# Managing the Public Sphere: Journalistic Construction of the Great Globalization Debate

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*There is little consensus on what constitutes open, deliberative media discourse. We offer a simple, measurable, and comparative model based on 3 aspects of source and issue construction in news accounts: access, recognition, and responsiveness. The model is applied to coverage of 2001–2003 World Economic Forum (WEF) meetings and protests against the organization's role in global economic policies. Both demonstrators and WEF participants were granted news access, but WEF actors were recognized more formally and given greater input in news content, including ownership claims to many activist issue positions. Journalistic deference to the WEF communication agenda limited mutual responsiveness. The journalistic process systematically managed the debate about globalization on terms that favored elites over citizen-activists.*

Public spheres may be defined as the collection of places and spaces—from neighborhood cafes to Internet chat rooms—where private individuals can speak their minds in public, form opinions, and become independent agents in governing the state (Dahlgren, 1991; Habermas, 1989). In contemporary society, the news media are important in determining who communicates with larger publics. Media systems vary in terms of independence from state control and elite communication management, conditions deemed necessary for autonomous public opinion to emerge (Dahlgren, 1995; Sparks, 2001). Within-system variations in news qualities affect the potential for public deliberation on different issues (Bennett, 2003).

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We propose that mediated public spheres can be assessed in terms of three defining qualities distilled from Habermas (1989) and subsequent interpretations (Bennett, 1985; Feree, Gamson, Gerhards, & Rucht, 2002):

1. *Access*: Is the media sphere inclusive or exclusive? Who gets into news discourse?
2. *Recognition*: For those who get in: Who is formally identified (sourced by name, status, or social membership)? How much discourse space do they get?
3. *Responsiveness*: Is there dialogue or mutual responsiveness between sources with different claims or issue positions? Who responds to whom?

These may be regarded as deliberative process variables: a hierarchy of necessary and sufficient conditions for mediated deliberation. Degrees of access, recognition, and responsiveness contribute to the quality of vicarious or active deliberation on issues—affecting, in turn, the quality of opinions subsequently expressed in polls, voting choices, or protests. Thinking of mediated deliberation in these terms enables us to gauge the formation of autonomous publics that are more than statistical summaries of private opinion (Herbst, 1993).

## The Media as Public Sphere

It is possible to read Habermas (1989) as both an indictment of modern media as instruments of elite control and a more subtle analysis of the media as social gatekeepers managing the interactions among elites and broader publics. We prefer the latter reading for its greater comparative and empirical capacity. The idea of a managed media sphere eases two contentious theoretical issues: whether Habermas's idealized public sphere ever existed, and whether contemporary press systems necessarily fail to meet the ideals of open, dialogic, and synthetic public discourse. This follows Curran (1991), who disputed Habermas's idealization of the early bourgeois press, and shows that some contemporary (public service) media systems produce relatively diverse social content. Hallin and Mancini (1984) have argued that as late modern societies lose locally autonomous public spheres, they must settle for mediated communication processes as surrogates, a view they have since developed into a comparative framework of press systems (Hallin & Mancini, 2004).

In the U.S. press system (characterized by high corporate ownership and strong journalistic consensus on impartiality), news discourse ranges from relatively open and dialogic to relatively closed and elite-dominated. Page (1996) described mainstream news coverage of the Los Angeles riots of 1992 as (put in our terms) high in access and recognition of diverse voices that journalists invited to respond to each other. He contrasted this case with far more restricted news coverage of the debate on the Gulf War of 1991, which displayed very limited access, little recognition of dissenting voices, and correspondingly little responsiveness by elites to opposing political claims and criticisms.

Bennett (1990) has argued that journalists constructing routine government and

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politics stories tend to open or close the news gates, or *index* news content, as cued by levels of public conflict among powerful elites and established interests. This means that examples of mediated deliberation identified by scholars can often be traced to such journalistic indexing. For example, Simon and Xenos (2000) described a labor dispute as having frequent responsive exchanges between the two sides; the situation also involved a U.S. president repeatedly encouraging dialogue between them. Press recognition of demonstrators during the Seattle World Trade Organization meetings in 1999 seems less plausible to attribute to what Rojecki (2002) described as press sympathy, than to President Clinton acknowledging that the demonstrators had some good points that were worth listening to. Such elite cueing is missing in negative press coverage of other social protests (Entman & Rojecki, 1993; Gitlin, 1980).

Not all news is indexed to elite conflicts and cues. For example, scandals may produce feeding frenzies with journalists taking their cues from each other (Sabato, 1991), giving the news a sensationalistic peep show quality (Sabato, Stencil, & Lichter, 2001). In other cases, such as the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, journalists may narrate iconic stories with deep cultural scripts that officials can join but not fully control (Bennett & Lawrence, 1995; Lawrence, 2000). Finally, grassroots voices can make the news via public relations strategies that often engage governmental institutions through lawsuits or hearings (Bennett, 2004; Lagos & Sellers, 2001).

What is important to understand about all types of news construction—whether driven by indexing, breaking events, strategic communication, or some combination of the three—is how the press manages news sources, their claims, and the interactions among them. We propose that the conditions for audience deliberation are best established when news accounts: (a) report diverse voices (access), (b) identify and comparably value those voices (recognition), and (c) invite those with opposing views or claims to respond directly to each other (responsiveness). To the extent that these conditions are all met, media audiences receive a richer set of social images with which to deliberate (i.e., consider issues from alternative perspectives in forming opinions). These conditions are satisfied often enough in the daily news to be considered hallmarks of good journalism. For example, on the day this section of the article was written, the *New York Times* ran a front page story about a political fundraising scheme created by U.S. House majority leader Tom DeLay (R-TX), in which tax deductible charitable donations were solicited with part of the money going to needy children and part to fund parties, boat cruises, and V.I.P. boxes at the 2004 Republican convention. The article introduced named sources from two public interest organizations who charged the plan with violations of political finance laws and U.S. Internal Revenue Service (IRS) rules. Those charges were then put to the manager of the new charity, whose response was quoted. This exchange was then referred to a former IRS official, who said the plan might violate a nonpartisan requirement for charities. The story thus provided its audience with competing, fully identified sources, claims, and mutual responses (Slackman, 2003, p. A19).

We suspect that our standards of access, recognition, and responsiveness are met fairly often in such accounts of clashes inside government or between estab-

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lished interests, and less often in coverage of groups and causes more removed from government or conventional cues of status and authority. This proposition follows Tuchman's (1978) analysis of the construction of journalistic legitimacy via reliance on the pronouncements of officialdom, an argument expanded by Bennett (1990, 2003), among others. Our analysis examines the discourse patterns in journalistic representations of different types of actors concerned about the same general issues.

## Conceptualizing Mediated Public Discourse

Journalists could not function without professional routines and gatekeeping standards, but the implications of these conventions for the qualities of the resulting public media sphere are not always obvious. Feree et al. (2002) offered a useful typology of public sphere models in their comparative analysis of mediated abortion discourse in Germany and the United States. They describe Germany as a "representative liberal" public sphere in which representatives of parties, churches, and establishment social institutions dominate media discourse on abortion. The United States, by comparison, is classified as a "participatory liberal" sphere in which grassroots groups have nearly equal media standing with officials and organized interests (Feree et al., 2002, pp. 251–253). Neither country comes close to the Habermasian ideal that they term a "discursive" public sphere, characterized by widespread popular inclusion, deliberativeness (dialogue, mutual respect, civility), and issue closure (recognition of others and efforts to achieve consensus). Their analysis is empirically rich and provocative; however, we wonder if issues other than abortion might change the discourse categorizations. For example, a look at U.S.–Iraq war coverage in 2002–2003 might show U.S. news discourse as more representative liberal (dominated by government elites from the Bush administration) and German news as more participatory liberal (with more coverage of demonstrations and civil society groups).

Such inference problems may be resolved by measuring levels of access, recognition, and responsiveness in news discourses, producing robust empirical indicators that support systematic analyses within and between media systems. This approach enables us to identify where deliberative conditions variously break down or approximate the Habermasian ideal in different cases. Such inferences seem more difficult to draw from the scheme of Feree et al.—who, for example, conflate recognition with different categories of their typology (inclusion, civility, and respect). We regard recognition as a stand-alone discourse element that bridges access and responsiveness by establishing who holds legitimate claims, to what positions, that are granted responses from whom. It is possible to be included in a discourse (access), yet recognized differently in terms of identity, relationship to ideas, and allocated space. For example, Entman and Rojecki (2000) found that Blacks were included in crime news disproportionately to Whites, yet were far less likely to be identified by name, creating a threatening social image.

## The Great Globalization Debate: The World Economic Forum and Its Critics

We apply our public sphere discourse model to U.S. news coverage of two opposing nongovernmental social networks that seek to influence public opinion on the important topic of globalization: the 2001, 2002, and 2003 gatherings of the World Economic Forum (WEF), the World Social Forum (WSF), and the related demonstrations against the WEF. In recent years, the news has been filled with globalization protests, reaching something of an iconic level with the "Battle in Seattle" during the World Trade Organization meetings in 1999. A key target of protest is the World Economic Forum, an exclusive network of leaders from business, government, and selected nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) who meet to discuss aspects of globalization. The WEF has met since 1971, principally in Davos, Switzerland, under the leadership of Klaus Schwab. The WEF is a good case for mediated public sphere analysis because it has defined itself as (1) a nonpartisan, nongovernmental deliberative gathering, (2) concerned with some of the most important issues of the day, (3) with the aim of publicizing its deliberations in world media, government, and business arenas, (4) for the purpose of shaping public opinion about globalization. As the WEF's mission statement reads, "The Forum facilitates dialogue between corporate, political, intellectual, and other leaders on matters of global, regional, corporate, and industry importance" (WEF, *Mission and Vision*, n.d.).

This case is also interesting because the WEF has drawn many prominent critics such as Saskia Sassen (2001), who disputed the nonpartisan claims of the WEF when charging: "With the fall of the Eastern bloc, the WEF's purpose became to reorient elites from around the world toward U.S.-style market policies" (n.p.). Sassen also identified the rise of unchecked corporate rule on the planet as the core concern of the legions of globalization critics: "In addition to being the engines driving globalization, these corporations are the cause of much of the world's economically induced environmental damage, mounting debt and escalating impoverishment" (n.p.). Globalization critics have even created a counter public sphere organization, the WSF, to explore and promote opposing views. The WSF was originally referred to as the "Anti-Davos Forum" when it first met in Porto Alegre, Brazil in 2001. Attendance grew from 10,000 participants in its first year to over 100,000 in 2003 (Klein, 2003; Whitaker, n.d.). The charter of the WSF identifies such concerns as democratic participation in economic development policies, human rights, health, labor, media regulation, environmental standards, and corporate responsibility (WSF, *Charter of Principles*, 2002). We are concerned with how these two broad global communities and their concerns are represented in news accounts.

### Research Question

As outlined above, our case involves two prominent, self-defined public sphere networks dedicated to deliberation and public influence on an important topic.

One network is composed almost entirely of high status elites, with Bill Gates and Bill Clinton in regular attendance. WEF financing comes from more than 1,000 corporate sponsors who paid annual dues of $17,647, and an additional $7,335 per attendee at the 2002 New York meeting, which drew approximately 2,700 invited participants (Strom & Uchitelle, 2002). The other network of WSF attendees and affiliated global social justice activists is far larger, but far less elite. How did mainstream American news represent the WEF, the WSF, and other critics of the WEF in terms of our criteria of access, recognition, and responsiveness? Our design included globalization critics outside the WSF meetings because, as anticipated, the WSF received little media access compared to the WEF. Thus, we included the demonstrators at WEF meetings who did receive coverage, reflecting the views of many protesters that the only way to be heard is through demonstrating. How were the WEF and its critics recognized, and who responded to whom?

## Research Design and Logic of Inquiry

We examined three years of *New York Times* (*NYT*) coverage of the WEF and the WSF, from 2001 to 2003, spanning both the development of the WSF and the decision of the WEF to hold its 2002 meeting in New York out of solidarity with the city following the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001. The Lexis/Nexis database was searched for the term "World Economic Forum" beginning 1 week before and ending 1 week after each year's WEF meeting dates. After removing letters to the editor and tangential mentions in articles about other subjects, our data sample contained 12 news stories and editorials from 2001, 58 from 2002, and 18 from 2003. The spike in 2002 reflects the *NYT's* attention to an event that was prominent both as an international and a local story. The 2002 data offered something of a natural experiment enabling comparisons to the 2001 and 2003 meetings based on conditions in 2002 that were not present in Davos: a high volume of news coverage, the commitment of the 2002 demonstrators to a peaceful assembly aimed at communicating their messages, and easy access to demonstrators by a large numbers of journalists. We also conducted a parallel *NYT* search on the World Social Forum, which drew great fanfare in global activist communities. Although a news dialogue could have been constructed directly between the two bodies, given the overlapping meetings and opposing concerns, our search yielded no WSF articles in 2001, five in 2002 (two of which were also included in the WEF data set out of dual focus), and three in 2003.

The 2002 meeting in New York produced enough coverage by one of the nation's leading news organizations to support a content analysis. The *NYT* assigned 26 reporters to the story. There were 58 articles on the WEF and the demonstrators in our sampling period from January 24 to February 10, with 34 of them appearing during the meeting dates of January 31 to February 4. Both because of its status as a national paper of record and the occurrence of this event on the local scene, we expected the *Times* to lead national journalistic coverage. Analysis of 12 other national papers revealed that prestige papers such as the *Los*

*Angeles Times* and the *Washington Post* ran 15 and 12 articles, respectively, while a group of 10 other national papers (*Chicago Sun-Times, Houston Chronicle, San Diego Union-Tribune, Boston Globe, Atlanta Journal-Constitution, Denver Post, San Francisco Chronicle, Seattle Times, St Louis Post-Dispatch*, and *USA Today*) published an average of only 4.3 articles on the WEF meetings and demonstrations, ranging from eight articles in the *Chicago Sun-Times* to one each in *USA Today*, the *San Francisco Chronicle*, and the *Denver Post.*

Beyond the volume of coverage, the *NYT* is a good candidate for focusing this content analysis because it is an exemplar of professional news standards: Often discussed in journalism schools, among the most desirable news organizations in which to work, the *NYT* is most likely to be read by other journalists and the most dominant influence on the daily editorial decisions of other news organizations (Gelb, 2003; Halberstam, 1979; Talese, 1969; Tift & Jones, 1999). Even the reporting scandal that occurred after the time of our case was met with an aggressive internal investigation, an editorial house cleaning, and a public apologia, suggesting the degree to which the organization cultivates and protects its reputation with its peers and readers.

The *NYT* outpaced the rest of the nation's press in covering the WEF in 2002; there was clear journalistic consensus on the relative unimportance of the WSF. The *NYT*, as noted above, ran only five stories on the WSF; the *Los Angeles Times,* four; *Washington Post,* none; and the 10-paper comparison group averaged less then 1 WSF story (0.4 to be exact). This disproportionate focus on the WEF occurred despite the size of the WSF gathering, its explicit public mission of challenging the WEF, and the presence of newsworthy sources such as United Nations Secretary General Kofi Annan in New York and Undersecretary Campos in Porto Alegre delivering parallel speeches urging both sides to engage in dialogue. Journalists provide an obvious means of initiating such dialogue and conveying it to larger audiences. Even though the WSF was not admitted to the news as a primary dialogue partner, there were some 7,000 potential news sources demonstrating within easy journalistic reach just outside the WEF meetings. The protest groups prepared for weeks to emphasize peaceful tactics and to get their claims about globalization into the news. Leaders were mindful of the image pitfalls of being on the other side of New York's police force, who were heroes of September 11. For the most part, the protests were remarkably peaceful, with arrests mainly for blocking traffic. One news recap stated simply: "Number of buildings vandalized—one. Number of protesters charged with crimes of violence—zero" (Barry, 2002c). Ostensibly, journalists had far more opportunities to interview demonstrators and pose questions to both sides than the year before in Davos, when Swiss police resorted to "fencing off the resort with barbed wire and using water cannons spiked with liquid manure to prevent protesters from ascending the hill to the Alpine village" (Sassen, 2001, n.p.). The potential for dialogue was also heightened by the journalistic opportunity to bring issues and claims from inside the WEF—which, by 2002, claimed to be concerned about the social impact of globalization—to the protestors for their reaction. In these and other ways, the meeting of 2002 offered ample opportunities to recognize the globalization critics and

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invite responses from both sides. The question is how this news was constructed in terms of our defining qualities of the mediated public sphere. We therefore turn to an examination of access, recognition, and responsiveness in news about the globalization elites and their critics.

## Methods

The first cut at the data involved identifying the main themes in the coverage. Two of the authors read all of the articles in the data set and generated a preliminary set of theme categories that summarized the reportage. We selected 20 articles at random (half from the *NYT* set and half from the comparison newspaper sample, to detect possible idiosyncrasies in the *NYT*), and instructed coders in identifying the themes from the list. Results of the coding were tabulated and discussed. Themes that overlapped in coders' decisions were simplified along the lines of what Glaser and Strauss (1967, pp. 101–115) described as the *constant comparative method*. For example, police, violence, and protest activity were combined because articles mentioning one generally mentioned the others, even if by reference to violence that did not happen.

We narrowed the theme list to five general categories, any number of which could coexist within an article: (a) organizational logistics—names of organizers of participants, number of attendees, food served, events, meetings, accommodations, and security; (b) activist issues—social, economic, and political issues raised by globalization critics, including equal distribution of wealth and property, democratic participation in development, environmental justice, corporate and trade regime transparency and accountability, debt relief, health, human and women's rights, AIDS, diseases, drug companies, and housing; (c) business and economic development issues—trade agreements, costs, factories, workers, wages, free trade laws, investments, development, and geopolitical alliances; (d) protest activity/ police response/violence—demonstrations, barricades, marches, protests, arrests, detentions, billy clubs, street theater, violence, water cannons, injuries, tear gas, and expectations of violence and property damage; and (e) style/culture/social networking—mentions of fashion, parties, celebrations, celebrities, evening events, networking, socializing. For example, a style/culture/social networking theme was found in a February 1 article noting "Sir Elton [John] was paid a fee of $1 million" to perform at a WEF-related banquet (Kuczynski, 2002). An activist issue theme was identified in another February 1 article in which a "longtime garment worker from Guatemala" expressed her belief that "companies should pay a just wage and treat people like human beings" (Greenhouse, 2002). A protest activity/police response/violence code was assigned to a February 3 article that observed:

> Adding to the mix were thousands of police officers assigned to keep the peace. . . . By early evening, an estimated 7,000 protesters had engaged in a loud but peaceful rally within earshot of the Waldorf on Park Avenue, and then disbanded. By that point, police officials said, at least 38 people had been arrested on charges of disorderly conduct. (Barry, 2002b)

The full *NYT* coverage for 2001, 2002, and 2003 was coded for presence or absence of these broad themes. Intercoder agreement scores for the story themes averaged 93%. Taking chance agreement into account produced a Cohen's kappa of .85. Interpretive guidelines for this and subsequent reliability coefficients are provided by Krippendorf (1980), who suggested that kappas between .67 and .8 permit tentative conclusions, and coefficients greater than .8 support definite conclusions about coding reliability.

We next developed a fine-grained coding method to identify all of the 2002 activist issues as they appeared in context so they could be coded for access, recognition, and responsiveness. Sources inside the WEF also claimed to be concerned about some of the same issues that concerned the protesters, and our case is part of a larger discourse on globalization; therefore, we began the coding procedure with an independent reference list of activist issues. Two of the authors generated this initial list from sources independent of the 2002 WEF demonstrations: the Seattle WTO protest issues identified by Lichbach and Almeida (2001), and the WSF Charter (World Social Forum, 2002). (This general list was also used to train coders in the more general activist issue theme recognition task above). Two new coders were given the list to guide their reading of all the 2002 *NYT* articles. They were instructed to write down verbatim descriptions of issues in the news stories that seemed consistent with any of the issues on the list. A master list of 34 verbatim activist issues was then constructed and used independently by each coder to assess coding reliability in a sample of seven of the longest articles, eliciting a total of 252 coding choices. For example, this passage from one article contained five issues that were recognized by both coders: "The protesters, who include mainstream student and union groups and more radical elements, plan street demonstrations focusing on such issues as declaring *war on poverty, racism* and *mass layoffs, workers' rights* and *ways to reduce world debt* [italics added]" (Baker, 2002a). The coder ability to find items on the master list in specific locations in the articles resulted in 98% agreement, with a Cohen's kappa of .89 when corrected for chance agreement. After the few disagreements were resolved by discussion, all activist issues were then flagged with their locations in the *NYT* articles so that the next round of coding could identify the sources connected to those issues (access), how those sources were identified (recognition), and whether one side's issue claims were presented to the other for reaction (responsiveness).

*Access.* We first coded for whether each activist issue reference was attributed to *WEF participants* or to *protestors*. Sources not falling under either of these categories, such as academics or experts, were coded as *other*. There were a few cases in which actors were associated with both the meetings and the demonstrations outside. A Guatemalan garment worker, Sofia Sazo, was quoted at a demonstration outside a GAP store, but was given a WEF participant code because she was flown in, as the article noted, by an official WEF participant, the AFL-CIO. We adopted a rule in complex sourcing to follow the chain to its end location; because the news account sourced her in relation to a WEF participant, this drove the coding decision. Most coding was less problematic. An unnamed person quoted at an Another World is Possible rally was given a protester code. Coder agreement
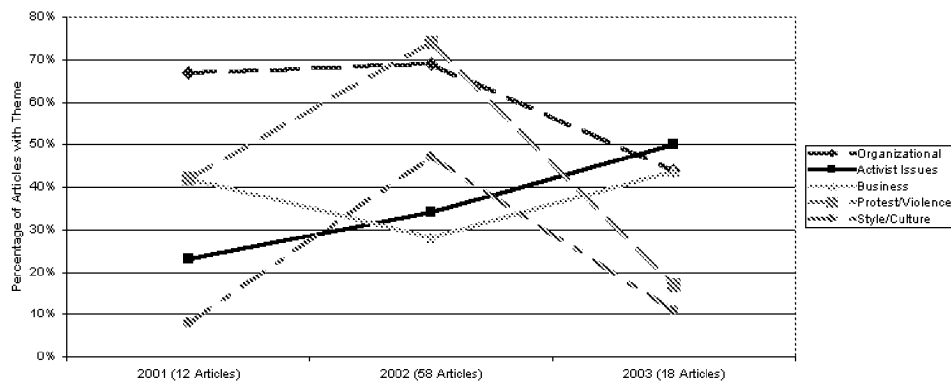
**Figure 1.** *New York Times* **coverage themes of WEF meetings 2001-2003.**

was 86% on whether the source was inside or outside the WEF meeting, or other, with a Cohen's kappa of .71.

*Recognition.* We next coded all the activist issue source references for the presence or absence of names, titles, or organizational affiliations. The intercoder reliability was 96% for specific source identifications (names, organizations), with a Cohen's kappa of .92. A second recognition measure is the amount of news space allotted to these sources of activist issues. The lines of text associated with each issue or source mention were counted, after standardizing the texts by inserting articles from Lexis/Nexis into the default page format of a Microsoft Word document. (We prefer this standardized measure to an actual column inch count of the original newspaper because we believe this approach may be more accessible to other scholars who wish to replicate this or similar studies.) When an activist issue was determined to be the primary subject of a paragraph, all lines in the paragraph were counted. If the issue was determined to be a secondary subject of a paragraph, only the sentence in which it appeared was counted. All lines were coded. Lines not related to any activist issue were coded as *none.* Because all activist issues had been highlighted in the text, this was a straightforward task, resulting in intercoder agreement of 98%, and a Cohen's kappa of .94.

*Responsiveness.* In order to determine how often journalists invited or reported reactions to opponents' claims, two of the authors read the texts closely to identify exchanges in which one side's claim was presented to another for reaction, along the lines of the earlier example involving Tom DeLay's private fundraising charity. Because this coding task involved recognition of a particular discourse sequence (claim and response), we identified and discussed all issue claims identified from the above coding. Both coders agreed that no cases of explicit responsiveness occurred, reflecting news construction patterns that systematically preempted opposition dialogue between the groups, as reported in the next section.
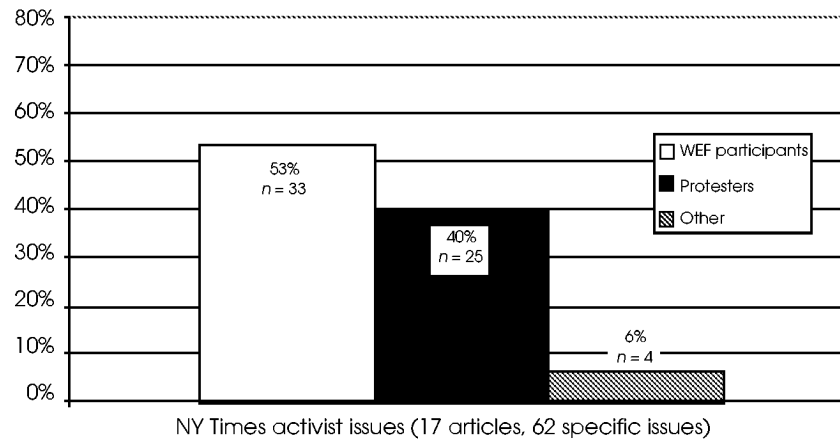
NY Times activist issues (17 articles, 62 specific issues)

**Figure 2. 2002 *New York Times* source attributions of activist issues.**

## Results

Simple thematic measures of the sort used in many news construction studies might suggest that activists have been successful in getting their issues into the news. Figure 1 shows that over the 3 years of this study, coverage of activist issues increased steadily, from appearances of activist issues in 23% of articles in 2001 to 34% in 2002 and 50% in 2003. By contrast, the other theme trends plotted in Figure 1 clearly reflect the move from Davos to New York and back. The organizational logistics, style, and protest/violence themes all peaked in 2002, reflecting the organizational challenges, star-studded guest list, and massive police preparations of the New York event. The decline of business themes in 2002 can also be explained along these lines, as business angles competed more heavily with other story lines unique to the New York context. In keeping with our earlier reference to a natural experiment, however, the New York venue does not explain the steady rise in the percentage of articles with activist issue themes that continued after the WEF returned to Davos. Probing this trend showed that the activist issue focus was substantially the result of cueing by elites inside the WEF, whose sources received disproportionate recognition for being concerned with activist issues. At the same time, activist challenges and comments on WEF positions were seldom reported.

*Access.* The first level of our discourse analysis lends merit to dissidents' oft-heard lament that the only way to make their voices heard is through demonstrating. Figure 2 shows that fully 40% of all activist issue references came from protesters. Although protesters gained access, it is ironic that activists were not the majority voice in registering their own issues. The distance between protesters
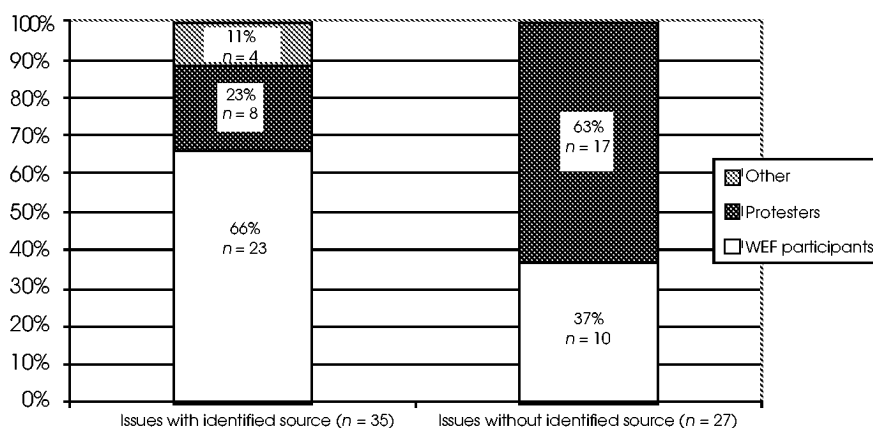
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**Figure 3. 2002 *New York Times* activist issue identified vs. unidentified sourcing patterns.**

and their issues grew even greater when we examined how protesters and WEF sources were recognized (by journalists) in relation to the issues in question.

*Recognition.* If our analysis stopped with the access data, it might be tempting to conclude that the news constructed something of a discursive public sphere balanced between activists and elites, with a tilt toward the elites. Upon closer examination of the sourcing patterns associated with the activist issue themes, there arose a disproportionate failure to identify the sources coming from outside the WEF. Figure 3 shows that in (the 53% of all) the activist issue statements reported from WEF sources, a specific name and/or organization affiliation was reported 66% of the time. By contrast, for the (40% of all the) activist issues sourced to the protesters, the source was identified by name or affiliation only 23% of the time.

The protesters were marginalized even further by the allocation of news space. Figure 4 shows that activist issues linked to WEF participants received over twice the news space.

Beyond these measures of nonrecognition, protest voices were further marginalized by framing the demonstrators in terms of the specter of violence. Figure 5 shows the relative frequencies of protest/violence frames in the phases before, during, and after the 2002 WEF meetings. Protest/violence themes infused 92% of the stories before the meeting, 68% during the meeting, and returned as the most dominant theme (75% of the articles) after the meeting. Fitting protest/violence frames to largely peaceful demonstrations required often contrived references to "violence that did not happen" (Rashbaum, 2002).

Framing protesters negatively as threats to authority and stability is among the most established findings of framing research. In his seminal work, *The Whole World Is Watching*, Gitlin (1980) described a list of "deprecatory themes" that discredit protestors, including trivialization, polarization, and emphasis on violence. Subsequent research has shown that dissident voices in the news are often
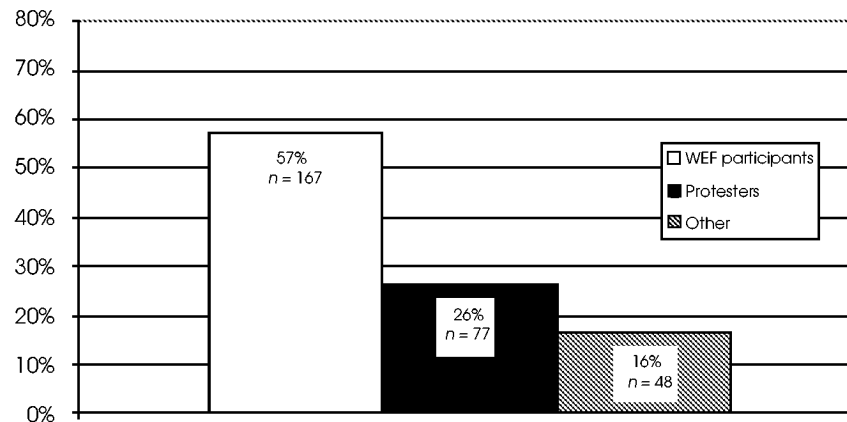
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**Figure 4.** 2002 *New York Times* percentage of activist issue news space (lines) by source.

framed with symbolic cues that diminish their credibility or salience (Entman & Rojecki, 1993; McLeod & Detenber, 1999).

*Responsiveness.* Simple logic suggests that when there are fewer sources with recognizable social identities on one side of a conflict, opportunities for mutual responsiveness are likely to be even fewer. Based on the close text readings, the two coders found no instances in which a specific issue claim by an identified source on one side was presented to an identified source on the other side for reaction. The closest two cases identified by the coders involved claims by WEF officials about the nature of the Forum itself. For example, Forum spokesman Charles McLean described the WEF as a gathering to address "the big problems confronting humankind." The same article contained this journalistic response sequence:

> Not everyone quite agrees with the forum's self-assessment. . . . "What we are talking about is democratic involvement in the important decisions that affect everyone's lives all over the world," said Kevin Skvorak, a carpenter from Brooklyn who is a member of Another World is Possible. In his view, "These decisions are currently made by a gang of the richest people in the world and the politicians they control and pay for." (Barry, 2002a)

As noted earlier, United Nations General Secretary Kofi Annan called on the Forum to address challenges from below, warning, "Business cannot afford to be seen as the problem." The reporter added that "Mr. Annan's comments seemed a fitting conclusion to an . . . event that was often portrayed by outsiders as a gathering of the world's richest and most powerful men shaping a global agenda from which the weak and poor were excluded" (Schmeman, 2002b). This passage offers limited recognition of unidentified "weak and poor"; however, it does not
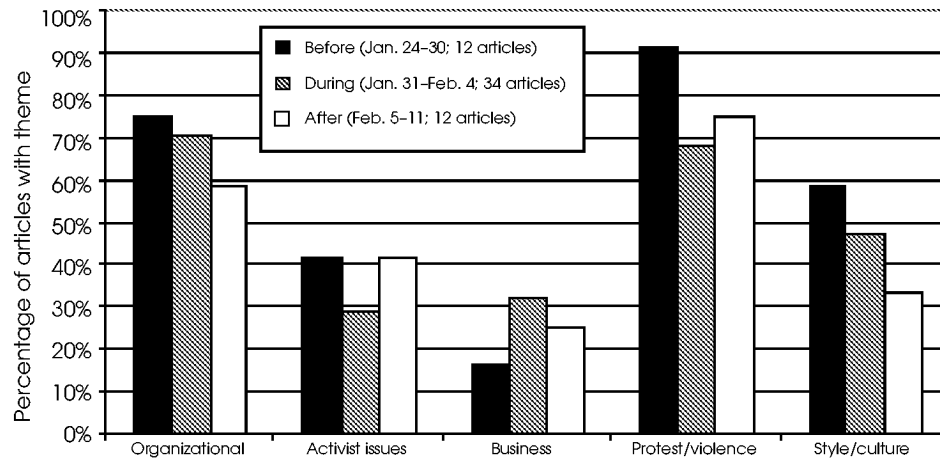
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**Figure 5. 2002 *New York Times* coverage themes: Before, during, and after the Forum.**

invite or report responses from identified sources to particular issues or claims. Thus responsiveness was limited to a handful of general claims from or about the two sides about their motives, but there were no direct exchanges on the numerous contested issues pertaining to globalization that provided the reason for the two grand networks to assemble. This failure of journalists to elicit mutual reactions may seem puzzling in light of (a) the large number of reporters who were (b) assigned to cover so many accessible sources (c) with well-prepared messages (d) that the other side might easily address. The absence of the reaction stories that occur routinely in coverage of same-status officialdom suggests that journalistic routines not only limit the recognition of lower status actors but also preempt responsiveness and dialogue across different strata of the public sphere.

## Discussion

Perhaps the greatest irony in the journalistic construction of the globalization debate is that WEF elites were given disproportionate credit for issues that activists had long before defined and attempted to get into the news on their own terms. Even if the WEF had begun to move its discourse in the direction of its critics, the failure to report whether opponents found that shift credible limited the audience's capacity to judge different sides of important issues. Not only did journalists fail to invite mutual responsiveness about globalization issues, but the disproportionate recognition of WEF sources nicely fit the goals of an ongoing WEF public relations campaign. The increasing WEF focus on activist issues makes less sense as a move toward engaging its critics in open dialogue than as an attempt to shift its public image. There is evidence that the organization began a

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rebranding operation following a Gallup International poll that disclosed very low levels of trust in political and economic institutions worldwide. The WEF deployed its own survey in the fall of 2002 (WEF, *Survey on Trust*, n.d.), revealing even lower levels of trust in leaders. The "Building Trust" theme of the 2003 meeting was openly acknowledged by WEF leaders as a show of concern for how its membership was perceived in world opinion (WEF press release, 2003).

Image campaigns generally involve spinning the news media, and their effectiveness depends on whether journalists and news organizations are receptive to the spin. The same journalistic practices that marginalized the globalization opponents from their own issue agenda also favored reporting the rebranding story on WEF terms. For example, on February 4, 2002, the Associated Press ran a headline announcing "World Economic Forum Takes Left Turn" (Krane, 2002). The *Washington Post* ran a story that could not have been written better by a WEF publicist. The headline heralded "A Revolution in Reverse at Econ Forum: As Capitalists Co-Opt Message, Protesters Have Little to Say." The breathless story proclaimed that the WEF had gone "green, groovy and indigenous" (Powell & White, 2002). A similar *NYT* article also played into the WEF appropriation of the activist issue agenda, from the headline ("Anarchy has an Image Problem"), to providing an opportunity for WEF spokesperson Charles McLean to spin both the Forum and its critics. He identified the WEF demonstrators as "anarchists" bent on using violent confrontation to make the news. In contrast, he said that "[t]he people who really care about the issues—about the environment, inequality in the world, health care—are inside the meeting talking about ways to improve the situation" (Fries, 2002). One prominent journalist even went so far as to make WEF founder Klaus Schwab the real radical in the story, writing that he "has sought to bring some of the street anger that has confronted economic summits in recent years into his exclusive gathering" (Schmemann, 2002a). Another reporter quoted a WEF participant as saying: "The world inside is so much more like the way the people on the outside wish it would be than they realize" (Baker, 2002b).

The Forum did make a show of inviting some critics inside, from rock star Bono to select NGO officials. In reality, few of those left on the outside felt that the Forum had changed its mission as much as its public image. In a speech at the 2003 World Social Forum, Noam Chomsky chided the WEF communication offensive as proof that the "Masters of the Universe . . . know they are in trouble" (Chomsky, 2003). Chomsky, like most critics responding to WEF claims, had to use alternative media channels that reached few opinion makers or average citizens.

The larger theoretical story here is about the public media sphere and the possibilities for dialogue across two large, media-oriented, opposing social networks aimed at convincing larger audiences of the value of their ideas. When the WEF meetings and the counterdemonstrations moved to New York, press attention was extremely high. Mindful of the importance of press framing for their communication success, the protest organizers effectively enforced a no-violence policy and concentrated on getting out their messages about global social justice. The potential for a deliberative media outcome seemed even greater when WEF

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organizers announced that they were concerned about criticisms of their neoliberal globalization policies. Instead of taking the claims of each side to the other for reaction, the press framed the protesters in ways that limited their legitimacy, marginalized their status, and ultimately gave ownership of their issues to the higher status actors on the terms those actors chose.

These construction patterns all shifted the globalization debate away from a bottom-up discursive sphere in which more diverse voices could have been recognized and introduced on their own terms. As a result, there was little basis to move even to the next step of deliberation and seek responsive dialogue across the participants. Such journalistic choices are not likely to be found at the conscious level of individual reporters, but embedded in the routines of the profession and news organizations and understood as good journalism (Tuchman, 1978). A story on the last day of the meetings captured the spirit of such journalism, as the reporter wrote:

> The demonstrators who came to New York to rail against the World Economic Forum expressed exhilaration, vindication, and yet frustration, saying that their cause had produced larger-than-expected crowds and had defied predictions of violence—but that their voices had fallen on largely indifferent ears. (Jacobs, 2002)

The WEF elites may have been indifferent, but the irony in this account is that the press tacitly legitimized that indifference by failing to present the protesters' claims for a response.

We conclude from this analysis that the public media sphere is highly managed—in this case, actively by WEF officials and passively by journalists who systematically deferred to WEF participants over their critics. We offer our public sphere framework as a general method for assessing the degree to which such news management opens or restricts public dialogue in different political situations. In our case study, public sphere management created the thin appearance of inclusiveness as journalists granted access to different groups, yet initiated no dialogue between them. The first limit on dialogue was the different journalistic recognition given to higher and lower status actors, differentially assigning ownership and definition to the issues they claimed to embrace. The news actively constructed the grassroots globalization critics as marginal, largely nameless scruffians who threatened civil order with violence, even though little disorder actually occurred. Such narratives appear to be stock elements of journalistic storytelling, just as accounts of beautiful celebrities and power brokers privilege the claims of elites. The result is that journalists actively maintain the boundaries of different social and political encounters by expanding or restricting the degrees of recognition and mutual response opportunities among the participants. We hypothesize that these three defining elements of public spheres—access, recognition, and responsiveness—will vary systematically across news accounts involving different combinations of status, authority, office, and other markers of social and political identity.

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