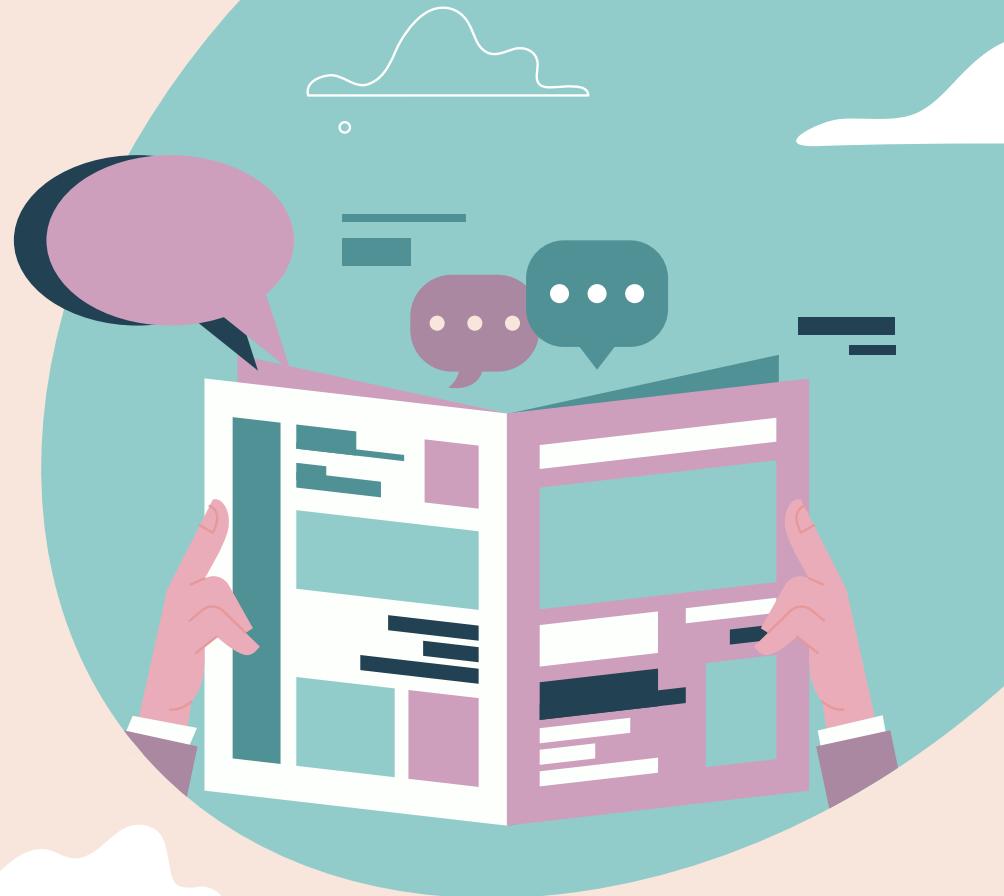


# MEDIA ¶ THE PUBLIC

Week 3  
Media trust

Ryan Wang  
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# Stanford Cyber Policy Center Weekly Seminar

## ALGORITHMIC NEWSFEEDS AND ELECTIONS

Tuesday, February 1st  
12 – 1 PM Pacific

PART OF THE  
FALL WEBINAR SERIES AT THE CPC



**Alessandro Vecchiato**  
Postdoctoral Fellow,  
Program on Democracy and the Internet

**Stanford** | Cyber Policy Center  
*Freeman Spogli Institute*





## Key takeaways of Pew report

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- Greater portions of Republicans express distrust than express trust of 20 of the 30 sources asked about. Only seven outlets generate more trust than distrust among Republicans – including Fox News and the talk radio programs of hosts Sean Hannity and Rush Limbaugh.
  - Fox news phenomenon
- Greater portions of Democrats express trust than express distrust in 22 of the 30 sources asked about. Only eight generate more distrust than trust – including Fox News, Sean Hannity and Rush Limbaugh.

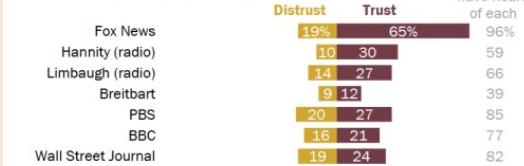
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## Republicans' trust and distrust of news sources asked about

% of Republicans and Republican leaners who trust or distrust each source for political and election news

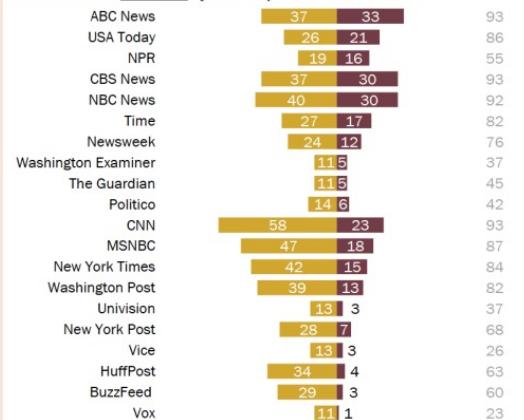
### Sources that are trusted by more Republicans than distrusted



### Sources that are about equally trusted and distrusted



### Sources that are distrusted by more Republicans than trusted



Note: Those who neither trust nor distrust, hadn't heard of each source, or did not answer are not shown. Grouping of outlets is determined by whether the percent who trust each source is significantly different from the percent who distrust each source. Outlets are then ordered by the proportion of trust to distrust. Order of outlets within each group does not necessarily indicate statistically significant differences.

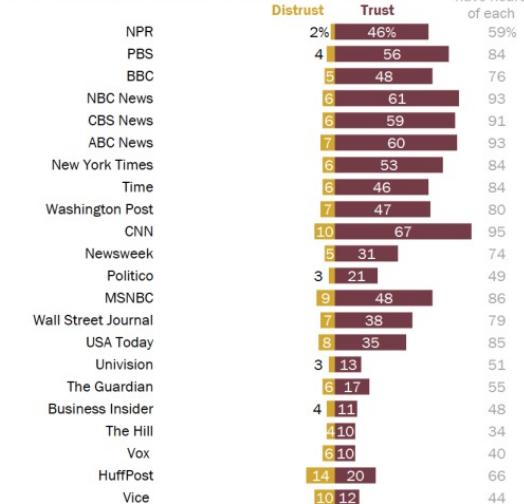
Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted Oct. 29-Nov. 11, 2019.  
“U.S. Media Polarization and the 2020 Election: A Nation Divided”

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

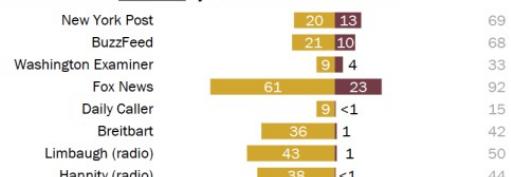
## Democrats' trust and distrust of news sources asked about

% of Democrats and Democratic leaners who trust or distrust each source for political and election news

### Sources that are trusted by more Democrats than distrusted



### Sources that are distrusted by more Democrats than trusted



Note: Those who neither trust nor distrust, hadn't heard of each source, or did not answer are not shown. Grouping of outlets is determined by whether the percent who trust each source is significantly different from the percent who distrust each source. Outlets are then ordered by the proportion of trust to distrust. Order of outlets within each group does not necessarily indicate statistically significant differences.

Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted Oct. 29-Nov. 11, 2019.  
“U.S. Media Polarization and the 2020 Election: A Nation Divided”

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## Key takeaways of Pew report

- + • Partisan divides lead to one-sided audiences for many news outlets

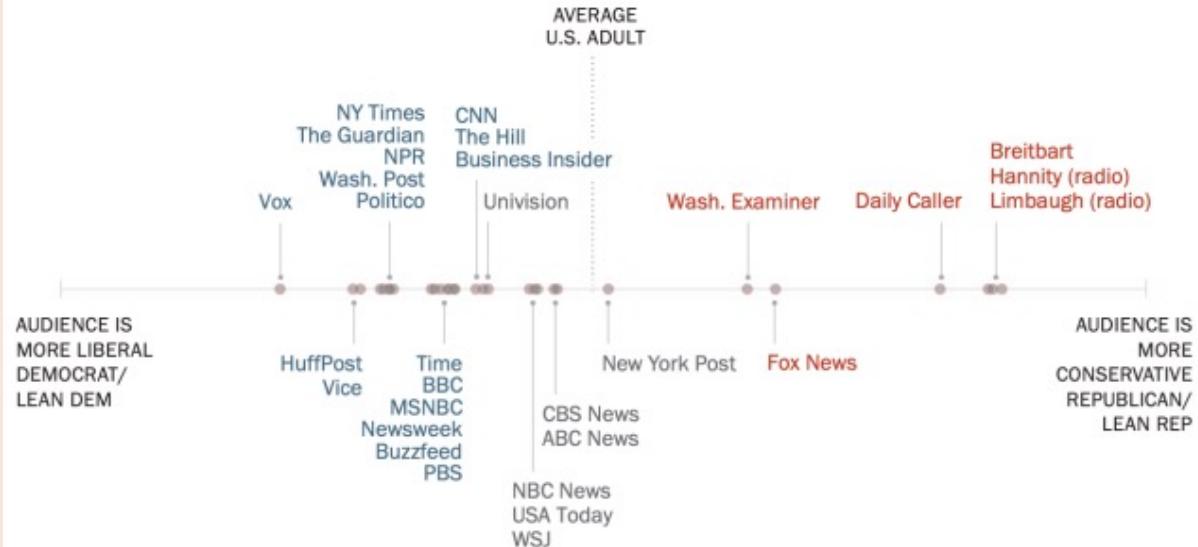


## About two-in-ten in each party are in tight political news bubbles

Average party and ideological self-placement of those who got political and election news from each source in the past week

20% of Democrats/Lean Dems turned only to the outlets **In blue** for political and election news in the past week

18% of Republicans/Lean Reps turned only to the outlets **In red** for political and election news in the past week



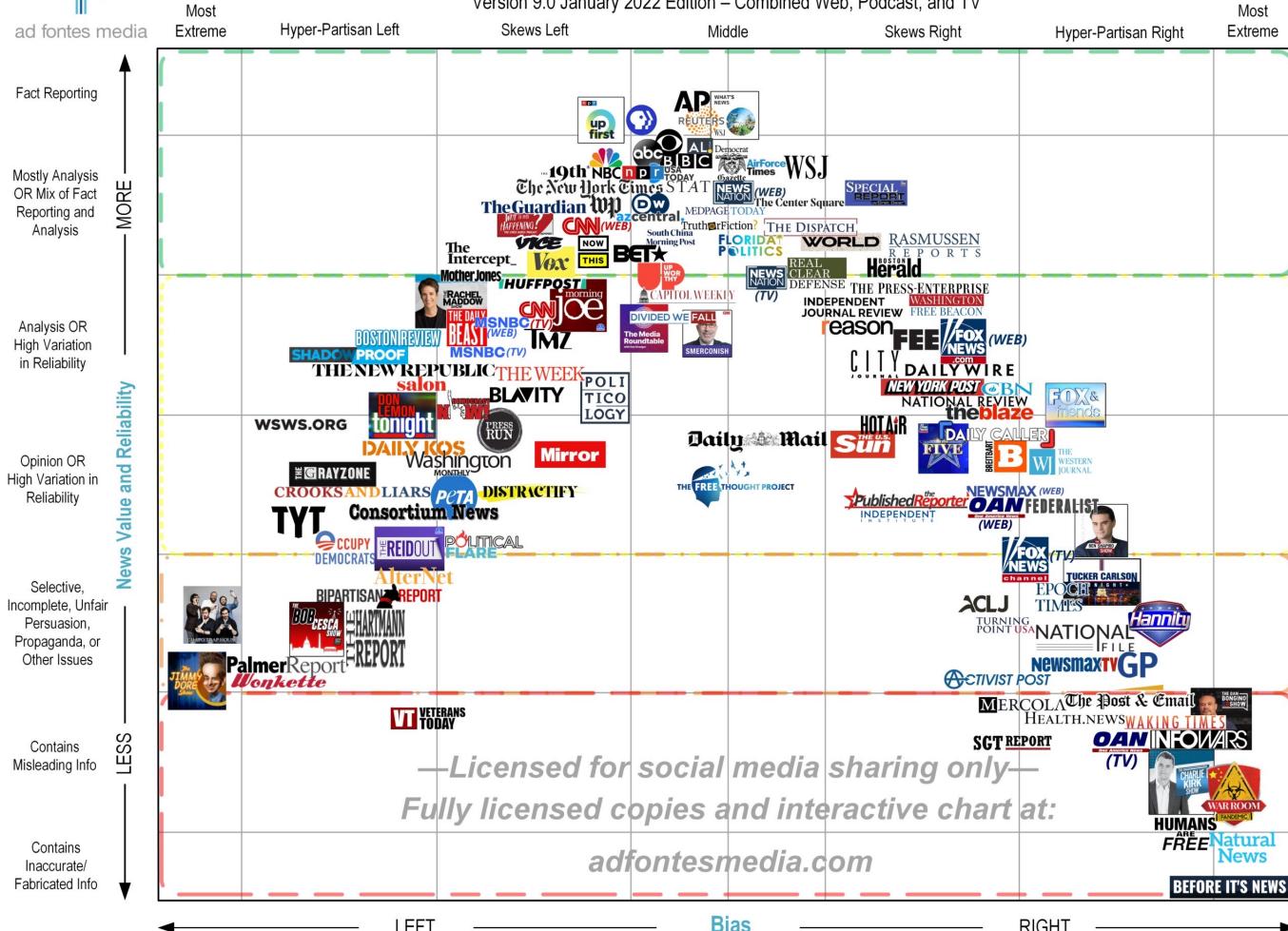
Note: Lists labeling multiple points are ordered from outlets with more liberal Democrats/lean Democratic audiences on top to those with more conservative Republican/lean Republican audiences on the bottom. Order of outlets does not necessarily indicate statistically significant differences. See methodology for details.

Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted Oct. 29-Nov. 11, 2019.  
"U.S. Media Polarization and the 2020 Election: A Nation Divided"



# The Media Bias Chart ®

Version 9.0 January 2022 Edition – Combined Web, Podcast, and TV



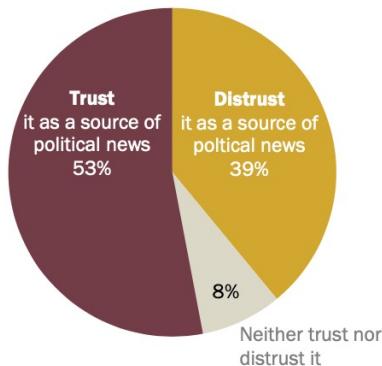


# Key takeaways of Pew report

- + News consumption does NOT mean trust.

## Many Republicans who use CNN also distrust it

Of the 24% of Republican/Lean Rep who got news from CNN last week, % who ...



Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted Oct. 29-Nov. 11, 2019.  
“U.S. Media Polarization and the 2020 Election: A Nation Divided”

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## Key takeaways of Pew report

- + Partisan media divides have grown, largely driven by Republican distrust between 2014 and 2020



## Trust in news outlets in 2014 and 2019, by party

% of U.S. adults who trust each source for political and election news

	Democrat/Lean Dem		Republican/Lean Rep			Democrat/Lean Dem		Republican/Lean Rep	
	2014 survey among web-using U.S. adults	2019 survey among U.S. adults	2014 survey among web-using U.S. adults	2019 survey among U.S. adults		2014 survey among web-using U.S. adults	2019 survey among U.S. adults	2014 survey among web-using U.S. adults	2019 survey among U.S. adults
ABC News	59	60	39	33	ABC News	6	7	29*	37*
BBC	47	48	23	21	BBC	4	5	11*	16*
Breitbart	<1	1	9	12	Breitbart	7*	36*	1*	9*
Business Insider	-	11	-	6	Business Insider	-	4	-	5
BuzzFeed	4	10	1	3	BuzzFeed	8*	21*	8*	29*
CBS News	55	59	36	30	CBS News	6	6	27*	37*
CNN	65	67	41*	23*	CNN	8	10	33*	58*
Daily Caller	-	<1	-	4	Daily Caller	-	9	-	5
Fox News	21	23	70	65	Fox News	59	61	13*	19*
HuffPost	25*	20*	11*	4*	HuffPost	10	14	26*	34*
MSNBC	50	48	27*	18*	MSNBC	7	9	39*	47*
NBC News	61	61	39*	30*	NBC News	7	6	34	40
Newsweek	-	31	-	12	Newsweek	-	5	-	24
New York Post	-	13	-	7	New York Post	-	20	-	28
NPR	43	46	15	16	NPR	2	2	17	19
PBS	51	56	25	27	PBS	6	4	19	20
Politico	10*	21*	4	6	Politico	2	3	8	14
Rush Limbaugh Show	1	1	27	27	Rush Limbaugh Show	54	43	22*	14*
Sean Hannity Show	1	<1	28	30	Sean Hannity Show	32*	38*	9	10
The Guardian	11	17	4	5	The Guardian	4	6	5*	11*
The Hill	-	10	-	5	The Hill	-	4	-	6
New York Times	48	53	19	15	New York Times	5	6	29*	42*
Wall Street Journal	33	38	32*	24*	Wall Street Journal	8	7	11*	19*
Washington Post	37*	47*	18*	13*	Washington Post	5	7	22*	39*
Time	-	46	-	17	Time	-	6	-	27
Univision	-	13	-	3	Univision	-	3	-	13
USA Today	37	35	29*	21*	USA Today	9	8	16*	26*
Vice	-	12	-	3	Vice	-	10	-	13
Vox	-	10	-	1	Vox	-	6	-	11
Washington Examiner	-	4	-	5	Washington Examiner	-	9	-	11

Note: Asterisk indicates that 2019 value is significantly different from 2014 value at a level of  $p < .01$ , taking into account the change in the percent who have heard of each outlet.  
Source: Surveys of U.S. adults conducted March 19-April 29, 2014 and Oct. 29-Nov. 11, 2019.

"U.S. Media Polarization and the 2020 Election: A Nation Divided"

## Distrust in outlets in 2014 and 2019, by party

% of U.S. adults who distrust each source for political and election news

	Democrat/Lean Dem		Republican/Lean Rep			Democrat/Lean Dem		Republican/Lean Rep	
	2014 survey among web-using U.S. adults	2019 survey among U.S. adults	2014 survey among web-using U.S. adults	2019 survey among U.S. adults		2014 survey among web-using U.S. adults	2019 survey among U.S. adults	2014 survey among web-using U.S. adults	2019 survey among U.S. adults
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CNN	8	10	33*	58*	CNN	8	10	33*	58*
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New York Post	-	20	-	28	New York Post	-	20	-	28
NPR	2	2	17	19	NPR	2	2	17	19
PBS	6	4	19	20	PBS	6	4	19	20
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The Guardian	4	6	5*	11*	The Guardian	4	6	5*	11*
The Hill	-	4	-	6	The Hill	-	4	-	6
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Source: Surveys of U.S. adults conducted March 19-April 29, 2014 and Oct. 29-Nov. 11, 2019.

"U.S. Media Polarization and the 2020 Election: A Nation Divided"

RESEARCH ARTICLE



# Exposure to opposing views on social media can increase political polarization

Christopher A. Bail, Lisa P. Argyle, Taylor W. Brown, John P. Bumpus, Haohan Chen, M. B. Falli...  
+ See all authors and affiliations

PNAS September 11, 2018 115 (37) 9216-9221; first published August 28, 2018;  
<https://doi.org/10.1073/pnas.1804840115>

Edited by Peter S. Bearman, Columbia University, New York, NY, and approved August 9, 2018 (received for review March 20, 2018)



Source: Bail et al. (2018)



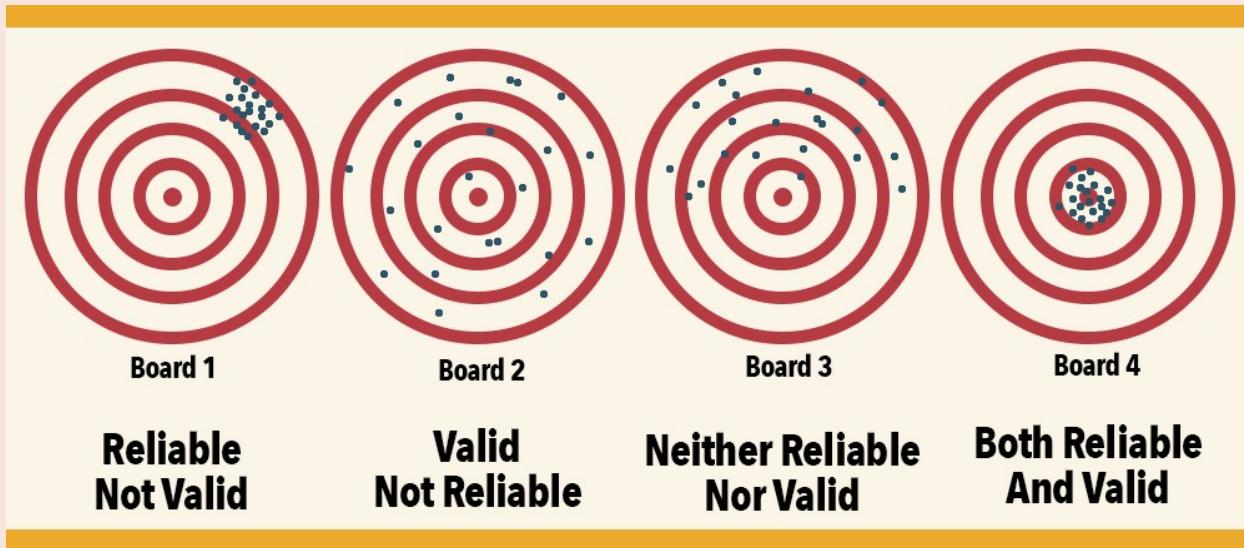
# **Understanding the Public's Animosity Toward News Media: Cynicism and Distrust as Related but Distinct Negative Media Perceptions (Markov & Min, 2021)**



# Background

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- Reliability





# Background

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## • Validity

- Face validity
  - Does the content of the test appear to be suitable to its aims?
- Content validity
  - Is the test fully representative of what it aims to measure?
- Criterion validity: Do the results accurately measure the concrete outcome they are designed to measure?
  - Concurrent validity: the amount of agreement between two different assessments (compared to an established measurement)
  - Predictive validity: the ability of a measure to predict performance on another (related) outcome variable
- Construct validity: Does the test measure the concept that it's intended to measure?
  - Convergent validity: two measures that are supposed to be measuring the same construct and shows that they are related
  - Discriminant validity: two measures that are not supposed to be related are in fact, unrelated.

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# Background

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- Exploratory factor analysis
  - Measure underlying factor affecting the variables in a data structure without setting any predefined structure to the outcome (new scale)
- Confirmatory factor analysis
  - Confirm predefined components that already explored
  - Implement for reconfirming the effects and possible relations existing between a set of predetermined factors and variables

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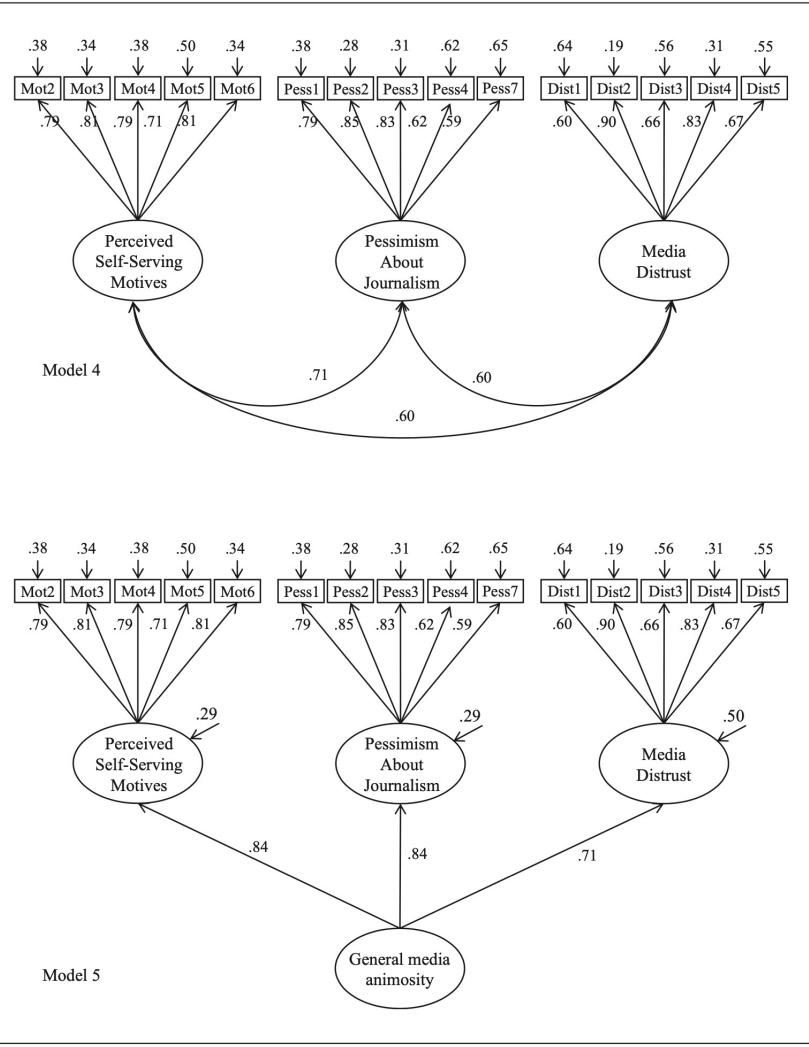
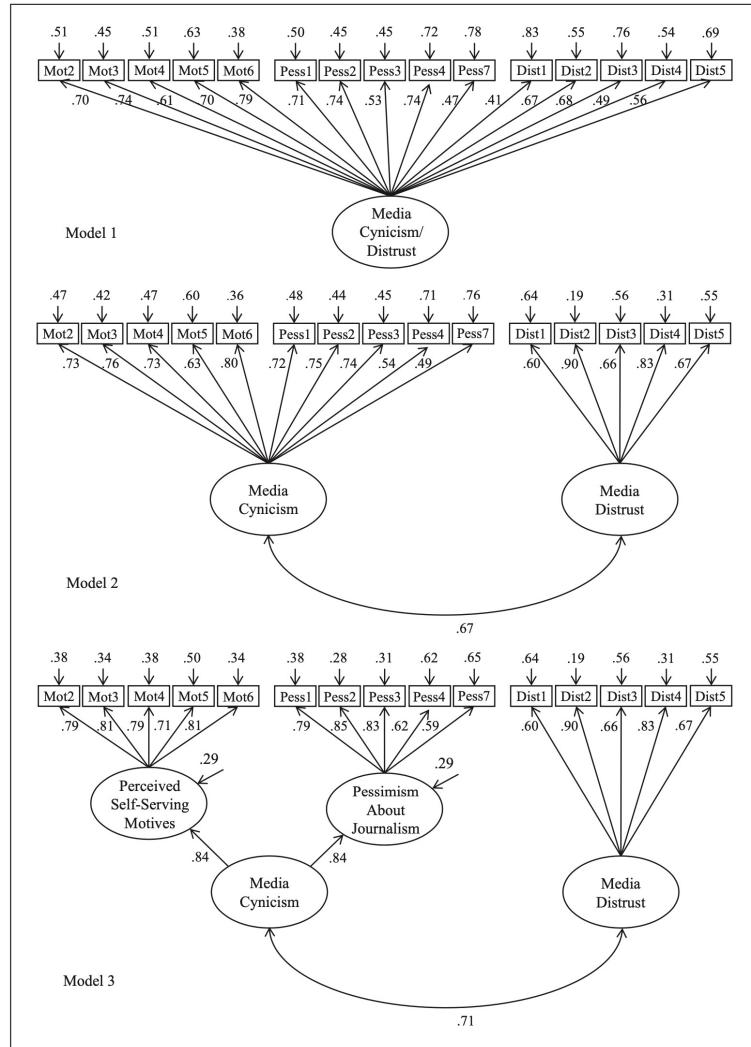


# Background

**Table 2.** Exploratory Factor Analysis of Media Cynicism and Media Distrust Indicators.

Item	Factor loading		
	1	2	3
<b>Factor 1: Perceived self-serving motives</b>			
Journalists are prepared to lie to us whenever it suits their purposes. (Mot2)	<b>.86</b>	.05	-.09
The news media pretend to care more about people than they actually do. (Mot3)	<b>.86</b>	.04	-.07
The news media intentionally report in a divisive way because it is more profitable. (Mot4)	<b>.90</b>	-.09	.05
The news media do not care about the damage their reporting will cause as long as it serves their interests. (Mot5)	<b>.79</b>	.02	.11
The news media do not care about protecting the interests of regular people. (Mot6)	<b>.78</b>	.08	.03
<b>Factor 2: Pessimism about journalism</b>			
Journalism in this country always ends up failing the public. (Pess1)	.14	<b>.76</b>	.04
The system of professional journalism as we have it today will never be able to adequately inform the public. (Pess2)	.12	<b>.67</b>	.19
Most of the measures that are intended to improve how the news media in this country cover the news will not do much good. (Pess3)	.12	<b>.73</b>	.10
The news media in this country will never be better at informing the public. (Pess4)	-.05	<b>.87</b>	-.03
All journalists are bad—some are just worse than others. (Pess7)	-.06	<b>.81</b>	-.08
<b>Factor 3: Media distrust</b>			
The news media are fair when covering the news. (Dist1, R)	.01	-.11	<b>.78</b>
The news media are unbiased when covering the news. (Dist2, R)	.11	.07	<b>.82</b>
The news media tell the whole story when covering the news. (Dist3, R)	.01	-.08	<b>.81</b>
The news media are accurate when covering the news. (Dist4, R)	.02	.10	<b>.84</b>
The news media separate facts from opinions when covering the news. (Dist5, R)	-.10	.13	<b>.69</b>

Note.  $n = 251$ . The extraction method was principal component analysis with an oblimin rotation. Factor loadings above .50 are in bold. 69.1% of variance explained. Reverse-scored items are denoted with R.





# Background

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# DON'T TRY TO READ EVERYTHING!



WHAT IS THE MAIN POINT  
OF THIS PAPER?

- Dependent variable
- Independent variable(s)



WHAT IS THE MAIN  
RESULT?

- The relationship between IV(s) and DV



WHAT DATA ARE THEY  
USING?

- Measurement
- Operationalization



WHAT METHOD DO THEY  
USE?

- How do they get to the result?



# What are the main points of this paper?

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- Media cynicism
  - perceived self-serving motives of news media actors
  - pessimistic expectations of journalistic conduct
- Media (dis)trust
  - Measurement items are framed in term of perceived outcomes (e.g., how objective, impartial, or complete the news reporting is)
  - Lack scrutinizing the criteria audiences use for such evaluations (e.g., how knowledgeable, skillful, honest, reliable, or principled the media are when it comes to performing the expected functions)

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## What are the main results (model fit)

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- RQ1: How can media cynicism be measured?
  - The final 10 items present a reliable and valid measure of media cynicism, which should be modeled as a second-order latent variable
- RQ2: Can indicators of media distrust and media cynicism be empirically distinguished
  - The EFA and CFA results consistently showed that media distrust and media cynicism items always load better on their respective factors rather than on the same factor, providing initial evidence of discriminant validity

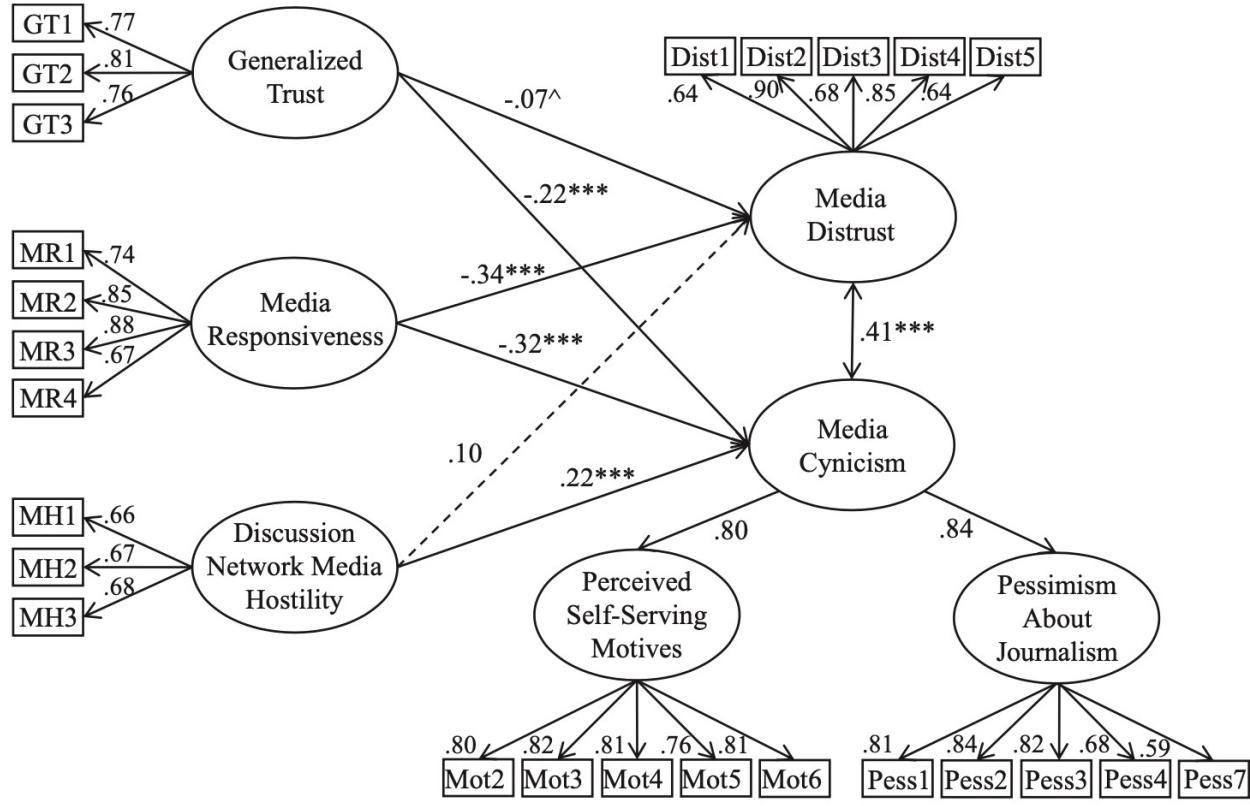
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- RQ3  
the



Control Variables: Age, Sex, Education, Political Interest, Political Ideology, Political Trust, Mainstream News Exposure, Alternative News Exposure, and Social Media-Based News Exposure



## What are the main results (model fit)

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- RQ3: How do predictors of media cynicism differ from those of media distrust?
  - While generalized trust was a strong negative predictor of media cynicism, it was only marginally associated with media distrust (Low generalized trust indicated increased cynicism about media significantly more than did media distrust)
  - Media hostility in one's discussion network was a significant predictor of media cynicism but not distrust.
  - Perceived media responsiveness was strongly associated with both media distrust and cynicism (The critical ratio for the difference between the estimates)

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## Key takeaways

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- Media distrust is NOT the same as media cynicism
  - Distrusting the media does not necessarily involve believing that newpersons have malicious intent or that the media are not capable of performing any better
- Media cynicism cannot be fully explained by common indicators of media distrust
  - The instrument is not perfect though as the alternative measurement models cannot be completely ruled out
  - But indicators of media cynicism and distrust never load onto the same factor.
- Future direction: is media distrust the opposite of media trust?

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