



Analysis: Press Coverage of Leveson *Part 1: The Inquiry*

Gordon Neil Ramsay
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Executive Summary

This report analyses press coverage of the Leveson Inquiry from 14th July 2011, the day after the Inquiry was announced, until 28th November 2012, the day before the report was published. In total, 2,016 news articles from 18 national newspapers were analysed. It is the first attempt to do a full analysis of coverage during this period.

Given some of the polarised views towards the Inquiry we have set out – in detail – the methodology used for collecting and analysing the articles. We have also published all the raw data on which the analysis is based (on our website and on Google Docs).¹ If any mistakes are identified we will correct them.

Four broad conclusions:

1. *Coverage of the Inquiry was extensive.* Reporting on Modules 1 and 3 of the Inquiry was widespread in most newspapers. While the oral hearings were being live-streamed, most of this coverage was neutral reporting;
2. *One viewpoint dominated evaluative coverage of the Inquiry.* There was a limited plurality of views expressed. Where articles contained evaluative statements about the Leveson Inquiry, one perspective was given clear prominence;
3. *That viewpoint was overwhelmingly negative.* In almost all newspapers, negative views on the Inquiry dominated. This negative coverage increased substantially in the 100 days before publication of the Leveson Report;
4. *Reporting on proposed regulatory alternatives was virtually non-existent.* Readers were given little information about regulatory alternatives from which to make up their own minds about the potential outcomes and repercussions of the Inquiry.

Six key findings:

1. During the oral hearings of the Leveson Inquiry, when evidence was live-streamed online, most of the coverage (89%) was neutral. After the hearings ended, neutral coverage fell to 37%. (Tables 10 & 11);
2. Where articles included evaluative viewpoints on the Inquiry, whether from sources in factual news stories or in leader or opinion columns, these were overwhelmingly negative. Over the whole period of study, 76% of such articles contained only negative viewpoints, while 18% contained only positive viewpoints, and 6% contained both (Table 5 & 7; Figure 4);
3. The negative coverage usually framed the Inquiry as a potential threat to press freedom. 280 stories (64% of those with evaluative coverage) contained descriptions of the ‘threats’ posed by press regulation. In contrast, there were 103 positive references to the Inquiry in all newspapers across the whole period of study (Tables 6 & 8; Figure 5)
4. Negative coverage increased drastically in the last 100 days, once oral hearings had ended and in the run-up to publication of the report. Stories during this period were five times as likely to contain only negative viewpoints as only positive ones. Many newspapers contained no positive references to the Inquiry or its outcomes during this period (Tables 10, 12, 13 & 14);
5. In the run-up to the publication of the report, newspaper leaders on the Inquiry nearly all contained negative references to the Inquiry or its outcomes. Of 28 leaders in all papers published between 20th August and 27th November 2012, 23 contained only negative viewpoints on the Inquiry. Two contained no evaluative statements at all, while three contained both positive and negative viewpoints. None were purely positive (Table 15);
6. Alternative models of regulation went almost entirely unreported, except for that put forward by the newspaper industry itself. Substantive descriptions of regulatory outcomes appeared in just 62 articles, of which 56 were on the industry’s plan (Table 9).

¹ <http://mediastandardstrust.org/mst-news/mst-leveson-coverage-analysis-data-and-qa/>

Introduction

Of the many reviews of UK press regulation since 1947, the Leveson Inquiry has been unique in the level of media coverage given to the Inquiry. In addition to which all hearings were streamed live and the majority of written evidence was made available to the public online.

This commitment to openness on the part of the Inquiry provides an opportunity to compare press coverage of the Inquiry, which – as this report demonstrates – was extensive, with the information placed in the public domain by the Inquiry.

Leveson was always going to be a contentious issue, tackling press regulation shortly after a series of revelations about abuses that remained high in the public consciousness, and dealing with issues that go right to the heart of modern liberal democracy. A further dimension of interest – and controversy – was provided by the fact that the outcome of the Inquiry was always likely to impact upon the regulation of the press. Far from being a spectator in the public policy process, newspapers were themselves the subjects of investigation.

Leveson coverage therefore provides a rare opportunity to explore how the press reflected the variety of views on press regulation, and how they treated the Inquiry that was set up to investigate and make recommendations on their own industry.

In keeping with the approach towards openness of the Inquiry, this report is published in conjunction with the datasets generated during the research, available on the Media Standards Trust website, alongside other tools to evaluate the coverage of the Inquiry.²

The polarisation of views means that several statements have to be made about the purpose of this project.

The project makes no assertions about ‘right’ or ‘wrong’ ways to cover Leveson. Nor does it make any judgements on the ‘right’ or ‘wrong’ opinion that people should take on the issues around Leveson. Instead, it is an evidence-based analysis of the number of times certain evaluative statements and opinions of the Inquiry appeared in print in national newspapers throughout the course of the Inquiry.

Like any political issue, press regulation invites a wide range of opinions. This project shows how often those opinions were represented in press coverage of the issue.

² <http://mediastandardstrust.org/mst-news/mst-leveson-coverage-analysis-data-and-qa/>

Methodology

Sampling

To provide a comprehensive analysis of press coverage of the Leveson Inquiry, the project sought to analyse every story published in national newspapers that dealt with the Inquiry or its then-forthcoming report. The newspapers sampled were the full list of daily and Sunday newspapers in the UK as defined as “national” by the Audit Bureau of Circulations (ABC), excluding regional papers like *The Scotsman* or *The Evening Standard*, and the *i*, which repackages content from *The Independent*. For the sake of consistency, only the national versions of articles were included. Articles from regional – usually Scottish or Irish – editions of newspapers were not included to prevent duplicate stories.

The list of newspapers sampled for the research consists of:

Dailies	Sundays
<i>The Sun</i> (including Sunday edition, from February 2012)	<i>The Sunday Mirror</i>
<i>The Daily Mirror</i>	<i>The People</i>
<i>The Daily Star</i> (including Sunday edition)	<i>The Sunday Express</i>
<i>The Daily Express</i>	<i>The Mail on Sunday</i>
<i>The Daily Mail</i>	<i>The Sunday Times</i>
<i>The Times</i>	<i>The Sunday Telegraph</i>
<i>The Daily Telegraph</i>	<i>The Observer</i>
<i>The Financial Times</i>	<i>The Independent on Sunday</i>
<i>The Guardian</i>	
<i>The Independent</i>	

Stories were obtained using Factiva, the database system used by British Library Newspapers. The date range was set from the day after the announcement of the Inquiry (14th July 2011) to the day before publication of the report (28th November 2012).

Using Factiva, a search algorithm was used to obtain all stories including any one of the words “leveson” OR “hacking” OR “Inquiry”. Results were then manually filtered on the basis of the information on the Factiva search results screen (which displays each headline and the first two-to-three lines of each story). Where these were not conclusive, such stories were read in their entirety to discern whether they were suitable. Stories were included on the basis of Higgins’ (2006) typology of print news stories (see below). As a result, the few stories picked up by the algorithm, but which did not fit into Higgins’ four categories of news story (comic sketches with no news content, television reviews or content lists), were excluded.

Stories were included for analysis on the basis of a hierarchy:

- All stories that were clearly about the Leveson Inquiry, or had it as the primary focus of the story, were included.
- After this, stories that had been picked up by the keyword search, and which contained one or several prominent mentions about the Inquiry were also included. This was often the case with political stories that factored the Inquiry, or evidence given at it, into reporting about other political issues.
- Finally, stories that contained only one or two references to the Inquiry, but which contained an evaluative statement of the Inquiry either by the author or by a source in the story, were included.

Analysis

Due to the large size of the sample (2,016 stories), quantitative content analysis techniques were used, with a number of variables recorded for each story, including: date; title; word count (calculated using the body of text for each story, rather than the number provided by Factiva which includes headlines, captions, bylines, etc); headline; byline, story type (“Category Tier 1” and “Category Tier 2” in the list below), and more (see below). Analysis of the data was conducted using the statistical package SPSS, while supplementary data on story numbers and wordcount was stored in Excel files.

Full variable list:³

1. Date
2. Day of Sample
3. Publisher
4. Title
5. Sunday Paper
6. Word Count
7. Category Tier 1
8. Category Tier 2
9. Headline
10. Byline
11. Guest Contributor
12. First (witness/subject) name mentioned
13. Second name mentioned
14. Third name mentioned
15. Fourth Name Mentioned
16. Critical of Leveson (dependent on positive responses for variables 23-25)
17. Supportive of Leveson (dependent on positive response for variable 22)
18. Focused on Political Issues
19. Main Focus on Leveson
20. Victim Focus
21. Focus on Press Regulation
22. Positive reference to Inquiry
23. Leveson Not A Key Issue for Public
24. Threat to Press Freedom Cited
25. Inquiry Misconceived
26. Contains Model
27. Model Referenced

Five additional variables: ‘comments’, ‘tone category’, ‘flagged for analysis’, ‘adjusted day of sample’ and ‘tone diagnostic’ were used for the benefit of the researcher to cross-reference stories and to help sort the dataset for ease of analysis, and have been removed from the publicised datasets.

Not all of the 27 variables have been incorporated into this analysis. Variables 10-15 and 18-21 do not necessarily enhance the analysis of the volume and tone of coverage of the Leveson Inquiry and its outcomes. They may inform future analyses.

Stories were categorised according to Higgins’ (2006) typology⁴, devised to analyse a large sample of print news stories, which divides all news stories into two sets of discourse types: ‘Informative’

³ See Appendix for an explanation of each variable’s usage

⁴ Higgins, M. (2006) ‘Substantiating a political public sphere in the Scottish press: a comparative analysis’, *Journalism*, 7(1) pp25-44

(concerned with the factual provision of new information) and ‘Evaluative’ (offering “subjective appraisal of current events or issues, either from a named individual journalist, or on behalf of the institution of the newspaper” (2006: 32)). These were recorded using the “Category Tier 1” variable. Each discourse was broken down further into story types, with ‘Informative’ comprising ‘News’ and ‘Feature’ stories, and ‘Evaluative’ comprising ‘Leader’ and ‘Opinion’ stories (“Category Tier 2” variable).

Frames

One major purpose of the analysis was to ascertain the tone of coverage across newspapers as a whole, individual titles and story types. Since the sample size was too large to adopt an in-depth qualitative analysis of content within a reasonable time frame, a quantitative analysis of framing was adopted.

This was achieved by analysing a subset of 100 stories and recording which evaluative statements were put forward in relation to the Leveson Inquiry. Hypothetical frames were tested, while other frames were generated by a process of induction. Following the analysis, four frames were established, and then slightly refined following testing on another subset of stories. These were:

- **Positive:** This frame covers ANY positive statement about the Inquiry. Usually this is expressed in terms of support for the Inquiry and its possible outcomes, a statement that the Inquiry is – or was – necessary, or a desire that the recommendations of the Inquiry be implemented.
- **Not Key:** Any statement that suggests that the Leveson Inquiry is not an important issue, is not of interest to the public, or is trivial in relation to other political or economic issues.
- **Threat:** Any statement that suggests that the Leveson Inquiry or its outcomes will pose a threat to free speech, freedom of expression, or press freedom. Also includes statements that suggest the Leveson Inquiry will threaten the financial health of newspapers.
- **Misconceived:** Any statement that suggests that the Leveson Inquiry is in some way misconceived. Includes references suggesting that: the Inquiry is a waste of time or a waste of money; the terms of reference were wrong or were too broad (including the suggestion that press regulation is irrelevant in a digital age); the witnesses were poorly-chosen; or the outcomes of the report will be irrelevant or unworkable.

The frames were recorded on the basis simply of **whether they were present in the story**, whether they had been made by the author (in a ‘Leader’ or ‘Opinion’ piece), or by a quoted source (in a ‘News’ or ‘Feature’ story). A deeper analysis of the strength or repetition within stories of these frames may be possible at a later date, but the present analysis sought only to record the prevalence of these different frames in stories

A second level of analysis was to use the presence of these frames to categorise stories on the basis of the frames they contained. As the list of frames shows, three denoted specific negative statements (one of which – ‘Misconceived’ – covers a variety of possible statements), while one catch-all frame related to any positive statements. On this basis, stories were categorised on the basis of whether they:

- Contained only **Negative** statements
- Contained only **Positive** statements
- Contained **both Positive and Negative** statements
- Contained no evaluative statements at all.

There is an important distinction to be made clear between the two measurements related to tone that feature in the analysis below. In Tables 5, 7, 10 and 13, measures relate to the **Tone** of stories, that is, whether they contain only negative, or only positive frames, and so on. In Tables 6, 8, 12 and 14, however, the prevalence of the four frames is added. In other words, the number of stories in which the 'Threat' frame has appeared, and so on. So, for instance, the total number of 'positive' frames will equal the total number of 'positive only' and 'both positive and negative' stories, while 'negative only' and 'both' stories can contain any combination of negative frames.

In order to ensure that the frames generated and the methods of recording them for this analysis were valid and replicable, Inter-Coder Reliability (ICR) testing was undertaken, according to standard testing principles. A sample of slightly over 10% (220 stories) of the total was split between three coders.

To achieve this, two MSc (Media and Communications) students from the London School of Economics, with experience of news content analysis, were recruited.⁵ Following a practice session to familiarise coders with the variables and methods, each student separately coded half the sample, which had been independently coded in full by the main researcher. Results were then compared. Results for each frame fell well within acceptable ICR testing parameters, with all scoring 80% agreement or higher.

A supplementary research meeting on 14th February 2013 resolved some minor disagreements between coders and indicated that further inter-coder testing would generate enhanced levels of agreement. However, the results were high enough to indicate that the variables were sufficiently intelligible and reliable to justify their use in this analysis and to generate valid conclusions.

The results by frame (percentage agreement) were:

- Positive: 85.9%
- Not Key: 98.6%
- Threat: 80.0%
- Misconceived: 90.4%

⁵ Thanks to Jacopo Genovese and Ying Huang, from the Media Policy Project at the London School of Economics. Comparative coding was conducted by each coder separately following a meeting on 7th February 2013, and discussed and verified at a second meeting on 14th February 2013.

I. Leveson Coverage in Numbers, July 2011-November 2012

(NB: All percentages are subject to rounding)

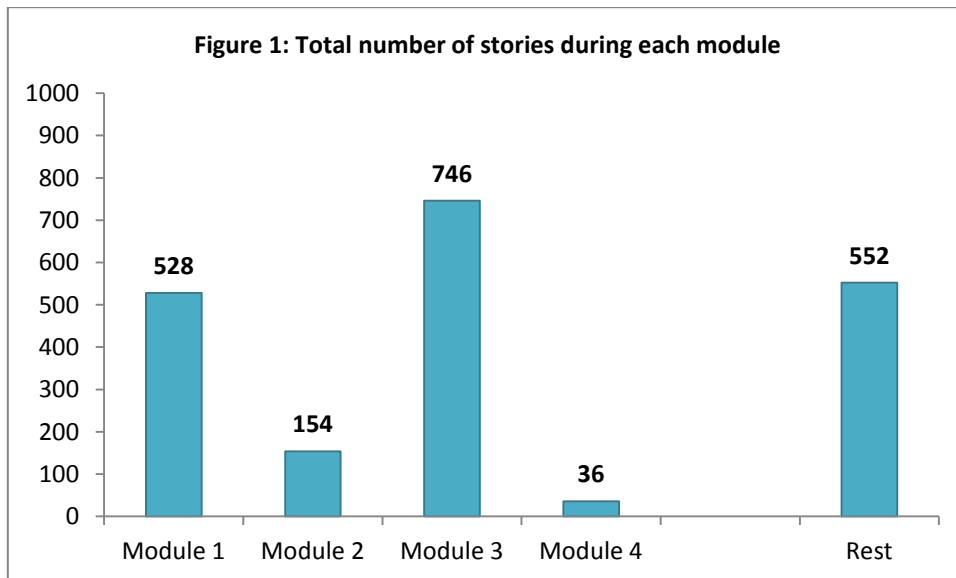
Table 1: Leveson coverage - overall figures

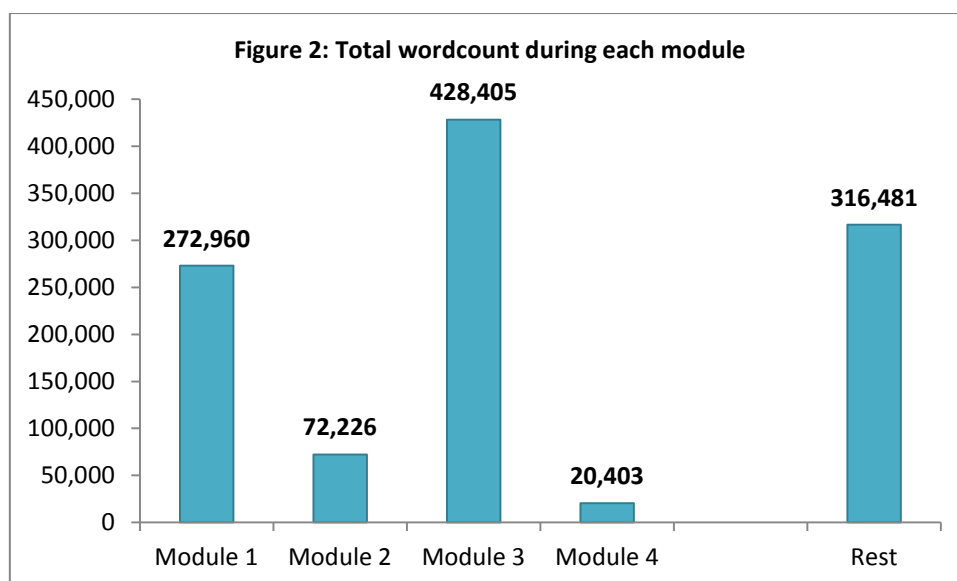
Total number of Leveson-related stories in UK national press, 13th July 2011 – 28th November 2012	2,016
Total number of words (not including headlines, captions, etc)	1,110,475

Coverage of the Leveson Inquiry, and of issues closely related to the Inquiry such as implications for politics, the police and media industries was extremely prominent in the UK national press, with over 2,000 stories and over 1 million words printed. The free availability of documents and video footage published on the Leveson Inquiry website, in addition to the presence of journalists in the courtroom at the Royal Courts of Justice allowed great ease of access to a wealth of information on the interlocked areas of public life under scrutiny as part of Leveson’s terms of reference.

Table 2: Coverage, by module

	Module 1	Module 2	Module 3	Module 4	(Rest)
No. of stories	524	154	746	38	554
No. of words	270,827	72,226	428,405	20,403	318,614





Of the four modules of Part I of the Inquiry, Modules 1 and 3, detailing press abuses and press-politics relations respectively, gained most coverage, with the 65 days spanned by Module 3 attracting over one-third of all coverage, by both measures (NB: results for each Module include the period up to and including the Sunday following the end of the Module to include Sunday newspaper coverage). Modules 2 and 4, covering relations between the press and the police, and recommendations for more effective regulation respectively, received considerably less coverage. The very low levels of press coverage of Module 4 appear to be, as Section 3 (below) shows, indicative of a distinct lack of interest in covering potential alternative models of press regulation by the press.

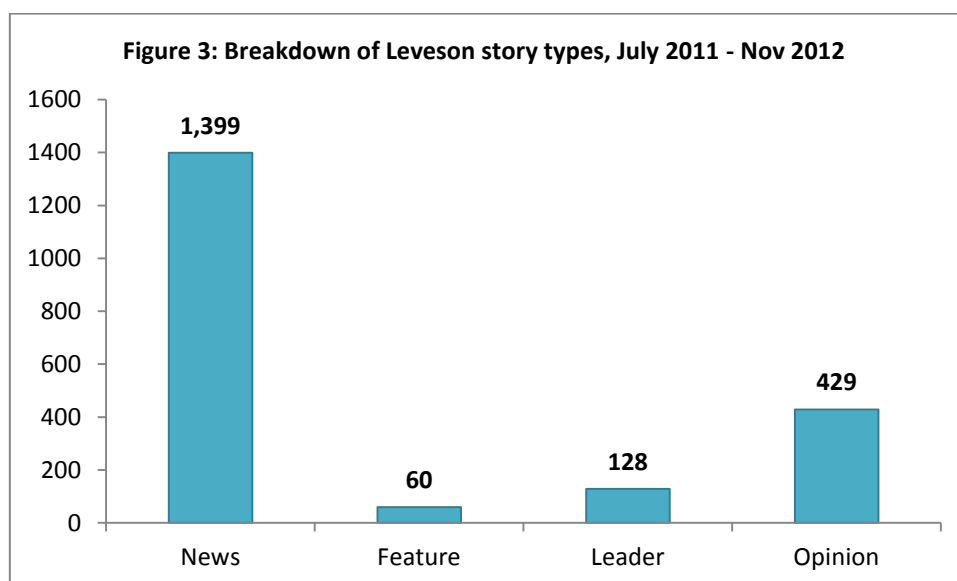
Table 3: Coverage, by title

Title	No. of stories	% of total	No. of Words	% of total
Tabloids	289	14.3%	78,789	7.1%
<i>Sun (inc. Sunday)</i>	120	6.0%	32,864	3.0%
<i>Star (inc. Sunday)</i>	41	2.0%	7,765	0.7%
<i>Mirror</i>	99	4.9%	27,815	2.5%
<i>Sunday Mirror</i>	18	0.9%	6,836	0.6%
<i>People</i>	11	0.5%	3,509	0.3%
Mid-markets	337	16.7%	178,929	16.1%
<i>Daily Express</i>	74	3.6%	27,109	2.4%
<i>Sunday Express</i>	11	0.5%	3,810	0.3%
<i>Daily Mail</i>	219	10.9%	127,347	11.5%
<i>Mail on Sunday</i>	33	1.6%	20,663	1.9%
Broadsheets	1,390	69.0%	852,757	76.8%
<i>Times</i>	234	11.6%	137,730	12.4%
<i>Sunday Times</i>	44	2.2%	34,195	3.1%
<i>Daily Telegraph</i>	247	12.3%	124,794	11.2%
<i>Sunday Telegraph</i>	23	1.1%	23,685	2.1%
<i>Guardian</i>	329	16.3%	223,123	20.1%
<i>Observer</i>	74	3.7%	57,951	5.2%
<i>FT</i>	124	6.2%	58,812	5.3%
<i>Independent</i>	286	14.2%	163,539	14.7%
<i>Independent on Sunday</i>	29	1.4%	28,928	2.6%

Predictably, Leveson coverage is more common, and of greater length, in broadsheet titles, which have more space to cover stories like Leveson at length and in depth, and without the brevity that is a hallmark of tabloid coverage. Within each category, however, there are differences between titles. The *Daily Mail* has three times as many stories as the *Daily Express*, while the *Guardian* accounts for over one-fifth of all coverage of the Inquiry. Northern and Shell newspapers (*Express*, *Star*) are notable for their low levels of coverage relative to direct competitors.

Table 4: Story type by title

Title	Type of story				Total
	News	Feature	Leader	Opinion	
Tabloids	224	2	23	40	289
<i>Sun (inc. Sunday)</i>	94	1	4	21	120
<i>Star (inc. Sunday)</i>	38	0	1	2	41
<i>Mirror</i>	78	0	13	8	99
<i>Sunday Mirror</i>	10	0	2	6	18
<i>People</i>	4	1	3	3	11
Mid-markets	261	3	18	55	337
<i>Daily Express</i>	62	0	2	10	74
<i>Sunday Express</i>	6	0	2	3	11
<i>Daily Mail</i>	178	3	12	26	219
<i>Mail on Sunday</i>	15	0	2	16	33
Broadsheets	914	5	87	334	1,390
<i>Times</i>	193	5	7	29	234
<i>Sunday Times</i>	18	2	6	18	44
<i>Daily Telegraph</i>	208	3	12	24	247
<i>Sunday Telegraph</i>	5	2	4	12	23
<i>Guardian</i>	190	19	18	102	329
<i>Observer</i>	13	7	4	50	74
<i>FT</i>	101	7	6	10	124
<i>Independent</i>	176	6	25	79	286
<i>Independent on Sunday</i>	10	4	5	10	29
Total	1,399	60	128	429	2,016
Percentage	69.4%	3.0%	6.3%	21.3%	100.0%



Stories were divided into four categories, based on Higgins' (2006: 31-33) typology of UK newspaper story content. These consisted of four 'discourse types' split into two groups: 'Informative' stories ('News' and 'Feature' stories), based on factual news provision; and 'Evaluative' stories ('Leader' and 'Opinion' pieces), based on subjective appraisal of current events or issues. The vast majority (almost 7 out of every 10) of stories were factual reporting ('News') items, with 557 evaluative, subjective stories accounting for around 28% of coverage.

2. Tone of Coverage

Given the large number of Leveson-related stories in total, including over 500 evaluative stories, tone of coverage was measured using quantitative methods to record the number of instances of 'positive' and 'negative' framing of the Inquiry or its outcomes.

Each story was read, and frames were recorded as being present if detected in the text of the story. Each story was then assigned a status of 'Negative' (contained one or more negative frame(s) and no positive frame), 'Positive' (contained one or more positive frame(s) and no negative frame), 'Both' (contained both positive and negative frames) or 'None' (contained none of the frames).

Four frames, three negative and one catch-all positive, were devised following a pilot analysis of a small subsample of stories:

- **Positive:** This frame covers ANY positive statement about the Inquiry. Usually this is expressed in terms of support for the Inquiry and its possible outcomes, a statement that the Inquiry is – or was – necessary, or a desire that the recommendations of the Inquiry be implemented.
- **Not Key:** Any statement that suggests that the Leveson Inquiry is not an important issue, is not of interest to the public, or is trivial in relation to other political or economic issues.
- **Threat:** Any statement that suggests that the Leveson Inquiry or its outcomes will pose a threat to free speech, freedom of expression, or press freedom. Also includes statements that suggest the Leveson Inquiry will threaten the financial health of newspapers
- **Misconceived:** Any statement that suggests that the Leveson Inquiry is in some way misconceived. Includes references suggesting that: the Inquiry is a waste of time or a waste of money; the terms of reference were wrong or were too broad (including the suggestion that press regulation is irrelevant in a digital age); the witnesses were poorly-chosen; or the outcomes of the report will be irrelevant or unworkable.

These were recorded solely on the basis of whether the language used within a story, by journalist/commenter or by sources, corresponded to one of these frames. Therefore, the inclusion of sources representing alternate viewpoints did not automatically warrant both positive and negative framing, unless those viewpoints were explicitly made within the story. The analysis was therefore interested only in whether explicitly positive or negative viewpoints were being articulated.

It is, of course, the case that journalists cannot control what is said by sources in contributing to the story. The analysis is, however, concerned with the presence (if at all) of certain types of evaluative statement. Therefore quotes from sources are more salient than source identity.

All of the frames were tested according to standard Inter-Coder Reliability (ICR) testing procedures, with a subset of approximately 10% of all stories (220/2,016) being independently coded by three separate researchers: the author, and two researchers from the London School of Economics Media Policy Project. Results demonstrated high levels of reliability in the relevant variables, with percentage agreement of 80% or higher for recordings of each frame (see 'Methodology' section above).

Results

Table 5 shows that 436 out of 2,016 stories, just over one-fifth, contained one or more frames (positive or negative). This is consistent with the large proportion of stories devoted to factual coverage (see Table 4) which were more likely not to include any evaluative statement, and the concentration of coverage on the events of the oral hearings in Modules 1-4 (Table 2). However, some factual coverage could also contained or specifically covered attacks on, or praise of, the Inquiry provided by sources.

Table 5: Tone, by story type – all stories

Story Type	Negative only	Positive only	Both	None	Total
News	165	30	11	1,193	1,399
Feature	3	6	1	50	60
Leader	50	17	5	56	128
Opinion	115	26	7	281	429
Total	333	79	24	1,580	2,016
Percentage	16.5%	4.0%	1.2%	78.4%	100.0%

Two significant conclusions can be drawn from this. First, the vast majority of coverage of the Leveson Inquiry was ‘neutral’, in the sense that it was not concerned with either actively praising or criticising aspects of the Inquiry, or of airing the views of sources doing so. Coverage during the period of oral hearings tended to consist of factual representations of events concerning or related to the Inquiry, or opinion pieces that did not deal with the merits or failings of the Inquiry.

However, the second conclusion is that, where subjective views on the Inquiry were offered, they tended overwhelmingly to be negative. Looking specifically at factual ‘News’ stories, 165 contained one or more criticism(s) of the Inquiry, while 30 contained only positive statements, a ratio of over 5:1. For ‘Opinion’ pieces, this ratio was over 4:1, while for ‘Leader’ articles, there were over two and a half times as many negative than positive stories. Of stories where an evaluative statement was included (436 of the 2016), 76% were negative only (333 out of 436: Figure 4). As Section 4 of this summary shows, however, the balance of coverage was not evenly spread across the whole period of the Inquiry prior to publication, with evaluative coverage of the Inquiry increasing substantially as the Inquiry ended and the publication date of the Report drew closer.

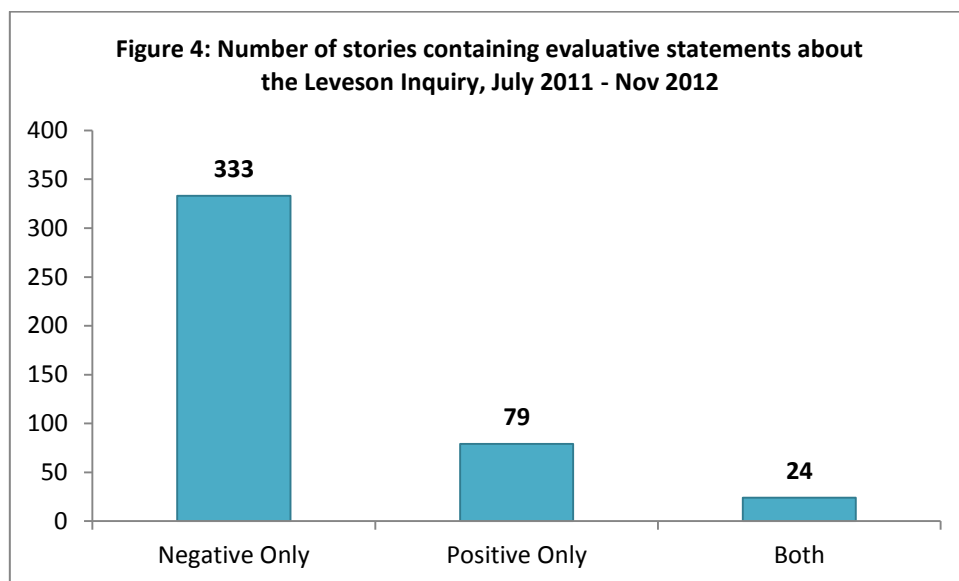


Table 6: Instances of frames - all stories

Story type	Frame			
	Threat	Misconceived	Not Key	Positive
News	150	33	8	41
Feature	2	1	1	7
Leader	45	15	3	22
Opinion	83	41	14	33
Total	280	90	26	103

Table 6 shows a different measurement: the total number of stories in which the various frames arose within all Leveson coverage. This includes stories where multiple frames were present. Overall, there were nearly four times as many instances of negative frames being attached to Leveson coverage (396) than positive frames (103). By far the most common frame deployed was the conflation of the Leveson Inquiry or its possible outcomes to a threat to freedom of speech or expression. There were nearly three times as many instances of this ‘threat’ frame alone than of all positive frames. The ‘threat’ frame appeared in around four-fifths of stories that contained ‘negative only’ or ‘both positive and negative’ evaluative statements - 280 times in 355 such stories (Tables 5 and 6).

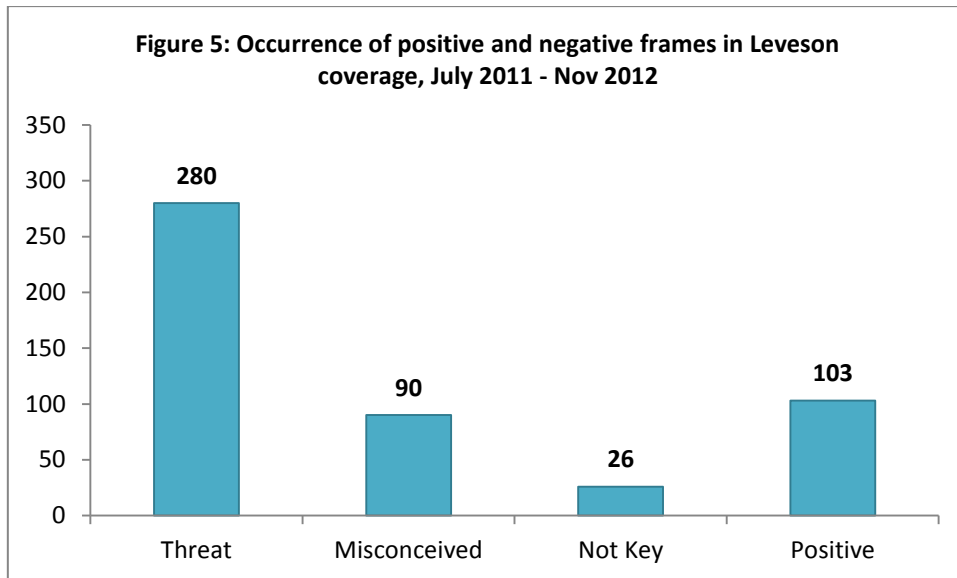


Table 7: Tone, by title – calculated from presence of frames

	Negative only	Positive only	Both	None
Tabloids	67	8	2	212
<i>Sun (inc. Sunday)</i>	45	2	1	72
<i>Star (inc. Sunday)</i>	4	2	0	35
<i>Mirror</i>	11	2	0	86
<i>Sunday Mirror</i>	5	2	0	11
<i>People</i>	2	0	1	8
Mid-markets	90	5	0	242
<i>Daily Express</i>	11	0	0	63
<i>Sunday Express</i>	1	0	0	10
<i>Daily Mail</i>	66	4	0	149
<i>Mail on Sunday</i>	12	1	0	20
Broadsheets	176	66	22	1,126
<i>Times</i>	27	4	3	200
<i>Sunday Times</i>	21	1	0	22
<i>Daily Telegraph</i>	44	4	2	197
<i>Sunday Telegraph</i>	8	1	0	14
<i>Guardian</i>	13	24	1	291
<i>Observer</i>	25	9	3	37
<i>FT</i>	10	7	5	102
<i>Independent</i>	24	14	6	242
<i>Independent on Sunday</i>	4	2	2	21
Total	333	79	24	1,580

Table 7 shows that, for the vast majority of all newspapers, stories containing negative-only evaluative statements outnumbered those containing positive-only statements. Almost one-third of all positive-only stories appeared in a single newspaper, the *Guardian* – also the only newspaper to contain more positive than negative stories.

Certain newspapers displayed a ratio of over 10:1 of ‘negative only’ to ‘positive only’ statements within stories: the *Sun*, the *Daily Mail*, the *Daily Telegraph*, and the *Sunday Times*. The *Express* titles contained no positive references whatsoever (although coverage as a whole was not prominent in the Northern and Shell titles).

In a comparison of the balance of those stories that contained evaluative statements of any kind (i.e. excluding the ‘None’ column) among the different groupings of newspapers, Table 7 shows that for Tabloid newspapers, 87% were ‘negative only’ (67/77), as were 95% of Mid-market stories (90/94) and exactly two-thirds of Broadsheet stories (176/264). Broadsheet newspapers were far more likely to run stories that contained both positive and negative statements.

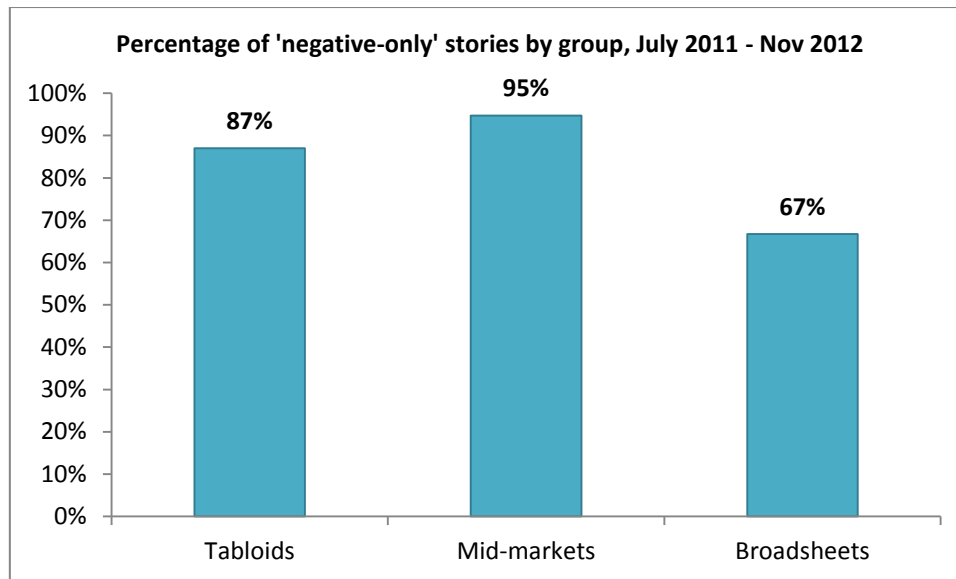


Table 8: Instances of frames - by title

	Threat	Misconceived	Not Key	Positive
Tabloids	59	11	6	10
<i>Sun (inc. Sunday)</i>	37	11	2	3
<i>Star (inc. Sunday)</i>	3	0	0	2
<i>Mirror</i>	11	0	0	2
<i>Sunday Mirror</i>	5	0	3	2
<i>People</i>	3	0	1	1
Mid-markets	67	26	9	5
<i>Daily Express</i>	4	4	5	0
<i>Sunday Express</i>	1	0	1	0
<i>Daily Mail</i>	51	22	2	4
<i>Mail on Sunday</i>	11	0	1	1
Broadsheets	154	53	11	88
<i>Times</i>	25	7	0	7
<i>Sunday Times</i>	17	6	1	1
<i>Daily Telegraph</i>	43	7	1	6
<i>Sunday Telegraph</i>	6	1	2	1
<i>Guardian</i>	12	3	0	25
<i>Observer</i>	12	12	5	12
<i>FT</i>	13	1	1	12
<i>Independent</i>	22	14	0	20
<i>Independent on Sunday</i>	4	2	1	4
Total	280	90	26	103

Table 8 shows the number of times the different frames arose within the full dataset of 2,016 stories across the different newspapers. As already noted, the 'threat' frame was overwhelmingly the most popular evaluative statement overall, and particularly amongst the negative frames.

As with Table 7, use of the 'threat' frame was more common among certain newspaper groups. Titles published by News International, Telegraph Media Group and Associated newspapers accounted for over two-thirds of all instances of the frame (190 of 280), while again only the *Guardian* contained more stories containing positive statements than negative statements.

3. Coverage of Alternative Models of Press Regulation

From the full sample of 2016 stories, 87 contained a substantive analytical reference to one or more alternative models of press regulation.

A large number of alternative models and templates for press regulation were submitted by organisations and individuals to be considered by the Inquiry team by July 2012. Several of these were explicitly referenced in the Leveson report as having informed the regulatory recommendations arrived at:

1. Campaign for Press and Broadcasting Freedom
2. Co-ordinating Committee for Media Reform
3. Working Group led by Lord Prescott
4. Media Regulation Roundtable / Hugh Tomlinson QC
5. Roy Greenslade
6. Max Mosley
7. Joint Submission by Core Participant Victims
8. Michelle Stanistreet, on behalf of the National Union of Journalists
9. Media Standards Trust
10. Early Resolution
11. Alternative Libel, English PEN, Index on Censorship
12. George Eustice MP
13. Tim Suter of Perspective Associates

The Report also devoted a chapter to analysing the submission on behalf of the bulk of the national press, itself the result of a series of submissions (both institutional and individual) by representatives of the Press Complaints Commission (Lord Hunt) and the Press Standards Board of Finance (Lord Black and Paul Dacre). This was justifiably given special prominence, given its importance as the industry’s proposed solution to the problems of press regulation. Indeed, the Lord Hunt/Lord Black plan appeared to be presented not as a resource for the Leveson Inquiry to draw upon, but as an outright alternative to the Inquiry’s outcomes (not known at that point). However, the Leveson Report dismissed the model as being insufficient to solve the problems with press regulation within the terms of reference of the Leveson Inquiry.

As Table 9 shows⁶, however, despite the 13 alternative models of press regulation submitted to the Inquiry, the Hunt/Black model was almost the only model reported on, with the incentives proposed by Paul Dacre, Editor-in-Chief of Associated Newspapers, which were themselves incorporated into the Hunt/Black plan, second. Substantive coverage of other models of regulation submitted to the Inquiry was almost non-existent, and many models were completely unreported.

Table 9: Coverage of alternative models of press regulation

Models specifically analysed	Instances of analysis
The Hunt/Black plan	48
Paul Dacre’s incentives (press cards, kitemarking)	8
Max Mosley	3
Hugh Tomlinson QC / Media Regulation Roundtable	2
Media Standards Trust	1

This is partly reflected in Table 2 above, which showed that press coverage of Module 4 of the Leveson Inquiry, which dealt specifically with future models for regulating the British press, was

⁶ Table 9 and the list of 13 models above are concerned only with those models that were explicitly created as suggestions for the Leveson Inquiry to adopt. Certain overseas models were featured in the British press, particularly the Irish model. These are shown in the accompanying dataset.

extremely limited in comparison with the rest of the Inquiry. It would appear that there was no serious attempt by the press to engage with future regulatory models or to provide readers with a basic, let alone comprehensive, analysis. Instead the newspaper industry's own model was given by far the most prominence. Very few of these articles on the industry's own plans were critical.

4. Coverage in the run-up to the publication of the Leveson report

As the data included in Tables 1-8 shows, over the course of the period of study (from the announcement of the Inquiry in July 2011 to the eve of publication of the report, 28th November), coverage of the Inquiry and its outcomes broadly consisted of neutral factual coverage. Where subjective evaluations of the Inquiry were made, however, these tended overwhelmingly to be negative, whether they were made by journalists, guest contributors, or by sources.

While this indicates a degree of hostility to the Inquiry across the majority of the British press, it obscures the uneven spread of adversarial coverage. The Leveson Inquiry provided a unique insight into the workings of the British press, politics, and police – three fundamental pillars of democratic society. Many of the witnesses to the Inquiry were high-profile or venerated public figures, occupants of high office, or figures of particular interest to the press. Their appearances tied in with prominent events in British public life, including the failure of the bid by News Corp to gain full control of BSkyB (and the associated impact on the careers of those involved), links between the Prime Minister and senior media executives, the on-going police operations into various aspects of press behaviour. At the same time, high-profile witnesses often contradicted each other (for example: Rupert Murdoch and Gordon Brown; Heather Mills, Piers Morgan and Jeremy Paxman).

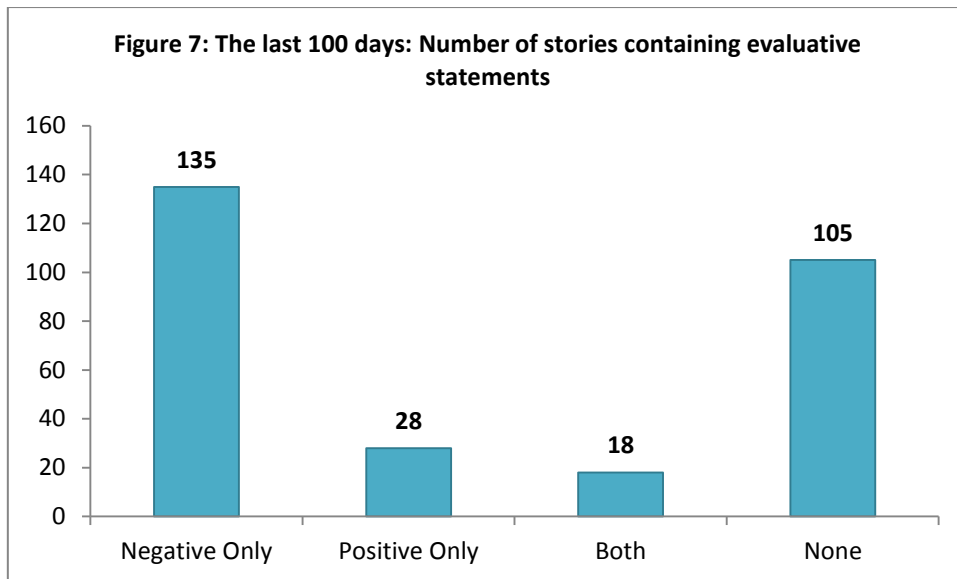
The Inquiry therefore provided a constant diet of events worthy of coverage and comment, without the need for judgements to be made about the Inquiry itself. This is reflected in Tables 2 and 5 above, which show, respectively, that around three-quarters of coverage took place during the four modules of the Inquiry, and that about three-quarters of the coverage contained no positive or negative statements about the Inquiry, but instead consisted of factual reportage of events.

As this section shows, once the public hearings of the Inquiry ended, there is a substantial difference in the nature of coverage of the Inquiry. A subset of the period of study, from 20th August 2012 until 28th November, has been analysed in isolation from the rest. This choice was not made arbitrarily – the week beginning 20th August was three weeks after the last public hearing of the Inquiry, and contained the first significant post-Inquiry story that concerned press conduct, regulation and rules: the publication of naked photographs of Prince Harry in Las Vegas. It also represents the 100 days prior to the Report’s publication.

286 stories on Leveson were published within this time period, and as Tables 10-14 show, there was a substantial turn towards more evaluative, and more adversarial, coverage of the Inquiry.

Table 10: Coverage during run-up to Report

Story Type	Negative only	Positive only	Both	None	Total
News	67	20	10	66	163
Feature	1	3	1	5	10
Leader	23	0	3	2	28
Opinion	44	5	4	32	85
Total	135	28	18	105	286
Percentage	47.2%	9.8%	6.3%	36.7%	100.0%



The level of neutrality in coverage, defined as stories in which neither positive nor negative interpretations were attached to the Inquiry, is substantially lower during this period, down from 78.4% (overall – 1,580 out of 2,016 articles) to 36.7%. Almost half of all Leveson-related stories in the last 100 days of coverage contained negative-only evaluative references to the Inquiry or the forthcoming outcomes. As the oral hearings and the accompanying daily information disappeared, coverage of the Inquiry shifted towards a greater proportion of “evaluative” story types (opinion pieces and leaders).

However, even within ‘news’ story types there were more ‘negative only’ stories (67) than neutral stories (66). Within all story types, there were significantly more negative to neutral stories by this measure (135 to 105). Evaluative stories were considerably more likely to contain only negative statements than to contain only positive ones. There were no leader articles that contained only positive statements (see also Table 15 below), while there were 44 negative-only opinion stories to just 5 positive-only stories – a ratio of almost 9:1.

There were, however, many more stories that contained both positive and negative statements: 18 (77% of the total of 23 – see Table 5). There was, this shows, considerably more emphasis on covering both supportive and critical viewpoints (or at least sources were more likely to be quoted as such), although it should be borne in mind that almost all stories that contained both positive and negative statements were printed in broadsheets.

Table 11: Coverage during period of oral hearings, 21st November 2011 – 24th July 2012

Story Type	Negative only	Positive only	Both	None	Total
News	65	3	1	1,008	1,077
Feature	1	3	0	39	43
Leader	15	13	2	49	79
Opinion	43	17	3	222	285
Total	124	36	6	1,318	1,484
Percentage	8.4%	2.4%	0.4%	88.8%	100.0%

This bears comparison with coverage during the period of oral hearings, which began formally on 21st November 2011, and finished with the end of Module 4 on 24th July 2012 (Table 11). During this period, ‘neutral’ coverage accounted for 88.8% of stories (1,318 out of 1,484), more than double the rate of those during the last 100 days.

Table 12: Instances of frames in run-up to report

Story type	Frame			
	Threat	Misconceived	Not Key	Positive
News	69	12	6	30
Feature	1	1	0	4
Leader	21	5	1	3
Opinion	43	7	0	9
Total	134	25	7	46

Table 12 demonstrates that, again, the subset of stories from the last 100 days of the Inquiry shows that the ‘threat’ frame was by far the most common frame of any type applied to the Inquiry and report, with almost three times as many uses of the ‘threat’ frame than any positive statements about Leveson whatsoever (see Figure 8).

With the exception of ‘Feature’ items, which were rare, this balance was replicated in every type of news story. As Table 15 shows, the three ‘positive’ frames within leader articles were counterbalanced by statements critical of the Inquiry or its outcomes.

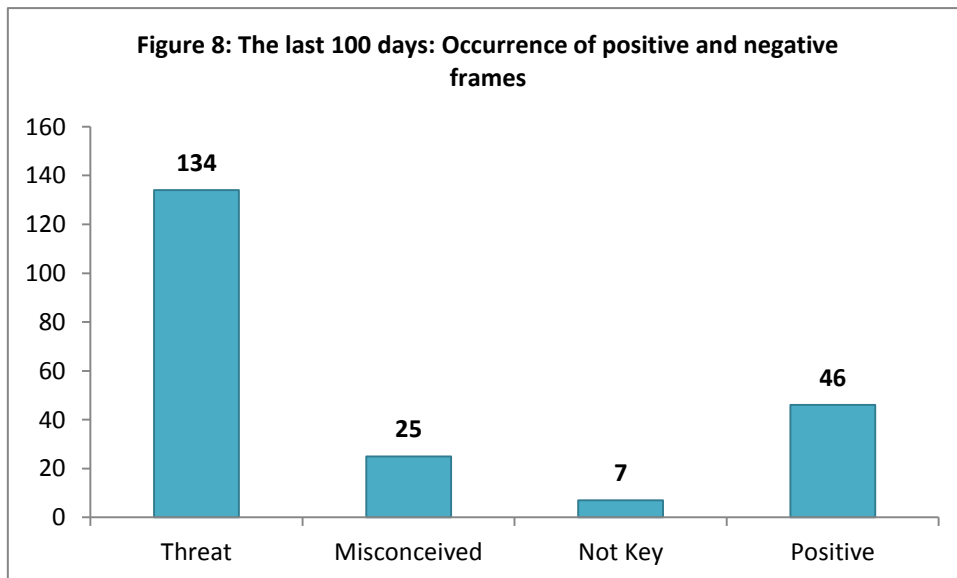


Table 13: Tone of coverage in run-up to report, by title

	Negative only	Positive only	Both	None
Tabloids	34	1	1	9
<i>Sun (inc. Sunday)</i>	24	1	1	3
<i>Star (inc. Sunday)</i>	1	0	0	0
<i>Mirror</i>	5	0	0	6
<i>Sunday Mirror</i>	3	0	0	0
<i>People</i>	1	0	0	0
Mid-markets	39	2	0	11
<i>Daily Express</i>	2	0	0	3
<i>Sunday Express</i>	1	0	0	1
<i>Daily Mail</i>	29	2	0	5
<i>Mail on Sunday</i>	7	0	0	2
Broadsheets	62	25	17	85
<i>Times</i>	7	1	2	13
<i>Sunday Times</i>	12	0	0	2
<i>Daily Telegraph</i>	26	3	2	6
<i>Sunday Telegraph</i>	5	0	0	0
<i>Guardian</i>	3	13	1	19
<i>Observer</i>	2	3	3	7
<i>FT</i>	2	1	3	11
<i>Independent</i>	3	3	5	23
<i>Independent on Sunday</i>	2	1	1	4
Total	135	28	18	105

Tables 13 and 14 replicate the analyses in Tables 7 and 8 (above) for the subset of stories within the last 100 days before the publication of the report. As Table 13 shows, coverage of Leveson was scarce in many newspapers, and what was included was often negative-only. The *Sun*, the *Daily Mail* and *Mail on Sunday*, the *Sunday Times* and the *Daily Telegraph* continued to be strongly negative, while the *Guardian* maintained its broadly positive stance, although the majority of its coverage, along with the *Times*, *FT* and the *Independent* was neutral.

Table 14 shows that, again, the ‘threat’ frame was cited most often when evaluative statements were made.

It is also significant that several newspapers – the *Daily Star*, the *Mirror* and *Sunday Mirror*, the *Daily Express* and *Sunday Express* and the *Mail on Sunday*, as well as the *Sunday Times* and *Sunday Telegraph* – contained no positive statements about the Inquiry at all during the run-up to the publication of the Leveson Report.

Table 14: Instances of frames during run-up to report, by title

	Threat	Misconceived	Not Key	Positive
Tabloids	31	4	3	2
<i>Sun (inc. Sunday)</i>	21	4	1	2
<i>Star (inc. Sunday)</i>	1	0	0	0
<i>Mirror</i>	5	0	0	0
<i>Sunday Mirror</i>	3	0	1	0
<i>People</i>	1	0	1	0
Mid-markets	34	10	2	2
<i>Daily Express</i>	2	0	0	0
<i>Sunday Express</i>	1	1	1	0
<i>Daily Mail</i>	24	9	1	2
<i>Mail on Sunday</i>	7	0	0	0
Broadsheets	69	12	2	42
<i>Times</i>	9	0	0	3
<i>Sunday Times</i>	8	5	0	0
<i>Daily Telegraph</i>	27	2	1	5
<i>Sunday Telegraph</i>	4	1	1	0
<i>Guardian</i>	4	0	0	14
<i>Observer</i>	5	0	0	6
<i>FT</i>	5	0	0	4
<i>Independent</i>	4	4	0	8
<i>Independent on Sunday</i>	3	1	0	2
Total	134	26	7	46

Leader Articles in the last 100 days before publication

Table 15: Leader articles between 20th August and 28th November 2012

Date	Newspaper	Headline	Coded as
26.08.12	<i>Sunday Times</i>	The Sun's brave lone stand for press freedom	Negative
02.09.12	<i>Sunday Times</i>	The high price of truth, Sir Brian	Negative
15.09.12	<i>Daily Mail</i>	The Duchess and the irony of privacy laws	Negative
29.09.12	<i>Daily Telegraph</i>	The threat to our free press is grave and foolish	Negative
11.10.12	<i>Daily Mail</i>	Leveson must reopen his Inquiry to look into the cesspit at the BBC	Negative
21.10.12	<i>Sunday Times</i>	A free society needs a free press	Negative
24.10.12	<i>Independent</i>	Another chapter of the phone hacking scandal	None
28.10.12	<i>Sunday Telegraph</i>	Statute of any kind spells the end of a free press	Negative
30.10.12	<i>Daily Mail</i>	An insidious threat to the right to know	Negative
30.10.12	<i>FT</i>	Leveson, the media and the law; Inquiry should beware of statutory press regulation	Negative
02.11.12	<i>Guardian</i>	Leveson Inquiry: prejudging the judge	Negative
07.11.12	<i>Independent</i>	A public inquiry is not always the right answer	Both
07.11.12	<i>Daily Telegraph</i>	Keep the press free	Negative
10.11.12	<i>Daily Mail</i>	Britain will shackle a free press at its peril	Negative
10.11.12	<i>Daily Telegraph</i>	A free press is in the public interest	Negative
11.11.12	<i>Sunday Telegraph</i>	The BBC deals a blow to investigative journalism	Negative
16.11.12	<i>Daily Mail</i>	Sir David Bell and the public's right to know	Negative
18.11.12	<i>Sun on Sunday</i>	Cry freedom	Negative
18.11.12	<i>Sunday Telegraph</i>	Trust in the press has not died [...]	Negative
22.11.12	<i>Sun</i>	It's app-alling	Negative
24.11.12	<i>Daily Mail</i>	Dictators like Mugabe 'would love to see the British press shackled'	Negative
25.11.12	<i>Sunday Mirror</i>	A free press protects all our freedoms	Negative
25.11.12	<i>Mail on Sunday</i>	For 300 years the British people have fought - and died - to keep a free press. This week our Prime Minister must not betray them	Negative
25.11.12	<i>Observer</i>	Do we need a new law to rein in the press?	Both
25.11.12	<i>Independent on Sunday</i>	No to press legislation	Negative
26.11.12	<i>Guardian</i>	The independence test: Leveson and press regulation	None
26.11.12	<i>Daily Telegraph</i>	MPs are turning a blind eye to their own failings	Negative
27.11.12	<i>Independent</i>	A new press watchdog must be independent	Both

There were 28 leader columns related to the Leveson Inquiry in the last 100 days before publication. Strikingly, none of these put forward a purely positive view of the Inquiry. Three leaders contained positive statements balanced alongside critical statements, two were largely descriptive and made no evaluative comment about the Inquiry or its outcomes, while 23, or over 8 out of 10, contained only negative evaluative statements about the Inquiry.

As with all quantitative measurements, however, the raw numbers disguise many nuances in the coverage. Not all 'negative' leaders were implacably hostile; several, including the *Independent on Sunday's* final leader before the publication of the Report ('No to press legislation', 25/11/12) acknowledge reactionary and misleading press coverage of the Inquiry, although that particular article raised similar objections to those in other leaders: that the Inquiry – and by extension regulatory reform – was caused only by failures of the proper policing of laws, or that strengthened regulation raises the threat of state control of the press. Sometimes the leader was not primarily

about the Inquiry, but inserted a comment about the Inquiry within the context of a separate opinion. The *Sun*'s leader ('It's app-alling', 22/11/12) focused on dishonest expenses claims by MPs, but ended with the statement "Many MPs are now eagerly hoping newspapers will be muzzled by Lord Leveson's [sic] Inquiry into the press".

Positive coverage was hard to come by – so much so that none of the leaders contained only supportive interpretations of the Inquiry. Where they did occur (in leaders that also contained negative framings of the Inquiry), they were often buried quite deep. The *Observer*'s leader of 25th November contained a single reference to the Inquiry's role in uncovering inexcusable aspects of press behaviour, "the cruelties, the invasions, the stupidities", the curtailment of which "is what many ordinary people wish to happen". *Independent* leaders on 7th and 27th November contained support, albeit qualified. On 7th November the paper claimed to "firmly [support] the aims behind the investigation". The sentence continues, however, to criticise the remit and validity of the Inquiry. On 27th November the paper's leader contained similar qualified support: "However, while [the Inquiry] was flawed – and it did not fully explore subjects such as the pervasive influence of the PR industry on the press and the Parliamentary lobby, both of which it was entitled to do – Leveson undoubtedly lanced a growing, increasingly painful boil". The *Independent*'s coverage was honest about the arguments behind the editorial position taken on Leveson, and – alongside the *Guardian* – provided significant space to pro-Leveson arguments throughout the Inquiry.

Negative coverage of the Inquiry, was – with a small number of exceptions – considerably more overt and visceral, and tended to repeat consistent themes. These were, generally, variants of the view that Leveson could, or would, lead to political control of the press and the curtailment of press freedoms. It appeared in leader articles such as: 'The threat to our free press is grave and foolish' (*Daily Telegraph*, 29/9/12); 'A free society needs a free press' (*Sunday Times*, 21/10/12); 'Britain will shackle a free press at its peril' (*Daily Mail*, 30/10/12); and 'Statute of any kind spells the end of a free press' (*Sunday Telegraph*, 28/10/12).

Beyond this strident language, conspiracist interpretations were common:

"There is a real danger that, because some newspapers allegedly behaved in a criminal manner, efforts will be made to reduce the press to an emasculated cipher of high-minded opinion"
(*Daily Telegraph*, 29/9/12)

Or:

"...it is undeniable that there are powerful enemies of a free press who don't like the spotlight of truth and openness shone on them. We may be about to enter a critical battle with them. Watch this space" (*Sunday Mirror*, 25/11/12)

This theme is also deployed in the *Sunday Times*:

"There is a dangerous coalition forming of aggrieved film and television stars, out-of-sorts Labour politicians and bien-pensants who would happily bring much greater regulation and censorship to the press" (26/8/12)

Elsewhere, in language reminiscent of the response of the press to the Calcutt report in 1990, the metaphor of the slippery slope, or the thin end of the wedge, was frequently evoked to support the idea that a move towards a regulatory system potentially based on legislative underpinning is a first step to authoritarian government: 'Dictators like Mugabe 'would love to see the British press shackled' (*Daily Mail*, 24/11/12).

Conclusion

This analysis draws three significant conclusions about UK press coverage of Leveson:

1. Press coverage of the Inquiry and issues of press regulation was dominated by one viewpoint, meaning that the public was overwhelmingly presented with a critical interpretation of Leveson;
2. Evaluative coverage of the Inquiry was highly negative across almost all daily and Sunday titles. This negativity increased substantially in the weeks before publication of the report;
3. Although aspects of regulation were considered in the coverage, detailed outlines of regulatory alternatives to the existing system were rare, and the press ignored almost all other proposals beyond their own.

Dominance of one viewpoint – failure in the marketplace of ideas?

The strength and vitality of the UK press stems in large part from its ability to present the public with a wide range of authoritative and accessible views on often complex policy issues.

However, the data gathered here shows that, where press coverage has expressed a view on the Leveson Inquiry, one viewpoint has dominated. Though much of the coverage of the Inquiry during the public hearings was neutral, comment and opinion pieces were overwhelmingly negative.

Negative coverage increased substantially as the oral hearings finished and the publication date of the Report approached. Readers of many papers received almost exclusively negative opinions and commentary on the Inquiry in the run-up to the report. Only two papers (from the same publisher) out of eighteen contained more instances of supportive statements about the Inquiry than negative.⁷

Leader articles provide an indicator of the views of individual newspapers themselves. Almost all Leveson-related leader articles published in the last hundred days prior to publication of the Leveson Report contained only negative statements about the Inquiry. Three contained both positive and negative statements. None contained purely positive statements.

This dominant viewpoint was overwhelmingly negative

The dominant viewpoint expressed in newspapers about the Inquiry was negative, and became more so as the Inquiry went on. Within this negative coverage there was some variation, though even this was dominated by the perspective that the Inquiry and its outcomes were a threat to press freedom.

Positive references to the Inquiry – particularly in the early stages – were not uncommon, but only 23% of all stories that contained evaluative statements were positive-only, while in the last hundred days, only 11% of such stories contained positive-only statements.

Although this dominant view, that the Inquiry was a threat to press freedom, was repeated regularly and consistently, it was not done in reference to any specific plans. Many arguments were based on the theoretical premise that any deviation from a fundamental separation of the press from any aspect of Parliament or legislation was threatening. Alternative systems of regulation were not examined or critiqued. No evidence was presented at the Inquiry itself that any witnesses or members of the Inquiry sought to inhibit press freedom. The theoretical premise itself – regarding the fundamental separation of laws and the press – tended to be asserted rather than questioned.

This negative coverage of the Inquiry, and particularly towards any reforms to press regulation that may involve the use of legislation to support the system, was not in step with public opinion at the

⁷ The *Guardian* and *Observer* (see Table 14)

time (or since). As has been examined elsewhere, there was a clear discrepancy between the attitudes of the public on press regulation and the dominance of negative coverage.⁸

Failure to report possible outcomes

Although the Leveson Inquiry was explicitly set up to consider how regulation of the press should work in the future, only a tiny amount of stories dealt substantively with possible future models of press regulation. Of these, only a fraction dealt with models for future regulation other than that put forward by the newspaper industry.

The Leveson Inquiry had a wide remit, and was undoubtedly a complex issue. There is no real explanation, however, as to why potential regulatory outcomes were so seldom covered. It is also a concern that the press industry's plan for regulation was essentially the only alternative described for the benefit of the public. It is reasonable to assume that the confusion and misrepresentation that followed the publication of the report originated, at least in part, in the refusal or failure to engage with alternative plans.

Summary

This report does not make any judgement about 'right' or 'wrong' positions on the Leveson Inquiry, or on how journalists should cover it. It analyses what was covered and how. It is significant, however, that coverage has been so one-sided, with certain viewpoints and information given far more prominence than others. It is not unreasonable to draw attention to the fact that viewpoints that were sympathetic to those of the majority of the press were dominant.

It is worth drawing attention to the fact that all of this negative comment – in particular the 'threat' framing – was made before Lord Justice Leveson had made any announcement or given any indication of proposed reforms to the system of press regulation.

The public is best served by a press that gives them the information they need to make informed decisions on current issues. A healthy press is one that not only provides the information, but provides a plurality of views based on that information that enables citizens to engage with issues, debate them, and - in the digital age - respond. Where viewpoints are systematically stifled – not necessarily in a co-ordinated manner, but by individual titles following their own interests – the public is deprived of the information they need to make informed decisions or to participate fully in the debate.

⁸ <http://mediastandardstrust.org/blog/how-the-press-has-failed-to-represent-the-public-mood-over-leveson-2/>

Appendix: Variables created in SPSS

This project is based on a dataset constructed using the statistical package SPSS. This involved creating a number of variables based on the data in newspaper articles. The list of variables, and the instructions used to guide information-gathering are listed below. Variables marked 'yes/no' responses in the guide below were binary choices, used to sort and collate aggregate data. Other variables, such as 'title' or 'publisher' used multiple categories (e.g. 'Northern and Shell' = 1; Associated Newspapers = 2, and so on...).

Date

Date of publication of the story, as registered in Factiva.

Day of Sample

Linked to excel files listing the number of stories and the wordcount, to aid cross-referencing

Publisher

Publishing group responsible for title

Title

Title of newspaper

Sunday Paper

Yes/No response to delineate between daily and Sunday newspapers

Word Count

Calculated by pasting text from Factiva articles into MSWord and using wordcount tool. Factiva wordcounts include captions, bylines, etc. – analysis in this project is purely on text within articles.

Category Tier 1

Distinguishes between 'informative' and 'evaluative' articles. Allocated following a reading of the article, rather than Factiva labels.

Category Tier 2

Distinguishes between 'News' and 'Feature' (informative articles), and 'Leader' and 'Opinion' (evaluative articles)

Headline

Textual reproduction of article headlines. Some particularly long headlines have been truncated

Byline (not used in present analysis)

Bylines include all journalists named in Factiva. Where no name was attached, or a generic 'reporter' byline was attached, this was labelled 'none'.

Guest Contributor (not used in present analysis)

Yes/No response to delineate whether article is by a guest contributor

First (witness/subject) name mentioned (not used in present analysis)

First of a maximum of four witnesses to the Leveson Inquiry mentioned within the article. Not linked to appearance at the Inquiry, so witnesses yet to appear or who have appeared previously were included. Usually, this was allocated on the basis of order in which witnesses were mentioned, but if more than four were present in an article, priority was given to any witnesses quoted within the article.

Second name mentioned (see above – not used in present analysis)

Third name mentioned (see above – not used in present analysis)

Fourth name mentioned (see above – not used in present analysis)

Critical of Leveson

This was marked 'yes' or 'no' solely on the basis of whether ANY of the critical frames were present within an article

Supportive of Leveson

This was marked 'yes' or 'no' based on the nature of the 'Positive reference to Inquiry' variable. This variable was added for ease of comparison with the 'Critical of Leveson' variable.

Focused on political issues (not used in present analysis)

Marked 'yes' if the main subject of the story was party political or linked to the government, in which the Leveson Inquiry was mentioned prominently.

Main focus on Leveson (not used in present analysis)

Marked 'yes' if the main subject of the story was the Inquiry itself, or about expected or potential outcomes of the Inquiry.

Victim focus (not used in present analysis)

Marked 'yes' if the main subject of the story was testimony by a victim of press abuses a story about the legal cases of victims, or a feature or interview featuring a victim.

Focus on press regulation (not used in present analysis)

Marked 'yes' if the story contained detailed explanations of existing or potential issues relating to press regulation

Positive reference to Inquiry

The catch-all positive frame. Marked 'yes' if the following frame was present in the story:

- ANY positive statement about the Inquiry. Usually this is expressed in terms of support for the Inquiry and its possible outcomes, a statement that the Inquiry is – or was – necessary, or a desire that the recommendations of the Inquiry be implemented.

Leveson not a key issue for public

A negative frame, marked 'yes' if the following frame was present in the story:

- Any statement that suggests that the Leveson Inquiry is not an important issue, is not of interest to the public, or is trivial in relation to other political or economic issues.

Threat to press freedom cited

A negative frame, marked 'yes' if the following frame was present in the story:

- Any statement that suggests that the Leveson Inquiry or its outcomes will pose a threat to free speech, freedom of expression, or press freedom. Also includes statements that suggest the Leveson Inquiry will threaten the financial health of newspapers.

Inquiry misconceived

A negative frame, marked 'yes' if the following frame was present in the story:

- Any statement that suggests that the Leveson Inquiry is in some way misconceived. Includes references suggesting that: the Inquiry is a waste of time or a waste of money; the terms of reference were wrong or were too broad (including the suggestion that press regulation is

irrelevant in a digital age); the witnesses were poorly-chosen; or the outcomes of the report will be irrelevant or unworkable.

Contains model

Marked 'yes' if any substantive reference was made to a potential replacement for the previous system of press regulation. This included highly specific models, such as that put forward by the newspaper industry, or generic aspects of regulation, such as arbitration or ombudsmen.

Model referenced

A textual note on the nature of the model referenced – either the author or proponent of the model, or the aspect of regulation that the model refers to.