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Rice, C. & Taylor, M.

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Trust in media: Relevance, responsibility, and epistemic needs in divided societies

Charis Rice and Maureen Taylor

Abstract

This chapter explores trust in media through an in-depth qualitative analysis of the perceptions of one group of informed and engaged citizens in Northern Ireland. The findings reveal that perceptions of trust – or the lack of it - in news media are expectedly multifaceted and dynamic, eluding simple linear explanations. Our case study respondents reflect the tension between individuals’ diverse personal news needs and the centrality of media content in their lives, and the fierce criticism directed towards the media in inflaming post-conflict sensitivities. We propose that an application of epistemic theory on trust, knowledge and personal media repertoires provides an encouraging angle for theoretical development in media and journalism studies, particularly with regard to trust.

Introduction

Public trust in journalism has become a topic of increasing academic attention. Scholars and commentators often discuss the detrimental effects of low trust in the media for the health of contemporary democracies (Van Dalen, 2020). Studies report an ongoing decline in trust in journalists and other traditional expert sources (Edelman, 2021); a turn to alternative or fake news sources that provokes divided and ill-informed publics (Ognyanova et al., 2020); avoidance of news media altogether (Palmer et al., 2020); low levels of voting or political engagement, linked to low trust in both media and government institutions (Ariely, 2015). Such troubling accounts are often juxtaposed with normative theories of well-functioning societies where information flows unfettered from political authorities through the media to citizens, who use this information to deliberate and hold their government accountable (Habermas, 1989; Ryfe, 2020). At the same time, scholars have argued that ‘blind trust’ undermines the role of critical citizens in holding the powerful to account (Norris, 1999; Usher, 2018). Further, scholars have been critical of the often prioritised role of journalists as government-public intermediaries, which often devalues the general public’s collective competence and their fundamental role in democratic systems (c.f. Schudson, 2008, on the ‘Lippmann-Dewey debate’). Others remind us that blanket accounts of a ‘decline’ in media

trust are not warranted, but instead represent specific, well investigated contexts and that media trust can be better conceptualised as a dynamic and deeply personal phenomenon (Hanitzsch et al., 2018).

Accordingly, this chapter explores trust in media through a select, in-depth qualitative analysis with one group of informed citizens. It seeks to address one overarching question: *How do citizens living in a post-conflict, divided society characterise trust in media and what are the implications for journalism theory?* This chapter considers this question within the context of an illustrative case study from Northern Ireland involving leaders of community and voluntary organizations. The first section of the chapter explores various conceptualisations of trust in news media. The second section presents our theoretical framework with particular attention to its application in divided societies. The third section presents our case study context of post-conflict Northern Ireland, followed by section four, our methodology. Section five presents our findings, followed by the final section, our discussion and conclusion

Trust in Media: Conceptualisations and Challenges

Public trust in media - and the role of the news media more widely - is complex and heavily nuanced by a host of individual, social and institutional factors. Trust judgements of any kind are made within a particular socio-political, cultural and historical context (Wubs-Mrozewicz, 2020). Trust itself is a theoretically complex notion that suffers from definitional breadth and ambiguity, as well as methodological challenges. One widely adopted definition is that trust comprises the willingness to be vulnerable to another actor or entity, based on positive expectations of their behaviour or intentions (Mayer et al., 1995). It entails feelings including security, positivity and hope (Fulmer & Gelfand, 2012). Trust is generally accepted to be based on the perception of one or more of the following elements of trustworthiness: competence, benevolence and integrity (Mayer et al. 1995). However, any study of trust can consider its bases, associated attitudinal, emotional, behavioural and social characteristics, its purpose, targets and consequences, to name just a few foci (e.g. see PytlikZillig & Kimbrough, 2016). The application of trust to journalism studies must therefore be well defined (Stromback et al., 2020). This becomes even more important given growing attention towards *distrust* as a separate construct, that manifests in feelings such as wariness, scepticism and threat (Bijlsma-Frankema, Sitkin & Weibel, 2015).

Stromback et al. (2020) reviewed media trust research and argue that regardless of the level of analysis, trust in *news media* should be considered in terms of “the *information*

coming from news media” (p. 11). Further, scholars have called for news media trust research that takes a more distinguished examination of media use. For example, people consume news media, not solely for the purposes of information on current affairs, but out of routine and ritual, diversion and entertainment, underpinned by social and psychological needs (Ruggiero, 2000; Rubin, 2009; Stromback et al., 2020). Stromback et al. thus propose that, in such cases: “the level of media trust might matter less compared to when media are used for informational and surveillance purposes” (2020, p. 7). Similarly, Tsafi and Cappella state: “Obtaining information about the world is just one motivation for watching the news. When other motivations are present, trust in the media becomes less relevant” (2003, p. 519). This is an important but relatively over-looked proposition in current media trust research that encourages a more nuanced way of exploring news media trust, particularly at a time when news media consumption is high but trust is seemingly low across many contemporary democracies (Newman et al., 2020). The next section explores three theoretical frameworks for examining media trust.

Theoretical Frameworks: Epistemic Needs, Trust and Personal Media Repertoires

In addressing our research question, this chapter draws on three complementary theoretical frameworks. We explore trust and epistemic needs (Origgi, 2004, 2008), personal epistemologies of the media (Schwarzenegger, 2020) and media repertoires (Stromback et al., 2018). Epistemology studies how people know what they claim to know (Littlejohn & Foss, 2010, p. 21). In the most basic sense, it relates to the origin, nature, and limits of human knowledge (Stroll & Martinich, 2021). Schwarzenegger (2020) explains that a personal epistemology of the media concerns: “how and based on what grounds an individual develops an understanding of the media and media-related practices, and hitherto utilizes these conceptions in their sensemaking of media in the world” (p. 365). Personal epistemologies of the media therefore heavily influence how an individual will perceive, interact, and by extension, trust or distrust, news media content. Epistemic knowledge therefore is the broader context from which personal media repertoires develop (Stromback et al., 2018).

The idea that people will “act on media based on epistemological grounds” (Schwarzenegger, 2020, p. 362), is supported by Origgi’s philosophical work (e.g. 2004, 2008). Origgi’s stance, while perhaps a more unusual application to studies of media trust, is particularly helpful, given it integrates communication, trust and epistemology. Epistemological grounds in any scenario, according to Origgi, are intrinsically related to constructed communication contexts. Origgi argues that most of the time, individuals are

strategic and “responsible epistemic agents” (2008, p. 37). Origi builds on work by Sperber and colleagues (1995; 2010) on the importance of *relevance* in communication as a critical explanation for what people actually seek out and ‘do’ with communication: “people do not look for true information, but for relevant information, that is, information that is relevant enough in a particular context to deserve our attention” (2008, p. 42). Origi (2008) therefore provides a useful point of departure for understanding both news media trust and media use, and provides useful everyday exemplars including one’s ability to tolerate ‘loose evidence’ in small talk but seek out hard evidence when the stakes are personally higher. Origi then applies epistemic standards to the study of trust, defining *epistemic trust* as an attitude with two basic components:

a *default trust*, which is the minimal trust we need to allocate to our interlocutors in order for any act of communication to succeed; and a *vigilant trust*, which is the complex of cognitive mechanisms, emotional dispositions, inherited norms, reputational cues we put at work while filtering the information we receive. (2012, p. 224)

Thus trust judgements and the nature of those judgements will depend on attitudes towards media sources and media content that will be primed by relevance and this multifaceted vigilance (Sperber et al., 2010). Such a thesis may help us understand in which cases audiences may care enough to properly attend to, or further trust, news media content and why, and the possible inferences we can make from this about the role of journalism in an audience member’s everyday life. Insights about all of these issues may then help us form wider and more robust theories on the wider role of journalism in ‘actually existing’ democracies (Davis, 2010). Indeed, ‘folk theories’ of trust may play a similarly enlightening role.

Folk Theories of Trust in Media

The need to move beyond longstanding but (still important) theories of journalism has been highlighted in recent research on ‘folk theories’ of journalism (Nielsen, 2016). Folk theories are citizen’s qualitative “understandings of journalism that in turn shape engagement with journalism” (Nielsen, 2016, p. 842). Nielsen’s (2016) study of Danish news derived three theories of journalism that surfaced from individuals’ perspectives on a local newspaper. Nielsen recounted different conceptions of identity, relevance, place and geo-political bias; these underpin theories on ‘what journalism is, what it does, and what it ought to do’ (p. 840). By engaging with these ‘actually existing beliefs’ (Nielsen, 2016), we obtain better insights into what constitutes the ‘trust gap’ in modern journalism, as well as better

explanations of seemingly contradictory audience consumption of journalism. Nielsen's study was conducted in a relatively homogenous location, meaning that folk theories are likely to vary in contexts with cleavages or divides (Nielsen, 2016).

Trust in Media in Divided Societies

Schmidt and colleagues' (2019) case study of underserved and divided communities derived a folk theory of trust in news media based on responsibility, integrity and inclusiveness. Similarly, our own recent research has qualitatively explored conceptions of news media and trust in post-conflict Northern Ireland and found that communities with longstanding associations with 'bad news' may prioritise conflict-sensitive and communitarian theories of journalism (Rice & Taylor, 2020a) and assess trustworthiness by standards of inclusivity and benevolence (Rice & Taylor, 2020b). In any context, it is important to understand what the audience considers is valuable (Costera Meijer, 2020), responsible or trustworthy journalism, if we are to effectively and meaningfully assess journalistic performance. Indeed, existing research on journalism in conflict, post-conflict and divided societies demonstrates how these contexts present additional expectations, roles and challenges for journalists. Journalists may see themselves fulfilling roles beyond Western ideals of the watchdog, such as being 'mobilizers', 'activists' or 'peace advocates' (e.g. McIntyre & Sobel, 2018; Prager & Hameleers, 2021; Sahin, 2021).

Personal Media Repertoires

Trust influences the media repertoires that people use. Repertoires are subsets of media channels frequently used together by individuals or organizations (Taneja et al., 2012). Reagan (1996) noted that repertoires are stable patterns of media use that form when individuals choose to regularly consume content from a subset of available channels. With the advent of the internet, cable, and digital media, people have more options and thus repertoires are easy ways for people to manage their media consumption. Without repertoires, people would shift aimlessly among media outlets. Moreover, Sommerfeldt (2015) studied media repertoires in the crisis context of Haiti, finding that existing trusted communication channels, including media and interpersonal relationships, mattered a great deal in the crisis recovery. Media repertoires matter because they can help reduce uncertainty and enact lifestyle within a particular social context (Schwarzenegger, 2020).

The previous sections show that the concept of trust in media is complex and multifaceted. One crucial way to deepen our knowledge of the topic is to learn about individual's epistemic frameworks, needs and repertoires. The next section provides the

context for our case study of relevance, responsibility and epistemic needs as they pertain to media in Northern Ireland.

A Case Study of Trust in Journalism: Cross-community Leaders in Northern Ireland

Northern Ireland's political and societal landscape provides an important context for any research on its media and journalism environment. A thirty-year period of violent ethno-political conflict, 'The Troubles', came to a formal end in 1998 following the Good Friday Agreement and the development of the consociational power-sharing model of governance, devolved from Westminster. Northern Ireland's divisions are complex and intertwined, spanning religious differences between Catholics and Protestants, politically polarised ideologies and attitudes towards Northern Ireland's constitutional status and a range of national identities (Rice & Somerville, 2018). While inter-communal violence has drastically reduced in Northern Ireland and inter-community relations are on the whole much more positive, it is arguably a context of 'negative peace' (Galtung, 1967). Northern Ireland is still deeply divided in many ways, including in education, social housing and sport (Hargie & Irving, 2017). Indeed, the ongoing divisions in Northern Ireland are reflected – and many would say fuelled – by an antagonistic mandatory coalition of unionist and nationalist political parties with a history of unstable devolved governance. In recent years, Northern Ireland experienced a three-year breakdown in local government (2017-2020).

The 'traditional' media environment includes public service and commercial broadcasters (e.g. BBC, UTV), three main regional daily newspapers, multiple 'hyperlocal' papers, and a number of independent journalists and digital platforms (Ramsey & McDermott, 2020). All of these outlets seek to attract the widest possible audience. However, of the three main regional daily newspapers, the *Irish News* is largely targeted towards the nationalist community, the *News Letter* towards the unionist community and the *Belfast Telegraph* as cross-community in a manner reflecting the 'political parallelism' of the place (Hallin & Mancini, 2004). There is a body of research on the media during and post Troubles in Northern Ireland which illustrates the dynamic role of journalism in moving from reflecting a public desire for peace to a more traditional critical watchdog role (Armoudian 2018; Rice & Somerville, 2017; Wolfsfeld, 2004).

Methodology

Our research question, *how do citizens living in a post-conflict, divided society characterise trust in media and what are the implications for journalism theory?* derives from a project exploring trust in government and the media in Northern Ireland, where we

sought the views of cross-community organisation leaders (see Rice & Taylor, 2020a; 2020b). We conducted 17 in-depth semi-structured interviews, considering these leaders key informants who have an expert knowledge and a wealth of lived experience both in interacting with the media in Northern Ireland, with political elites, and with communities ‘on the ground’. Northern Ireland’s community and voluntary sector is a significant part of its public sphere that has been instrumental in its journey to a fragile peace (Rice et al., 2021). All of our interviewees were leaders or key representatives of organisations that were involved in cross-community work of some description in the Belfast/County Antrim area. In selecting organisations, we chose those that were established, useful points of entry to our sample which together represented a breadth of activities and experience across: (1) community development (e.g., area regeneration, upskilling local residents); (2) advocacy/policy organisations; (3) peace and reconciliation. The interviews were transcribed in full, coded inductively and organized thematically through a process of deliberation, reflection and constant comparison across the sample. To ensure their personal and organisational anonymity, interviewees are identified below as C1, C2 etc.)

Findings

Our interviewees’ perceptions provide four main findings about media trust in a post-conflict, divided society. First, the interviewees shared their experiences of regular negative news and the long term consequences for their own trust and for the health of post-conflict democracy. Second, we heard their willingness to be exposed to media content they don’t always trust. Third, there is a recognition that people in different positions and scenarios access and consume news differently. Finally, their answers point to an epistemic desire for deliberative, trustworthy news. These issues are discussed thematically below.

Bad News Sells but Has Long Term Consequences for Trust

Many of the responses we heard from interviewees were heavily critical about media. Interviewees expressed negative perceptions towards the main broadcast and press in Northern Ireland that crossed all three components of trustworthiness. Comments such as “reconciliation isn’t sexy” [C2] and “bad news sells papers” [C14] were common. There was a sense that: “Media stir things up and try to look for more controversial and negative story angles to generate interest” [C3]. Interviewees discussed journalistic *incompetence*: “the election they were dreadful and really shallow and on the Programme for Government, they just don't get it” [C9]. Referencing one newspaper, an interviewee similarly said their lack of trust was based on: “not only the ‘stands’ they take but sometimes the quality of some

journalists, that some things are factually wrong...quite often they are completely careless, poor grammar, spelling and things like that over time, develop mistrust” [C6]. Interviewees discussed a lack of *integrity* and *benevolence*, working on the basis of sales rather than principles, for example in the context of reporting a race hate crime: “if the journalist had any concern for that family they would have been a little bit slower and a little bit more considered... you have put a lot of people's lives in question, that is deeply irresponsible” [C10]. Such sentiments reflected the feeling that news media exacerbate existing political and societal divides and focus on points of contention rather than (potential) points of agreement in much of their reporting.

The theme of *responsibility* was central in their criticism, where ideally journalists would be helping to actively contribute to reconciliation by: “moving us forward. Media have a responsibility to play a role in [building] a country of our own with an ownership of place” [C9]; “If they can use it [their power] for the good rather than to keep conflict going then, I feel that they have a responsibility to do that” [C7]. In this vein, comments reflected the ethos of peace journalism (Lynch & McGoldrick, 2005), constructive journalism (McIntyre & Sobel, 2018) and communitarianism (Christians, 1997) which, in various ways, see a role for journalism in bridging divides and widening news reporting beyond traditional binaries towards shared, mutually-beneficial solutions. Yet, for all of those criticisms, our interviewees continue to consume news media content.

Willing Exposure to Media Regardless of Perceived Trust

It is interesting in the context of these statements of clear media scepticism and limited trust, therefore, to consider that interviewees reported using both traditional and social media regularly to access news. Social media were afforded a similar dose of scepticism to the central focus of discussion – traditional media - through their role in creating ‘echo chambers’ but were considered to deliver more autonomy to audiences by their ability to ‘filter’ their sources of information more discriminately to their particular tastes and needs. But why then, if people do not trust the media, are they still accessing the content? Two sub themes help us understand this seeming paradox.

Interest and information. First, interviewees consult diverse platforms largely online, not because they trust the information or affiliated journalists, but because they are interested in what various news media outlets, journalists and audience members might be saying on a given day and/or a given topic. For example, one interviewee explained:

“all the websites I tend to go to...BBC, I read the [online news platform] Journal.
ie...I think sometimes the comments are worthwhile skimming...not that comments

are a scientific reality but they are nonetheless interesting. And then I dip into the Belfast Telegraph - I find it to be increasingly tabloid, but I find it nonetheless interesting to see what people are saying. I rarely feel like I am looking there for straight facts” [C12].

In fact on some occasions, such comments were specifically related to perceptions of trust or distrust: “if I can manage it I might tune into [BBC’s] Stephen Nolan, but I find that really extraordinarily distrustful... it just seems like there is a vision of success which is about whipping up outrage that I find to be really problematic” [C12]. In this vein, individuals are seeking to get a sense of the breadth of opinion on any given issue either out of generic interest, or as a strategic part of their professional work, for example one interviewee explained:

“I suppose [I access] things like the BBC...the Newsletter, the Belfast Telegraph, Slugger O’Toole [online political blog]...and then on top of it try to weave in things like what are people tweeting around it, just try to see you know what's had an influence ...whenever we would be tracking something that we would want to know who were an influential voice, who might be useful for us to talk to” [C10].

Thus interviewees discussed accessing news media for information updates on various issues, rather than as unequivocal testimony. For example, one interviewee explained:

“the newspaper will report on all the stuff from the government, you know what our Assembly is doing and stuff like that, obviously, but essentially they represent themselves...I just read it...I take the information as updates on things, but I form my own opinions”. [C14]

Routine. Second, interviewees have developed routines of news consumption that implicitly guide the information that they gather. Various studies have considered how news routines shape media consumption (e.g. see Rubin 2009; Fisher, 2016). Interviewees discussed consuming news media out of daily routine. Common statements were for example: “I read the news every morning. BBC news Northern Ireland, Twitter feed, which has papers that I agree with and papers that I don't, that give the other opinion and then just like individual journalists” [C8]. Interviewees at times again distinguished about their level of trust and this habitual action, making it clear that this regular action did not in itself equate to trust:

“I listen to radio Ulster in the mornings which is where I pick up most of the news for the day... I would generally be trusting of the likes of the BBC but not blindly

trusting, you know there might be times when I would question a little bit. It really depends on the issue, the story and what else I have read about it I suppose” [C7]. Thus across these examples, it seems that it doesn’t always matter to interviewees whether they trust the news media sources they use; here our findings fit well into the theory that “news gratifies diverse needs” (Tsftati & Cappella, 2003, p. 517) and within these needs, trust will not always play a central role. Additionally, much of the content interviewees dismiss and actively distrust, so called ‘negative’ content, is seemingly done so because it is not relevant to their epistemic needs. Such news described as irrelevant or unreflective of the lives of most citizens in Northern Ireland was concerned with ‘tribal’ political issues and intertwined with political discourse. For example, one illustrative quote was:

“I just feel the media help the [political] parties to drag us back all the time...they keep things the negative politicking going because I think they think it's of interest to people. It's not of interest to me. And I think increasingly it is not of interest to younger people” [C7].

While interviewees told *their* stories about routinized, diverse news consumption, they recognized that not all people use the media the same way.

‘Citizen Elites’ Differ from ‘the General Public’

It was interesting that an implied distinction was often made between our interviewees who have in some respects privileged access to information and the ‘general public’, who may rely more heavily on mediated information. For example, one interviewee explained: “what information I would tend to get, it will vary because of my relationships, I would have a lot of relationships where I could get first-hand information” [C6]. Another interviewee demonstrated this by their reflection on the combination of ineffective government public relations and negative media framing with regards the Northern Ireland Programme for Government and the lasting consequences for wider public opinion:

“we had the official who has all the details here a month before... the [negative] public reaction to this flawed programme for government when that was all an inaccurate picture” [C8].

Indeed, interviewees tended to make distinctions around the problem of ‘the public’ trusting, or at least being influenced by, the news media around certain issues with widespread and tangible effects, such as local elections, Brexit, or comparable international issues:

“investing time and money into investigating journalism is just not happening very often and very much... you get a completely distorted misrepresentation of reality, that leads to electoral changes and lots of other issues that are in our society, whether

it's hatred or mistrust or any of those issues that we see. It is often based on journalism, it's not based on fact. But based often on what they believe the readers want to see or based on the limited evidence that they have available to them" [C15]. Such responses reflect the perspectives of other kinds of highly engaged citizens elsewhere (Nielsen, 2016; Schmidt et al., 2019) and raises the issue of distinguishing between the impact of news media trust on different individuals who may not be engaged in diverse circles with access to direct 'specialist' knowledge, and on different topics of high stakes societal significance. Of course, the emphasis here should not be on any objective 'accuracy' of such assessments (Schudson, 2008), but the sensemaking work individuals do as they reflect on the role of news media in their lives.

Epistemic Desires

This is an important issue to consider when presenting our final theme, interviewees' 'epistemic desires' with regards to journalism. Interviewees discussed desiring 'enlightened debate' [C6]. One interviewee explained: "there is not really a good avenue through which to discuss big issues in a nuanced and analytical way... we have got a long way to go...in terms of trusting [journalism]" [C8]. These epistemic desires were often associated with notions of trustworthiness. One interviewee discussed a past BBC journalist and the qualities that made the journalism trustworthy:

"Like Talkback with David Dunseith was one of the most trusted and loved radio programmes...this was a cynical, extraordinary, sharp and intelligent journalist...when it came to his curating of his news and then his presentation of it and his handling of it, just curated that into a dignified form of journalism that sought to elevate conversation rather than escalate hostility" [C12].

These expressions of the normative role of news media and journalism are perhaps particularly articulate coming from professionals with high civic engagement, yet they support other studies where audience members have prioritised values of civic understanding, inclusiveness which 'honours complexity' (Costera Meijer, 2020), local responsiveness and deliberation in their ideals of journalism (Costera Meijer, 2010, 2020; Schmidt et al., 2019).

Discussion and Conclusion

This study applied epistemic theory on trust, knowledge and personal media repertoires within a post-conflict, divided society context. Our findings, while limited by the fact that they are restricted by the parameters of a small qualitative study of a particular 'type' of informed citizen, do seem to support the notion that: "Trust is an epistemic commodity.

The dose of trust and distrust that makes us cognitively fit to our societies is a nuanced mixture of sound and unsound heuristics we should be more aware of” (Origgi, 2012, p. 233). As journalism stands at a crossroads between trusted partner and untrustworthy enemy for many, is this a reason to be more optimistic about the future of journalism given the widely lamented era of ‘post-truth’ fake news? Not surprisingly, the answer eludes a simple yes or no. On the one hand, we can be tentatively encouraged by the findings from our sample of cross-community leaders. They showed the ability to nuance the quality and trustworthiness of the news media they access. They make “experienced” choices when it comes to news media depending on what they want at any given time – deliberative debate, updates, fulfilling curiosity or simply fulfilling their daily routine. They told us that they had higher desires about news media and ideas of what journalism ‘could be’ reminding us that people can consume news media discriminately and in an educated manner that can still push towards better overall standards of journalism.

The findings also provide some warning. There is no doubt that particularly in a post-conflict, divided society, community leaders see a destructive role for news media and journalism in exacerbating existing divides and framing political and civic issues in binary ‘us and them’ terms, a strategy that our interviewees see both instigated and reflected by political elites, a finding corroborated elsewhere (Hanitzsch et al., 2018). In cases of direct and tangible societal significance, such as elections or unsophisticated reporting of events that threaten the very safety of communities, unwarranted trust in the news media is a concern for our interviewees. Such concern however is largely held in a collective sense -for society at large, and for individuals and communities who may have narrower social and professional circles and therefore are rightly or wrongly considered to be more reliant on mediated knowledge. We see that the ‘epistemic vigilance’ (Sperber et al., 2010) that individuals employ in their daily consumption of news media is an ongoing and cognitively demanding resource. One may wonder therefore whether some kind of ‘epistemic vigilance fatigue’, the depletive effects of ongoing vigilance employed towards news media and journalism may be one reason for a blanket reported distrust towards news media that appears to be on the rise in democracies across the world (e.g. see Edelman, 2021).

There are many practical and theoretical challenges ahead for considering trust in media. Development in this area must straddle both the commonalities across case studies involving different geographical contexts, groups of individuals, types of media and so on, and the very individual nature of both trust and media use. There is a continued need to develop theories that help us understand the complexity of trust in relation to media and

journalism. Longstanding yet not commonly applied philosophical and communication theories in the form of epistemic needs and relevance theory may have significant value for the study of trust in journalism.

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