article

Why do civil servants experience media-stress differently and what can be done about it?

Thomas Schillemans, t.schillemans@uu.nl
Utrecht University, Netherlands

Rune Karlsen, Rune.karlsen@media.uio.no
Kristoffer Kolltveit, kristoffer.kolltveit@stv.uio.no
Oslo University, Norway

Pressure from the media affects the daily work of bureaucrats and induces 'media stress', with potentially critical effects on the quality of public policy. This article analyses how bureaucrats' daily work has been adapted to the media ('mediatised') and which groups of bureaucrats experience the most media-stress. Reporting the results of an original and large-scale survey (N=4,655) this article demonstrates that levels of media-stress vary among different groups of civil servants. In turn, its analysis suggests that media-stress is more pronounced in the Netherlands than in Norway, is more concentrated in the lower rungs of administrative hierarchies and is related to media pressures on organisations. By untangling the underlying logic of mediatisation and the dynamics of media-stress, this article makes an important contribution to extant scholarship and also provides a series of practical recommendations.

Introduction

Politicians and bureaucracies operate in the constant limelight of the media in contemporary monitory democracies (Keane, 2009). The academic literature has so far focused mostly on the impact of news media on politics, politicians and policy processes (Bekkers et al, 2011a; Djerf-Pierre and Pierre, 2016), yet the media also have strong impacts on bureaucrats and bureaucracies (Schillemans and Pierre, 2016; Klijn and Korthagen, 2017). The daily work rhythms inside bureaucracies have been adapted to the logics of the media where civil servants develop proactive strategies that anticipate the media agenda (Thorbjørnsrud et al, 2014a: 412). Government organisations and agencies actively present themselves in favourable frames in the media (Schillemans and Jacobs, 2014) in order to boost their reputations (Boon et al, 2019).

Mostly under the banner of 'mediatisation', scholars have recently explored news media effects on various types of bureaucracies (Maggetti, 2012; Thorbjørnsrud et al, 2014b; Fredriksson et al, 2015; Salomonsen et al, 2016; Schillemans, 2016; Garland et al, 2017). These literatures clearly document *that*, *why* and *how* the work of public bureaucracies has become mediatised in the sense of having been adapted to the outside media context. Less clear, however, are the *effects* of mediatisation inside governments on civil servants and on the efficacy of government itself (Garland, 2017: 3). This poses the question of whether the mediatisation of work inside bureaucracies actually 'matters'. If the media indeed have a strong impact on bureaucracies, this should leave a tangible imprint on the daily activities of civil servants.

Mediatisation theory describes how the institutional logic of the media 'penetrates', 'affects', becomes 'integrated' or even 'colonises' other societal institutions (Cook, 2005; Mazzoleni and Schulz, 1999; Strömbäck, 2008; Hjarvard, 2013). A mediatised bureaucracy then implies that civil servants have to cope with and handle different institutional logics and behavioural expectations. As institutional logics are contradictory, this can potentially lead to stress, possibly even to fear for, the media, as has indeed been documented to exist among various civil servants (Bekkers et al, 2011a; Klijn et al, 2016; Schillemans, 2016; Garland, 2017). This article sets out to explore the relationship between the mediatisation of the daily work of civil servants, specific individual and organisational characteristics, and the extent to which they experience media-stress. The central question is: who is afraid of the media (in public bureaucracies), or, who experiences media-stress?

This is important, as media is known to be a major stressor for individuals and stress has many negative effects on job performance and thus, potentially, on the quality of public policies (Michie, 2002; Bouckenooghe et al, 2005). Knowing where in the bureaucracy media-stress is most prevalent helps to gauge the effects of media inside bureaucracies but may also help bureaucracies to target effective ways of coping with media.

The article is based on a large-N survey (N=4,655), distributed among civil servants with policymaking and operational tasks in the Netherlands and Norway. The survey contains questions relating to the 'penetration' of the media in the daily activities of civil servants and questions on media-related stress, in combination with information collected on national backgrounds, different types of bureaucracies and professional positions.

We find that media-stress is distributed unevenly across different types of bureaucracies and is more pronounced in the Netherlands than in Norway. We also find that bureaucrats who are more attuned to the media (more media use and media awareness) are more stressed, yet media-stress is lower for those actively participating in media work. The theoretical and policy implications of these findings are discussed in the concluding section.

Mediatisation of daily work

Over the past decade, 'mediatisation' has been an incredibly powerful 'sensitizing concept' (Hjarvard, 2013: 4; Lunt and Livingstone, 2016: 464–5) with which scholars have analysed the role and impact of the media in various non-media settings, including politics (Couldry and Hepp, 2013; Esser and Strömbäck, 2014). Strömbäck (2008: 236–40) has argued that the historical process of

mediatisation denotes a sequential trajectory of four phases. It starts with the media becoming (the most) important source of information for societal actors and media subsequently operating ever more independently from governments. The media then have developed into an important and distinct social institution. In the third phase of the historical mediatisation process, the media affect other societal organisations and institutions. In our case this would refer to the media affecting how bureaucracies operate and what bureaucrats do on a day–to–day basis. In Strömbäck's fourth phase of mediatisation, organisations internalise the external media rules. This can lead to 'amalgamation', when the core activities of the organisation become amalgamated with media–related activities or can even lead to 'substitution', in which public communication substitutes for core organisational activities (Schulz, 2004: 88–9).

In the literature on the mediatisation of politics, the news media are still important even in the age of social media. The news media are generally associated with the press and television, yet in its modus operandi there are very strong links to social media and vice versa. The mass media are for instance found to still play an important role in 'strengthening the frames that micromobilizing individuals produce' (Bekkers et al, 2011b: 217). Research on media use by civil servants suggests that the use of mass media and social media are strongly related (Djerf–Pierre and Pierre, 2016). Digital and social media have strengthened the penetrative and intrusive capacity of the media as a social system affecting other social systems and have become part of 'hybrid media systems' (Chadwick, 2014) in which traditional and social media feed into each other and exert ever more pressure on other institutions. This paper thus focuses on the impact of news media, acknowledging that the news is (re)distributed via physical, digital and social media channels.

Mediatisation describes how societal institutions or organisations change and integrate the media in their own processes (Esser, 2013: 158; Hjarvard, 2013). Media have an impact by 'changing the rules of the game' (Maurer and Pfetsch, 2014: 340). This is a macro-institutional process, yet, when we 'descend the ladder of abstraction' (Deacon and Stanyer, 2014: 1040), the mediatisation of bureaucracies on the meso–level should leave a tangible imprint on the daily activities of civil servants on a micro–level.

Many recent studies suggest that politicians and policymaking have, to varying degrees, adapted to the logic of the media (Elmelund–Præstekær et al, 2011; Kunelius and Reunanen, 2011; Thorbjørnsrud et al, 2014a; Garland et al, 2017). Research, for instance, documents that the interactions between politics, bureaucracies and the news media are a struggle for dominance or control (Casero–Ripollés et al, 2014; Isotalus and Almonkari, 2014; Hepp et al, 2015) between institutions with 'overlapping interests but different purposes' (Savage and Tiffen 2007: 84). This struggle involves making compromises, negotiating (Figenschou and Thorbjørnsrud, 2015a) and outright bargaining (Spörer–Wagner and Marcinkowski, 2010). Politicians reportedly adapt to the logics and agenda of the media (Van Santen et al, 2015: 59) yet, by doing so, they simultaneously try to regain control over media coverage (Driessens et al, 2010). Conversely, it has also been documented that the media have to give up some control and autonomy in order to deal with political logics (Orchard, 2018). This enduring conflict signifies the unresolved value conflict between the institutional logics (Maurer and Pfetsch, 2014).

Bureaucrats face even more complex tensions under media pressure than politicians although they are less exposed than politicians. Traditionally, squaring classic, Weberian

administrative values with politics and politicisation is already an important institutional balance that civil servants, at least in Northwestern European democracies, have to strike (Salomonsen et al, 2016). Working in government departments means having to find a proficient method of balancing bureaucratic and political values (Figenschou and Thorbjørnsrud, 2015a). Salomonsen et al (2016) analysed the involvement of policymaking civil servants in strategic communication by the Danish government. They show that strategic communication aims to contribute to organisational goal–achievement and conclude that 'involvement in a minister's strategic communication is part and parcel of a functionally politicised – and hence politically savvy – civil service.' This involvement goes hand in hand with increased central and political control over government communication and operations within bureaucracies (Salomonsen et al, 2016; Schillemans, 2016). Garland (2017) recently described how the clash between external media logics and internal administrative logics may produce tensions, even disdain, inside bureaucracies. For policy staff, public relations is generally seen as a 'soft option' and as 'toys for the minister'. There is a 'them and us attitude' between communications staff and policy staff (Garland, 2017: 178). This is, again, a sign of unresolved inter-institutional conflict between media values and the administrative values to which civil servants adhere.

In this article, we focus on the mediatisation of the daily work of civil servants as the inclusion of media–related activities and concerns in their daily practices. We focus on *organisational* adaptation; not communicative adaptation (Strömbäck and Van Aelst, 2013: 344), by looking at 'activities' (Landerer, 2014), 'habits' (Garland et al, 2017: 11), and 'doings' (Driessens et al, 2010) of ordinary civil servants. We see three ways in which the daily work of civil servants may become mediatised.

A first indication of the mediatisation of work is active, professional *media use* by civil servants, underscoring that the media have become an important source of information (Strömbäck, 2008). Civil servants spend some of their time following twitter, listening to the radio, scanning news sites or broadcast teletext. It is generally seen as important to 'know the news' (Schillemans, 2012) and the media have become 'institutionalized and normalized within state bureaucracies' (Garland et al, 2017: 1), producing a 'hyper-sensitive bureaucracy' (Garland et al, 2017: 5). The media can be a valuable source of information for bureaucrats as journalists have forms of access which are not available to public actors for legal reasons (De Graaf and Meijer, 2019: 88). As such, the media can be important organisational 'inputs' for civil servants (Salomonsen et al, 2016; Schillemans, 2016).

Second, mediatisation can also be a 'mental state' of anticipating the media in one's daily activities as a form of *media awareness*. Landerer (2014: 306) for instance showed that 'audience oriented MP's' constantly ask themselves how to get into news outlets with the widest possible reach with what they do. This mirrors Maurer and Pfetsch's (2014: 340) conclusion that 'it becomes normal for political actors to consider how media actors will behave when they design political strategies or make decisions' (see also Kunelius and Reunanen, 2011; Salomonsen et al, 2016: 211). A high level of media awareness logically results from operating in a media saturated policy environment in which news media and social media often 'surprise' policymakers (Bekkers et al, 2011a: 25) and media operate as external accountability forums for bureaucracies (Maggetti, 2012).

Finally, bureaucrats may also participate in active media work, when they help write speech dots or press releases, do background talks with journalists, gather information

in response to media queries, or play a part in media campaigns. Salomonsen et al (2016) have shown that some bureaucrats do indeed play a role in strategic communication. Djerf–Pierre and Pierre (2016) suggest that active media work is mostly performed by the most senior civil servants. Schillemans (2012) documents that some bureaucrats may shun the spotlights of the media as they are concerned about the pressures this gives while others actively seek publicity. Active media work is performed to boost organisational reputations (Boon et al, 2019), also in response to challenges through (social) media (Bekkers et al, 2011a).

All in all, we thus contend that the mediatisation of daily work can manifest itself in three ways: media use, media awareness and media work. In the methods section we describe how we have measured these three sub-concepts of mediatisation.

Media-stress

The mediatisation of daily work implies that bureaucrats are faced with the challenge of 'amalgamating' (Schulz, 2004) demands, rules and expectations stemming from different institutions. This results in conflicting expectations, as is for instance evidenced by a Dutch police officer stating: 'It is difficult to keep citizens as your friend, do your job well, and follow all the rules' (De Graaf and Meijer, 2019: 89). Psychological research generally shows that institutional and value conflicts can lead to stress for employees (Bouckenooghe et al, 2005). A recent overview of studies on 'coping' in policy implementation, shows that bureaucrats have been found to resort to many normatively, personally or operationally dysfunctional coping mechanisms under the stress of unresolved institutional value conflict (Tummers et al, 2015). These same coping mechanisms – for instance 'moving away from clients' – have also been found for policymakers facing disruptive forms of micro-mobilisation via social media (Bekkers et al, 2011a).

Media-stress is likely to manifest itself in the form of feelings of fear and anxiety related to the media. Bureaucrats may also express negative views towards the media (Klijn, 2016; Thorbjørnsrud et al, 2014a). Prior research shows that people may experience the media to be 'hostile' and disproportionately negative when 'their' cause is portrayed in the news (Vallone et al, 1985; Perloff, 2015).

The media can be a source of stress as they are difficult to control, and their agendas and stories may affect the fate of a policy. This is a source of distress and frustration for civil servants (Thorbjørnsrud et al, 2014b). Furthermore, the media are also often believed to report unfavourably about bureaucracies. Popular pejorative stereotypes about lazy, unresponsive, careless or inefficient bureaucrats are readily invoked by some of the press (Van de Walle, 2004; Cook, 2005: 88). The public administration literature on the role of the media tends to be quite negative 'in the sense that media is perceived as an uncontrollable nuisance, alien to the *logics* [emphasis added] of policy and steering' (Klijn et al, 2016: 1053).

Workplace stress in general is related to a number of factors (Michie, 2002) with clear significance for the impact of media on bureaucrats: time pressures, work overloads, lack of control and role conflicts.

The media now work on a 24/7 basis and put considerable *time pressure* on bureaucracies to meet their deadlines (Boon et al, 2019). This is clearly exacerbated by social media regularly 'surprising' policymakers with the swiftness of events (Bekkers et al, 2011b). The time pressure can easily lead to *work overloads* for non-communication

staff in public bureaucracies, for whom media use, awareness and work are likely to come on top of existing responsibilities and duties. Working with the media implies struggling for *control* (Hepp et al, 2015) and also to some extent playing by the rules of the media. Working with the media, thus, means giving up some control which is an important source of workplace stress. Also, by amalgamating policy work with media work, bureaucrats may experience *role ambiguity* and *role conflict*, again theoretically related to stress.

All in all, the driving forces of media–stress are unresolved value conflict, unpredictability, loss of control, time pressures and work overloads related to the media. Our first hypothesis (H1) is then that *civil servants whose work is more mediatised (higher media use, media awareness and media work) will also experience more media-stress*.

Institutional predictors

Beyond the mediatisation of daily work, media–stress will also be dependent on individual characteristics of the person and on institutional characteristics of the organisation in which (s)he works. In this section we develop additional hypotheses relating macro- (country differences) and meso-level (organisational differences) predictors of media-stress. In addition, several individual level factors (such as age, gender) have been used as control variables and some will turn out to be relevant in our analyses.

Macro-level: national differences

The mediatisation of bureaucracies is a general process of adaptation to the media which may take on different forms, depending on specific institutional settings. So far, most studies of the mediatisation of political phenomena have been single country studies, although there are important exceptions (Strömbäck and Dimitrova, 2011; Magin, 2015; Van Santen et al, 2015; Schillemans, 2016). By comparing the mediatisation of relevant political and policy processes, the concept can be better adapted to specific contexts (Ekström et al, 2016) and be further developed as a 'concept of difference' (Deacon and Stanyer, 2014). In our study, we have looked at civil servants in Norway and the Netherlands; two established, affluent and advanced parliamentary democracies in which civil servants have relatively strong and protected positions in the policy process. The administrative systems in both countries are comparable on most important HRM-indicators (OECD, 2012).

The Norwegian media can theoretically be expected to be more stressing for civil servants than the Dutch media as the pressure from the media is likely to be higher. Some of the national newspapers in Norway are tabloidesque (Cere et al, 2015), and in comparative studies the Norwegian media are found to report more personalised and human interest stories than newspapers in other countries (Figenschou and Thorbjørnsrud, 2015b). A recent comparative study of top-level civil servants further showed a relatively high media awareness in Norway, compared to six other advanced democracies, including the Netherlands (Overman et al, 2018). Journalists are also reported to be relatively powerful in Norway compared to other countries, again including the Netherlands (Van Dalen and Van Aelst, 2014). Against this background, we hypothesise (H2) that *media-stress is higher in Norway than in the Netherlands*.

Meso-level: organisational differences

Bureaucrats work in different types of organisations with varying levels of media visibility and media pressure. Previous studies have indicated several organisational characteristics which triggering media coverage and, thus, theoretically generating more media pressure. The early work on agencies and media by Deacon and Monk (2001) showed that size matters and that the biggest organisations generally attract most media attention. The type of task also matters for the amount of media scrutiny. Bureaucracies providing direct services to the public are more visible and easier to understand, evaluate and criticise (Schillemans, 2012; Boon et al, 2019). The location of the main office is also relevant. Research in Sweden indicated a significant relationship between organisational mediatisation and the location of the main office. Organisations outside of the greater Stockholm area were less visible in the news and less focused on the media in their internal procedures (Fredriksson et al, 2015). And in a recent study, Boon et al (2019) showed that legally independent agencies are among those that generate more media coverage.

Following up on this, we distinguish between central government departments and semi-autonomous agencies (Schillemans, 2012), including regulatory authorities (Maggetti, 2012). In both countries, policies are prepared and coordinated in central government departments while they are delivered by agencies with some operational or financial autonomy (Verhoest et al, 2016). This may have an impact on the relationship between bureaucracies and the media, as has been addressed in earlier studies (Salomonsen et al, 2016; Schillemans, 2016; Boon et al, 2019). Central government departments operate more closely to the political game and feature more prominently in the news than the average agency. Earlier studies found that the level of media attention for specific agencies differs widely, and that some agencies are regularly scrutinised by the media and prioritise media-related work while many other agencies experience little to no pressure and reporting from the media (Deacon and Monk, 2001; Fredriksson et al, 2015; Schillemans, 2016). For some agencies, the media are a powerful external source of accountability and scrutiny (Maggetti, 2012) while others operate out of sight in a 'pastoral world' (Pollitt et al, 2004). This suggests that media pressure and, theoretically, media–stress, are likely to be experienced to quite different degrees by civil servants, depending on the media salience of their organisation. A civil servant working for the immigration department would theoretically experience most pressure and, thus, be most likely to experience media-stress (Figenschou et al, 2017). The media are also biased towards authorities, towards the 'powerful', and can be expected to report much more on central government departments led by politicians than on separate agencies (Korthagen, 2015). Following this logic of media pressure, one would, on average, hypothetically expect (H3) *civil servants working for central government departments to experience more media-stress than their colleagues in agencies.*

Organisational position

A person's hierarchical position in the organisation may also affect the media–stress (s)he experiences. We distinguish between civil servants supervising others and civil servants who do not. For civil servants at higher levels in the organisation, it can be assumed that broader issues, including the media, demand their attention than 'just' their specific policy task. We know that hierarchy has an impact on the values of civil servants and that top public administrators cope with more

complex value systems (De Graaf, 2010). Supervising administrators work more closely to the political centre and may thus feel the weight of the media pressure more strongly. The media are probably more relevant for supervising than for non-supervising administrators, which makes it hypothetically *more likely that higher level civil servants experience more media-stress* (H4). However, by focusing on the organisational position of individuals, their coping abilities with media as an external stressor also becomes important, which suggests a competing logic to media-stress. Supervisors generally have to cope with more diverse value-conflicts than operational civil servants and may be better at coping than regular staff. Also, by being in a supervisory position, those bureaucrats may experience more control and agency in their work, as well as in relation to the media and the responses by ministers and other political actors. Agency and control are crucial in relation to workplace stress. The competing hypothesis based on expected individual coping ability would then be the opposite of H1. We additionally hypothesise (H4') *less media-stress for civil servants with supervising tasks.*

Methods

This paper investigates the impact of the mediatisation of civil servants' work on the media-stress they experience. We do so on the basis of a survey distributed in public bureaucracies in Norway and the Netherlands. Overall, there are a few important differences between Norway and the Netherlands, mostly related to the media and the role of journalists, as described above when we develop the second hypothesis. The main goal of our research design is to transcend country-specific patterns in the analysis of the mediatisation of work and media–stress which greatly adds to their generalisability. In the analysis, differences between the two countries will be reported although we focus mainly on over-arching commonalities. Additionally, the research design allows us to compare media fear between the two countries.

Empirically, the paper draws on two surveys conducted in Norway and the Netherlands. The survey was translated by a bilingual researcher. We used online survey tools provided by Questback to design, distribute and collect the surveys. In Norway, the survey was sent to five ministries and 28 agencies in late 2015 and early 2016. We approached all ministries to negotiate access and received e-mail lists from five (out of 16) ministries (Ministry of Defence; Ministry of Finance; Ministry of Health; Ministry of Justice; Ministry of Research and Education). For the agencies, e-mails were mainly available on their websites. After four reminders, we obtained a response rate of 40 per cent from the ministries and 28 per cent from the agencies. In total, 3,103 civil servants responded to the survey in Norway.[1]

In the Netherlands, the survey was distributed in early 2016 through three channels. The first is an existing panel of civil servants willing to participate in research, representing both central government departments and agencies ('Flitspanel'). Here the response rate obtained was 41 per cent, with 1,401 responses. Additionally, two large agencies with highly diverse task portfolios working in one of the policy areas of central concern were surveyed in order to increase the number of responses from agencies. Here, email lists were received, focusing on (senior) policy staff and

supervisors. The response rates obtained after three reminders was 53 per cent. In total, 1,552 civil servants filled out the survey in the Netherlands.

Measurements

Dependent variable: media-stress

The survey contained six questions in which respondents were asked for assessments of how they saw the media, how their organisation handled the media and questions relating to media-related negativity, stress and anxiety. Five of those were negatively correlated to the mediatisation of daily work. Three of the five remaining items were related. The items refer to 'often being anxious that cases come out in the media before they are completely finalised', the perception that 'media is hostile to bureaucracy' and the assertion that 'pressure from media causes fear to make mistakes'. An additive index was calculated combining these three variables.

Independent variable: mediatisation of daily work

The questions on the mediatisation of daily work were based on earlier surveys (Salomonsen et al, 2016; Schillemans, 2016), and aimed to tap into specific, concrete, measurable dimensions in which the media 'out there' could affect mental states of and specific behaviours by bureaucrats. Originally, the questions were devised to measure four ways in which the media could possibly penetrate the work practices of civil servants. The factor analysis however revealed three distinct underlying factors, making immediate theoretical sense. The questions appeared at various places in the survey routing, so the factor structure is not a battery effect.

The three sub-dimensions are media use, media awareness and media work (see Table 1).

Media use refers to the extent to which civil servants see and use the news as an important source of information for their work (Salomonsen et al, 2016; Schillemans, 2016). The items are whether respondents agree that 'it is important to follow media in my work' and 'media covers information that is often important for my work'.

Media awareness refers to the extent to which the media are mentally present while civil servants are doing their daily work. The media are then mentally 'present' in the minds of civil servants as political actors (Kunelius and Reunanen, 2011; Landerer, 2014). The items are whether 'it is important in my job to understand the media' and whether people 'consider how a case may appear in the media'.

Media work relates to the extent that non-media staff directly engage in customary media work (Salomonsen et al, 2016). Here, non-media staff engage in directly media-related activities, thus theoretically 'substituting' (Schulz, 2004) non-media work for direct media work. Items refer to participating in 'writing speech dots/flakes in connection with media inquiries or media initiatives' and 'responding to media inquiries and work with media initiatives are a natural part of one's work'.

Table 1: Factor analyses mediatisation of daily work, Norway and the Netherlands Principal axis factoring

		Factor (eigenvalue)		
		1	2	3
		(1.2)	(2.7)	(1.1)
Media work	Q35: Writing speech dots/flakes in connection with media inquiries or media initiatives	0.83	0.14	0.10
	Q76: Respond to media inquiries and work with media initiatives are a natural part of my work	0.80	0.27	0.08
Media use	Q78: Its important to follow media in my work	0.25	0.83	0.08
	Q79: Media covers information that is often important for my work	0.25	0.79	0.12
Media awareness	Q16: Qualification – understand media	0.24	0.35	0.71
	Q26: Values – consideration of how a case may appear in the media	-0.23	0.42	0.67
	Q65: How often do you have to interrupt work due to media inquiries	-0.23	0.36	-0.73

Note:
N=3716–4452

Macro and meso level variables

Beyond the mediatisation of their work, respondents come from different organisational and professional backgrounds which have an impact on how they see the media and on media-stress.

To begin with, we collected data from Norway (N=3,103) and the Netherlands (N=1,552), meaning that the Norwegian respondents represent precisely two-thirds of total responses. This means that the Norwegian responses dominate the sample. The important relations between variables, however, are also visible in the Dutch sample. Furthermore, participants either worked for central government departments (N=1,605) or attached, semi-autonomous government agencies (N=3,048). Now two-thirds of our respondents represent agencies, which makes sense in so far that in both countries, agencies employ more staff than central governments. Finally, we asked respondents to indicate whether or not they had a supervising position, which almost half of the sample does (49% versus 51%). This figure as such is somewhat unrepresentative. On the one hand it means an over-representation of supervisors. This, on the other hand, could also be a response bias, as highly educated respondents may over-report the extent to which they supervise others as this is socially desirable. Furthermore, this somewhat tilted balance with too many chiefs and too few Indians is also to some extent an outcome of our sampling procedure, where we were looking for (senior) policy officials and not for support staff and were furthermore dependent on access provided.

Individual factors

We collected *individual* level factors as controls. We asked for the age in years of respondents and the number of years of experience in the organisation. For the Norwegian sample we also had gender but this was not available throughout for the Dutch sample. Various individual level factors are probably also related to media-stress

and would be important to incorporate in future studies. We were however limited in the number of questions we could ask in the Dutch sample and have therefore focused on the mediatisation and institutional variables of interest to our central research question. The Norwegian sample contained more individual level factors and we will mention some of them in the discussion.

As dependent and independent variables are drawn from the same survey, we risk common source bias. We ran the Lindell and Whitney test (2001), where an unrelated question from the survey is utilised as a marker. We used a question about lawful proceedings as a bureaucratic value for civil servants, and Pearson's r were below 0.10 for all correlations. We also performed a factor analysis with dependent and independent variables. It shows that the first underlying dimension explains only 24 per cent of the variance, again suggesting that the problem of common source bias is limited.

Results

Mediatisation of daily work: a mixed bag

This paper started with some, mostly qualitative, accounts of the mediatisation of bureaucracies and public agencies (Bekkers et al, 2011a; Maggetti, 2012; Schillemans, 2012; Thorbjørnsrud et al, 2014b; Djerf-Pierre and Pierre, 2016; Klijn et al, 2016; Garland et al, 2017). Together such studies have shown that media have a strong impact on bureaucracies on an organisational level with impacts on individuals. We now open up the organisation further to analyse the mediatisation of civil servant's daily work by measuring their professional media use, media awareness and direct media work. Table 2 below gives a first overview of our findings.

The table shows that there is a decent variation on all three indices. The means, though, differ quite strongly, with a very low mean for media work suggesting that most respondents simply do very little direct media work, although there are some clear exceptions in our data. There seem to be firewalls between the communications people preparing media initiatives by bureaucracies and most of the policy staff preparing or delivering the policies.

The means are much higher for media use and media awareness, suggesting this is fairly relevant for Dutch and Norwegian civil servants, albeit with some marked variation. The 4,655 civil servants in our sample, then, are on average fairly mediatised in terms of using media as a source of information and having the media in the back of their minds while working, yet, they are mostly at arm's length from doing real media work. The media, thus, are a real but not overbearing or all-encompassing presence in the professional lives of civil servants, which aligns with findings in other

Table 2: Descriptives mediatisation indices, Norway and the Netherlands(all 5-pt scales, range 1–5)

	Min	Max	Mean	Median	SD	Valid N	Missing	Cronbach's Alpha	Nr of items
Media work	0	7	1.77	1.00	1.77	3469	1259	0.62	2
Media use	0	8	5.11	6.00	1.98	4364	364	0.80	2
Media awareness	0	8	4.82	5.00	1.80	4073	655	0.56	2

studies on the relative weight of the media for bureaucrats (Waterman et al, 1998: 24; Overman et al, 2018: 9). Our findings also imply that there is an important distinction between professional media use and media awareness on the one hand, which are both quite widespread among our respondents, and performing media work on the other, which is quite rare. This is going to be an important distinction further on.

Media-stress

The media are often portrayed as external intruders in public administration (Klijn et al, 2016) and may invoke media-stress. We have measured media-stress with items stressing 'anxiety', 'hostility', and 'fear'. Table 3 below provides an overview of our findings on media-stress.

The table shows that our respondents indeed on average suffer a bit from media-stress. Yet the stress is again, as with the mediatisation of work, not at all at a dysfunctionally high level. Underneath the overall picture of media-stress, almost half of the respondents agree (strongly) that they can be anxious that cases will come out in the media before they are completely finalised. A third of the respondents further (strongly) agreed that media pressure produced fear of making mistakes. This fear as such is actually quite productive and will probably decrease the actual number of mistakes made. When fear is overbearing, however, it may produce problematic doses of stress and could lead to unsavory responses. Finally, a smaller number of respondents (around 25%) agreed that the media is hostile to bureaucracy.

The reassuring news for public administration scholars would be that the average media-stress level is not too high. The data do however also suggest that at least some media-stress is widespread among bureaucrats and that some individual respondents are very stressed. This leads to the question of how media-stress can be explained.

Antecedents of media-stress

To analyse the antecedents of media-stress, we performed a stepwise regression analysis relating the three dimensions of the mediatisation of daily work (media use,

Table 3: Media-stress, Norway and the Netherlands, descriptives(α: 0.54 all 5-pt scales, range 1–5)

	Min	Max	Mean	Median	SD	Valid N	Missing	Nr of items
Media stress index	0	12	6.27	6.00	2.30	2641	2087	3
Items media stress index (in %)			1	2	3	4	5	N
Anxiety that cases come out in the media before they are completely finalised			9.2	12.8	26.0	40.9	11.1	3032
The media is hostile to bureaucracy			6.7	23.7	44.0	20.3	5.2	3885
Pressure from media causes fear to make mistakes			11.3	22.9	27.6	31.1	7.1	3872

media awareness and media work), some institutional predictors (country, type of organisation) and some individual characteristics (hierarchical position, age, years of experience) to media-stress. Several of these factors were related to media–stress in the analysis. We first provide the general overview in Table 4 and will then discuss the four hypotheses in turn including some reflections.

Mediatisation and media-stress: two logics

Table 4 shows that all three sub-dimensions of the mediatisation of daily work are significantly related to media-stress, as we hypothesised (H1), yet not all in the same direction. The picture turns out to be more complex than originally envisaged.

In line with our hypothesis, the analysis suggests that civil servants who use the media much more as an input to their work and who are more aware of the media while doing their work are also more media-stressed. This pattern is reminiscent of results from agenda-setting studies. The agenda-setting effect of the media is generally speaking strongest on those individuals who listen, read and watch more media (McCombs, 2004). This suggests that at least some of the media-impact results from how people handle media and attribute importance to media. The media does not so much (or not only) enforce its logic upon the civil service, they are also 'invited in' by individuals with a strong orientation towards and awareness of the news.

Table 4: The antecedents of media-stressOLS regression, entries are b-coefficients. St dev in parentheses

	Model 1	*Model 2*
Constant	5.81*** (0.23)	4.80*** (0.27)
Age (in years)	0.00 (0.01)	-0.01 (0.01)
Experience	-0.07 (0.11)	-0.05 (0.11)
Leadership position	-0.24** (0.12)	-0.32*** (0.12)
Organisation type	0.19* (0.10)	0.22** (0.11)
Country	1.31*** (0.11)	1.18 *** (0.12)
Media work index		-0.06** (0.03)
Media use index		0.11*** (0.03)
Media awareness index		0.18*** (0.03)
R^2 (adjusted)	0.08	0.11

Notes:
***$p < 0.01$; **$p < 0.05$; *$p < 0.10$

The pattern however totally reverses when people actually participate in media work on a regular basis, which only a small minority of our respondents do. The civil servants doing most media work turn out to be significantly less media-stressed. This is at odds with our hypothesis.

Upon reflection it seems that working with the media may take away some of the factors leading to media-stress. The finding may suggest that bureaucrats who are routinely involved with media work learn to understand the media and find effective ways of coping (Bekkers et al, 2011a). By having to balance conflictual institutional demands on a regular basis they may learn to reconcile and balance ensuing practical and value conflicts. Also, by being actively involved, bureaucrats may get a stronger sense of control which may also lower media-stress. The simplified lesson to take away from this for civil servants is: 'if you want to stand the (media) heat, get into the (media) kitchen'. We should note, though, that the increase in explained variance is limited, when introducing the three dimensions of the mediatisation of daily work. This suggests that country (and the other organisational level variables) are strong predictors of media-stress.

Country differences: surprising Dutch media-stress

Beyond the mediatisation of work, our second hypothesis (H2) was that Norwegian civil servants, due to the characteristics of the media system, would be more media-stressed than their Dutch colleagues. Table 4 however clearly shows this hypothesis has to be refuted. The Dutch respondents – surprisingly – express more media-stress than Norwegian respondents. This was unexpected, because Norway has a stronger tabloid tradition (Cere et al, 2015), with more soft news and human interest stories (Figenschou and Thorbjørnsrud, 2015b), stronger media concerns by civil servants (Overman et al, 2018) and more powerful media (Van Dalen and Van Aelst, 2014). Nevertheless, the Dutch civil servants seem to be consistently more stressed than their Norwegian colleagues. We ran the multivariate regressions on each country separately (see Table A1 in the appendix). Interestingly, media work and media awareness are significant in the Norwegian case, media use is significant in the Netherlands. Leadership position and type of organisation is only significant in Norway.

One should be careful in interpreting such country differences. It could be that the original question in Norwegian sounds stronger to the native ear than its Dutch translation. It could also be the case that Norwegians are simply less outspoken in their judgements, so that it would take more in Norway to answer strongly affirmatively to a question.

Having said that, however, it could well be the case that our survey taps into a real difference. A related study comparing Dutch to Australian civil servants showed the same pattern. The objective reasons for stress were much higher in Australia (more coverage, more negativity, tabloids) while the subjective perceptions of media-pressure in the Netherlands turned out to be much higher (Schillemans, 2016). This may suggest that media-stress is to some extent an in-group phenomenon (see Perloff, 2015), developed and shared in professional communities and only partially coupled to the 'objective' external media pressure experienced.

Organisational differences: most media-stress in central government

As expected, we find that departmental staff experience significantly more media-stress than their counterparts in more 'pastoral' (Pollitt et al, 2004) agencies. This is

Table A1: The antecedents of media-stress, Norway and the NetherlandsOLS regression, entries are b-coefficients. St dev in parentheses

	Norway	*Netherlands*
Constant	5.08*** (0.32)	5.57*** (0.59)
Age (in years)	-0.01* (0.01)	0.01 (0.01)
Experience	0.05 (0.14)	-0.11 (0.18)
Leadership position	-0.32** (0.16)	-0.25 (0.17)
Organisation type	0.30** (0.15)	0.14 (0.16)
Media work index	-0.08** (0.05)	-0.05 (0.05)
Media use index	0.06 (0.04)	0.22*** (0.05)
Media awareness index	0.23*** (0.04)	0.07 (0.06)
R^2 (adjusted)	0.03	0.04

Notes: ***$p < 0.01$; **$p < 0.05$; *$p < 0.10$

precisely as was expected and confirms our third hypothesis (H3). This makes sense, as central government departments work much closer to the political power centre and its political games. Their work is also much more salient for the news media and subjected to much larger numbers of media stories. And also, not unimportant, the media will be familiar with the names of most departments while most agencies, with some notable exceptions (Deacon and Monk, 2001; Schillemans, 2012), remain unknown to the average public and work out of sight, out of reach, of the media. Against this background, it is only logical that bureaucrats in government departments are more stressed about the media than most of their colleagues delivering and implementing policy. This is in line with expectations about the stressing impact of media on bureaucracy (Klijn and Korthagen, 2017), and the general assumptions in the mediatisation of politics literature (Esser and Strömbäck, 2014). An increase in media pressure exacerbates the institutional value conflict between bureaucracy and media, resulting in media-stress, explaining the higher media-stress in central government departments.

Individual differences: leading is coping

Finally, in line with our expectations, we find that civil servants with supervising responsibilities experience less media-stress than non-supervising civil servants (H4). The hypothesis was based on the expectation that supervising staff would be more exposed to media, also given their closer proximity to political decision-making, and would be more affected by 'media surprises'. Although they experience more media-pressure and have to deal with more complex value conflicts, supervising civil servants experience less media-stress. This suggests that, as part of their supervising role, they have learnt to cope with different value systems and they may simply be

better at handling such tensions. Also, in line with our reasoning regarding the effects of media work, supervisors may have a much stronger sense of agency in their work which may make the media 'out there' seem less threatening and stressing. The logic of individual coping ability and agency, summarised in H4', then seems to be more important than proximity to political decision-making and exposure to media-pressure, which was our contrasting hypothesis here (H4).

The other individual variables had no effect in our model. There was no relation between age and media-stress nor years of experience in an organisation and media-stress. In the Norwegian data there was a significant relation between media-stress and gender, though (gender was not systematically available in the Netherlands). It turned out that women were less media-stressed than men. We would not know how to explain this interesting finding but it suggests that much more can be learnt about the antecedents of media-stress when we zoom in on individual-level factors. Our explanatory power is fine (R^2=0.11) but there is still a lot left to explain. It would be valuable for instance to take personal characteristics of civil servants into account. One could for instance expect that some of the big-five personality traits (Barrick and Mount, 1991), notably 'neuroticism' and 'openness to experience', are related to media-stress. It would also make sense to relate media-stress to more generic professional attitudes found in civil servants, such as public service motivation (Perry, 1996) or fatalism (Klijn et al, 2016). This however needs to be taken up in subsequent research.

Conclusion and discussion

Now who is afraid of the media? Against the background of the institutional value conflict between bureaucratic values and media demands, this paper has sought to find out which civil servants experience more media-stress than others. The analyses confirmed most of our hypotheses and suggest that various logics are at play.

There is first of all a logic of *media* (and political) *pressure*. Those bureaucrats working for the central government departments operating more closely to the spotlights of the media, also experience more media-stress. There is, second, a logic of *media focus*. Those bureaucrats reading, watching and listening more to the news (media use) and who are more aware of the media while working (media awareness) also experience more media-stress. There is, third, however, also a logic of *learned skill* or *coping ability*. Bureaucrats doing more media work and bureaucrats with supervising positions seem to have learnt to cope with the conflicting demands from the media and subsequently experience less media-stress. Overall, we conclude that mediatisation is indeed related to media-stress, yet not, as the different logics above suggest, in a one-dimensional way.

There are some important limitations to and reflections on our findings. To begin with, we were restricted in collecting data on the individual and organisational level in the two countries. As a consequence, various potential explanations of media-stress on the individual and organisational level were not included in the survey which could have provided further explanations. For instance, we found significant differences between organisational backgrounds of the respondents but were not able to use further theoretically relevant organisational variables, such as organisational size, type of task or location of the main office (Boon et al, 2019). And on the individual level, additional variables such as media training, personality traits or fatalism (Klijn et al, 2016) could be relevant. Such organisational or individual variables can potentially influence our results as they could be both related to the independent and dependent variables.

Second, the paper is theoretically framed on the generic concept of mediatisation yet focuses on two countries only which raises the issue of generalisability. Generally, some care has to be taken in interpreting findings from specific settings and also in interpreting cross-country comparisons. As results relate to earlier studies (Salomonsen et al, 2016; Schillemans, 2016; Thorbjørnsrud et al, 2014b; Garland et al, 2017) and insights extend and build on existing scholarship, we believe our findings may at least generalise theoretically and could inform subsequent studies in different settings.

Finally, both in survey research in general as in mediatisation studies in particular, the issue of causality is always complex. Scholars in mediatisation have explained how processes of adaptation to media should not necessarily be interpreted as strict responses to an external pressure; there can also be processes of reverse causality. Sometimes adaptation to the media could also be the product of mimetic isomorphism (Donges and Jarren, 2014: 189) or other institutional or organisational factors (Fredriksson et al, 2015; Salomonsen et al, 2016). The surprisingly high level of Dutch media-stress could be related to this. Even more strongly, mediatisation can also be the product of conscious strategic actions by the mediatising entity itself, in fact rendering it 'self-mediatisation' (Esser, 2013: 162), where strategic objectives coincide with adaptation to the media (Strömbäck and Van Aelst, 2013: 345).

Beyond the explanations we sought, we believe that our findings have normative, theoretical and policy-relevance.

The mediatisation of politics literature started out from an explicitly *normative* concern about the undue and undesirable influence of media on politics (Mazzoleni and Schulz, 1999). The public administration literature is equally concerned with the disruptive effects of the media on public policies (Klijn and Korthagen, 2017). In both literatures, some authors fear that hegemonic media logics crowd out or supplant 'homegrown' institutional logics of politics and administration with detrimental effects. In this context, we believe that our findings provide a welcome comfort to those concerned authors. The levels of media-stress we saw in this study are not terribly high. The media has an active presence in the daily work performed in public bureaucracies, yet this effect is not all-encompassing and does not overrun traditional bureaucratic practices and seems to have become normalised (compare Salomonsen et al, 2016). At the same time, the paper also shows that some bureaucrats are (way) more media-stressed than others and helps to understand when and why this is the case.

In the *theoretical* debate about the mediatisation of political phenomena, we have aimed to provide a modest but important contribution. The expansive mediatisation literature has in recent years attracted criticisms and been dubbed in one of the strongest contributions as a 'concept of no difference' (Deacon and Stanyer, 2014; Ekström et al, 2016). In this paper we have specified and contextualised what mediatisation – adaptation of people's work inside public bureaucracies to the logics of the media – could mean in tangible ways. We have used the concept in a purely descriptive, non-normative sense (Schulz, 2004; Hjarvard, 2013: 18), describing variance in media use, media awareness and media work. As such, this paper has been able to capture 'differences' in mediatisation and to explore some of the underlying logics and dynamics. This is crucial for scholars aiming to understand the real antecedents of mediatisation and the concrete ways in which the media environment becomes integrated and changes public bureaucracies.

Finally, we believe that our findings have potential policy implications. Every bureaucracy faces the challenge of coupling internal policy processes to external

communications about those policies. Ideal-typically, bureaucracies can deploy two organising principles. The first strategy could be dubbed a *firewalling* strategy, where the organisation buffers the core of its policy work from the external media by insulating policy work from media work. In this scenario, bureaucrats do as little media work as possible and their work will not be mediatised. The second strategy could be dubbed *filtering*, where organisations carefully expose and integrate policy staff to some media work, almost as a sort of a vaccine, to accustom them to the media and to balance institutional demands (and when the filters fail and media work takes precedence, this could be called *flooding*). Both strategies are found in public organisations and we find advocates of both strategies in the literature and among civil servants (Sanders et al, 2011; Klijn et al, 2016). Our research now suggests that, in lieu of media-stress, the fire-walling policy seems to offer most potential. When bureaucrats are highly aware of the media and use much media this is associated with media-stress, yet once they get into the media-kitchen and take part in some of the media work, they are much less stressed. This suggests that it would be helpful for policymaking civil servants to participate in some of the media work in order to reconcile conflictual institutional demands from bureaucracy and the media. When media-stress is a problem, including bureaucrats in media work can be part of the answer.

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Note
[1] In addition to the number of respondents reported here, we also received responses from communications staff in the Netherlands and Norway. Those respondents have been excluded from the analysis.

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