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CONSTRUCTING POLITICAL EXPERTISE IN THE NEWS

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Constructing Political Expertise in the News

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Abstract: Expert news sources in particular offer context and act as translators, communicating complex policy issues to the public. Therefore, expert sources have implications for who, and what, is elevated and legitimized by news coverage. This Element considers patterns in expert sources, focusing on a particular area of expertise: politics. As a starting point, the authors conduct a content analysis to track which types of political experts are most likely to be interviewed and use this analysis to explain patterns in expert sourcing. Building on the source data, there follow experiments and surveys of journalists to consider demand for expert sources. Finally, shifting the analysis to the supply of expert sources, the Element turns to a survey of faculty to track expert experiences with journalists. Jointly, the results suggest that underlying patterns in expert sourcing are a tension between journalists' preferences, the time constraints of producing news, and the preferences of the experts themselves.

Keywords: news, experts, sources, political journalism, political science

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