

---

**Čedomir Markov**

<https://orcid.org/0000-0001-8575-3244>

cedomir@korea.ac.kr

Korea University

---

**Young Min**

<https://orcid.org/0000-0003-2912-5264>

ymin@korea.ac.kr

Korea University

---

**Submitted**

March 14th, 2019

**Approved**

January 29th, 2020

---

© 2020

Communication & Society

ISSN 0214-0039

E ISSN 2386-7876

doi: 10.15581/003.33.3.67-84

[www.communication-society.com](http://www.communication-society.com)

---

2020 – Vol. 33(3)

pp. 67-84

---

**How to cite this article:**

Markov, Č. & Min, Y. (2020). The origins of media trust in a young democracy. *Communication & Society*, 33(3), 67-84.

## The origins of media trust in a young democracy

**Abstract**

**Declining trust in news media has often been recognized as one of the major challenges facing modern journalism with potentially detrimental consequences for democratic processes. In this article, we examine the predictive potential of cultural-political and performance factors on public trust in news media in the context of a young democracy. Specifically, we have analyzed to what extent citizens' populist attitudes and perceptions of journalistic roles relate to the levels of media trust using data from an online survey of Serbian respondents ( $N = 200$ ). The findings showed that support for populism did not significantly predict trust in news media in general after controlling for relevant factors, most importantly political trust. However, populist attitudes were found to be related to the amount of trust citizens have in distinct types of news media –i.e., those who support populism exhibited less trust in public broadcasters than in online news outlets. The analyses also revealed that the more Serbian citizens perceived news media as being successful at performing interpretive and mobilizing roles, the more trust they placed in the media.**

**Keywords**

**Media trust, populist attitudes, journalistic roles, public broadcasters, online news outlets, Serbia.**

### 1. Introduction

Many democratic countries across the world have experienced a significant decline of public trust in news media in recent decades (Hanitzsch, Van Dalen & Steindl, 2018). Consequently, a great deal of research effort has been directed towards understanding the causes of such decline (for an overview, see McLeod, Wise & Perryman, 2017). In line with cultural and performance theories regarding institutional trust, previous studies have commonly analyzed media trust as a function of audience characteristics and/or media performance (Hanitzsch *et al.*, 2018; Hopmann, Shehata & Strömbäck, 2015; Ladd, 2012; Pjesivac, 2017).

Declining media trust is particularly alarming for young democracies in which the news media are expected to perform decisive roles in promoting democracy by boosting political accountability and empowering people to demand the development of more inclusive social institutions (Acemoglu & Robinson, 2012). To gain a better understanding of how trust can be strengthened in such a context, this study was set to analyze the sources of public trust in news media in Serbia, a young democracy with communist and authoritarian heritage, currently moving toward joining the European Union (EU). After a long experience with non-democratic regimes, public trust in social institutions in Serbia –much like in other East European countries– is depressingly low (Pjesivac, 2017). This is especially true for the news

media, which, for decades, were perceived as mouthpieces for oppressive regimes. As a result, we argue that media trust in countries like Serbia is highly sensitive to the extent to which the citizens perceive that the news media are departing from their old ways and assuming the functions and identity better aligned with citizens' democratic expectations. We identified populist attitudes and perceptions of the journalistic role performance as relevant audience and media factors of media trust, which can capture the dynamics described in this theoretical expectation.

From a populist perspective, society is fundamentally divided into two antagonistic groups: "the pure people" and "the corrupt elite" (Mudde, 2004). Studies have recently started to investigate how the news media fit in such a binary worldview (Fawzi, 2019; Flew, 2019). This is a particularly relevant question in countries like Serbia, in which the independence of the media has frequently been disputed (Pjesivac, Spasovska & Imre, 2017).

The notion of journalistic roles refers to the basic functions the news media are supposed to carry out in a democratic society—such as providing relevant political information to the citizens and monitoring government activities (Hanitzsch & Vos, 2018). In new democracies, like Serbia, the news media have a long history of serving the political elite rather than citizens. Therefore, public perceptions of the effective performance of normative citizen-oriented journalistic roles can indicate how successfully the media have adapted to the new democratic conditions and how the media are meeting citizens' demands.

With this article we hope to contribute to the current discussion on media trust in the following ways. As populism is becoming an increasingly prominent aspect of political cultures around the world, we emphasized the importance of considering how the essential elements of populist worldview (i.e., people-centrism and anti-elitism) could affect trust in news media. We also suggested the importance of studying the performance factors of media trust in a more comprehensive manner, by examining various functions citizens expect media to perform. Finally, our study provided insight into the origins of media trust in a young democracy, which is still a relatively understudied context compared to established democracies.

## 2. Theoretical framework

### 2.1. *The media environment and public perceptions of the news media in Serbia*

After the overthrow of the authoritarian regime of Slobodan Milošević in 2000, Serbia entered a long and turbulent process of democratic reforms, intending to harmonize the country's legal and wider institutional framework with the EU standards<sup>1</sup>. This process also included the reform of the media sector. The reform focused on deregulation and privatization of previously state-owned media as well as the transformation of the state-run television into a public service broadcaster (Veljanovski, 2014). In addition, the Serbian news media have received a considerable amount of foreign financial assistance since the late 1990s. This aid was intended to help increase professionalism and independence of the news media (Rupar, Němcová Tejkalová, Láb & Seizova, 2019).

However, these measures failed to significantly improve the conditions in the Serbian media environment. Today, the media market is oversaturated with 2,248 registered media outlets for a population of roughly seven million (IREX, 2019). The fact that the ownership structure and the sources of financing lack transparency inevitably leaves the media vulnerable to financial pressures. The quality of news contents is frequently disputed due to a widespread tabloidization and fake news as well as unbalanced coverage which not only favors the ruling coalition but also demonizes political opponents and critical citizens.

---

<sup>1</sup> Serbia currently holds the status of a "flawed democracy" according to The Economist Intelligence Unit (see <https://www.eiu.com/topic/democracy-index>); Freedom House classifies Serbia as a "transitioning or hybrid regime" (see <https://freedomhouse.org/country/serbia/nations-transit/2020>).

Journalists in Serbia are also subjected to frequent harassment from high political officials, who often resort to extremely hostile rhetoric to criticize the media (Freedom House, 2016; Rupar *et al.*, 2019). The extent to which the independent and investigative news outlets experience legal pressure and smear campaigns became particularly severe under the government of the Serbian Progressive Party and the current president, Aleksandar Vučić<sup>2</sup>.

Under such circumstances, a substantial gap has emerged between the public's normative expectations from the media and dramatically negative evaluations of the actual media performance. One of the key normative expectations is related to increasing the media's independence from political interferences. Calls for the government to remove restrictions on the freedom of the press and to protect the independence of media were important public demands, both during the 1990s protests against the Milošević's regime and during the recent waves of anti-government protests started in 2018 (IREX, 2019; Rupar *et al.*, 2019). A recent study has found that Serbian citizens perceive that newsmen, when making professional decisions, commonly engage in corruptive practices, i.e., yielding to the demands from the media owners or other external political and economic sources of power (Pjesivac *et al.*, 2017). Such perceptions show that the public is unconvinced by the media's capacity to break free from the negative practices which, for long, have been governing the mass media in Serbia. As Pjesivac, Spasovska and Imre (2016) noted, Serbian citizens express a lack of faith in the expertise of Serbian journalists and a high degree of cynicism.

## 2.2. Defining media trust

The research on media trust has gained significant traction in recent years, but some concerns have been raised about the way the concept has been used in previous studies. It is frequently noted that a widely agreed-upon definition of media trust does not exist. Some have questioned its distinctiveness from media credibility which has a long research history in communication studies (see McLeod *et al.*, 2017). Whereas the research on credibility has primarily investigated how properties of either the source, message, or media channel influence the course of communication, media trust is a relational concept focusing on the audiences' attitudes regarding the news media (Kohring & Matthes, 2007). The concept of media trust has been strongly influenced by sociological approaches to studying trust and the notion of institutional trust (e.g., Luhmann, 1979; Mishler & Rose, 2001). In line with this tradition, Hanitzsch *et al.* (2018) have recently defined it as "*the willingness of the audience to be vulnerable to news content based on the expectation that the media will perform in a satisfactory manner*" (p. 5, emphasis in the original).

However, it is becoming increasingly more challenging to define the news media—and designate the target of media trust by extension—in continually evolving media environments. In this study, we analyzed trust in news media with respect to different targets of trust. Our primary interest was to tap into the Serbian citizens' attitudes toward news media in general. This approach is informed by how citizens conceptualize the news media as a social institution, in regard to considerations of professional journalism overall, rather than any particular news outlet (Hanitzsch *et al.*, 2018; Ladd, 2012). In addition, following the previous studies which discovered that citizens' trust varies depending on the different types of news outlets within a media system, we have also explored public trust in specific types of news outlets: public broadcasters and online-only media (Daniller, Allen, Tallevi & Mutz, 2017; Fawzi, 2019). Making this distinction is relevant for examining the association of populist attitudes and media trust, which will be further explained in the following section.

Trust is also *domain* specific. The domain of trust refers to the scope of a trustee's actions to which a trustor's willingness to accept vulnerability is limited (PytlikZillig & Kimbrough, 2016). Since the news making process consists of various activities (e.g., selecting stories,

---

<sup>2</sup> For details see <https://freedomhouse.org/country/serbia/nations-transit/2020>.

researching, observing, interviewing sources, and fact-checking), it makes sense to consider media trust a multidimensional construct. However, large-scale public opinion polls, such as the World Values Survey (WVS), commonly use single indicators to estimate public trust in news media (Daniller *et al.*, 2017). The same approach has been adopted by the majority of academic research in the field (Ariely, 2015; Tsfati & Ariely, 2014; Tsfati & Cappella, 2003). Kohring and Matthes (2007) have criticized this approach for not reflecting the multifaceted nature of journalistic work, which was made central to their conceptualization and measurement of trust in news media. Building on journalism theories, they conceptualized trust in news media as a complex construct comprising four dimensions: trust in the selectivity of topics, selectivity of facts, accuracy of depictions, and journalistic assessments. At the center of their theory of trust in news media is *selectivity*, the fundamental feature of basic tasks regularly performed by media workers during the news production process. Previous research has found media trust in terms of journalistic selectivity to be relevant for Serbian citizens' conceptualizations of media trust (Pjesivac *et al.*, 2016), and the same conceptualization is also implemented in the current study.

### 2.3. *Origins of media trust*

Previous studies have explored a variety of the audience and media characteristics as potential origins of media trust. For instance, micro-level cultural theories posit that trusting attitudes are a product of individual socialization experiences (Mishler & Rose, 2001). Thus, cultural theories typically explain the level of media trust as a function of generalized trust and demographic factors (Pjesivac, 2017; Tsfati & Ariely, 2014). In addition, studies have found that a variety of other characteristics related to the audience—most notably, political attitudes—can also account for the differences in media trust (Hanitzsch *et al.*, 2018; Tsfati & Ariely, 2014). In contrast, performance theories link trust more directly to the perceived and/or actual characteristics of the conduct of institutions (Mishler & Rose, 2001). In accordance with this argument, communication scholars have discussed flawed journalistic practices, such as sensationalism and focus on political strategies rather than policies, as potential reasons for weakening public trust in news media (Hopmann *et al.*, 2015; Ladd, 2012).

Due to the specifics of press-state relations in Serbia, we expected media trust to be particularly sensitive to the factors related to the media's positioning relative to the citizens and political power and media's adherence to citizens-oriented normative functions. Thus, our analysis focuses on populist attitudes and perceptions of journalistic role performance, as the individual-level cultural-political and performance factors which are consistent with our expectations.

#### 2.3.1. Populist attitudes and media trust

When 'populism' was named the Cambridge Dictionary's Word of the Year for 2017, it echoed a widely shared sentiment that we are living in a "populist Zeitgeist" (Mudde, 2004). What directed much attention toward populism in recent years was the occurrence of political events which threatened to challenge established political courses of Western democracies, such as the Brexit vote in the UK and the election of Donald Trump in the US (Flew, 2019). Populist parties have also been successful in more recently democratized nations, such as Hungary, Poland, and Serbia. According to Mudde (2000), various forms of populism (i.e., agrarian, economic, and political) have long been important features of political cultures in Eastern Europe. An example of the enduring relevance of the populist heritage can be observed in the party dynamics in Serbia, as political parties and movements across the ideological spectrum increasingly incorporate populist ideas into their programs and rhetoric (Stojiljković & Spasojević, 2018).

The term 'populist' has been used as an umbrella term that denotes different types of political ideologies and parties (Akkerman, Mudde & Zaslove, 2014). In this study, we focused

on populist attitudes as a set of beliefs that citizens hold about the nature of people and society. Recent research has acknowledged that the success of populist projects rests in part on tapping into such ideas, often referred to as the demand side of populism, populist attitudes, or populist worldview (Akkerman *et al.*, 2014; Spruyt, Keppens & Droogenbroeck, 2016). At the core of populist attitudes lies a combination of people-centrism and anti-establishment. In this view, society is perceived to be in a state of a perpetual conflict between the pure people and the corrupt elite (Mudde, 2004). People are considered a homogenous and virtuous group with unrestricted sovereignty whose interests have been under the attack from the corrupt elite. This is a minimal definition of populist attitudes, which applies indiscriminately to the citizens who ascribe to a populist worldview either on the left or right side of a political spectrum (Akkerman *et al.*, 2014; Spruyt *et al.*, 2016).

Populist citizens can be particularly susceptible to populist leaders' messages (Akkerman *et al.*, 2014). The media have often been at the receiving end of hostile, anti-elite rhetoric of populist leaders (Flew, 2019). Populist criticisms are so powerful because the criticisms are directed not so much at the media's professional abilities but at their integrity and benevolence. According to Freedom House (2016), this kind of rhetoric is not unfamiliar to President Vučić, who portrays investigative and independent media as "foreign-backed propagandists seeking to damage the government and destabilize Serbia" (para. 2). The message that this kind of rhetoric implies is not that the media just got some facts wrong, but that they are ultimately dangerous to the people. To those susceptible to the populist rhetoric, populist criticisms can become an important cue for media trustworthiness (Müller, 2013).

More importantly, the relevance of populist attitudes for media trust comes from perceived positioning of the media on the populist dichotomy that puts people against the elite. Hanitzsch and his colleagues (2018) speculated that the wide-spread anti-establishment sentiment could be fueling both media and political distrust. Flew (2019) has also argued that "[a]nti-elitism extends to journalists and news organizations as much as it does to political and business elites" (p. 1). Some empirical support already exists for this idea. Mitchell and colleagues (2018) showed that, in eight West European countries, citizens who adopt populist views indeed expressed significantly lower trust in news media compared to those who reject them. Further, Fawzi (2019) has found the anti-elitism dimension of populist attitudes to be a negative predictor of trust in both quality and tabloid media in Germany. As noted above, the Serbian media have been considered a part of the state apparatus during the non-democratic regimes and continued to struggle with establishing independence after the democratic transition had started (Pjesivac & Imre, 2019; Rupar *et al.*, 2019). For this reason, many citizens might still consider the media a part of the corrupt establishment which is working against the true interest of the people.

H1a: Populist attitudes will be negatively associated with trust in news media in general among Serbian citizens.

For general public and populist citizens alike, trust in specific outlets within a media system can vary, depending on the types of news outlets (Hopmann *et al.*, 2015; Fawzi, 2019). We have argued that populist attitudes decrease media trust in Serbia largely because the media are still likely to be perceived as a part of the corrupt establishment. However, the degree to which specific types of outlets will be vulnerable to this kind of hostile perception could vary. For instance, Serbia's oldest and most-watched television channel is the public broadcaster, Radio-Television of Serbia (RTS). It was a state-run national television station during the communist and authoritarian regimes, which began the transformation into a public service broadcaster after the regime change in 2000 (Radovic & Luther, 2012). Due to its longevity and persistently dominant position among Serbian viewers, we expected the public broadcaster to represent the most institutionalized type of news media. In contrast, online-only news outlets are regarded as one of the alternatives to the legacy news media

(Ladd, 2012; Lin & Chiang, 2017), and their work is often considered to recontextualize traditional journalism practices, if not entirely disregarding them in favor of a new, distinct set of rules (Mitchelstein & Boczkowski, 2009).

Although popular online news sources in Serbia are predominately online editions of the established news media (Schlosberg, 2014), several online-only news outlets have also become successful over the past decade. For instance, digital-born *Telegraf.rs* and *Espresso.rs*, two among the most popular online news sources (IREX, 2019) were founded in 2012 and 2015, respectively. Similarly, *Krik.rs*, one of the influential investigative online-only outlets was also established in 2015. We assumed that online-only news outlets do not share the same negative heritage from non-democratic regimes, unlike the public broadcasters, because online media entered the Serbian media market considerably later. This could be reflected in the public's perceptions of these two types of news outlets (e.g., the degree to which they are considered to represent the establishment), as suggested in the following hypothesis:

H1b: Depending on the type of news channels, the relationship between populist attitudes and media trust will appear different; the relationship will be more negative for public broadcasting media than for online-only news.

### 2.3.2. Perceptions of journalistic role performance and media trust

Previous studies, which examined media trust as a function of media performance, have focused mostly on flawed journalistic practices and other deviations from the public's normative expectations in democratic societies. For instance, scholars have argued that excessive cynicism, focus on conflicts and competitions instead of policies, sensationalism, and political bias in reporting can influence public skepticism toward the news media (Hopmann *et al.*, 2015; Kovach & Rosenstiel, 2014; Ladd, 2012). The problem with this approach is that it focuses on specific instances of transgressions in media work, instead of addressing media performance in a more comprehensive manner. Citizens expect the media to perform a number of important functions (Willnat, Weaver & Wilhoit, 2019). Just as institutional factors of political trust are defined in relation to the main benefits that political systems are supposed to deliver –political and economic prosperity–, it would be helpful to examine the performance factors of media trust in terms of various benefits citizens expect the media to deliver. We argue that the most straightforward approach to do this is found by addressing journalistic roles in democratic societies, as the roles highlight the social functions and position of journalism (Hanitzsch & Vos, 2018), and thus clearly express citizens' expectations of news media. Communication scholars have identified myriad specific journalistic roles (see Hanitzsch, 2018). A well-known classification encompasses the following four: the disseminator, interpretive, mobilizing, and adversarial roles (Chung & Nah, 2013; Weaver & Wilhoit, 1996; Willnat *et al.*, 2019).

The disseminator role describes the most basic democratic task of the news media—to provide relevant political information to citizens in order to assist them in making informed decisions in a neutral and objective manner. Recent studies have found a preference for objective journalism among the general public and journalism students in Serbia (Pjesivac *et al.*, 2016; Pjesivac & Imre, 2019). The association of this kind of reporting with media trust (worthiness) has been shown by studies in different political contexts (Cozzens & Contractor, 1987; Livio & Cohen, 2018).

The interpretive or investigative role corresponds to the “watchdog” position of news media, which may serve as an external control mechanism that monitors those in power. The importance of this aspect of journalism was found to be relatively salient among the Serbian journalism students (Pjesivac & Imre, 2019), which might be indicative of the general public's attitudes as well. However, previous research does not offer clear evidence for the association of this role with media trust. A recent study found that Korean citizens rated citizen-run

podcasts higher at performing the interpretative role and trust them more than other types of media. The same study found a different dynamic in the US, where podcasts were also rated higher at performing the interpretive role but were not trusted more than other types of outlets (Park, 2017).

The mobilizing role emphasizes the importance of facilitating discussions and participation by providing a public forum in which diverse opinions may be represented and exchanged. This role might be particularly important in the Serbian context in which official news stories have long been dominating the media agenda (Radovic & Luther, 2012). As previous research has shown, providing a public forum is positively related to media trust, while feeling underrepresented increases dissatisfaction with the news media (Peifer, 2018; Austin & Pinkleton, 1999).

Finally, the adversarial role positions the media against institutional centers of power with the potential to set the political agenda rather than to merely follow it (Hanitzsch & Vos, 2018). Again, this role may be particularly important to Serbian citizens who perceive the media's independence to be seriously weakened. A research set in transitioning Taiwan has found that the more citizens perceived the media and government to be in an adversarial relationship, the more they trusted the media (Gunther, Hong & Rodríguez, 1994). However, more recent research has shown that exposure to a combative talk-show host, representative of adversarial journalism, decreases media trust (Vraga *et al.*, 2012). The authors explained this finding by arguing that too much emphasis on the adversarial role could signal a lack of media accountability, rather than independence, to the audience.

In summary, there are indications that Serbian citizens value the normative journalistic roles examined above. There is also some evidence to suggest the association between the quality of journalistic role performance and media trust in various political contexts. However, the relationship between the public's perceptions of journalistic role performance and media trust has rarely been examined in the context of young democracies. Also, studies have rarely examined the impact of different aspects of media performance on media trust simultaneously. This leads us to formulate the following research question:

RQ1: How do perceptions of journalistic role performance relate to media trust among Serbian citizens?

### 3. Methods

Data for this study were collected through a non-probability web-based survey from May 30 to June 6, 2018. The survey was conducted in collaboration with Plum Mark, a research agency which manages an online panel representing the Internet population in Serbia. Panel participants received an email invitation containing the survey URL, and the final sample included a total of 200 adult citizens. As an incentive for participating in the survey, respondents received approximately 1.2 EUR. We set a quota for gender according to the general Serbian population characteristic so that women accounted for 51% of the sample. The age distribution of the respondents was as follows: those aged 18-29 (27.5%), 30-39 (31.5%), 40-49 (33.0%), 50-59 (6.0%), and those over 60 (2.0%).

Considering the place of residence, 53% of respondents reported living in urban areas, 35% in suburbs, and 12% in rural communities. Respondents who have completed high school comprised 47% of the sample, while the rest have obtained at least a two-year college diploma or higher level of tertiary education. Although representative in terms of gender, this sample was more urban, younger, and better educated compared to the Serbian Census data.

### 3.1. Measures

#### 3.1.1. Media trust

Trust in news media in general was measured using Kohring and Matthes' (2007) scale, as the second-order latent factor consisting of the four lower-level components. The respondents were asked to what extent they agree or disagree (from 1 = *strongly disagree* to 5 = *strongly agree*) to a total of 16 statements that are displayed in Table 1, along with factor loadings and reliability scores. The examination of fit indices based on the confirmatory factor analysis showed an acceptable model fit (CMIN/df = 2.049, CFI = .938, TLI = .925, RMR = .055, RMSEA = .073), and the values for the main dependent variable in this study were computed as second-order factor scores ranging from 0.86 to 4.31 ( $M = 2.42$ ,  $SD = .67$ ).

**Table 1:** Items, factor loadings, and reliability scores for the scale measuring trust in news media ( $N = 200$ ).

Items	Factor loading	First-order factor	Factor loading	Cronbach's $\alpha$
Topics relevant for Serbian society receive the necessary attention.	.690			
Topics covered in the news are assigned an adequate status.	.631	Trust in the selectivity of topics	.863	.86
The frequency with which important topics are covered is adequate.	.823			
The important topics are covered on the necessary regular basis.	.903			
The essential points of the covered topics are included.	.711			
The focus in news stories is on important facts.	.844	Trust in the selectivity of facts	.991	.84
All important information is provided.	.757			
Reporting includes different points of view.	.696			
The information in reports would be verifiable if examined.	.370	Trust in the accuracy of depictions	.836	.71
The reported information is true.	.733			
The reports recount the facts truthfully.	.752			
The facts I receive are correct.	.669			
Criticism is expressed in adequate manner.	.719			
The journalists' opinions are well-founded.	.811	Trust in journalistic assessment	.799	.83
The commentary consists of well-reflected conclusions.	.778			
The journalists' assessments are useful.	.675			

Source: Own elaboration. Note. Items were modified from Kohring and Matthes (2007) to assess Serbian citizens' perceptions on the reporting of news media in general, not limited to reporting on any particular topic

Media trust according to the outlet was measured using a comprehensive single indicator asking respondents to report how much they trust the news programs of several media outlets (from 1 = *not at all* to 4 = *very much*). This approach was adopted following the commonly used measure of trust in WVS (e.g., Hanitzsch *et al.*, 2018). Trust in public broadcasters ( $M = 2.44$ ,  $SD = .74$ , Cronbach's  $\alpha = .79$ ) was calculated by averaging the scores for national (RTS) and



regional (Radio–Television of Vojvodina) public broadcasters. Trust in online news outlets ( $M = 2.06$ ,  $SD = .67$ , Cronbach's  $\alpha = .79$ ) was calculated by averaging the scores for four online-only outlets: *Telegraf.rs*, *Espresso.rs*, *Krik.rs*, and *Pescanik.net*. The outlets selected in this study are similar in that they are widely recognizable and provide news contents exclusively online, but they differ in terms of their editorial policies and journalistic styles. The former two are the two most popular online-only news outlets (IREX, 2019) and offer a combination of news and entertaining contents. However, since the former two outlets are considered to have a pro-government slant, the latter two outlets—distinct for their independence and critical reporting—were included; *Krik.rs* practices investigative reporting, while *Pescanik.rs* focuses on analyses and opinions.

### 3.1.2. Populist attitudes

Populist attitudes ( $M = 4.09$ ,  $SD = 0.68$ , Cronbach's  $\alpha = .87$ ) were measured as a coherent set of ideas—such as anti-elitism, the preference for popular sovereignty, and the belief in conflict of good and bad social forces—shared among populists, regardless of ideological direction (Akkerman *et al.*, 2014; Spruyt *et al.*, 2016). The index used for this purpose is composed of eight items (Spruyt *et al.*, 2016), asking respondents to report the extent to which they agree (from 1 = *strongly disagree* to 5 = *strongly agree*) with the statements such as “The people, and not politicians, should make our most important policy decisions” and “The established elite and politicians have often betrayed the people.”

### 3.1.3. Public perceptions of journalistic role performance

We used a set of 15 indicators developed to assess distinct types of journalistic roles in democratic societies (Weaver & Wilhoit, 1996; Willnat *et al.*, 2019). However, while previous studies examined the respondents' assessments of the importance of each journalistic function, the current study examined respondents' perspectives on how often Serbian media in general effectively fulfill each journalistic function (from 1 = *never* to 5 = *always*). The disseminator role ( $M = 3.51$ ,  $SD = 0.68$ , Cronbach's  $\alpha = .51$ ) was measured with four items such as “Getting information to the public quickly.” The interpretive journalistic role ( $M = 3.11$ ,  $SD = 0.67$ , Cronbach's  $\alpha = .64$ ) was assessed with four items including “Providing analysis and interpretation for complex problems.” The measurement for the mobilizing role ( $M = 2.38$ ,  $SD = 0.82$ , Cronbach's  $\alpha = .87$ ) also included four items, such as “Giving ordinary people a chance to express their views on public affairs.” Lastly, the adversarial role ( $M = 2.67$ ,  $SD = 0.80$ , Cronbach's  $\alpha = .76$ ) was measured with three items including “Being an adversary of public officials by being constantly skeptical of their actions.”

According to the results of principal component analysis, however, the items by which perceptions of journalistic role performance were measured are not as clearly influenced by four different factors as previously theorized. More specifically, the indicators of the mobilizing and adversarial roles cluster fairly well, while only some items measuring the disseminator and interpretive roles cluster as predicted. Interestingly, this is a similar result to the one obtained in a recent study by Willnat *et al.* (2019), who used the same measurement tool to estimate the perceived importance of the core journalistic roles among media workers and the general public in the US. While for the journalists, all items clustered around four groups as predicted, these authors found that fewer items than expected formed perceptions of the disseminator and mobilizing roles for the citizens. Nevertheless, the current study used all items to calculate the scores for perceptions of journalistic role performance because their theoretical merits have been supported in previous research (Willnat & Weaver, 2018; Willnat *et al.*, 2019).

#### 3.1.4. Control variables

Previous literature indicates several additional possible sources of trust in news media. In addition to the main independent variables, the questionnaire also included the items to measure several control variables, such as generalized trust, traditional and internet news media exposure, political interest, ideological stances, ideological extremity, political trust, and demographics.

### 4. Results

The results initially indicate that Serbian citizens expressed fairly low levels of trust in the news media, political institutions, and their fellow citizens. Individually, the most trusted news source appears to be the national public broadcaster RTS ( $M = 2.50, SD = 0.83$ ). On the other hand, trust in exclusively online news outlets, such as *Espresso.rs* ( $M = 1.99, SD = 0.84$ ) and *Telegraf.rs* ( $M = 1.86, SD = 0.80$ ), which entered the Serbian media market relatively recently, was the lowest among the measured news media. Measurements of political trust demonstrated that Serbian citizens have a very low level of trust in their political institutions. Among them, political parties were rated as the most distrusted ( $M = 1.55, SD = 0.64$ ), while the president emerged as the least distrusted institution ( $M = 1.98, SD = 1.02$ ).

**Table 2:** Correlations among media trust and all predictors included in regression model, except for demographics.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
1 Media trust													
2 Generalized trust	-.03												
3 Traditional news consumption	.18*	-.02											
4 Online news consumption	.13	.10	.66**										
5 Political interest	.12	.06	.47**	.39**									
6 Conservatism	.04	-.04	.10	.04	-.09								
7 Ideological extremity	.11	-.07	.13	.18*	.19**	-.06							
8 Political trust	.56**	.12	.16*	.14*	.15*	-.00	-.05						
9 Populist attitudes	-.21**	.00	-.02	-.02	-.08	.26**	.05	-.41**					
10 Disseminator role	.42**	.05	.19**	.12	.12	-.04	.03	.43**	-.21**				
11 Interpretive role	.59**	-.04	.16*	.11	.06	.11	.01	.49**	-.12	.50**			
12 Mobilizing role	.55**	.12	.13	.13	.13	-.06	.02	.43**	-.21**	.40**	.61**		
13 Adversarial role	.45**	.08	.03	-.01	.02	.06	.00	.37**	-.10	.34**	.59**	.62**	

Source: Own elaboration. \* $p \leq 0.05$  \*\* $p \leq 0.01$  (two-tailed).

**Table 3:** OLS models predicting trust in news media in general, public broadcasters, and online media.

	Trust in news media in general	Trust in public broadcasters	Trust in online media
Constant	2.697*** (.119)	2.594*** (.174)	1.945*** (.158)
Female	-.108 (.078)	.029 (.113)	.102 (.103)
Age	-.017 (.037)	-.067 (.054)	.043 (.049)
Education	-.090** (.034)	-.007 (.050)	-.014 (.045)
Generalized trust	-.098^ (.056)	.107 (.081)	.047 (.074)
Traditional news consumption	.011 (.025)	.050 (.037)	.014 (.033)
Internet news consumption	-.004 (.019)	-.010 (.027)	.046^ (.025)
Political interest	.011 (.051)	-.050 (.075)	.020 (.068)
Ideology	.008 (.017)	.011 (.024)	-.016 (.022)
Ideological extremity	.025 (.023)	.012 (.034)	.031 (.031)
Political trust	.268*** (.064)	.238** (.093)	-.025 (.084)
Populist attitudes	.013 (.058)	-.128 (.084)	.116 (.077)
Disseminator role	.105^ (.062)	.083 (.090)	.000 (.082)
Interpretive role	.248*** (.076)	.183^ (.112)	.216* (.101)
Mobilizing role	.189** (.060)	-.071 (.088)	.186* (.080)
Adversarial role	.023 (.059)	.000 (.086)	-.091 (.078)
Total R <sup>2</sup> (%)	53.8	19.7	19.3
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup> (%)	50.1 (N = 200)	13.1 (N = 200)	12.7 (N = 200)

Source: Own elaboration. Note. Entries are unstandardized regression coefficients with standard errors in parentheses. All predictor variables except for *Female*, *Age*, and *Education* were mean-centered. ^p ≤ 0.1 \*p ≤ 0.05 \*\*p ≤ 0.01 \*\*\*p ≤ 0.001.

Three ordinary least squares (OLS) regression models were run to examine the extent to which the proposed independent variables explain variability in media trust beyond commonly argued sources of trust. All predictors entered in the model, except for age, gender, and education, were mean-centered and no multicollinearity problems were found. The summary of the test results is displayed in Table 3.

H1a predicted that support for populism will be negatively related to the trust in news media in general. Examining the zero-order correlation (Table 2) between the two variables showed a weak negative association ( $r = -.21, p = .003$ ). However, after controlling for other relevant factors in the OLS regression model, the association between support for populism and trust in news media stopped being statistically significant and even changed direction to exhibit a positive correlation ( $\beta = .013, n. s.$ ). Hence, these results do not provide enough

evidence that populist attitudes negatively relate to trust in news media in the Serbian context, when other relevant factors are controlled for; H1a was not supported. Regarding the association of populist views with the two contrasting groups of news outlets (the focus of H1b), the findings show an interesting pattern. Support for populism was negatively related to trust in public broadcasters ( $\beta = -.117$ , *n. s.*) and positively related to trust in online news outlets ( $\beta = .117$ , *n. s.*). In both cases, the relationships did not exhibit statistical significance. However, additional analysis to contrast the two populism coefficients revealed that the difference was statistically significant. We used the general linear model (GLM) procedure, by which we can test the equality of OLS regression coefficients for different dependent variables regressed on the same predictor(s), and the contrast estimate was  $-.242$  ( $SE = .098$ ,  $p = .015$ ). The results indicate that the effects of populist attitudes on media trust may differ depending on the types of news outlets. Support for populism has more negative effects on trust in public broadcasters than online news outlets. This lends at least partial support for H1b.

RQ1 asked how perceptions of normative journalistic roles performance relate to media trust in the context of a young democracy. According to the results, the interpretive journalistic role emerged as the strongest performance factor of media trust ( $\beta = .248$ ,  $p = .001$ ), followed by the perceived performance of the mobilizing role ( $\beta = .230$ ,  $p = .002$ ). Perceptions of the disseminator role were associated with trust in news media at the marginally significant level ( $\beta = .106$ ,  $p = .091$ ), while no significant relationship was found between the perceived performance of the adversarial role and media trust.

Among the control variables, political trust was found to be strongly related to trust in news media in general ( $\beta = .287$ ,  $p < .001$ ) and public broadcasters ( $\beta = .231$ ,  $p = .011$ ). Interestingly, in the case of trust in online news media, this association was negative but not statistically significant ( $\beta = -.027$ , *n. s.*). In addition, less educated respondents were found to be more trusting of news media as an institution ( $\beta = -.149$ ,  $p = .009$ ). Finally, generalized social trust was negatively associated with the level of media trust in general, although this relationship was only marginally significant ( $\beta = -.094$ ,  $p = .080$ ).

## 5. Discussion

The aim of this study was to examine the extent to which trust in news media can be explained as a function of populist attitudes and perceptions of journalistic role performance in the context of a young democracy like Serbia. Contrary to our theoretical expectations, populist views were not found to be related to the level of trust in news media once other relevant factors were taken into account. However, citizens with stronger populist attitudes were found to be more distrusting of public broadcasters compared to online-only news outlets. An examination of performance factors demonstrated that the more satisfied respondents became with the performance of the interpretive and mobilizing journalistic roles, the more trust they placed in Serbian news media. Further, media trust was positively related to perceptions of the disseminator role performance, but this association was only marginally significant.

One potential reason why we were not able to identify a clear relationship between populist views and media trust could be contextual. Serbia is one of the countries with the strongest link between political and media trust (Ariely, 2015). Hanitzsch *et al.* (2018) describe the situation in which political and media trust are so closely intertwined as the nexus of institutional trust. In societies with a strong nexus of trust, public perceptions of the media and political institutions can easily become entangled in a downward spiral, which appears to be the case in Serbia. The authors have argued that the anti-elite sentiment, the core of the populist worldview, could be fueling this reinforcing spiral of institutional distrust. Although populist attitudes were not found to have a direct impact on media trust in this study, they may exert a negative but indirect impact on media trust by decreasing political trust in Serbia. In contrast, populist attitudes may be more directly consequential for media trust in countries

like Norway, Finland, Poland, or France, where the link between the political and media trust is relatively weaker (Ariely, 2015). Future research on populist attitudes and news trust should consider how closely intertwined the public's perceptions of the media and other institutions are in a specific context. More research is also needed to explore the potential role of political trust in mediating the relationships between media trust and relevant predictors (Hanitzsch *et al.*, 2018; Lee, 2010).

In addition, we found that support for populism reflects more negatively on trust in public broadcasters than online news media. The finding signals that it may be beneficial to examine how populist attitudes relate to the patterns of trust within a media system. Even if receptiveness to populist views might not appear to be associated with evaluations of journalists and news media in general, it could change what the audiences perceive as “real” journalism. As Fawzi (2019) noted, populists express more affinity for tabloid outlets, because their emphasis on personalization, language of ordinary people, and negativity is a good match with the populist worldview. Similarly, populists might prefer the outlets which provide more opportunities for users' contributions and engagement, as such outlets could be perceived to share people-centric values. Future research should further explore how populist attitudes relate to the perceptions of different types of news media and reporting styles, such as citizen-run outlets, local, and partisan media.

Our findings suggest that certain aspects of media performance –such as providing political analysis, monitoring political power, and serving as a public forum– are particularly important as the sources of public trust in news media. This is in line with previous research finding that journalism students in Serbia place a high value on journalistic roles which embody these crucial democratic functions (Pjesivac & Imre, 2019). In comparison, perceptions of the disseminator role performance were found to be less predictive of media trust and only marginally significant. Theoretically, these findings point toward potential benefits of assessing institutional factors of media trust through the perceived performance of the media's basic democratic functions. Overall, the perceived performance of journalistic roles can thus offer a comprehensive and straightforward set of micro-level indicators of media performance. These indicators refer to the extent to which the media are considered to be capable of and successful at delivering the democratic demands and expectations of their audiences. This allows us to evaluate the media performance in terms which matter to citizens and to examine how different aspects of journalism vary in their relevance to media trust.

On a practical level, our findings imply that recovering the alarmingly high level of public distrust in the media in Serbia should start with improving relationships with audiences. The importance that respondents ascribed to the mobilizer role could be indicative of the need for further engagement with audiences using various tools, from simply increasing the amount of conversation to crowdsourcing (Fink, 2019) and relational journalism (Lewis, 2019). Since the Serbian media have historically been perceived to serve a particular interest, the media need to find a structural way to connect with audiences in all stages of the news production process. This could be a helpful strategy to demonstrate a radical turn in Serbian political communication from an elite-dominated autocratic model toward a more inclusive participatory model (see Christians, Glasser, McQuail, Nordenstreng & White, 2009).

These efforts could end up in vain, however, if citizens continue to have deep concerns about the independence of the media. Independence is a crucial prerequisite for the media to gain authority when performing the interpretive role and holding elected officials accountable (Kovach & Rosenstiel, 2014). Our findings indicate that one of the strongest reasons for the widespread distrust in Serbian media might be a prevalent perception that the media lack the capacity to fulfill this important democratic function. Indeed, the institutional media are losing their monopoly on this function as the number of other agencies, such as NGOs and think tanks, continue to grow (Esser & Neuberger, 2019). Thus, to

convince the public of the media's relevance and authority as the primary outlet for information and analysis, the media should promote the transparency of ownership and create sustainable financing models.

The findings presented above should be interpreted with caution considering the limitations of the study. Above all, the sample of respondents was not obtained using any probability sampling technique, which certainly limits the extent to which the results can be generalized. In addition, the lack of divergent validity in measuring perceived journalistic role performance should be noted as another limitation. Although the suggested four dimensions were not clearly identified among the Serbian public, we still consider the framework theoretically relevant and meaningful for understanding journalism's roles in a young democracy. However, to increase the usefulness of the construct, future research should reassess how appropriate indicators of normative journalistic roles are for the analysis of contemporary media environments. Finally, our findings do not enhance the understanding of the causal order in the associations we identified. Future studies should make use of longitudinal data or experimental design to provide more compelling evidence for causality. Despite these limitations, our study contributes to the current discussion of the public perceptions of the media by illustrating the relevance of political and performance factors for public trust in media in a new democracy. We have shown the importance of considering different types of news outlets when examining the impact of populist attitudes on media trust. Our findings also exemplify the importance of considering distinct aspects of media performance to assess media trust in recently democratized societies.

## References

- Acemoglu, D. & Robinson, J. A. (2012). *Why nations fail: The origins of power, prosperity, and poverty*. New York, NY: Crown.
- Ariely, G. (2015). Trusting the press and political trust: A conditional relationship. *Journal of Elections, Public Opinion and Parties*, 25, 351–367.  
<https://www.doi.org/10.1080/17457289.2014.997739>
- Akkerman, A., Mudde, C. & Zaslove, A. (2014). How populist are the people? Measuring populist attitudes in voters. *Comparative Political Studies*, 47, 1324–1353.  
<https://www.doi.org/10.1177/0010414013512600>
- Austin, E. W. & Pinkleton, B. E. (1999). The relation between media content evaluations and political disaffection. *Mass Communication and Society*, 2, 105–122.  
<https://www.doi.org/10.1080/15205436.1999.9677867>
- Christians, C. G., Glasser, T., McQuail, D., Nordenstreng, K. & White, R. A. (2010). *Normative theories of the media: Journalism in democratic societies*. Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press.
- Chung, D. S. & Nah, S. (2013). Media credibility and journalistic role conceptions: Views on citizen and professional journalists among citizen contributors. *Journal of Mass Media Ethics*, 28, 271–288. <https://www.doi.org/10.1080/08900523.2013.826987>
- Cozzens, M. D. & Contractor, N. S. (1987). The effect of conflicting information on media skepticism. *Communication Research*, 14, 437–451.  
<https://www.doi.org/10.1177/009365087014004004>
- Daniller, A., Allen, D., Tallevi, A. & Mutz, D. C. (2017). Measuring trust in the press in a changing media environment. *Communication Methods and Measures*, 11, 76–85.  
<https://www.doi.org/10.1080/19312458.2016.1271113>
- Esser, F. & Neuberger, C. (2019). Realizing the democratic functions of journalism in the digital age: New alliances and a return to old values. *Journalism*, 20, 194–197.  
<https://www.doi.org/10.1177/1464884918807067>

- Fawzi, N. (2019). Untrustworthy news and the media as “enemy of the people?” How a populist worldview shapes recipients’ attitudes toward the media. *The International Journal of Press/Politics*, 24, 146–164. <https://www.doi.org/10.1177/1940161218811981>
- Fink, K. (2019). The biggest challenge facing journalism: A lack of trust. *Journalism*, 20, 40–43. <https://www.doi.org/10.1177/1464884918807069>
- Flew, T. (2019). Digital communication, the crisis of trust, and the post-global. *Communication Research and Practice*, 5, 4–22. <https://www.doi.org/10.1080/22041451.2019.1561394>
- Freedom House. (2016). Serbia: Profile. Retrieved from <https://www.freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-press/2016/serbia>
- Gunther, A. C., Hong, Y.-H. & Rodríguez, L. (1994). Balancing trust in media and trust in government during political change in Taiwan. *Journalism Quarterly*, 71, 628–636. <https://www.doi.org/10.1177/107769909407100314>
- Hanitzsch, T. (2018). Roles of journalists. In T. P. Vos (Ed.), *Journalism* (pp. 43–62). Berlin: De Gruyter.
- Hanitzsch, T., Van Dalen, A. & Steindl, N. (2018). Caught in the nexus: A comparative and longitudinal analysis of public trust in the press. *International Journal of Press/Politics*, 23, 3–23. <https://www.doi.org/10.1177/1940161217740695>
- Hanitzsch, T. & Vos, T. P. (2018). Journalism beyond democracy: A new look into journalistic roles in political and everyday life. *Journalism*, 19, 146–164. <https://www.doi.org/10.1177/1464884916673386>
- Hopmann, D. N., Shehata, A. & Strömbäck, J. (2015). Contagious media effects: How media use and exposure to game-framed news influence media trust. *Mass Communication and Society*, 18, 776–798. <https://www.doi.org/10.1080/15205436.2015.1022190>
- IREX. (2019). Serbia: Media sustainability index 2019. Retrieved from <https://www.irex.org/resource/media-sustainability-index-msi>
- Kohring, M. & Matthes, J. (2007). Trust in news media: Development and validation of a multidimensional scale. *Communication Research*, 34, 231–252. <https://www.doi.org/10.1177/0093650206298071>
- Kovach, B. & Rosenstiel, T. (2014). *The elements of journalism: What newspeople should know and the public should expect* (3<sup>rd</sup> Ed.). New York, NY: Three Rivers Press.
- Ladd, J. M. (2012). *Why Americans hate the media and how it matters*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Lee, T. T. (2010). Why they don’t trust the media: An examination of factors predicting trust. *American Behavioral Scientist*, 54, 8–21. <https://www.doi.org/10.1177/0002764210376308>
- Lewis, S. C. (2019). Lack of trust in the news media, institutional weakness, and relational journalism as a potential way forward. *Journalism*, 20, 44–47. <https://www.doi.org/10.1177/1464884918808134>
- Lin, T. T. C. & Chiang, Y. H. (2017). Dual screening: Examining social predictors and impact on online and offline political participation among Taiwanese Internet users. *Journal of Broadcasting and Electronic Media*, 61, 240–263. <https://www.doi.org/10.1080/08838151.2017.1309419>
- Livio, O. & Cohen, J. (2018). ‘Fool me once, shame on you’: Direct personal experience and media trust. *Journalism*, 19, 684–698. <https://www.doi.org/10.1177/1464884916671331>
- Luhmann, N. (1979). *Trust and power: Two works by Niklas Luhmann*. Chichester: John Wiley & Sons.
- Mishler, W. & Rose, R. (2001). What are the origins of political trust? Testing institutional and cultural theories in post-communist societies. *Comparative Political Studies*, 34, 30–62. <https://www.doi.org/10.1177/0010414001034001002>
- Mitchell, A., Simmons, K., Matsa, K. E., Silver, L., Shearer, E., Johnson, C., Walker, M. & Taylor, K. (2018). In Western Europe, public attitudes toward news media more divided by populist views than left-right ideology. Retrieved from



- <http://www.journalism.org/2018/05/14/in-western-europe-public-attitudes-toward-news-media-more-divided-by-populist-views-than-left-right-ideology/>
- Mitchelstein, E. & Boczkowski, P. J. (2009). Between tradition and change: A review of recent research on online news production. *Journalism*, 10, 562–586.  
<https://www.doi.org/10.1177/1464884909106533>
- McLeod, D. M., Wise, D. & Perryman, M. (2017). Thinking about the media: A review of theory and research on media perceptions, media effects perceptions, and their consequences. *Review of Communication Research*, 5, 35–83. <https://www.doi.org/10.12840/issn.2255-4165.2017.05.01.013>
- Mudde, C. (2000). In the name of the peasantry, the proletariat, and the people: Populisms in Eastern Europe. *East European Politics and Societies*, 15, 33–53.  
<https://www.doi.org/10.1177/0888325401015001004>
- Mudde, C. (2004). The populist zeitgeist. *Government and opposition*, 39, 541–563.  
<https://www.doi.org/10.1111/j.1477-7053.2004.00135.x>
- Müller, J. (2013). *Mechanisms of trust: News media in democratic and authoritarian regimes*. Frankfurt: Campus.
- Park, C. S. (2017). Citizen news podcasts and journalistic role conceptions in the United States and South Korea. *Journalism Practice*, 11, 1158–1177.  
<https://www.doi.org/10.1080/17512786.2016.1224682>
- Peifer, J. T. (2018). Perceived news media importance: Developing and validating a measure for personal valuations of normative journalistic functions. *Communication Methods and Measures*, 12, 55–79. <https://www.doi.org/10.1080/19312458.2017.1416342>
- Pjesivac, I. (2017). The effects of culture and performance on trust in news media in post-communist Eastern Europe: The case of Serbia. *Journalism and Mass Communication Quarterly*, 94, 1191–1214. <https://www.doi.org/10.1177/1077699016674185>
- Pjesivac, I. & Imre, I. (2019). Perceptions of media roles in Serbia and Croatia: Does news orientation have an impact? *Journalism Studies*, 20, 1864–1882. Advance online publication. <https://www.doi.org/10.1080/1461670X.2018.1539627>
- Pjesivac, I., Spasovska, K. & Imre, I. (2016). The truth between the lines: Conceptualization of trust in news media in Serbia, Macedonia, and Croatia. *Mass Communication and Society*, 19, 323–351. <https://www.doi.org/10.1080/15205436.2015.1128548>
- Pjesivac, I., Spasovska, K. & Imre, I. (2017). Attribution of global ethical norms: Perceptions of journalistic independence and integrity in Serbia, Macedonia and Croatia. *Global Media and Communication*, 13, 157–179. <https://www.doi.org/10.1177/1742766517705682>
- PytlíkZillig, L. M. & Kimbrough, C. D. (2016). Consensus on conceptualizations and definitions of trust: Are we there yet? In E. Shockley, T. M. S. Neal, L. M. PytlíkZillig & B. H. Bornstein (Eds.), *Interdisciplinary perspectives on trust: Towards theoretical and methodological integration* (pp. 17–47). New York, NY: Springer.
- Radovic, I. & Luther, C. A. (2012). From state controlled to public service broadcasting: Signs of change in Serbia's RTS television newscasts 1989–2009. *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media*, 56, 245–260. <https://www.doi.org/10.1080/08838151.2012.678517>
- Rupar, V., Němcová Tejkalová, A., Láb, F. & Seizova, S. (2019). Journalistic discourse of freedom: A study of journalists' understanding of freedom in the Czech Republic and Serbia. *Journalism*. Advance online publication.  
<https://www.doi.org/10.1177/1464884919868075>
- Schlosberg, J. (2014). Digital media in the EU enlargement countries. In M. Dragomir & M. Thompson (Eds.), *Digital journalism: Making news, breaking news* (pp. 239–252). New York, NY: Open Society Foundations.
- Spruyt, B., Keppens, G. & Van Droogenbroeck, F. (2016). Who supports populism and what attracts people to it? *Political Research Quarterly*, 69, 335–346.  
<https://www.doi.org/10.1177/1065912916639138>

- Stojiljković, Z. & Spasojević, D. (2018). Populistički zeitgeist u “proevropskoj” Srbiji [The Populist Zeitgeist in “Pro-European” Serbia]. *Politička Misao*, 55(3), 104–128.  
<https://www.doi.org/10.20901/pm.55.3.04>
- Tsfati, Y. & Ariely, G. (2014). Individual and contextual correlates of trust in media across 44 countries. *Communication Research*, 41, 760–782.  
<https://www.doi.org/10.1177/0093650213485972>
- Tsfati, Y. & Cappella, J. N. (2003). Do people watch what they do not trust? Exploring the association between news media skepticism and exposure. *Communication Research*, 30, 504–529. <https://www.doi.org/10.1177/0093650203253371>
- Veljanovski, R. (2014). Kontroverze medijske politike Srbije [Controversies of Serbian media policy]. *Teme – Časopis za Društvene Nauke*, 3, 1297–1312. Retrieved from <https://www.ceeol.com/search/article-detail?id=46636>
- Vraga, E. K., Edgerly, S., Bode, L., Carr, D. J., Bard, M., Johnson, C. N. & Shah, D. V. (2012). The correspondent, the comic, and the combatant: The consequences of host style in political talk shows. *Journalism and Mass Communication Quarterly*, 89, 5–22.  
<https://www.doi.org/10.1177/1077699011428575>
- Weaver, D. H. & Wilhoit, G. C. (1996). *The American journalist in the 1990s: US news people at the end of an era*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Willnat, L. & Weaver, D. H. (2018). Social media and U.S. journalists: Uses and perceived effects on perceived norms and values. *Digital Journalism*, 6, 889–909.  
<https://www.doi.org/10.1080/21670811.2018.1495570>
- Willnat, L., Weaver, D. H. & Wilhoit, G. C. (2019). The American journalist in the digital age: How journalists and the public think about journalism in the United States. *Journalism Studies*, 20, 423–441. <https://www.doi.org/10.1080/1461670X.2017.1387071>