Routledge
Taylor & Francis Group

Check for updates

Perceived News Media Importance: Developing and Validating a Measure for Personal Valuations of Normative Journalistic Functions

Jason T. Peifer

The Media School, Indiana University-Bloomington, Franklin Hall, 601 E. Kirkwood Avenue, Bloomington, IN 47405, USA

ABSTRACT

This study features the development and validation of a multidimensional scale for Perceived News Media Importance (PNMI), a concept pertaining to how much individuals personally value normative functions of political/public affairs journalism. Comprised of six different dimensions that represent the weight of what citizens deem to be desirable about news work, the PNMI concept exhibits the capacity to strengthen scholarly explanations about the public's perceptions of the news media and related democratic outcomes. More specifically this research, which employs three data sets, is designed to (1) explicate the PNMI concept, (2) develop and validate a PNMI scale, (3) and explore PNMI's predictive value relative to news media use and support for freedom of the press. Evidence of validity is confirmed with media trust, political media use, political interest, and ideology. Furthermore, PNMI is shown to be predictive of (a) mainstream and social media-based news use, as conditioned by perceptions of the press satisfactory performing normative functions, and (b) support for press freedoms. While the hypothesized PNMI model (as a higher order latent construct with six lower order dimensions) exhibits a sound model fit, a combined data set (total N=912) reveals that PNMI could also be treated as a multi-factor, lower-order latent construct.

This research effort features the development and validation of a multidimensional scale for *Perceived News Media Importance* (PNMI). The PNMI concept pertains to the question of how important individuals deem normative functions of the journalism industry to be—a value assessment of considerable import in view of the public's widespread skepticism of the news media's legitimacy and credibility (Gronke & Cook, 2007; Jones, 2004; Swift, 2016), as state actors and special interests around the world commonly seek to curtail the freedom of the press (Reporters Without Borders, 2017), and as scholars, practitioners, and cultural observers seek to better understand the evolving roles and perceived value of the press in today's media environment (e.g., Ladd, 2012; Stroud, 2011). Consider how late in the 2016 U.S. presidential election season, a Pew Research Center (2016a) poll inquired how important it was that "news organizations are free to criticize political leaders" for maintaining "a strong democracy." Among the registered voters supporting Donald Trump, only 48% affirmed this liberty as "very important." In contrast, 83% of Hillary Clinton supporters deemed the freedom to be very important. While it should be recognized that the survey was administered at the height of a contentious campaign season, it is nonetheless notable that the press's classic function to "monitor power"—widely regarded as a central role of journalism in a democratic society (Kovach & Rosenstiel, 2014; Peterson, 1963)—was not more resoundingly endorsed. It suggests that a high regard for the aspirational (i.e., *normative*; see Benson, 2008)

CONTACT Jason T. Peifer ✉ jpeifer@indiana.edu

functions of the news media are neither fixed nor universally valued (see also Heider, McCombs, & Poindexter, 2005; Pew Research Center, 2016b; Van Der Wurff & Schoenbach, 2014). In this light, it is important that scholars continue to identify the extent to which citizens' values are congruent with the key normative roles of the press—for instance, in terms of attributing importance to the *information, investigation, analysis, social empathy, public forum*, and *mobilization* functions of the press (Schudson, 2008). Such research could serve to strengthen insights about of how contemporary forces (e.g., economic instability in the news industry; political upheaval; the creations and adoptions of new technologies; anti-media rhetoric) are potentially (re)shaping values and perceptions related to the journalism profession. Given that citizen perceptions of news media may change over time, it is important for scholars to have a solid frame of reference for gauging what's presently valued *and* what values are shifting.

While the question of how much individuals value the fundamental roles of the news media is worth addressing on its own terms, PNMI may also shed light on broader dynamics of political engagement (Tsfati & Ariely, 2014). For instance, PNMI's relationship with news media consumption is important to consider. Working from the premise that news media content is important for providing citizens with information they need to make informed decisions (Kovach & Rosenstiel, 2014), the PNMI concept can be valuable for further illuminating when and why citizens use news media. PNMI is here theorized to be a values-based factor that can play a role in motivating news media use. In addition, given the human impulse to defend, bolster, and/or restore that which one deems to be important (Krosnick, 1988; Miron & Brehm, 2006), PNMI can also be explored as an antecedent to supporting press freedoms.

In overview, the chief aims of this study are to (1) explicate the PNMI concept, (2) develop and validate a PNMI scale, and (3) and explore its predictive value relative to news use and support for freedom of the press. To this end, this research employs three survey data sets. A convenience sample (*N* = 403) conducted via the Mechanical Turk (MTurk) system is first used to pilot potential PNMI items. Next, a probability-based survey (*N* = 510) serves as the study's key dataset in its examination of PNMI's convergent and discriminant validity. Theses two datasets are also combined for purpose of comparing alternative dimensional structures of the proposed measure. Finally, analyses of an opt-in panel sample (*N* = 626) further explore (a) the boundary conditions of PNMI's predictive capacity relative to mainstream and social media-based news use and (b) the index's relationship with support for freedom of the press. In view of the limited understanding of the extent to which citizens value the functions of the press, these efforts help to further illuminate public perceptions of the news media as an institution.

Distinguishing news media perceptions

To lay the groundwork for bringing definition to the PNMI concept, it is useful to first consider, and distinguish PNMI from, related media concepts. Communication scholars have long devoted significant effort to researching citizens' attitudes, beliefs, motives, and values relative to "the media." For instance, the *uses and gratifications* approach (Katz, Blumler, & Gurevitch, 1974; Rubin, 2009) focuses on the needs and goals (e.g., surveillance, diversion, curiosity; see Blumler, 1979) that motivate one's use of the media. Similarly, the *media dependency* framework (Ball-Rokeach & DeFleur, 1976) addresses the extent to which one is exclusively dependent upon the media as an informational resource to realize one's goals/needs—for example, the goal to be informed about the world. Such theoretical frameworks are designed to clarify when and why media content—in various forms—affect one's beliefs, attitudes, feelings, and behavior.

More confined to the realm of journalism, scholars have also employed a variety of approaches to investigate different types of *news* media perceptions.[1] For instance, one way in which media scholars have investigated the ideas that people hold about how the news media work is through the concept of *media images* (Kosicki & McLeod, 1990). Media images are the relatively stable and implicit lay theories that the public retains about the news media and how news media work (Fredin

& Kosicki, 1989). Theorized to be distinct from global, like/dislike attitudes associated with news media, media images function as a type of schema—a knowledge structure used to process, organize, and make inferences about events or behaviors (Wicks, 1992). Although not heavily utilized, the media images approach highlights the complexity and diversity of knowledge structures about how the press operate and function in society.

Compared to the concept of media images, a more dominant approach used for investigating the perceptions of the news media is *media trust*. Media trust can be understood as a judgment regarding whether to label a news media entity as trustworthy or not based on one's perceptions of whether that entity will meet one's expectations in the future (Vanacker & Belmas, 2009). Given that the average citizen does not have the time, resources, and skills to personally to collect and verify news information, it is necessary to rely on newsgathering agents for such tasks—acts of delegation that involve risk (of time, energy, and credibility), requiring some level of trust. More specifically, media trust is typically centered on meeting expectations relative to news sources selecting and presenting accurate, fair, insightful, complete, and truthful information (Gaziano & McGrath, 1986; Meyer, 1988). A media trust evaluation can pertain to an individual journalist, a particular news outlet, or the news media as a political institution. Moreover, trust is not solely dependent on the performance and objective traits of the object of trust. It is an audience *perception*; a subjective evaluation on the part of news consumers.

Perceptions of news media importance as value assessments

Whereas news media perceptions like *media images* focus on schemas about how the news media work and *media trust* largely pertains to global judgments of how well the press will meet certain expectations, the *media importance* concept broadly centers on the question of how much an individual fundamentally perceives that various facets of conventional news media work are important. That is, using the label of *Perceived News Media Importance* (PNMI), PNMI is here defined as assessments of value, on a personal level, attributed to the normative roles of professional journalism. *Values* are here understood to represent "conceptions of the desirable" (Kluckhohn, 1951); they are taken to be "beliefs about desirable end states or behaviors, that transcend specific situations, guide selection or evaluation of behavior and events, and are ordered by relative importance" (Schwartz & Bilsky, 1987, p. 551). Accordingly, in contrast to focusing on what personal needs the news media gratify (i.e., a *uses and gratifications* orientation) or the extent to which an individual exclusively utilizes media to fulfill goals/needs (i.e., *media dependency theory*), PNMI represents the weight of desirability that one imputes to the press relative to fulfilling normative expectations—particularly within the scope of professional public affairs journalism. Even as journalists, scholars, and cultural elites commonly tout the importance of the press and the dimensions of its work (e.g., Johnstone, Slawski, & Bowman, 1972; Schudson, 2008), many citizens may not fully share these values.

To be sure, although PNMI has not been directly addressed by extant scholarship, variations of the concept have been employed. For instance, the notion of media importance has been examined in relation to perceptions of various communication platforms and channels. Pinkleton and Austin (2001) operationalized media importance by instructing study participants to rate the importance of different *sources* of political information—such as television news, newspapers, radio news, conversations with family or friends, and radio talk shows (see also Austin & Pinkleton, 1999; Pfau et al., 1997). Meanwhile, others have taken a more multi-faceted approach, examining citizen assumptions of what the news media should do (although not addressing whether these roles are deemed to be important on a personal level). For instance, Guo and Li (2011) focus on judgments of what media "ought to do" (p. 52) in terms of journalism's roles in supervising power, boosting economic development, educating people, and trying to influence what people think (see also McLeod, Sotirovic, & Holbert, 1998).

Yet another stream of research in the domain of normative evaluations seeks to identify expectations of journalists and which distinct roles of the news media are deemed important. For instance,

researchers have conducted a series of surveys—dating back decades—that examine how journalists themselves perceive the roles of the press, as well as which roles are most important to them (Johnstone et al., 1972; Weaver, Beam, Brownlee, Voakes, & Wilhoit, 2007). Weaver et al. (2007) identified four key roles in this approach: the interpretive/investigative role, disseminator role, adversarial role, and populist mobilizer role.

Others have conducted similar explorations of news media expectations, but from the perspective of citizens (e.g., Chung, 2009; Heider et al., 2005; Van Der Wurff & Schoenbach, 2014)— pointing out that "research on what the audience thinks about journalistic roles and norms for news production are scarce" (van der Wurff & Schoenback, 2014, p. 436). This latter body of research identifies both overlap and divergences in terms of how journalists and the public rank the importance of different press roles. For instance, Heider et al. (2005) report a gap between the perspective of the public and journalists on the importance of the press's watchdog role; journalists deemed the watchdog role more important than news consumers did. Importantly, across both approaches (i.e., expectations of journalists versus those of the public), the focus is trained on *which* particular roles of the press are deemed most important, not how perceptions of these roles function in tandem. Moreover, to the extent that the notion of media importance has been addressed in empirical research, interest in media importance is often secondary, typically examined as an antecedent to or proxy of media use and attention (e.g., Guo & Li, 2011; Pinkleton & Austin, 2001).

Key functions of the press

In view of the scattered approaches to the idea of media importance and its potential to strengthen an understanding of the press's perceived value, this study is designed to more firmly establish the concept. This study's conceptualization of PNMI principally draws from Schudson's (2008) inventory of what journalism offers to democracy. Schudson identifies a range of functions that efficiently capture the various roles that the news media can serve in society— particularly within the scope of political and public affairs news. These functions include the *information, investigation, analysis, social empathy, public forum*, and *mobilization* functions. While alternative conceptions of press functions/societal roles could ably undergird this project's conceptualization of PNMI (e.g., McNair, 2010; Weaver et al., 2007), face validity assessments reveal Schudson's (2008) framework as particularly comprehensive, nuanced, *and* parsimonious, offering a sensible starting point for developing PNMI. There is utility in developing a measure that encompasses a strong compendium of functions, capturing the interconnected complexities of professional news work in a hybrid media environment—beyond the prominent roles like offering information utility and serving as a "watch dog." Notably, this broad conceptualization enables consideration of the extent to which there is a "unity of virtue" (Penner, 1973) within the scope of normative media functions. Akin to a line of reasoning attributed to ancient Greek philosophers that a virtuous person should exhibit a broad range of moral virtues *all* pulling in the same direction (i.e., a *truly* virtuous person cannot have one virtue, like courage, without possessing the other cardinal virtues), a multifaceted approach to PNMI can illuminate how distinct normative press functions operate both in tandem and individually. The different functions are outlined below.

Information

The information function relates to the news media's traditional charge to inform the public, providing citizens with "the information they need to be free and self-governing" (Kovach & Rosenstiel, 2014). This function can be understood in terms of keeping citizens abreast of governmental activity and fostering awareness of what's happening in one's community/country/surrounding world.

Investigation

The investigation function speaks to the press's adversarial role (Weaver et al., 2007), keeping the powerful accountable and conducting surveillance, wherein the news media's mere presence/ ongoing observation can serve as a safeguard against abuses of power (Schudson, 2008). The investigation function can also apply to news work that uncovers corruption and incompetence (i.e., weaknesses) of those in power and generally having a skeptical disposition toward those who wield authority and influence—propelled by the understanding that power, especially when unchecked, can corrupt.

Analysis

Commonly discussed in terms of "explanatory journalism," the analysis function refers to journalists providing coherent interpretations to help citizens make sense of the complexities of current events (Weaver et al., 2007). Because the meanings of "facts" are not always self-evident, this function involves explaining not simply what happened, but why and how it happened and what the future might hold. As Schudson (2008) notes, journalism of this type "articulates a silence or foregrounds what was background, making it thereby available for conversation and collective notice" (p. 17).

Social empathy

The social empathy function pertains to fostering an appreciation for the experiences of other people —especially those less advantaged than oneself. Schudson (2008) asserts that while scholars do not commonly discuss this function, it is nonetheless an essential role. The motivation of this function is to open people's eyes to the plight of others in one's community, country, and world, whereby the press serves to foster compassionate understanding and remind citizens of a shared humanity. The social empathy function can be understood an appreciation for different types of human experiences —both the difficulties of those suffering some misfortune *and* the triumphs of the more fortunate.

Public forum

The public forum function refers to news media as a venue for dialog and deliberation among citizens, facilitating communication of the perspectives of varied groups in society (Bertrand, 2000; Christians, Glasser, McQuail, Nordenstreng, & White, 2009). The function is consistent with the tenets of the public/civic journalism movement, which promotes journalism that invites citizens to engage in political conversation (Rosen, 2000), stimulating substantive discussion of social issues and fairly representing a diversity of voices.

Mobilization

The mobilization function represents the role of the news media to rally citizens to political activity and involvement (Weaver et al., 2007). This function is action-oriented. Although not necessarily linked to explicit advocacy, this function can also encompass partisan journalism (Kuypers, 2014). Journalism has a long history of advocacy, as evidenced by editorial opinion content, which are still commonplace in news publications. Because this function can, at times, veer into partisan politics, mobilization may be one of the more controversial ones among the six news media functions discussed here. Qualities like detachment, nonpartisanship, and balance in news coverage are still idealized within the scope of U.S. journalism, even as the notion of journalistic "objectivity" has long been critiqued as a problematic ideal (Kovach & Rosenstiel, 2014).

PNMI's utility

As a set of normative news media functions, PNMI has the capacity to elucidate the ways and extent to which citizens attribute importance to normative roles of the press—especially within a democratic society. Yet PNMI is also understood to illuminate other meaningful democratic outcomes and concepts. For instance, PNMI demonstrates the potential to sharpen an understanding of media trust/credibility assessments. Notably, this study's explication of PNMI is broadly aligned with the normative values, principles, and goals emphasized by journalism educators and newsroom leaders; that is, PNMI is largely consistent with the *occupational ideology* (Deuze, 2005) of mainstream journalism (see also Weaver et al., 2007). Based on the premise that citizens generally sense that mainstream journalists *aspire* to fulfill the functions outlined in this project's conception of PNMI, it is sensible to expect that the stronger a citizen's alignment with the value system of mainstream journalists, the more likely that person is to trust the news media as an institution. Indeed, a congruence of values tends to engender social trust (Earle & Cvetkovich, 1995; Parsons, 1969). Individuals are more willing to "risk" time and resources when one's salient cultural values are perceived to be in alignment with the trust object. Of note, extant research indicates a causal link between PNMI and different facets of media trust, suggesting that efforts to highlight the importance of normative press roles may contribute to increased media trust (Peifer, 2017).

It is also plausible that attributing value to normative roles of the press can relate to motivations to consume news media. Consider that the basic premise of the classic Expectancy-Value Theory is that both expectations *and* how one feels about/evaluates those expectations together influence the liklihood of subsequent (related) behavior (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975). If one expects that news media to perform certain functions *and* those functions are deemed to be highly desireable, then the liklihood of media use behavior should increase.

The *uses and gratifications* (UG) perspective can also be instructive in this regard (Katz et al., 1974; Rubin, 2009). The UG approach features a conception of an active audience who seek to fulfill needs and goals relative to their media consumption patterns. Accordingly, the UG approach's examinations of audience needs, desires, and motivations can shed light on media use patterns and media effects. Understanding PNMI as a motivational factor may also point to insights about when and why individuals consume news media. If a person highly values the societal roles of the press—indicating a perceived *need* for the news media roles represented by PNMI—in can be inferred that this person is more prone to use content produced by the press. Importantly, the strength of the PNMI-media use relationship is likely influenced by a variety of other factors. For instance, the strength of any PNMI-media use association is presumably moderated by *how well* one feels the normative roles of the press are being fulfilled. There is difference between aspiring to do something and actually doing it well. If a person perceives that the press do in fact satisfactorily inform citizens, hold the powerful to account, provide analysis, and so forth (i.e., high PNMI), then attributing value to normative news functions should be associated with greater media use.

Yet another way in which the PNMI concept may offer utility for communication research is in understanding public support for press freedom. Numerous studies examine societal-level indicators of press freedom (Becker, Vlad, & Nusser, 2007; Brunetti & Weder, 2003). Yet research on support for press freedom at an individual level is sparse (yet see Johnson & Fahmy, 2008; Pew Research Center, 2016a). At a time when the legitimacy and authority of the press is frequently de-valued, it is sensible to more closely examine the factors that undergird support for the press. As shown by Media System Dependency Theory research, perceptions of threats in one's evironment can intensify an individual's reliance on a media system's informational resources (Loges, 1994). Furthermore, as highlighted by attitude importance-related literature, people are inclined to defend and cling to that which they deem important (e.g., Krosnick, 1988; Miron & Brehm, 2006). If efforts to undermine/threaten the news media as an institution evoke a renewed sense of the media's importance and subsequently arouse an impulse to defend the press, PNMI may represent a meaningful antecedent to supporting press freedom.

Scale development steps and hypotheses

In order to gauge the quality of a measure for PNMI, an important initial step is to examine whether the proposed measurement model fits the data prior to testing relationships with other measures. More specifically, it is necessary to evaluate the fit of this project's proposed relationships between the latent (unobserved) PNMI variable and its interconnected lower order dimensions (i.e., the various normative news media functions). Furthermore, even as this project conceptualizes PNMI as a composite measure for valuing various news media functions, it will also be useful in this developmental stage to explore PNMI's underlying dimensions by comparing the hypothesized model to plausible alternative dimensional structures.

Upon examining the internal validity of PNMI's structure, the next step is to validate PNMI's construct validity, both in terms of convergent and discriminant validity (Miller, McIntire, & Lovler, 2011). First, with regard to convergent validity, it is expected that the PNMI measure will demonstrate a meaningful positive relationship with media use. As noted above, it is reasonable to expect that attributing high importance on a personal level to the normative roles of public affairs journalism is associated with the use of public affairs information. Accordingly, it is appropriate to examine how PNMI relates to news consumption patterns—for instance, the frequency of turning to newspapers, television, web-based news sites, and social media for political information. PNMI is conceptually distinct from media use; appreciating the importance of the news media is not necessarily tantamount to using it. Nonetheless, it stands to reason that the more one recognizes the value of news media's core normative functions, the more likely that person will consume political information via various platforms. Therefore, an initial hypothesis predicts that PNMI will demonstrate convergent validity by (H1a) *correlating with accessing political information* (i.e., the use of newspapers, television, radio, magazines, news websites, and social media). Furthermore, PNMI is predicted to (H2a) *correlate with media trust.* As noted above, it is reasonable to anticipate that positive perceptions of the PNMI-based functions privileged by many mainstream journalists will align with positive perceptions of the news media's trustworthiness. Extant research supports this proposition (Peifer, 2017).

Finally, analyses should reveal an association between finding value in the key functions of the press and having a strong interest in public affairs/politics. Those with a keen interest in politics are more likely to seek out political information, as well as notice and think seriously about the political information they encounter (Luskin, 1990). Notably, political interest generally has a strong relationship with news media use (Strömbäck, Djerf-Pierre, & Shehata, 2013). Yet these two factors should not be treated as synonymous. For instance, one might have strong political interest, but not have the time or emotional energy to closely follow the news. Thus, in tandem with testing PNMI's relationship with media use, it is also worthwhile probing the index's relationship with political interest. Accordingly, PNMI is predicted to (H3a) *positively correlate with political interest.*

While PNMI is hypothesized to positively correlate with political media use, trust, and political interest, the measure should also be markedly distinguishable from these same variables. Overly strong correlations would raise questions about PNMI's utility. How useful is a PNMI scale if the variables used as evidence of convergent validity can easily serve as a proxy for the measure? Accordingly, PNMI should *demonstrate discriminant validity relative to* (H1b) *media use*, (H2b) *media trust*, and (H3b) *political interest.* Furthermore, as an additional test of PNMI's discriminant validity, the scale should be *statistically distinguishable from ideology* (H4). While judgments about the fairness and accuracy of the press often have partisan overtones (Lee, 2005), PNMI should ideally have limited association with political ideology.

Finally, in an effort to further establish PNMI's utility, it is also worthwhile initiating an exploration of the scale's criterion-related validity—assessing the extent to which the measure can predict related outcomes/behaviors of interest (Miller et al., 2011). Given that values and attitudes about certain behaviors are often predictive of behavioral intentions and, subsequently, actual behavior (Ajzen, 1991), PNMI can be helpful for illuminating news media use behavior and other important attitudes about the news media. First, building on the convergent validity findings of PNMI's association with a

political media use index, it is sensible to further probe PNMI's relationship with news consumption and test the boundary conditions of PNMI's predictive capacity relative to news media use. As alluded to earlier, it is posited that (H5a-b) *PNMI will more strongly predict news media use when one feels that mainstream news media are doing a satisfactory job of fulfilling the functions represented by PNMI.* Because individuals increasingly consume news content via social media platforms, such as Facebook and Twitter (Pew Research Center, 2017), it is sensible to examine media use outcomes both in terms of (a) conventional mainstream news sources and (b) social media venues in which the producer of news content is less salient. Finally, given that individuals tend to defend that which they believe to be important, it is anticipated that (H6) *PNMI will predict basic support for press freedom.*

Methodology

Overview of datasets

To aid the development of a PNMI measurement model and address these hypotheses, three datasets are employed in the study analyses. Dataset 1 participants were recruited from Amazon's Mechanical Turk (MTurk). The central purpose of this first survey was to pilot test 35 preliminary items (see Appendix A), grounded in Schudson's (2008) explication of the six primary functions of the news media. Analyses in this stage focused on identifying poor questions, narrowing the preliminary list of questions, and tentatively assessing PNMI's reliability and underlying dimensions. Upon reducing the preliminary battery of PNMI questions to 15 survey items (see asterisked items in Appendix A), a second survey (Dataset 2) was subsequently administered to confirm the proposed model. This survey (N = 510) employed a nationally representative probability-based sample. Given the strengths of a probability-based sample, the data is most heavily used for confirming the construct validity of the PNMI concept. Finally, Dataset 3 (N = 626)—an opt-in panel data collection effort—was used to examine PNMI's predictive value. Refer to Appendix B for a detailed description of these respective samples.

Analytical procedures

Upon completing the first data collection effort, an exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was first used to provide a preliminary assessment of the dimensionality of the original 35 PNMI survey items. Subsequently, a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was employed to confirm a tentative PNMI measurement model, as suggested by the EFA of Dataset 1. Attention was next directed to the internal validity of the proposed PNMI model. This validation process involved two steps. First, a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was conducted with Dataset 2 to test the measurement model of a 13-item, higher-order, 6-dimensional PNMI index. Next, analyses compared this hypothesized structure to two plausible alternative structures with χ^2-distributed test statistics (Schumacker & Lomax, 2004). Because SEM is generally understood to be a large-sample technique (Kline, 2011), this study evaluated the competing PNMI structures with a combined dataset, integrating Datasets 1 and 2. Of note, Jackson (2003) proposes an *N:q* rule wherein the *ideal* minimum sample size for an SEM analysis (using maximum likelihood estimation) can determined by a ratio involving the number of cases (N) in the data to the number of model parameters needing statistical estimates (q). A ratio of around 20:1 is proposed as most ideal (Kline, 2011). Given that the hypothesized PNMI structure involves the estimation of 45 parameters, the *N:q* rule suggests that a sample size of 45 x 20, or N = 900, is appropriate for an analysis of PNMI's structure. Accordingly, Datasets 1 and 2 were integrated (N = 912) to meet the threshold suggested by the *N:q* rule.

To test PNMI's *convergent* validity, correlation statistics were assessed with Dataset 2 (via SEM) between PNMI's multidimensional construct and logically similar variables, in the form of (a) political media use (modeled as a latent construct), (b) media trust (also a latent construct), and

(c) political interest (an observable item). PNMI's higher-order latent construct was co-varied with each variable in separate models. Convergent validity is deemed to be established if analyses reveal PNMI to be positively correlated with the variables with at least a correlation coefficient of medium/moderate size (i.e., between .20–.30; see Hemphill, 2003).

To conduct an assessment of PNMI's *discriminant* validity, models featuring PNMI and (a) political media use, (b) media trust, and (c) political interest were compared. An initial model for each pairing treated PNMI and the respective discriminant measure as the same by constraining the covariance between them to be 1, resulting in a single-factor model. A second model for each pairing assessed the two measures as unconstrained, representing a two-factor model. The two models (one with the constrained covariance and the other unconstrained) were then compared with a chi-square difference test with one degree of freedom. A significant difference between these models serve as evidence of discriminant validity. Notably, there is a valuable efficiency in using the same constructs (i.e., media use, media trust, and political interest) to provide evidence of both convergent and discriminant validity. This approach facilitates an examination of the extent to which PNMI strikes a proper balance in terms of being clearly distinct from similar variables (avoiding redundancy), while simultaneously demonstrating a pattern of correlations that indicates PNMI performs as theorized—significantly pointing in the right direction relative to these logically similar constructs. (For a similar analytical approach see Appelman & Sundar, 2016; Hayes, Glynn, & Shanahan, 2005; Reichardt & Coleman, 1995).

In addition to analyzing both PNMI's convergent and discriminant validity via political media use, media trust, and political interest, the scale was additionally correlated with political ideology to further assess PNMI's discriminant validity—demonstrating that PNMI is not redundant with one's ideological orientation. Notably, the cutoff for what is a small/negligible correlation is arbitrary. However, as posited by Cohen (1988) and Hemphill (2003), many scholars consider a correlation coefficient of less than .20 to be relatively small (though not necessarily meaningless). Using this guideline, ideology's correlation with PNMI should be less than .20. Finally, ordinary least squares regression models were used to examine (H5) PNMI's predictive value relative to news media use, as moderated by perceptions of the press satisfactorily fulfilling normative function and (H6) as predictive of support for freedom of the press. The PROCESS macro (Hayes, 2013) was used to probe the interaction via the Johnson-Neyman technique, which serves to identify *where* in the distribution of a moderator that X has an effect on Y different from zero. By specifying the point(s) of transition of the effect of X on Y relative to the distribution of the moderator, the Johnson-Neyman technique highlights regions of statistical significance (Hayes, 2013).

The *Analysis of Moment Structure* (AMOS) statistical software was used for all SEM analyses. The root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) and the standardized root mean square residual (SRMR) were used as absolute fit statistics for the analyses. The confirmatory fit index (CFI) was used as the incremental fit statistic for the models. In terms of guidelines for assessing a sound model fit, an RMSEA value of close to or less than .06 is commonly advised (Holbert & Stephenson, 2002; Hu & Bentler, 1999) and an SRMR cutoff value close to .08 or less is recommended (Hu & Bentler, 1999). Meanwhile, a CFI cutoff of about .95 (or greater) is most ideal (Holbert & Stephenson, 2002; Hu & Bentler, 1999).

Measures

Perceived news media importance (PNMI)
Participants of the Dataset 1 sample answered 35 questions (see Appendix A) pertaining to perceptions of the news media's importance, while the Dataset 2 survey respondents answered a 15-item randomized battery of questions. These sets of question consisted of a blend of items originally developed for this project *and* question wording featured in existing research (see McLeod et al., 1998; Weaver et al., 2007). Questions were measured on a 7-point scale (1 = strongly disagree, 7 = strongly agree). Upon analysis of these pools of survey items, a 13-item solution for a six-
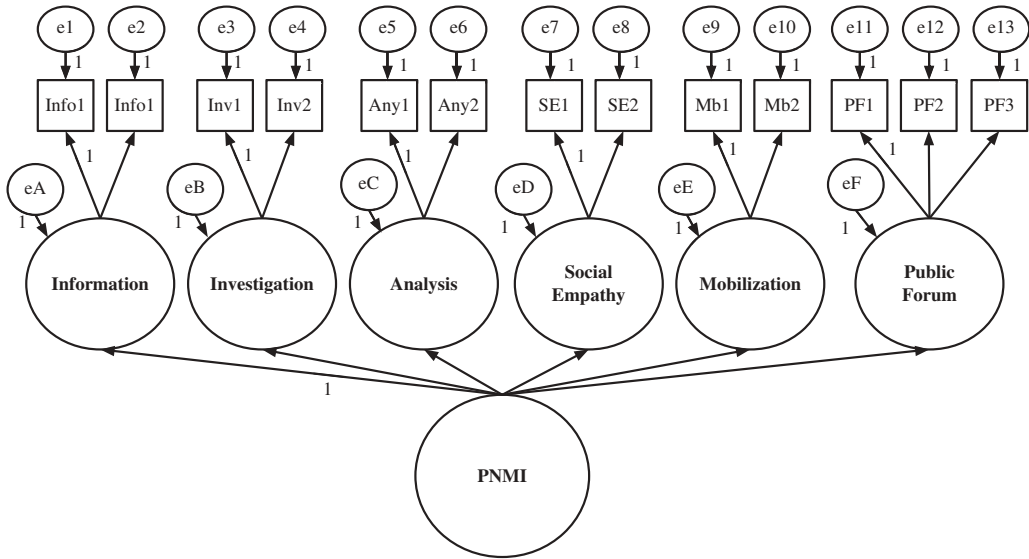
Figure 1. Hypothesized measurement model of perceived news media importance (PNMI).

dimensional PNMI scale was ultimately reached (see Figure 1 for an overview of the hypothesized PNMI model).

News media trust (dataset 2 only)
Media trust was measured in the Dataset 2 survey based on agreement (on a 7-point scale ranging from "Strongly Disagree to "Strongly Agree") with the following statements: "In general, the news media... (a) are accurate, (b) are fair, (c) can be trusted (see Gaziano & McGrath, 1986; Meyer, 1988). The Dataset 2 media trust scale (M = 3.63, SD = 1.40) demonstrates reliability (Cronbach's α = .93).

Political interest
Political interest was measured in Dataset 2 by asking participants, "How interested are you in politics and public affairs?" on a 4-point scale, where 1 = "Very interested," 2 = "Somewhat interested," 3 = "Not very interested," and 4 = "Not at all interested." The variable was reverse coded so that a high value represents high interest (Dataset 2: M = 2.68, SD = 0.93). The same question was posed in Dataset 3 using a 7-point scale from ranging from "not at all interested" (1) to "very interested" (7) (Dataset 3: M = 5.45, SD = 1.47).

General political media use (dataset 2 only)
Political news media exposure was measured in Dataset 2 as pertaining to six news source platforms. The question stem for each item was as follows: "How often do you get information about politics from [the media platform]." Political media use was measured on a 6-point scale ranging from 1 ("Never") to 6 ("Every day"). The six news source platforms were *print newspapers* (M = 3.06, SD = 1.88), *television* (M = 4.25, SD = 1.67), *magazines* (M = 2.16, SD = 1.86), *Internet news sites* (M = 3.31, SD = 1.84), *radio* (M = 3.42, SD = 1.26), and *social media websites* (M = 2.52, SD = 1.72). This political media use index is generally reliable (M = 3.12, SD = 1.10; Cronbach's alpha = .71).

Support for press freedom (dataset 3 only)

Support for press freedom is probed in Dataset 3 with the question, "To what extent is it important to you to support the freedom of the press?" Answer options ranged from (1) "not at all important" to (7) to "very important" ($M = 5.97$, $SD = 1.30$).

Perceived media performance (dataset 3 only)

This exploratory measure relates to assessments of *how well* one perceives the news media to be performing the core functions highlighted by the PNMI concept. Participants were asked to indicate the extent to which they perceived "Mainstream news media generally do a good job of..." 1) "keeping powerful people and institutions accountable," 2) "informing citizens about important issues," 3) "providing analysis and interpretation of the complex issues facing our country," 4) "promoting substantive public debates about important issues," 5) "helping me understand the experiences of people from all walks of life," and 6) "encouraging ordinary people to get involved in important societal issues." Upon conducting an EFA using maximum likelihood extraction and a direct OBLIMIN rotation, a solution converged in four iterations. Result pointed to a one-factor solution with the 6 items, accounting for 81.7% of the variance with an eigenvalue of 4.90.[2] Responses to the 6 questions were averaged together ($M = 4.61$, $SD = 1.58$; Cronbach's alpha = .96).

Mainstream and social media-based news use (dataset 3 only)

Participants read the prompt, "Over the past month, how often did you get news about politics and public affairs from the following sources?" Subjects subsequently reported frequency of exposure to CNN, *New York Times, Washington Post*, broadcast television, and NPR. (While the question of what constitutes "mainstream news" is debatable (Daniller, Allen, Tallevi, & Mutz, 2017), these outlets are deemed to be broadly representative of the concept.) Each question item was measured on a 5-point scale ranging from 0 ("Never") to 4 ("Almost very day"). Self-reported exposure to these media outlets were averaged to create a composite mainstream political media use measure ($M = 1.39$, $SD = 0.90$; Cronbach's alpha = .70). Similar to the *Mainstream Political News Use* probes, respondents also indicated how often they get news about politics and public affairs from (a) Facebook and (b) Twitter. The two survey items were averaged together ($M = 4.00$, $SD = 1.26$; $r = .38$, $p < .001$) to form the *Social Media-based Political News Use* variable.

Results

Scale development: dataset 1

To begin the process of examining and confirming the hypothesized underlying dimensions of the PNMI concept, an exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was conducted with Dataset 1. The EFA analysis used maximum likelihood extraction and a direct OBLIMIN rotation. A 15-item solution converged in 6 iterations, comprised of 6 factors. To reach this solution, items were dropped one-by-one from the initial pool of questions based on the criteria of items demonstrating minimal variability across responses and showing little commonality with other PNMI items (as revealed by the EFA). Examination of a scree plot suggested a 6-factor solution that in combination explains 74% of the variance, with the point of inflection in the scree plot positioned after the sixth factor.

The first dimension, consisting of two items, included items designed to represent the *analysis* function (see Appendix A for an overview of how each question aligned with the dimensions of PNMI). The dimension accounted for 31% of variance with an Eigenvalue of 4.65 ($r = .83$, $p < .001$). The second dimension—aligned with the *investigative* function—was comprised of three items. This dimension accounted for 12.9% of variance with an Eigenvalue of 1.93 (Cronbach's α = .82). A third dimension aligned with two *information* function items ($r = .48$, $p < .001$), representing 10.3% of variance with an Eigenvalue of 1.54. The next dimension, linked to the *mobilization* function, consisted of three items (Cronbach's α = .74), accounting for 7.3% of variance with an Eigenvalue

of 1.10. The *public forum* function constituted a fifth factor with three items (Cronbach's α = .73), accounting for 6.7% of variance with an Eigenvalue of 1.00. Finally, the lowest loading factor—aligned with the *social empathy* function—had two items ($r = .40$, $p < .001$) with an Eigenvalue of .87, accounting for 5.8% of the variance.[3]

Upon identifying these six dimensions, a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was conducted to test the measurement model fit of the scale as suggested by the EFA. Using maximum likelihood estimation and modeling the measure with a single higher-order latent variable (PNMI) six lower-order latent variables (information, investigation, analysis, social empathy, public forum, and mobilization), a reasonable model fit was reached, as indicated by the following fit statistics: χ^2 (84, 402) = 230.39, $p < .001$; CFI = .932, RMSEA = .066 (90% CI from .056–.076); and SRMR = .062.

While the 15 items identified in the exploratory survey were included in the second survey instrument, not all items were employed in subsequent analyses. Motivated by a desire to further refine and streamline the measure, two additional questions were dropped for the second stage of analyses. First, one item was dropped based on face validity considerations. The "be an adversary of businesses" question (see Appendix A) was cut due to concerns that the wording was politically-charged. A fiscal conservative, for example, who might otherwise deem the work of the journalism to be important, may balk at the idea that journalists should have an adversarial relationship with the business world. Second, upon consulting the modification indices, the "point me toward possible solutions" item was omitted from the model. This modification seemed theoretically justified, as the question does not well represent the action-oriented nature of the *mobilization* dimension. Upon eliminating these two items on the basis of face validity consideration and the modification indices, a total of 13 PNMI items were retained, with three questions in the *public forum* dimension and two in each of the other lower-order dimensions.[4]

Scale development: dataset 2

The 13-item measurement model was next tested with an independent, nationally representative random sample. Modeling PNMI as hierarchical factor (of second order) consisting of six lower-order latent variables, a CFA indicates that the 13-item hierarchical PNMI structure fits the data: χ^2 (59, 510) = 190.20, $p < .001$; CFI = .950, RMSEA = .066 (90% CI from .056–.077); SRMR = .045. This analysis confirms that PNMI can be conceptualized as being animated by personally valuing the news media functions of information, analysis, social empathy, public forum, and mobilization. Table 1 provides a correlation matrix indicating how the composite PNMI scale and each PNMI dimension correlate with other variables from Dataset 2.

Scale development: combined datasets 1 & 2

While Dataset 2 confirms that the hypothesized PNMI model finds empirical support, it is also valuable to evaluate the hypothesized model relative to potential competing models (Holbert & Grill, 2015). In contrast to the hypothesized model, consisting of a higher-order latent construct with six lower-order dimensions (see Figure 1), an initial alternative structure to consider is one that retains only the six lower-order factors, removing the higher-order factor. While this structure still presents PNMI as one overarching force, it allows for the possibility that each PNMI dimension can stand independent of the other five dimensions (see Figure 2). A second competing structure to examine is one consisting of a single latent variable with 13 observable variables, devoid of the lower-order latent constructs. This model explores that possibility that the PNMI items are unified as a single factor (see Figure 3).

To formally compare each of the proposed competing models to this study's hypothesized model, χ^2-distributed test statistics were employed (Schumacker & Lomax, 2004), wherein a χ^2 estimate was calculated for each model. The difference in the degrees of freedom between models being compared were subsequently used to determine whether change in the χ^2 estimate ($\Delta\chi^2$) was statistically

Table 1. Pearson correlations for composite 13-item PNMI measure, each PNMI dimension, and related study variables (Dataset 2).

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17
1. PNMI (13 items)	–																
2. Information	.75***	–															
3. Investigation	.63***	.40***	–														
4. Analysis	.73***	.40***	.36***	–													
5. Social Empathy	.74***	.51***	.32***	.46***	–												
6. Public Forum	.87***	.65***	.45***	.53***	.53***	–											
7. Mobilization	.73***	.41***	.29***	.44***	.52***	.60***	–										
8. Media Trust	.36***	.21***	.12**	.42***	.33***	.25***	.25***	–									
9. Political Media Use Index	.19***	.22***	.11*	.09*	.05	.20***	.14**	.05	–								
10. Newspaper	.16***	.20***	.05	.07	.07	.18***	.11*	.11*	.63***	–							
11. TV news	.16***	.18***	.04	.09*	.12**	.17***	.09*	.13**	.65***	.49***	–						
12. Radio news	.13**	.18***	.10*	.07	.02	.14***	.07	.00	.71***	.29***	.36***	–					
13. Magazine news	.18***	.20***	.09*	.11*	.04	.21***	.13**	.07	.67***	.55***	.33***	.40***	–				
14. Web-based news	.10*	.12**	.11*	.03	−.02	.11*	.10*	−.09#	.67***	.13**	.23***	.39***	.29***	–			
15. Social Media news	.01	−.01	.06	.00	−.03	−.01	.04	−.04	.54***	.02	.11*	.28***	.18***	.49***	–		
16. Ideology	−.09*	−.01	−.02	−.13**	−.08#	−.08#	−.10*	−.27***	−.05	−.03	.00	.09*	−.07	−.07	−.13**	–	
17. Political Interest	.27***	.33***	.17***	.08#	.11*	.31***	.21***	.01	.48***	.29***	.35***	.38***	.32***	.38***	.15**	.01	–

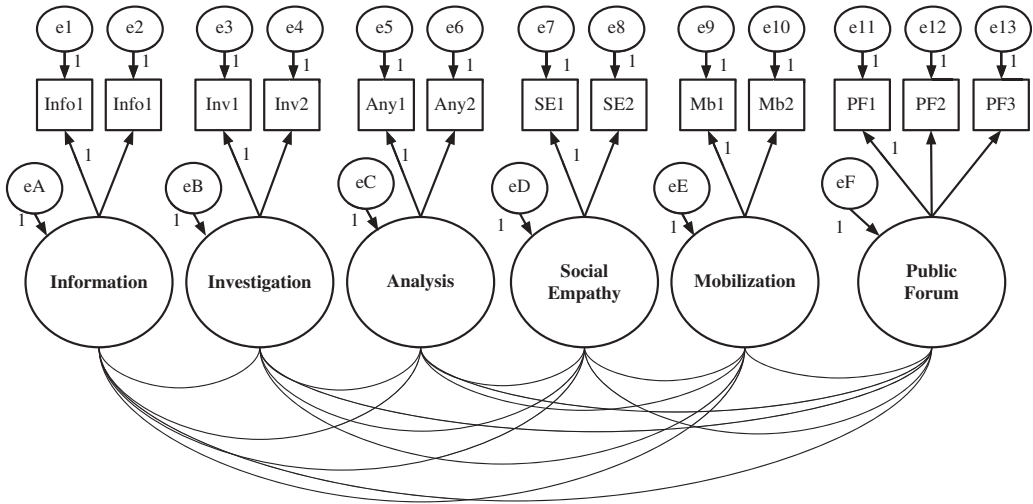*Note.* Results #$p < .10$, *$p < .05$, **$p < .01$, ***$p < .001$

Figure 2. Competing multi-factor measurement model of perceived news media importance (PNMI).
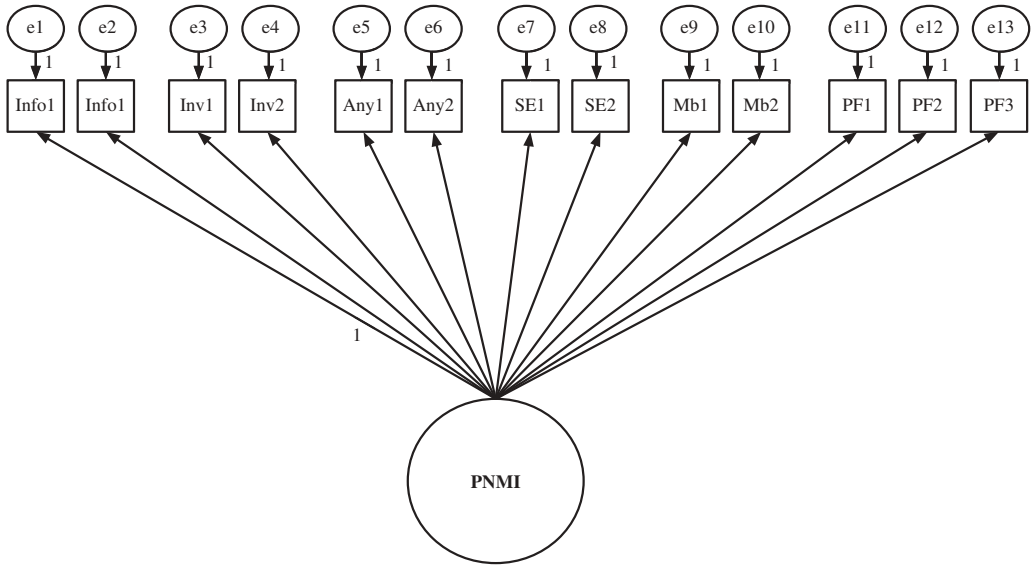

Figure 3. Competing single-factor measurement model of perceived news media importance (PNMI).

Table 2. Competing PNMI structural models: Fit and $\Delta\chi^2$ estimates (datasets 1 & 2).

Model	χ^2 (df)	$\Delta\chi^2$ (df)	CFI	RMSEA (90 CI)	SRMR
Hypothesized Model	276.87 (59)	–	.95	.06 (.06, .07)	.04
Competing Model #1 (Multi-factor structure)	201.73 (50)	−77.14 (9)*	.97	.06 (.05, .07)	.04
Competing Model #2 (Single-factor Structure)	1,187.69 (65)	+908.82 (6)*	.76	.14 (.13, .15)	.08

Note. $N = 912$. Critical χ^2 value for the $p < .001$ alpha level for df(9) = 27.88. Critical χ^2 value for the $p < .001$ alpha level for df (6) = 22.46. $\Delta\chi2$ tests run against hypothesized model, *$p < .001$. CFI = Confirmatory fit index. RMSEA = Root mean squared error of approximation. SRMR = standardized root mean squared residual.

Table 3. Convergent and discriminant validity of 13-item PNMI scale (Dataset 2).

	Convergent Validity: Correlation (φ) with PNMI	Single-factor model	Two-factor model	Discriminant Validity: Change ($\Delta\chi^2$) from single- to two-factor model
Political Media Use Index	φ = .29**	CFI = .90	CFI = .93	$\Delta\chi^2$ = 86.31
		RMSEA = .07	RMSEA = .06	Δdf = 1
		SRMR = .12	SRMR = .05	p < .001
Media Trust	φ = .36**	CFI = .93	CFI = .95	$\Delta\chi^2$ = 83.02
		RMSEA = .08	RMSEA = .06	Δdf = 1
		SRMR = .13	SRMR = .06	p < .001
Political Interest	φ = .33**	CFI = .88	CFI = .93	$\Delta\chi^2$ = 153.98
		RMSEA = .10	RMSEA = .07	Δdf = 1
		SRMR = .17	SRMR = .05	p < .001
Political Ideology	φ = −.08#	CFI = .87	CFI = .94	$\Delta\chi^2$ = 192.91
		RMSEA = .10	RMSEA = .06	Δdf = 1
		SRMR = .17	SRMR = .05	p < .001

Note: N = 510. CFI = Confirmatory fit index. RMSEA = Root mean squared error of approximation. SRMR = Standardized root mean squared residual. **$p < .001$. #p < .10.
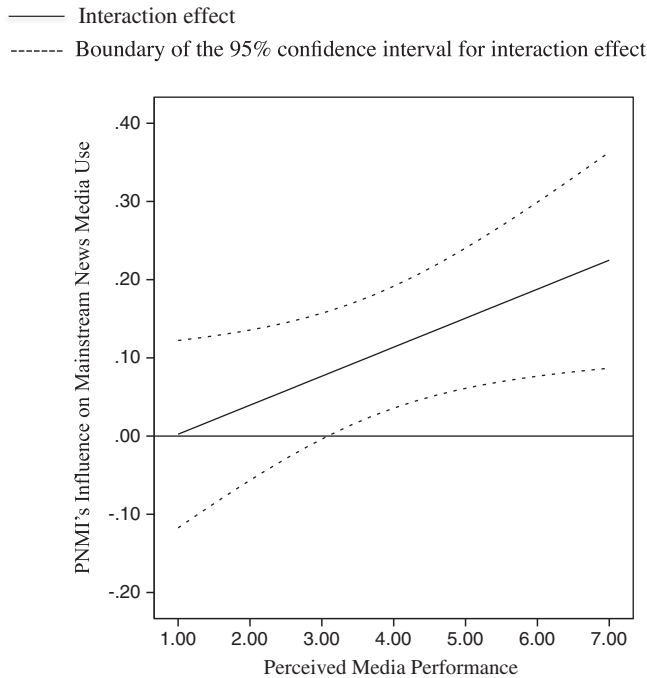
different. Notably, a lower χ^2 estimate (when the contrast between models is statistically significant) is indicative of a better fit.

As shown in Table 2, the results of the hypothesized model in the combined dataset point to a solid fit, CFI = .953, RMSEA = .064, SRMR = .040. Turning to the first competing model, modeling PNMI as comprised of interrelated-yet-distinct latent variables renders a stronger fit measurement model than the hypothesized model, $\Delta\chi^2$ (df = 9) = − 77.14, $p < .05$; CFI = .967, RMSEA = .058, SRMR = .036 (see Table 2). Meanwhile, the second competing model (PNMI as a single factor) represents a markedly weaker measurement structure compared to the hypothesized model, $\Delta\chi^2$ (df = 6) = 908.82, $p < .05$; CFI = .758, RMSEA = .138, SRMR = .076. In sum, while the combined datasets confirm that the hypothesized model (as a higher-order latent construct) has a good model fit, the first competing model demonstrates that each dimension of PNMI can also be thought of and employed as distinct latent constructs.

Table 4. PNMI's predictive value: OLS regression models predicting news use and support for press freedom (Dataset 3).

	Model 1 (DV: Mainstream News Use)	Model 2 (DV: Mainstream News Use)	Model 3 (DV: Social Media News)	Model 4 (DV: Social Media News)	Model 5 (DV: Support for Press)
Constant	−0.26 (.30)	0.53 (.47)	1.61 (.46)	3.66 (.73)	3.24 (.44)
Gender	−0.17 (.06)**	−0.16 (.06)**	0.19 (.10)*	0.20 (.09)*	−0.25 (.09)**
Age	−0.01 (.00)#	−0.01 (.00)#	−0.04 (.00)***	−0.04 (.00)***	0.01 (.00)#
Education	0.13 (.02)***	0.13 (.02)***	−0.03 (.04)	−0.03 (.04)	0.07 (.03)*
Race (White = 1, Other = 0)	−0.08 (.09)	−0.08 (.09)	0.10 (.15)	0.11 (.15)	−0.02 (.14)
Republican (Repub = 1, Other = 0)	−0.07 (.08)	−0.07 (.08)	0.12 (.13)	0.10 (.12)	−0.17 (.12)
Democrat (Dem = 1, Other = 0)	0.02 (.08)	0.00(.08)	0.13 (.12)	0.10 (.12)	−0.14 (.11)
Ideology (Conservative coded high)	−0.09 (.02)***	−0.09 (.02)***	−0.02 (.04)	−0.03 (.04)	−0.17 (.03)***
Political Interest	0.16 (.02)***	0.15 (.02)***	0.15 (.03)***	.13 (.03)***	0.34 (-.21)***
Perceived Media Performance	0.15 (.02)***	−0.05 (.10)	0.02 (.04)	−0.52 (.15)***	−0.03 (.03)
PNMI	0.10 (.04)**	−0.04 (.08)	0.09 (.06)	−0.27 (.12)*	0.31 (.06)***
PNMI x Perceived Media Performance	–	0.04 (.02)*	–	0.10 (.03) ***	–
R2	0.366	0.370	0.189	0.206	0.352
R2 increase due to interaction	–	0.005*	–	0.017***	–
N			625		

Note. Unstandardized coefficients reported with standard error in parentheses. DV = Dependent Variable. Two models are reported for both (a) mainstream news media use and (b) social media-based news use to highlight the unique influence of the PNMI x Perceived Media Performance interaction. #p < .10 *p < .05, **p < .01, ***p < . 001

www.m

—— Interaction effect

- - - - - - Boundary of the 95% confidence interval for interaction effect
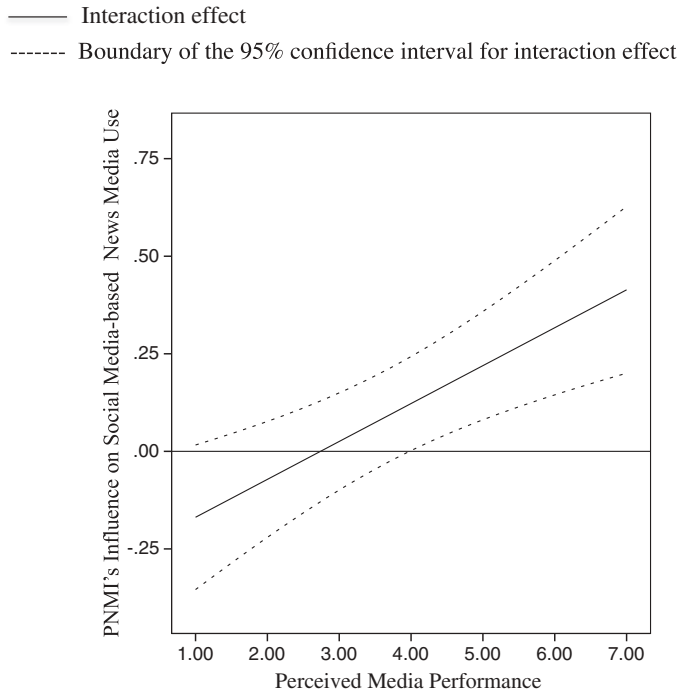

Figure 4. Interactive effect of PNMI and perceived media performance on mainstream news use.

Hypothesis testing results

As Table 3 indicates, analyses offer support for PNMI's convergent validity via positive correlations with the news media use index[5] (ϕ = .29), media trust (ϕ = .36), and political interest (ϕ = .33). Therefore, in addressing H1a–H3a, PNMI is shown to bear a solid association with logically similar concepts. Table 3 also reports discriminant validity findings (i.e., H1b–H3b). Across all three comparisons, PNMI's discriminant validity is evidenced by significant differences between the respective single-factor model and two-factor model. Furthermore, addressing H4, PNMI is demonstrated to have a marginal correlation with ideology (ϕ = −.08).

OLS regression analyses were used with Dataset 3 to examine PNMI's criterion-related validity. As shown in Model 1 of Table 4, results indicate that PNMI (in this case, as a 12-item composite measure) is a significant predictor of self-reported mainstream news media use (b = .10, p = .02). Furthermore, as shown in Model 2 of the same table, PNMI interacts with Perceived Media Performance (b = .04, p = .03), suggesting that PNMI's effect on media use can be elucidated by examining perceptions of the news media's performance. Probing this interaction via the Johnson-Neyman technique, the data indicate that PNMI's positive effect on media trust is most pronounced among those who evaluate press performance more favorably. As illustrated in Figure 4, the point of transition for PNMI's moderated effect (at a .05 alpha level) on mainstream news use resides at the 3.08 mark of the perceived media performance measure, indicating PNMI's positive effect on news use is significant when the perceived performance index is 3.08 or *higher* (at about the 18th percentile of the distribution and above). Similarly, PNMI and Perceived Media Performance interact to predict social media-based news use (b = .10, p < .001; see Model 4 in Table 4). Notably, neither PNMI or Perceived Media Performance independently predict social media-based news use (see Model 3). As illustrated by Figure 5, the point of transition for PNMI's moderated effect (at the .05 alpha level) on social media-based news use resides at the 3.98 mark. This conditional effect is significant at about

——— Interaction effect

------- Boundary of the 95% confidence interval for interaction effect

Figure 5. Interactive effect of PNMI and perceived media performance on social media-based news use.

the 28th percentile of the distribution and above. Finally, confirming H6, PNMI is shown to predict believing the freedom of the press to be important ($b = .31$, $p < .001$).

Discussion

The chief aim of this project is develop a tool for illuminating the extent to which citizens' values are congruent with the normative aspirations associated with the news media industry and provide a foundation for exploring the implications of a value (in)congruence. Accordingly, this study offers a theoretically grounded explication and validated operationalization of PNMI. Within the validation process, a 13-item solution was ultimately reached via 2 independent data sets, demonstrated to be internally reliable and comprised of 6 dimensions that represent a spectrum of normative roles that journalists can perform.

This study's examination of potential alternative model structures underscores the versatility of PNMI, serving as a *multi-faceted* tool for researchers. There is a firm foundation for conceptualizing PNMI as hypothesized—as a unified higher order latent construct with six lower-order dimensions. However, this study also provides compelling evidence of each of the six PNMI dimensions functioning as discrete-yet-correlated constructs. Indeed, this multi-factor model proves to be stronger than the hypothesized PNMI model. Taken together, analyses indicate that it is not only appropriate to operationalize PNMI as a composite measure; researchers might also employ measures of discrete PNMI dimensions in future research. In this sense, PNMI offers researchers various avenues for examining how attitudes about distinct functions of the news media may relate to other media judgments. For example, one might focus on how valuations of the *analysis* function are associated with trust in and use of partisan news sources—outlets that quite frequently offer analysis/commentary.

This research also highlights the broader utility of PNMI. First, employing a probability-based sample (Dataset 2), analyses demonstrate that as predicted, PNMI is positively associated with political interest—yet it is not redundant with political interest. It is also show to be distinct from political ideology, an important delineation in light of the key role of ideology/partisanship relative to attitudes about the news media. Furthermore, convergent validity analyses confirm PNMI's basic association with media trust. The relationship between news media trust and judgments of its importance are posited to *not* be trivial. It points to a potential leverage point for mitigating excessive cynicism and skepticism about the news media system.

Importantly, PNMI also exhibits a relationship with news media use. Dataset 2 analyses reveal that valuing the normative functions of the news media is positively associated with political media use patterns, encompassing a range of platforms—including print newspapers, television, radio, magazines, and Internet news sites. Furthermore, Dataset 3 highlights the predictive capacity of a composite PNMI measure both in terms of traditional mainstream news use and social media-based news use. Incorporating a perceived media performance measure helps to elucidate *when* PNMI is predictive of news use. The PNMI-news use relationships are most pronounced in accordance with the extent to which participants perceive that mainstream news outlets are satisfactorily performing their normative roles.

These findings are notable in two particular respects. First, it confirms that PNMI is meaningfully related to consuming news. While attributing importance to normative journalistic functions is not tantamount to using news media, it does seem to represent a motivation to consume news content. The results suggest that strategies to better educate or persuade citizens about the fundamental value of journalism's work may in some cases serve to encourage more consumption of quality journalism. Second, it is notable that PNMI is most clearly predictive of more conventional news media use, (e.g., print newspapers, cable and broadcast television, radio, and web-based outlets). PNMI only predicts social media-based use when individuals feel that the news media are performing its normative functions relatively well (see Table 4 and Figure 5). In seeking to understand these relationships, it is worth noting that while a clear majority of Americans report getting news on social media (Pew Research Center, 2017), research also indicates that much news exposure on social media—such as Facebook—may be incidental; that is, people often encounter news on social media while "doing other things online" (Pew Research Center, 2016c). That PNMI does not always directly predict getting political information from social media is perhaps indication that PNMI is most relevant to actively seeking news—less with incidental news exposure. This is an important question to further examine in future research.

PNMI also demonstrates utility in terms of its capacity to shed light on support for press freedoms. Predictive of perceptions of the importance of supporting freedom of the press, the PNMI linkage suggests that if news media advocates can effectively make the case for the importance of the press and its various societal functions, citizens may be more inclined to defend/support the press against efforts to weaken and delegitimize the institution. This is surely a research direction worthy of attention in future PNMI-related work.

Finally, it is posited here that PNMI is a meaningful perception in and of itself. The question of whether people find value in the normative functions of the new media is in some respects a more fundamental question than whether a given person essentially likes or dislikes the news media. It is also distinct from questions of feeling gratified by news use (Katz et al., 1974) or whether one is highly dependent upon the media (Ball-Rokeach & DeFleur, 1976). Instead, PNMI comprehensively probes how one's personal values regarding news media work are in alignment or incongruent with the aspirational goals that mainstream journalists commonly embrace. Given that the press's viability is in part dependent upon public perceptions of its societal utility and legitimacy, PNMI is worthy of ongoing scholarly attention.

Taking stock of the preceding analyses, several additional points warrant further discussion. First, work in this research domain might consider expanding the dimensionality of media importance assessments. This study's bounded conception of PNMI represents an aspirational lens within the

scope of political/public affairs-based news; it is animated by the functions that commonly inspire both communication scholars (see Althaus, 2012) and journalists themselves (see Weaver et al., 2007). These aspirations are broadly nested within normative theories of the press—"the ideal functions of the press, what the press *should* do" (Benson, 2008, p. 2591). But while PNMI broadly maps onto journalism's occupational ideology, it should be again acknowledged that the functions featured in PNMI do not *fully* represent all meaningful ways that the press serves society (c.f., Bertrand, 2000; Christians et al., 2009). Accordingly, it could be worthwhile to move beyond a normative framework. For instance, one might further explore how media importance assessments are relevant to news media providing entertainment value.

Moreover, the PNMI construct should not be viewed as concretely fixed. Just as norms of citizenship can change over time (Bennett, 2008), so too could journalism's occupational ideology and its normative functions evolve. Though this project's operationalization of PNMI is argued to be theoretically-grounded and stable, future modifications may be appropriate. While PNMI presently exhibits a "unity of virtue" among its six dimensions, this cohesiveness could wane. This possibility underscores the value of highlighting PNMI both as a latent construct with six lower-order dimensions *and* as discrete-yet-interrelated functions. Rather than conceiving of PNMI as representing a permanently fixed set of functions, it may be helpful to view PNMI more as a research orientation that directs focus on the congruence of citizens' values with the normative goals of the news industry, even as journalism's aspirations may evolve over time.

It is also important to further emphasize that this study's analysis of PNMI's predictive value was exploratory in nature. In particular, the *freedom of press* measure (indicated by one item) was quite rudimentary. There is a strong need for developing a sound measure of support for the press at an individual level. Yet even with this limitation, this study's operationalization of support for press freedom offers a foundation to build upon. Similarly, the *Perceived Media Performance* measure also marks a preliminary research effort and should be treated tentatively. The significant PNMI x Perceived Media Performance interaction in Table 4 does not account for much variance in the models. The findings demonstrate Perceived Media Performance's potential for highlighting *when* PNMI predicts news use, but they also suggest that more work is needed to more formally operationalize a measure for these perceptions of press performance.

Finally, this research domain would benefit from deeper examinations of the determinants of PNMI, exploring what factors contribute to shaping this set of value assessments. In light of this project's analyses, it would be worthwhile identifying the extent to variables like media trust and news media use have a reciprocal effect on PNMI. It is quite plausible that trust and media use have an influence on PNMI. Existing PNMI research has begun examining such questions (Peifer, 2017), but more research is certainly warranted.

In sum, this article demonstrates that the proposed PNMI concept and its operationalization can facilitate a reliable examination of the extent to which the public's values are congruent with normative functions of the news media. More broadly, it illuminates an avenue for the advancement of the study of citizen perceptions of the news media. To be sure, more work is necessary to more fully understand the implications of individuals fundamentally valuing the normative work of political/public affairs journalism. Nonetheless, it is anticipated that as citizens' perceptions about and the use of news media continue to evolve within the contemporary media landscape—perhaps in divergent ways—the study of perceived new media importance should continue to be relevant to questions of when, why, and how citizens trust, use, and support different forms and sources of news. Ultimately, it is hoped that the PNMI concept and measure developed by this research effort will prove to be a valuable research tool for shedding light on and promoting the health of democratic societies.

Notes

1. Note that this does not represent an exhaustive inventory of concepts similar to perceptions of news media importance. However, these perceptions do represent frameworks that are here deemed to be most relevant to PNMI.
2. Further examining the internal validity of this exploratory measure, a CFA modeling the measure as single-factor latent construct exhibits a solid model fit: χ^2 (9, 625) = 47.43, p < .001; CFI = .990, RMSEA = .083 (90% CI from .060 to .107); and SRMR = .013.
3. It is recognized that an eigenvalue of 1.00 is commonly used as the standard cutoff for a factor to be considered articulated (Kaiser, 1960). Yet even as this latter factor falls below the traditional cutoff, it is worth noting that the cut-off of 1.00 is highly arbitrary (Reagan, 2000) and critiqued by some as an overly conservative (Jolliffe, 1986). Indeed, upon examination of a scree plot, the "elbow" of the scree plot was situated between the sixth and seventh factors, suggesting that the sixth factor of this solution may constitute a meaningful dimension of PNMI. Therefore, the social empathy factor was retained in the preliminary 15-item PNMI solution.
4. The fit statistics for the 13-item version of PNMI in pilot data (Dataset 1) improved from the 15-item version: χ^2(59, 402) = 140.15, p < .001; CFI = .950, RMSEA = .059 (90% CI from .046–.071); SRMR = .049. Overall, the model fits the data well.
5. In view of the shared platform with Internet news sites and social media sites (two of the six news sources included in Dataset 2's media use index), the error terms of these two observable variables were co-varied, serving as an acknowledgement in the model that the variables are, from a theoretical standpoint, strongly related to one another.

Acknowledgement

Funding

References

Ajzen, I. (1991). The theory of planned behavior. *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes*, 50(2), 179–211. doi:10.1016/0749-5978(91)90020-t

Althaus, S. L. (2012). What's good and bad in political communication research? Normative standards for evaluating media and citizen performance. In: H. A. Semetko, & M. Scammell (Eds.), *The SAGE handbook of political communication* (pp. 97–112). Los Angeles, CA: Sage Publications.

Appelman, A., & Sundar, S. S. (2016). Measuring message credibility: Construction and validation of an exclusive scale. *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly*, 93, 59–79. doi:10.1177/1077699015606057

Austin, E. W., & Pinkleton, B. E. (1999). The relation between media content evaluations and political disaffection. *Mass Communication and Society*, 2, 105–122. doi:10.1080/15205436.1999.9677867

Ball-Rokeach, S. L., & DeFleur, M. L. (1976). A dependency mode of mass-media effects. *Communication Research*, 3, 3–21. doi:10.1177/009365027600300101

Becker, L. B., Vlad, T., & Nusser, N. (2007). An evaluation of press freedom indicators. *International Communication Gazette*, 69, 5–28. doi:10.1177/1748048507072774

Bennett, W. L. (2008). Changing citizenship in the digital age. In: W. L. Bennett (Ed.), *Civic life online: Learning how digital media can engage youth* (pp. 1–24). Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press.

Benson, R. D. (2008). Journalism: Normative theories. In: W. Donsbach (Ed.), *The International encyclopedia of communication* (pp. 2591–2597). Oxford, UK: Blackwell.

Berinsky, A. J., Huber, G. A., & Lenz, G. S. (2012). Evaluating online labor markets for experimental research: Amazon.com's Mechanical Turk. *Political Analysis*, 20, 351–368. doi:10.1093/pan/mpr057

Bertrand, C. (2000). *Media ethics and accountability systems*. Piscataway, NJ: Transaction Publishers.

Blumler, J. G. (1979). The role of theory in uses and gratifications studies. *Communication Research*, 6, 9–36. doi:10.1177/009365027900600102

Brunetti, A., & Weder, B. (2003). A free press is bad news for corruption. *Journal of Public Economics*, 87(7), 1801–1824. doi:10.1016/S0047-2727(01)00186-4

Christians, C., Glasser, T., McQuail, D., Nordenstreng, K., & White, R. (2009). *Normative theories of the media: Journalism in democratic societies*. Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press.

Chung, D. S. (2009). How readers perceive journalists' functions at online community newspapers. *Newspaper Research Journal*, *30*, 72–80. doi:10.1177/073953290903000108

Cohen, J. (1988). *Statistical power analysis for the behavioral sciences* (2nd). Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum.

Daniller, A., Allen, D., Tallevi, A., & Mutz, D. C. (2017). Measuring Trust in the Press in a Changing Media Environment. *Communication Methods and Measures*, *11*(1), 76–85. doi:10.1080/19312458.2016.1271113

Deuze, M. (2005). What is journalism?: Professional identity and ideology of journalists reconsidered. *Journalism*, *6*(4), 442–464. doi:10.1177/1464884905056815

Earle, T. C., & Cvetkovich, G. T. (1995). *Social trust: Toward a cosmopolitan society*. Westport, CT: Praeger.

Fishbein, M., & Ajzen, I. (1975). *Belief, attitude, intention and behavior: An introduction to theory and research*. Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley.

Fredin, E. S., & Kosicki, G. M. (1989). Cognitions and attitudes about community: Compensating for media images. *Journalism Quarterly*, *66*, 571–578. doi:10.1177/107769908906600306

Gaziano, C., & McGrath, K. (1986). Measuring the concept of credibility. *Journalism Quarterly*, *63*, 451–462. doi:10.1177/107769908606300301

Gronke, P., & Cook, T. E. (2007). Disdaining the media: The American public's changing attitudes toward the news. *Political Communication*, *24*, 259–281. doi:10.1080/10584600701471591

Guo, Z. S., & Li, L. (2011). Perceptions of media functions and processing of news: Analysis of audience in a Chinese metropolis. *Asian Journal of Communication*, *21*, 47–68. doi:10.1080/01292986.2010.524231

Hayes, A. (2013). *Introduction to mediation, moderation, and conditional process analysis*. New York, NY: The Guilford Press.

Hayes, A. F., Glynn, C. J., & Shanahan, J. (2005). Willingness to self-censor: A construct and measurement tool for public opinion research. *International Journal of Public Opinion Research*, *17*(3), 298–323. doi:10.1093/ijpor/edh073

Heider, B. D., McCombs, M., & Poindexter, P. M. (2005). What the public expects of local news: Views on public and traditional journalism. *Journalism and Mass Communication Quarterly*, *82*, 952–967. doi:10.1177/107769900508200412

Hemphill, J. F. (2003). Interpreting the magnitudes of correlation coefficients. *American Psychologist*, *58*, 78–79. doi:10.1037/0003-066X.58.1.78

Holbert, R. L., & Grill, C. (2015). Clarifying and expanding the use of confirmatory factor analysis in journalism and mass communication research. *Journalism and Mass Communication Quarterly*, *92*, 292–319. doi:10.1177/1077699015583718

Holbert, R. L., & Stephenson, M. T. (2002). Structural equation modeling in the communication sciences: 1995-2000. *Human Communication Research*, *28*, 531–551.

Hu, L., & Bentler, P. M. (1999). Cutoff criteria for fit indexes in covariance structure analysis: Conventional criteria versus new alternatives. *Structural Equation Modeling: A Multidisciplinary Journal*, *6*, 1–55. doi:10.1080/10705519909540118

Jackson, D. L. (2003). Revisiting sample size and number of parameter estimates: Some support for the N: qhypothesis. *Structural Equation Modeling: A Multidisciplinary Journal*, *10*(1), 128–141. doi:10.1207/S15328007SEM1001_6

Johnson, T. J., & Fahmy, S. (2008). The CNN of the Arab world or a shill for terrorists? How support for press freedom and political ideology predict credibility of Al-Jazeera among its audience. *International Communication Gazette*, *70*, 338–360. doi:10.1177/1748048508094290

Johnstone, J. W. C., Slawski, E. J., & Bowman, W. W. (1972). The professional values of American newsmen. *Public Opinion Quarterly*, *36*, 522–540. doi:10.1086/268036

Jolliffe, I. T. (1986). *Principal component analysis*. New York, NY: Springer-Verlag.

Jones, D. A. (2004). Why Americans don't trust the media: A preliminary analysis. *Harvard International Journal of Press/Politics*, *9*, 60–75. doi:10.1177/1081180X04263461

Kaiser, H. F. (1960). The application of electronic computers to factor analysis. *Educational and Psychological Measurement*, *20*, 141–415. doi:10.1177/001316446002000116

Katz, E., Blumler, J. G., & Gurevitch, M. (1974). Utilization of mass communication by the individual. In: J. G. Blumler, & E. Katz (Eds.), *The uses of mass communications: Current perspectives on gratifications research* (pp. 19–32). Beverly Hills, CA: Sage.

Kline, R. B. (2011). *Principles and practice of structural equation modeling* (3rd ed.). New York, NY: The Guilford Press.

Kluckhohn, C. (1951). Values and value-orientations in the theory of action: An exploration in definition and classification. In: T. Parsons, & E. Shils (Eds.), *Toward a general theory of action*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Kosicki, G. M., & McLeod, J. M. (1990). Learning from political news: Effects of media images and information processing strategies. In: S. Kraus (Ed.), *Mass communication and political information processing* (pp. 69–83). Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum.

Kovach, B., & Rosenstiel, T. (2014). *The elements of journalism: What newspeople should know and the public should expect* (3rd ed.). New York, NY: Three Rivers Press.

Krosnick, J. A. (1988). The role of attitude importance in social evaluation: A study of policy preferences, presidential candidate evaluations, and voting behavior. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *55*, 196–210. doi:10.1037/0022-3514.55.2.196

Kuypers, J. A. (2014). *Partisan journalism: A history of media bias in the United States*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield.

Ladd, J. M. (2012). *Why Americans hate the media and how it matters*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Lee, T. (2005). The liberal media myth revisited: An examination of factors Influencing perceptions of media bias. *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media*, *49*, 43–64. doi:10.1207/s15506878jobem4901_4

Loges, W. E. (1994). Canaries in the coal mine: Perceptions of threat and media system dependency relations. *Communication Research*, *21*, 5–23. doi:10.1177/009365094021001002

Luskin, R. C. (1990). Explaining political sophistication. *Political Behavior*, *12*, 331–361. doi:10.1007/BF00992793

McLeod, J. M., Sotirovic, M., & Holbert, R. L. (1998). Values as Sociotropic Judgments Influencing Communication Patterns. *Communication Research*, *25*(5), 453–485. doi:10.1177/009365098025005001

McNair, B. (2010). *The sociology of journalism*. New York, NY: Bloomsbury Academic.

Meyer, B. P. (1988). Defining and measuring credibility of newspapers: Developing an index. *Journalism Quarterly*, *65*, 567–588. doi:10.1177/107769908806500301

Miller, L. A., McIntire, S. A., & Lovler, R. L. (2011). *Foundations of psychological testing: A practical approach* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.

Miron, A. M., & Brehm, J. W. (2006). Reactance theory - 40 years later. *Zeitschrift Für Sozialpsychologie*, *37*, 3–12. doi:10.1024/0044-3514.37.1.3

Myers, T. A. (2011). Goodbye, listwise deletion: Presenting hot deck imputation as an easy and effective tool for handling missing data. *Communication Methods and Measures*, *5*, 297–310. doi:10.1080/19312458.2011.624490

Parsons, T. (1969). Research with human subjects and the "professional complex". *Daedalus*, *98*, 325–360.

Peifer, J. T. (2017). Imitation as flattery: How TV news parody's media criticism can influence perceived news media importance and media trust. *Journalism and Mass Communication Quarterly*. Advance online publication. doi:10.1177/1077699017713002

Penner, T. (1973). The unity of virtue. *The Philosophical Review*, *82*, 35–68. doi:10.2307/2184238

Peterson, T. (1963). The social responsibility theory of the press. In: F. S. Siebert, T. Peterson, & W. Schramm (Eds.), *Four theories of the press*. Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press.

Pew Research Center. (2016a, October 27). *As election nears, voters divided over democracy and 'respect.'* Retrieved from http://pewrsr.ch/2eK8Oqm

Pew Research Center. (2016b, November 18). *Majority of U.S. adults think news media should not add interpretation to the facts*. Retrieved from http://pewrsr.ch/2gpRpYT

Pew Research Center. (2016c, May 26). *News use across social media platforms 2016*. Retrieved from http://pewrsr.ch/249haJM

Pew Research Center. (2017, September 7). *News use across social media platforms 2017*. Retrieved from http://pewrsr.ch/2xdh8vt

Pfau, M., Kendall, K. E., Reichert, T., Hellweg, S. A., Lee, W., Tusing, K. J., & Prosise, T. O. (1997). Influence of communication during the distant phase of the 1996 Republican presidential primary campaign. *Journal of Communication*, *47*, 6–26. doi:10.1111/j.1460-2466.1997.tb02723.x

Pinkleton, B. E., & Austin, E. W. (2001). Individual motivations, perceived media importance, and political disaffection. *Political Communication*, *18*, 321–334. doi:10.1080/10584600152400365

Reagan, J. (2000). Toward a set of standards for the use of factor analysis in the in the Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media. *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media*, *44*, 324–328. doi:10.1207/s15506878jobem4402

Reichardt, C. S., & Coleman, S. C. (1995). The criteria for convergent and discriminant validity in a multitrait-multimethod matrix. *Multivariate Behavioral Research*, *30*, 513–538. doi:10.1207/s15327906mbr3004_3

Reporters Without Borders. (2017). *2017 Press freedom index—Even darker world map*. Retrieved from https://rsf.org/en/2017-press-freedom-index-ever-darker-world-map

Rosen, J. (2000). Questions and answers about public journalism. *Journalism Studies*, *1*, 679–683. doi:10.1080/146167000441376

Rubin, A. M. (2009). Uses-and-gratifications perspective on media effects. In: J. Bryant, & M. B. Oliver (Eds.), *Media effects: Advances in theory and research* (3rd ed., pp. 165–184). New York, NY: Routledge.

Schudson, M. (2008). *Why democracies need an unlovable press*. Malden, MA: Polity Press.

Schumacker, R. E., & Lomax, R. G. (2004). *A beginner's guide to structural equation modeling* (2nd ed. ed.). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Schwartz, S. H., & Bilsky, W. (1987). Toward universal psychological structure of human values. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *53*, 550–562. doi:10.1037/0022-3514.53.3.550

Strömbäck, J., Djerf-Pierre, M., & Shehata, A. (2013). The dynamics of political interest and news media consumption: A longitudinal perspective. *International Journal of Public Opinion Research*, *25*(4), 414–435. doi:10.1093/ijpor/eds018

Stroud, N. J. (2011). *Niche news: The politics of news choice*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

Swift, A. (2016, September 14). *Americans' trust in mass media sinks to new low. Gallup.* Retrieved from http://www.gallup.com/

Tsfati, Y., & Ariely, G. (2014). Individual and contextual correlates of trust in media across 44 countries. *Communication Research, 41*, 760–782. doi:10.1177/0093650213485972

Van Der Wurff, R., & Schoenbach, K. (2014). Civic and citizen demands of news media and journalists: What does the audience expect from good journalism?. *Journalism and Mass Communication Quarterly, 9*, 433–451. doi:10.1177/1077699014538974

Vanacker, B., & Belmas, G. (2009). Trust and the economics of news. *Journal of Mass Media Ethics, 24*, 110–126. doi:10.1080/08900520902885277

Weaver, D. H., Beam, R. A., Brownlee, B. J., Voakes, P. S., & Wilhoit, G. C. (2007). *The American journalist in the 21st century: U.S. news people at the dawn of a new millennium.* Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Wicks, R. H. (1992). Schema theory and measurement in mass communication research: Theoretical and methodological issues in news information processing. In: S. A. Deetz (Ed.), *Communication Yearbook 15* (pp. 115–145). Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

Appendix A

Exploratory set of PNMI questions (35 original items)

Introduction Statement: Some people say that what they value in the news differs from what people in the news media say is important, while others are more likely to agree with the goals that the news media often prioritize. We'd like to know what you value in the news, regardless of what others say the news media should do. Carefully read each statement and ask yourself: Thinking about my news preferences, it is important to me that the news media...

Information function

... *provide me with a daily account of what is happening in the world.* +*
... *keep me up to date on what my political leaders and government are doing. * +*
... *raise my awareness about the negative things facing society.*
... *raise my awareness about the positive things happening in society.*
... *regularly fill me in on what's happening in the local community.*
... *regularly fill me in on what's happening in my country.*
... *regularly fill me in on what's happening in the world at large.*

Investigative function

...*expose the shortcomings of government officials and institutions.* +*
...*be an adversary of public officials by being constantly skeptical of their actions*+*
...*be an adversary of businesses by being constantly skeptical of their actions**
... *be a watchdog over the behavior of the government and public officials*
... *test claims that politicians and public officials make*
... *keep a close eye on businesses and powerful organizations*
... *just report what our leaders say and not question them*

Analysis function

... *provide analysis and interpretation of the complex problems around me*+*
... *provide analysis and interpretation about the events in the news*+*
... *provide analysis and interpretation of international developments*
... *help me make sense of what's happening in the country*
... *are able to able to explain the future implications of news events*

Social Empathy function

... *open my eyes to the misfortunes of other people.* +*
... *open my eyes to the good things that are happening to people.* +*
... *focus on what's mainly relevant to my life.*
... *give me sense of what other people in my local community are experiencing*
... *give me sense of what other people in my country are experiencing*

. . . give me a sense of what other people around the world are experiencing

Public Forum function

. . . help me learn more about issues and political causes that I don't agree with.* +
. . .encourage substantive public debates about important issues.* +
. . . provide a forum for a wide range of viewpoints on important issues.* +
. . . ask the kinds of questions of political leaders I would like to have asked
. . . gives me the opportunity to make my voice heard in society

Mobilization function

. . .help me to play active roles in community controversies.* +
. . .motivate ordinary people to get involved in public discussions of important issues.* +
. . .point me toward possible solutions to society's problems.*
. . . take clear positions on issues to help guide my decisions.
. . .avoid trying influence what I think and do.

Note. Questions marked with asterisks (*) denote the 15 questions carried forward for inclusion in the nationally representative Dataset 2 survey. Questions notated with plus (+) symbol indicate inclusion in the final 13-item PNMI measure validated by the Dataset 2 survey data.

Appendix B

Description of study datasets

Dataset 1. A convenience sample of English speaking, American adult participants ($N = 403$) was recruited from Amazon's Mechanical Turk (MTurk) system in October 2014. MTurk is a web-based crowdsourcing system that uses anonymous workers to complete a diversity of tasks, including surveys. Although MTurk samples are not representative of the national population and, accordingly, are inappropriate to use for drawing conclusions about population means, MTurk convenience samples are nonetheless generally more diverse than student samples (Berinsky, Huber, & Lenz, 2012). Respondents in the MTurk survey were between the ages of 19 and 82 ($M = 35$, $SD = 11.54$) and 56% male. In terms of race, 83% were White, 7% Black, 7% Asian, and 3% Other. The sample was relatively educated (11% high school or less, 24% some college, 52% four years of college or more) and represented a fair range of incomes (62% <$50K, 20% $75K+). In terms of political affiliation, the plurality of the sample was Independent (46%); Democrats (37%) outnumbered Republicans (13%); 4% identified as "other" for political affiliation. With regard to ideology, the sample skewed liberal ($M = 3.36$, $SD = 1.66$ on 7-point scale with conservatives coded high). Approximately 89% of the sample reported being registered to vote.

Dataset 2. The second dataset represents a probability-based, national sample ($N = 510$) recruited by the survey firm GfK (formerly Knowledge Networks) in March 2015. Unlike with opt-in panels, individuals can only become GfK panelists through random selection; one cannot simply volunteer to be a panelist. GfK's recruitment protocol relies on probability-based sampling of addresses from the United States Postal Service's Delivery Sequence File (DSF), a methodology that allows sampling of almost all United States households. Persons randomly selected by GfK who do not have Internet access are provided a Web-enabled computer and free Internet service (more information can be found at www.gfk.com). About 1,000 individuals were invited to take part in this project's Stage 2 survey ($N = 1008$), with a completion rate of 60.1% ($n = 606$) and an incidence rate of 84%. The GfK survey respondents were between the ages of 18 to 91 ($M = 50.09$, $SD = 16.63$); they were 50% female, 76% White, 9% Black, and 10% Hispanic or Latino. In terms of education, 37.6% had a high school education or less, 17% some college, and 37% four years of college or more. The sample represented a range of household incomes (32% <$50K, 48% $75K+). For political party identification, 31% self- identified as strong or weak Democrats and 27% as strong or weak Republicans; those who declared themselves Independent, "undecided," -lean Republican, or -lean Democrat made up 42% of the sample. On average the sample resided around the mid-point of a 7-point ideology scale with "very conservative" coded high ($M = 4.26$, $SD = 1.55$).

The Hot Deck Imputation technique (see Myers, 2011) was used to address missing values in Dataset 2. While missing data was not a major problem (the most per variable was 12 cases—for radio news use), the hot deck technique was used in an effort to retain as much valid data as possible. This approach involves identifying a set of three variables in a data set with little to no missing values *and* that bear some theoretical relevance to the hypothesis/ research question at hand—yet not of substantial theoretical interest (Myers, 2011). These deck variables are used to locate "donor" cases in the data set to replace missing values *when* the responses of the case with the missing values matches that of the (non-missing) donor case across the three hot deck variables. Using gender, age, and education to

identify the donor cases, hot deck imputations were performed for the following measures: ideology, political interest, political party identification, six news political media use items (i.e., print newspapers, television, radio, web-based news sites, magazines, social media websites), and the 13 PNMI items. Upon conducting this imputation technique, the data did not retain any missing values.

Dataset 3. Dataset 3 ($N = 626$) comes from a May 2017 data collection effort via a Survey Sampling International (SSI) panel sample. Notably, the questionnaire included only 12 of the original 13 PNMI question items. Respondents in this third dataset were 53% female, ranging from 19–65 ($M = 51.05$, $SD = 12.33$) in age. Household incomes were well distributed across the sample (42% <$50K, 39% $75K+). Most participants identified as White (89%); 5% identified as Black, and 3% identified as Asian. In terms of education, 18% had a high school education or less and 30% had "some college"; 52% hold a four-year degree or beyond. Party identification was balanced, with 27% self-identifying as a strong or weak Democrat and 26% as a strong or weak Republican; those who declared themselves Independent, independent-lean Republican, or -lean Democrat made up 47% of the sample. Participants' ideological orientations averaged around the mid-point of a 7-point scale with "very conservative" coded high ($M = 4.11$, $SD = 1.66$).