MEDIA@LSE MSc Dissertation Series

Compiled by Bart Cammaerts, Nick Anstead and Ruth Garland

Finding Ferguson: Geographic Scale in the United States' National Nightly Network News

John Ray
MSc in Politics and Communications

Other dissertations of the series are available online here:

http://www.lse.ac.uk/media@lse/research/mediaWorkingPapers/
ElectronicMScDissertationSeries.aspx

Finding Ferguson: Geographic Scale in the United States' National Nightly Network News

John Ray

ABSTRACT

When Michael Brown was shot by police officer Darren Wilson in Ferguson, MO, a small suburb of St. Louis, 'Ferguson' became a site of national and global inquiry. This increased interest, especially in the national network news, a domain of symbolic power, may have magnified the locale and created a distorted perception of Ferguson's geography and the geographic systems to which it belongs. This dissertation pairs research in media and communications and human geography to examine the scalar geographical schemas being produced in and around Ferguson by United States' national network news language. To specify 'scalar geographic language', the dissertation reviews literature from various scholars who conceptualized scale and develops a tripartite conceptualization of scalar geographic language, consolidating repeated themes in human and political geography into three classifications of scalar systems: vertical, horizontal, and binary.

After conceptualizing these geographical divisions, a content analysis of national network news media language is conducted, examining 65 texts and their deployment of these scalar geographic systems. In the analysis of the national network news texts, this dissertation finds that the national network news largely presented scalar language that created a binary between the nation and Ferguson, while also largely ignoring the regional context (the language of vertical scalar systems). Based on these findings, the dissertations argues that conceptualizations of geographic scalar systems in the national news media may have political ramifications given the United States' federalist system and the national network news' uneven distribution of visibility.

INTRODUCTION

Ferguson, Missouri was founded 160 years before teenager Michael Brown was shot and killed by Officer Darren Wilson on August 9th 2014. Ferguson came into being as a railroad community in 1855, when William B. Ferguson deeded property crucial for rail development to the North Missouri Railroad Company and received naming rights over the area. Ferguson is a part of the Greater St. Louis Metropolitan Area. It is located within St. Louis County, 12 miles away from downtown St. Louis. It is one of over 90 municipalities in the county (Newburn, 2014) and is a modern, predominantly black, suburb that is identical in many ways to the ones that surround it (Fox, 1995).

But after Darren Wilson fired the shots that killed Michael Brown, Ferguson erupted into protests and violence and became a center of massive national attention, garnering more than 50 segments on the national nightly news in the two months following the shooting. This act of naming in the media made Ferguson, now distinct from its surrounding suburbs, a site of inquiry from without—or what Ingrid Volkmer refers to as a 'sphere of magnification', a locally bounded event that is reflected and enhanced in scope and constructs new connectivity cultures among varying centers of 'we' and 'the other' (Volkmer, 2008; 96). In the wake of the conflict, this connectivity culture inspired protesters in cities around the United States to take up the #BlackLivesMatter motto and march through their places, suggesting a shared experience between them and those who were protesting in Ferguson and St. Louis.

This translocational affiliation plays into the idea of reconceptualizing geographical scale, promoting a vision in which political allegiances can arise around shared experience, regardless of where activity is situated—breaking down/transcending hierarchical geographical containers. (Healey, 2004; Cloke & Johnston, 2005). This notion of society shifting to relational forms of scalar organization, and even the deconstruction of scale itself, has become increasingly popular in the field of geography, as many scholars now accept the premise that social forces produce scale. Nevertheless, the social forces that produce geographic scale have not had enough empirical examination.

One of these social forces, the broadcast news media, is a locus of tremendous symbolic power in society, and, as such, this dissertation seeks to investigate the compatibility between geographical language that the broadcast news media use when discussing a disruptive media event and varied theorizations of geographical scale. In other words, is the geographical language that the media use to discuss disruptive events compatible with relational visions of geographic scale, or does broadcast news media language preserve traditional views of

geographic scale? The theoretical contribution of the present study is to create a greater understanding of the degree to which national broadcast news media language promotes, hinders, or maintains geographic systems in the case of Ferguson, MO. This will hopefully provide fruitful conclusions regarding national broadcast news media's geographic language in times of crisis. Previous research in the area examines news media language, the relative prominence of different localities at the same scalar level (such as which cities are privileged in news media language), focusing on the power of 'naming' and its connection with visibility. Through a content analysis of United States national nightly broadcast news texts, this dissertation examines news media language in terms of scalar relationships, acknowledging the symbolic power in 'naming', but going further to examine the patterns of naming that exist (in terms of geographical scale) in broadcast television news media language and their potential consequences.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The News Media: Institutionalism and Control

The national broadcast news media has been conceptualized as a political institution by a variety of authors (Bodker & Neverla, 2014; Cook, 2006; Schudson, 2002; Schlesinger, 1991). The manner of this political institutionalization, be it proximity to politicians, media ownership, or cultural values, has often been considered worthy of conceptualization (Schudson, 2002; 249), but for the purpose of this dissertation, the link between institutionalism and 'control' is of paramount importance. The journalistic value of objectivity—and distance—from the news, for instance, is argued to serve control in that it protects the community from the "power of the press to incite public sentiment and to destabilize the political system' (Bodker & Neverla, 2014[1]). Schlesinger argues that this desire to protect societal order from destabilization is part of the evolution of contemporary society—as the imagined community has become more crucial to the viability of the nation. Disruptive opposition, both internal and external, creates a sense of national vulnerability (1991; 299). Because of this, he suggests, 'the media and wider cultural fields are indeed to be conceived of as *battle*fields, as spaces in which contests for various forms of dominance take place.' (Schlesinger, 1991; 299 [emphasis in original]). Given the findings of Anderson

---

[1] Online-source was not paginated.

(1983), Dayan and Katz (1992), and Lewis (2008), which present the argument that the media produces feelings of community, nationalism, and belonging, perhaps the function of the national broadcast news media as an institution is not to prop up and reflect the existing political system, but to produce communities and social linkages out of discord? Lewis (2008; 409) argues that in Spain, 'Newspaper editors there have imagined language communities, niche "nations" of readers with whom they feel a special kinship and for whom they feel a moral obligation to preserve the ethnic language.' While this is obviously a specific case, and perhaps not entirely relevant for the United States national network news, it serves as interesting evidence that news editors feel a strong connection to, and preserve, community.

Nightly National Network News

> *'National news is, by definition, about the nation.'*- Gans (2004; 8)

This definition by Gans, although simplistic, makes a critical point for this dissertation, which is that the national network news plays a crucial role in the selection of salient topics for the nation to discuss and to build identities through. As briefly discussed in the previous section (and with full depth in the work of Anderson [1983]), the nation is imagined, in part, through the news media. These two ideas mean that national network news is about the nation, while also producing the nation—it is at once constituted by and constitutive of the national. This two-way process gives the news a unique ability to produce an idea of the nation as a whole; national network news broadcasts reflect what it means to be of the nation. And the nightly national network news is watched by nearly 2/3rds of Americans at least once a week (Mitchell et al., 2013). The salience of the national news media is also made even greater in times of turmoil (domestic or internal), as shown by Althaus (2002), who provides evidence that viewers watch the news more during periods perceived as crises.

The Modern, Destabilizing Media Event

Not all media coverage edifies nation-building narratives. 'Disruptive media events', events occurring live that the media reacts to, such as reactionary protests, war, acts of terrorism, and other conflicts (Katz & Liebes, 2007; 160) can enrich anti-national narratives. The important distinction between disruptive media events and 'media events', as famously conceptualized by Dayan and Katz (1992), is that the earlier conceptualization only accounted for pre-planned events. These could be responses to tragedy (JFK's funeral) or the coronation of a king, but, in their pre-planning, they assemble community and produce 'holidays that halt everyday routines' (Dayan & Katz, 1992; 5). Even war, under these circumstances, could be considered a media event as the media's ability to pre-package and plan their coverage in

order to rally the nation around narratives of conquest. It is 'Anticipation, and perhaps the comfort of orderliness, [that] differentiate them[2]', according to Katz and Liebes (2007; 160). As such, disruptive media events, rather than edifying establishments, like other media events, can lead to the media 'serving the anti-establishment' (Katz & Liebes 2007; 164).

While Katz and Liebes describe media events and disruptive media events as fundamentally different in their nature, Volkmer (2008) argues that the spatial and temporal shift enabled by globalizing and cosmopolitanizing forces (Giddens, 1990; Beck, 2009), provokes a reconceptualization of the entirety of media coverage and its relationship with society. Rather than events unfolding according to a media script, events and their communication now unfold in some semblance of real-time, with the media presenting reactionary, rather than pre-planned coverage. The live-tweeting and coverage of events (such as the G8 summit), she argues, turns them into communicative spheres where narratives can be presented with or without the 'elite' lens of the institutionalized mass media-'Conflict images are no longer only 'distributed' from 'a' to 'b', but are actively accessed and continuously exchanged in order to obtain additional details and reinforce and review previous information' (Volkmer, 2008; 92). The effect of this is to turn occurrences into discursive arenas or 'event spheres', discursive spaces in which different actors fight for supremacy of their messages on Schlesinger's (1991) media battlefield and traditional entrenchments of 'we' and the 'other' can be destabilized and reconfigured.

While Volkmer (2008) is principally concerned with the transnationalization of discourse, the creation of the media conditions that enable the concept of the 'event sphere' has salient implications regarding the locus of control for national media events as well. Locally bound events, specifically, can take on greater symbolic significance, with the media also reacting to—rather than merely planning—the communications surrounding a topic. Indeed, as Keeler (1993; 440) notes, times of crisis (public dissatisfaction) are defined by the 'language used to create it'. By widening discursive spheres, local crises may be able to engage other publics and widen the 'window for reform' (Keeler, 1993; 443). Thus, the reformatory potential of new or broadened discursive spheres can present challenges to traditional conceptualizations of the national, institutions, what it means to be part of a 'we', and, thus, societal control.

These theorizations of the event sphere and its perceived capacity to turn disruptive news media narratives into a dialogue between those at the center of the disruption and those

---

[2] Disruptive media events and media events.

producing the content are interesting, but they have yet to be thoroughly examined in empirical work. This being the case, more empirical research examining disruptive media events, their coverage, and the ways that they are opened to, and molded by, different discursive spheres must be conducted.

The News Media and Geography

Despite broadcast 'mass' media power becoming increasingly diffused into different communicative channels, the broadcast news media remain the primary circulator of information in society (Van Dijk, 2000[3]) and, as such, a locus of symbolic power—'the power of constituting the given through utterances' (Bourdieu, 1991; 170). This symbolic power over the language that is used to portray events means that the news media produce understanding and meaning and play an equal part in the creation of reality as they do in the reflection of it (Couldry, 2000)—'The news creates and reinforces labels for groups, places, events, and situations' (Avraham, 2013; 3). As such, the news media is a vital cog in the production of 'common sense' understandings of the organization of society and its geographical divisions. Empirical evidence in the fields of media and geography serve to reinforce this statement; news media have been shown, in numerous studies, to be producers of geographic knowledge (Howe, 2009; Rantanen, 2003; Bendix & Liebler, 1999).

Naming and Geography

A material building, if not properly maintained, will soon fall apart. To continue to exist, places must be kept in good repair. They can also be improved upon through alterations and additions. Much the same is true of places created by language, oral and written.

> 'Mount Misery' will fade from consciousness if it is not kept alive by social support-if the name is not passed on by word of mouth or written on a map that is periodically consulted (Tuan, 1991; 689)

The quote above, from Tuan, points out that the visibility of geographic scales and systems is promoted and preserved through language, and that geographic locales erode in the collective conscious when they are not maintained with language. This maintenance argument relates

---

[3] Van Dijk's argument, although coming before the proliferation of the Internet, still appear to hold true today with recent research from Pew & Nielsen (Mitchell, 2013) suggesting that 65% of Americans watch the national news at least once a week. And OFCOM (2015a; pg. 37) reporting that, while "consumption of news across any online platform has seen a large increase since 2005, from 25% to 42%", in the UK (a comparably digital country), this increase has not greatly affected the television news market share in the country and that television news still remains most influential (OFCOM, 2015b; pg. 8; see Appendix C).

to his general approach, which claims that places are defined and maintained by language just as much (if not more) as they are by physical features. But Tuan argues that the capacity for language to produce geography has largely been understudied in the field of Geography; 'In studying how places at all scales have come into existence, geographers have focused almost exclusively on material processes and socioeconomic forces, without raising, explicitly, the role of language' (Tuan, 1991; 692). Indeed, and even after Tuan, very few scholars—including those that cited Tuan—engaged with the maintenance argument explicitly. However, if naming and its maintenance are viewed as the outcome of a competition of symbols, or lack there-of, then Bourdieu's (1989) theory of symbolic power proves to be directly related. Bourdieu argues that 'there are always, in any society, conflicts between symbolic powers that aim at imposing the vision of legitimate divisions' (1989; 22) and that a differential in symbolic power—in the distribution of symbolic capital and/or a greater level of representational accuracy is that way that symbolic contests are decided.

Thus, employing one's symbolic capital to explicitly name something edifies an existing geographic schema and adds visibility to that locale. When this happens through a locus of tremendous symbolic power, such as the United States national network news media, geographic identities and divisions that were long dormant can appear again as common sense. News media utterances, and their deployment of symbolic power, aid in production of communities, the establishment of boundaries, the creation of connections between them, and the development of their membership criteria and values (Gasher, 2009).

The News Media, Communities, and Space

The communities that the news media help build, in Anderson's view (1991), are built by creating bonds around shared characteristics, but they also produce a shared feeling of place. It is communication, Anderson argues, that produces geographical meaning. Places and their relationship to each other are defined by the use of language. In short, 'communities are built, maintained, and wrecked in communication' (Nord, 2001; 2), and the news media, as a locus of symbolic power, has a disproportionate amount of influence over the communication of community. Communities, in a globalized era, are not only defined by what they represent, they are also defined in their difference and similarity to other communities (Gasher, 2009; 105). When a suburban area is defined as a site of inquiry, it is defined as such to promote difference and similarity vis-à-vis the city that it relates to (Hartley, 1992; 207). As such, and as will be explained later in the literature review, the communities that the news media aid in producing are divided into scalar geographical hierarchies of difference in scale (the region exists as a subset of the nation, the city is a subset of the state etc...) and function.

Geographical connections are also drawn by the news media. Rantanen's (2003) work illustrates how the news media produce the limits to connectivity and imagination beyond the places in which we dwell. She suggests that electronic news media (in this case the telegram) 'form the global news space available to readers in different locations (2003; 447). The world and the connections within it has gotten more complex since the telegram, but Rantanen's point remains critical, if not even more so today. As our boundaries of time and space are increasingly and simultaneously expanded and compressed (Tsatsou, 2009), the news media have a greater ability to limit and delimit perceptions of geographic scale and can create the linkages between two previously un-associated, or unknown spaces. Work conducted by Howe (2009), too, describes how the 'semantics' used by the news media (in this case newspapers in Arizona) take on a geographic life of their own, producing geographic relationships that may have not otherwise existed and tying the fortunes of disparate localities to each other.

But Howe (2009, 58) also argues that 'the spaces and places that are represented in the news media reflect both physical spatial relationships and the cognitive maps of journalists and readers'. This interest in the differences and similarities between the "the real world' and the 'news world" (Wu, 2000; 110) is a center of much scholarly attention. This may be a false dichotomy as, if the news media plays a role in the production of the 'real world', its communities, and its boundaries, then the distinction between the two fails to be as significant, as the real world and the news world are mutually constitutive. One of the long-term consequences of this dichotomy between reality and language in the field is that toponyms (the names of places) have been considered reality producing—scholars argue that contests for power manifest themselves in the name of a location, which then presents an ideology to those that occupy it, but 'relational' language, the language of scalar systems, had largely been considered as something that was taken from the landscape until radical geographers, like Healey (2004) began unpacking conceptualizations of scale in the 1990s and 2000s. Yet, the field still lacks empirical research regarding the relationship between relational language, social actors, and understandings of geographic scale. These macro-level conceptualizations of geographic language must be investigated in order to examine what kinds of divisions the news media creates in geography and their possible social consequences. In the following sections, scale will be defined for the purpose of this dissertation and different conceptualizations of scale will be discussed.

Scale

Scale is a complex concept that is used in many different ways in the field of geography (Montello, 2001), but for the purpose of this dissertation, scale will be broadly considered as

the link between phenomena and level of analysis—how we contain and define the scope of reality (Montello, 2001; 13503). While lacking a distinct theoretical tradition, the benefit of this definition is that it is general enough to be able to afford multiple conceptualization of scale, from different theoretical backgrounds. An example of scale, using an essentialist view of scale building is if people gather in one location and begin to behave within it in a way in which macro-level societal patterns emerge, then individuals may be able to observe their activities at the level of the neighborhood. This then extends up to networks between communities, which may allow for regional scales. Geographical scale, in the essentialist view, is a reflection of human organization (and the absence of human organization) across space in reality.

In the past two decades, however, geography scholars have been unpacking this 'essentialist' view of scale and are attempting to explicate how scalar decisions themselves are the manifestation of power relationships (Healey, 2004; Brenner 1998). This shift is defined in the field as the 'relational' turn and geographical scale is not, according to this view, something that is either natural or encased in power. Instead, relational scholars argue, it must be viewed as both the production and producer of contested social forces (Smith, 1993; page 101). In an empirical project Lebel et al. (2005) present the idea that 'different social actors constrain, create, and shift scales and levels' and examine the Mekong Valley region in China, Vietnam, Thailand, Laos, and Myanmar. In their analysis they illustrate divergent political consequences when different conceptualizations of scalar hierarchy are employed (e.g. across social spaces or across nesting geographical spaces like the city, state, region). The actors that they analyzed used communicative strategies to forward the narratives of 'scale, place, and position' (Lebel et al., 2005; 18) that resulted in the greatest level of benefit[4]. The effect of this, Lebel et al. argue, is to reorganize political decision-making around narratives of scale, position, and place, while also creating new understandings of scale, position, and place in the process.

One consideration that has been largely absent in examining social actors' role in establishing scale is that of the news media. A study conducted by Kariel and Rosenvall (1995), performed a content analysis of Canadian newspaper texts and demonstrated that Ottawa (the seat of the government) was at the center of Canadian news language, despite its lesser status in size

---

[4] For instance, blaming upland cultivators for 'sedimentation, droughts, and floods' in order to privilege the 'lower reaches' and creating a water usage binary of upland/downland within the Mekong Valley. (Ibid; pg. 18)

and economic weight than some of its competing urban areas—and thus hierarchically privileged in the news media. This is an interesting conclusion, but one that takes the city for granted as the site of geographic inquiry and uses a comparative analysis across cities. That type of language—the language of horizontal comparison—is just one way to analyze scalar relationships. This study seeks to build on this analysis of the media's relationship with geographic hierarchies and investigate patterns in scalar language itself; hopefully gaining a greater understanding of the language of scale that is edified by the media, and thus, according to a media power approach, privileged in society.

In reviewing texts in the field, four prominent attitudes towards scalar hierarchies emerge: the binary, the horizontal, the vertical, and the deconstructionist (Marston et al. 2005; Healey, 2004). This review will describe each.

Binary Scalar Hierarchies

Binaries (or dichotomies), the reduction of spectrums into two oppositional ideas, are a problematic in the fields of geography and media and communications. Scholars in both fields have noted that the consolidation of spectrums into oppositional poles can have both geographical and representational consequences (Orgad, 2012; Gibson-Graham, 2008; Cloke & Johnston 2005). Scale may be an area in which ideas of the binary, such as the particular and the general or the local and the global, hold particular influence because they appear uniquely entrenched. Cloke and Johnston (2005; 11) discuss this entrenchment of binaries in the context of the rural/urban divide and suggest that, while the urban and the rural have, in reality, been brought increasingly closer by trends like 'counter-urbanization' and the universality of urban-based media, the dichotomy and distinction between the two is still over-relied on as a crutch for the field to understand the relationship between places. Similarly, the global/local divide, has elicited much consideration from academics; Hardt and Negri (2000) argue that a political and geographic scale that organizes either a totality or a locality leads to an imbalance in power. Specifically, they suggest that binary scalar conceptualizations lead to macro-level actors exerting disproportionate political pressure on local ones as they have a greater level of organization.

The language of binaries has been conceptualized in many different ways in terms of the power relationships and difference that they produce (notably by Saussure [1974] and Derrida & Bass [1982]), but a particularly salient conceptualization for that of human geography is that of Cloke and Johnson (2005; 3) who suggest that geographical binaries, which are constitutive of identities of place and person, are the creation of categorizations of 'us' versus 'them' in which 'us' takes up a position of relative superiority over 'them'. This

being the case, geographical binaries are often the local being conceptualized as 'particular' in order to produce general identities of the 'universal' (to borrow the terminology of Roland Robertson [1990]). A locale being considered as a separate categorical site, in a globalized paradigm, then, serves to separate the imaginary of the total ('we') from that of the local ('them') and quarantine the specifics of the local within an isolated social space. This localization then creates another binary, that of 'here' and 'there', where one place is defined as marked in contrast to its surrounding spaces and containers.

Vertical Scalar Hierarchies

Vertical hierarchies are the 'traditional' way of perceiving the geographical world—they suggest that there is a hierarchy of territories that go from the level of the domicile, to the neighborhood, to the district, to the city, to the state, to the region, *etcetera*. It is geographical hierarchy that conforms to scalar terminology. Vertical conceptualizations of scale have come under much criticism by Marxist and post-structuralist scholars, who respectively argue that they trap material economy and capital, or ideological structures of power, into a hierarchy, when one need not exist. (Springer, 2014; Marston et al., 2005; Brenner, 2001; Swyngedouw, 1997a). While these criticisms have a bearing for geography scholars, politics scholars will note that vertical scalar hierarchies are the primary form of organization within federalized democracy (that of the United States), as its basis is sustained by centralized power being checked by constituent scales in a manner of cascading responsibility (Hess, 2000; 28).

Thus, the language of vertical scalar systems is that which accounts for the actors that can claim political responsibility over an area and engages geographical hierarchies of nested difference in scalar scope.

Horizontal Scalar Hierarchies

Horizontal hierarchies are those that engage collectivities across space and time, where the issue is most relevant. The conceptualization of horizontal hierarchies was provoked by scholars' understanding of the natural world taking a 'relational turn' (Healey, 2004); their conceptualization of the natural world moved away from the 'essentialist' view that geography reflects nature and moved on to a relational one, which suggests that geographical entities are the product of social actors and social relations. Researchers have taken this to mean that geographical scales themselves are the products of power relations. Speaking on the political potentials for reconfigured scale, John Allen argues:

> A kind of topology of political practice is possible whereby a process of collective mobilization
> is sustained through networked interaction at points distant in space and time...If government

is joined up, then so too is the political practice of those who appropriate, displace, and thwart the exercise of power and its intended outcomes (Allen, 2004; 29).

Applying geographical concepts to the exercise of power, Allen finds that horizontal spatial networks of commonality may provide alternatives to the view of organizational, spatial power that the government, as a central, networked entity, can exercise. What is important here, however, is the notion that, with horizontal scalar language, previous organizations can influence contemporary ones and that society should organize not around cascading difference, but around similarity.

The language that presents horizontal scalar systems, then, is that which creates commonalities and produces new categorizations of 'we' across space.

Why Not Framing?

In reviewing literature in the field regarding the news media and its relationship with social reality, it became clear that much of contemporary research in the news media and its coverage is focused on 'framing', defined by Entman as '[selecting] aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text' (1993; 52). While this study eschews that tradition, framing's prominence in the field and potential fit for this dissertation must be acknowledged. This dissertation deviates from the tradition of framing because framing research cannot answer the geographic questions that are being investigated in this study.

To expand, framing is similar to the second-level of agenda setting, which focuses on the relative prominence of the attributes placed onto the media agenda, rather than which items are placed on the agenda in the first place (Weaver, 2007; McCombs, 1997). These similarities between framing research and 'second-level' agenda-setting research lead both to focus on questions of *how* subjects are reported, rather than *which* subjects are 'more or less prominently reported' (Weaver, 2007; 145), which is better suited to first level agenda setting research. Attempting to analyze which geographical systems are reported, as well as the relative prominence of each is not supported by the framework of either research lineage and this dissertation has made a conscientious effort to select literature regarding the relationship between the news media, symbolic power, language, and geography. In doing so, this dissertation aims to present a conceptual framework that provides a more holistic view of the relationship between news media language and the public's understandings of geography.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

As shown in the literature review, many geography scholars have taken a relational turn in their understanding of scale. This relational turn postulates that social actors produce scalar relationships, but empirical literature, especially that regarding the United States' national network news media is lacking. To contribute to this deficiency, this dissertation presents an inter-disciplinary approach, drawing from the disciplines of human geography, linguistics, and media studies.

The most salient concepts for this dissertation are nightly network news media institutionalization, internal disruptive media events, naming, and binary, vertical, and horizontal scalar systems.

Nightly network news media institutionalization is used here to suggest that the nightly national network news media has an inherent desire to produce or relate to a national community, a combination of the approaches of Anderson (1983), Gans (2004) and Lewis (2008).

The conceptualization of internal disruptive media events in this dissertation is conflicts occurring within a locale that, in their potential to create new centers of 'we' and the 'other', destabilize the center of society. The narratives of the conflicts will also need to be at least partially produced outside of the newsroom, with the news media being forced to react to external events, rather than anticipate. This is based upon the theorizations of both Volkmer (2008) and Katz and Liebes (2007).

Naming, in this dissertation, is the generation of meaning through the deployment of language and symbolic capital. This language-based definition synthesizes Tuan (1991) and Bourdieu's (1989) approaches to maintenance and symbolic power, respectively.

The tripartite conceptualization of scalar hierarchies: the binary, the horizontal, and the vertical, was chosen by the researcher to represent the full spectrum of scalar hierarchies that could be represented by the news media, while also organizing different theoretical approaches to scale into operationalizable categories. The three concepts (and scale itself) have been defined in their literature review sections and are operationalized for analysis in the methodology chapter.

It's also worth noting that this dissertation, based on the conceptualizations above, sides with Bourdieu's (1989) 'constructivist structuralism' approach to structure and agency, aligning itself within the theoretical tradition that suggests that the objective (structures) and the

subjective (representations) are actually in a dialectical relationship and, thus, constitutive of each other.

RESEARCH QUESTION

This conceptual framework, brings us to the following, overarching, research question and its sub-questions--the language of which is operationalized in the methodology chapter:

> **RQ:** Which languages of geographic scalar systems did the United States broadcast television news media promote or hinder in their coverage of Ferguson, MO in the aftermath of the Michael Brown shooting?

In order to answer this overarching question, sub-questions regarding the specifics and timing of different geographic language will need to be answered. The sub-questions are as follows:

> **Sub-question 1:** To what degree did the national broadcast television news media distribute the language of vertical scalar systems?

> **Sub-question 2:** To what degree did the national broadcast television news media distribute the language of binary scalar systems?

> **Sub-question 3:** To what degree did the national broadcast television news media distribute the language of horizontal scalar systems?

> **Sub-question 4:** Did the distribution of scalar system language change over time in the national broadcast television news media? And, if so, in what way?

These sub-questions were selected to attempt to capture the balance and development of the connective geographical language applied to the case of Ferguson by the national news media and answering them will serve to identify the salient patterns in the text that relate to how the national broadcast news media conceptualized geography in Ferguson, and possibly other internal localized disruptive media events.

Given the literature reviewed in the previous section and the research question, this dissertation hypothesizes that the national news media will largely present binary scales, as they may wish to minimize the destabilizing effect of Ferguson on 'the national' community. In addition, it hypothesizes that the language of vertical scales will be the least present, because the national news media is least incentivized to present them as they are likely the least effective at producing the national.

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

Given the research question and hypothesis above, the methodology used needs to take into account an additional factor: the orientation of the researcher towards the subject. As an individual who grew up in St. Louis, Missouri, the researcher has certain biases vis-à-vis the reality of the city, its portrayal, and its problems that are a manifestation of experiencing 'place'. These biases helped conceptualize the project theoretically, but provide methodological challenges, as this is a dissertation that strives to create an accurate portrayal of media behaviour in Ferguson, MO (as conceptualized in the literature review). If the researcher were to subjectively select texts that highlighted their point, this accuracy may be jeopardized; a methodology that emphasizes objectivity and systematicity is ideal. As such, this project uses content analysis to systematically discover patterns in the usage of language regarding geographic systems.

Research Design

In order to discover patterns in the texts, this study will use content analysis. Content analysis is a research method that makes 'replicable and valid inferences from text to the contexts of their use' (Krippendorf, 2004; 18) and aims to analyze media content 'in a more comprehensive way, a way less prone to subjective selectiveness and idiosyncrasies' (Hansen, 1998; 91). Given this strength, content analysis will be used to identify the distribution of language and identify salient patterns in the distribution of language by the United States news media, then, in the ensuing 'Findings' section, excerpts from the texts that best exemplify the systematically discovered patterns will be selected to add greater depth and highlight the specific ways in which different conceptualizations of scalar systems were either promoted or hindered by the news media. This blend of quantitative and qualitative analysis is recommended by both Krippendorf (2004; 16) and Deacon et al. (2007; 145), who suggest that the distinction between quantitative and qualitative analyses is of nebulous validity, that each one offers benefits to the researcher, and that the combination of the two—when done properly—can yield results with greater depth and accuracy than one alone.

Case Selection

Analyzing national broadcast news media coverage of Ferguson, Missouri after the shooting of Michael Brown is particularly apt for a multitude of reasons vis-à-vis other comparable 'disruptive events' such as the protests in Baltimore over the death of Freddy Gray. Firstly, the event was bound within a suburban site that is politically and socially subordinate to its

larger city in many ways. Secondly, it can be defined as a national crisis. Thirdly, both the National Guard and the St. Louis County police were called in, which included St. Louis and Missouri as relevant political parties (the National Guard can be called into a locale by a state's Governor in cases of unmanageable turmoil).

The disruptive nature of the event is encapsulated not only in the 'rioting'/'protest' that was occurring, but also in Ferguson meeting the criteria of a 'crisis', as defined by John Keeler (1993). A crisis is an event that taps into 'large-scale public dissatisfaction or even fear stemming from wide-ranging economic problems and/or an unusual degree of social unrest' (1993; 440). The Ferguson protests came on the back of, or concurrently with, several notable public confrontations with violence from authority figures and minorities including Eric Garner, Treyvon Martin, and Christopher Dorner. The Martin case was the most widely covered news story regarding race in recent years (Anderson, 2013), and the public was widely dissatisfied with its verdict, which created an already engaged public to tap into. And the #BlackLivesMatter and #HandsUpDontShoot hashtags became spaces of dissent and outrage at the current state of affairs in the nation. Crises create opportunities for change or what Keeler (1993; 443) refers to as 'windows for reform' and are destabilizing to conservative interpretations of existing society (Zhang, 2013).

Operationalization

Proper operationalization of binary, vertical, and horizontal language is important because the terms must be clearly defined and distinguishable in order to get valid and replicable results. Given the conceptual underpinnings of these terms (as found in the review chapter) and the language of nightly national news stations, their corresponding operationalizations are as follows:

- **Binary:** The text isolates Ferguson as a specific geographical entity in contrast to the nation. Language of uniqueness and separation, without comparison to the national, also falls into the realm of binary language because the national becomes the unspoken 'other'. If a text uses multiple geographic scales, makes a comparison to other localities, or seeks to find commonalities between the national and the local, it does not use binary language.
- **Vertical:** The text places the primary focus on the political system that is responsible for Ferguson, mentioning St. Louis, the surrounding region, and/or Missouri as political entities that Ferguson is a member of.
- **Horizontal**: Ferguson is compared to other localities or situations in which similar publics are, or have been, engaged. This can include national level discussions, but

only those which seek to build new societal spaces out of language. For instance, a national level narrative that employs horizontal language would say 'police militarization has become a problem throughout the country lately'. This serves to make Ferguson look neither particular, nor general, but one of many localities in which this has been an issue.

The codebook (Appendix A) has been illustrated in order to display which questions are specifically aimed at identifying which types of language.

Sampling

This dissertation draws its texts from Factiva, a database and search engine that transcribes broadcast television texts. This process removes the element of vocal inflection and visual representation from the source content, but it has the advantage of making the texts easily quantifiable, comparable, and allows for the removal of coder error in both transcription and identification of source texts. The sample will start on August 9th, 2014, the day of the Michael Brown shooting and end on October 30th, 2014. This time span was selected in order to conceptualize the growth of the issue and because, after initial coverage waned, it restarted in November, this time pre-prepared, after a Grand Jury decided not to press charges against Officer Darren Wilson sparked additional conflict. While this is an important occurrence, the news media had time to prepare and prognosticate over the potential verdict and its response. As such, it fails to qualify as a 'disruptive media event' (Katz & Liebes, 2007).

The sources that will be a part of the sample are the CBS, NBC, PBS, and ABC nightly news. The decision to include only these sources is made easy by the research question focusing on national televised news broadcasts, but the rationale for choosing this level of analysis is presented below. Nationally nightly network news still holds an overwhelming share of total viewership in America. According to Mitchell et al. (2013), 65% of Americans watch broadcast news once a week, while 38% watch its cable counterpart. Also, the orientation of national broadcast news and cable news are different. Cable news is drawn from divided ideological bases, while broadcast news is still largely beholden to 'traditional' journalistic praxes of 'objectivity' and 'impartiality', or at least the pretense of it (Beckett, 2008). As is discussed in the theoretical section, these duties are conceptualized as important to the institutional function of the news.

The search term used to draw the texts on Factiva was "St. Louis', or 'Saint Louis', or 'Ferguson', or 'Michael Brown'". This term was drawn in order to ensure that there was not an exclusion of texts that mentioned Michael Brown and St. Louis and so that all of the possible texts on the topic were discovered. This dissertation used all of the news media texts

available, given these parameters. After discarding irrelevant broadcasts and duplicates this amounts to a sample of 65 media texts.

Intercoder Reliability

Intercoder reliability (ICR) testing is critical for the validity of content analysis research. High intercoder reliability scores ensure that the coding frame is strong and clearly defined, and thus replicable, and that the results are 'trustworthy' (Krippendorff, 2004; 212). After training and providing instructions to a second coder, a random sample of 30 texts was analyzed. While the agreed upon ideal percentage of a large sample is 10%, the smaller population that was tested in this research necessitated a larger ICR sampling so 30 texts (roughly half of the sample) were selected. The resulting codes were tested against each other with Krippendorff's Alpha, 'the most general agreement measure with appropriate reliability interpretations in content analysis' (Krippendorff, 2004; 221), on the ReCal web application[5] and produced an alpha of greater than .83 for every variable except 'MACRO', which still surpassed the traditional cut-off point of .8 for the more lax 'percent-agreement' formula provided by Lombard et al. (2002). The overall percent agreement was 96.3%.

Textual Analysis

If patterns in the conceptualization of geography in the texts are uncovered through quantitative content analysis, the most salient excerpts (with regards to the meaning of the patterns) will be drawn from the body of texts in order to provide greater analytical depth. After the initial patterns are found, the researcher will go back through the texts and recode them according to the initial content analysis findings, noting when texts especially contradict or illustrate a finding. The most relevant passages will be included within the findings subsection to provide analytical depth and a greater understanding of which languages were privileged.

RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

To analyze the research question and its sub-questions, this study will look at the 65 national televised news broadcasts in the 3 months following the Michael Brown shooting. This

---

[5] http://dfreelon.org/utils/recalfront/recal-oir/

number of texts was hoped to be larger, but it represents the entire population of national nightly news broadcasts that aired during this period, and will yield more conclusive results than a sample of a comparative size would about a larger population. Statistical tests were conducted using SPSS and general descriptive results will be displayed before attempting to address the research question and sub-questions introduced earlier in this dissertation.

Results

The term 'Ferguson' was used much more than any of the other terms and was the most prominent. The mean usage of Ferguson was 6 times per story, while 2 for St. Louis, 2.35 for Missouri, 0.75 for Missouri without Ferguson or St. Louis preceding it, and .94 for other locations. The distinction between the two usages of Missouri was made in order to show that, while Missouri as a geographical container was often used, it generally wasn't engaged with specifically.

In terms of prominence, and as displayed by Figure 1, Ferguson was the first signifier used 41 times, compared to 19 times for St. Louis, 3 times for Missouri, 2 times for another signifier, 0 times for the United States/nation. This general data shows that the language of 'Ferguson' defined the aftermath of the Michael Brown shooting and grounded it in a specific, local context.
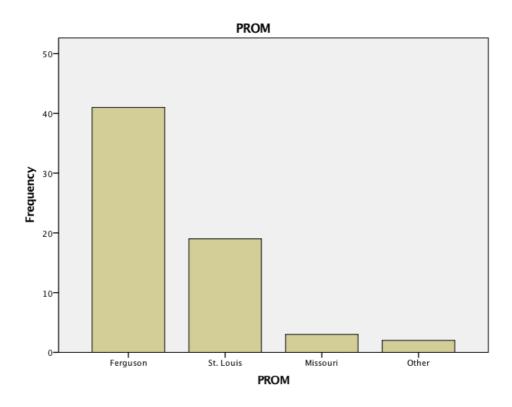

Figure 1

Sub-question 1: To what degree did the national broadcast television news media distribute the language of vertical scalar systems?
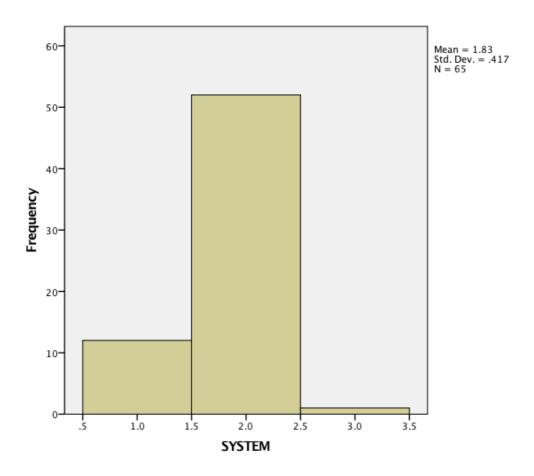

Figure 2 SYSTEM = 'Is Ferguson mainly discussed in the context of St. Louis', with 1 = Yes, 2 = No, and 3=Not-Applicable (Ferguson not mentioned)

Sub-question 2: To what degree did the national broadcast television news media distribute the language of binary scalar systems?

As illustrated above, the language of vertical scalar systems (responsible political entities) was subordinate overall to specific language of Ferguson in terms of prominence and overall utterance. The recurring utterances of Ferguson made it take on a larger role in the media coverage than its vertical political containers, St. Louis and Missouri. This is further illustrated by the fact that in 80% (52) of the articles Ferguson was not mainly discussed in

the context of St. Louis[6], the political container that immediately presides over it. Furthermore, a 'regional' approach was only clearly identified in 9.2% (6) of the articles.

MACRO * INDIVID Crosstabulation

			INDIVID				
			Entirely	Somewhat	Does Not	Can't Tell	Total
MACRO	Very Prevalent	Count	0a	3b	9c	0a, b, c	12
		% within INDIVID	0.0%	15.8%	64.3%	0.0%	18.5%
	Somewhat Prevalent	Count	3a	4a	4a	0a	11
		% within INDIVID	10.0%	21.1%	28.6%	0.0%	16.9%
	Not Very Prevalent	Count	6a, b	5b	0a	2c	13
		% within INDIVID	20.0%	26.3%	0.0%	100.0%	20.0%
	Not Present	Count	21a	7b	1c	0b, c	29
		% within INDIVID	70.0%	36.8%	7.1%	0.0%	44.6%
Total		Count	30	19	14	2	65
		% within INDIVID	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Each subscript letter denotes a subset of INDIVID categories whose column proportions do not differ significantly from each other at the .05 level.

Figure 3

This cross tabulation of MACRO and INDIVID shown in Figure 3, provides strong evidence ($X2 = 43.875$; Sig = <.001) for there being a relationship between the 'uniqueness' of Ferguson, and the level of macro-narrative applied in the news sources. Further examining the table, it is clear that binary language is the most prevalent. 41.5% of the texts portrayed Ferguson as entirely unique and in 90% of those texts a Macro-level narrative was either largely or completely absent. As discussed by Cloke and Johnson (2005) in the review chapter, when language of scale is used to portray a locality as unique, without incorporating regional, macro, or horizontal narratives, it serves to create a geographic 'them' and, thus, an implied 'we' that exists in opposition to it—a binary, the local and the national, as that is the public of the national news.

This promotion of binary scalar systems is further evidenced by the lack of comparisons made to other geographic locales. 69% of the stories (45), didn't mention a place outside of the responsible zone, effectively isolating Ferguson as a unique area vis-à-vis the rest of the United States.

---

[6] See Figure 2

Sub-question 3: To what degree did the national broadcast television news media distribute the language of horizontal scalar systems?

The language of horizontal scalar systems was more prevalent than vertical language within the sources analyzed, but still not very prevalent as only 23.1% of the sources (12) present Ferguson within a comparative context or a national context in which Ferguson is neither portrayed as unique nor general. As mentioned in the methodology section 'operationalization', both of these conceptualizations of horizontal scalar systems were included because they engage and create publics of 'we' in new social spaces, rather than portraying Ferguson as specific or general. In terms of actually mentioning other locales for direct comparison, other locations were mentioned in 31% of the texts (20).

Sub-question 4: Did the distribution of scalar system language change over time in the national broadcast television news media? If so, in what way?

A week after the shooting of Michael Brown, Governor Jay Nixon called the National Guard into Ferguson as the protesting/rioting escalated past a level of local containment. As displayed in Figure 4, the usage of the term 'Ferguson' increased during the period that the National Guard were called in compared to the rest of the sample. Referring to the interquartile range below in Figure 4, it can be seen that both every story during the National
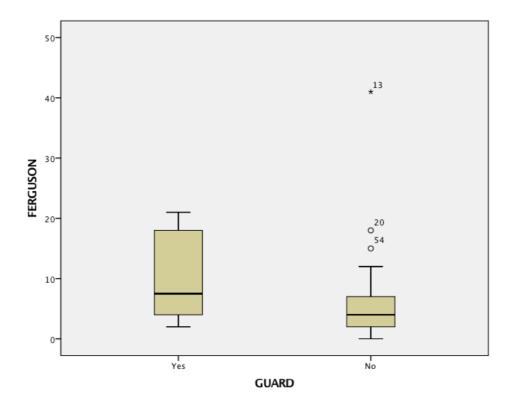

Figure 4

Guard period used the term 'Ferguson' and that the median usage of the term was higher than in the time outside of the 'National Guard' period. Similarly, the use of 'St. Louis' declined during this period, with the stories omitting St. Louis in 38% of the cases as opposed to 22% in the rest of the population. Figure 5 further shows how the conceptualization changed, with the levels of usages being paired in the beginning, then separation beginning to show. After the first week of coverage, Ferguson would—with few exceptions—be the main signifier in every text.
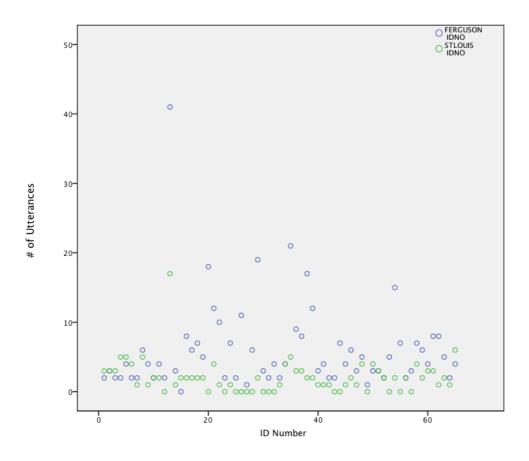

Figure 5: ID Number is organized by the time the articles were published.

Findings

Finding 1: The use of vertical scalar hierarchies was limited.

As displayed by Figure 2, the presentation of Ferguson as an entity within St. Louis or Missouri was limited. In addition to this, the limited definition of Ferguson within that context was constrained to the first week of coverage. Outside of the first week, only one story mainly considered Ferguson within the context of St. Louis or Missouri. This has important

implications for representations of the geography of federalist democracy in the news media. Federalist democracy, as discussed in the review section, is based upon cascading realms of political responsibility from the national to the local level. Here, the national news media do not appear to proportionally represent the geography that corresponds to it, St. Louis and Missouri, despite being politically responsible for the laws and regulations in Ferguson, are given much less airtime and consideration than Ferguson or the nation.

> Source 46 (August 24th): 'The families of Michael Brown and Trayvon Martin appeared together for the first time at a rally in St. Louis tonight. As Vladimir Duthiers reports, it is part of a larger push for peace instead of violence in the tension- filled town of Ferguson.'

The excerpt above, typical of the texts analyzed is an example of how the media routinely passed on the opportunity to present Ferguson within vertical scalar contexts. The article opens mentioning that there is a rally in St. Louis regarding what is going on in Ferguson, but, almost bizarrely, the article neither refers to St. Louis again nor uses language to contextualize Ferguson within it. The text chooses not to link St. Louis to Ferguson and focuses directly on Ferguson, detailing the composition of the city's police force, comparing the lessons of the city to national narratives of policing, and detailing the state of turmoil within its bounds.

When vertical scalar language was presented, it was generally in this format:

> Source 45 (August 22nd): 'RON ALLEN: Also today tough new demands from the young people of Ferguson at a forum calling for an expanded investigation of police practices throughout the St. Louis area.'

> TEF POE (Community Organizer): 'We`re tired of being racially profiled and- and singled out. We want to be treated like citizens of the United States of America.'

Instead of the news broadcasters themselves investigating or discussing vertical system-based dynamics, they would describe individuals from the community as favouring a vertical conceptualization of scale, in which systems were given responsibility over their constituents. But, as illustrated by the dichotomy between presenter Ron Allen and activist Tef Poe, they didn't actually air this speech, instead using statements that appealed to the general; it was rare that these general statements generated additional inquiry or discussion from the hosts.

Finding 2: Binary scalar hierarchies were prevalent within the media's discussion of Ferguson, MO after the Michael Brown shooting.

Describing Ferguson as a unique site of geographic inquiry, separate from the surrounding world, was common within the texts analyzed, the excerpt below is a dramatic example.

Source 32 (August 18th): 'Good evening. Tonight the National Guard has taken control of Ferguson, Missouri, a city so torn, so tense, it is now essentially militarized. We're gonna give you an extraordinary look tonight at what it is really like on the front lines in Ferguson.'

First it is important to acknowledge the use of Missouri in the above statement. This usage was typical. Stories would start by using Ferguson, Missouri, then their usage would slip, with the signifier of Ferguson becoming 'enough'. In this text, for instance, Ferguson would go on to be used two more times, while there were zero usages of 'Missouri'. While the locating usage of Missouri does serve to advantage vertical language to some degree, the qualities of Ferguson are not attributed to Missouri, it is defined as separate from Missouri (and the rest of America), and the place 'Missouri' is given little space to breathe in the text, averaging less than one utterance outside of the locating function per text.

Returning to the matter of the broadcast's introduction, Ferguson is presented as a specific place, whose disruptiveness makes it distinct. This seems more akin to a war piece than one on internal disturbances; the broadcaster uses the terms 'militarized', 'front lines', and 'extraordinary' to define it as a place of violent import that is distinctly different than the rest of America.

The excerpt below, despite coming from a passage that acknowledged Ferguson's status as a suburb, served to create a binary between Ferguson and the nation and eliminated the space in-between.

Source 39 (August 20th) 'Ferguson looks like an all-American suburb. Its median income is thirty-seven thousand dollars, but residents tell us most neighborhoods remain segregated.'

This conceptualization serves to create a geographic dichotomy between Ferguson and the nation. It suggests that, while Ferguson is similar to the nation in many ways, its quality of segregation is something that makes it distinct as a site of geographic inquiry. Thus, rather than building commonality out of segregation in St. Louis as a whole, in the United States, or in other communities, the text serves to use that feature to suggest those qualities which make the place of Ferguson 'distinct'. This creates a binary logic of categorization where the newscaster seems to be positing that the all-American suburb is not segregated, but Ferguson is…and perhaps that is what has caused the protests.

Finding 3: Horizontal scalar systems were moderately present.

Typically, like vertical language, horizontal language would be presented when the news narrative was negotiated by an outside source such as a protestor or a student.

Source 53 (August 29th): KONRAD OLSON, Maryland Student: 'What happened in Ferguson, Missouri, was a tragedy, but it's also a bit of a logical progression. Living in the type of community that I do, I see the issues a lot more than some people around the country would. And I feel like it's the start of almost a second civil rights movement, because it's the same as how the first one started, and that the racial tensions have just been building up and they have just reached a boiling point now.'

PAUL OLIVER, Utah Student: 'I think the events in Ferguson have revealed to me that racial tensions are still very real in America. And they're just something that we don't talk about as a society anymore.'

The passage above, from a piece about students and their perception of what was going on in Ferguson, gave the students sufficient airtime to comment as opposed to those who presented vertical language in other excerpts, in which shorter snippets of dialogue from the guests were typically aired. This is a key finding as horizontal narratives were more prevalent than vertical narratives, despite the fact that there were a greater number of utterances of vertical geographic terminology. As discussed above, the imbalance between usage and weight might be accounted for in the fact that the level of broadcaster engagement than horizontal language was greater than that of vertical language.

Finding 4: The geographic language changed over time to portray Ferguson as more unique.

Source 1 (August 10th): 'More protests tonight in a St. Louis suburb after a police officer shot and killed an unarmed teenager this weekend.'

Over the course of the sample, the way that the media considered Ferguson evolved. It began as an anonymous 'suburb', with Ferguson only being portrayed in the context of St. Louis during the first week of coverage in the quantitative data and as evidenced by the excerpt above.

Source 35 (August 19th): 'By day, the main streets in Ferguson were busy with cars, many blowing horns in solidarity with demonstrators who carried signs and banners…Then, a dozen miles away, on the north side of Saint Louis, a new incident.'

A week later, as shown in Source 35 above, and it has been turned into a separate city that is not 'of' St. Louis, but geographically distant. Rather than being a part of the system, it is portrayed as a different near-by city. And the North side of St. Louis is actually much closer than a dozen miles to St. Louis. It is 12 miles from Ferguson City Hall to St. Louis City Hall. But the 'North side of St. Louis' referred to in the text is actually closer. The traditional area of the 'North side' is South of Skinker Blvd., West of Delmar Blvd., East of I-70, and North of

Grand Blvd. If one drove from the center of that area, roughly at the intersection of St. Louis Ave. and Newstead Ave., to Ferguson Police Department, the distance would be less than 8 miles. This could be an honest mistake by the reporter, but serves as a potent metaphor for how Ferguson was distanced from St. Louis and elevated to equal import as a separate geographic area.

> Source 62 (October 13th): 'In Ferguson, nearly half of black men Frankie's age are unemployed. The jobless rate for the city's black males overall is 27.5 percent, four times the national average.'

Finally, near the end of the sampling period in mid-October, Ferguson was referred to as a city independent of its metropolitan and regional surroundings, existing in contrast to the problems of the nation. As was seen in the section on binary language, these conceptualizations of Ferguson as statistically and qualitatively unique vis-à-vis the nation became pervasive. Coverage evolved from portraying Ferguson as an entity of St. Louis, to a locale separate from, but near St. Louis, and, finally, to a separate city that exists and has problems independent of those of St. Louis.

DISCUSSION

Given these findings, there is evidence to support the overarching hypothesis that binary scalar geographical language would be privileged by the national nightly network news and that vertical geographical language would be hindered by the national nightly network news. In addition to hypothesis testing, there were a few other notable findings: horizontal language was not particularly privileged, but was given more airtime than vertical language, and the narrative changed over time as the event became more of a crisis and the national guard were called in.

This being the case, it appears that national network television news's duty to represent the nation superseded their duty to other political geographic languages (Gans, 2004). Language in the sample that centered on national level narratives or producing new geographic connections was privileged, while language that edified regional geographic connections was presented less frequently. This finding has salience regarding theorizations of political geography, scalar geography, human geography, media events, event spheres, and crises within the United States. These implications will be discussed in greater length in this chapter as well as potential future areas of research.

The finding that national nightly news privileged binary scalar language harms aims at the relationalization of scale. While other language was present in the text, binary language represented the majority of utterances and the issue was largely localized. As shown by Kariell and Rosenvall (1995), this imbalance can result in a locale taking precedence in the news media over other locales at the same scalar level, but the results presented in this dissertation present evidence that this focus on one locale correlates with a lesser focus on scalar systems, confining language to that of the local vs. the national. Hardt and Negri (2000) suggest that binary conceptualizations of political geography lead to an imbalance in power in which there is little ability for the lesser actor in the binary to enact political change. The news media predominantly relying on language of binary scale, according to Bourdieu's theory of symbolic power and its ability to 'constitute the given through utterances' (1991; 170), makes confining visions of scale to binaries more viable and damages the potential for radical scalar systems. Along these lines, Allen's (2004) argument that horizontal political geographies can be constructed by points distant in space and time may be impinged upon by the national news media here, because they are the principal circulators of discourse in society (Van Dijk, 2000) and they did not present horizontal language in a manner that could create new political connections.

However, the results also suggested future potential for horizontal geographic scales in the national nightly news media, as the protestors and external actors that produced horizontal language when interviewed (shown by the excerpts), received a greater level of opportunity to speak than those who presented vertical language. Based on the theory and empirical evidence that the national news media is more concerned with narratives that engage the nation (Althaus, 1991), this largely makes sense. Like binary language, horizontal language can also engage a national public, but it does so in ways that create similarity between scales, rather than differences that separate them. In contemporary events like Ferguson, which tap into national dissatisfaction, investigating similarities may make more sense in some reports than localizing the issue, as Volkmer (2008) contends that it is possible that the activation of a communal event sphere may create a common societal space that the media are driven to react to.

Vertical conceptualizations of scale, then, as evidenced by this dissertation, are those which are most damaged in national news media language. While many of the geography scholars discussed, like Brenner (2001) and Swyngedouw (1997), will be pleased that the relatively unsophisticated conceptualization vertical system of political geography is not being reinforced by the media, it is unlikely to be changed in the United States as long as federalism prevails as an internal logic. Given this, a problem that emerges from this dissertation is that scalar geographic language in the United States national network news media does not seem

to match up with the political geography of the United States. The effect of this, then, may be to make the political systems that govern a specific locale less visible than their role in government dictates and, in turn allocate full responsibility to a specific locale. This is exemplified by the excerpts from sources 39 and 62, which treat issues regarded as endemic to the St. Louis area (Fox, 1995) as specific to Ferguson. The transitory nature of the conceptualization of geography within the sample serves as evidence against Howe's (2009) assertion that the geographies in the news media reflect the cognitive maps of journalists and readers. While Ferguson is a 10-minute drive away from St. Louis, it grew to be presented by the news media as further away, and this notion of distance from the surrounding community permeated the coverage after the language of Ferguson was developed. Further research specifically in this area could ask respondents who live in an area to draw a map of Ferguson with respect to St. Louis, and then those that live outside of the area to draw the same map. One would expect the local respondents to be more accurate, but the distant respondents' responses would be interesting in their distance relative to the local respondents.

As for disruptive media events, the ways that the media handled scale in the case of Ferguson hints at some problems within the portrayal of internal conflict that may be able to be extrapolated out to other locales in crisis in the future. The findings serve to provide a moderate amount of evidence for the claims of Volkmer (2008), who argues that media events in a networked, globalized era create large-scale publics that the media may be provoked into reacting to. The national news media, instead of merely comparing the local to the national, opened itself up to the language of commonality (often pushed to do so by interview subjects and protestors). Thus, the national news media was also able to contest the geographic discussion of the national 'we' and the local 'them' and provide an alternative vision with Ferguson as a part of the 'we' in some of the texts.

On the other hand, this is a blow to geographic equitability in crisis theory, as Keeler's (1993) 'window for reform' is at least partially closed by the fact that vertical scales are not represented in the media in a manner that is equitable to their political influence. As such, the national news media, focusing on the specific and the general, may represent crises in a way that makes political change more viable within the immediate locality of the crisis, but less viable within the surrounding system—even if protestors voice displeasure with that system, as they did in some of the media texts.

Future Research

This dissertation is meant to be an entry point to an empirical understanding of the relationship between geographic hierarchies and the media. This study, in focusing on the

national nightly news, chose the source that most Americans go to for their news/geographic information, but not all news is broadcast on national television. Cable networks like Fox News and CNN are gaining steam, individuals are getting more and more of their news online (OFCOM, 2015a), and audiences increasingly rely on social media platforms such as Twitter and Facebook. Thus, an investigation of the geographic language used on each platform, and the role that it plays in the conceptualization of scale, would produce research that could allow for an understanding of how geography is conceptualized in each, as well as a means to compare the relative prominence of geographic language among them. This would yield greater information about the imperatives that drive certain types of geographical conceptualizations on the different platforms.

Shifting from a media-centric focus to an event-centric focus, Ferguson is just one disruptive media event, which may have led to an isolated or unique response from the national broadcast news media. Future research in the area should focus on additional events, or a comparison across events. If the media behavior observed in Ferguson is found in other localized disruptive events, that finding would provide stronger evidence that the media conceptualize geography in this manner across cases.

Also, and along the same lines, focusing on the media, rather than the audiences that consume it, leaves a hole in the research that could be filled in the future by an audience study. A hypothetical study might observe how audiences perceive the geography of Ferguson (or another media event) and its relationship to scalar systems and compare those results to media centric findings.

In addition to these avenues for future research, there are many others, as, ultimately, the findings in this dissertation pose more questions than answers and are hoped to provide a launching point for those interested in the relatively under-researched area of geographic scale and the news media.

REFERENCES

Allen, J. (2004) 'The whereabouts of power: politics, government and space', *Human Geography* 86: 19–32.

Althaus, S. (2002). 'American news consumption during times of national crisis', *Political Science & Politics* 35 (3): 517-521.

Anderson, B. (1991) *Imagined communities: Reflections on the origin and spread of nationalism*, London: Verso.

Anderson, M. (2013) 'As the Trayvon Martin case goes to trial, remembering a major media event', *Pew Research Center*, URL: http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2013/06/10/as-the-trayvon-martin-case-goes-to-trial-remembering-a-major-media-event/ [June 1st 2015].

Avraham, E. (2003) *Behind media marginality: Coverage of social groups and places in the Israeli press,* Lanham, Md.: Lexington Books.

Beck, U. (2009) *World at risk,* Cambridge: Polity Press.

Beckett, C. (2008) *Supermedia: Saving journalism so it can save the world*, Malden, MA: Wiley.

Bodker, H., & Neverla, I. (2014) *Environmental journalism*. Routledge.

Bourdieu, P. (1989) 'Social Space and Symbolic Power', *Sociological Theory* 7 (1): 14-25.

Bourdieu, P. (1991) *Language and symbolic power*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Bendix, J., & Liebler, C. (1999) 'Place, Distance, and Environmental News: Geographic Variation in Newspaper Coverage of the Spotted Owl Conflict'. *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 89(4): 658-676.

Brenner, N. (2001) 'The limits to scale? Methodological reflections on scalar structuration', *Progress in Human Geography* 591-614.

Cloke, P., & Johnston, R. (2005) *Spaces of geographical thought: Deconstructing human geography's binaries.* London: SAGE Publications.

Cook, T. (2006) 'The News Media as a Political Institution: Looking Backward and Looking Forward', *Political Communication* 23 (2): 159-171.

Couldry, N. (2000) *The place of media power: Pilgrims and witnesses of the media age,* London: Routledge.

Dayan, D., & Katz, E. (1992) *Media events the live broadcasting of history*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Deacon, D. (2007) *Researching communications: A practical guide to methods in media and cultural analysis* (2nd ed.), London: Hodder Arnold.

Derrida, J., & Bass, A. (1982) *Positions*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Entman, R. (1993) 'Framing: Toward Clarification of a Fractured Paradigm', *Journal of Communication* 43: 51–58.

Fox, T. (1995) *Where we live: A guide to St. Louis communities,* St. Louis: Missouri Historical Society Press.

Gans, H. (2004) *Deciding what's news: A study of CBS evening news, NBC nightly news, Newsweek, and Time*, Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press.

Gasher, M. (2009) 'Mapping the online news world: A news-flow study of three U.S. dailies'. *Aether: The Journal of Media and Geography* 4: 102-116.

Gibson-Graham, J. (2002) 'Beyond Global vs. Local: Economic Politics Outside the Binary Frame', in A. Herod and M. Wright's (Eds.) *Geographies of Power: Placing Scale*, Oxford: Blackwell.

Giddens, A. (1990) *The consequences of modernity*, Cambridge: Polity Press.

Hansen, A. (1998) *Mass communication research methods*, Basingstoke: Macmillan Press.

Hardt, M., & Negri, A. (2000) *Empire*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Hartley, J. (1992) *The politics of pictures: The creation of the public in the age of popular media*, London and New York: Routledge.

Healey, P. (2004) 'The Treatment of Space and Place in the New Strategic Spatial Planning in Europe', *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 28: 45–67.

Hess, S. (2000) 'Federalism and news media to government: drop dead', *The Brookings Review* 18 (1): 28-31.

Howe, D. (2009) 'Newsworthy spaces: the semantic geographies of local news', *Aether: the Journal of Media Geography* 4: 23-61.

Katz, E. & Liebes, T. (2007) "No more peace!': How disaster war and terror have upstaged media events', *International Journal of Communication* 1: 157-166

Kariel, H., & Rosenvall, L. (1995) *Places in the news: A study of news flows,* Ottawa: Carleton University Press.

Keeler, J. (1993) 'Opening the Window for Reform: Mandates, Crises, and Extraordinary Policy-Making'. *Comparative Political Studies* 25 (4): 433-486.

Krippendorff, K. (2004) *Content analysis an introduction to its methodology*, California: Sage

Lewis, S. (2008) 'News, nationalism, and the imagined community: The case of bilingual journalism in Spain', *Journalism Studies* 9 (3): 409-429.

Lebel, L., P. Garden, and M. Imamura. (2005) 'The politics of scale, position, and place in the governance of water resources in the Mekong region', *Ecology and Society* 10(2): 18. URL: http://www.ecologyandsociety.org/vol10/iss2/art18/ [August 1st 2015].

Lombard, M., Snyder-Duch, J. and Bracken, C. (2002) 'Content analysis in mass communication: Assessment and reporting of intercoder reliability'. *Human Communication Research* 28: 587–604.

Marston, S., Jones, J. and Woodward, K. (2005) 'Human geography without scale', *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 30: 416–432.

McCombs, M. (1997) 'New frontiers in agenda setting: Agendas of attributes and frames', *Mass Comm Review* 24 (1&2): 32–52.

Mitchell, A., Jurkowitz, M., Enda, J., & Olmstead, K. (2013) 'How Americans get TV news at home'. *Pew Research Center*, URL: http://www.journalism.org/files/2013/10/Nielsen_Latest_10-11.pdf [June 10th 2015].

Montello, D. (2001) 'Scale, in Geography', in N. Smelser and P. Baltes' (Eds.) *International Encyclopedia of the Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 13501-4. Oxford: Pergamon Press.

Newburn, T (2014) 'Civil unrest in Ferguson was fuelled by the Black community's already poor relationship with a highly militarized police force*', LSE American Politics and Policy Blog,* 29 August, URL: http://blogs.lse.ac.uk/usappblog/2014/08/29/civil-unrest-in-ferguson-was-fuelled-by-the-black-communitys-already-poor-relationship-with-a-highly-militarized-police-force/ [August 10th 2015]

Nord, D. (2001) *Communities of journalism: A history of American newspapers and their readers,* Urbana: University of Illinois Press.

OFCOM. (2015a) Adults' media use and attitudes, URL: http://stakeholders.ofcom.org.uk/binaries/research/media-literacy/media-lit-10years/2015_Adults_media_use_and_attitudes_report.pdf [August 10st 2015].

OFCOM. (2015b) Measurement framework for media plurality, URL: http://stakeholders.ofcom.org.uk/binaries/consultations/media-plurality-framework/summary/Media_plurality_measurement_framework.pdf [August 10th 2015].

Orgad, S. (2012) '*Media representation and the global imagination',* Cambridge: Polity.

Rantanen, Terhi (2003) 'New sense of place in the 19th Century news', *Media Culture and Society* 25 (4): 435-449.

Robertson, R. (1990) 'Mapping the Global Condition: Globalization as the Central Concept', *Theory, Culture & Society* 7 (2-3): 15-30.

Schudson, M. (2002) The news media as political institutions, *Annual Review of Political Science* 5: 249-269.

Schlesinger, P. (1991) 'Media, the political order, and national identity', *Media, Culture, & Society* 13 (3): 297-308.

Smith, N. (1993) 'Homeless/global: scaling places'. In Bird, J., Curtis, B., Putnam, T., Robertson, G. and Tickner, T., (Eds.), *Mapping the futures. local cultures, global change*, 87–119. New York: Routledge.

Springer, S. (2014) 'Human geography without hierarchy', *Progress in Human Geography* 38 (3): 402-419

Swyngedouw, E. (1997a) 'Excluding the other: the production of scale and scaled politics', In R. Lee, and J. Wills (Eds.) *Geographies of economies*, 171-180. E. Arnold: London, UK.

Swyngedouw, E. (1997b) 'Neither global nor local. 'Globalization' and the politics of scale', in K. Cox (Ed.) *Spaces of globalization: reasserting the power the local*, 137– 166. Guildford, New York: New York, USA.

Tsatsou, Panayiota (2009) 'Reconceptualising 'Time' and 'Space' in the Era of Electronic Media and Communications', *PLATFORM: Journal of Media and Communication* 1: 11-32.

Tuan, Y. (1991) 'Language and the Making of Place: A Narrative-Descriptive Approach', *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 81: 684–696.

Van Dijk, T. (2000) 'New(s) Racism. A discourse analytical approach', In S. Cottle (Ed.), *Ethnic minorities and the media,* 33–49, Milton Keynes: Open University Press UK.

Volkmer, I. (2008) Conflict-related media events and cultures of proximity. *Media, War & Conflict* 1 (1): 90-98.

Weaver, (2007) 'Thoughts on agenda setting, framing, and priming', *Journal of Communication* 57: 142–147

Wu, D. (2000) 'Systematic determinants of international news coverage: A comparison of 38 countries', *Journal of Communication* 50 (2): 110-130.

Zhang, S. (2013) 'To Construct a Riot: Interpretations and Consequences of the 2011 English Riots', *The Journal of Politics and Society* 24: 6-24.

APPENDICES

Appendix A: Codebook

V1: IDNO
• ID number of each article, assigned in chronological order.
V2: CODER
1. Researcher
2. Intercoder
V3: DATE (DD/MM/YY)
• Date of article
V4: STATION
1. CBS
2. PBS
3. NBC
4. ABC
V5: WORDS
• How many words are in the broadcast?
V6: FIRST
• What is the first geographical area mentioned in the text? (including titles and parentheticals)
1. Ferguson
2. St. Louis
3. Missouri
4. The United States/Nation
5. Other
V7: STLOUIS
• How many times does the article *explicitly* use the word 'St. Louis'? (Code parentheticals and headlines)
V8: FERGUSON
• How any times does the article *explicitly* use the word 'Ferguson'? (Code parentheticals and headlines)
V9a: MISSOURI
• How any times does the article *explicitly* use the word 'Missouri'? (Code parentheticals and headlines)

V9b: INDMO
- How many times is the word 'Missouri' *explicitly* mentioned without the word 'Ferguson,' 'St. Louis,' preceding it (Code parentheticals and headlines)?

V10: ELSEWHERE
- How many times are other localities outside of the Ferguson/St. Louis/Missouri area mentioned? (Code parenthetical and headlines)

V11: MACRO
- How prevalent is a national-level narrative?
1. Very prevalent (focus of broadcast)
2. Somewhat prevalent (core element of broadcast)
3. Not prevalent (briefly mentioned)
4. Not present

V12: SYSTEM
- Is Ferguson mainly discussed in the context of St. Louis or Missouri?
1. Yes
2. No
3. N/A

V13: RACE
- Does the article discuss race?
1. Yes
2. No

V14: STLPD
- Does the article mention the St. Louis County PD or its members?
1. Yes
2. No

V15: FERGPD
- Does the article mention the Ferguson PD or its members OTHER than Darren Wilson?
1. Yes
2. No

V16: GUARD
- Does the article mention the National Guard or its members?
1. Yes
2. No

V17: CONTEXT
- Which level of scale does the article contextualize Ferguson in? (in terms of history, location, narrative, etc…)
1. Nationally
2. Regionally (St. Louis & surrounding Midwest)
3. Locally
4. Comparative (Comparing it to other localities and events)

V18: INDIVID
- To what extent does the author presents Ferguson as somewhere unique?
1. Entirely
2. Somewhat
3. Does Not
4. Can't tell

Appendix B: ICR

	Percent Agreement	Scott's Pi	Cohen's Kappa	Krippendorff's Alpha (nominal)
Variable 1 (cols 1 & 2)	100%	1	1	1
Variable 2 (cols 3 & 4)	0%	-1	0	-0.967
Variable 3 (cols 5 & 6)	100%	undefined*	undefined*	undefined*
Variable 4 (cols 7 & 8)	100%	1	1	1
Variable 5 (cols 9 & 10)	100%	1	1	1
Variable 6 (cols 11 & 12)	100%	1	1	1
Variable 7 (cols 13 & 14)	100%	1	1	1
Variable 8 (cols 15 & 16)	90%	0.876	0.877	0.878
Variable 9 (cols 17 & 18)	100%	1	1	1
Variable 10 (cols 19 & 20)	100%	1	1	1
Variable 11 (cols 21 & 22)	100%	1	1	1
Variable 12 (cols 23 & 24)	86.7%	0.813	0.813	0.816
Variable 13 (cols 25 & 26)	93.3%	0.836	0.836	0.839
Variable 14 (cols 27 & 28)	96.7%	0.918	0.918	0.919
Variable 15 (cols 29 & 30)	93.3%	0.83	0.83	0.832
Variable 16 (cols 31 & 32)	96.7%	0.927	0.927	0.928
Variable 17 (cols 33 & 34)	100%	1	1	1
Variable 18 (cols 35 & 36)	93.3%	0.901	0.901	0.903
Variable 19 (cols 37 & 38)	90%	0.864	0.865	0.867

There is an additional variable because 9a and 9b were treated as different variables (9&10), there is no agreement for variable 2 because it is the coder, and the values are undefined for variable 3 because the system could not handle dates and, thus, after checking that all were in agreement, the values were all converted to ones.

Appendix C: OFCOM, 2015b

Figure 1: Top 20 news sources, reach among all adults: 2014

News source	Reach	Note
BBC One	53%	57% in 2013
ITV1/ITV WALES/UTV/STV	33%	
BBC website or app	24%	16% in 2013
Sky News Channel	17%	
BBC News Channel	16%	
The Sun	11%	
BBC Radio 2	10%	
The Daily Mail	9%	
BBC Radio 4	9%	
Channel 4	8%	
Google (Search engine)	8%	
BBC Radio 1	7%	
Facebook	7%	
Sky News website or app	7%	
The Sun on Sunday	5%	
The Daily Mirror	5%	
Any local daily paper	5%	
BBC Two	5%	
The Mail on Sunday	5%	
The Metro	4%	
The Guardian	4%	

Legend:
- TV Channel
- Newspaper
- Radio Station
- Website / app

Electronic MSc Dissertation Series

The Media@LSE Electronic MSc Dissertations Series presents high quality MSc Dissertations which received a mark of 74% and above (Distinction).

Selected dissertations are published electronically as PDF files, subject to review and approval by the Editors.