Liberal discourse - An invisible hand in free trade research?

- An investigation into how global trade discourse is created through discourse interaction within research.

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ABSTRACT

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An investigation into how global trade discourse is created through discourse interaction within research.

This paper uses a quantitative content analysis informed by a critical realist framework to study the patterns of international political economy discourse prevalence within research articles concerning free trade. Once categorized, there are observable differences in the extent to which articles in the different categories address other discourses. Analyzing these patterns using concepts from discourse theory, we suggest that the liberal discourse constitutes a regime of truth to which the other discourses must relate. It is also found that articles published in higher ranking journals are less likely to address other discourses. We argue that this could be explained as being an effect of the larger readership of those journals.

Keywords: Free trade, discourse, critical realism, content analysis, SJR
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1. Introduction

Trade has large effects on societies all over the world and the development process. How trade is conducted is to a large part mediated through powerful institutions (O’Brien and Williams, 2016). Today, free trade is the most prevalent framework for development of the large trade and economic institutions (World Trade organization [WTO], n.d.-a; International Monetary Fund [IMF], 2017; World Bank, n.d.). Practitioners and policy makers in trade are influenced by and draw on research to support their positions. This makes research an important factor in determining development. Research on free trade is suggested to be dominated by a liberal economic perspective (O’Brien and Williams, 2016). However, there is no consensus regarding the benefits of free trade and the liberal framework is challenged by other perspectives. Understanding the process whereby different perspectives interact to form a global trade discourse, especially among more influential research journals, is therefore important to understand the shaping of policy.

The goal of this study is to investigate the extent of the liberal perspective in research articles on free trade. This will be done through a quantitative content analysis by which we will be able both to categorize articles as belonging to different perspectives and investigate patterns regarding which other perspectives they reproduce. Using discourse theory, we will analyze why we may see certain patterns emerge. Also, we take in consideration that not all research has the same impact, and we will therefore study how these patterns are manifest at different levels of journal rankings.

1.1 Purpose and research questions

1.1.1 Purpose

The purpose of this study is to investigate the prevalence of the liberal discourse in free trade research and to interpret and analyze patterns of how articles in different categories may address the other perspectives, and how differences of such patterns may coincide with differences in journal rankings.

1.1.2 Research questions

- What patterns of discourse presence can be found within research articles concerning free trade?
- How can these patterns be explained through discourse rules?
2. Background

Some background information of relevance to the context of this study is presented below. We will begin by providing a short overview of the concept of free trade and the major institutions associated with it. Next, we give a brief description of how research journals function and the SJR journal ranking system. The background information will be incorporated into the analysis and the discussion of our results.

2.1 Free trade and institutions

Free trade is the removal of trade barriers such as tariffs and quotas which are designed to protect domestic producers from international competitors. Free trade is based on a liberal understanding of the economy, were all countries are thought to be able to benefit from trade as long as the market forces, in the form of the “invisible hand”, are left to guide economic activity (Balaam and Dillman, 2011). Liberal trade theory is the main framework for analyzing international trade within policy and academic contexts (O’Brien and Williams, 2016). Indeed, a majority of the post-war international institutions concerned with trade espouse free trade policies (Balaam and Dillman, 2011). For example, the Washington Consensus institutions (the World Bank and the IMF) as well as the World Trade Organizations tend to favor trade liberalization (ibid.).

The most prominent free trade institution is the WTO. It is an organization that manages a system of rules of trade for its member governments (WTO, n.d.-a). The rules are based on agreements and define how trade liberalization is to be achieved. This includes the lowering of trade barriers and the maintaining of open markets of goods as well as services (WTO, n.d.-b). The WTO and also settles disputes related to trade between members. The rules and dispute mechanisms are regulated by documents which are binding for the member states (WTO, n.d.-a).

The IMF claims that it “strongly supports the role of the WTO in ensuring openness, transparency, and stability in the global trading system, including its role in enforcing trade rules” (IMF, 2017). The World Bank similarly advocates a global trading system based on rules and openness. According to the World Bank, such a system is challenged by trade barriers enacted by governments in order to protect domestic industries. Moreover, the bank perceives restriction and lack of competition in service markets of developing countries as a problem for integration into the global system (World Bank, n.d.).

2.2 Journals and SJR

Research journals are a common medium through which researchers communicate their work to the academic community, and to the rest of the world. Journals are headed by
editors who pick the articles that are to be published. Most journals practice peer-review. This is a process in which two reviewers, who are themselves researchers, will evaluate research to make sure that it is of sufficient quality to be published. Reviewers are chosen by editors (Andries & Wright, 2016).

There are several journal ranking systems. SJR is a journal metric system which groups journals from more than 5000 international publishers into 27 subject areas. The metric derives its name from the indicator upon which it is based, the SCImago journal rank (SCImago, 2007). Like many other ranking systems, SJR ranks journals based on citations. However, the SJR algorithm was built upon the notion that not all scientific documents nor journals have the same impact. Therefore, SJR values citations of articles differently. Most notably, citations from higher-ranking journals are valued more, and there is a decrease in value when a citation comes from a field different than that of the journal. The point of the latter is to make sure that rankings reflect that researchers within fields have the most say in determining what is important within their field (Guerrero-Bote & Moya-Anegón, 2012).

3. Theory

3.1 Critical realist theoretical model

This study is based on a critical realist (CR) theoretical model, informed by Danermark, Ekström, Jakobsen and Karlsson (2002). We will outline the CR framework below and also provide an overview of how we have employed it in our study.

3.1.1 Critical realism

Like “regular” realism, CR is based on the ontological premise that reality exists independently of our knowledge of it and that it is possible to study this reality (Danermark, Ekström, Jakobsen & Karlsson, 2002; Bryman, 2011). However, CR disagrees with the positivist standpoint held in “regular” realism which states that there can be a perfect correlation between the theoretical concepts we use to describe the world and the world in itself (Bryman, 2011). As stated by Danermark, Ekström, Jakobsen and Karlsson (2002), “facts are theory-dependent but not theory-determined” (p. 15). As such, CR accepts the existence of a “real” natural world while also claiming that our understanding of this world is mediated by concepts and theories belonging to a “social” world (Bryman, 2011).

This “social” world is subjective and separate from the “natural” world, but is both affected by and affects the “natural” world (Bryman, 2011). An example is given in Danermark, Ekström, Jakobsen and Karlsson (2002) regarding the social structure of wage labor. A concept describing a system, such as the “wage labor” system cannot directly be observed in the “natural” world, yet the effects of what we call the “wage labor” system can. We can observe the real effects of people heading to certain places at
certain times, having different material possessions, and so forth (Danermark, Ekström, Jakobsen & Karlsson, 2002).

In this way, CR is distinguished from regular positivist realism not only in that knowledge is mediated through the social world, but also that it permits the usage of theoretical concepts denoting non-observable hypothetical entities as possible explanations for observable events or patterns of events in the “real” but also in the social world (Bryman, 2011). These entities are referred to as “generative mechanisms” and are considered “real” by critical realism in so far as that they have real observable effects (ibid.). For example, a belief is real if we interpret there being causes for it to exist, or if we observe effects (such as a certain behavior) and find that a likely cause of it could be a belief. By necessity, CR epistemology will always be partly relativistic in that while we may observe the exact same world we can never arrive at the exact same explanations of it. However, CR believes that we can use our judgment to discuss which explanations seem more or less likely (Danermark, Ekström, Jakobsen & Karlsson, 2002).

3.1.2 Overview of model application

In accordance with the critical realist perspective, we assume that if one should be able to infer from a text that it adhered to a certain discourse, we should in part be able to examine it empirically, supposedly in the form of textual matter, constituting a part of the material world. After this, we would need concepts of the social world to understand how textual matter could in the first place be interpreted as signifying adherence to an element of the social world, in our case a discourse. This is done by employing a content analysis approach used by Krippendorff (2004).

Next, we would need concepts to explain why some textual matter should be interpreted as addressing some particular discourse related to free trade. To do so, we have operationalized the different discourses by drawing on theories of international political economy. At this point, we can categorize the articles as belonging to different discourses. Finally, for us to be able to explain why articles categorized as belonging to a particular discourse would be more or less likely to address other discourses, we have incorporated some concepts of discourse theory into our analysis. By doing so, we hope to be able to investigate if discourse membership could be seen as a generative mechanism of a certain behavior of addressing other discourses.

3.2 International political economy

International political economy (IPE) is a discipline concerned with the synthesis of political and economic analysis of global economic activity (O’Brien & Williams, 2016). The main IPE perspectives are used in the content analysis in this study and will be discussed later on. An overview is therefore provided here.

3.2.1 The main perspectives
**Liberal**

The liberal perspective is based neoclassical economics, which portrays itself as the science of economics, not just an art, with a focus to maximize utility without philosophical or political concerns (Watson, 2014). In liberal theory, individuals and their wants and preferences are the focus subject, and corporations are considered to be an extension of these individuals and their wants (O’Brien & Williams, 2016).

In order to create the greatest freedom for individuals as well as the most efficient economy, liberals argue that there has to be a free market with no restrictions. In this market, the individual is supposed to be free to use their private property in any manner they see fit. This market will be guided by supply and demand. According to the liberal perspective, this will make the most efficient system since it is based upon the people by the people (Cohn, 2008).

Since the liberal perspective regards the free market as the most efficient system of allocation, any state intervention in the market is believed to lead to lower efficiency and less prosperity, and should therefore be minimized (Balaam & Dillman, 2011; O’Brien & Williams, 2016). Free trade is an extension of this line of reasoning, with adherents of the liberal perspective arguing that such policies are vital in order to maximize growth for everyone involved. If free trade does not bring prosperity, the liberal perspective regards this not as a fault of the international economic system but of government’s failures to pursue free trade policies to the degree needed (Balaam & Dillman, 2011; Cohn, 2008).

Liberals view trade as a positive sum exchange, in which it is possible for all participants to gain. Another central tenet of the liberal view of trade is the emphasis on absolute gains rather than relative gains, that is, governments should pursue participation in trade as long as it increases their net welfare, whether or not this leads to another participants earning relatively more from the same exchange (O’Brien & Williams, 2016). Two other central terms are absolute and comparative advantage. Absolute advantage refers to the possibility of an actor to produce better or more goods when compared to another actor. Comparative advantage on the other hand, refers to the ability of an actor to produce a good at a lower cost than another. An example is China, who thanks to the countries large amounts of available labor and low wages has a comparative advantage in the production of simple goods. The liberal perspective believes that all countries should pursue their comparative advantage (Cohn, 2008).

**Economic nationalism**

The economic nationalist perspective regards state as the central actor within global trade. In contrary to the liberal perspective, the economic nationalist perspective advocates state engagement in the market in order to protect the domestic population and business (Balaam & Dillman, 2011). The reason for this is that the economic nationalist perspective see trade as part of power struggles between states. As such, trade should be pursued in a way as to maintain and secure more power (Cohn, 2008). A way of doing
this is to protect certain industries which have strategic importance, such as defense or agriculture, while pursuing comparative advantage in others (Balaam & Dillman, 2011; O’Brien & Williams, 2016).

According to the economic nationalist perspective, trade is not a positive-sum exchange but a zero-sum exchange. That is, trade can never be truly mutually beneficial, as someone has to gain less compared to the other in any such exchange. As such, economic nationalists tend to emphasize the relative gains of trade. For example, a trade deal which would result in a larger relative gain for another state should be avoided, as economic nationalists perceive that state’s increase in power as a potential threat. On the other hand, a trade deal in which a state can gain more than another should always be pursued in order to gain a possible advantage compared to that state (Cohn, 2008; O’Brien & Williams, 2016).

Another consequence of the perception of trade as zero-sum is that the economic nationalist perspective views the international trade system as little more than a means for powerful states to dominate weaker states. As such, weaker states should not participate in this system as it will reinforce the status quo (Balaam & Dillman, 2011).

**Critical**

When compared to the two previously described perspectives, the critical perspective is more of a collection of positions rather than a unified set of beliefs. The critical IPE position incorporates insights from Marxist, environmental and feminist theory. The common denominator among these stands is that they are in contrast to the perspectives above not only critical to certain aspects of the international economic system but critical to the system as a whole. A consequence of this is that the critical perspective is not as a coherent position as the others (O’Brien & Williams, 2016).

Marxist theory is based upon an analysis of the capitalist system as an inherently unjust mode of production where the working class is exploited by the owners of the means of production (Cohn, 2008; O’Brien & Williams, 2016). There are several theories used by Marxists to argue that international trade leads to the reproduction of the capitalist system. Marxism contends that the wealthy are wealthy because of historic reasons, that imperialist have looted and exploited poor countries, and this is how comparative advantage has been created. Pursuing comparative advantage will therefore lead to the reproduction of inequalities (O’Brien & Williams, 2016). Likewise, geographical theories such as center-periphery describe how less developed countries are forced to sell raw materials to a developed center where materials are refined and sold back to the periphery at a relative loss for the peripheral countries (Balaam & Dillman, 2011). Similar arguments are used by Marxists to argue that free trade is essentially a new form of imperialism increasing the distance between rich and poor countries (O’Brien & Williams, 2016).
The environmentalists focus on environmental impacts of global trade. This position claims that the negative impacts that free trade causes are not accounted and compensated for, and that these adverse effects are unjustly affecting those who also benefit the least from trade. For this reason, environmentalists argue that local trade is a more environmentally mode of commerce than global trade (O’Brien & Williams, 2016). Feminists on the other hand talk of how the effects of global trade are not gender neutral. Feminist theory claims that while the negative consequences of trade disproportionately affect women, social costs are ignored when free trade deals are made and women must therefore bear the burden. Finally, the critical position also encompasses a critique towards the negative effects of global trade on human- and labor rights agreements (O’Brien & Williams, 2016).

3.3 Discourse

We will now address some concepts of discourse theory which we will use in our analysis. Thereafter, we will provide a justification for treating the main theories within IPE as discourses. These concepts will be used in analyzing our empirical results.

3.3.1 Discourse theory

In the Foucauldian tradition, a discourse is a collection of statements related to a social practice. They function as the basis for definition and analysis of phenomena and provide direction regarding how such a phenomenon is to be treated or used. Thus, a dominating discourse becomes a “regime of truth”, a standard against which to measure what statements may be considered as true but also which statements are even meaningful to discuss. A dominating discourse goes beyond just deciding what issues should be discussed and dealt with. It also approves the use of certain practices regarding ways of reasoning, language, symbols and conclusions (Keeley, 1990).

Eventually, challengers may divert from the use of the prescribed practices and form rival discourses by the side of the “regime of truth”, so called “subjugated knowledge”. This knowledge is subjugated by the dominant discourse in that it has been declared ineligible for use in understanding of a certain matter or simply being considered as naive or primitive knowledge. In order for the dominant discourse to continuing being dominant, it must reinforce the use of prescribed practices. Mostly, users of divergent practices will simply be ignored based on the perception of them as bizarre. However, rival discourses may eventually have to be addressed in some way, becoming objects of ridicule or correction and in the worst case being excluded or targeted for elimination (Keeley, 1990; Brikell, 2012).

Several researchers identifying with CR argue that the position is compatible with discourse analysis. Discourses can be studied as being caused by, as well as being causal mechanisms of phenomena in the social as well as the real world (Banta, 2012; Downey & Toynbee, 2016; Thompson & Harley, 2012). However, these authors all share a critical
stance towards Foucauldian discourse analysis as they see it embracing a social constructivist thought. The potential issue that these researchers see with social constructivism is that it may entail that nothing can be viewed as having a cause or an effect, because such concepts are themselves socially constructed through discourse. The only explanations to any phenomena becomes references to discourse, rendering any other non-material phenomena such as structural processes or social entities invalid for analysis (Downey & Toynbee, 2016; Thompson & Harley, 2012). According to Banta (2012), such research will also lack in external validity.

Elder-Vass (2012) agrees that while social constructivism may be incompatible with the CR position, Foucauldian discourse analysis can be reframed to fit the CR position. Instead of being perceived as linguistic mediators of social reality, discourses should be interpreted as providing a set of norms. Every norm has a group of people devoted to supporting and enforcing the norm. Elder-Vass (2012) calls this a norm circle. This group of people will denounce and penalize those who do not comply with the norm, and will reward and commend those who do. This disciplining function will cause individuals who are exposed to the norm circles’ influence to develop a proneness to conforming to the norm. Discursive rules, as a result, have a causal effect on individuals thanks to the influence of a norm circle committed to the discursive rules (Elder-Vass, 2012).

Elder-Vass (2012) provides an example which is very adequate for our study: There is a set of discursive rules about what can be said and what should not be said in articles in academic journals, and these rules are causally effective because there is a group of people—primarily journal editors and reviewers—who are committed to enforcing them and who have the power to sanction academic writers in support of these rules. (p. 15)

### 3.3.2 Political economy perspectives as ideologies?

Robert Gilpin claims that while all political economy perspectives contain analytical tools, they all contain normative elements as well (Gilpin, 2001). The author refers to economic liberalism as on the one hand containing the analytical tools of neoclassical economic theory, and on the other the normative commitment to a capitalist or market economy (ibid.). In his 1987 seminal work, Gilpin referred to the IPE perspectives as “ideologies”, perceiving the positions as being “self-contained, coherent world views, capable of imposing meaning of any experience of the world, and equally capable of encapsulating whole systems of thought and belief” (Ravenhill, 2011, p. 27).

Likewise, O’Brien and Williams (2016) claim that particular theories in IPE have particular goals and will often propose solutions which are more in line with the interests of a particular group. Theories applied to trade are no exception but are also political and ideological (ibid.). O’Brien and Williams stress that while all IPE theories contain valuable analytical tools, theories cannot be proven wrong or right (ibid.). Ultimately, the normative trade theory frameworks contained within IPE perspectives are not only
socially constructed in themselves, but they are also the result of completely differing interpretations of the world to start with (ibid.). O’Brien and Williams (ibid.) conclude that this fact is crucial and must be understood as having important implications in light of the fact that actors in the trade system are indeed influenced by the writings of trade theorists.

We argue that if IPE positions, from within the subject itself, can be argued to coherent systems providing normative frameworks and prescribing certain units of analysis and practices to be used, they can be treated as discourses with regard to Keeley’s (1990) definition.

4. Earlier research

In this section, we will discuss earlier research of relevance to this study. As we have not found any previous studies similar to ours in methodology and subject matter, we draw on research that we find related to our approach and research question. This will help us in situating our findings in contexts which we can relate to our results in our analysis.

4.1 Hegemony

Many authors studying the role of beliefs in the shaping of economic relations do so by employing the term “hegemony” (O’Brien & Williams 2016), which was originally used by Antonio Gramsci to describe how a dominant group could construct ideas in order to perpetuate the current structures of material ownership (Olsaretti, 2016; O’Brien & Williams, 2016). For example, Schwarzmantel (2005) claims that neo-liberalism should be studied as a hegemonic force, arguing that it limits the space of expression of new political ideas.

Robert Cox, drawing on the Gramscian concept of hegemony, argued that ideas, material conditions and institutions should be understood as shaping each other. Cox claims that the after the Second World War, liberal ideas were institutionalized in the IMF, the World Bank and the GATT (the precursor to the world trade organization) as well as the OECD. These institutions then became important proponents of the liberalization of the world economy (Budd, 2013).

Gramsci’s concept of hegemony contains two elements. First, there is the “external” hegemony, whereby systems of beliefs are dispersed through society to the subordinate groups. This ensures that they perceived the current material conditions as fair and in their favor, and make them less likely to revolt. However, Gramsci also described that the purpose of creating such systems of belief was also to maintain ideological coherence of the dominant group, thereby ensuring that “restricted” hegemony was also sustained. This is to make sure that the dominant group acts as a unified actor and does not diverge (Olsaretti, 2016).
4.2 Impact of research on policy

An account is given below on the different reasons and uses for incorporation of research in the policy making process. This will be used to discuss the implications of the analysis of discourses.

4.2.1 Instrumental and symbolic use of research

According to research of Boswell (2009), there are two main ways of interpreting how policy is informed by research. The first suggests that as the policymaking process becomes increasingly technocratic, governments and public servants are in more need of expert knowledge in order to determine the most efficient ways of improving delivery of services or allocation of resources. Debates over policy are to be settled by referring to data and expertise rather than to values or interests (Boswell, 2009).

The second line of interpretation is that research fills a symbolic role. Research can have two important symbolic uses in policy-making. The first is a legitimizing function. An organization can improve its legitimacy and even its prospects of power over certain material or political resources if it is seen as drawing on expert knowledge. This is because the perception of officials or agencies and departments as possessing relevant and reliable knowledge or at a minimum having access to such knowledge will increase the confidence that their decisions will be well grounded (Boswell, 2009).

The second symbolic use of research has less to do with how a certain actor may use research to enhance their authority, but rather with how expert knowledge can be used to legitimizing a certain position on policy. Used in this way, research can aid in substantiating an actor’s policy preference, and undercut that of contenders. In both cases, expert knowledge is more so a tool for credibility than for improvement of policy results. (Boswell, 2009). We

4.3 Critical realism in the study of discourse

We will now review two articles exemplifying how the CR framework has been used to study ideology and discourse. This helps in our contextualization of the CR epistemology, as the articles below used the same framework in studying similar topics to the one investigated in this study.

4.3.1 Critical realism and ideology

Downey & Toynbee (2016) used a CR approach to investigate the possible presence of neoliberal ideological bias within the BBC and four other British media networks. The empirical basis was a comparison of how many seconds of talking time was given to business leaders and union leaders respectively regarding a certain matter. It was shown that the business leaders were given several minutes of quotation time on many of the networks, while union leaders received no quotation at all on but one network. The authors claim that they could find no objective reason for this difference. They found it
strange in particular as the union leaders should be seen to represent a lot more citizens than the business leaders in the particular issue. The authors therefore concluded that there could be an ideological bias at work explaining the preferable treatment of the business leaders versus the unions.

4.3.2 Critical realism and discourse
Thompson & Harley (2012) compared research done on two competing discourses, “knowledge-based-economy” (KBE) and “shareholder value” (SV) and show that the characteristics of these discourses in the “social world” caused different effects in the “real world”. The authors claim that while KBE was more common within academic discussion, SV was the discourse that would dominated in actual commercial practice. Thompson & Harley (2012) claim that, despite there being much evidence for the benefits of the KBE approach, many academics lauded it and did not put the discourse to much critical scrutiny. The authors suggest that at the time, KBE was a large influence on the programs of research and policy. As such, they conclude that it would simply not be in the interest of academics to argue against the same approach that had justified significant investment in human capital which could be very beneficial for these academics. By comparison, it was the SV discourse that was adopted by commercial actors, as it made more sense for them at that point, which could be observed in commercial practice (ibid.).

4.4 Research on the Scimago Journal Ranking system (SJR)
We will now review two articles discussing how possible implications of the SJR system on research practice, which will be used in analyzing our results.

4.4.1 Ranking systems and quality
High ranked journals are associated with high quality articles, and are as such recognized as important within the academic community and therefore more frequently cited and read. This in turn inflates the rankings of such journals, which Wilkins and Huisman (2015) claim leads to a narrow range of journals which are deemed worthy to read and publish in. Moreover, the authors argue that ranking systems encourages readers to assess the quality of research by look at the ranking rather than through critically examining the article content. The authors claim that on average, 90 % of the citations of a journal comes from half of its articles. So if citations would be the base of successful scholarship, there is no guarantee that an article published in a high ranking journal will be successful solely dependent on where it is published (ibid.).

Additionally, Wilkins and Huisman (2015) found that interdisciplinary researchers might be especially disfavored by ranking systems. The authors argue that because interdisciplinary journals are more specialized, they attract lower readership and consequently receive lower rankings and lower chances of being noticed (ibid.).
4.4.2 Ranking systems and researchers

Huber (2015) claims that being published in a high ranked journal is highly correlated with faculty appointments and promotions. As such, researchers who want to advance their careers and their research cannot ignore the impact of where they are published. The potential issue with this is that researchers might try to change their research into better fitting the perceptions of quality held by editors of these journals. This is reflected in the study conducted by Wilkins and Huisman (2015), in which they interviewed researchers about how they experienced the impact ranking systems had on their work. While some respondents argued that they enjoyed chasing the prestige that being published in a high ranking journal would bring with it, others declared that they felt pressured as they believed they had to adapt to the rankings.

5. Method

5.1 Critical realism empirical procedure

Danermark, Ekström, Jakobsen and Karlsson (2002) states that while the task at hand in critical realism is always to “identify generative mechanisms and describe how they are manifested in real events and processes” (p. 165), critical realism embodies methodological plurality and rejects the classic dichotomy of qualitative versus quantitative methodologies (Danermark, Ekström, Jakobsen & Karlsson, 2002). Drawing on Sayer, Danermark, Ekström, Jakobsen and Karlsson. (2002) instead present a view of methodology as “intensive” or “extensive”. Intensive research addresses research questions where individual or fewer cases are involved, deeper understanding of a certain process is desired or where a more comprehensive picture of actual changes or individual actions is sought. Intensive research typically employs qualitative methods in order to gain an in-depth and more contextual understanding of a particular generative mechanism. Extensive research, on the other hand, investigates patterns, regular phenomena and differentiating features in larger populations and typically uses more quantitative methodologies and statistical analysis. While lacking in explanatory depth, extensive research produces more descriptive accounts which are better suited for generalizations and may be more representative. Generally, intensive research is used to find investigate the particular workings of a specific generative mechanism, while extensive research is used to study the magnitude of effects of a certain such mechanism or how the effects of such a mechanism may be found in a certain population.

Supposing the existence of a generative mechanism, an intensive study could help us in gaining a deeper understanding of the many processes underway in the playing out of this. One could, for example, interview editors of journals in order to gain a deeper understanding of how they choose articles that are to be published. Interviews could also be conducted with researchers to attempt to gain an understanding of why they send their articles where they do and so forth. However, we think that for such a study to be meaningful, it would require an effort beyond the scope of this thesis. We would not have
been interested in just any editor or researcher but would have had to find editors of journals as well as researchers concerned with trade, as this is the subject we are interested in.

As such, we find a research design in line with the extensive approach more fitting. We want to see if we can find general patterns of how discourses address each other and speculate regarding a generative mechanism of these patterns. We therefore decided to use a more quantitative content analysis based more on categorization than on deep reading of texts. This allows us to draw more general conclusions regarding a larger population of articles.

5.2 Delimitations

This study only covers articles written in 2015 and which used the keyword “free trade” or “protectionism”. This was done in order to find a large body of articles which we presumed could be relevant to our research question. We used a keyword search rather than a title search as we supposed that several articles could discuss free trade without having it in their title.

We only included articles published in journals with a SJR ranking, as the SJR ranking has the broadest scope of journals and also has a mechanism that enables comparisons between disciplines. We did not include other ranking systems as we did not find it feasible to compare categories of rankings and to only find articles that were published in journals indexed in several ranking systems.

5.3 Content analysis

5.3.1 Content analysis and critical realism
The design of our content analysis is mainly based on Krippendorff (2004). We will begin by providing a justification of this particular choice of methodology, and thereafter turn our attention to outlining the process in itself.

We find Krippendorff’s (2004) approach to content analysis fitting in the context of this study and for the critical realist epistemological position in particular. This can be illustrated by a short discussion of how the approaches of Berelson and Holsti is contrasted to the author’s own. Berelson’s definition states that content analysis should infer answers from texts by focusing on the “manifest” of a text (Krippendorff, 2004; Bryman, 2011), which according to Krippendorff (2004) limits the “content” of a text to what would be apparent to anyone reading it. By comparison, Holsti claims that content analysts should make inferences about texts by looking at who the sender of a text is, to whom it was addressed, what the consequences of the sending of this text would be, and so forth. In other words, Holsti focuses on “latent” content, which is content that resides outside of the textual matter (Bryman, 2011; Krippendorff, 2004). Krippendorff (2004) is critical to both of these conceptions of content analysis, stating that Berelson’s definition
ignores that it might be impossible to find what content in a text would be apparent to anyone reading it. Also, it prohibits the possibility of interpreting a text by using different theoretical perspectives. Krippendorff (2004) argues that Holsti’s approach entails several problems as well. First, if content is seen to be a property of the source or receiver of a text, the validity of any inference regarding a text will also be a property of the source or receiver. Second, if approaching a text from the perspective that content is a property of the source and/or receiver of a text, the analysts own conceptual understanding of how a text is to be read and how this particular conceptual understanding is relevant in the answering of a certain research question will never be addressed.

Krippendorff’s (2004) definition of content analysis differs from the ones describes above in that, unlike Holsti, inferences are indeed to be drawn from analyzing actual textual matter, but unlike Berelson, texts are not seen as containing any reader-independent content but inferences are only valid relative to “particular contexts, discourses or purposes” (Krippendorff, 2004, p. 24). The job of the content analyst according to Krippendorff (2004) can be summed up as draw inferences about non-manifest phenomena from manifest text. We find that this definition of content analysis works well line with the critical realist epistemology. Whereas Berelson’s approach would entail an attempt to solely study “the real world”, and Holsti’s approach would entail predominantly studying “the social world”, we interpret Krippendorff’s definition as trying to draw inferences about “the real world” (actual textual matter) but acknowledging the subjectivity and dependence of any such inference of conceptual understandings belonging to “the social world” (discourses, different theoretical interpretation).

In the next section, we will discuss the design of our content analysis as informed by Krippendorff (2004). We will begin by describing how we’ve operationalized our context. Afterwards, we’ll turn to the practical steps in handling of the manifest texts. Finally, we will discuss the reliability and validity of the result of our content analysis.

5.3.2 Content analysis research design
According to Krippendorff (2004), a research design involving a content analysis is made up of a research question, a context as conceived by the content analyst and operationalized as an analytical construct, the application of the practical content analysis techniques on texts and the inferences that the analysis yields. We will discuss each one below.

Analytical construct

When a body of texts and research questions have been established, the content analyst must choose a context through which the body of texts is to be analyzed. The next step is to create an analytical construct, which “operationalizes what the content analyst knows, suspects or assumes about the context of the text and procedurally accounts for the
drawing of inferences from that text” (Krippendorff, 2004, p. 171). Different types of analytical constructs fit different types of content to be analyzed. For example, to interpret a document of ones and zeros with no obvious relation to each other, the analyst would need an analytical construct containing rules for the interpretation of the different numbers. On the other hand, analyzing how a particular author’s writing style changed over a course of ten years would require more theory and a more complex analytical construct.

Our aim is to look at manifest textual matter and interpreting it as signifying the presence of a certain theory within a text. In the language of Krippendorff (2004), relations such as these are called “linguistic re-presentations”. The hyphen (-) suggests that, rather than just being a “representation” (which would be a simple relation of a signifier denoting something signified), a “re-presentation” is a word or phrase which constantly brings a narrative into the present. In turn, narratives will in themselves contain lots of information about, for example, relations between objects, about moral or guiding principles, how one variable is to be interpreted in relation to another, and so forth. Analyzing “re-presentations” is as such investigating “the conceptual structure that a text invokes in particular readers” (Krippendorff, 2004, p. 63).

Analytical constructs needed for the analysis of linguistic re-presentations must be discourse specific. They must contain information about what words mean within a certain discourse (Krippendorff, 2004). For example, when a writer claims that a poor country risks becoming a satellite as a result of free trade, we would know that this does not mean that the poor country will go into orbit if we know that the critical IPE-perspective contains information regarding a different interpretation of the word “satellite”. Moreover they must contain any information related to the discourse regarding how sentences should be analyzed and how that could affect the interpretation of individual words (Krippendorff, 2004).

The analytic construct is as such what warrants the inferences drawn from the text (Krippendorff, 2004). If everyone could agree on the existence of some words making up a sentence in an in text, but would be unable to agree on the meaning, that would be the equivalent of readers using different analytical constructs yielding different inferences.

**Our analytical construct**

The point of our analytical construct is for us to be able to read a sentence speaking about free trade and determine if that sentence is a re-presentation of a certain discourse, the three discourses being the three main theoretical perspectives in IPE. In doing so, we have of course already committed to having IPE as part of our analytical construct as well. This is a strength, however, when we consider that our analytical construct must contain information about the discursive interpretation of sentences. We could not claim that the three main perspectives in themselves are usually associated with any such information. That is, we have found nothing to suggest that sentences of re-presentation
would be structured in different ways depending on what perspective they re-presented (for example, that a re-presentation of a liberal theory would be manifest as “capitalism is a good thing” while the manifestation of a re-presentation of a critical theory could look like “a bad thing capitalism is”). However, we consider that we have been able to find such information in the literature concerning IPE as a subject rather than the individual theories.

We argue that re-presentations of IPE theories, due to their subject matter, could be expected to be made up of a sentence with a word or a phrase denoting a certain phenomenon related to international economic activity regulated by politics and then other words or phrases establishing a relation between this phenomena and a quality or some other phenomena and so forth. At this point, we could say that we know we are looking for sentences expressing a relation between an X and a Y. We did not expect to and have not found any discursive information regarding how those relations can be expected to be expressed in manifest text, not in the specific theories in themselves or in IPE overall. But as Krippendorff (2004) suggests, we must include in our analytical construct our general knowledge of language and grammar and logic.

Based on our research question, we know that X should be “free trade”. To distinguish a re-presentation of a certain theory, we need to know what Y should stand for. Thus, we read textbooks on IPE to search for what arguments concerning free trade were usually associated with and said to be employed by writers in the different theories. As such, we can discern a particular re-presentation in a sentence depending on what argument is connected to free trade. We think that this is a good way of measuring re-presentations of theories, as the arguments both follow from the theory and constitute it. For example, the power of the invisible hand leads us to believe that we should deregulate the market; on the other hand, the power of the invisible hand cannot be realized unless we deregulate the market. The arguments are shown in table 1 and will be discussed more in the section on validity.

By no means do we think that we will find re-presentations on free trade using the exact formulations found in table 1 as Y. Neither do the formulations in the table correlate exactly with how they were written in the books, which would also be impossible since the textbooks used different formulations. Our understanding of the theories is therefore key. For instance, if we know that the infant industry argument prescribes that a state should protect new industries from foreign competition until they develop, we could interpret that formulation as a re-presentation of that argument. Also, context units, which will be described below, are also important to understand what could constitute a re-presentation in a certain context.

Sampling units are the largest units. In our content analysis, articles are the sampling units. Recording units are units that are to be distinguished in order to be counted or described in a certain way. In our content analysis, recording units will be sentences or
parts of sentences which express a connection between free trade and some argument. Context units are units which provide and set limits on the information that can be consulted outside of a recording unit in order to describe it. For example, if a sentence expresses that “FFA should be supported based on the benefits of comparative advantage”, it could not be recorded as re-presentation as we have no discursive information on how to interpret “FFA”. However, if we find a sentence stating that “FFA is the future free trade agreement”, we could consider this a context unit providing us with the necessary information to record it. Likewise, if a sentence refers to a certain “it”, the analyst might have to look earlier in the text for a context unit to determine what this “it” is referring to. There are no set limit to the sizes of context unit, but the general rule is that larger context units increase validity but also put more work on the coder, which may be time-consuming and may reduce reliability. Krippendorff (2004) states that context units should be “as large as is meaningful, as small as is feasible” (p. 101-102).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Liberal</th>
<th><strong>Lib1.</strong> Emphasize absolute gains of free trade (Ravenhill, 2014; O’Brien, 2016)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Lib2.</strong> Free trade is an economic phenomenon (Cohn, 2008; O’Brien, 2016)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Lib3.</strong> State should be kept out of market (Cohn, 2008; Balaam, 2011)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Lib4.</strong> Pursuing comparative advantage is always desirable (Cohn, 2008; Balaam, 2011; O’Brien, 2016)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Lib5.</strong> Free trade is beneficial for all states (positive sum) (Cohn, 2008; Balaam, 2011; O’Brien, 2016)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Lib6.</strong> Trade restrictions impede market logic causing loss of overall gain and inefficiency (Balaam, 2011; O’Brien, 2016)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Lib7.</strong> International trading system is fair. If participants lose, it’s because they pursue protectionism. (Cohn, 2008; Balaam, 2011; O’Brien, 2016)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Economic Nationalism</th>
<th><strong>Eco1.</strong> Emphasize relative gains of free trade (Cohn, 2008; Balaam, 2011; O’Brien, 2016)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Eco2.</strong> Free trade is a political (power) phenomenon (O’Brien, 2016; Ravenhill, 2014)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Eco3.</strong> State should pursue power through market interaction (Balaam, 2011; O’Brien, 2016)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Eco4.</strong> Pursuing comparative advantage is not always desirable (Balaam, 2011; O’Brien, 2016)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Eco5.</strong> Free trade allow stronger states to dominate weaker ones (zero sum) (Cohn, 2008; Balaam, 2011; O’Brien, 2016)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Eco6.</strong> Trade restrictions/protection may be desirable. (Balaam, 2011; O’Brien, 2016)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Eco7.</strong> Current international trading system favor stronger states. If developing states pursue “status quo” rules, they will never catch up. (Balaam, 2011; Ravenhill, 2014)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Critical</th>
<th><strong>Crit1.</strong> All economic exchange disproportionately benefits the wealthy at expense of workers (Cohn, 2008; O’Brien, 2016)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Crit2.</strong> Free trade causes discrimination as rich countries can use their equal labor to gain more labor from poor countries. (Balaam, 2011; O’Brien, 2016)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Crit3.</strong> The state is a tool for the capitalist class (Cohn, 2008; Balaam, 2011; O’Brien, 2016)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Crit 4.</strong> Comparative advantage is result of imperialism, pursuit of it reproduces disparities (Balaam, 2011; O’Brien, 2016)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Crit5.</strong> Less developed states need to protect themselves from becoming satellites to more developed center (Cohn, 2008; Balaam, 2011; O’Brien, 2016)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Crit6.</strong> Trade is not gender neutral, social costs are not counted (Cohn, 2008; O’Brien, 2016)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Crit7.</strong> Human rights and labor rights are ignored in free trade agreements (Balaam, 2011; O’Brien, 2016)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Crit8.</strong> Negative externalities of trade such as environmental damage are not counted (Balaam, 2011 O’Brien, 2016)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Categorizing

All identified re-presentations involving a specific argument were only counted once. We did this as we are not trying to measure how “strongly” a certain argument is present in a text. Rather, we see more re-presentations as a certain perspective being present in an article to a higher degree. Depending on how many re-presentations could be identified in an article, we then categorized them as belonging to one of the categories “Liberal”, “Economic Nationalist” or “Critical”. To illustrate, an article wherein we found three re-presentations with two of them involving a liberal argument and the third involving an economic nationalist argument, would be categorized as “liberal”. A consequence of this is that some articles could not be categorized. We will address this in the discussion.

Population

We searched for all articles that used “free trade” and “protectionism” as a keyword that were published in 2015 because that is the latest year with a SJR ranking and that had access to via the Jönköping University indexing service Primo. This resulted in a total of 423 articles. 12 articles were discarded because they were duplicates and 5 because they weren’t possible to download. We removed 75 articles because they were published in a journal with no SJR. By then we had 331 articles left which we included in our content analysis. 221 were discarded as we could not find an argument from any of the theories within them. In total, 100 articles could be coded with at least one argument. Out of these, 89 could be categorized as belonging to a certain IPE theory, leaving us with 11 that could not. See Appendix 1. for a list of all articles that were coded.

Validity

As was stated before, the validity of the content analysis must be judged both by the state of our analytical construct, but also in the light of the methodology we have employed. It could very well be that we have managed to categorize some articles as “liberal” where the author would claim to identify more with the economic nationalist or the critical position. As noted, the inferences drawn using the methodology employed are valid in a certain context, and there could be no inference without the context. Nevertheless, we find that our approach to measuring the presence of theoretical perspectives by looking for manifestations of certain arguments could guarantee a degree of correspondence with the theories. The arguments are derived from a body of work which is in turn derived from scholars active in the field. Moreover, scholars in the field will probably be influenced by the formulations used in these theories. We also mainly used text books as a source for arguments as we presume that it may be in the interest of text book authors to attempt to provide a fair overview of the theories discussed.
Reliability

We believe our study is reliable as we have clearly laid out our analytical construct and that someone could potentially reproduce our study by using our construct and applying it to the articles we coded. Moreover, the theories that we have used to create our analytical construct on sources are available to everyone. Of course, the reliability will always suffer from the fact that no two persons can have the exact same interpretation of any theory used to operationalize the context. An additional source of reliability is that the articles at hand are available for anyone with access to the databases to read. A potential problem of reliability is that there were two people (the authors of the study) coding articles, and we may have made different interpretations. However, there is little to be done about this since we needed a large empirical foundation to draw inferences about patterns, and the body of texts was too large for one coder to handle.

Practical application

The coding was done using Nvivo 11, a software mainly designed for qualitative text analysis but which we nevertheless found to fit our needs. We created 23 overarching codes representing each argument as well as one code for “context unit”. Whenever we found a sentence that satisfied the requirements set up in the analytic construct, we assigned it to the code that corresponded to the argument we inferred from the manifest text. After this, we recorded all codings in an excel spread-sheet and categorized the articles depending on the number of recording codings from each category. The patterns of re-presentations were calculated in excel.

6. Results

The results are shown below, with different tables highlighting different aspects of our coming of the content analysis and categorization.

Table 2. Cross tabulation of article categories with SJR categories

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Liberal</th>
<th>Economic Nationalist</th>
<th>Critical</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Low SJR</td>
<td>18 (13)</td>
<td>3 (8,2)</td>
<td>6 (5,8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medium SJR</td>
<td>13 (15)</td>
<td>10 (9,4)</td>
<td>7 (6,6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High SJR</td>
<td>12 (15)</td>
<td>14 (9,4)</td>
<td>6 (6,6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 2 shows the distribution of articles according to perspective category and SJR-category, with counts and expected counts in parenthesis. The liberal perspective is the most common one, making up around 50% of the total number of articles. It is furthermore underrepresented in the high and medium SJR-categories and overrepresented in the lowest one. The economic nationalist perspective is the second most common, and is clearly underrepresented in the lowest and overrepresented in the highest SJR-categories. The critical perspective is the least common one. It is also the most evenly distributed with regards to categories and expected counts.

Table 3. Number of articles for perspective categories and SJR-categories in which another perspective was re-presented and coherence values for all categories

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Perspective</th>
<th>Low SJR</th>
<th>Medium SJR</th>
<th>High SJR</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Liberal</td>
<td>2 (1 - 2 / 18) = 0.89</td>
<td>2 (1 - 2 / 13) = 0.85</td>
<td>1 (1 - 1 / 12) = 0.92</td>
<td>5 (1 - 5 / 43) = 0.88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economic Nationalist</td>
<td>1 (1 - 1 / 3) = 0.66</td>
<td>6 (1 - 6 / 10) = 0.4</td>
<td>4 (1 - 4 / 14) = 0.71</td>
<td>11 (1 - 11 / 27) = 0.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Critical</td>
<td>4 (1 - 4 / 6) = 0.33</td>
<td>2 (1 - 2 / 7) = 0.71</td>
<td>2 (1 - 1 / 6) = 0.83</td>
<td>8 (1 - 8 / 19) = 0.58</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3 shows the number of articles in the different perspective- and SJR-categories in which another perspective was re-presented. To make comparisons easier we have also calculated what we have decided to call a “coherence value” (the underlined value), which is one minus the number of articles in which a re-presentation of another perspective occurs divided by the total number of articles. A higher value means less re-presentations of other perspectives relative to the number of articles in the category. Articles in the liberal category have the fewest re-presentations of other categories in both relative and absolute numbers. Moreover, it has the highest coherence ratio in all SJR-categories. The economic nationalist perspective has the highest amount of re-presentations of other perspectives. The critical category has the lowest total coherence ratio but also has the sharpest and most steady increase in coherence going from the low to high SJR-categories. The coherence ratio is higher for all perspective categories in the
high-SJR category when compared to the total coherence ratio, as well as the coherence ratio in the low SJR-category.

Table 4. Number of re-presentations of different categories occurring in articles belonging to the different discourses at the different SJR-categories

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Liberal</th>
<th>Economic Nationalist</th>
<th>Critical</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Low SJR</strong></td>
<td>2 Economic Nationalist</td>
<td>1 Liberal</td>
<td>3 Liberal 3 Economic Nationalist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Medium SJR</strong></td>
<td>2 Economic Nationalist</td>
<td>6 Liberal 1 Critical</td>
<td>2 Economic Nationalist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>High SJR</strong></td>
<td>1 Economic Nationalist</td>
<td>4 Liberal 2 Critical</td>
<td>1 Liberal 1 Economic Nationalist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>5 Economic Nationalist</td>
<td>11 Liberal 3 Critical</td>
<td>4 Liberal 6 Economic Nationalist</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4 shows how many articles within the different categories re-presented another perspective. The liberal perspective had 5 re-presentations, making it the category with the least re-presentations of other categories. Additionally, no article in the liberal perspective ever re-presented the critical perspective. The economic nationalist perspective had 14 re-presentations. As such, while having fewer articles that represented another perspective when compared to the critical perspective (see Table 3), there were ultimately more cases of a perspective being re-presented among the articles in the economic nationalist perspective than in the critical perspective. The critical perspective had 6 re-presentations of the economic nationalist perspective and 4 re-presentations of the liberal perspective making up a total of 10 re-presentations.

Note that while Table 3 shows the number of cases in which an article re-presented any another perspective, Table 4 shows the number of cases in which a specific perspective was re-presented in an article. For example, a critical article in the lower SJR-category re-presenting both the Liberal and the Economic Nationalist perspective would be counted only once in Table 3, but in Table 4 it would give a count towards Liberal as well as Economic Nationalist. Therefore, numbers can be higher in Table 4.
Table 5. Comparison between the number of re-presentations of perspectives in the high category

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Liberal</th>
<th>Economic nationalist</th>
<th>Critical</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total re-presentations</strong></td>
<td>17</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total re-presentations per article in category</strong></td>
<td>1,416</td>
<td>1,14</td>
<td>1,33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Re-presentations in other articles / total re-presentations</strong></td>
<td>29 %</td>
<td>12,5 %</td>
<td>25 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Incoming re-presentations / outgoing re-presentations</strong></td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0,3</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The top row of table 5 shows how many occurrences there were of a perspective being re-presented in the high SJR-category. The rows below show three different values which indicate how much attention in terms of re-presentations a certain perspective is given relative to the number of articles categorized as belonging to that perspective. Despite economic nationalism being the perspective with most articles in the high-SJR category (see table 2), the liberal perspective was still re-presented the most within that same category. The liberal perspective performed better than both the critical and the economic nationalist perspectives on all three values. The economic was the perspective performed the worst on all three values.

7. Analysis

7.1 Discourse

7.1.2 Regime of truth

We interpret the liberal discourse as what Keeley (1990) would have described as the regime of truth. As suggested by previous research and the IPE literature, the liberal perspective is not only considered the basis for free trade to start with but is also normative in research and education. Second and in conjunction with this, the result of our content analysis shows that the liberal perspective is dominant in terms of total re-presentations, article numbers and discursive coherence. Articles in the other
Rule 1. Avoid addressing other perspectives
Articles categorized as liberal re-present other perspectives to a lesser degree than those of other perspectives. We hypothesize a first rule of the liberal discourse, which is to avoid addressing other perspectives. Discourse theory states that dominant discourses will prevail as dominant if they can reproduce their desired practices and exclude the others (Keeley, 1990). By never addressing other perspectives, not only are rival discourses excluded but the orthodoxy in the dominant discourse never questioned. As the liberal perspective already has the interpretative prerogative in the discussions of free trade, we do not recognize that they have a lot to win by taking any other route.

Rule 2. Do not address the critical perspective
While there are few re-presentations of other perspectives in articles in the liberal category, they all re-present the same perspective, the economic nationalist. There are several possible explanations for this. First, the economic nationalist perspective has a slightly different set of analytical tools and subjects for discussion which may complement the liberal perspective in certain areas. Second, discourse theory claims that a dominant discourse will ignore rival discourses if possible. However, at a certain point they have to be engaged with to enforce the dominant discourse by refuting the rival discourse position. We know that articles categorized as economic nationalist are overrepresented in the high SJR category. This could signal a growing influence of economic nationalist thought which adherents of the liberal perspective believe that they need to confront, or perhaps draw inspiration from.

The critical perspective however is never re-presented by articles categorized as liberal. From a discourse point of view, this could be interpreted as the critical perspective not being enough of a threat and simply being perceived as bizarre. This seems reasonable as many of the normative and analytical foundations of the critical perspective are the antithesis of the liberal perspective. While we think that there is room in liberal discourse to discuss certain aspects of the economic nationalist position from an analytical point of view, the critical perspective challenges the basic capitalist structure of society and is therefore too far away from the understandings of the regime of truth. We do not think that the liberal perspective has anything to gain from addressing the critical perspective.

7.1.3 Subjugated knowledge
We see the economic nationalist and the critical perspectives as subjugated knowledge (Keeley, 1990). While they are more prevalent in certain areas of analysis in IPE and policy, they are nevertheless considered to be less influential overall than the liberal perspective. Similarly, the results of our content analysis show that, relative to the liberal
perspective, these categories contain fewer articles and the perspectives are in themselves re-presented less overall, in particular the critical perspective. Notably, articles in the critical and economic nationalist re-present other perspectives more and, looking to the categories as a whole, no perspective is ever absent from re-presentation. We will now discuss what discourse rules as conceptualized by Elder-Vass (2012) could be the cause of this and why they are to be found with regards to the characteristics of the two perspectives.

**Economic Nationalist**

*Rule 1. Other perspectives can be addressed*

Articles categorized as economic nationalist are more likely to re-present other perspectives in comparison to articles in the liberal perspective, despite them former being fewer in numbers (see table 5.). We argue that as the economic nationalist perspective is not a regime of truth, they have little to lose from discussing the practices of the liberal perspective, as this perspective is already so influential. On the one hand, the economic nationalist perspective may want to acknowledge the liberal arguments in order to challenge them. While adherents to a regime of truth may find it easier to maintain the status quo by simply not acknowledging the existence of contending truths, a subjugated knowledge may find that it must acknowledge the prescribed practices of the regime of truth in order to challenge them.

Another possible explanation is that in some matters, advocates of the economic nationalist perspective may not find that the liberal position is inherently in contradiction to theirs. For example, an economic nationalist may agree with the liberal position that trade restrictions cause loss of economic efficiency, but may still believe that such restrictions are necessary for purely political reasons. A final reason could be that economic nationalists may want to incorporate arguments from the regime of truth in order to gain acceptance. If subjugated knowledge risks being recognize as bizarre, partaking to a degree in the dominant discourse could possibly extend the audience to some actors in that discourse.

There is also a few re-presentations of the critical perspective in the economic nationalist category. It may be that differing discourses which can be considered as subjugated knowledge have little to lose from doing so if it can lend weight to a certain argument. The economic nationalist and the critical perspective share some analytical approaches to dominance of stronger states over weaker states. However, it is hard to elaborate on this because of the small amount of articles and re-presentations in question. Moreover, there is no guarantee that adherents to a particular perspective regard a certain argument as part of another discourse. This could perhaps especially be the case regarding discourses which are not so crystallized in comparison to the liberal perspective.
**Critical**

**Rule 1. Other perspectives can be addressed**

There are re-presentations of both other perspectives among the articles in the critical category. Similar to the economic nationalist category, there are more re-presentations among the articles in the critical category relative to the liberal category even if the latter has more articles in it. We also believe that the previously formulated argument stating that discourses that can be regarded as subjugated knowledge have little to lose from addressing the regime of truth holds for the critical perspective as well.

There is however a difference in that the articles categorized as critical are more likely to re-present the economic nationalist perspective than the liberal perspective. This is probably because as was also stated earlier, the critical and the economic nationalist perspectives share some insights. However, articles in the critical category are more likely to re-present the economic nationalist perspective than vice versa. Critical being perhaps the least influential perspective, they may have more to gain from legitimizing their position by drawing on a more prominent discourse. We find it unlikely that the economic nationalist perspective is being re-presented in order to be challenged, as the liberal perspective would if so constitute the more direct opponent to the critical perspective. Consequently, we also believe that when the liberal perspective is re-presented from within the critical position, it is probably more likely that this is to challenge it rather than to draw on it as the two perspectives stand in stark opposition towards each other.

In the end however, the same issue that was discussed regarding the economic nationalist concerning the small number of articles and re-presentations as well as the possible difference in interpretation of what argument belongs to what perspective apply.

7.2 Norm Circle

We will now use the concept of norm circles to analyze how these rules are enforced and reproduced through the organizations of individuals who are committed to the norms connected to the discourses. As was argued by Elder-Vass (2012), journal editors and reviewers obviously play an important role in the enforcing of rules as they influence what articles are published. We think that by having examined how patterns of re-presentations occur at different levels of SJR, we can build on this analytical approach by adding readers and citations as important factors of enforcement. While we do not claim that SJR is an element of the organization per se, it interacts with it which produces additional effects. We will expand on this below.

As stated, the basic presumption is that editors and reviewers enforce the rules by allowing certain articles to be published. It follows that certain journals will be associated with certain discourses. We argue that the discourse rules we hypothesized earlier also affect these gatekeepers. For example, an editor of a journal associated with the liberal
discourse may not allow an article incorporating re-presentations of critical arguments, while an editor of a critical journal would as this is not a breach of that discourses rule.

The most dominant discourse will probably have a larger readership. Therefore, they will also have a larger base of potential gatekeepers. An editor accepting certain types of articles may be questioned or even sanctioned by readers if the editor does not comply with the discourse rules. This brings us to the incorporation of the SJR. All perspective categories have higher coherence in the higher categories of SJR. Higher SJR is associated with higher readership and therefore this form of gatekeeping could be stronger at those levels. We think there could be two more ways in which higher SJR is associated with higher coherence. Research is cumulative and citing other researchers is a good way to construct an argument. It may as such be more desirable to cite material which is more coherent as it can more easily be said to be representative of a certain position. Second, it could also be that editors who strive for their journal to be a “go-to” journal for researchers working within a particular research framework will ignore articles outside of this framework.

8. Discussion

We will begin by discussing some limitations to our study. Free trade as a concept is associated with the liberal perspective which means that as we searched using the keyword free trade, we may have missed articles discussing trade from a critical or economic nationalist perspective since they might have chosen another definition or as they might mostly discuss free trade in relation to other questions. Also, we have used IPE concepts to study what was said in articles, but there is no guarantee that the authors themselves considered to be working in IPE. Moreover, the study was conducted using articles published during 2015. This was necessary however as the SJR-ratings are calculated cumulatively and there were no ratings yet for 2016. Another limitation is that we did not find a way to include articles that we could not assign to a specific category in our analysis. Future studies could perhaps use another approach which could include such articles.

Moreover, while we find our results valid, they are so based on how we chose and operationalized the concepts we used in the content analysis. Likewise, our categorization is based our own research design and does not reflect anything inherent to the articles or the writers. However, these limitations are intrinsic to the epistemology of CR and the content analysis methodology we used. They reflect a belief in that we can never make any claims to truth but only interpretations. By outlining how we have made our interpretations, they can be compared with other based on the concepts we employed, which we perceive as increasing the reliability of our results.

Overall, we find that our study produced interesting findings and analytical insights. First and foremost, the distribution of articles in different categories surprised us. While the liberal perspective had most articles overall, the economic nationalist perspective had the
most articles in the high category of SJR and almost as many re-presentations. This is an interesting result, as this perspective is not only regarded as less influential than the liberal perspective within IPE. There could be several explanations. It could be chance, or economic nationalist happens to cover some issues that are more discussed in higher ranked journals. However, it could also be that the political climate is changing. The last years have seen the rise of right wing populism such as Trump, skepticism towards the European Union and economic sanctions because of conflicts. Also, the WTO has not been successful in the negotiations of the latest Doha round. If the liberal perspective is inadequate to account for these trends and to provide solutions for the issues that are today considered urgent, this could make perhaps make the economic nationalist perspective more attractive.

Despite this, the liberal perspective is clearly the most influential in our result. What we found most significant is while the liberal category was the one with the most articles, it was also the one with the least re-presentations of other perspectives. If the liberal perspective is the most influential in IPE research, it could perhaps also be the most influential in IPE education, bringing many students into the tradition. Additionally, the neoclassical understanding of the economy that the liberal perspective is based on is also the foundation of mainstream economics and business education, which is a much larger subject than IPE. As such, the larger amount of liberal articles could be a result of the larger influence of liberal thought in research overall. This could mean that whereas a scholar of economic nationalism may address the liberal perspective as it is considered a rival tradition, the authors of many of the articles in the liberal category may not even be aware of other traditions or even IPE as a subject. This could explain why the liberal articles are less likely to address other perspectives. This could also have an effect on the workings of journals of other perspectives. As economics is a much larger subject in terms of researchers, journal editors may find that they could reach a larger audience if they incorporate some insights from the liberal analytical foundation of neoclassical economics as to not alienate those basing their work on this foundation.

The large trade institutions espouse a free trade agenda. Also, it is probably the case that many of those working in these institutions have studied economics or business rather than IPE. As these subjects do not contain the arguments of those IPE traditions that rival the liberal perspective, arguments in line with the liberal perspective would become dominant in how the members of these institutions understand trade. Thus, researchers in the economic nationalist and critical perspective will not only have to relate to a larger liberal influence in research but also in the reality of how free trade is institutionalized and discussed on a global scale.

While the arguments of the economic nationalist and critical traditions could perhaps be influential to common people risking to lose their jobs as a result of trade liberalization, the liberal perspective is still ruling in the institutions that actually control trade. If researchers of divergent traditions have any interest in their research having an impact in this sphere, they will have to partake in the language of trade created by the liberal
perspective. As such, the power of the institutions and the particular perspective they hold will influence other research, and any divergent research that actually reaches these institutions will have gone through a filter of liberal discourse.

How can we relate to earlier research on hegemony and the influence of expert knowledge in policy? On the one hand, the normative power of the global trade institutions may influence research in a way so that it becomes more similar to the world view of the institutions, as a form of external hegemony. As a result of this, research that actually gets through to the top to a greater degree be used by institutions in justifying their legitimacy and policy choices. Most importantly however, it could also contribute to a situation in which the practitioners of these institutions are rarely exposed to alternative views, thereby giving way to a form of restricted hegemony. Who benefits from the entrenched liberal ideas in these institutions could be interpreted differently from different IPE perspectives. However, only one of them (the liberal) suggests that it would be the poor in the global south.

8.1 Future research

We have not found any earlier studies inquiring into how factors such as discourse rules and theoretical standpoints converge with journal rankings to produce specific outcomes. This make the possibilities for future research numerous. We would like to discuss to certain topics which would have been interesting to further investigate in future research.

First, why do certain articles end up in journals of higher SJR? Our results indicate a difference in which perspective an article was categorized as belonging to and its SJR rankings. This could mean that SJR is in fact biased towards certain factors. As earlier discussed, there is an interest for the dominant group to control research, and SJR could be a tool for that. An inquiry into what factors gives an article a high SJR could be interesting to study the eventual structures of hegemony that might be present within the SJR system.

Future research could also investigate the implications this could have for universities. If this paper is correct, then universities could be thought of as reproducing liberal hegemony. This is problematic since they claim to be informing “objective” policies which can have grave consequences for the people who are affected. If we also assume that SJR is biased we come into the implications for the researchers who are looking towards SJR to measure quality and finds a disproportional number of articles encompassing a certain perspective. This could also have a normative effect on researchers since they strive to publish in high ranked journals in order to receive prestige and promotions. We believe future studies of this will be of great importance in understanding how the academy will function in future society.
9. Conclusion

In this study, a manifest content analysis building on a critical realist framework has been applied to investigate the patterns of discourse prevalence in articles regarding free trade. Our result show that articles categorized as liberal have the least re-presentations of other perspectives both in absolute and relative terms, and never re-present the critical perspective. By comparison the economic nationalist and critical perspectives re-present both other perspectives. Analyzing this using concepts of discourse theory, we conclude that the liberal perspective is a regime of truth whose followers have little to gain but potentially more to lose from addressing the other perspectives, which constitute subjugated knowledge. The latter, on the other hand, must to a greater degree engage with the regime of truth in order to challenge it. We therefore hypothesize that discourse belonging could be a generative mechanism of re-presentation behavior. Moreover, articles published in journals of higher SJR are found to re-present other perspectives less. We argue that this could be because such journals have a larger norm circle enforcing adherence to the perspective. The discussion highlights the potential influence of trade institutions and the large overall liberal economic influence in academia on how articles from all perspective address free trade, and how this could contribute to a hegemony of liberal ideas in such institutions.
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Appendix 1. List of articles coded

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- Korea’s linkage strategy between FTA hub policy and middle power leadership in regional economic integration, Park, J., 2015
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