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Actor diversity and viewpoint diversity: Two of a kind?

DOI 10.1515/commun-2017-0017

Abstract: News content diversity is generally considered to be an essential precondition for the promotion of social pluralism. However, how diversity of news content should be conceptualized and measured is less clear. We use a content analysis of newspaper articles about immigration (2013–14) in Belgium (Flanders) to measure the diversity of actors and viewpoints in the news, and to study the link between those two subdimensions of content diversity. We find that the representation of a plurality of active actors in a news article seems to go hand in hand with a more diverse range of viewpoints. The findings show that there are no significant differences in the level of actor and viewpoint diversity between quality and popular newspapers. However, the length of the article has a positive effect on providing more diversity. Moreover, our results indicate that allowing for individual immigrants to talk in the reporting is fundamental to promoting a more positive representation of immigration in the news.

Keywords: content diversity, content analysis, news, journalism, immigration, public

1 Introduction

In recent years, the diversity of media content has become a central principle and cause for concern in communication policy. Normative theorists have stressed the importance of promoting a broad range of actors and viewpoints in the news (Baker, 2002; McQuail, 1992; Van Cuilenburg and McQuail, 2003). According to Napoli (1999), guaranteeing the heterogeneity of the supply of news media content is a condition for a healthy democratic debate among properly informed citizens. News content diversity becomes essential when journal-

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ists deal with complex social issues involving a plurality of different actors that are willing to put forward opposing views in the news in order to influence public opinion (Benson, 2009; Wolfsfeld, 2011). In these cases, the democratic role of the press should consist of granting a wide range of actors and viewpoints access to the news, so that the public can form its own opinion about a given issue (Benson, 2009; Gans, 1979, 2011).

Political communication scholars have devoted a great deal of attention to the process of news construction, particularly focusing on the factors shaping the range of actors and frames that are represented in the news content (Bennett, 1990; Bennett, Lawrence, and Livingston, 2008; Sheafer and Wolfsfeld, 2009; Shoemaker and Reese, 2011). However, we argue that existing studies present two main shortcomings. First, there is little empirical research that has systematically measured the diversity of news content (but see Benson, 2009; Choi, 2009; Humprecht and Büchel, 2013). Second, authors in the field have generally neglected to examine the relationship between the two main subdimensions of content diversity, namely actor and viewpoint diversity (for an exception, see Voakes, Kapfer, Kurpius, and Chern, 1996).

In this study, we seek to overcome the inadequacies of existing research, proposing a comprehensive analysis of the content diversity of news on immigration from a sample of newspapers in Flanders, the Dutch-speaking community of Belgium. We chose to focus on news related to one single issue, as this will allow for an in-depth examination of content diversity. The diversity of actors and viewpoints in the news lies at the heart of our investigation. First of all, we measure actor and viewpoint diversity in each newspaper of the sample with the purpose of observing *whether the level of actor and viewpoint diversity changes according to the newspaper type (quality vs. popular)*. Second, we focus on the link between actor and viewpoint diversity, developing an innovative model that gauges *the extent to which actor diversity is related to viewpoint diversity*. Last but not least, we look at the relationship between the diversity of actors and viewpoints from another perspective, evaluating *the extent to which the presence/absence of individual immigrants in a news item results in more or less favorable viewpoints about immigration*. Finally, in the last section, we discuss the normative implications of our findings and give indications for future research on news content diversity.

2 Theoretical framework and hypotheses

2.1 Conceptualization of content diversity

Building upon the definition provided by Van Cuilenburg (1999), in our study we measure the heterogeneity of news content in terms of actor and viewpoint diversity. The diversity of actors refers to the range of category affiliations of actors who are quoted or paraphrased in the news. Communication scholars interested in content diversity have pinpointed differences in the social affiliations of news actors. In a case study of the news coverage about a law proposal in Wisconsin, Voakes et al. (1996) systematically measure the distribution of actors in the news according to institutional affiliations and status of positions. Actors are divided into four mutually exclusive categories: government, private sector, affiliated and non-affiliated. Similarly, in Benson's (2009) comparative study on immigration news in France and the United States, actor groups are distinguished according to their affiliation to diverse institutional fields. In our analysis, we follow the approach of a number of recent studies in the political communication field (see Choi, 2009; Humprecht and Büchel, 2013) and opt for a division of actors by categories that mirror the main existing groups in society.

The second dimension – diversity of viewpoints – has been considered by different authors as being core to the concept of content diversity. Griswold (1999) intuitively notices that, although various actors might feature in a discussion about a certain issue in the news, it is ultimately the diversity of viewpoints that guarantees the democratic benefit of content diversity, providing readers with a plurality of perspectives on a given topic. In line with this, Voakes et al. (1996, p. 585) propose a comprehensive definition of viewpoint diversity as the range of “ideas, perspectives, attributions, opinions, or frames within a news product”. In keeping with this definition, Van Gorp (2005) analyzes the use of frames in Belgian news about the asylum issue, identifying a dichotomy between an “intruder” and a “victim” frame. In a similar way, Benson (2009) measures frame diversity in immigration-related news in France and the US, pinpointing ten frame categories which characterize the mediated debate on immigration in those countries.

2.2 Differences in content diversity between quality and popular news outlets

A number of studies in the field support the idea that variation in the level of content diversity might stem from differences in the editorial orientation of

newspapers. According to Benson, (2009), “the cultural capital of media outlets and their audiences” (p. 405) might be a key element in shaping news’ diversity. Following McQuail (2010), we can distinguish between “quality” and “popular” newspapers based on their editorial orientations, which are in turn reflected in specific characteristics of the content. On the one hand, quality news outlets are characterized by high levels of social and ethical awareness, which typically corresponds to more objective reporting. Benson (2009) suggests that quality newspapers are likely to promote diversity of actors and perspectives because they target more highly educated audiences, who prefer more diverse reporting (Peterson and Kern, 1996). On the other hand, popular newspapers’ coverage focuses on “human interest” stories, personalities and conflictual viewpoints (see Norris, 2000). Building on Mazzoleni’s (2003) argument that popular newspapers are more market-oriented than their quality counterparts, we would expect that the former present a ‘simpler’, less diverse content, which focuses on a narrower range of actors and viewpoints compared to quality outlets. A study conducted by Roggeband and Vliegenthart (2007) on the coverage of immigration in the Dutch press gives support to this hypothesis, showing that quality newspapers employ more diverse frames than popular outlets, thus coming closer to the ideal of a civic forum for discussion. In line with this, the results of Benson’s (2009) comparative study on immigration news in France and the US indicate that the newspapers targeting more intellectual audiences are those with the highest levels of actor and viewpoint diversity. Therefore, we formulate the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 1: Quality newspapers will present higher levels of actor and viewpoint diversity than popular newspapers.

2.3 Relationship between actor diversity and viewpoint diversity

While there is little discussion that actor and viewpoint diversity are both crucial subdimensions of content diversity, the link between both has remained underexplored. Previous research maintains that decisions made by journalists regarding the societal actors who “get to talk” in the reporting are key to shaping news content (Gans, 1979, 2011; Sheaffer and Wolfsfeld, 2009; Strömbäck and Nord, 2006). The expectation that actor diversity is related to viewpoint diversity is inspired by Wolfsfeld’s (2011) view that actors compete with each other in the media arena in order to enter the news and ultimately raise their own viewpoints to influence public opinion. Also Bennett (1990) supports the

notion of a strong link between actor and viewpoint diversity, noting that the “indexization” of the mediated debate on the range of opinions expressed by governmental actors ultimately limits the variety of viewpoints expressed in the news. A similar stance has been taken by Gans (1979, 2011), who has made a plea for *multiperspectival* news – that is, news that presents perspectives from diverse sectors of society. According to Gans (2011), this would only be possible if journalists enhanced actor diversity in the news, granting access also to non-elite actors, so that politicians could learn about their viewpoints.

Although previous research gives support to the idea that actor and viewpoint diversity are positively related, this link is more often suggested than actually measured. A formal test of this relationship has been conducted by Voakes et al. (1996), but the results of their study show that actor diversity does not ensure viewpoint diversity and vice versa. Therefore, it remains important to shed light on the interconnection between those two subdimensions of content diversity. Without assuming causality, we build upon the theoretical assumptions that there exists a link between actor and viewpoint diversity in the news (Bennett, 1990; Gans, 1979, 2011; Wolfsfeld, 2011), and we expect that the presence of a higher number of actor types in a news article corresponds to a more diverse range of viewpoints. Hence, we will test the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 2: Within a news article, there is a positive relationship between actor diversity and viewpoint diversity.

2.4 Immigrant actors and favorability of viewpoints about immigration in the news

Finally, we seek to look at the relationship between actor and viewpoint diversity from a different angle. Specifically, we investigate the link between actor diversity and the *direction* of the viewpoints in the news. Drawing from Wolfsfeld’s (2011) “actors’ competition model”, we notice that societal actors’ ultimate goal is not that of adding up to diversity: Instead, they aim at influencing the overall direction of the viewpoints expressed in the news to ensure consistency with their own opinion on the issue under discussion. The same is likely to happen in the case of mediated debate on the “multifaceted and complex” topic of immigration (Benson, 2009, p. 403). In the news, the issue is disputed by a plurality of actors belonging to a wide range of societal groups – politicians, actors from NGOs, business, trade unions, as well as ordinary citizens and immigrants –, each determined to enter the news and mold the general direction of the viewpoints about immigration expressed therein.

However, not every type of actor has an equal chance to succeed in its attempt to determine the general perspective on immigration in the news. In line with Wolfsfeld's (2011) principle that "political power can usually be translated into power over the news media" (p. 9), we can expect that elite actors – that is, the ones who possess political and economic power in society – will have more possibilities to attain this goal than non-elite actors. In particular, among the latter type of actors we might expect that immigrants will be among those who struggle the most to influence the direction of viewpoints in the news; due to their unaffiliated, low-status nature, they usually lack power and resources to have an impact on news content (Fujioka, 2011; Hargreaves and Perotti, 1993; Su and Conaway, 1996; Van Dijk, 1992). Nonetheless, we argue that the different ways in which immigrant actors are represented in newspaper articles have an impact on their capacity to shape news content. They can enter the news both as a collective actor, that is, immigrants as a group, and as individuals. As first suggested by a seminal study conducted by LaPiere (1934), there exists a "person-positivity bias" related to immigration (Sears, 1983). Through a process of impression formation conditioned by people's stronger identification with fellow human beings, it seems that individual immigrants are generally perceived more positively than immigrants as a group. In a recent study, Iyengar et al. (2013) have tested the person-positivity hypothesis in a cross-national experiment, backing up the notion that individual immigrants spark more positive reactions among the public than when represented as an impersonal group. Although our study does not test the public's attitudes towards immigrants, we expect that, based on the person-positivity hypothesis, a similar mechanism will influence the attitude of journalists when producing news content that includes individual immigrants. More concretely, we argue that the extension of the range of active actors in the news to one specific actor category, namely individual immigrants, will lead to a more positive perspective on immigration in the articles. Therefore, we hypothesize the following:

Hypothesis 3: Articles that feature individual immigrants have a more positive view on immigration than articles without individual immigrants.

3 Data and methods

This study analyzes news about immigration in the main newspapers in Flanders between January 1, 2013 and April 30, 2014. The newspaper sample in-

cludes six titles: *De Morgen*, *de Standaard*, *De Tijd*, *Gazet van Antwerpen*, *Het Nieuwsblad* and *Het Laatste Nieuws*. *De Morgen* and *de Standaard* are quality newspapers, whereas *Het Nieuwsblad* and *Het Laatste Nieuws* are typical examples of popular outlets. *De Tijd*, once a purely financial news outlet, has recently increased the number of sections it deals with, becoming more similar to *De Morgen* and *de Standaard* (De Bens and Raeymaeckers, 2007). Finally, *Gazet van Antwerpen* is the local newspaper of the province of Antwerp. However, owing to the similitude of issues covered and its style of reporting, it can be considered as a popular newspaper.

The articles were retrieved from the Belgian online database Gopress. Through an elaborate search string based on Boolean operators,¹ we looked for articles about immigration, this being defined as the entrance and the presence of people in a country other than their country of birth with the purpose of settling down (drawn from the United Nations' definition of immigration). It is important to note that we decided to exclude the issue of integration from the scope of the study. Although strictly connected to immigration, we consider that integration is an independent theme, which deserves a separate analysis. The outcome of the first search for the whole period was further filtered, and it ultimately resulted in a final sample consisting of 642 news articles. The articles were coded quantitatively by three coders. We conducted an inter-coder reliability test using a set of randomly selected items amounting to five percent of the total sample. For the variables that we used in our study, the average of the coefficients calculated with Krippendorff's alpha is 0.65, which is an overall acceptable level of inter-coder reliability. The good quality of the coding is further supported by a very high inter-coder agreement score (Holsti's coefficient is 0.97).²

A maximum of 10 actors (quoted or paraphrased) were coded for each news article. Actor codes are divided into 11 categories corresponding to different groups in society (see Figure 1 in the Results section). Besides, coders indicated 'views about immigration' and 'characterization of immigrants' that were

1 The string that was used (in Dutch) is as follows: *immigr* OR migr* OR vreemdel* OR alloch* OR gastarbeider* OR (immigr* OR migr*) AND (buiten!* OR illeg* OR (zonder AND papieren) OR vastgehouden* OR verwijder* OR uitzet* OR uitwijk* OR uitgezet* OR uitgewezen* OR huisjesmelker*) OR gezinsherenig* OR diaspora OR mensensmokkel* OR mensenhandel* OR schijnhuw* OR repatriër* OR asiel* OR aziel* OR vluchteling* OR opvangcentr**

2 The inter-coder reliability score calculated with Krippendorff's alpha is slightly negatively influenced by the lower score for variables with a more evaluative character (such as viewpoints expressed about immigration), which are notoriously hard to code. As contended by a number of scholars (Gwet, 2002; Humprecht and Büchel, 2013), high levels of inter-coder agreement are also a valuable indicator of high reliability.

present in the news item. These two variables were collapsed in one single variable, which we call ‘Viewpoints about immigration’.³ The variable consists of three categories:

- Negative viewpoints: Negative characterization of immigrants and/or view of immigration as a threat (e.g., immigration enhances work competition, it increases criminality, immigrants are criminals, they carry diseases, etc.).
- Victimization of migrants: Immigrants are portrayed as victims (e.g., immigrants are victims of traffickers, victims of racism, etc.).
- Positive viewpoints: Positive characterization of immigrants and/or view of immigration as an opportunity (e.g., immigration empowers work force, immigrants bring ‘positive multiculturalism’, etc.).

Both actor and viewpoint diversity (see Hypothesis 1 and Hypothesis 2) are count variables measured at the level of news article. “Diversity of actors” was simply calculated through a count of the unique actor categories that are represented in every news item. As coders could indicate a maximum of 10 actors in a news article, this would also be the maximum score for actor diversity. Similarly, “Diversity of viewpoints about immigration” measures the number of unique viewpoints represented in an article, and ranges between the values zero (no viewpoints expressed in the article) and three (full range of viewpoints expressed). Our choice to study actor and viewpoint diversity on the article level, and not on the level of the newspaper, is supported by the consideration that, on average, every newspaper in our sample covers immigration with around one article per day. During the period under study, the average number of articles on immigration per newspaper ranged between 1.17 and 1.31.⁴ This means that chances are low that a reader gets a more diverse view by reading multiple articles on this topic. Additionally, when taking a closer look at the cases in which a newspaper covers immigration with more than one article on

3 In the codebook, we coded 11 categories relative to viewpoints about immigration and immigrants. The negative viewpoints are: “immigration as a general threat”, “immigration as an economic threat”, “immigration as a cultural/moral/ethnic/demographic threat”, “immigration as an administrative/logistic problem”, “negative characterization of immigrants”, “immigrants as an administrative/organizational burden”. Victimization is coded as “immigrants as victims”. The positive categories are: “immigration as a general opportunity”, “immigration as an economic opportunity”, “immigration as a cultural/moral/ethnic/demographic opportunity”, “positive characterization of immigrants”.

4 For our calculation, we did not take into account days in which no article applied. The average number of articles per day is: *De Morgen* = 1.28; *de Standaard* = 1.31; *De Tijd* = 1.18; *Gazet van Antwerpen* = 1.20; *Het Nieuwsblad* = 1,20; *Het Laatste Nieuws* = 1.17.

one day, we notice that the number of unique viewpoints seldom increases.⁵ Hence, by measuring the range of unique actor and viewpoint categories at the article level, we come close to the overall diversity of the news coverage on immigration that a reader is likely to find in a newspaper on a given day. Of course, during specific events that are extensively covered by a newspaper, it might be better to measure diversity at the level of the news outlet.

Moving on to the other variables of the study, the dependent variable “Favorability of viewpoints about immigration” (see Hypothesis 3) takes into account the direction of the viewpoints expressed in an article. It is an ordinal variable, ranging from -1 (maximum negativity of viewpoints in the news article) to $+1$ (highest level of positivity of the viewpoints in the news article). To build up the favorability scale, we condensed the viewpoints about immigration into a dichotomous distinction between negative viewpoints and victimization/positive ones. The number of times a certain viewpoint is presented does not matter for the calculation of the score. The favorability scale takes a value of -1 when an article features only negative viewpoints. A value of zero is assigned when no viewpoint is present, or when the negative and victimization/positive viewpoint balance each other out. Finally, “Favorability of viewpoints about immigration” is equal to $+1$ when only victimization and/or positive viewpoints are expressed in an article. Also, it is important to point out that we consider ‘victimization’ at the same level of positive viewpoints about immigration. Although we recognize that the two viewpoints are substantially different, we draw from the work of Van Gorp (2005, 2006), who considers victimization as a “dramaturgic technique” used by the media to describe “people being in a situation that is due to a force that lies beyond their own actions and responsibility”, which may include, for example, poor people, the elderly and children (Van Gorp, 2005, p. 489). Analyzing the way in which asylum-seekers were portrayed in Belgian newspapers, he ultimately noted that they were represented in the news either as victims or “intruders”. A third, more positive characterization of immigrants as “heroes” (see also Benson, 2009) did not occur often in the news. Also in our analysis, there seems to be a focus on negative and ‘victimization’ viewpoints about immigration at the expense of fully positive viewpoints, with the former generally used to look upon immigration from a favorable perspective. Regarding the independent variable tested in Hypothesis 3, the presence of immigrant actors in the news was calculated as a dummy, with zero meaning the absence of individual immigrants in the news and one

⁵ In particular, in the case of multiple articles on the same day, the article that appears more in the front usually expresses more viewpoints, whereas the articles that follow hardly ever express an additional viewpoint.

indicating their presence. For the test of both Hypothesis 2 and Hypothesis 3, we controlled for the length of the articles, which is expressed as a count of the article's words. We also controlled for differences between quality and popular newspapers.

In the following section, we present the results of our study. First of all, we measure the average diversity scores for each news outlet, and we assess differences in the levels of actor and viewpoint diversity between quality and popular newspapers by means of t-tests. Second, we evaluate the relationship between actor and viewpoint diversity at the article level. Considering the count nature of the dependent variable, we have to use either a Poisson or a negative binomial regression model. We tested the assumption of equidispersion, which does not hold, and therefore selected the negative binomial regression model. We exclude the choice of zero-inflated models for a theoretical reason, namely because a score of zero in our dependent variable has just one meaning. Finally, we use an ordered logistic regression to gauge the relationship between the presence of individual immigrants in the news item and the favorability of viewpoints about immigration (an ordinal variable).

4 Results

Before measuring content diversity, we examine the distribution of actors and viewpoints about immigration in the sample. Figure 1 shows the distribution of

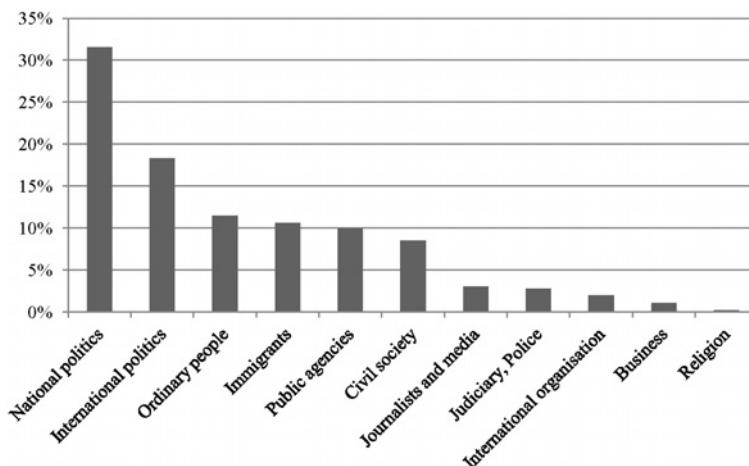


Figure 1: Distribution of actors per category ($N = 1688$).

Table 1: Distribution of viewpoints on immigration.

	Negative	Victimization	Positive	Total ($N = 100\%$)
De Morgen*	33 %	44 %	22 %	140
de Standaard*	35 %	47 %	18 %	159
De Tijd*	31 %	33 %	36 %	67
Gazet van Antwerpen**	51 %	37 %	12 %	68
Het Nieuwsblad**	48 %	50 %	2 %	48
Het Laatste Nieuws**	34 %	54 %	12 %	68
Total	204	244	102	550

Note: * Quality newspapers; ** Popular newspapers.

a total of 1688 actors in the different actor categories. Political actors, both national and international, dominate the news coverage (representing 32% and 18% of the total number of actors, respectively), followed by ordinary people and immigrant actors (both 11%).

Table 1 provides an overview of the distribution of viewpoints about immigration in the newspapers of the sample. At a glance, the table shows that *De Morgen* and *de Standaard* are the newspapers employing the highest number of viewpoints about immigration ($N = 140$ and $N = 159$, respectively). It is also evident that *Gazet van Antwerpen* and *Het Nieuwsblad* employ relatively more negative viewpoints about immigration than *De Morgen*, *de Standaard* and *De Tijd*. The popular outlet *Het Laatste Nieuws* represents an exception, as it follows the quality newspapers' pattern in the use of viewpoints. On top of that, we note that "victimization" is the most commonly used category. Generally, the Flemish newspapers in our sample make substantially less use of a positive characterization of migrants, with the exception of *De Tijd*.

In Table 2, we provide an overview of the differences in the levels of actor and viewpoint diversity between the newspapers of the sample. Regarding actor diversity, Table 2 shows that an average of less than two unique actor categories are represented in every article, except for *de Standaard*, which features slightly more than two different actor categories per news item. Given that each news outlet dedicates around one article per day to the issue of immigration, we can conclude that the average daily range of actor categories that enter the immigration debate in one single newspaper is limited to just two groups of actors. In turn, considering that the reporting is dominated by political actors (see Figure 1), the chances that at least one of the two quoted categories belongs to the political sphere are high, which supports the idea of a limited actor diversity in immigration news. When we compare the scores between quality and popular newspapers, we notice a difference in the average level of actor

Table 2: Average diversity scores of actor and viewpoint diversity in the newspapers ($N = 642$).

Newspaper	Actor diversity	Viewpoint diversity
De Morgen*	1.87	0.98
de Standaard*	2.02	0.88
De Tijd*	1.67	0.86
Gazet van Antwerpen**	1.48	0.88
Het Nieuwsblad**	1.79	0.66
Het Laatste Nieuws**	1.67	0.75

Note: * Quality newspapers; ** Popular newspapers.

diversity ($M_{\text{quality}} = 1.85$; $M_{\text{popular}} = 1.65$). However, the results of a t-test show that this difference is not significant ($p > 0.05$). Moreover, we notice from Table 2 that an average of less than one unique viewpoint about immigration is represented in every article of our sample. These findings indicate a low level of viewpoint diversity, in that each news article is likely to be exclusively slanted towards one single viewpoint (negative, positive, or victimization), without providing the reader with a diverse array of viewpoints. Finally, although we notice a difference between the average viewpoint diversity scores for quality and popular newspapers in our sample ($M_{\text{quality}} = 0.91$; $M_{\text{popular}} = 0.76$), the results of a t-test show that this is not significant ($p > 0.05$). Hence, as we did not find significant differences in the levels of actor and viewpoint diversity between quality and popular newspapers, we have to reject Hypothesis 1.

Hypothesis 2 seeks to test the relationship between actor diversity and viewpoint diversity at the article level. Since we expect that the length of the article has an impact on the diversity of viewpoints expressed in the news, we control for it in the model. At the same time, by means of a dummy indicator, we control for differences between quality and popular newspapers. First of all, we note that there is a significant, positive relationship between the *Diversity of actors* and the *Diversity of viewpoints* at the article level ($p < 0.01$). This finding gives support to Hypothesis 2: An increase in the number of actor categories present in a news item corresponds to an increase in the range of the viewpoints about immigration expressed in the article. As we expected, the effect of the length of the article on diversity of viewpoints presented in a news item is both significant and positive ($p < 0.01$): Longer articles will feature a larger number of viewpoints about immigration, which in turn enhances the diversity of ideas about immigration that are expressed in a newspaper on a given day. For example, we find high levels of both actor and viewpoint diversity in a reportage about irregular migrants in the US published in *de*

Table 3: Explaining diversity of viewpoints about immigration (negative binomial regression).

	b(SE)	Percent change	STD Percent change
Diversity of actors (count)	.132 (.04)**	14.1	14.6
Length of article	.000 (.00)**	0.0	13.4
Popular-quality newspaper	-.014 (.10)	-1.4	-0.7
Constant			
<i>N</i>	642		

Note: * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$

Standaard.⁶ The article is very long (2810 words, well above the average number of 650 words per article), and it features five different actor categories (politicians, civil servants, migrants, religious and ordinary people), giving space to a full array of viewpoints about immigration. Irregular immigrants are portrayed as victims who live in a clandestine way because of an unfair system, even though they work hard and behave as good citizens (positive views). The article also mentions that some migrants commit acts of violence (negative viewpoints).

Furthermore, the model shows no significant differences between quality and popular newspapers in the levels of viewpoint diversity, confirming our findings regarding the test of Hypothesis 1. Last but not least, we want to evaluate the strength of this relationship. The results indicate that, for a single unit increase in actor diversity – that is, if one more actor category is presented in a news article – the number of viewpoints presented will increase by 14.8%. In addition, the standardized percentage change shows that the relationship between actor and viewpoint diversity is stronger than the one between length and viewpoint diversity. In fact, for a one standard unit increase in the diversity of actors, the variation in viewpoint diversity is larger than the variation corresponding to the same increase in length (14.6 versus 13.4 standard percent change). We argue that these findings indicate that the relationship between diversity of actors and viewpoints expressed in an article is substantial, thereby giving further weight to Hypothesis 2.

Finally, we narrow in on the relationship between individual immigrant actor and the favorability of viewpoints about immigration expressed in the news. In the model, we also add a dummy variable for the presence of immigrants as a group in the news article, and we control for the length of the

⁶ “Hier is iedereen illegaal” (“Here everybody is illegal”) by Steven De Foer, published in *de Standaard* on 11 January 2014.

article as well as for differences between quality and popular newspapers. First of all, we see that the effect of the presence of an individual immigrant actor on the direction of the viewpoints is statistically significant ($p < 0.01$). The coefficient tells us that if an individual immigrant ‘talks’ in the article, we expect a 1.49-increase in the odds of the article being more favorable about migration. Therefore, we find support for Hypothesis 3. A good example of this effect is provided by articles about Navid Sharifi, an Afghan plumber who was expelled from Belgium although he was well integrated. Navid, who speaks Dutch, is very often quoted when his story is covered. His words are a powerful carrier of the idea that he is a victim of an unfair asylum policy. Hence, when he is quoted, the articles are positively oriented towards immigration: The reader gets the impression that Navid is well integrated and his expulsion is ultimately unfair. Furthermore, we do not find any significant effect of the presence of immigrants represented as a group. This is an important result, which confirms the role played by the individual nature of immigrant actors quoted in the news. For example, in an article published by *De Morgen*⁷ about the strictness of the asylum policies pursued by junior minister Maggie De Block, the journalist reports the slogan used by a group of Afghan asylum seekers protesting in front of the minister’s office (“What do we want? Justice!”). However, their voices do not have the power to change the overall direction of the viewpoints on immigration in the article. In fact, immigrant groups’ voices are often reported in the context of a protest and frequently juxtaposed to politicians’ utterances that are unfavorable to them.⁸

Table 4: Explaining the favorability of viewpoints about immigration (ordered logistic regression).

	b(SE)
Presence of individual immigrant actors	1.49 (.24)**
Presence of immigrants as a group	.26 (.36)
Length of article	.00 (.00) [†]
Popular-quality newspaper	-.46 (.16)**
Constant	
<i>N</i>	642

Note: * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, [†] $p = .05$

⁷ “Overlopen? Me zou dat écht niet lukken” (“Pull out? It really wouldn’t work with me”) by Yves Desmet, published in *De Morgen* on 21 December 2013.

⁸ See, for example, the articles “Broer De Block sluit zijn deuren voor Afghanen” (“De Block brother closes his doors to Afghans”, *Het Nieuwsblad*, 3 January 2014) and “Afghanen betogen tegen uitwijzingen” (“Afghans protest against expulsions”, *De Morgen*, 12 November 2013).

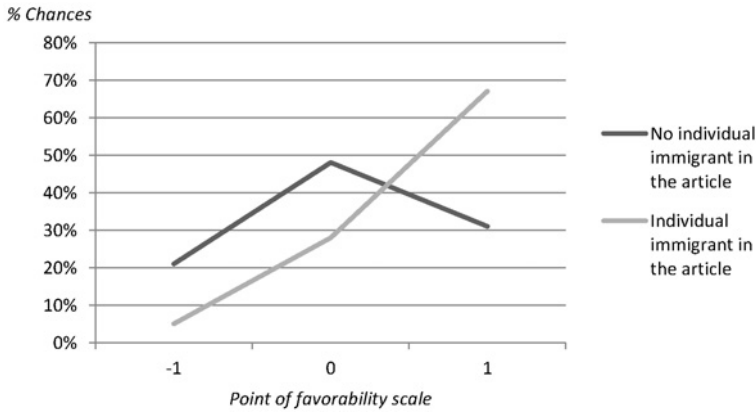


Figure 2: The effect of individual immigrants in the news on favorability (predicted probabilities of the ordered logistic model).

Moreover, the model also points out that length is less crucial in predicting the direction of viewpoints than it was in predicting their diversity ($p = 0.05$). Instead, the model shows that differences in the editorial line of the newspaper are a significant predictor of the favorability of viewpoints towards immigration ($p < 0.01$), with popular newspapers presenting significantly more negative views on the issue compared to quality titles. This is in line with the distribution of viewpoints across newspapers that we observed in Table 1, in that popular news outlets present on average fewer positive viewpoints and more negative viewpoints than quality newspapers.

Figure 2, plotting the predicted probabilities, shows that the chances of an article presenting negative viewpoints about migration are much higher if there is no immigrant actor mentioned in the article – 21% versus 5%. Conversely, the chances that an article entails positive viewpoints about immigration are 31% if there is no immigrant actor present, but are 67% (more than twice as high) if an immigrant actor is present, which gives further support to our Hypothesis 3. More in general, these results indicate that the active presence of individual immigrants in the news enhances the overall positivity of the views on immigration that are expressed in a newspaper on a given day.

5 Conclusion and discussion

Through this analysis of newspaper articles about immigration we aimed at honing in on content diversity following three main steps. First, we compared

average articles' scores of actor and viewpoint diversity between news outlets. Contrary to our expectations, the results show that actor and viewpoint diversity hardly vary according to the quality or popular nature of the newspaper. Second, we focused on the relationship between actor and viewpoint diversity of articles about immigration. The results support the hypothesis that the two dimensions are strictly related to each other, showing that the representation of a larger number of actor categories in a news article corresponds to the expression of a greater variety of viewpoints in the same article, which in turn enhances the overall diversity of ideas on immigration provided by each newspaper. Finally, the analysis moved from diversity of viewpoints to favorability of viewpoints about immigration presented in the news. In particular, drawing from the person-positivity hypothesis (Iyengar et al., 2013; LaPiere, 1934; Sears, 1983) we find that the inclusion of individual immigrants in the range of actors that 'talk' in an article leads to a generally more positive perspective on immigration in the news. Last but not least, our results point out that the length of an article is a crucial predictor of the diversity of viewpoints (the longer an article, the more views on immigration will be expressed), but it is not a key element in predicting the direction of viewpoints. The latter is better predicted by the editorial line of a newspaper, with popular titles expressing more negative viewpoints about immigration than quality newspapers.

We believe this study makes a relevant contribution to the literature on diversity of news content. First of all, we established the importance of measuring content diversity in a systematic way. Considering that each newspaper covers immigration with around one article per day, the calculation of actor and viewpoint diversity at the article level is a valid and easily interpretable indicator of the level of diversity that characterizes the coverage of immigration for each single outlet. Specifically, this study points out that immigration-related news in Belgium presents readers with a rather limited range of actors and viewpoints, ultimately failing in providing a diverse representation of the issue. Second, our results successfully challenge the idea that actor and viewpoint diversity might not be related to each other (see Voakes et al., 1996), reinforcing the assumption that actor diversity goes together with viewpoint diversity. Third, the findings of this study suggest that the presence or absence of 'key actors' in news articles – in our case, individual immigrants – is significantly related to the direction of the viewpoints expressed about a particular issue in the news. Nevertheless, we must refer to some limitations of our study that might be overcome by future research in the field. The limited focus on the Flemish media system, an example of the democratic corporatist model (Hallin and Mancini, 2004), might hinder the generalizability of the study. Hence, future research on the content diversity of news about immigration should adopt

a comparative design to encompass countries belonging to different media systems. Moreover, news about immigration might be substantially different in countries experiencing direct, mass-scale incoming immigration flows (e.g., Italy) than in countries in which immigration rates are lower. Furthermore, this article focused on just one kind of media, namely newspapers. Considering the importance of television in priming public opinion about immigration (see Gilliam Jr and Iyengar, 2000), it would seem advisable for future studies to analyze the content diversity of TV news on migration. Finally, we did not address other potential factors that might explain differences in content diversity between newspapers. Investigating the extent to which structures of media ownership might have an influence on content diversity could be an innovative way to look at the effect of market and organizational forces on news production.

In the introduction, we assumed that the diversity of news content is important to guarantee the democratic debate in a society of properly informed citizens (Napoli, 1999; Van Cuilenburg, 2007), especially when dealing with a socially relevant issue such as migration. This study points to a number of normative implications for journalism professionals. Our results highlight the key role of journalists' gatekeeping practices at the actor level to shape news content on immigration. The first indication is that if journalists cite a wider range of social actors they can potentially give space to a broader range of viewpoints in immigration news. Secondly, it is important that they "open the news gates" to individual immigrants, often negatively represented in the news (see Crespo Fernández and Martínez Lirola, 2012; Kim, Carvalho, Davis, and Mullins, 2011), as this is likely to correspond to a more positive general perspective on immigration in the news. In this sense, our study goes against the idea that the personalization of news coverage is more likely to give a biased view of reality (Bennett, 1996). However, the results indicate that a positive representation of immigration in the news is mostly limited to the victimization of migrants. Although Van Gorp (2005, 2006) stresses the structural positive nature of the 'victim' viewpoint – from which we also draw in our study –, it remains remarkable that potential (social, economic or cultural) benefits related to immigration are left unmentioned. The important economic and political implications of migration in the present day suggest that a more diverse representation of perspectives on the issue is needed to better reflect the inherent complexity of the phenomenon. Finally, we believe the results of our study have meaning beyond the case of immigration. If a more diverse set of actors gets access to the news, chances are higher that a wider diversity of viewpoints is addressed. In addition, our study suggests that, in particular, the presence of the weakest actors seems crucial to getting a positive or at least balanced viewpoint of the issue. This leads to similar questions about the person positivity bias in other

domains. Does, for instance, the presence of individual unemployed people lead to a less negative or a more diverse type of coverage of the unemployment issue? Can we, more generally, expect that an active presence of the ‘underdogs in society’ will lead to more positive viewpoints and more understanding of their position? Again, these are questions that require further investigation. We hope the present study can serve as source of inspiration.

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