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Statement of Current and Future Research

My research centers on the intersection of international relations, comparative politics, and political communication. Specifically, I focus on the conditions under which the media are able to hold government accountable, especially in regards to human rights, and theorize that the effect of the media depends on the presence of democratic institutions. I am particularly interested in studying the relationship between media and government when both the political and the communication systems are in transition.

In my doctoral dissertation, “The Fabled Fourth Estate: Media Freedom, Democracy and Human Rights,” I have considered the implications the foreign policy practices of the United States and other western democracies aimed at encouraging media freedom in non-democracies. In particular, I have studied the role of media in the protest-repression nexus and compared the ability of free media to hold government accountable, especially in regards to protest and human rights, across a range of regime types. I have investigated how media freedom affects protest and government respect for a variety of human rights and theorized that the effect of media freedom depends on the presence of democratic institutions. The results from my empirical analyses support this premise. Specifically, in non-democracies media freedom is associated with increased protest and decreased government respect for physical integrity rights (these are the rights to be free from political murder, torture and imprisonment) and decreased government respect for women’s rights. Only in the most consolidated democracies is media freedom associated with decreased protest and increased government respect for human rights.

I am especially interested in the relationship between media and government as media systems evolve within changing political systems, particularly in democratizing states and autocracies. I have presented papers on media freedom, democracy and human rights at recent APSA, ISA and Peace Science Society conferences. These presentations have produced a publication in *International Studies Quarterly* and several manuscripts currently under review and in preparation.

In order to compare the effect of media freedom before and after the emergence of new media, it is necessary to study the evolution (and devolution) of media freedom around the world over time. To that end I am working with a co-author on a historical encyclopedia of media freedom. This book-length work will offer the only comprehensive historical reference on press freedom in the Post-

World War II era. In addition to providing a consistent and comparable measure of press freedom in all independent countries for the years 1948-2009, it will include extensive reliability analyses, country-by country summaries, and analyses of historical trends.

In addition, but also related to my main research agenda, a colleague and I continue to work on a study of the news media's influence on U.S. environmental foreign policy. In particular, we are studying the effect of the news media's use of what we term *connection frames*, which link abstract ideas to actual events, in this case the concept of global warming to extreme weather events. We hypothesize that the media's use of connection frames helps to increase public concern about issues like global warming which in turn encourages, and often pressures, the government to address the problem. We test these hypotheses over time (from 1970 to 2008) with case studies of global warming coverage in the New York Times and statistical analyses of the effect of this news coverage on congressional activity. We have presented findings from this study at ISA and APSA conferences and received the Best Paper Award from the International Political Communication Section at the 2009 ISA annual meeting. We plan to publish this work as a series of articles.

In the future, I intend to look at the different dimensions of media, including media freedom, journalistic professionalism and partisanship and how the availability of new media influences these dimensions and affects the relationship between media and government policies and international relations.