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News framing and media legitimacy: an exploratory study of the media coverage of the refugee crisis in the European Union

Abstract

This research project focuses on a specific type of legitimacy, media legitimacy, which deals with the judgements made by the media about the legitimacy of organisations and explores the relationship between the types of *frames* (episodic and thematic) proposed by Iyengar (1994) and the typologies of moral legitimacy proposed by Suchman (1995): consequential, procedural, structural, and personal legitimacy. The subject of this empirical analysis will be the refugee crisis (2015-2016) in the European Union. Legitimacy rests on the consent of authority and power. Media framing can shape the opinions and political attitudes of citizens and, consequently, judgements of the legitimacy of public organisations. A content analysis was performed to measure the presence and absence of the types of legitimacy and understand the relationship with the types of episodic or thematic frames as well as the sense of appraisal using the Janis-Fadner coefficient. This research suggests that while the four types of legitimacy are present in news coverage, procedural legitimacy is more prevalent than the others, as well as more negative. This research notes the importance of process management in influencing the legitimacy of an organisation, and underlines the importance of managing the communication of public policy processes. The supporting results develop hypotheses for future research on the attribution of responsibility.

Keywords
Legitimacy, media legitimacy, framing, media, intangible assets, public sector, content analysis

1. Introduction

The European Union (EU) and its member states have recently been immersed in intense public management debates to provide solutions to the refugee crisis. This wave of migration has intensified since mid–2015 with the increased flow of displaced people and tragedies in the Mediterranean. Until the signing of a pact between the EU and Turkey to manage the reception of refugees one year later, European countries

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and community institutions had intense debates concerning migrant quotas, who should accept them, and how to proceed.

This fact garnered extensive media attention given its topical nature, being of great human interest, the volume of displaced persons, and because it put the unity of member states and their commitment to the adoption of common European policies in check. Just as the euro crisis shocked European values, the refugee crisis shook not only these core values, but also milestones such as the Schengen Agreement.

Information detailing the refugee crisis was distributed through communication media. Europeans, using the news, were able to judge the management and political actors involved. The basic assumption of this article is that the media acts as information intermediaries and, through frames projected in the news, provide interpretive judgements that influence the political attitudes of recipients and, therefore, the judgements of legitimacy they formulate.

Conceptually, the article explores the relationship between the types of moral legitimacy (Suchman, 1995) and the projection of episodic or thematic frames (Iyengar, 1994). The subjects of study are news articles appearing on the covers of the two major national Spanish newspapers (*El País* and *El Mundo*) the day after the meetings of the European Union (meeting of EU Heads of State or Government, and Justice and Home Affairs Councils) concerning the Syrian refugee crisis from April 2015 to May 2016.

The article is structured as follows. First, it provides the theoretical framework that the empirical observation is based on: the concept of legitimacy as an intangible asset of the public sector, but with the variation "media legitimacy" and its relationship to the "framing" activities of news outlets. This relationship is explored using the frames and legitimacy typology. After introducing the research questions and methodology, the results and conclusions are presented.

2. Legitimacy as an intangible asset of the public sector

The idea and concept of legitimacy has been approached from different perspectives. In the field of Political Science, it is understood that the legitimacy of an organization lies in the consent of authority and power borne of the electoral process: the winners of which obtain certain authoritative powers over the electors who voted for them, and consequently, electors feel a certain obligation and commitment to them (Manin, 1998; Dogan, 1992). In democracy decision-making derives its normative legitimacy from the degree with which it approaches the ideals on which it is based (Mansbridge et al., 2010).

The legitimacy of public organizations is a crucial aspect of life in a democratic country, because only with legitimate organizations can one expect citizen support. Viewed as an intangible asset, we can say that legitimacy is an invisible abstraction, like justice or freedom. In this sense, in the field of organizational communication, legitimacy is connected to the public perception of an institution. The paradigmatic definition is "the perception or assumption that the actions of an entity are desirable, proper, and appropriate within some socially constructed system of norms, values, beliefs, and definitions" (Suchman, 1995: 574). In this definition we find one of the essential characteristics of legitimacy: that of being a judgement derived from a social process (Johnson et al., 2006), and whose purpose is an organizations performance, and capacity to solve the problems for which it is the purported solution (Suchman, 1995:573).

This relationship of legitimacy with the process of social construction could be controversial if it is understood that the value of things depends solely on public decision. Therefore, it is necessary to emphasize that what the concept of legitimacy contributes to the field of organizational communication compliments other disciplines and, in short, can be summarized like this: to exercise authority one needs, in addition to laws, social support.

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In fact, the roots of the modern concept of legitimacy lie in theories developed by Weber (1968), who related legitimacy with the dominative force derived from the acceptance of the governed, since legitimacy is the recognized authority that leads the public to voluntarily follow and obey certain rules (Dogan, 1992). So, law is only one of the sources that dictate social organization; one must also accept the law, and assumption made by those whom are bound to the law (Weber, 2007). Thus, the effectiveness of authority relies not only on the rule of law, but socially constructed norms (Gordon et al. 2009), and the perception that what authorities decide are in line with socially shared norms, values, and beliefs (Johnson et al. 2006: 55). Legitimacy, in short, rests on willingness to obey authority and translates into an actual compliance with governmental regulations and laws (Levi et al., 2009).

This dynamic of validating authority and consent establishes that legitimacy rests on social perceptions and judgements held by relevant publics and by society at large (Aerts and Cormier, 2009; Bitektine, 2011). Consequently, trust and judgements of desirability, appropriateness, and righteousness, are key components of the legitimacy of an organization. Thus, legitimacy exists and resides in the eyes of the beholder (Ashforth & Gibbs, 1990; Zimmerman & Zeit, 2002). The public's knowledge to legitimize an organization lies in the belief that its authorities, institutions, and social arrangements are appropriate (Tyler, 2006); in the set of perceptions that constitute the acceptance process (De Fine et al., 2011); and in the collective awareness and recognition of an organization in its field as appropriate and acceptable (Aerts & Cormier, 2009).

Although there is scarce literature that considers legitimacy as an intangible asset of the public sector, its study increases insofar as the economic crisis challenges public organizations to build, maintain, and protect their legitimacy (Canel & Luoma-aho, 2015; Canel et al., 2016). This concept of legitimacy emphasizes the need for organizations to interact with their audiences. Legitimacy cannot be seen or analysed as an asset that depends exclusively on a certain organization or political actor. Rather, it is the collective actors – groups, organizations, field-level actors such and the media or regulators (Bitektine & Haack, 2015). The process of communication between organizations and the public is relevant and, by association, gives rise to concepts such as media legitimacy, discussed below.

3. Media legitimacy

This study focuses on a specific type of legitimacy: media legitimacy. Bitektine (2011) defines legitimacy as reflected in means of communications (through printed media, TV, or radio broadcasts). Media legitimacy concerns the media projection of judgments of legitimacy over different organizations and actors.

A useful assertion to address the relevance of this concept comes from Aerts and Cormier (2009): the information and evaluations provided by media tend to be distributed more broadly than the opinions of the average stakeholder. Media coverage is an important source in forming certain perceptions of organizations that are the subject of the news amongst citizens. The media act as social transmitters (Lamertz & Baum, 1998), able to shape public understanding, develop explanations and generate support, which citizens will use to pass judgment. Wartick (1992) argues that media is a persuasive element of society, and Pollock and Rindova (2003) consider media to propagate legitimacy, since it directs public attention by choosing what topics to cover, thereby increasing exposure of those topics to the public.

One may begin to wonder what organizations are legitimized by the media. To find out, it is interesting to start with an assertion made by Powers and Fico (1994) who stress that organizations are sources of information and must gain a journalist's confidence. In selecting sources of information journalists show they trust the judgments these sources

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make (Powers & Fico, 1994) and, one could say, give them authority. The more a journalist trusts a given source, the greater its media access will be, and consequently, the likelihood it will dominate public discourse. Institutional sources deserve special attention in this regard, as they receive privileged access to media and become primary definers of news agendas by virtue of their power, representativeness, and expertise (Yoon, 2005). Society's institutional powers act as the primary definers, setting the limits of discussion (Reese & Buckalew, 1995).

But as Yoon (2005) argues, the legitimacy of an institution is not necessarily associated with a greater amount of news coverage, since it is possible for an organization to have ease of access (and therefore, a strong presence), but for its coverage to be negative. So while it is true that, as Yoon (2005) says, the sources most legitimized by journalists tend to enjoy more favourable coverage, in public debate there are many other actors that can make negative judgments about them and, therefore, it is impossible to establish a relationship between quality of access and coverage favourability. The amount of media access is, therefore, the first step towards legitimacy; after which comes judgements of content. It is the media then that, through their coverage, diffuse perceptions of desirability, properness, and appropriateness of an institution.

Therefore, organizations have three tiers of media legitimacy. Firstly: the legitimacy of access, measured as the amount of media presence granted to a source of information. This is the space a source is given to speak for itself, about itself (for example, when media uses text inserts of statements made by a minister during a public policy presentation). When this occurs, the organization is the primary definer and the media disseminates their judgments, assessments and evaluations. Secondly: the legitimacy of presence, measured as the access granted to other sources to speak about that organization (in this case, they would add the statement of a union concerning the same public policy). Evidently this presence is greater, as its measurement includes all the institutional actors that form judgements about a certain organization. Thirdly, the legitimacy of journalists: a measurement that factors in the judgements made by journalists. This section, which measures legitimacy, analyses the judgements gathered from news coverage and formed by organizations, journalists, and other entities.

4. Media legitimacy and framing

To the extent that the media acts as gatekeepers by selecting content and giving it a frame, it is plausible to draw a relationship between the intangible asset of media legitimacy, and the practice of framing the news by journalists.

As Hallin and Mancini explain, the news incorporates political values that emerge from a series of influences, from the routines of gathering information to the recruitment of journalists and ideological assumptions shared by society in general (2008: 24). According to Lang and Lang (1966: 466), most of what citizens know about politics comes from second or third hand sources, from either the media or other citizens. As mass transmitters of information, the media are catalysts of information, and instruments that attract, direct, and guide mass attention; they provide a stable framework to regulate public relations and distribute public attention (Innerarity, 2004: 136).

The theory of framing states that framing information is "to select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicative text such as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation (Entman, 1993: 52). This framework defines a central organizing idea for the news coverage of an event, in that it selects and emphasizes some issues to the detriment of others (Gamson & Modigliani, 1989; Tankard, 2001). As Gitlin argues, media frames are "persistent patterns of cognition, interpretation and presentation, of selection,

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emphasis and exclusion by which symbol-handlers routinely organize discourse, whether verbal or visual" (1980: 7).

News framing is evidence that the media defines how and what people will know by selecting and interpreting facts, and gives cause to consider the media and framing process as a social process that has a special impact on public opinion (Durham, 2001: 123). The media use data and interpretations to nurture news facts through frames and approaches that can influence recipients' political attitudes and, therefore, the judgements of legitimacy they make.

5. Legitimacy and frames types

This research relates the typologies of legitimacy with the judging dimension of framing. Therefore, it uses the typologies of both concepts to explore this relationship.

Suchman (1995) defines three major legitimacy blocks: pragmatic, moral, and cognitive. Pragmatic legitimacy rests on the self-interested calculations of an organization's most immediate audiences: what can it do for me? It is a judgement, therefore, that rests on reciprocal interest, so that the public will support an organization not necessarily for what it can provide them, but because it is receptive to their own interests. Moral legitimacy reflects a positive normative evaluation of the organization (what should it do?) and its activities, and its different levels: results and consequences, techniques and procedures, structures and leaders. Finally, cognitive legitimacy is the judgement determining an organization right to exist, and is performed when the organization is seen as necessary or inevitable.

This research focuses on moral legitimacy. This legitimacy typology is subdivided into consequential legitimacy, procedural legitimacy, structural legitimacy, and personal legitimacy. Consequential legitimacy measures the evaluation of results and consequences; Procedural legitimacy, the procedure followed; Structural legitimacy, the means and resources provided; Personal legitimacy, leadership capacity and the initiative demonstrated by representatives during management.

Of the different frames typologies existing in academia, Iyengar (1994) provides useful information on episodic and thematic news. Episodic news are those that have narrative tension, with a script and personal characteristics; thematic news places public issues in general or abstract context in order to offer general outcomes or conditions. Thus, while episodic approaches focus on concrete events, the thematic presents general, abstract, or collective evidence. The aim of this typology is to analyse the effect of news approaches, since, according to Iyengar (1994, 1996), episodic frame tends to individualize the attribution of responsibility for national problems, thereby shielding governments and society from responsibility.

Measuring the effects of frames on the attribution of responsibility is not the scope of this research, since, as discussed in the following section, no study has been made on the recipients of this coverage. The objective is to find the relationship (if any) between the types of frames and the types of legitimacy the news alludes to, in order to determine if specific news approaches can guide the judgment of legitimacy towards a specific object.

6. Research questions and hypothesis

This research aims to analyse legitimacy typologies seen in the news frames regarding the management of the EU (and the representative of the Spanish government) during the refugee crisis. The analysis period spans April 2015 to May 2016. Its interest lies in exploring whether certain thematic or episodic news is associated with a type of legitimacy. Specifically, it aims to:

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1. Identify whether the four types of moral legitimacy: procedural, consequential, structural, and personal; are applied to media coverage.

   Therefore, the first research question (P_1) is: are the four types of moral legitimacy present in media coverage?

   The hypothesis associated with this question is (H_1): News coverage includes approaches to results, procedures adopted, structures employed, and representatives involved.

2. Explore whether addressing a specific type of legitimacy leads to a framed approach focused on episodic or thematic news.

   Therefore, the second research question (P_2) is as follows: is there any relationship between the typology of legitimacy and typology of thematic and episodic framing?

   In order to answer this question, the second hypothesis (H_2) is formed: The media make both episodic and thematic judgments, regardless of the legitimacy typology (results, structures, processes, leadership) it pays attention to.

3. Identify if there is a greater depth of legitimacy depending on the focus (thematic or episodic) on the object of judgement (results, structures, processes, leadership).

   Therefore, the third research question (P_3) is: are there differences in media support in terms of EU political management of refugees, depending on the type of legitimacy and its episodic or thematic approach?

   To answer this question, the third hypothesis (H_3) is: The use of episodic or thematic news affects how the problem is assessed, meaning episodic content will have more negative ratings than thematic content in different legitimacy typologies.

7. Method

For the analysis, the quantitative technique of content analysis was employed. Content analysis was defined by Berelson as "a research technique for the objective, systematic, and quantitative description of the manifest content of communication" (1966: 263). Krippendorff understands that the aim of this technique is "to make replicable and valid inferences from data to their context" (1997: 28). Kientz (1976) states that messages, being measurable and cipherable objects, allow content analysis to fragment, measure, enumerate, calculate their frequency of occurrence, and search for correlations. In addition, as a result of the analysis of messages, it is possible to discover the attitudes, tendencies, and mentality of the communication medium.

The analysis of media content has been a widely used tool for the study of legitimacy (Wartick, 1992; Deephouse, 1996; Brown & Deegan, 1998; Lamertz & Baum, 1998; Pollock & Rindova, 2003; Bansal & Clelland, 2004; Chermak & Weiss, 2005; Deephouse & Carter, 2005; Aerts & Cormier, 2006, 2009; Schultz et al., 2014; Sela-Shayovitz, 2015). However, research on media legitimacy of the public sector is scarce and has focused on security forces (Chermak & Weiss, 2005). Sheafer's research (2001, 2008) explores the relationship of competition in political communication between political actors and media access to gain media legitimacy, that is, a media space that gives them legitimacy.

As Baum and Powell (1995) point out, the media is a basic source of information, and analysing the content of its coverage constitutes as powerful technique to operationalize legitimacy based on media judgements. Media judgments are linked to framing processes. For this reason, the framing theoretical approach to the analysis of media content has established a typology, as has been stated, between episodic and thematic frames (Iyengar, 1994).

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8. Data collection

The data sample includes the printed editions of the newspapers *El País* and *El Mundo* published the day after two types of meetings: the Justice and Home Affairs Council (where the Ministers meet), and the Summits of Heads of State and Government of the EU (where the Heads of State and Government meet). The period of analysis spans April 2015 to May 2016. During this time period, fifteen meetings of the Justice and Home Affairs Council (dates in Annex 1) and eight Summits of Heads of State and Government (dates in Annex 1) were held.

In total 66 print editions were selected for content analysis: 33 from *El Mundo* and 33 from *El País*. Both publishers were selected on the basis that they are the largest distributors in Spain.

The unit of analysis is all news that makes reference to the public management of the refugee crisis derived from political management, and therefore, news from the period of analysis that contained a judgment on what the public organizations, the European Union and Government of Spain (either through its President of its Minister of the Interior), did in relation to the management of the refugee crisis. All the news were analysed, which resulted in a total of 64 units of analysis.

9. Measures and procedures

The following steps were taken to test the hypotheses. First, content was measured using the model proposed by Suchman (1995), which establishes four types of moral legitimacy: consequential legitimacy, procedural legitimacy, structural legitimacy, and personal legitimacy.

A table was drawn up with a series of items (or traits) characteristic of each type, and the traits presence (1) or absence (0) was recorded for each news article. The items are listed in Table 1.

Table 1. Model for the content analysis of Legitimacy Types

Consequential Legitimacy
Does the information indicate that the organization (the EU) did all it could for the subject matter?
Does the information indicate that the organization (the EU) has achieved its objectives?
Does the information indicate that the objectives achieved by the organization (the EU) provide any benefits?
Procedural Legitimacy
Does the information indicate that the public management process (dialogue, consensus, agreement, protocol) followed by the organization (the EU) is positive or negative?
Are data or figures identified from the process followed by the organization (the EU)?
Are socially accepted values identified in relation to the management process followed by the organization (the EU)?
Structural Legitimacy
Does the information indicate the means and resources used by the organization (the EU)?
Does the information indicate the institutional structure and course of action provided by the organization (the EU)?
Does the information indicate the organizations (the EU) concern to address the problem?

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Personal Legitimacy
Does the information specifically mention or assess the Spanish representative (either the Minister of the Interior or the Prime Minister)?
Does the information indicate efforts of the Spanish representative (either the Minister of the Interior or the Prime Minister) to solve the problem?
Does the information indicate the personal involvement of the Spanish representative (either the Minister of the Interior or the Prime Minister) in the resolution of the event?

Second, in order to use frame types we will follow Iyengar's proposal (1994:18). A unit of analysis is taken to be episodic if it consists of stories that depicted issues predominantly as concrete instances or events that contain a high degree of personalization; translated to news values, it is rooted in human interest where the protagonist is a passive subject who has no control or executive power over the management of public policy. A unit is taken to be thematic if it treats common public themes in a general sense or abstract context, with interpretive of contextual analysis, since the protagonist is a relevant public actor with the capacity to execute public policies.

The measurement of legitimacy was performed with the classic sense of appraisal (negative-neutral-positive) method. To this end, the Janis-Fadner co-efficient was used, also known as the Deephouse (1996) coefficient of media endorsement. It is an imbalance coefficient that measures the legitimacy of an institution through media coverage (Deephouse, 1996; Bansal & Clelland, 2004; Aerts & Cormier, 2009). The coefficient uses values ranging from -1.0, 0, and +1.0: the greater the presence of articles favouring the performance of the institution, the closer the result will be to +1.0, and therefore, the greater the media's legitimacy of the institution over the addressed subject will be. On the other hand, the greater the presence of articles that unfavourably address institutions decisions, the closer the coefficient will be to -1.0, and therefore, the greater the institution is delegitimized in the media.

The formula is as follows:

$$\text{Janis-Fadner Coefficient} = \begin{cases} \dfrac{(e^2 - ec)}{t^2} & \text{if } e > c \\[2mm] \dfrac{(ec - c^2)}{t^2} & \text{if } c > e \end{cases}$$

Where e is the number of favourable articles; c is the number of unfavourable articles; and t is the sum of $e + c$.

This coefficient allows us to evaluate whether the subject content of analysis is favourable, unfavourable, or neutral.

10 Results

10.1. The presence of legitimacy types in the media

The first hypothesis explores whether news coverage addresses the four types of legitimacy of results, procedures followed, structures employed, and the leaders or representatives. Table 2 shows the intensity of the presence of different features that make up the different legitimacy types. Intensity of occurrence is calculated by measuring the frequency of the three features that make up each legitimacy type. Taking a feature of consequential legitimacy for example, "Does the information indicate that the organization (the EU) did all it could for the subject matter?" has a value of 0,843 (first cell in Table 2), meaning 84.3% of the units analysed contain this feature. Similarly, the feature of structural legitimacy "Does

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the information indicate the means and resources used by the organization (the EU)?" has an absence value of 0,281 because 28,1% of content analysed did not contain this feature.

As shown in Table 2 and Table 3 (which cumulate the features of each type), the predominant type of legitimacy (though only slightly) is procedural, followed by structural and consequential with similar results, and trailing far behind, personal legitimacy.

Table 2. Frequency of occurrence of the characteristics of each type of legitimacy

Typology Analysed		Frequency of Occurrence	
		Present	Absence
Consequential Legitimacy n=64	Does the information indicate that the organization (the EU) did all it could for the subject matter?	0,843	0,156
	Does the information indicate that the organization (the EU) has achieved its objectives?	0,734	0,265
	Does the information indicate that the objectives achieved by the organization (the EU) provide any benefits?	0,562	0,437
Procedural Legitimacy n=64	Does the information indicate that the public management process (dialogue, consensus, agreement, protocol) followed by the organization (the EU) is positive or negative?	0,890	0,109
	Are data or figures identified from the process followed by the organization (the EU)?	0,906	0,093
	Are socially accepted values identified in relation to the management process followed by the organization (the EU)?	0,75	0,25
Structural Legitimacy n=64	Does the information indicate the means and resources used by the organization (the EU)?	0,718	0,281
	Does the information indicate the institutional structure and course of action provided by the organization (the EU)?	0,671	0,328
	Does the information indicate the organizations (the EU) concern to address the problem?	0,828	0,171
Personal Legitimacy n=64	Does the information specifically mention or assess the Spanish representative (either the Minister of the Interior or the Prime Minister)?	0,25	0,75
	Does the information indicate efforts of the Spanish representative (either the Minister of the Interior or the Prime Minister) to solve the problem?	0,109	0,890
	Does the information indicate the personal involvement of the Spanish representative (either the Minister of the Interior or the Prime Minister) in the resolution of the event?	0,203	0,796

Table 3 cumulates the average value for each type of legitimacy giving us the intensity of each type's occurrence.

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Table 3. Intensity of occurrence of the type of legitimacy in news coverage

Types of media judgements of legitimacy	Intensity of occurrence
Consequential legitimacy	0,714
Procedural legitimacy	0,849
Structural legitimacy	0,739
Personal legitimacy	0,188

The four types are present but the intensity of each varies substantially. The legitimacy type most present in media judgments is procedural legitimacy (which refers to the procedures followed in public management, data of the procedure followed, and values associated with the procedure)[1]; followed by structural legitimacy (which refers to the means and resources employed, programs of action, and the institutional concern)[2]; and consequential legitimacy (which refers to the achievement of resolving the issue, to the gains and benefits generated by the obtained result)[3]. We see that personal legitimacy (which identifies specific assessments, initiatives and personal involvement)[4] has had an infrequent presence and that the media have scarcely collected media interpretations on the leadership of the Spanish representatives on the process of public management of the European Union.

It can be said that the results fulfil the first hypothesis which affirmed that the four types of legitimacy are present, with none being dominant over the others. However, it should be added that the substantial difference between personal legitimacy and the other types leads to the assertion that it was almost absent.

10.2. Types of legitimacy and frames

The second hypothesis set out to find if the media formulate judgments both episodically and thematically, regardless of the type of legitimacy (results, structures, processes, leadership) focused on.

As Table 4 shows, the intensity of occurrence of the type of legitimacy (consequential, procedural, structural, personal) has been measured depending on whether media coverage was episodic or thematic.

Table 4. Intensity of occurrence of the legitimacy type depending on the type of frames

Type of framing	Consequential Legitimacy	Procedural legitimacy	Structural legitimacy	Personal legitimacy
Episodic N=26	0,666	0,807	0,666	0,038
Thematic N=38	0,745	0,877	0,789	0,289

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[1] Some examples are: "The EU fails in its attempt to reach a common agreement on the quota system". In: New shipwreck in refugee delivery. *El Mundo*, June 21, 2015. "Leaders make no progress in the migratory crisis". In: Leaders make no progress in the migratory crisis. *El Pais*, February 20, 2016.
[2] Some examples are: "Community agencies participate in the identification process". In: *El Pais*, October 16, 2016. "They are registered in a transit center erected on the premises of an old prison" *El Mundo,* March 11, 2016.
[3] Some examples are: "Leaders make no progress in the migratory crisis". In: Leaders make no progress in the migratory crisis. *El Pais*, February 20, 2016. "Refugees kicked in the front: to the irritation of Berlin, solutions are not expected until the next summit in March". In: *El Mundo* February 19, 2016.
[4] Some examples are: "(...) to include in the document some of the red lines approved by the Spanish Parliament". In *El Mundo*, March 19, 2016. "The Minister of the Interior, Jorge Fernández Díaz, refused to communicate his figures with other community partners until yesterday". In *El Pais*, July 21, 2015.

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The values of the table reflect the average appearance of the sum of the features that make up each legitimacy type as a function of its framing. For example, the value 0,666 in the first cell means that 66.6% of consequential news was treated episodically, and up to 74.5% were treated thematically: news about results is more thematic than episodic. All four types of legitimacy are more associated with thematic frames than episodic ones, with a slight difference in procedural legitimacy, where the values are closer.

Therefore, the second hypothesis is confirmed, as it is observed that legitimacy judgments formulated in news coverage, regardless of the legitimacy type, adopt both episodic and thematic approaches with predominance to thematic approaches.

10.3. The amount of media legitimacy

To measure the amount of media legitimacy (in terms of negative-neutral-positive news) we used the Janis Fadner coefficient of media imbalance to obtain a measurement of media support provided to the European Union and Government of Spain in its management of the refugee crisis.

The amount of media endorsement according to the types of legitimacy are presented in Table 5, where we see that the values of media endorsement are more negative about procedures, followed by the results, and then structures. Similarly, the presence of personal legitimacy about Spanish representatives was negative.

Table 5. Amount of media support according to legitimacy types and their media presence

Type analysed		Media Endorsement coefficient
Consequential legitimacy	Does the information indicate that the organization (the EU) did all it could for the subject matter? N=54	-0,515
	Does the information indicate that the organization (the EU) has achieved its objectives? N=47	-0,156
	Does the information indicate that the objectives achieved by the organization (the EU) provide any benefits? N=36	-0,081
Procedural legitimacy	Does the information indicate that the public management process (dialogue, consensus, agreement, protocol) followed by the organization (the EU) is positive or negative? N=57	-0,399
	Are data or figures identified from the process followed by the organization (the EU)? N=58	-0,237
	Are socially accepted values identified in relation to the management process followed by the organization (the EU)? N=48	-0,339
Structural legitimacy	Does the information indicate the means and resources used by the organization (the EU)? N=46	0,107
	Does the information indicate the institutional structure and course of action provided by the organization (the EU)? N=43	0,055
	Does the information indicate the organizations (the EU) concern to address the problem? N=53	-0,156
Personal legitimacy	Does the information specifically mention or assess the Spanish representative (either the Minister of the Interior or the Prime Minister)? N=16	0
	Does the information indicate efforts of the Spanish representative (either the Minister of the Interior or the Prime Minister) to solve the problem? N=7	-0,48
	Does the information indicate the personal involvement of the Spanish representative (either the Minister of the Interior or the	-0,061

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	Prime Minister) in the resolution of the event? N=13	

A detailed analysis of each of the legitimacy types reveals that only two types have a favourable media endorsement coefficient. Both are part of structural legitimacy and refer to the means and resources provided, and the structure and plan of action implemented.

The worst coefficient of media endorsement for consequential legitimacy belongs to the trait measuring whether the organization does all it can for the matter at hand. The other two features are both negative, although closer to having a neutral score. The three features of procedural legitimacy also received negative values, meaning the media passed unfavourable judgment on processes followed by organizations. Structural legitimacy has two features with positive coefficients, although the third, which refers to the organizations concern to solve the problem, has a negative value. With respect to media endorsement in personal judgments, id est, the positive/neutral/negative nature of personal legitimacy, the organizations efforts were regarded negatively, while specific mentions remained neutral, and personal involvement was negative but closer to neutral.

If we analyse the amount of media endorsement for each feature depending on whether the coverage is thematic or episodic (see Table 6) we see that most of the legitimacy ratings are negative regardless of whether it had thematic or episodic framing. However, this support is slightly diminished when news takes an episodic approach rather than a thematic approach.

Thus, the three features that make up consequential legitimacy all have negative media endorsement coefficients, with episodic content valued more unfavourably than thematic content. Procedural legitimacy features demonstrate similar behaviour, although the difference is more profound. Negative media endorsement coefficients are characteristic in both thematic and episodic coverage, but the difference is greater than in the previous typology. Episodic coverage attracts more negative values for all three features than thematic coverage. The third type of legitimacy received a positive coefficient in thematic framing for two of its features: the means and resources used, and plans of action; although these are negative in episodic coverage. The third feature in this legitimacy type received a negative thematic coverage coefficient, and neutral episodic coverage coefficient. Personal legitimacy, which refers to the representatives of the Government of Spain, is almost completely devoid of episodic coverage. On the other hand, thematic coverage of this legitimacy type reveals negative coefficients evaluating the initiatives and personal involvement of representatives involved.

Table 6. Amount of media support according to the types of legitimacy, and their media presence according to their *framing*

		Episodic *framing*	Thematic *framing*
Type Analysed		Media Endosement Coefficient	Media Endorsement Coefficient
Consequential legitimacy	Does the information indicate that the organization (the EU) did all it could for the subject matter?	-0,612 N=19	-0,602 N=35
	Does the information indicate that the organization (the EU) has achieved its objectives?	-0,306 N=17	-0,088 N=30
	Does the information indicate that the objectives achieved by the organization (the EU) provide any benefits?	-0,142 N=16	-0,035 N=20

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Procedural legitimacy	Does the information indicate that the public management process (dialogue, consensus, agreement, protocol) followed by the organization (the EU) is positive or negative?	-0,48 N=19	-0,356 N=38
	Are data or figures identified from the process followed by the organization (the EU)?	-0,532 N=24	-0,055 N=34
	Are socially accepted values identified in relation to the management process followed by the organization (the EU)?	-0,674 N=20	-0,156 N=28
Structural legitimacy	Does the information indicate the means and resources used by the organization (the EU)?	-0,081 N=17	0,222 N=29
	Does the information indicate the institutional structure and course of action provided by the organization (the EU)?	-0,081 N=19	0,142 N=24
	Does the information indicate the organizations (the EU) concern to address the problem?	0 N=16	-0,222 N=37
Personal legitimacy	Does the information specifically mention or assess the Spanish representative (either the Minister of the Interior or the Prime Minister)?	0 N=1	0 N=15
	Does the information indicate efforts of the Spanish representative (either the Minister of the Interior or the Prime Minister) to solve the problem?	0 N=1	-0,222 N=6
	Does the information indicate the personal involvement of the Spanish representative (either the Minister of the Interior or the Prime Minister) in the resolution of the event?	-1 N=1	-0,375 N=12

11. Discussion and Conclusion

This research has explored the relationship between types of legitimacy and the episodic & thematic types of frames.

While this study should, being an exploratory analysis, be interpreted with caution; its results suggest that judgments of the four types of legitimacy are present in both episodic and thematic coverage. In other words, there does not seem to be an association between a particular subject of judgement (processes, results, structures, or people) and a specific way of formatting the news. Journalists are interested in one type of legitimacy or another, using thematic and episodic approaches interchangeably. Although it can be said the data for procedural legitimacy is slightly more even, in the other cases, the thematic approach is more prevalent than the episodic approach. Therefore, focusing on procedures increases the nature of episodic coverage.

Thus, in general, types of legitimacy are not associated with a specific type of coverage (episodic or thematic), but the media judges the legitimacy of an organization by analysing general management issues (thematic frame) or particular facts or concrete instances and scripts (episodic frame).

The research also corroborates what has been found in previous research (Canel et al., 2016) on the tendency in Spain to pay more attention to procedures than management results, perhaps as a consequence of the economic crisis. Aspects such as transparency, openness to dialogue, or law enforcement seem to gain more relevance in media judgement than the concrete results provided by public management. Contrary to what might be expected, there seems to be no interest in making judgements about the personal dimension of public management.

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This research has also shown that coverage is predominantly negative, overall towards procedural legitimacy. It could be said that this tendency to focus on procedures over other subjects has catalysed the polarisation of judgements to the detriment of neutral affirmations.

In short, the media, in its reports on the refugee crisis in the European Union, tend to increase the episodic focus when referring to procedures, which in turn is associated with greater negativity.

This research was not intended to test the effects of the approaches on citizens, but to explore the relationship between episodic/thematic approaches and types of legitimacy. The results obtained help to lay out the groundwork for further research hypotheses on the attribution of responsibilities: as the news about procedures is more episodic and negative, will the responsibility attributed to it be greater?

This study has focused exclusively on the role of the media as actors that generate legitimacy in the process of legitimation. The other big players are stakeholders, citizens, and the study of receiving messages; their individual interpretations are equally important to close the process and understand legitimacy judgments. All this points to topics of interest of future research.

The interpretation of these results also suggests that the media gives special importance to the management of processes in the decision making of an organization. Judgments on procedural legitimacy are more present than the results obtained or the structures used. These results underscore the importance of the communication of public management as a crucial tool in managing procedures and processes, and their activity is key to maintaining organizational legitimacy.

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Annex 1

Dates of the Justice and Internal Affairs Councils: 20/04/2015, 16-17/06/2015, 10-11/07/2015, 21/07/2015, 15/09/2015, 23/09/2015, 9-10/10/2015, 10/11/2015, 21/11/2015, 4-5/12/2015, 26-27/01/2016, 26/02/2016, 11-1203/2016, 22/04/2016 y 21/05/2016.

Dates of the Summits of Heads of State and Government: 23/04/2015, 25-26/06/2015, 23/09/2015, 15/10/2015, 12/11/2015, 17-18/12/2015, 18-19/02/2016 y 17-18/03/2016.