes content analysis as a

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[7] Research on factors of news decision making reveals that there are numerous influences on journalists' news work such as "political, economic, organizational, professional, and procedural influences as well as influences from reference groups" (Hanitzsch and Mellado, 2011: 404; see also Preston, 2009). These sources of influence include what Scheufele (1999: 115) refers to as "organizational pressures", 'ideologies, attitudes' and 'other elites'.

[8] The coding sheet and codebook as well as additional research materials can be requested from the author. The dataset itself is available in Wagner (2016).

technique for gathering and analysing the content of text. The 'content' refers to words, meanings, pictures, symbols, ideas, themes, or any message that can be communicated. The 'text' is anything written, visual, or spoken that serves as a medium for communication.

Such analysis of news content relies on the coding of news articles. Coding is a process that segregates, groups, regroups and relinks data 'in order to consolidate meaning and explanation' (Grbich, 2007: 21). Saldaña (2013) differentiates between first-cycle coding and second-cycle coding. "First Cycle methods are those processes that happen during the initial coding of data", whereas "Second Cycle coding methods … are advanced ways of reorganizing and reanalyzing data coded through First Cycle methods" in order "to develop a sense of categorical, thematic, conceptual, and/or theoretical organization" from the initial codes (Saldaña, 2013: 58, 207). Both coding processes were used in this study to collect data and analyse news stories. This study draws on what Saldaña (2013) calls "descriptive coding", "evaluation coding", and "magnitude coding".[9] Descriptive coding is a summarizing process used to express "in a word or short phrase … the basic topic of a passage of qualitative data" (Saldaña, 2013: 88). Evaluation coding is used to detect "judgements about the merit, worth, or significance of programs or policy" within the news content (Saldaña, 2013: 119). In addition to the description and evaluation of news stories, the content analysis is also based upon numeric magnitude codes indicating the "intensity, frequency, direction, presence, or evaluative content" of description and evaluation codes (Saldaña, 2013: 77). Regarding second cycle coding methods, the content analysis is grounded in so-called "focused coding". This method is "appropriate for … the development of major categories or themes from data" as it "searches for the most frequent or significant codes" (Saldaña, 2013: 213) to determine "the most salient categories" within the set of first cycle codes (Charmaz, 2006: 46).

Operationalising Issue-Specific Valence Frames

The operationalization of issue-specific valence frames is twofold: on the one hand, the valence that the news frame expresses is operationalised; on the other hand, the operationalisation includes the issue-specificity of these frames. Regarding the first aspect, Matthes (2012: 253) argues that "[f]rames are always valenced, either explicitly (i.e., a positive or negative evalua-

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[9] The combination of these three coding methods results in the creation of a method that could be called "valence coding" as it, in the way it is used here, is specifically designed to detect valence within text.

tion) or implicitly (i.e., selecting bits of information that suggests a positive or negative evaluation)". Implicitly valanced frames tend to be embedded in latent news content, whereas manifest news content is more likely to carry explicitly valenced frames. Since valence can occur in these two ways, the study uses two operationalisations of valence, one suitable to examining latent news content, and the other one useful for assessing manifest news content.[10] In order to explore valence in latent news content, it is firstly operationalised as the overall tone expressed in news stories drawing on a study by Castello and Capdevila (2013). Consequently, newspaper articles were analysed based on their tone toward Scottish independence and given the codes "pro", "contra" or "neutral" during the process of first cycle coding. Then, numbers were attributed to these verbal categories in order to simplify the presentation of results ("pro" was converted to 1, "contra" to -1 and "neutral" to 0).

Secondly, valence was operationalised as leaning which is understood as manifest valence expressed in news content. Schuck and de Vreese (2006, 2009) designed a set of questions to be asked about each news story during the coding process in order to examine manifest news content. The authors then calculate a value of valence based on the responses to these questions.[11] Adapting this methodology, the questions used for this content analysis assess whether or not the analysed newspaper articles contain the following framing devices: emotional statements supporting or opposing Scottish independence, rational arguments in favour or against Scottish independence, references to future benefits or costs of Scottish independence, and quotes supporting or opposing Scottish independence. During first cycle coding the following procedure was applied. For each of the four framing devices supporting Scottish independence, the newspaper articles were attributed the value "1" if they contain that framing device. Similarly, news stories were given the value "-1" for each framing device opposing Scottish independence if they contain that framing device. In the absence of a framing device, the value of "0" was attributed to the news story. The leaning of the news story was then calculated as the average of all eight values.

Based on these measurement methods, values of tone and leaning can range from -1 to 1. Valence was then calculated as the average between tone and leaning to ensure both indicators

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[10] Note that Castello and Capdevila (2013) take a similar approach in their analysis of media frames of the independence issue during electoral campaigns in Scotland (2007) and Catalonia (2006).

[11] It is important to note that Schuck and de Vreese (2006, 2009) refer to valence when analysing positively and negatively framed manifest news content. In contrast, I understand valence as the being articulated through tone expressed in latent news content and leaning carried by manifest news content. In this way, leaning describes what Schuck and de Vreese (2006, 2009) refer to as valence.

have the same weight in the calculation of valence. Consequently, the analysis expresses valence as a single value ranging between -1 and 1, with the value of 0 indicating the absence of valence.

The operationalisation of issue-specific valence frames builds upon this measurement of media bias in that these frames carry valence in relation to an independent Scotland. Drawing on D'Angelo's (2002: 873) definition of frames as "themes within news stories", issue-specific frames are furthermore operationalised as thematic fields prevalent in numerous newspaper articles. Wirth *et al*. (2010: 339) stress that "referendum campaigns are about arguments" and, consequently, the operationalisation follows Matthes' (2012: 254) perception of frames as "bundles of consistent issue arguments". Thus, issue-specific valence frames are understood as accumulated valenced statements on particular aspects of Scottish independence prevalent in the content of multiple newspaper articles. Returning to Entman's (1993) frame definition, issue-specific valence frames are conceived of as thematic strands of arguments within news content that define, interpret and evaluate an aspect of Scottish independence either positively or negatively, as well recommend or discourage Scottish independence. News stories define and interpret issues of Scottish independence by naming them and by giving information about their origins. They evaluate and make recommendations by expressing a certain valence in relation to specific aspects of Scottish independence.

Based on this operationalisation, the following methodology was adopted to assess the occurrence of issue-specific valence frames. Based on open-ended coding, all topics covered in the newspaper articles analysed were noted during first cycle coding. Then, second-cycle coding methods were applied to group these topics into broader thematic fields. These thematic fields form the basis on which issue-specific valence frames were explored depending on whether the vast majority of articles covering one thematic field expresses a clear valence in relation to Scottish independence. For this purpose, the values of tone and leaning expressed in all articles belonging to one thematic field were averaged in order to gain the overall valence of that thematic field. If that averaged value of valence is positive, the respective thematic field is considered a positive issue-specific valence frame. Likewise, if the average valence is negative, the theme of arguments is seen as a negative issue-specific valence frame. Finally, if the average value equals 0, the thematic field does not carry any valence and is therefore not considered an issue-specific valence frame.

Data Sources, Selection and Collection

The content analysis is solely based on articles published by Dundee-based newspapers, *The Courier* and *Evening Telegraph*. Both newspapers are owned by DC Thomson (DC Thomson, 2016), a Scottish news corporation that owns several daily newspapers, as well as evening and weekly titles (Scottish Universities Insight Institute, 2010: 2), and have the same local focus on the area of Dundee. Despite these commonalities, the titles differ in at least two significant ways. Firstly, their target readerships are different as *The Courier* is a daily newspaper as opposed to *Evening Telegraph* being a typical tabloid paper. Secondly, the two newspapers are issued at different times of the day: *The Courier* in the morning and *Evening Telegraph* in the evening.

The newspaper articles analysed were those discussing Scottish independence published by the two newspapers between the launch of the White Paper on November 26th 2013, and the day of the referendum, September 18th 2014.[12] This time span was chosen because it represents the run-up to the referendum during which political parties, the two campaigns ("Yes Scotland" and "Better Together") and the general public were all deeply engaged in discussions about Scottish independence. Access to hard copies and microfilms of the articles was provided by the National Library of Scotland (NLS) in Edinburgh.[13]

The content analysis conducted for this study is based on entire news stories as units of analysis. To qualify for coding, news stories published by the two newspapers in the defined time period had to be written by staff of at *The Courier* or *Evening Telegraph*. Hence, letters to the editor, guest editorials, columns, and other articles written by persons external to the news corporations were excluded from the material. To be considered for coding and content analysis, articles also had to explicitly cover the independence referendum, the two campaigns ("Yes Scotland" and "Better Together"), or predictions about the likely characteristics of an independent Scotland.

The sampling of newspaper articles was based on the construction of news weeks. According to Riffe *et al.* (2005, cited in van Dalen *et al.*, 2012: 911), stratified sampling in the form of constructed news weeks (CNWs) yields most representative samples of data for media studies.

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[12] In the so-called White Paper entitled *Scotland's Future: Your Guide to an Independent Scotland* (The Scottish Government, 2013), the SNP outlined their view of the route to independence, presented their vision of an independent Scotland and provided a set of answers to voters' questions.
[13] Coding was undertaken on January 22nd, January 29th, February 4th, February 5th, February 11th, and February 12th 2016.

The application of this sampling technique to the population of newspaper articles published by *The Courier* and *Evening Telegraph* during the referendum campaign resulted in the identification of nine CNWs. The total stratified sample (n = 275) consists of 242 articles published by *The Courier*, and 33 articles issued by *Evening Telegraph*.[14] As shown in Figure 2, the sample is characterised by a significant rise in the number of articles over time. This may be due to a likely increase in public interest in and media coverage of the referendum debate toward the end of the campaigning period.
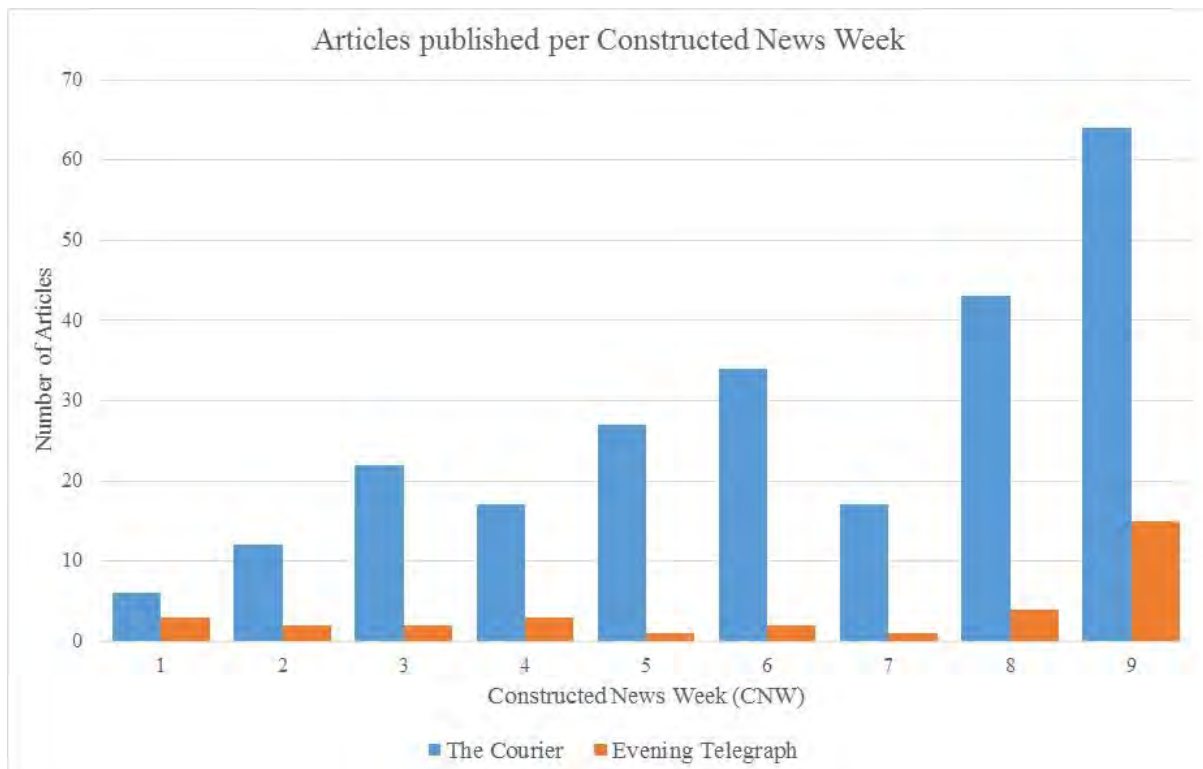

Figure 2: Number of articles published by The Courier and Evening Telegraph during the nine constructed news weeks.

Findings and Discussion: Framing Scottish Independence

As mentioned above, the question that motivates this chapter is *whether The Courier and Evening Telegraph used the 2014 independence referendum as an opportunity to reaffirm their strong linkage to Scottish national identity by taking a clear position on Scottish independence.* After outlining the operationalization and introducing the data in the previous section, the chapter now turns to the discussion of the findings of the content analysis. The first part of the

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[14] Intra-coder reliability was measured at 90.71% (based on 20% of the sample (n=55)). Inter-coder reliability was measured at 80.16% (based on 10% of the sample (n=28)).

following analysis compares the news coverage of the two local newspaper and discusses several explanations for the observed trends. The second part focusses more specifically on the issue-specific valence frames that were used in the news stories.

Taking a Position

Breaking news coverage down into tone, leaning, and valence, Table 1 shows how many news stories published by *The Courier* or *Evening Telegraph* were neutral toward, in favour of, and opposed to Scottish independence. The majority of articles were neutral in their tone, leaning, and valence toward Scottish independence. However, when taking a position on independence, *The Courier*'s articles were more often negatively valenced (n = 88) than positively valenced (n = 47). In contrast, *Evening Telegraph* framed Scottish independence more often in a positive way (n = 7) than in a negative one (n = 6). This difference in news coverage is consistent across tone, leaning, and valence. Moreover, comparing the averages of valence over the period of the campaign maintains this difference as *The Courier*'s articles have an average valence of -0.09, whereas the *Evening Telegraph*'s news coverage was neutral on average (average valence = 0). In this way, the content analysis of news stories suggests that the two local titles positioned themselves quite differently in relation to Scottish independence. Figure 3 shows the change of valence in news stories published by the newspapers over the nine CNWs of the referendum campaign. Articles in *The Courier* were negatively biased for most of the referendum campaign with a negative peak at -0.22 in CNW 4. Only CNWs 1 and 2 saw support of Scottish independence in *The Courier*'s articles. The bias expressed in *Evening Telegraph*'s coverage is

Table 1: *The Courier* and *Evening Telegraph*'s position on Scottish independence as expressed in their news stories.

	The Courier (N = 242)	Evening Telegraph (N = 33)	Total (N = 275)
Tone - Pro - Neutral - Contra	37 (15.29%) 134 (55.37%) 71 (29.34%)	7 (21.21%) 22 (66.67%) 4 (12.12%)	44 (16.00%) 156 (56.73%) 75 (27.27%)
Leaning - Positive - Neutral - Negative	45 (18.60%) 116 (47.93%) 81 (33.47%)	5 (15.15%) 24 (72.73%) 4 (12.12%)	50 (18.18%) 140 (50.91%) 85 (30.91%)
Valence - Positive - Neutral - Negative	47 (19.42%) 107 (44.21%) 88 (36.36%)	7 (21.21%) 20 (60.61%) 6 (18.18%)	54 (19.64%) 127 (46.18%) 94 (34.18%)
Averaged Valence	-0.09	0.00	-0.08

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almost perfectly antithetic to the bias in *The Courier*'s articles in that, throughout the period of the campaign, the former tends to be positive whenever the latter is negative and *vice versa*. For articles in *Evening Telegraph*, positive valence peaks at 0.17 in CNWs 1 and 4, whereas opposition to Scottish independence reaches an extreme value of -0.38 in CNW 2.
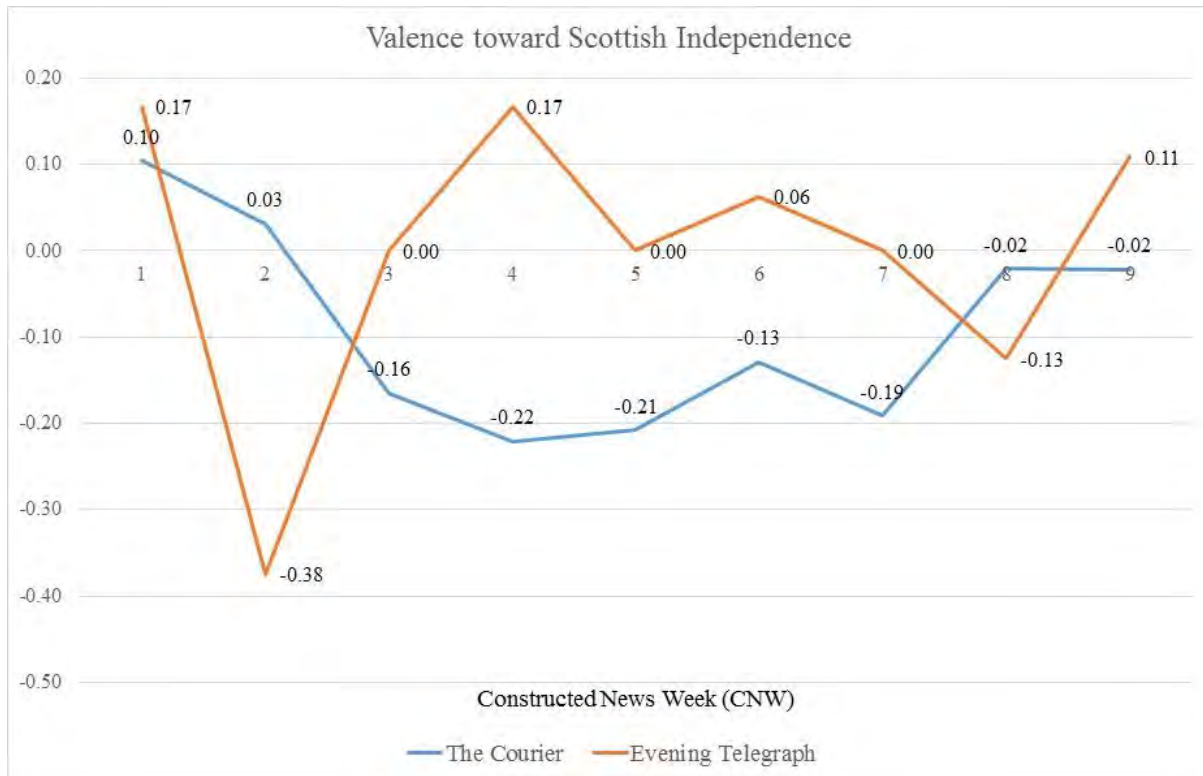

Figure 3: Valence toward Scottish independence as expressed in news stories published by *The Courier* and *Evening Telegraph* over the period of the campaign.

Together Table 1 and Figure 3 shed light onto two important phenomena: on the one hand, there is a stark difference in valence between the two newspapers' coverage, which becomes more evident over time; on the other hand, valence of the two newspapers' coverage of Scottish independence varies significantly over the period of the referendum campaign. What can explain these observations? In general, the literature on the production of news content suggests a wide range of factors that can influence the process of news making (for example, Hanitzsch and Mellado, 2011; Preston, 2009). In the context of the 2014 Scottish independence referendum, three explanations of news production seem especially relevant. The first plausible explanation is that news corporations produce news content based on specific economic decisions in response to pressures of the highly competitive media market (Dekavalla, 2015; Hamilton, 2004). Thus, it is arguable that the two newspapers analysed here portrayed Scottish independence differently because of differing economic strategies. From the point of view of D.C. Thomson, the news corporation that owns both newspapers, it makes sense to offer the local

readers two differently valenced versions of news coverage of the independence referendum in order to cover the entire range of audience preferences. A second explanation holds that the media is interested in producing news content that corresponds with their audiences' attitudes and preferences (Dekavalla, 2016b). Given the differences in coverage between *The Courier* and *Evening Telegraph*, this argument suggests that the two newspapers target and appeal to distinctively different audience groups. As *The Courier* is a daily newspaper with a focus on rather serious news coverage its readership might be significantly different from that of *Evening Telegraph* which is a rather typical tabloid paper. However, given the mostly negative news coverage, the fact that Dundee voted in favour of independence contradicts this explanation.

While these two arguments provide an explanation for the difference in news coverage between *The Courier* and *Evening Telegraph*, they are less meaningful in explaining why the valence of news coverage of Scottish independence varied over time because economic interests and audience preferences are relatively static concepts that are unlikely to change dramatically during a period of a few months. Instead, a third explanation is more helpful for understanding abrupt shifts from positive to negative coverage and *vice versa*: newspaper coverage changes in reaction to specific political events related to the referendum campaign (Hutchison, 2015; 2016). Such specific events include the launch of the White Paper on November 26th 2013, the two TV debates August 5th and 25th 2014, and particular statements about controversial policy issues such as EU membership, the prospective currency of an independent Scotland, and the revenues from Scotland's oil reservoirs. As revealed by the content analysis, there was an increase in news coverage of Scottish independence following the launch of the White Paper and the two TV debates. In relation to the White Paper, the two titles framed Scottish independence positively (for example, Evening Telegraph, 2013, November 26). In contrast, following the TV debates in August 2014, the news coverage was rather sceptical of independence (The Courier, 2014, August 6; Evening Telegraph, 2014, August 6). Despite these preliminary findings, the extent to which these events led to actual changes in the newspapers' framing of Scottish independence cannot be assessed with the data and methodology used here.

Issue-specific Valence Frames

A closer look at the different themes covered in the analysed news stories provides further insight into the local titles' portrayal of Scottish independence. First-cycle coding showed that the two newspapers broached a wide range of topics when reporting on the issue of Scottish independence. These topics were grouped into broader thematic fields during second-cycle

coding. In this way, ten themes were identified: technical information, social policy, the economy, EU membership, monetary policy, nationhood, campaigns, the general debate, and a category including topics that do not fit into any of these themes. Following the identification of these thematic fields, it was assessed if these themes of arguments correspond with the patterns of valence described above.

Table 2: Valence toward Scottish independence by newspaper and thematic field.

Thematic Field	The Courier (N = 242)	Evening Telegraph (N = 33)	Total (N = 275)
Technical Information	-0.03 (36)	0.04 (13)	-0.01 (49)
Social Policy	-0.15 (24)	0 (2)	-0.14 (24)
The Economy	-0.22 (44)	0.63 (3)	-0.17 (47)
Foreign Policy	-0.58 (9)	0 (1)	-0.53 (10)
EU Membership	-0.19 (11)	-0.75 (1)	-0.24 (12)
Monetary Policy	-0.21 (15)	-0.25 (3)	-0.22 (18)
Nationhood	-0.09 (15)	0.06 (2)	-0.07 (17)
Campaigns	0.10 (36)	0.09 (4)	0.10 (40)
General Debate	-0.02 (65)	-0.13 (5)	-0.03 (70)
Other	-0.16 (20)	0 (1)	-0.15 (21)

As can be seen in Table 2, the news coverage of most thematic fields was negatively valenced toward Scottish independence. "Campaigns" is the only thematic field that is characterised by a consistently positive frame (0.10). The table also shows that *The Courier* and *Evening Telegraph* mostly used the same issue-specific valence frames. For instance, the news content of both titles carried negative valence for themes such as "EU membership" (-0.24), and "monetary policy" (-0.22), and positive valence when reporting on "campaigns" (0.10). *The Courier*'s articles pointed to the opposition of some European decision makers to guaranteeing an independent Scotland membership in the union and one headline concluded that there was "no future for independent Scotland in the EU" (The Courier, 2014, September 18; see also The Courier, 2014, February 4; 2014, February 20). The headline of one article in *Evening Telegraph* said "currency union claims [were] rejected" (Evening Telegraph, 2014, July 21). Similarly, one headline in *The Courier* stated that a "currency union [was] 'not possible'" (The Courier, 2014, July 21), and another that "uncertainty over currency could lead to 'capital flight'" (The

Courier, 2014, August 23). In contrast, news coverage of the referendum campaigns was consistently more positive with respect to Scottish independence (for example, The Courier, 2014, September 2; Evening Telegraph, 2014, September 10).

However, in relation to "the economy", *The Courier* expressed a negative viewpoint on Scottish independence (-0.22), whereas *Evening Telegraph* portrayed the economic situation of an independent Scotland positively (0.63). For example, one article in *Evening Telegraph* made the following point quoting Alex Salmond: "Scotland is one of the wealthiest countries in the world, and … has a strong and diverse economy" (Evening Telegraph, 2014, September 2). In contrast, headlines in *The Courier* said for example "Fiscal black hole fear for independent Scots" and "Teenagers fear independence could damage the economy" (The Courier, 2013, November 26, 2014; May 20). With regards to "nationhood", a theme the Scottish local press could arguably be expected to portray in a way that emphasises Scottish pride and thus supports Scottish independence, the two local titles reported on Scottish independence differently: while *The Courier*'s coverage was negative (-0.09), that of *Evening Telegraph* was positive (0.06), resulting in a negative overall valence (-0.07). Moreover, *Evening Telegraph*'s coverage of "social policy", "foreign policy", and "other" was neutral in that it did not express any bias. *The Courier*, in contrast, reported negatively on these themes.

To conclude, the negative reporting in relation to "EU membership" (-0.24) and "monetary policy" (-0.22) of an independent Scotland indicates the occurrence of negative issue-specific valence frames used by both newspapers. *The Courier*'s news stories also carried a strong negative issue-specific valence frame in relation to "foreign policy" (-0.58). In contrast, the pro-independence media coverage of "campaigns" can be seen as a weak positive valence frame (0.10). Finally, the two newspapers evaluated the economic situation of an independent Scotland differently in that *The Courier* used a negative issue-specific valence frame (-0.22) when covering economic aspects of Scottish independence, whereas *Evening Telegraph* reported positively about the same topic (0.63).

Conclusion

The goal of this chapter was to show how Dundee-based newspapers *The Courier* and *Evening Telegraph* portrayed Scottish independence during the campaign of the 2014 Scottish independence referendum in order to contribute to the literature on the relationship between the local media and politics. As outlined above, the primary findings of the content analysis are that *The Courier* framed Scottish independence slightly negatively, while *Evening Telegraph*'s

coverage was not overtly partisan. Moreover, the study finds that the local titles' news coverage changes significantly over the time period studied, and that the two newspapers used issue-specific valence frames in their news stories about Scotland's future.

These findings lead to the conclusion that it is too simplistic to assume that the traditionally close tie between the press and national identity in Scotland inevitably leads local newspapers to support Scottish independence. However, the absence of that causal mechanism does not necessarily imply that the reciprocal relationship between the local press and Scottish national identity is weakening or fading. Instead, the findings of this study suggest that local Scottish papers frame "Scottishness" in a way that differs from independence. This is to say that the patterns of news content revealed in this analysis point to the possibility that *The Courier* and *Evening Telegraph* did not perceive Scottish independence as consistent with their idea of Scottish national identity.

The study does not provide evidence as to the extent to which the observed frames are prevalent among journalists and audiences. Future research is needed to better understand the relationship between the news frames discovered here and journalists' procedures of news making as well as readers' decision-making. Regarding frame building, Dekavalla's (2016a) study of editorials of indigenous Scottish newspapers indicates that editors' opinions and beliefs had a strong impact on the production of news frames in the context of the Scottish referendum. In relation to national newspapers' coverage, Brandenburg *et al.* (2015) suggests that the way the Scottish press framed independence did indeed have an impact on the readers' voting intentions. Given these findings, future studies on the antecedents and effects of framing in the context of Scottish independence should build on interview-based research design to better understand how frames in communication relate to frames in thought.

Since the 2014 independence referendum – and since the beginnings of this research project – several political events have changed the circumstances surrounding Scottish independence. First, the outcome of the United Kingdom's referendum on European Union membership ("Brexit") in June 2016 changed the conditions of Scotland's political, social, economic, and legal position within the United Kingdom. Second, Theresa May's way of dealing with the "Brexit" process by excluding Nicola Sturgeon from the negotiation table further spurred Scottish dissatisfaction with Westminster. Finally, Nicola Sturgeon's call for a second independence referendum and Theresa May's subsequent rejection of this demand indicate that the issue of Scottish independence will not be off the news in the coming years.

In light of these events, Scotland's struggle continues to provide an excellent case study for enquiries into news content of political processes. In this way, analyses of media coverage of Scottish independence remain relevant and, especially, a follow-up study of local newspapers position on Scottish independence promises valuable insights into the relationship between political events and news framing. The findings presented in this chapter can help inform such future research by suggesting past trends and patterns.

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Short Bio

Jan-Philipp Wagner is a graduate student in Political Science at the University of British Columbia. In 2016, he received his undergraduate degree in Geopolitics from the University of Dundee. At the University of British Columbia, Jan-Philipp received the R E McKechnie Graduate Scholarship and the Faculty of Arts Graduate Award. His research interests include media effects, journalistic role-conceptions, local media, populism, secession movements, and practical wisdom. He is currently working on a research project investigating journalists' role-conceptions in the face of populism in Canada, Germany, and the United Kingdom.