
How to cite this article:

LUENGO, O. & COIMBRA-MESQUITA,
N., "Media and Political Disaffection",
*Communication&Society/Comunicación y
Sociedad*, Vol. 26, n. 1, 2013, pp. 115-128.

Media and Political Disaffection: A comparative study of Brazil and Spain*

Medios y Desafección Política: Un estudio comparado de Brasil y España

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Submitted: April 19, 2012

Approved: Oct 1, 2012

ABSTRACT: The findings of a series of studies in the area of political communication during the 1990s questioned the answer media malaise offered for what was considered a constant in the academic debate: the negative relationship between media exposure and civic engagement. Some authors blame the media for "narcotizing" citizens, while other analysts say empirical evidence points to the

*Supported by the São Paulo Research Foundation - FAPESP - (process number 08/57470-0)

opposite direction. This article approaches empirically the compared Spanish and Brazilian cases. More specifically, the study presents an approach to the impact of media consumption on institutional trust. The results point to different impacts of the media in each country, brought by *the peculiarities of their political systems, as well as differences in media consumption behavior.*

RESUMEN: Los hallazgos de una serie de trabajos desarrollados en el área de la comunicación política durante la década de los noventa, han venido a cuestionar la respuesta que el malestar mediático ofrecía en relación con un asunto configurado como una constante en el debate académico; la relación entre la exposición a los medios de comunicación y el compromiso político. Mientras algunos autores adscritos a la perspectiva clásica citada culpan a los medios de comunicación de haber “narcotizado” a los ciudadanos, otros analistas aseguran que la evidencia empírica apunta en la dirección contraria. Tomando como punto de referencia la discusión descrita, este artículo pretende aproximarse empíricamente de forma comparada a los casos español y brasileño. Más concretamente, el estudio presenta un acercamiento al impacto del consumo de medios de comunicación en la confianza institucional.

Keywords: Political Culture, Disaffection, Media, Democracy, Brazil, Spain.

Palabras clave: cultura política, desafección, medios, democracia, Brasil, España.

1. Introduction

The media are an important source of political information in contemporary society and, therefore, an important variable to consider for the quality of democracy. More specifically, we argue their relevance in the study of the relationship between citizens and the political system, stressing that the way in which political issues are covered by the media influence political attitudes that they manifest.

According to some theorists, the media would foster cynicism and distrust among citizens, as they focus on more negative aspects of political life. This adverse effect would also be driven by a changing society that has become increasingly more focused on television, a vehicle less able to cope with the more complex aspects of politics¹. However, there are perspectives that interpret news media (print or electronic) as factors that provide information that encourages citizens' engagement in democracy².

¹ Cfr. CAPPELLA, Joseph & JAMIESON, Kathleen, *Spiral of Cynicism. The press and the public good*, Oxford University Press, New York/Oxford, 1997; MERVIN, David, “The News Media and Democracy in the United States”, *Democratization*, vol. 5, Issue 2, 1998, pp. 6-22; PATTERSON, Thomas, “The United States: news in a free-market society”, in GUNTHER, Richard & MUGHAN, Anthony. (eds.), *Democracy and the Media, a comparative perspective*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2000, pp. 241-265.

² Cfr. NEWTON, Kenneth, “Mass Media Effects: Mobilization or Media Malaise?”, *British Journal of Political Science*, vol. 29, Issue 4, 1999, pp. 577-599; NORRIS, Pippa, “Impact of Television on Civil Malaise”, in PUTNAM, Robert & PHARR, Susan (eds.), *Disaffected Democrats: What's Troubling the Trilateral Democracies*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 2000a, pp. 231-251.

Furthermore, there is also the perspective that the growing distrust in democratic regimes may be related to the ongoing processes of cognitive qualification of its citizens, brought about by cultural transformations that, in turn, have resulted from continuous cycles of economic development. Education, as well as information acquired from the media, would have this instruction role. Therefore, better-informed segments of society are more distrustful of institutions and are more critical of the regime's performance³. From this perspective, however, distrust would be seen as a healthy skepticism of institutions, rather than a syndrome that could affect the stability of democracy.

Regardless of the adopted theoretical perspective concerning the role of mass communication, information about institutions conveyed by the media is part of the instruments available for the public to relate to them, beyond the specific experiences they may have. Therefore, what can be said about the role played by the media for the quality of democracy? More specifically, how is trust in democratic institutions affected by media exposure?

Comparing selected case studies of two countries is an interesting approach to address this problem. Brazil and Spain share many social and cultural characteristics. Brazilian political culture is often described as having strong Iberian roots. Its transition to democracy is more or less recent, as the case of Spain, although occurring about a decade later. Despite cultural similarities, they differ in their political systems (presidential vs. parliamentary), and in its media landscape. Brazil has higher illiteracy rates and, therefore, less newspaper readership, causing a greater reliance on television for political information. Having this in mind, could these differences produce different results in these two countries?

2. Media and Democracy: mobilization or political disaffection?

Among the different theoretical perspectives that exist in political communication –and ascribed the general label of media effects theory– we find the set of interpretations that serve as reference for the development of our study, that is, (de)mobilization theories⁴. These analyses allow us to explore the debate between political disaffection perspectives (also called media malaise –or videomalaise– theories) and recent reinterpretations that argue the opposite: namely the political mobilization approach⁵.

2.1. Media Malaise Theories

The process by which media malaise theories emerged is somewhat imprecise. Undoubtedly, the origins of these interpretations are found in the reflections of Kurt Lang

³ Cfr. NORRIS, Pippa (ed.), *Critical Citizens*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1999; NYE, Joseph, “Conclusion: Reflections, Conjectures, and Puzzles”, in NYE, Joseph, ZELIKOW, Phillip & KING, David, *Why People don't Trust Government*, Harvard University Press, Harvard, 1997, pp. 253-281.

⁴ Within this approach we can find other theories such as agenda-setting or persuasion theories.

⁵ Throughout the chapter we find the terms “demobilization”, “media malaise” and “videomalaise” theories. Except for the small nuances referred to in the text, they are used here as synonyms.

and Gladys Lang⁶. They were the first to suggest connections between the rise of news channels and the increased feeling of disengagement from politics in the United States. From their point of view, the form which television covered news about politics could affect the fundamental orientations of the electorate towards public institutions, including the Government. Television programs, they argued, emphasized conflicting elements of the political process⁷, which fed public cynicism. However, this analysis was sidelined at the time, in part because the consensus of political communication studies then was that the media had only minimal effects on public opinion⁸.

Henceforth, a new set of considerations increasingly began to take place and challenge the dominant paradigm of the 1960s. The idea that the media had more weight than had been measured so far started to take stronger shape among a growing number of publications. Paul Weaver, for example, claimed that television news formats fostered indifference (at best) or cynical rejection (at worst) to national institutions⁹.

The year of 1976 was vital in the development and subsequent consolidation of malaise theories. It was then that Michael Robinson popularized the term videomalaise, in an influential research that took shape in the article entitled "Public Affairs Television and the Growth of Political Malaise: The Case of The Selling of the Pentagon"¹⁰. The analysis present in Robinson's article constitutes the first accurate theoretical concept developed rapidly after the realization of an empirical work –that combines experimental methods and statistical data analysis techniques. The author pointed out six interrelated factors in order to explain the growth of videomalaise¹¹: (i) the anomalous magnitude and shape of television audience; (ii) public perceptions of credibility of programs; (iii) the interpretative nature of news coverage; (iv) the emphasis on negative news reports; (v) emphasis on conflict and violence reports; and (vi) anti-institutional bias of television news programs. All these elements came together in promoting widespread political disaffection, frustration, cynicism and malaise.

Therefore, far from informing and mobilizing the public, media coverage promotes public cynicism and political apathy, say these media malaise theorists. Exposure to news media limits learning about politics, erodes trust in political leaders and in government institutions, as well as reduces political mobilization: "*videomalaise* theories argue that the dominant values and structural biases of the news media produce campaign coverage

⁶ Cfr. LANG, Kurt & LANG, Gladys, "The Mass Media and Voting", in BERELSON, Bernard & JANOWITZ, Morris (eds.), *Reader in Public Opinion and Communication*, Free Press, New York, 1966, pp. 455-472.

⁷ Cfr. MAIER, Jurgen, *Politikverdrossenheit in Deutschland. Dimensionen - Determinanten - Konsequenzen*, Leske + Budrich, Opladen, 2000, pp. 79-80.

⁸ Cfr. NORRIS, Pippa, *A Virtuous Circle: Political Communications in Postindustrial Societies*, Cambridge University Press, New York, 2000b, p.5.

⁹ Cfr. WEAVER, Paul, "Is Television News Biased?", *Public Interest*, n° 26, 1972, p. 74.

¹⁰ The discussion between the terms and media malaise and videomalaise are due simply to the outlet that dominated during the different periods in the evolution of political communication. When Michael Robinson coined the term videomalaise, he did nothing but acknowledge the role of television in the media landscape studies of the seventies and early eighties. Subsequent contributions have chosen to use media malaise, a more comprehensive term, with the intention acknowledging the significance of other media such as print media in this process of political disengagement.

¹¹ Cfr. ROBINSON, Michael, "Public affairs television and the growth of political malaise: The case of The Selling the Pentagon", *American Political Science Review*, vol. 70, Issue 3, 1976, p. 426.

dominated by the poll-led horse race, personal scandals, and cynical insider strategy, at the expense of detailed and informed debate about serious policy problems”¹².

This perspective –which can be considered well consolidated in the late 1980s and early 1990s– has particular applicability in the American political context. The main studies that provided the theoretical robustness of media malaise positions reflected mainly on U.S. media¹³.

In summary, media malaise theories maintain two central assumptions: that (i) the processes of political communication have a significant impact on citizens' civic engagement and that (ii) this impact occurs in a negative direction. In other words, the lack of social engagement with the political process is determined by the process of political communication.

2.2. Mobilization Theories

The approach proposed by media malaise theories is contested by a set of scientific publications, whose results have been grouped under the label of what has been called political mobilization theories. While it is true these new interpretations haven't completely contradicted the previous contribution, they do propose substantial nuances that challenge the central argument of videomalaise. Like media malaise theories, they suggest that contemporary media have a significant impact on the public. On the other hand, the alternative interpretation is that this influence flows in a positive direction, i.e., maintaining and promoting civic engagement.

Political mobilization theories appear on the academic scene with great influence in the 1990s¹⁴ following the publication of more or less specific research findings. The first works in this line are a consequence of challenging the hypotheses of media malaise. Therefore, it can be said that mobilization theories are a more or less direct result of falsification of most of the underlying assumptions proposed by videomalaise theories.

In some way or another, what this interpretation proposes is that when some analytical categories are differentiated, it is possible to reach the conclusion that media malaise theories are not applicable as they are formulated. Basically, the core assumption is to distinguish between positive and negative effects of different media, messages, audiences and effects¹⁵. In this sense, for example, regular consumers of TV news and readers of the press are more likely to be well informed, interested and committed to political life. By contrast, citizens who are exposed to sensationalist programs often have high levels of disaffection, cynicism, and political alienation.

¹² NORRIS, Pippa, CURTICE, John, SANDERS, *et. al.*, *On Message: Communicating the Campaign*, SAGE Publications, London, 1999, pp. 97-98.

¹³ Cfr. CAPPELLA, Joseph & JAMIESON, Kathleen, *op. cit.*; ROBINSON, Michael, *op. cit.*; FALLOWS, James, *Breaking the News: How the Media Undermine American Democracy*, Pantheon, New York, 1996; PATTERSON, Thomas, *Out of Order*, Knopf, New York, 1993; POSTMAN, Neil, *Amusing Ourselves to Death*, Methuen, London, 1985; SCHUDSON, Michael, *The power of news*, University Press Cambridge, Harvard, 1995.

¹⁴ Cfr. HOLTZ-BACHA, Christina, “Videomalaise Revisited: Media Exposure and Political Alienation in West Germany”, *European Journal of Communication*, March 1990, 5, pp.73-85; NEWTON, Kenneth, *op. cit.*; NORRIS, Pippa, CURTICE, John, SANDERS, *et. al.*, *op. cit.*

¹⁵ Cfr. NORRIS, Pippa, CURTICE, John, SANDERS, *et. al.*, *op. cit.*

Finally, it is important to mention the importance of a theory that, although framed within mobilization perspectives, distinguishes itself advancing a number of developments compared to the more generic propositions: the virtuous circle theory¹⁶. Despite proposing a similar approach as other political mobilization contributions, virtuous circle theory (proposed by political scientist Pippa Norris) takes a step further and provides a more complete theoretical elaboration. After examining empirical evidence derived from data analysis of the U.S. and Western Europe, one of the main conclusions of the virtuous circle lies in affirming that attention to news in general (and specifically on television) does not contribute to the erosion of diffuse support for the political system. On the contrary, those consistently exposed to news and election campaigns are more knowledgeable, more trusting of the government and the political system and more likely to participate in electoral campaigns.

In short, Pippa Norris states that the process of political communication can be understood as a virtuous circle, since –in the long-term– it reinforces activism of individuals. Indeed, when thinking about the process as a circle –a spiral– we can speak of a double directionality: the more informed politically, the most trusting and most participatory, are more exposed to media coverage of public affairs; those more exposed to media coverage of public affairs, in turn, become more engaged in the political system.

3. Case Studies: Spain and Brazil

The explanation of the increase in negative news and political scandals coverage as way to understand the loss of trust in institutions is quite common. However, the use of comparative data between countries is not so frequent. Thus, the objective in this article is to compare two countries: Spain and Brazil. Although sharing similar cultural characteristics, these two cases also present palpable differences. Therefore, the approach can provide interesting information about the issue.

Brazil's political culture is often described as having strong Iberian roots. That is, a system of authoritarian, and hierarchical values, combined with "statist" and "illiberal" components resulting from the formation process of the Brazilian State¹⁷. The Brazilian political system, in its turn, is characterized by a strong executive. The 1988 Constitution –which reopened the democratic period in Brazil– has institutionalized a system centered on the executive and party leaders that ensure governability through the delegation of power it receives from the parliamentary majority of government coalitions, similar to a parliamentary system. The description of the countries political system often includes the association of a plebiscitarian presidential system with federalism, electoral rules that combine open lists of candidates with proportional representation, a weak and fragmented multiparty system and the formation of large coalitions based on heterogeneous political forces¹⁸.

¹⁶ Cfr. NORRIS, Pippa, *A Virtuous Circle...*, *op. cit.*

¹⁷ Cfr. MOISÉS, José, *Os Brasileiros e a Democracia. Bases sócio-políticas da legitimidade democrática*, Ática, São Paulo, 1995.

¹⁸ Cfr. MOISÉS, José, "Cultura Política, Instituições e Democracia. Lições da experiência brasileira", in MOISÉS, José, (org.). *Democracia e Confiança: por que os cidadãos desconfiam das instituições públicas?*, Edusp, São Paulo, 2010, pp. 77-121.

Therefore, with a multiparty system in which the party with the most seats usually not exceeding 20%, it means a coalition government with a large number of parties. Thus, unlike the Spanish parliamentary system –in which dissatisfaction with the government tends to fall into the largest party in power– in Brazil, due to this fragmentation of the parties and the presidential system, there is a greater segmentation of dissatisfaction between the executive and parliament.

The landscape of the media in Brazil, compared with that of Spain, is characterized by a higher prevalence of electronic media. There is a significant penetration of this medium (comparable to more developed countries), with low educational levels and a high illiteracy rate. While in Spain newspaper circulation reaches 144,48 per thousand inhabitants, in Brazil the figure is only 35,55¹⁹. Despite its low circulation, the press in Brazil plays an active role in exposing corruption scandals and in setting the agenda for other media such as television, besides being a “niche” reference for more educated citizens and opinion formers. Newspaper readership in Brazil is characterized by cumulation and overlapping. Of those who read newspapers at least once a week, 83% also say they see the country's main television news program (*Jornal Nacional*) at least once a week, while the reverse is not so common: Only 45% of those who state watching this newscast at least once a week, read newspapers the same frequency²⁰.

In turn, in 2008, television was seen in Spain 3h 43m on average²¹. In Brazil, in the same year, the daily consumption reached 5h 08m²². In terms of news consumption, all this influence is controlled by almost a single company: Globo Network. Its main newscast, *Jornal Nacional*, has almost 70% of the audience, the equivalent of 31 million viewers²³, a significant figure if compared with the numbers of Spain, where the audience for this type of program is more divided between the different networks and the most watched newscast is less than one third of that number, displaying a greater competition between media companies. In a survey on the perception of media in several countries, 52% of Brazilians spontaneously cited Globo as the most reliable news source²⁴. These data are expressive, especially when considering the importance of television in Brazil –as shown here (high penetration, with low educational levels of the population)– and also the fact that trust in media is considered as a factor for the public accepting or not the “mediated climate of opinion”²⁵.

At the same time, institutional trust in Brazil is very low. The proportion of Brazilians who trust government is a little more than a third, while confidence in political parties is less than a fifth. In Spain, the numbers of trust in parliament are higher –reaching about

¹⁹ Cfr. UIS, UNESCO, 2004.

²⁰ Cfr. MENEGUELLO, Rachel. “Aspectos do Desempenho Democrático. Estudo sobre a adesão à democracia e avaliação do regime”, in MOISÉS, José (org.). *Democracia e Confiança: por que os cidadãos desconfiam das instituições públicas?*, Edusp, São Paulo, 2010, pp 123-148.

²¹ Cfr. WERT, José, *Los Medios en España: materiales para un debate*, Fundación Ciudadanía y Valores, 2009.

²² Cfr. IBOPE MÍDIA, Media workstation, Painel Nacional de Televisão (PNT), 2008.

²³ Cfr. *Veja*, September, 2004, [online] Available:

<http://veja.abril.com.br/acervodigital/home.aspx?cod=JMOMOOCQMRC>

²⁴ Cfr. “Media More Trusted than Governments” Poll, Globescan, [online] Available http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/shared/bsp/hi/pdfs/02_05_06mediatrust.pdf, 2006.

²⁵ Cfr. TSAFATI, Yariv, “Media skepticism and climate of opinion perception”, *International Journal of Public Opinion Research*, 15(1), 2003, 65-82.

half the population— while confidence in political parties reach one third, as shown on table 1. On a scale constructed from seven attitudes towards public institutions, Spain lies ahead of Brazil, reaching to 60.9, while Brazil came to 57,²⁶.

Thus, despite certain cultural similarities shared by Spain and Brazil, there are considerable differences both in relation to the level of media consumption, as well as the rate of institutional trust. How do these differences translate into the relationship between these two dimensions? Is the role of the media for citizens' attitudes toward democratic institutions in both countries similar, or are there differences caused by the diverse characteristics outlined above? In this study, we examined the relationship of media consumption with institutional confidence in Brazil and Spain. More specifically, we investigate how consumption of general information on television and in newspapers has an impact on trust in democratic institutions of both countries²⁷.

Thus, in line with mobilization theory, we argue that the consumption of television news has the ability to increase information regarding performance of democratic institutions. In this regard:

H1: Consuming news on television is associated with greater institutional trust in both countries.

On the other hand, the consumption of news in the papers may have different associations. The low readership in Brazil also means greater audience segmentation, which has a higher accumulation of information obtained from other means. Thus, this "niche" may represent the "critical citizen" of Norris²⁸. That is, the more informed citizens who are more suspicious and more critical of the performance of the regime:

H2: As television news consumption, in Spain the consumption of information in newspapers is associated with a greater confidence in institutions.

On the other hand;

H3: Newspapers readership is associated with lower levels of confidence in Brazil.

4. Results

In Brazil, as noted above, the medium most commonly used by people is television. The most watched newscast Brazilians use to obtain information is *Jornal Nacional*, from Globo Network. Therefore, as an independent variable, the audience for this particular

²⁶ Cfr. NORRIS, Pippa, *Democratic Deficit: Critical Citizens Revisited*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2011. All indicators are standardized to 100 points of the scales, to facilitate comparison, and derived from the fifth wave of the WVS (2005-7).

²⁷ For Brazil, we used data from the Latin American Public Opinion Project (2008) for data about the press (statistical treatment and interpretation of data, however, are ours). For data about newscast, "Citizens' Distrust Survey (2006)" was used. Both surveys used national probability sample design of voting-age adults. "Citizens' Distrust Survey (2006)": 2,004 interviews. Lapop survey (2008): 1,497 people. The sample was stratified by regions (north, northeastern, mid-west, southeastern and south) and by urban and rural areas. www.lapopsurveys.org. For Spain, we used data from the European Social Survey 2008-09 (4th Wave), which surveyed 2,576 people over 15 years of age, residents in Spain (including Melilla and Ceuta), regardless of their nationality, citizenship or language. Despite the different databases, the similarities in the variables used allow comparisons.

²⁸Cfr. NORRIS, Pippa (ed.), *Critical Citizens...*, *op. cit.*

newscast was chosen. Those who watch JN are also exposed to other messages and content on television. It seems reasonable to suppose that there is a difference between individuals who watch JN three times a week –while seeing only one hour of TV a day– and another person who watches the same amount of JN, but at the same time has a four hour daily consumption of television. Thus, we used a JN viewership rate, which corresponds to the proportion of consumption of the newscast in relation to the total number of hours devoted to television, created by a division between JN viewership by TV viewership.

The idea is not only a possible "dilution" of information compared to information that is more "pure". It is expected that spectators who practically restrict their consumption to television news, have a closer relationship to their content, as they turn on their TV set with the express purpose of watching the news of the day. However, a different pattern of viewership, in which the individual turns on his TV as he arrives from work until bedtime –watching the newscast "between the *telenovelas* (soap operas)"– may indicate that they are less aware of content, what is treated as a difference between consumption and exposure by some analysts. This created variable was more consistent –compared to single newscast viewership– in a previous study²⁹. The following data show the impact of this rate in explaining institutional trust in Brazil, obtained from categorical regression analysis and displayed on table 3³⁰.

The data suggest a positive role of television news, according to the hypothesis. Despite JN not having any association to confidence in the Brazilian parliament or political parties, television news was positively correlated to trust in the judiciary and the government. The results are consistent with those observed by Norris and Newton³¹ for the British case, i.e., consumption of information, television or newspapers, promoting institutional trust.

In the case of Spain, also displayed on table 3, there is no significant relationship between consumption of television news media and institutional trust. In fact, this is perfectly compatible with mobilization theories. The main argument of these studies is that there isn't necessarily a relationship between media consumption variables and political engagement dimensions –in this case institutional trust. What it points out is that when there is a significant association, it flows in a positive direction. In this case, although bivariate correlations may present some statistical significance, when more complex and multivariate analysis models are introduced, this relationship is diluted, not presenting any significant correlation coefficient.

For models with the press, we used the independent variable of newspaper readership frequency. It was expected that, in Brazil, a smaller and more segmented public with higher levels of information, would result in a more critical public, who would have greater expectations from the system and, therefore, display less trust in institutions. In fact, it is what the results on table 4 show.

Unlike some of the literature that sees journalism, especially the press, with a more positive role for citizens' attitudes towards politics, in Brazil results are more complex,

²⁹ Cfr. MESQUITA, Nuno, "Jornal Nacional, Democracia e Confiança nas Instituições Democráticas", in MOISÉS, José (org.), *Democracia e Confiança: por que os cidadãos desconfiam das instituições públicas?*, Edusp, São Paulo, 2010, pp. 185-216.

³⁰ Optimal Scaling in SPSS.

³¹ Cfr. NORRIS, Pippa, *A Virtuous Circle...*, *op. cit.*; NEWTON, Kenneth, *op. cit.*

depending on the medium used for information. While its main news program on television fosters confidence in institutions, the same can't be said of the press. Although there was no correlation between newspaper readership and trust in political parties, exposure to information in the press is negatively associated with trust in other institutions: the Brazilian parliament, the justice system and the government. As proposed in the initial hypothesis, this result is believed to derive from a "niche" consumer, who is more informed and more critical of government performance, the "critical citizen" of Norris³². In the case of Spain, like the case of television, print media consumption of political information did not prove to be a good predictor of institutional trust.

5. Conclusion

The way in which exposure to the media intervenes in some dimensions of political culture –in this case, institutional trust– has been a constant in political communication research. In recent decades we have witnessed a proliferation of academic papers –as well as less empirical speculation on this subject– having accumulated many different conclusions on the matter. Some theorists have pointed out a negative influence of the daily routine of the media on dimensions of political engagement. Others have pointed to the opposite direction, the potential of exposure to political information to foster more positive attitudes toward the regime. Further studies have introduced exceptions, exemptions and other particularities on this complex relationship. Our study attempts to deepen the debate that has been generated around this controversial issue. Using a comparative approach to the specific study of institutional trust as a concrete variable of political culture, we have gone a step further in the discussion.

Our Hypothesis 1 stated that television news consumption was associated with greater institutional confidence in both countries. In the case of Brazil, it occurs that way, while in Spain there is no clear relationship in either direction. Hypothesis 2, on the other hand, proposed that in Spain the consumption of information in newspapers was associated with a greater confidence in institutions, which was not verified with the statistical analysis provided. As consumptions of news on TV, the press is not a good predictor of institutional trust in Spain. Finally, Hypothesis 3 stated that newspapers readership is associated with lower levels of confidence in Brazil. This hypothesis was verified as it was formulated.

The most plausible explanation for these differences comes from Brazilian and Spanish peculiarities, both in relation to the political system and its design as well as their media system configuration, more specifically the specificities of print media readers. Given the configuration of the dedicated reader in Brazil (well-educated, knowledgeable of the political system, with high expectations, and, therefore, critical), as our data show, it was expected that these individuals –certainly a minority elite– had less confidence in institutions given their high expectations. The case of the reader in Spain, while displaying higher levels of education, does not present such a distinguished character, which could possibly explain the differences.

³² Cfr. NORRIS, Pippa (ed.), *Critical Citizens...*, *op. cit.*

Those findings mentioned before are absolutely coherent with previous studies in Spain and its European context³³.

To conclude, we can argue that this opens the discussion regarding the aspects involved in the relationship between media and political culture. In many cases, it has been assumed that all countries produce the same effect associations. On the opposite direction, this study seems to corroborate that comparative studies may reflect behavioral patterns between variables under study that are very diverse –in line with what was pointed by Hallin and Mancini in 2004– producing diverse roles for the media in different countries.

Tables

Table 1. Institutional Trust Spain-Brazil. Citizens that manifest having “some” or “a lot” of trust in institutions

	Government	Parliament	Parties
Brazil	46,20%	24,90%	21,00%
Spain	35,10%	50,80%	28,50%
Average WVS	45,80%	36,20%	24,30%

Source: World Values Survey (WVS), wave 5, 1981-2008. (Brazil: 2006; Spain: 2007). <http://www.wvsevsdb.com/wvs/WVSDData.jsp>

Table 2. Media Consumption Spain-Brazil. Citizens who state having consulted media previous week.

	Press	TV & Radio
Brazil	36,10%	86,10%
Spain	63,10%	90,70%
Average WVS	48,10%	88,20%

Source: World Values Survey (WVS), wave 5, 1981-2008. (Brazil: 2006; Spain: 2007). <http://www.wvsevsdb.com/wvs/WVSDData.jsp>

Table 3. Newscast and Trust in Institutions. Significance: *p < 0,10, **p < 0,05, ***<0,01. ns: not significant. Brazil: N= 2004.

JN rate (Brazil) and TV news consumption (Spain) Regression Coefficients (beta) controlled by socioeconomic variables (sex, age, education, income)				
BRAZIL	Parliament	Political Parties	Judiciary	Government
jn	ns	ns	0,04*	0,046**
R ²			0,02	0,027
SPAIN	Parliament	Political Parties	Judiciary	Government
Newscast	ns	ns	ns	ns
R ²				

Source: “Citizens Distrust in Democratic Institutions” (2006). Spain: N= 2,576; source: ESS, 2008-09.

³³Cfr. LUENGO, Oscar, *¿Comunicando Desafección? La influencia de los medios en la cultura política*, Fontamara/EGAP, Mexico, 2009; RODRÍGUEZ-VIRGILI, Jordi, LÓPEZ-ESCOBAR, Esteban & TOLSA, Antonio, “La percepción pública de los políticos, los partidos y la política, y uso de medios de comunicación”, *Comunicación y Sociedad*, Vol XXIV, n° 2, 2011, pp. 7-39.

Table 4. Newspaper readership and Trust in Institutions. Significance: *p < 0,10, **p < 0,05, ***<0,01. Brazil: N= 1,497.

Newspaper Readership Regression Coefficients (beta) controlled by socioeconomic variables (sex, age, education, income)				
BRAZIL	Parliament	Political Parties	Justice	Government
Newspapers	-0,099***	ns	-0,068**	-0,126***
R ²	0,034		0,047	0,053
SPAIN	Parliament	Political Parties	Justice	Government
Newspapers	ns	-0,058*	ns	ns
R ²		0,006		

Source: Lapop (2008). Spain: N= 2,576; source: ESS, 2008-09.

Appendix. Measures and Coding

Lapop (2008) Survey:

Newspaper readership: "How often do you read newspapers (everyday, once or twice a week, rarely, never)."

Institutional Trust: "Up to what point do you trust: the Judiciary, Congress, Federal Government, Political parties (not at all, 2, 3, 4, 5 ,6, a lot)"

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