

Introverted Locals or World Citizens?

A Quantitative Study of Interest in Local and Foreign News in Traditional Media and on the Internet

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Abstract

Claiming that interest in local vs. foreign news is one way of measuring orientation towards local and greater society, this paper utilizes a Norwegian survey with questions about interest in news to identify groups with different orientations. The study builds on Merton's (1949) local/cosmopolitan dichotomy, but takes this further by claiming that rather than two, there are four different ways of orienting oneself towards local and greater society on the basis of local/foreign news interest. The author suggests that a categorizing of individuals into either 'locals', 'cosmopolitans', 'local cosmopolitans' or the 'disconnected' is a more fruitful way of dealing with this matter. The results show that gender, age, education and ties to one's domicile may help explain which type of individual constitutes each of the four categories. Comparing traditional media with the Internet, the study shows that the level of interest in news on the Internet is generally lower, but that the patterns tied to the traditional media are transferred relatively unchanged to the Internet.

Keywords: local news, foreign news, cosmopolitan, news omnivores, news audience, gender

Introduction

News has been claimed to have an important role in integrating, enlightening and mobilizing citizens in a democratic society. Since the early days of media research, it has been claimed that the news media have had an important function in integrating individuals within their local community (Park 1923). Furthermore, news interest at different geographical levels has also been claimed to be an expression of how individuals relate to the world outside their local community. In his work on local and cosmopolitan "influentials", Merton (1949/68) found that those he defined as 'locals' were more interested in local news, thereby expressing a primary interest in local society. Those he called 'cosmopolitans' were more interested in 'national' news, and showed a broader interest in and orientation towards national society. The idea of local and cosmopolitan orientations towards society, and how interest in local and national media reflects this, forms the basis for the present study of interest in news. The scale of culture and social structure has grown since Merton presented his theory of 'locals' and 'cosmopolitans' in the 1940s. What was regarded as cosmopolitanism when Merton conducted his study may be regarded as a moderate form of localism today (Hannerz 1996: 102). Increased mobility (travelling and moving across nations) and new media technology have made

us more global. Young people are more likely to see themselves as cosmopolitan citizens of the globe, identifying with their nation, the continent, or even the world as a whole (Norris 2000). In order to use interest in news media today as a method of understanding local or cosmopolitan orientations, one has to take into account interest in what is happening beyond the national level.

Foreign and international news sources are crucial in informing people about what is happening outside their community, and are important as a means of understanding an increasingly complicated world (Biltereyst 2001). While interest in local news has been the subject of several research projects (see, e.g., McLeod et al. 1996; Moy et al. 2004), there has been surprisingly little interest in foreign news audience (Biltereyst 2001). Interest in news of this kind may be an expression of an individual's orientation towards the greater world society.

The present study shows how a transfer of Merton's local-cosmopolitan dichotomy into a global context can be useful when studying interest in both local and foreign news media. Interest, or lack thereof, in local and foreign news in different news media will be examined as different kinds of orientations towards, and interest in, local or greater society.

The various news media give priority to and present local and foreign news in different ways. Access to, and familiarity with, new media technology such as the Internet also varies. Preferences shown for the various forms of media may be important when local and foreign news are considered to be of interest (or otherwise) to the audience. On this basis, I will explore whether the interest in different kinds of news varies according to medium preferences.

Because local and foreign news media have been claimed to be useful to the individual (and society) in different ways, it will also be of interest to examine whether news media interest varies based on different social groups in society. This will enable a discussion of how interest in local and foreign news contributes in processes leading to social inequality. One relevant question when considering patterns of local and foreign news interest is: *Does interest in local and foreign news vary across different social groups?*

In order to answer this and other questions, data from a Norwegian Media Survey, TNS Gallup 2005-2006, are used. The survey contained questions about interest in local and foreign news in the traditional media (newspapers, radio and television) and on the Internet.

Locals, Cosmopolitans, Local Cosmopolitans and the Disconnected

Despite the fact that Merton was mainly concerned with the study of 'influentials' on a national scale, I maintain that his theoretical framework could also serve as a relevant point of departure for a discussion about the general public's media use and orientation towards local or greater society. But, use of the terms 'local' and 'cosmopolitan' has sometimes been confusing,¹ and I concur with Skrbis et al. (2004), who claimed that cosmopolitanism needs to be pinned down empirically to avoid becoming all things to all people. Like Merton (1949/68), I view news interest as one way of empirically measuring localism and cosmopolitanism.² But as mentioned in the introduction, the cosmopolitanism of today's world needs to be related to the greater world. Whereas interest

in local news indicates a local orientation, a truly cosmopolitan orientation needs to incorporate interest in news from foreign countries.

Some studies treat cosmopolitanism and localism as distinct and mutually exclusive. I suggest that being a local does not necessarily have to be the opposite of being a cosmopolitan. Some people may be similar to the kind of ‘cultural omnivorousness’ described in Peterson and Kern (1996). On the other hand, it is also possible to be neither local nor cosmopolitan in terms of one’s news interest. My recent study (Elvestad 2006) of newspaper reading among students indicates that there are groups of people who are not very interested in news media at all.³ Rather, they should be categorized as ‘disconnected’ in their news interest, more so than ‘locals’ or ‘cosmopolitans’.

In the following, I suggest that the local-cosmopolitan dichotomy should be replaced by four typologies related to the local-cosmopolitan dimension. *Locals* are those who are very interested in local news and not terribly interested in foreign news. The *cosmopolitans* are very interested in foreign news and show less interest in local news. Those who are very interested in both local and foreign news – the ‘news omnivores’ – will be called ‘*local cosmopolitans*’.⁴ The final group comprises those who are not very interested in either local or foreign news and may be defined as *the disconnected*. It should be noted that a lack of interest in local or/and foreign news is not necessarily related to involvement or engagement in local and foreign issues, but could result from dissatisfaction with the media content. But, as mentioned above, the topic of this study is news interest, and not interest in local society and/or the world outside more generally.

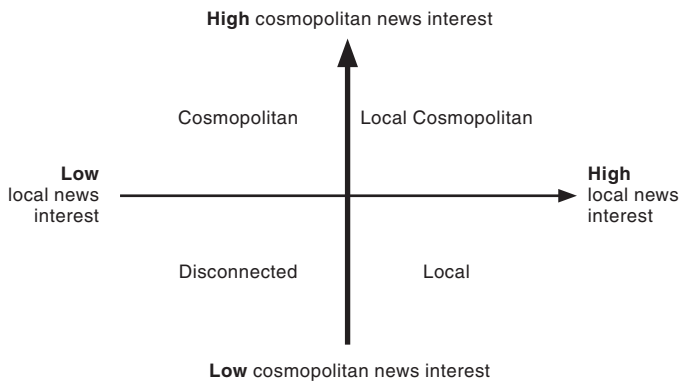
A preference for any particular category of news has not only been used to distinguish between different orientations towards local and/or greater society; several scholars have stated that media use may serve as a resource for individuals in social interaction. Partly overlapping media use is a precondition for the viewer’s ability to use media content in conversation (Fiske 1987; Høyer 1989). Cultural tastes have been claimed to shape and maintain personal networks (Lizardo 2006). Merton’s study shows how the local-cosmopolitan dimension can be relevant in a discussion about media use and social relations. Merton (1949/68) found that the influence of the locals rested not so much on what they knew, as who they knew. By contrast, cosmopolitans based whatever influence they had on knowledge less tied to other individuals, or to the unique community setting. They came equipped with special knowledge, and they could leave and take it with them without devaluing it. According to Merton, the different types of influence are reflected in media use – locals preferred local newspapers, and the cosmopolitans preferred national newspapers.

Inspired by Bourdieu’s work on cultural capital, Holt (1998) used ‘taste of news’ to distinguish between individuals with high and low cultural capital, where local news is associated with low cultural capital. Holt (1998) defined the locals as introverts with low cultural capital, and the cosmopolitans as extroverts with high cultural capital. Others, such as Hannerz (1996), are concerned with cosmopolitanism as a kind of competence, without discussing whether there could be something called a local cultural competence/capital. As I understand Merton’s (1949/68) theory of local and cosmopolitan influentials, the influentials seem to have different kinds of cultural capital or competence useful in different social fields. In the present study, I suggest that locals, cosmopolitans and local cosmopolitans can be expressions of different types of competence, all of which the ‘disconnected’ are deprived of. Lizardo (2006) showed how different kinds of cultural

taste contribute to shaping different kinds of personal networks, and how the strength of these networks varies. Relating this to news media, one might say that local news media content could be useful for conversation among citizens in local communities, while foreign news could contribute to shaping networks on levels above the local community. Individuals who are not involved in culture consumption are more likely to be disconnected from the others and forgo all of the benefits that come from network relations and that have been glossed under the banner of social capital (Lizardo 2006: 800). The local cosmopolitans are in the most advantageous position, as they may convert their complementary cultural resources into both local and cosmopolitan networks. In a global perspective, being an ideal citizen signifies being a local cosmopolitan – an individual who is very interested and informed about both local and foreign affairs.

Figure 1 shows how the typologies of local, cosmopolitan, local cosmopolitan and disconnected are related to interest in local and/or foreign news. This figure is dynamic in the sense that individuals can change their ‘status’. Furthermore, the figure is also open to nuances within the four categories.

Figure 1. ‘Local’ and ‘Cosmopolitan’ News Interest



Merton (1949/68) emphasized how diverse types of communities are reflected in the varying proportions of local and cosmopolitan influentials, and how technical and social change will alter these proportions. What does existing research lead us to expect about the shares of locals, cosmopolitans, local cosmopolitans and disconnected in a Norwegian sample? How does interest in news media vary according to type of media and social group? The ‘informed citizen’ is incorporated as an ideal in the Norwegian population, and following the news is seen as a citizen’s duty (cf. Hagen 1997). This ideal, however, has been challenged, a view supported by the reduction in general news interest (Vaage 2007). Despite this, there is reason to state that Norwegians generally show a high level of interest in news media. Norway has one of the highest levels of newspaper circulation in the world (WAN 2006). The most important characteristic of the large majority of Norwegian newspapers is their local character (Høst 1999: 110). As for foreign news/news about international relations, international studies and especially American studies have indicated how the interest in such news has declined (Hallin 1996; Moisy 1997; Schudson & Tiffit 2005) and that news of this sort is neglected by the media (Biltereyst 2001; Hamilton 2004). This observation is, however, not quite clear,

and may be more representative of the US than of Europe (Van Gompel & Biltreyst 1998 in Biltreyst 2001), although scholars have identified trends of Americanisation in European media (Hallin & Mancini 2004). In Norway, one study shows that foreign news constitutes less than 16 per cent of the total news coverage in Norwegian dailies (Allern 2001). While a study of news in the national TV channels TV2 and NRK shows that correspondingly 29 and 34 per cent of the news can be classified as foreign news (Waldahl et al. 2002). Waldahl et al. (2002), in their study of TV2 and NRK, found a small decline in foreign news coverage from 1993 to 2000 in both channels. Against the background of such conditions, I expect that interest in news in general (both local and foreign news) will be high among the respondents in the Norwegian sample. I also expect the population to be more interested in local than in foreign news.

The described difference in the proportion of foreign news in newspapers and television supports the hypothesis that media type may influence the extent to which the media are used as news sources for local and foreign news. Recent research claims that, for international information, television news is regarded as the main source (Hagen 1997), and the fact that a large proportion of newspapers are local (Høst 2007) should indicate that newspapers work as a local news source. But what kinds of expectations is it reasonable to have in relation to local and foreign news on the Internet? On the one hand, the Internet in itself is a global medium in the sense that news from the entire world becomes readily available. Hjarvard (2001) also stated that the Internet challenges the traditional news services in many ways. The interactivity involved in use of Internet news is one factor making the boundaries between national, foreign, and international news media more opaque and less obvious (Hjarvard 2001). Further, what constitutes local news becomes less obvious. On the other hand, the established news media at the local and national levels are the main providers of media content on the Internet. Further, Selwyn et al. (2005: 23-24) concluded that the Internet is unlikely to lead to a new, equitable and efficient version of modern society, but is more likely to reflect the same society as ever – just via different means. This gives us reason to expect that the interest in local and foreign news does not vary greatly between traditional media and the Internet.

Various social groups do not use new media technology to the same extent, and they show interest in different media content (van Rees & Eijk 2003). This gives us reason to expect that interest in foreign and local news will vary across different social groups. But, how will it vary? Gender and age have been claimed to be important explanatory variables in studies of people's media repertoires (van Rees & van Eijk 2003). Additional studies have shown that women (see, e.g., Elvestad and Blekesaune 2008) and age groups under 'the middle ages' (see, e.g., Lauf 2001) are generally less interested in news. Previous research also supports the hypothesis that gender and age matter when trying to explain an individual's different orientations towards local and/or greater society. Women identify with their local community to a larger extent than men do, and younger people tend to identify more with global communities than older people do (Norris 2000). In his well-known study of television audiences, Morley (1992) found that men are more interested in news programmes in general. But he also found that this pattern varies when it comes to local news, which a number of women claim to like. Women say that they do not understand what international economic news is about and, as it has no experiential bearing on their lives, they are not interested in it (Morley 1992: 157).

Education has been claimed to be of great importance to cultural taste and cultural capital (Bourdieu 1993). Further, those with less education are more likely to be local rather than cosmopolitan (McLeod et al. 1996; Norris 2000). In her study of television news audiences, Hagen (1994) found that manual workers perceived local and national news as more relevant than foreign news. On the other hand, those with a higher education expressed a desire for more and ‘better’ foreign news coverage (Hagen 1994). Changing highbrow taste from snob to omnivore (Peterson and Kern 1996) could indicate that higher education correlates with news ‘omnivoreness’.

Several studies (Stamm 1985; Skogerbø & Lundby 1988; Høst 1999, Elvestad 2006) have shown that interest in news is related to different kinds of ties to the community. Length of residence, small probability of moving, and subjective community ties show a positive correlation with interest in local news media. Consequently, there is an expectation of a positive correlation between these measures of community belonging and local news interest. But could this correlation be turned around when we study interest in foreign news? A recent study (Elvestad 2006) implies that an increasingly subjective community boundedness also increases the interest in news in general, not just in local issues.

For Internet news, the medium itself seems to play a large structuring role because the media are relatively novel and require specific skills on the part of their users. The increasing use of Internet news is most obvious among the younger age groups and among those with a high level of education (Vaage 2007). A number of researchers have found that, for some women, not using the Internet can be explained by their feelings of ‘guilt’ when they spend time on the computer at the expense of other members of the family (Burke 2003; Selwyn 2006). Perhaps it is easier for women to combine family duties with reading a newspaper, listening to the news on the radio or watching television news.

In the previous paragraphs, I have tried to show how national differences and media type may be relevant in explaining the way locals, cosmopolitans, local cosmopolitans and the disconnected are distributed within the Norwegian sample. I have also tried to show how gender, age, level of education, and ties to local community may correlate with people’s interest in local and foreign news. As far as I know, no studies have been undertaken employing a fourfold typology based on interest in foreign and local news. For this reason, it is not immediately obvious what characterizes the locals, local cosmopolitans, cosmopolitans and the disconnected.

Data and Method

In order to shed light on local, local-cosmopolitan, cosmopolitan news media interest (and the lack thereof), I use data from the TNS Gallup⁵, *Forbruker & Media undersøkelsen* (The Consumer and Media Survey). This survey has been carried out annually since 1994. I use data collected between July 2005 and August 2006. The sample was collected according to the following procedure. First, 30,000 persons were extracted from a representative⁶ sample of the Norwegian population, 15 years and above, for a telephone interview. At the end of each interview, the respondents were asked if they wanted to participate in a postal survey. In the second stage, around 20,000 persons received the 98-page postal questionnaire that included questions about interest in news media. I use data from this postal

survey in the analysis. The survey had a response rate of about 50 per cent (N=9483). This study has a very large sample, but the vast dropout rate is a problem if the purpose is to generalize findings to the Norwegian population. Hence, this must be considered a non-random sample. Because the TNS Gallup survey was the only available survey that could shed light on my topic of research, I chose to use it with these preconditions.

Dependent variables. The operationalization of local, cosmopolitan, news omnivore and disconnected was undertaken using the questions: ‘How interested are you in local news...(on the Internet/in radio/in television/in newspapers)?’;⁷ and ‘How interested are you in foreign news...(on the Internet/in radio/in television/in newspapers)?’.⁸ Respondents who showed great interest in local and/or foreign news were expected to express a different orientation than those with less or no interest in these news media.⁹ Those who answered ‘very interested’ in local news were defined as local in their orientation; those who answered ‘very interested’ in foreign news were defined as cosmopolitan in their orientation. In the present study, respondents who said they are not very interested or have not answered the question¹⁰ are treated as disconnected. The analysis variables are presented in Appendix, page 123.

Interest in Local and Foreign News in Traditional Media and on the Internet

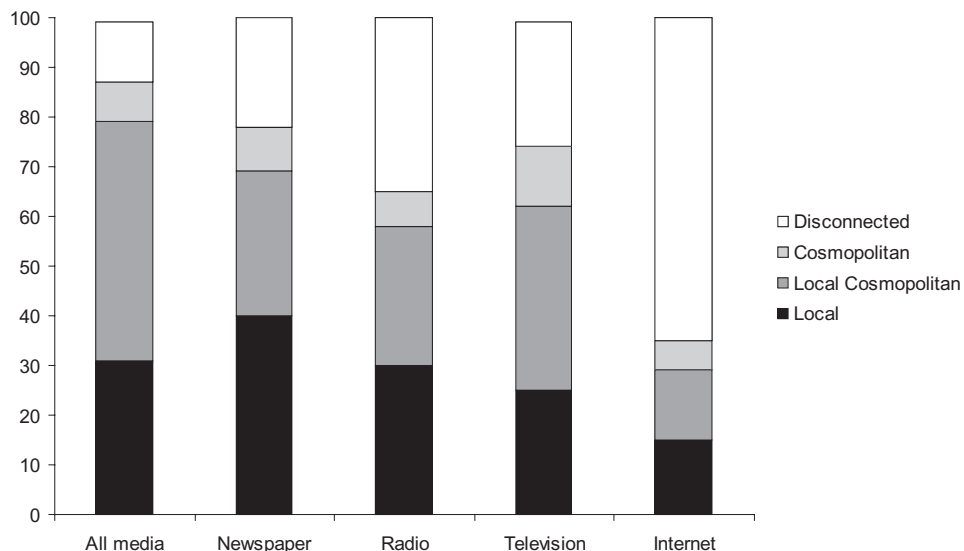
In 2006, 229 different newspapers were published at 183 different locations in Norway (Høst 2007). Since the mid-1980s, when the national broadcasting monopoly was ended, the number of national and local broadcasters has increased. In 2006, there were six national radio channels, and five television channels offering a news service. In addition, there were 24 local television stations and 249 local radio stations (Medienorge 2007), many offering local news. Since the mid-1990s, there has also been a growth in news on the Internet. In many cases, Internet news is published by the traditional media. For instance, the Norwegian national broadcasting company, NRK, has a news service on the Internet. Of the 229 newspapers in Norway, 225 are represented on the Internet, and of these, 196 newspapers offer an online news service (Høst 2007).

Analysing the local and cosmopolitan news interest patterns in the sample, I find that the news interest is high, as expected: 88 per cent of respondents claimed that they are ‘very interested’ in either local or foreign news or both, in at least one medium. Figure 2 shows how the local, cosmopolitan, local cosmopolitan and disconnected are distributed across the media.

Most local content in the media (cf. Allern 2001; Waldahl et al 2002) is reflected in news media interest. The findings illustrated in Figure 2 show a clear tendency towards a greater interest in local news than foreign news. This indicates that the majority of the sample can be categorized as locals or local cosmopolitans. The figure also shows that those interested in both local and foreign news constitute the largest group. The smallest of the groups comprises those with a high interest in foreign news, but with less interest in local news. When we look at the ‘all media’ bar, we see that 48 per cent of the sample can be classified as local cosmopolitans, 31 per cent as locals, 8 per cent as cosmopolitans and 12 per cent as disconnected.

The hypothesis that news media interest varies according to media type is also supported by the findings presented in Figure 2. Interest in local and/or foreign news is high-

Figure 2. *Locals, Cosmopolitans, Local Cosmopolitans and Disconnected in the Sample (percentage)*



est in the traditional media (newspapers, radio and television). Local interest is greatest in newspapers, and the proportion of local cosmopolitans and cosmopolitans is largest for television. Interest in both local and foreign news on the Internet is substantially lower than in the traditional media. As much as 65 per cent of respondents are not very interested in either local or foreign news on the Internet. This is somewhat surprising, because access to the Internet is high in Norway (Vaage 2007), plus the fact that the Internet offers a great deal of local and foreign news. Despite the global character of the Internet, interest in local and foreign news seems to follow almost the same pattern as in traditional media. Among the 35 per cent who are not disconnected, the proportion of locals and local cosmopolitans shows that among those interested in Internet news, a smaller proportion is more interested in foreign than in local news.

News Interest in Different Social Groups

In the following, characteristics of the respondents such as age, gender, education and orientation towards the local community are included in the analysis to further explore the social characteristics of the locals, the local cosmopolitans, the cosmopolitans and the disconnected. Table 1 shows how the proportion of locals, news omnivores, cosmopolitans and those classified as disconnected is distributed in relation to gender, age, education and different variables characterizing orientation towards place of residence.

Table 1 gives an impression of how interest in foreign and local news varies across the values of the explanatory variables. A higher proportion of women than men show greater interest in local than foreign news and are included in the category of locals, while more men are very interested in foreign news, and thereby characterized as cosmopolitans. The age distinction is clearest among news omnivores and the disconnected. The table shows that the proportions of disconnected and cosmopolitan decrease with

Table 1. Share of Locals, Cosmopolitans, Local Cosmopolitans and Disconnected. All media. (percentage)

	Local Cosmopolitan	Local	Cosmopolitan	Dis- connected	Total
Men	50	25	12	13	100 (4358)
Women	45	37	6	13	101 (5125)
<i>Age:</i>					
12-19 years	14	28	12	46	100 (292)
20-29 years	28	30	15	27	100 (752)
30-39 years	33	39	10	19	101 (1386)
40-49 years	41	38	8	13	100 (1703)
50-59 years	50	32	8	10	100 (2296)
60 years +	62	25	7	6	100 (3054)
<i>Education level:</i>					
'elementary school'	41	40	4	16	101 (1313)
'college'	44	39	5	12	100 (3918)
'University/university college up to 4 years'	50	27	10	14	101 (2510)
'University/university college more than 4 years'	56	15	19	11	101 (1699)
Community orientations					
<i>Affective community belonging^a</i>					
'very weak'	36	23	21	20	100 (140)
'some weak'	40	22	18	20	100 (268)
neither	42	29	12	18	101 (1948)
'some strong'	47	32	9	13	101 (3212)
'very strong'	52	34	5	9	100 (3667)
<i>Length of residence</i>					
0-4 years	37	28	14	21	100 (901)
5-9 years	42	30	12	17	101 (821)
10-14 years	46	29	12	14	101 (655)
15-19 years	37	30	11	23	101 (832)
20 years or more	51	33	7	9	100 (6018)
<i>Planning to relocate</i>					
'Very improbable'	52	33	6	9	100 (5067)
'Improbable'	44	34	10	13	101 (1745)
Neither	41	29	12	17	99 (1433)
'probable'	40	23	16	21	100 (482)
'very probable'	35	21	20	23	99 (494)

^aHow strongly do you feel connected to the municipal/city of residence?

age while the proportion of local cosmopolitans increases with age. At the same time, the middle age group seems more likely to be locals than the older and the younger age groups. There is also a difference between those with low and high education levels with regard to news interest. There is obviously a positive correlation between high education level and interest in foreign news. Only 15 per cent of those with more than four years of university or college education are more interested in local news than in foreign news.

On the other hand, 40 per cent of those with only elementary level schooling are more interested in local than in foreign news. Among those with less education, we also find a higher proportion of the disconnected.

Community ties also explain some of the differences in news interest. Those who feel a strong affinity to their community are more often locals, but this feeling also seems to influence a more general interest in news (cf. Elvestad 2006), as the majority of those with very strong affective community belonging fall into the group of local cosmopolitans. A weaker affective belonging seems to increase the possibility of being disconnected or cosmopolitan. The length of residence can also explain some of the differences in news interest. The distinction is most obvious between those who have lived in the community for 20 years or more. They are more frequently locals and local cosmopolitans than the others are. Whether the respondents plan to move away from their present place of residence also seems to matter for their interest in news. While the great majority of those not planning to move are locals or local cosmopolitans, those who are most likely to move are more likely to be cosmopolitans or disconnected. In brief, a lack of interest in local news is related to weaker ties to the community (cf. Stamm 1985; Skogerbø & Lundby 1988).

Table 1 does not indicate which of the explanatory variables explain more about the variation in news media interest, or whether the explanatory variables affect each other mutually. For instance, the correlation between community ties and news interest could be caused by age. To test covariance between the explanatory variables, I use a regression analysis. Because the dependent variables (locals, cosmopolitans, local cosmopolitans and disconnected) are dummy variables, I use a logistic regression analysis technique. This allows us to explore the strength and direction of the correlation between falling into each of the 'local-cosmopolitan' typologies for different values on the explanatory variables when controlling for the effect of the other explanatory variables. The B-coefficients tell us something about which explanatory variables have a greater effect, and the direction of the correlation. Negative B-coefficients show a negative correlation between a high value on the explanatory variable and the chance of being categorized into the given news media interest group, and vice versa.

To show whether the power of the explanatory variables varies between news interest in traditional media and on the Internet, Table 2 presents an analysis of each individual media.¹¹

The findings in Table 2 support the hypothesis that the explanatory variables gender, age, education and orientation towards domicile can explain interest in local and/or foreign news, also when the mutual impact these news interest types have on each other is accounted for. Education, gender, and orientation towards domicile are the factors that best explain whether the respondents are categorized as local cosmopolitans. Men, those with higher education levels and those with strong ties to their local community are more commonly categorized as belonging to this group.

Gender, education and local attachment are also the most significant variables when it comes to explaining who can be categorized as locals. Women, those with low education levels and without plans of moving are largely categorized as belonging to this group.

Education and gender are the most relevant factors in explaining the composition of the cosmopolitan group, but local attachment is also strongly correlated. Men, the highly educated and those with low degrees of local attachment, and those who have plans to

Table 2. Local Cosmopolitans, Locals, Cosmopolitan or Disconnected. Traditional Media and the Internet. B-coefficients. Logistic regression. N=9160

	Local Cosmopolitan		Local		Cosmopolitan		Disconnected	
	Traditional Media	Internet	Traditional Media	Internet	Traditional Media	Internet	Traditional Media	Internet
Woman	-0,10 *	-0,38 **	0,52 **	0,15 **	-0,73 **	-0,83 **	-0,25 **	0,33 **
Age	0,04 **	0,004	0,08 **	0,06 **	-0,08 **	-0,08 **	-0,05 **	0,01 **
Age ²	---	---	-0,001 **	-0,001 **	0,001 **	0,001 **	---	---
Education	0,25 **	0,20 **	-0,52 **	-0,32 **	0,67 **	0,68 **	-0,06	-0,12 **
<i>Orientation towards domicile:</i>								
Affective community belonging	0,19 **	0,17 **	0,03	0,11 **	-0,24 **	-0,14 **	-0,25 **	-0,10 **
Length of residence	-0,03	-0,03	0,04 *	0,04	-0,03	-0,05	0,02	0,01
Planning to relocate	0,05 *	0,12 **	-0,15 **	-0,05	0,20 **	0,18 **	-0,02	-0,09 **
Constant	-3,38 **	-3,19 **	-0,97 **	-2,39 **	-1,36 **	-1,68 **	1,55 **	0,79 **
Nagelkerke R ²	11.7	2.0	11.2	3.6	13.3	12.6	12.0	2.3

**sign. 0.01 level

*sign. 0.05 level

move, are more frequently found in this category. Women's stronger orientation towards the local level and the corresponding tendency for men to be more concerned about international affairs were also confirmed when I analysed interest in local and international politics in this sample.¹² This analysis shows that women are more interested than men are in local politics, and the opposite applies to international politics. This could imply that women's greater interest in local news is associated with their broader interest in local politics, and not just an interest in (gossip about) people they know.

The findings shown in Table 2 imply that most of the characteristics of the locals, cosmopolitans, local cosmopolitans and disconnected are similar, independent of whether I measure these localism–cosmopolitanism typologies by news interest in the traditional media or news interest on the Internet.¹³ One obvious difference is that the B-coefficients for age and gender have the opposite sign in the analyses of traditional media and the Internet. This means that while women and older people are more often categorized as disconnected in relation to the Internet, men and younger people are more frequently categorized as disconnected in relation to traditional media. Figures 3 a to h show the probability of falling into each of the news typologies for men and women in different age groups. The lines in Figures 3 a to h are based on predicted values for different age groups and gender, whereas the other explanatory variables have been given the average value. Figures 3 a to d show the likelihood of having a different interest in news in traditional media, while Figures 3 e to h show the same for the Internet.

Figures 3d and 3h emphasize the findings illustrated in Figure 2, showing that interest in both local and foreign news is less on the Internet than in traditional media. If we look for gender differences, we find that women are more likely to be disconnected regarding news on the Internet. Further, there is a tendency towards men being more cosmopolitan and women more local, in all age groups. The increased probability for women to be local is most obvious when we consider interest in traditional news media (Figure 3b), while the correlation is also significant regarding both traditional media and the Internet and for cosmopolitans in both medium types. This indicates that the gendered pattern of interest in local and foreign news is transferred to the Internet. Therefore, if more women were to start using the Internet, this pattern would presumably be further emphasized.

The age differences are most obvious in Figures 3a and 3d. The lines tell us that the probability of having a high interest in both local and foreign news increases with age. In Figures 3b, c, f and g, the influence from age is curvilinear (see also age^2 in Table 2). A valid interpretation here is that the youngest and the oldest are more likely to be cosmopolitans and less likely to be locals than are the middle-aged age groups. Age explains more of the variation in traditional media news interest than it does in relation to the Internet. Again, this could be explained by the homogenous character of those who are interested in news on the Internet. Women's and older people's lower level of Internet access (Vaage 2007) may explain some of this difference, although not all, as the access level does not vary that much.¹⁴ Further, interest in news from the Internet has been claimed to compensate for low interest in news in the traditional media among young people. Comparing the figures for great interest in both local and foreign news (local cosmopolitan interest in news), in traditional media (Figure 3a) and on the Internet (Figure 3e), these kinds of assumptions are not supported by the present study.

Figure 3a. Local Cosmopolitan. Traditional Media

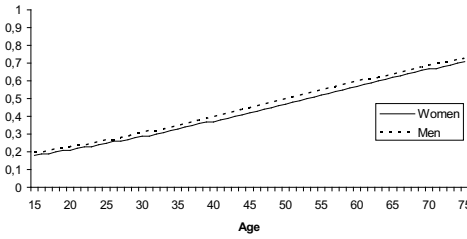


Figure 3e. Local Cosmopolitan. Internet

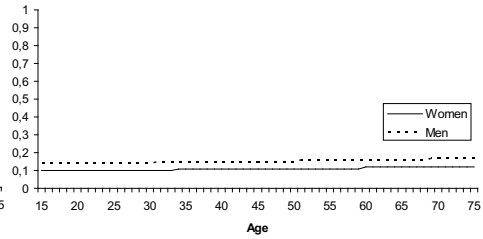


Figure 3b. Local. Traditional Media

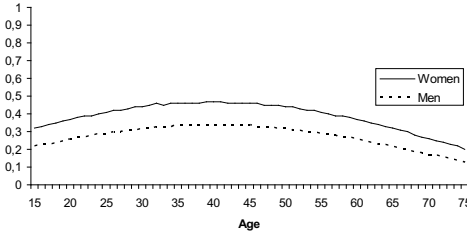


Figure 3f. Local. Internet

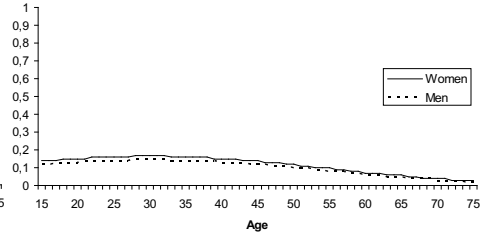


Figure 3c. Cosmopolitan. Traditional Media

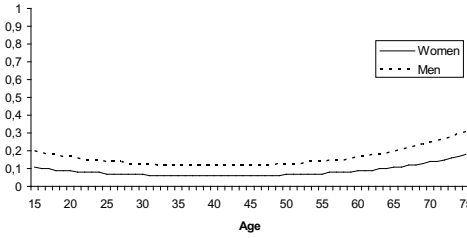


Figure 3g. Cosmopolitan. Internet

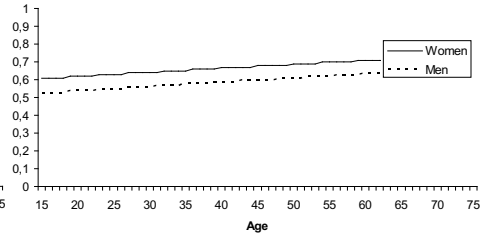


Figure 3d. Disconnected. Traditional Media

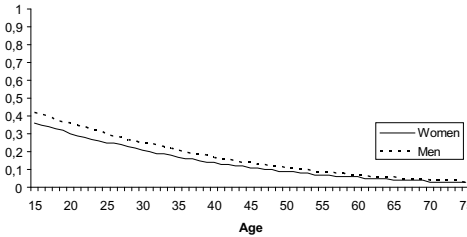
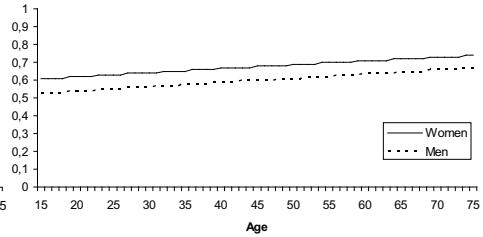


Figure 3h. Disconnected. Internet



The figures also show that, for the time being, there are minor differences regarding interest in Internet news. Presumably, this can be explained by the more homogeneous group of individuals using the Internet as news source. One could question whether this pattern of small differences among men and women, and across age regarding local and foreign news, will last when more individuals start using the Internet in general, and Internet news in particular. There is also a possibility that the Internet will never succeed in being a significant news source for a wider range of the population, but I find this very improbable.

Discussion

The present article commenced with the argument that localism and cosmopolitanism can be measured by interest in local and foreign news, as suggested by Merton (1949/68) in his theory of local and cosmopolitan “influentials”. Unlike Merton’s local–cosmopolitan dichotomy, it is suggested here that four typologies are useful for understanding differing orientations towards local and/or greater society. This is addressed by analysing the news interest of the general population (not only that of the influentials). The article uses data from a Norwegian media survey. The population is divided into four typologies regarding news interest: the locals, the cosmopolitans, the local cosmopolitans and the disconnected. First of all, the findings show that only a minority (12 per cent) are not very interested in either local or foreign news, and end up being categorized as disconnected in the study. The locals consist of 31 per cent of the population, while 48 per cent are categorized as local cosmopolitans. Only 8 per cent of this sample are more interested in foreign news than in local news (cosmopolitans). In summary, this shows that a majority of the respondents are interested in local news, which implies an orientation towards the local society by this group.

The proportions of locals, cosmopolitans, local cosmopolitans and disconnected were assumed to vary according to type of media. This study shows that the interest in news on the Internet remains much lower than the interest in news in the traditional media. This large difference was rather surprising, as Internet access is relatively high in Norway (cf. Vaage 2007). Newspapers and television, followed by radio, are the major news media. The interest in local news is highest in newspapers, which is not surprising in a country with an extensive supply and consumption of local newspapers (cf. Høst 2007). The interest in foreign news is greatest in television. These differences show that different media meet different needs for news and that the Internet has (still) not turned into a major news media. If we compare interest in news on the Internet with interest in traditional media, the present findings support those of Sewelyn et al. (2005), who concluded that the Internet is unlikely to lead to a new, equitable and efficient version of modern society. The pattern of someone being local, cosmopolitan, disconnected or local cosmopolitan is transferred to the new medium. The interest in local news is still greater than the interest in foreign news. Furthermore, there is reason to believe that social explanatory variables such as gender, age, education and orientation towards domicile may explain interest in news on different levels on the Internet in the same way as they explain interest in traditional media. Thus, while Peter and Valkenburg (2006: 302) aptly stated that ‘once access gaps are bridged, other gaps open’, the present study indicates that when access gaps disappear on the Internet, old interest (and information) gaps most likely reopen.

Mutual interest in news may be a way to acquire relevant knowledge in order to participate in social relations (cf. Lizardo 2006). Merton’s theory of locals and cosmopolitans may have more to contribute in clarifying how news at different geographical levels helps construct the different types of place-specific competences useful for different social relations. I agree with Holt (1998), who claimed that news preferences offer an important source of information for distinguishing between individuals with low or high cultural capital resources, because what one considers relevant news depends on the breadth of the perceived social world in which one lives. But I do not agree with Holt when he links ‘locals’ and ‘interest in local news’ with ‘low cultural capital’. There may be differences between local news in Norway and in the mid-eastern US, where

Holt conducted his interviews. But I still wish to claim that interest in local news may contribute to a kind of ‘place knowledge’ that can be useful for navigating in local communities. Interest in local news could also express a local competence that helps in making sense of such news. This is a kind of competence the disconnected and the cosmopolitans lack.

In the present study, I found that for all types of news interest (local, cosmopolitan, local cosmopolitan and disconnected), there are significant differences between men and women, between age groups and between people with high or low education levels. Ties to the community also explain some of the differences in news interest. Age explains whether the individuals are interested in news, and also the kind of news they prefer. As has been shown in other studies (e.g. Lauf 2001; Elvestad & Blekesaune 2008), young people show less interest in news and are more likely to be disconnected. A study by Norris (2000) found that the younger generation show a stronger orientation towards greater society than older generations do. The present study of news interest shows that young people are less interested in local news than older people are. However, there is no strong tendency showing that this low interest in local news is compensated for by a much greater interest in foreign news.

The gender distinction shown in studies of news media use (e.g. Morley 1992) is also evident in this study of news interest. Women are more likely to be locals than men are. The latter are more likely to be local cosmopolitans and cosmopolitans in particular. This could be interpreted as showing that women are more introverted and mostly concerned with what is happening in their own neighbourhood, while men are more concerned with issues at higher geographical levels. Thus, the current study reflects a traditional understanding of the genders. Feminist researchers like Mühleisen (2003: 200) have claimed that such confirmation of a traditional understanding of the genders is problematic. However, it is also stated here that it is wrong to make a simple connection between femininity and interest in local community, on the one hand, and low status and low cultural capital, on the other. Knowledge of and competence in the local scene are valuable assets that cosmopolitans lack. It should not be regarded as ‘inferior’.

The present study also supports the assumption that individuals with a higher education level tend to be more interested in foreign news. Individuals with a high level of education are also more likely to be local cosmopolitans and cosmopolitans. One way of interpreting this is that individuals with higher education levels are better equipped for understanding foreign news. Another way of understanding this is to relate this interest to the kind of news that is useful in the everyday life of the more highly educated, at home, at work, etc. (cf. Hagen 1997). The locals and the disconnected have low education levels and are planning to move from their present residence to a lesser degree than the other categories. Do these groups find it less attractive to explore ‘new places’ either physically or through the media? Could this be a sign of low cosmopolitan cultural capital on their part?

In the current article, I have explored the proportion of interest in local and foreign news in a sample of the Norwegian population and how news interest differs according to gender, age, education, community ties and across traditional vs. new news media. I recommend that further studies should be undertaken on the actual use of news media and on how this information may be associated with social capital. Such studies would give us more knowledge of how local and foreign news may constitute parts of processes

leading to social inequality. The gendered character of cultural reproduction has been too rarely examined (DiMaggio 2004). A study of how men and women give priority to and make use of local and foreign news, respectively, in their everyday life would be an interesting follow-up to the current article. In his article, Merton (1968) stressed that the proportions of locals and cosmopolitans change in accordance with social and technological change. Therefore, findings on news interest in Norway in 2007 do not automatically hold for previous periods, nor for other societies. Further research should examine people's preferences for different local and foreign news and how this content appears to be personally relevant to different groups in a changing world.

Notes

1. Cosmopolitanism has been described as 'businessmen travelling around the world, people with a kind of competence or cultural capital useful for navigating in different societies' (Hannerz 1996), or a state of mind one acquires through experience with living in different societies, such as for diasporic movements of people (Sreberny 2002). According to Hannerz (1996: 111), it is no longer easy to conform to the ideal type of a local. Migrant workers or exiles may try to encapsulate themselves within a 'homeland' community/diaspora. In my recent work (Elvestad 2006), I suggest that for people moving away from their domicile, the concept of being 'local' may be interpreted as either an orientation towards the former domicile, as an orientation towards the present domicile, or an orientation towards both the former and the present domicile.
2. Other studies inspired by Merton measuring localism–cosmopolitanism according to type of news interest are Stamm (1985) and McLeod et al. (1996).
3. In a footnote, Merton (1968: 446) also stressed that in a larger sample there may be some who approach neither the local nor the cosmopolitan pole.
4. There is reason to believe that the local cosmopolitan's great interest in both local and foreign news can contribute to other priorities and interpretations of the news than that of the 'pure' locals and cosmopolitans. But, the data used here cannot address such a hypothesis.
5. TNS Gallup is a full-service market research company, which first and foremost offers products and services for business activities.
6. The sample is drawn to account for gender, age and geographical differentiation.
7. Response categories: 1: 'very uninterested', 2: 'somewhat uninterested', 3: 'somewhat interested' and 4: 'very interested'.
8. Same response categories as above.
9. By using 'very interested' as a criterion for dividing responses into the four groups, individuals with 'some interest' in local and foreign news will fall into the group of 'not so very interested' together with those who have no interest in either of the news types. This will result in great variation in this group, but still I will argue that they differ from those with great interest in one or both of the news types.
10. In the analysis, those with 'missing' on interest in local and foreign news in either of the media are included in the analysis as 'not very interested'. I argue that this increases the validity of the analysis. It is more probable that respondents who are not very interested in local or foreign news abstain from answering compared to those with high interest in this kind of media content. Further, an omission of those with missing values on news interest will most likely involve a risk of misinterpreting that the share of 'very interested' is greater than misinterpretations as a consequence of including the missing cases as not very interested. In particular, this is the case for interest in news on the Internet (see Table A in the appendix).
11. A logistic regression analysis model for local, cosmopolitans, local cosmopolitans and disconnected in all media shows almost the same pattern as for the traditional media (not shown here).
12. Details are not given here.

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13. Separate analyses for each of the traditional media show almost the same tendency of correlation as does the analysis for all of the media. The correlation between gender and news omnivores in television is not significant, indicating that men and women have the same probability of falling into this group. Those planning to relocate are not more likely to be news omnivores in relation to radio and television. Showing a local news interest in radio is more common among the elderly, and age does not show a significant correlation with cosmopolitan interest in newspapers and radio. Further, those with a stronger affective belonging to the local community are more likely to fall into the local interest group in relation to radio. Finally, those who have not lived so long in their locality are more likely to fall into the cosmopolitan group in relation to interest in newspapers.
14. In 2006, 81 per cent of men and 77 per cent of women had Internet access at home. Ninety per cent of those aged 16-19 years, 31 per cent of those 67 years and above, and between 78 and 81 per cent of those between 20 and 66 had Internet access at home (Vaage 2007).

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Appendix

Table A. Descriptive Statistics. N=9483.

	Minimum	Maximum	Mean (listwise)	s.d.	Missing
Gender (Women=1)	0	1	0.54	0.50	0
Age	15	99	50.74	15.856	0
Education	1	4	2.49	0.94	43
Belonging to community	1	5	4.08	0.924	248
Length of residence	1	5	4.11	1.40	265
Planning to relocate	1	5	1.87	1.18	262
Interest in local news					
- television	1	4	3.56	0.66	188
- newspaper	1	4	3.65	0.58	159
- radio	1	4	3.43	0.81	162
- traditional media (index)	3	12	10.64	1.72	395
- Internet ^a	1	4	2.64	1.16	611
Interest in foreign news					
- television	1	4	3.40	0.71	166
- newspaper	1	4	3.26	0.71	148
- radio	1	4	3.09	0.87	158
- traditional media (index)	3	12	9.74	1.95	350
- Internet ^b	1	4	2.49	1.11	590

^a14 per cent of the sample in the age group 60 years and above have not answered this question. This is 'missing' in the analysis. (5 per cent among 50-59 years old, 3 per cent among 40-49 years old, 1 per cent among 30-39 and 20-29 years old and 2 per cent among those younger than 20 years.) 7 per cent of the women and 6 per cent of the men have not answered this question.

^b14 per cent of the sample in the age group 60 years and more have not answered this question, and is 'missing' in the analysis. (4 per cent among 50-59 years old, 3 per cent among 40-49 years old, 1 per cent among those in the age groups 30-39, 20-29 years and younger than 20 years). 7 per cent of the women and 5 per cent of the men have not answered this question.