Implications of Converging Media and Government

A qualitative study of the relationship between traditional news media and government in Mexico, as perceived by a group of Mexican students

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Abstract
The aim of this study is to investigate a group of Mexican university students’ perception of the country’s traditional news media and their relationship to the Mexican government with the objective of elaborating on and discussing how the respondents’ perception can be understood in terms of individual and social implications. The research is based on eight empirical interviews with Mexican university students enrolled at private and public universities in Mexico City at the time of the data collection taking place in late spring of 2015. Bourdieu’s notion of habitus and cultural capital, the attitude concept as recognized within the field of social psychology, the digital divide, normative theory and political-economic theory together form the key concepts and theoretical framework on which this study is based. This study shows that the respondents’ perception of the relationship between traditional news media and government in Mexico is characterized by distrust in both institutions’ legitimacy due to rightful allegations of collusion. Traditional news media are disregarded among the respondents who prefer alternative, online news sources, a news behavior arguably facilitated by the skills provided for by cultural capital and new media access granted to the respondents. The Mexican media and government convergence ultimately has far-reaching democratic implications as normative expectations on media to serve the wider public interest and check on power are largely discarded in favor of pursuing economic interests. Compromised journalism most affect those with limited access to alternatives, aggravating inequalities. The respondents’ negative perception of the traditional news media and government relationship has, however, also positive implications as the respondents’ awareness in combination with the democratic incentives offered by new media make the them possible agents for change.

Keywords
Mexico, democracy, cultural capital, digital divide, attitude, perception, normative theory, political-economic theory, new media, traditional news media, inequalities

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Definitions
Throughout this study, there will be frequently recurring conceptions that will have to be initially defined. The conceptions are defined in order to ensure similar interpretations from researcher and reader. Misunderstandings and confusion can thus be avoided and validity increased.

Democracy
Democracy is a principle of governance in which the supreme power is vested in the people and where government is accountable to the people; it is concerned with formal equality of rights and privileges of all people in a given society. Democracy corresponds with Human Rights and in particular the right to freedom of expression (Nieminä et al., 2011; Strömbäck, 2009).

News Media
While the notion of media refers to means of communication, news media specifically signify media that gathers, process and spread information about current events and issues to the public. News media are synonymous to mediators of journalism explicitly. Journalism is the activity of news production and is concerned with providing people with verified, reliable and accurate information (American Press Institute, 2016; McQuail, 2010; Strömbäck, 2009).

Traditional News Media
Traditional media are the means of communication that existed before the advent of the Internet and include TV, radio and newspapers, for instance (Strömbäck, 2009). In addition to the given definition, this study also recognizes 'traditional news media’ as synonymous to 'dominant news media’. Given that Televisa and TV Azteca control close to all concessions for broadcast TV in a country where Internet and cable penetration is limited, they are the most dominant news sources in Mexico and henceforward referred to as 'traditional news media’ (Guerrero, 2009).

New Media
New media refer to electronic communication available through digital technologies such as the Internet (McQuail, 2010).
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**Appendix – Interview Guide**
1. Introduction

Every society aspiring democracy needs an informed citizenry granted through transparent and independent news media who monitor power holders and prioritize information that serve the public interest (American Press Institute, 2016). In Mexico, transparency and media independence is weak due to intimate links between media and politicians and the immense symbolic power over the country’s political sphere granted to the two largest media corporations, Televisa and TV Azteca, has been described as one of the failures of Mexican democracy (García and Trerè, 2014; Reporters Without Borders, 2013). The Mexican media landscape as characterized by allegations of collaboration with the government is the wider context in which this study is situated. More specifically, this study will attempt to investigate how a group of Mexican university students’ perception of the relationship between traditional news media and government in Mexico correlates with that proposed by research.

The digital divide recognize how unequal dissemination of new media access and usage is widening the already existing gap between information rich and poor. New media carry democratic incentives as Internet users are better capable of engaging, mobilizing and participating in public life than non-users. Levels of access and use of new media is closely linked to income and education. In general, Internet access penetration grow in conjunction with level of income and education (Norris, 2001). Therefore, as university students in the Mexican context, the respondents and their perception make for an especially interesting area to study. Their level of education which, in the Mexican context, correlates with a strong socio-economic background (Hanushek and Welch, 2006), place the respondents in a relatively privileged segment of Mexican society who presumably enjoy high levels of access and skills to utilize new media. The notion of the digital divide and the implications connected to higher education in the Mexican context will be assessed as possible determinants for perception as well as explored in terms of democratic advantages granted to the respondents.

The digital divide concept will also enable a discussion of social inequalities in the Mexican context. A country struck by poverty and monumental inequalities (Ezquivel, 2015), the negative implications suggested by the digital divide should be particularly severe in Mexico. Ultimately, this study will contribute with knowledge on the significance of privileges such as higher education and new media skills in assessing an alleged unsound media climate while also recognizing how lack thereof may further marginalize the already unprivileged.
2. Background

There are several background dimensions that have to be accounted for in order to fully understand the context of this study. Firstly, Mexico and some of its main characteristics will be presented, emphasize is put on social inequalities. The brief outline of Mexico mainly highlights facets which are relevant to this study and is thus highly selective, to a large degree ignoring the greatness of the country. Thereafter follows a review of the Mexican media landscape which, as will be shown, is characterized by ownership concentration and partiality. The significance of the geographical context will be described, and, finally, a few words on the implications of higher education in the context of Mexico are articulated.

2.1 Mexico - an Outline

Mexico is a semi-industrialized, upper-middle-income country and as of 2012, ranked as the world’s fourteenth biggest economy (Lindahl, 2013). The Institutional Revolutionary Party (Partido Revolucionario Institucional; PRI) is historically Mexico’s most powerful and influential political force and the political party currently in power, led by president Enrique Peña Nieto since 2012 (IHS Global Inc., 2015). Corruption saturates political, economic and social institutions in Mexico and has greatly affected the country’s legitimacy, induced by concentration of power. Moreover, drug cartels spur violence in the country and present one of the biggest challenge to security, since 2007 thousands of people have been killed as a result of drug cartel violence specifically. Despite good access to the US market and an abundance in natural resources, the economic growth is modest (IHS Global Inc., 2015; Lindahl, 2013).

Mexico still belongs to the main cultivators of corn and vegetables in the world, but has on a more recent note invested in industry and the oil sector (Lindahl, 2013). Mexico ranks among the top-10 oil producers in the world and the oil industry has, and continues to play a key role in exports and tax revenues (IHS Global Inc., 2015). The oil sector is, however, dramatically changing due to the constitutional energy reform ending 76 years of state-monopoly on oil and gas. Foreign companies will soon be able to explore and exploit oil and gas fields in the country in an attempt to make the energy industry in the country more competitive and spur economic growth in Mexico (Del Carmen, 2014).

Alongside the official economy in Mexico exists the unofficial economy. The unofficial economy in Mexico is significant and holds everything from drug trafficking to street vending. Up to two thirds of the population are believed to support themselves through work
outside of the taxation system. Consequently, tax collection in Mexico is low and is a contributing factor to the country’s relatively low growth (Lindahl, 2013).

A population of 120 million, Mexico and its citizens are facing a series of severe challenges (IHS Global Inc., 2015). Over 40 percent of the country’s inhabitants are struck by poverty and the social inequalities are monumental (Ezquivel, 2015; Lindahl, 2013) Mexico belongs to the 25 per cent of countries with the highest levels of inequalities in the world according to the Standardized World Income Inequality Database (as cited in: Ezquivel, 2015). While the small economic growth has increased income per capita, poverty rates stay the same and the average wages do not go up. The wealth of a few is still growing however. Mexico is home to some of the wealthiest people in the world and their wealth continues to grow. While the rest of the world experience a decrease in number of millionaires, Mexico report a 32 per cent increase in number of millionaires (Ezquivel, 2015).

The consequences of Mexico’s inequality issues are social but also has political implications. Four of the country’s most prominent multimillionaires, including the owner of media network TV Azteca, have made their fortunes in the private sector thanks to lack of regulation and excessive tax privileges issued by the public sector. Existing inequalities are accentuated by the influence economic and private powers have on public policy which benefits only a few (Ezquivel, 2015; Guerrero, 2009).

2.2 Mexico’s Media Landscape
Freedom of expression and freedom of the press is granted in the Mexican constitution. In spite of that, self-censorship is widespread among Mexicans journalists due to relatively harsh penalties being imposed for defamation and the constant threat of violence coming from drug cartels, police and military alike (Lindahl, 2013).

Mexico is the most dangerous country for journalists in the western hemisphere, counting 86 murdered and 18 missing journalists over the past 10 years. Not only is Mexico one of the most dangerous countries in the world for journalists due to threats from organized crime cartels and corrupt officials, transparency and media independence is deficient because of intimate links between media corporations and politicians (e.g., Guerrero, 2009; Goggin and Albarrán, 2014; Reporters without borders, 2013). In addition, the two largest media corporations, Televisa and TV Azteca, controls 90 to 97 per cent of TV concessions for
broadcasting frequencies, creating a media landscape that lacks diversity (Reporters without borders, 2013; Cancino, 2013).

Televisa broadcasts alone reach 95 per cent of Mexican homes. Considering that a large portion of the Mexican population lack access to the Internet and that cable penetration is limited, broadcast TV plays a central role (Flannery, 2012, Cancino, 2013). According to a national survey of political culture in Mexico (INEGI-SEGOB, 2012: 2 as cited in García and Treré, 2014), 76 per cent of the Mexican population get their political information via TV, making it the most influential of media.

Concerned has been raised over the relationship between president Enrique Peña Nieto, political leader of The Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI), and Televisa, who controls 70 per cent of the broadcast television market (Flannery, 2012). Televisa was accused of having provided favorable media coverage to the president candidate Peña Nieto during the presidential election season in 2012 (García & Treré, 2014, Goggin and Albarrán, 2014).

As a response to what many perceived as media bias in connection with the presidential electoral election, the social movement #YoSoy132 was formed. The movement address lack of plurality in Mexican TV and demand democratization of the Mexican media system as a prerequisite for democratic and open elections in the country. They succeeded in demanding national broadcasting of the second presidential debate of 2012 as well as attracting members and support all over the world using social networks (WeAre132, 2012).

The members of #YoSoy132 represent the influential minority of a young urban middle class whose media consumption is increasing and who are mainly operating in the digital sphere. In a country of 120 million people, Internet users count approximately 45 million. Internet connectivity is particularly present among young Mexicans as 43 per cent of Internet users are between 12 and 24 years old. In 2012, Mexico had 34 million Facebook accounts and 12 million Twitter accounts registered (García and Treré, 2014; Jakobsson and Konow, 2014). The relatively small group of young middle class with access co-exist alongside the majority of the Mexican population still mainly active in the analogue sphere of broadcast media, mirroring the indisputable inequalities in the country (García and Treré, 2014).
In March of 2015, the renowned and highly respected Mexican journalist Carmen Aristegui hosting a popular daily show at MVS Radio got fired. The official reason for her being ousted was that of internal disagreements between Aristegui and the MVS management but many critics have pointed to possible conflict of interest as Aristegui had recently revealed unsettling information about the first lady’s real estate making the president and the rest of the government subject to accusations of fraud and corruption (Archibold, 2015; Partlow, 2015).

Apart from TV and radio, the number of newspapers in Mexico are plenty. The number of copies are, however, small in comparison to the population and it is estimated that merely one in five read a newspaper regularly. Reforma, El Universal, La Jornada, Excelsior and El Financiero are among the bigger newspapers and they are all published in Mexico City (Lindahl, 2013).

2.3 Mexico City
It is important to point out that the geographical context of this study is Mexico City and that all of the respondents study at universities located in Mexico City. Mexico City is where all the political powers of the country are established, it is the heart of the political scene. In a nation characterized by high media concentration, Mexico City offers the most plural media system. Moreover, all of Mexico’s major private universities have a campus in the city and to the three federal public universities, Mexico City constitute their base (García and Trëré, 2014).

2.4 Higher Education in Mexico
Private universities in Mexico regularly charge tuition fees which naturally exclude a large portion of otherwise eligible students from families with insufficient economic means. In contrast, the public higher education system in Mexico is one in which is there is no tuition charges for students. However, the demand exceeds the supply in terms of public university admission and studies suggest a strong correlation between privileged socio-economic background and enrollment in public higher education (Hanushek and Welch, 2006).
3. Previous Research

Because the scope of this study is wide and encompasses not just the field of media and communication but also the adjacent fields of social psychology, sociology and political science, previous relevant research is extensive. Due to time and space limitations however, relevant research delimited to the Mexican media landscape in terms of legislation, news narrative, private interests and new media implications have been reviewed in this chapter. This is done in order to justify the relevance of the study and to display appreciation of the subject area. The previous research presented in this chapter have been read with the premise that the results will have the potential to contribute to the analysis, discussion and conclusion of this study.

Previous research specifically on Mexican university students’ perception of the relationship between government and traditional news media in the country is limited. Or at least accessing such research is limited due to lack of sufficient skills in Spanish on my part. However, the body of literature examining the Mexican media/government relationship and its implications is quite extensive and they all tell the same story, that of a symbiotic tie between the two institutions where the regime privilege media corporations economic interests in exchange for support of government agenda and how this liaison undermine democracy in Mexico (e.g., Cancino, 2013; García and Treré, 2014; Goggin and Albarrán, Guerrero, 2009). Because this study aims at examining respondents’ perception of Mexico’s traditional news media and their relationship to the Mexican government in order to elaborate on individual and social implications, it will be crucial to explore what others have said about the Mexican media landscape, specifically in relation to the country’s political power.

In the article *The #YoSoy132 movement and the struggle for media democratization in Mexico* by García and Treré (2014), the future of the Mexican media situation is assessed as somewhat positive. The efforts and impacts of the mentioned #YoSoy132 movement is analyzed and shed light on the potential of social media. García and Treré (2014) acknowledge one of the greatest achievement of the #YoSoy132 movement to be the successful situating of media concentration and democratization on the public agenda and assert the movement owes much to social media. Social media offered new ways of participation resulting in engaging young people with no prior history of being politically active and providing many young Mexicans with a strong belief in their ability to ‘make a difference’. Thanks to social media platforms and new media-savviness, the activists of
#YoSoy132 were able to generate unprecedented discussions about the Mexican media system and its close connection to the political sphere and thereby trigger crucial processes related to Mexican political culture (García and Treré, 2014).

Goggin and Albarrán (2014) further examine the #YoSoy132 movement and new media but focus on the implications for mobile media geographies. That is, by exploring the #YoSoy132 movement and its use of social, online and mobile media in relation to the significance of the social, cultural and political context specific to Mexico. Goggin and Albarrán (2014) recognize how the long-standing frustration and discussions about the reproduction of power blocs through mutual interdependence of mainstream media and political elites, previous history of media activism by indigenous groups and increasing Internet connectivity is the backdrop against which the #YoSoy132 student movement was able to gain ground and enjoy relative success in contesting media and political regimes (Goggin and Albarrán, 2014).

While the foregoing articles acknowledge the significance and progress achieved by civil society, Guerrero (2009) assess Mexican civil society as relatively underdeveloped in comparison to consolidated democracies. The consequence, he estimates, is a civil society that cannot efficiently oversee public officials and concludes that, in this condition, potential conspiracy between private interests and public officials remains unchecked. Guerrero (2009) argues that power in Mexico has been fragmented by the privatization of public television and by the opposition defeating the historically predominant political party, the PRI, by the turn of the 21st century. Under conditions of fragmentation of power, Guerrero (2009) estimate that the relation between media and the political power has shifted from being solely determined by the regulatory initiatives put forward by federal government to being characterized by control of private, economic actors. Under these conditions, large media networks are presented with opportunities to gain control over public regulatory and policy areas for their own gain. In combination with an ill-functioning civil society, large media networks are given leeway to pursue their own agenda, potentially for the great losses for civil society (Guerrero, 2009).

One example of how civil society suffered as a result of powerful, commercialized media networks is examined by Cancino (2013) in Narrative, Commercial Media and Atenco: Mexican Television Corporations and Political Power. Cancino (2013) uses qualitative analysis to examine the depiction of the 2006 confrontation between social movement
protesters and the police in the city of San Salvador Atenco, as portrayed by Mexican television network TV Azteca. The article argues that because a large proportion of news production is evolving into becoming more and more profit-driven, information is simplified into being binary and reductive. In combination with a symbiotic relationship between media and political power where the economic elite controlling Mexican media are privileged in exchange for support of government policies and action, TV Azteca’s narrative portrayal criminalized the social movement in order to legitimize state violence. Ultimately, the commercialization of news favor the economic and political interests of both the television corporations and the state (Cancino, 2013).

Finally, on a slightly different note, Stanig (2015) examines the Mexican media landscape from a legislation perspective. Through content analysis of local Mexican press, restrictions to media freedom through repressive defamation legislation is explored. Stanig (2015) discover negative association between number of articles covering events of political and bureaucratic corruption and states with a more repressive defamation law. In Mexican states with a more repressive legal environment, journalist adopt self-censorship to a larger degree. The amount of accountability-oriented information and investigative journalism in those states are thus discouraged and reduced, which might have negative consequences for functioning of democracy and quality of government. The contribution of the research is demonstrating how freedom of the press is not constant throughout Mexico but rather concerned with degrees, depending on defamation laws of each state. Stanig (2015) conclude that punitive defamation laws indirectly creates incentives for power abuse and therefore, in the trade-off between protecting reputation and freedom of the media, more media freedom should always be encouraged (Stanig, 2015).
4. Research Objectives and Research Questions

Based on more or less valid evidence, the alleged strong ties between traditional news media and government in Mexico dates back a long way (e.g., Cancino, 2013; Guerrero, 2009; Flannery, 2012). Therefore, the underlying assumption is that the respondents included in this study recognize the allegations. The hypothesis is also that the respondents subscribe to the collaboration allegations directed towards the traditional news media and government in Mexico, although this is not taken for granted. As have been previously declared, Televisa and TV Azteca’s dominant position in the Mexican news media landscape makes them the core of what, in the context of this study, will be referred to as ‘traditional news media’.

This study aims at investigating a group of Mexican university students’ perception of the country’s traditional news media and their relationship to the Mexican government with the objective of elaborating on, and discussing how the respondents’ perception can be understood in terms of individual and social implications.

Individual implications will be concerned with how the respondents’ perception of the relationship affect them on a personal level which will be discussed in relation to the respondents’ sense-making process where possible determinants for perception will be identified. Applying a social dimension will be concerned with placing the respondents’ perception of the relationship between Mexican traditional news media and government in a broader context, to explore and consider how their approach can be interpreted beyond implications relevant to the respondent group but rather in relation to the Mexican society in large.

Research Questions:

1. **How does a group of Mexican university students perceive the relationship between the Mexican government and the country’s traditional news media?**

   This research question will be answered through investigating the respondents’ attitude towards the relationship, by discussing individual implications and through examining how cultural capital and being on the winning side of the digital divide contribute to form the basis for perception.

2. **How can their perception be understood in terms of progress, inequalities, power and in comparison to other countries?**
Through normative theory, political-economic theory and the digital divide, the social implications connected to the respondents’ perceptions of the relationship between Mexican government and the country's traditional news media will be analyzed and discussed.

5. Key Concepts and Theoretical Framework

To choose a theoretical framework is to choose a way of perceiving the world, knowledge and the production of new knowledge. This will ultimately influence how the empirical data is interpreted, what will be highlighted and what will be excluded in the analysis (Tovatt, 2013). Because this study is threefold and encompasses the respondents’ perception of the Mexican media/government relationship, conceivable determinants for perception and individual and social perspectives on consequences of their perception, the theoretical framework is selected accordingly.

Using concepts found in the fields of sociology and social psychology, the first two chapters will deal with perception and sense-making. Bourdieu’s notion of *habitus* and *forms of capital* followed by the three components of *attitude* are accounted for and their applicability to this study are argued. Thereafter, focus shift from individual perspectives to social perspectives. *Normative theory* and *political-economic theory* are both media theories concerned with the complex of principles that organize ideas about the relationship between media and society. Finally, a discussion of the *digital divide*-concept is located as a subheading to political-economic theory and is relevant within its scope. However, the concept is equally important with regards to sociology and more specifically, cultural capital. Regardless of its location, the concept of the *digital divide* is significant in understanding both individual level of perception and overarching social implications. Collected data will be analyzed based on the following theories.

5.1 Habitus and Forms of Capital

Access to power, peoples’ living conditions and scope of action is at least partly determined by social class. Social class is determined by family situation, education and upbringing environment and supposedly people within the same social class share similar life experiences. According to Bourdieu (as cited in Ahrne et al., 2008), these experiences are likely to give rise to similar habits and worldview, a common ’habitus’ (Ahrne et al., 2008). The notion of habitus presumes that this lifelong process of individuals’ socialization through
family and education result in certain predispositions, assumptions, judgments and behaviors (Benson & Neveu, 2005).

Habitus can further be understood as the embodiment of capital (Ahrne, 2008). The notion of capital can roughly be understood as resources, it splits into four types and encompasses cultural, economic, social and symbolic capital (Tovatt, 2013). Economic capital refers to economic resources in cash and assets and social capital to social networks in terms of size and how potentially useful it is for personal gain (Ahrne, 2008). Symbolic capital determines the value of the other capital types and is produced when resources are ascribed value in a given context (Tovatt, 2013).

For the purpose of this study however, Bourdieu’s concept of cultural capital is especially relevant. Cultural capital is divided into three forms; an objectified (material things ascribed cultural value in a given context), embodied (disposition to act and perceive the world, transmitted from one generation to another in a lifelong socialization process) and institutionalized (academic credentials and qualifications) form. Together, they constitute and determine each individual’s cultural capital. Cultural capital account for the advantages a person has and these result in higher status in society (Tovatt, 2013). One of the main arguments of cultural capital holds that the bigger the cultural capital, the more likely an individual is to assimilate higher education (Tovatt, 2013).

Bourdieu (as cited in Tovatt, 2013) acknowledge how cultural capital expand through reciprocity as children growing up in families with a large amount of cultural capital easily accumulate cultural capital of their own (Ahrne, 2008; Tovatt, 2013). Because this reciprocation process does not occur in families with little cultural capital, family as an institution reproduce class differences. Also noteworthy is how Bourdieu (as cited in Tovatt, 2013) indicates an immediate link between cultural and economic capital as acquiring cultural capital is a time consuming process that doesn't necessarily generates income. Not all families have the economic resources to support such a process, for instance (Tovatt, 2013).

The concept of habitus and capital will contribute to this study in explaining the respondents’ sense-making process as they comment on the relationship between government and traditional news media in Mexico. Bourdieu’s conceptions will be used as analytical tools and
assist me in defining, detecting and structure patterns among the respondent’s perceptions and, consequently, their actions.

5.2 Attitude
Attitude is an important area of study within the field of social psychology and there are multiple theories on the concept to be found. However, most social psychology scholars agree to the definition of attitude as a latent, learned pattern that affect peoples’ nature of respond. Attitude is concerned with perception of a phenomenon, or attitude object, and how we feel about it. In this context perception is understood as the impression we have about a phenomenon. Attitude is subjective and perception lies with the interpreter (Angelöw et al., 2015; Sternvik, 2007). The phenomenon or attitude object of this study is the relationship between government and traditional news media in Mexico. The most influential view of attitude is that it contains cognitive, affective and behavioral components (Sternvik, 2007).

The cognitive component refers to the conceptions and attributes we assign a phenomenon, the knowledge we have about it. Here, knowledge is understood as both descriptive and evaluative. Knowledge can be based on personal experience of the phenomenon but also on symbolic value like generally prevailing views that are taken for granted. Status, or a phenomenon’s position in society, is another symbolic value associated with political legitimacy and normative attitudes, for instance (Sternvik, 2007).

The affective component of attitude refers to the feelings we have towards a phenomenon in which attitudes are comparable to emotional reactions. Our inclination to act in a certain manner in relation to the phenomenon in question is the behavioral component of attitudes (Angelöw et al., 2015). Thus, attitude is about how we picture a phenomenon, how we feel about it and how actions are influenced in relation to it (Sternvik, 2007).

The relative significance of each of the three attitude components in shaping attitude as a whole varies and is primarily determined by the situation of the individual. The cognitive, affective and behavioral components influence each other but the nature of the correlation is not yet established, actions are not necessarily a consequent of knowledge and feelings towards a phenomenon. Knowledge and feelings may affect actions, but actions can also contribute with new feelings and knowledge about a phenomenon, for instance (Sternvik, 2007).
Over time, an attitude can become profound to the point that it’s hard to change and it becomes part of an individual’s integrated values. Both values and attitudes can result in the creation of habits, which are passive behavior patterns where you act out of habit rather than as a result of active choice (Sternvik, 2007). Someone who holds a profound negative attitude towards the relationship between government and traditional news media in Mexico will habitually disregard the legitimacy of both institutions.

Appreciation for the respondents’ perception about the relationship between government and traditional news media in Mexico will be acquired by examining the respondents’ personal and transmitted knowledge about the relationship between the institutions and its dynamics, how they feel about that relationship and if and/or how their knowledge and feelings towards the relationship have influences on the respondents’ action or behavior.

Transition
So far, the theories and key concepts laid out have been dealing with perception, possible determinants of sense-making, as well as potential behavioral effects. The upcoming theories, however, will shift focus from individual sense-making to relevant theories targeting the dynamics of the relationship between politics, economics, media and society. Normative theory discuss media as an institution of society while political-economic theory rather understand media as an industry and the digital divide covers information inequality and its consequences.

5.3 Normative Theory
Media theory engage in exploring the complex relationship between media and society. One of the ways in which this is done is through normative theory. Normative theory is concerned with media expectations, what the media ought or ought not to be doing in society. Behind the expectations of benefit from media to society as a whole, lies ideas of right and responsibility which are the focal points of normative theory (McQuail, 2010). With regards to this study, the ideas formulated in normative theory will prove useful in assessing and understanding the consequences of a media/government nexus in the Mexican context.

How the media institution conduct itself is determined by sources of influence. In a free society, the formal responsibility of the media is restricted to not doing harm and thus the
media have no obligation to operate in the wider public interest. However, the most fundamental source of normative expectation of the media is that of a close link between democratic political institutions and media as news carrier and former of opinion (McQuail, 2010).

The notion of public interest is fundamental within normative theory, but opinion is divided on what constitutes the public interest. The general idea is that because media plays an important role in contemporary society, they are expected to conduct themselves with respect to public interest. This implies having a media system that is consistent with other values and arrangements in a given society, especially in relation to matters such as democracy, justice and prevailing social and cultural values. Because the media reflect the social and political structures of the society in which it operates, there is room for differences between cultures (McQuail, 2010). The notion of public interest and how understanding of it is displayed among the respondents when reviewing the relationship between government and traditional news media will assist in shedding light on social consequences of an unholy alliance between the two institutions, especially in terms of democracy.

In order to serve the public interest, a number of main normative expectations on media are recognized. These are commonly broken down into elements of structure and content of which a few are worth mentioning in relation to the scope of this study. Freedom of publication relates to media system structure and states that media should be free from government and other powerful interests control. Another relevant expectation is that of plurality of ownership in which concentration of ownership and monopoly of control within the media system is opposed. Support for the democratic process is concerned with media content and refers to the contribution of media in promoting sound political and social institutions by providing reliable information on public matters and allow for a diverse point of views to be heard, for instance (McQuail, 2010). Based on the respondents’ accounts, the elements of normative expectations can be gauged and analyzed.

Relevant to this study, and covered under the normative theory framework, is the notion of mass media as a forum for public debate, a public sphere. Media are expected to make a contribution to the democratic public sphere. The notion here is that appropriately organized mass media is one of the preconditions for civil society in that it provides an autonomous and free space for mediation between individual citizens and political institutions. In relation to
new media, positive expectations about medias’ role in the public sphere have been expressed. Supposedly, the Internet have potential to provide platforms for advocates and activists and add a more diverse branch of journalism (McQuail, 2010). In the context of a Mexican government and traditional media collaboration, the significance of new media and potential restraints on civil society can be discussed with regards to this study.

5.4 Political-Economic Theory

In addition to understanding media as associated with the public domain and as a precondition for democratic political processes, the shaping of media institutions through political and economical forces is equally important within the scope of this study. The political-economic theory will serve as a model of explanation for why the Mexican mainstream media landscape has close ties to the country’s political sphere.

Critical political-economic media theory is the merging of Marxist-inspired analysis of modern media interpreting mass media as the ruling class’ tools for power exercise. The main focus of the approach is illustrating how media industry, economic structure and political outcome are interlinked and relate to each other. The underlying assumption here is that the media institution is considered to be integrated into the economic system and thus mainly controlled by economic forces. The theory aims at understanding media as a political and economic phenomenon in the context of capitalism, legitimizing its dominance (McQuail, 2010). By means of political-economic theory, the Mexican media/government nexus and its implications can be analyzed through recognition of capitalism as permeating and influencing all levels of society.

Political-economic theory expect the overarching media effects to be manifested in concentration of media ownership and the production of media content serving the interest of the ruling class. Concrete examples are to be observed in the reduction of independent media sources, neglect of the poor audience sections and politically unbalanced range of news media, for instance (McQuail, 2010). Respondents articulating such tendencies can thus be understood through the political-economic theory framework. Political-Economy theory is also relevant in relation to the growing problem of information inequality, referred to as the digital divide (McQuail, 2010).
5.5 The Digital Divide

The knowledge gap hypothesis holds that among higher status social groups, knowledge growth is relatively greater. Strong correlation has been shown between social class, attention to information-rich sources and knowledge of politics and social and economic matters. By the arrival of the Internet, the knowledge gap term was widely replaced with that of the digital divide (McQuail, 2010).

The notion of the digital divide proposes that the explosive growth of the Internet is worsening the already existing inequalities between the information rich and poor. The potential impact of new media on distribution of power and influence in political systems is at the center of the concept and is referred to as the democratic divide. The democratic divide recognizes how Internet users are better capable of engaging, mobilizing and participating in public life than non-users (Norris, 2001). This study will be interested in examining the respondents’ level of access and discuss it in terms of their potential to reap democratic benefits from it.

Originally, the digital divide was defined as the gap between those with access to the digital devices allowing connection to the Internet and those without. Thus, the gap was mainly understood in terms of economic and technological infrastructure differences. Today, those dimensions are viewed as contributing factors to the growing digital divide but most significant for higher levels of access and use appear to be levels of income and education. In general, the higher the level of education, the higher Internet access penetration. Especially higher education produces advantageous skills and experiences in relation till to computer usage (Norris, 2001). This suggests that new media is associated with cultural capital. New media can be used creatively and productively only in combination with necessary cultural skills and competencies (Buckingham, 2003). Given the respondents’ profile of being university students, it is fair to assume that the respondents belong to the segment of society that is becoming more information rich as a result of the digital divide.

Academic institutions per se also play an important role in providing hands-on training on computing, as well as the cognitive skills needed for making sense of online information. Also related to education is the vital knowledge of English as first or secondary language as the world of new media is dominated by the English language (Norris, 2001).
Overall, it seems as though citizens are raising their expectations on democracy as an ideal while at the same time evaluating representative institutions’ performance as low. However, the two-way communication that Internet offers enables strengthening of connection between citizens and government officials, social movements and news media, for instance. Potentially, engagement and participation in public life can be broadened through new media. In addition, digital technologies exhibit democratic incentives through the relative difficulty in silencing critical voices towards power holders on the Internet in comparison to authorities ability to regulate and control TV airwaves. Those skeptical of online politics argue that the unequal distribution of technological resources may further marginalize the underprivileged and amplify the voice of the wealthy and well educated (Norris, 2001).

The notion of the digital divide will be useful in investigating how the respondents’ level of access contributes to shape their perception of the Mexican media/government relationship given that higher level of access enables the respondents to take part of a broad spectrum of voices, including critical ones. The underlying assumption here is that their amount of cultural capital granted to them through higher education is closely linked to their level of access and their ability to skillfully navigate and make sense of new media. The digital divide-concept is, however, inherently social and will enable a discussion of social inequalities in the Mexican context. Thus, the term digital divide will prove useful in answering both research questions of this study.

**Summary**

This study seeks to examine a group of Mexican university students’ perception of the relationship between government and traditional news media in Mexico and how their approach can be understood in terms of individual and overarching social consequences. Through the theoretical framework offered by the notions of *habitus* and *cultural capital* and *attitude*, the respondents’ perception, underlying sense-making process and potential behavioral effects can be analyzed. The ideas inherent in *normative theory* and *political-economic theory*, on the other hand, provide valuable tools for raising the analysis from an individual to a social level. Through normative and political-economic theory, social implications of the respondents’ perceptions can be analyzed. The digital divide is understood as a cross-border concept in this study and will be used to in relation to illuminate the analysis of both individual perception and social consequences.
6. Methodology

In order to answer the research questions and cater for the objectives of this study, semi structured interviews have been conducted and make up the methodology of the research. In this chapter, choice of methodology, respondents, sampling and preparation and execution of interviews will be presented. The chapter will be concluded with a discussion of methodological issues covering relevant aspects of reliability and validity.

6.1 Choice of Methodology

For the purpose of this study, a qualitative research approach through the conduction of qualitative interviews have been applied. Qualitative interviews are focused towards exploring the respondents’ perceptions and interpretations which fits well with the design of the research questions. Qualitative interviews are characterized by flexibility and allows for respondents to speak freely and develop their arguments and position in whatever direction they prefer (Bryman, 2008). Considering that the research questions deals with perception, implementation of qualitative interviews assert itself as the most adequate method in the scope of this study.

More specifically, the qualitative interviews have been semi-structured. Semi-structured interviews are commonly centered around a set of interview questions and themes but where the order of the questions can vary and where the interviewer usually engage in in-depth follow-up questions which can increase the overall understanding of the respondents’ responses (Bryman, 2008).

Semi-structured interviews have been conducted with Mexican university students to explore how they perceive and assess the consequences of the allegedly strong relationship between traditional news media and government in Mexico. In line with all qualitative research approaches, the interviews have not generated material whereby statistical generalizations can be made, but have rather contributed with in-depth understanding on the specific respondents’ different perceptions and viewpoints. More than contributing to statistical generalization, the results will rather show tendencies, patterns and trends which can generate knowledge for a future quantifiably study (Bryman, 2008).

In total, I have conducted nine personal semi-structured interviews. Within qualitative research, no formal ‘rules’ for the appropriate number of respondents exist. The number of
respondents though, will have to generate data to the extent that theoretical saturation is attained. The material reaches theoretical saturation when no new answers or perspectives are presented (Bryman, 2008). After having conducted nine interviews, I assessed the collected material to be adequate enough for the scope of this study.

6.2 Respondents

The empirical material amounts to interviews conducted during the late spring of 2015, with nine young Mexicans in the country’s capital Mexico City. Out of the nine interviews, only empirical data from eight interviews will be included as the remaining one did not fit the criteria of being a student of a Mexican university. Four interviews have been conducted with female students and the remaining four with male students. The equal distribution of female and male students happened by chance and thus was not a strategic consideration. Their age span range from 19 to 25 and all of the respondents are Mexican citizens, born and raised in Mexico. As the study aims at investigating perceptions among Mexican students specifically, the respondents naturally met that criteria, attending private and public universities in Mexico City at the time of the interviews.

The respondents are or were predominantly majoring in social sciences. Apart from being Mexican students at Mexican universities, the respondents had to fit the criteria of being adequate English-speakers as to allow for the communication to run as smoothly as possible and avoid misunderstandings. In addition, the respondents were asked to define themselves as regular news consumers so that indicators regarding their perception of the relationship between traditional news media and government could be explored through discussing current events.

Because strong correlation has been suggested between privileged socio-economic background and higher education in Mexico (Hanushek and Welch, 2006), the respondents, by Mexican standards, presumably belong to a relatively privileged group in the Mexican context. Given also that strong socio-economic background correlates, at least partly, with access to power (Ahme, 2008), the respondents make an interesting group of people to study. Presumably, the respondents of this study belong to a segment of the Mexican society that are in a better position than many other fellow citizens to have their voices heard. Therefore, their perception of the relationship between traditional news media and government in Mexico matters, because they are potentially significant agents for change.
Information regarding the respondents who have contributed to this study have been treated in accordance with confidentiality. Confidentiality means that information that would make it possible to identify the respondents is collected and saved but carefully protected (Wibeck, 2000). As recommended by Wibeck (2000), the respondents’ names are therefore replaced with fictional names. The fictional names will recur in the result and analysis chapter in order for the reader to distinguish one quote from another, as to ensure transparency.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Respondents</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>University</th>
<th>Academic Major</th>
<th>Years of University Studies</th>
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<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>Woman</td>
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<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frida</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>Woman</td>
<td>UNAM</td>
<td>International Relations</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cesar</td>
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<td>Man</td>
<td>UNAM</td>
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<td>Tecnológico de Monterrey Estado de México</td>
<td>International Relations &amp; Public Administration</td>
<td>4,5</td>
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6.3 Sampling
In approaching respondents for the study, purposive- and snowball sampling have been applied. Purposive sampling is sampling where respondents are approached with reference to the research questions. Snowball sampling refers to a sampling method where the respondents approached through the purposive sampling are used to get in touch with other, for the research suitable, respondents. Snowball sampling is often used together with purposive sampling (Bryman, 2008) and are the sampling methods best fit for this study.

As I were to get in contact with possible respondents, I received help from my contact person in Mexico, professor David Sarquis, who invited students of his class in International
Relations at Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México (UNAM) to participate. Through professor Sarquis and his students, I was set up with three interviews. In accordance with Bryman’s (2008) definition of purposive sampling as strategically sampling respondents who are relevant for the research questions, students of International Relations appeared to well suitable candidates as one can presume that such students take interest in and appreciate social and political issues. Through snowball sampling within this group, I managed to get a fourth interview with a fellow student of one of the respondents.

In addition to the assistance received from professor Sarquis, personal Mexican friends of mine put me in contact with friends and acquaintances of them. Through a status update on Facebook, I briefly introduced the procedure and overall objective of the study and announced for candidates that would fit the given respondent criteria. Mexican friends replied to my status update and recommended people they knew. I then contacted these people and were able to organize an additional five interviews.

Some final notes on the sampling process is worth mentioning. First, since it was professor Sarquis and not me who approached the students of his class in International Relations, I was not able to monitor exactly how he approached his students and what prior information he provided them with. Tentatively, this could have meant being set up with respondents not fully aware of the implications of the study. In connection to each interview, I therefore made sure to clarify the scope of the study so that the respondents would be on board regarding what I was about to interview them about in addition to offer them the possibility to drop out.

Secondly, one of the conducted interviews is excluded from this study because it turned out that the respondent had not been a student at a Mexican university but completed five years of studying at a Spanish university from where he, at the time of the interviews, had recently returned. Because this study is specifically concerned with perception shaped in the context of Mexico, that interview was disregarded. This is to strengthen the credibility of the study.

6.4 Preparation and Execution
The interview guide is constructed in accordance to four main topics including; the demographics of the respondents; their media habits; relationship between traditional news media and government and; traditional news medias’ coverage of the energy reform. The focus of this study has changed over time. In addition to investigating possible determinants for perception, the initial aim of the study was to research how Mexican university students
perceived media coverage of the previously mentioned energy reform, specifically. Therefore, the interview guide was constructed with the initial aim in mind. The aim and objectives for the study have been adjusted retrospectively as to present a study that is more straight-forward and comprehensible.

Demographics of the respondents were included as one of the topics to ascertain a variation of respondents in order to increase trustworthiness of the study. Also, questions regarding demographics are easy and personal and serve as warm-up questions to familiarize the respondents with the interview situation (Bryman, 2008). The second topic dealt with the respondents’ media habits which was significant to explore as to investigate their point of reference with regards to the Mexican media system. Perception of the relationship between traditional news media and government was initially included to support discussions of the energy reform coverage but instead crystallized to be the main focus of the entire study. News medias’ coverage of the energy reform, although later dismissed, contributed to shedding light on how the relationship between traditional news media and government manifest itself through current events.

The location of the interviews varied and were adjusted according to convenience for the respondents. The length of the interviews varied from just over 20 minutes up to 45 minutes. Decisive of how comfortable the respondents felt in speaking English, how up-to-date they were on current events and personality type, the length of the interviews varied quite a bit.

Due to insufficient Spanish skills on my part, all the interviews were conducted in English. When arranging the interviews, I tried my best to ensure that the intended respondents spoke well enough English to be able to speak relatively freely about the interview themes. Adequate English was also a criteria for the sake of establishing equal relationships between me as a researcher and the respondents. Being that English wasn't the mother tongue for any of the parties involved, I wanted to at least ensure that we maneuvered the English language in similar and equal ways in order to avoid feelings of either superiority or inferiority.

During the interviews I tried to adopt a flexible attitude and let the respondent speak freely in relation to the interview questions. Depending on associations made by the respondents, and in line with recommendations for semi-structured interviews, the order of the themes and questions were adjusted accordingly to ensure smooth-running interviews (Bryman, 2008). While some of the respondents gave exhausting answers to the questions, others kept it more brief. In the case of extensive responses, the respondents were guided back to the prevailing subject or theme. The respondents who kept their responses brief, on the other hand, were
encountered with follow-up questions in order to receive more extensive responses. When respondents give brief answers, it enhances the risk for leading questions as the interviewer will have to define that to which the respondent is asked to take a stand. Because it’s difficult to anticipate how the respondents act in the interview situation, follow-up questions were prepared (Ekström and Larsson, 2010).

The interviews have been audio-recorded and transcribed. By doing so, the collected data can be processed, interpreted and analyzed in the best possible manner. Also, this ensures no information is lost or remembered incorrectly (Bryman, 2008). In connection to the interviews being held, all respondents gave consent to the interviews being recorded. The interview material provided for by the respondents have only been used for the purpose of this study and the recordings are kept in a safe place.

6.5 Methodological Issues
Scientific studies are assessed based on validity and reliability. Validity is concerned with whether what was set out to be measured was in fact measured, observed or identified. Reliability amounts to the stability and trustworthiness of a study’s result (Bryman, 2008). In terms of validity and reliability, a few aspects should be mentioned. Because the angle of incidence of the study was partly changed after the interviews were already conducted, this might have negatively affected both validity and reliability. I did not investigate exactly that which I initially set out to investigate which might have had implications for the validity of the study. On the other hand, the aim of the study was in fact retrospectively adjusted to better illustrate the essentials of what all the respondents discussed which implies validity should still be considered attained.

In terms of reliability, the adjusted aim of the study could have had negative implications for stability and consistency of the study. Also, not all of the interviews have been conducted in exactly the same manner which may have influenced reliability. As for the remaining procedure of writing the study, it has been carried out in a thorough and systematic way in order to achieve best possible reliability. By being transparent with problems and difficulties encountered along the way, reviewing of results by external parties are facilitated for and enhances the credibility of the study.

The change in direction from perception of media coverage on the energy reform to perception of traditional news media and government relationship has its fair share of negative aspects including disregarding certain collected data. On a positive note though, the
lack of dedication towards a specific structure allowed for me to read, interpret and analyze the empirical data with an open mind and see perspectives and patterns that otherwise would have gone unnoticed.

Further, the relationship between traditional news media and government in Mexico is indeed a delicate subject and journalists shedding light on the corrupt media situation in the country are for certain at risk (Reporters without borders, 2013). Regarding my selection of respondents, however, I didn't assess the subject to be sensitive enough to take extra precautions in terms of e.g. having the respondents fill in a sheet of informed consent as otherwise recommended when conducting interviews about subjects perceived as delicate (Wibeck, 2000). When conducting the interviews, none of the respondents gave the impression of having difficulties speaking openly and freely about the subject, assuming the assessment of level of sensitivity was legitimate.

A disadvantage with the snowball sampling method is that the method potentially limits diversity (Bryman, 2008). Although the snowball sampling method assisted me well in getting in touch with respondents knowledgable about, and interested in, the subject area, it did impair diversity among the respondents. As the chart presenting the respondents show, almost all of the respondents are students within the social sciences. It is only natural that the respondents, like for the rest of us, form relationships with like-minded people which, consequently, affect who they will recommend for respondents in a snowball sampling method situation. With that being said, it is possible that the empirical data would have showed different results if the interviewed respondents would have had other academic backgrounds.

Finally, I would like to make a comment on language and culture. A minor issue was that of language. Although all of the respondents were adequate and above in terms of English skills, I don’t want to rule out the possibility that some information might have gotten lost as neither me nor the respondents were conversing in our respective native tongue. As for culture, it should be noted that the respondents and I do not necessarily share the exact same cultural behavior which could imply misunderstandings or lack of information beyond my consciousness.
7. Result and Analysis

In this chapter, the most important results from the collected data will be presented. The results will be combined with the analysis in order to avoid repetitions and to make the study as lucid as possible. By presenting results and apply my analysis, the research questions can be answered. Background information, previous research and the theoretical framework will assist me in doing so. The findings are structured according to the two research questions.

1. How does a group of Mexican university students perceive the relationship between the Mexican government and the country’s traditional news media?

This research question will be answered through investigating the respondents’ attitude towards the relationship, by discussing individual implications and through examining how cultural capital and being on the winning side of the digital divide contribute to form the basis for perception.

When approaching the first research question, it seems reasonable to first apply the notion of attitude. The ideas included in the attitude concept provide the tools helpful in understanding and making comments on the respondents’ perception of the relationship between the Mexican government and the country’s traditional news media. To facilitate understanding and achieve greater clarity, the cognitive, affective and behavioral components of attitude (Sternvik, 2007) are titled knowledge, feelings and behavior/actions. Henceforth, the relation between traditional news media and Mexican government will occasionally be abbreviated ’media/government relationship’ for space efficiency reasons.

7.1 Knowledge about Mexican media/government relationship

Attitude is concerned with perception and contains a cognitive, affective and behavioral component where the cognitive component concerns knowledge about an attitude object (Angelöw et al., 2015; Sternvik, 2007). In this context, the attitude object is the relationship between government and traditional news media in Mexico. The respondents’ knowledge about the Mexican media/government relationship is extensive. Without exceptions, the respondents regard the Mexican government and the traditional news media as extremely closely linked. The two institutions are considered interrelated to the degree of being inseparable. To several of the respondents, this relationship manifest itself through biased, highly processed and government friendly news. Given that TV is the most influential medium in Mexico and that the media networks Televisa and TV Azteca control close to all
TV concessions for broadcasting frequencies (Flannery, 2012; García and Treré, 2014), they constitute the very core of traditional news media in Mexico. The respondents are convinced of a nexus between Televisa and TV Azteca and Mexican government. One of the respondents view the relationship like this:

'They are totally colluded, that’s a fact. Televisa, which is the biggest news, media news in Mexico, and TV Azteca, are totally bought, they are totally sold, I mean they are totally sold to the government…'. (Daniela)

The comment above is an example of knowledge based on status as a symbolic value. In the given context, status is associated with how the media/government relationship is perceived within the social group one belongs to (Sternvik, 2007). As have been demonstrated, the symbiotic relationship between government and traditional news media in Mexico is no well kept secret (e.g., Cancino, 2013; Flannery, 2012; García and Treré, 2014) but rather to be considered a fairly generally accepted view taken for granted by many, at least to those exposed to alternative news media. In conformity with the above comment, much of the respondents’ knowledge of the media/government relationship reside in the symbolic, evaluative category, the nexus between the two institutions is described as obvious.

Perhaps the most significant source of knowledge, however, is descriptive knowledge derived from personal experience of a phenomenon (Sternvik, 2007). Apart from displaying general, evaluative knowledge of the media/government relationship, descriptive knowledge is reflected in the many concrete examples of how the relationship manifest itself, as brought up by the respondents. Independently of each other, the respondents bring up the same ‘proof’ of media/government interconnectivity which suggest the respondent share similar experiences. The marriage between president Enrique Peña Nieto and Televisa soap opera star Angélica Rivera is mentioned by a few of the respondents who regard the union of the two as evidence of a merger between Televisa and the Mexican government. The alleged strong ties between government and media in Mexico is further demonstrated through the case of an individual journalist, Carmen Aristegui, who many of the respondents believe got fired from her job as a host at a popular radio show because of unfavorable exposure of the president.

'I mean it’s obvious that the government still has the pressure on the media and we can actually prove that based on the Carmen Aristegui example, I mean who actually fires
someone who carries all the ratings on the channel if it’s not because of threats from higher spheres…’. (Carlos)

Descriptive knowledge is, finally, reflected in how the respondents discuss traditional news medias’ coverage of the previously mentioned energy reform, whether the coverage had been positive, negative or neutral. Their response was unanimous, they all regarded coverage of the energy reform as positive, as illustrated by one respondent:

'Televisa and TV Azteca put the energy reform super positive, remembering us that we are gonna benefit, repeating the official discourse…’ (Frida)

According to the respondents, positive coverage stems from government control over media content, because the energy reform originate from the Mexican government and it is in their interest that it is perceived as beneficial for the country.

7.2 Feelings towards the Mexican media/government relationship
An overwhelming majority of the empiricism is concerned with the cognitive component of attitude. In order to further investigate how certain attitudes towards the media/government are shaped however, the collected data have been read with the lookout for respondents expressing feelings or emotions about the phenomenon, the affective component of what constitutes an attitude (Sternvik, 2007). Overall, feelings expressed by the respondents about the media/government relationship are scarce. Those feelings that are expressed among the respondents are negative and concerned with dislike and lack of trust in traditional news medias’ broadcasts because of government involvement.

'...we are used to the media being manipulated, we are used to the media responding to the government, so I cannot trust people that have anything to do with Mexican media...’ (Pablo)

7.3 Behavior in relation to the Mexican media/government relationship
The behavioral component, finally, is the last constituent of attitude and has to do with inclination to act in relation to the attitude object (Sternvik, 2007). The respondents’ position towards the media/government relationship is, as have been shown, negative and reflected in their behavior. The behavioral component of attitude in this case is demonstrated through the respondents turning their back on traditional news media for news updates. Instead, the respondents take part of alternative news sources online, which they access mainly through
links on social media like Facebook and Twitter. The following respondent account for her news consumption:

'I think that I, it’s all about social networks. I don’t read the newspapers or watch television, I get all the news from the pages and from Twitter’ (Daniela)

The news sources that they read are, to a large degree, online versions of national political magazines, government critic left-wing sources and international newspapers covering international as well as Mexican events. One respondent describe how he and his family’s behavior in relation to news consumption has changed over the years:

’... In high school I used to watch Televisa all the time, with my parents and all, but now we have realized that the news are pretty biased...so I would rather now watch CNN because it’s international. I’m afraid that these other national channels have this pressure from the government so now I’m really into CNN and maybe El Pais as well, the Spanish newspaper’ (Carlos)

With respect to the behavioral component of attitude however, it is important to note that actions are not necessarily a consequent of knowledge and feelings towards a phenomenon as the nature of correlation between the components is not yet established (Sternvik, 2007). Applied to the given context it seems reasonable to assume causality between the distrust that characterize the respondents’ knowledge and feelings towards the government/media relationship and choosing alternative news sources. That assumption is, however, not necessarily true as actions can also contribute with new feelings and knowledge about a phenomenon (Sternvik, 2007). One must therefore consider the possibility that because they choose to access alternative news sources they have acquired knowledge about the alliance between government and traditional news media.

An inverse correlation actually seems probable when taken into consideration that traditional news media in Mexico primarily engage in TV and radio broadcasting (Televisa, 2016; TV Azteca, 2016) which is inconsistent with the respondents’ strong preference for new media in accessing news. Given that the average amount of time users spend on the Internet is just over 5 hours/day in Mexico (García and Treré, 2014) and the convenience presented by many digital devices’ portability and readily available news updates, it seems only natural that new
media is favored over traditional media. Arguably, medium is also significant in understanding the respondents’ neglect of traditional news media and their behavior in relation to accessing news.

7.4 Attitude and Values
The respondents’ knowledge of the Mexican media/government relationship is extensive, it is observed through general opinions and personal experiences and demonstrates an unambiguous link between the two institutions. Their feelings towards this perceived unholy alliance are those of dislike and distrust and their actions are characterized by neglecting traditional news media and instead access alternative news sources online.

Deeply rooted attitudes are termed values. In comparison with attitudes, values are much harder to alter (Sternvik, 2007). With regards to this study, it seems as though there is ground to rightfully term the respondents’ perception of the media/government relationship as values rather than attitudes. The reason for claiming this rests in the respondents’ strong conviction of a media/government collaboration. To the respondents, the nexus between the two institutions is frequently described as obvious and they account for several concrete examples of how this nexus manifest itself which ultimately indicate that their perceptions are profound enough to be regarded values. As such, it seems unlikely that the respondents will reassess their perception of the media/government relationship regardless of how it evolves in the future. Values can be seen as extensions of attitudes and therefore the application of the notion of attitude to this study is still justified (Sternvik, 2007).

7.5 Determinants for Perception
Both values and attitudes can give rise to habits which are passive behavior patterns that replace active choice (Sternvik, 2007) Habits are also related to the notion of habitus in which prevalence of similar behavior patterns within social classes is argued (Ahrne, 2008). The notion of habitus encompasses cultural capital which is closely linked to the digital divide (Buckingham, 2003). By applying and analyzing the implications of these concepts, a deeper appreciation of possible determinants for shaping perception relevant to the specific characteristics of the respondent group can be attained. The common denominators of the respondents are, apart from their nationality and age, their level of education and their English skills. Taken into consideration that higher education represents a significant element of
cultural capital (Ahrne, 2008), it is fair to assume that the respondents all have a relatively large amount of cultural capital.

Higher education and cultural capital posit high levels of access and use of new media (Buckingham, 2003; Norris, 2011) which is consistent with the group of respondents included in this study. All of the respondents have continual Internet connectivity through their smartphones and laptops which is where they, almost exclusively, access their news. Although physical access to digital devices is a precondition for Internet usage, it is primarily the skills and competencies brought forth by cultural capital that allow the respondents to successfully utilize new media content.

Because English dominates new media, sufficient English skills as part of cultural capital is a valuable asset for optimizing new media usage (Norris, 2011). The qualification corresponds with the respondents of this study who’s new media optimization is demonstrated through their devotion to renowned international news sources like Spanish El País, The Economist and CNN. A majority of the respondents deem foreign news media more reliable in covering Mexican events because they are exempted from context and conflict of interest prevalent in national media. Due to cognitive and English skills and access to new media, the respondents can utilize content offered by international news media which constitute an important point of reference in relation to perceived government controlled domestic news media. The following comment resonate with the view of several of the respondents and accounts for the motive behind taking part of primarily international news sources:

'Because they have a more global look at Mexico, they don’t have a political way of thinking you know, they are in the middle, they look at it from the outside and I think people from the outside can understand better than us because we are so, we are used to some ways of thinking in Mexico, we are used to the media being manipulated...' (Pablo)

When knowledge increase, so too does the capacity to critically discuss and review (Buckingham, 2003). In this regard, knowledge is interpreted in a stricter sense than was done within the attitude concept and refers to internalization of facts and ideas (Cambridge Dictionaries, 2016). Knowledge can be acquired in numerous ways but cultural capital within families and higher education are certainly significant factors for obtaining knowledge and thus develop critical abilities (Buckingham, 2003) which is reflected in several comments
made by the respondents. Especially the respondents enrolled at the public university UNAM acknowledge how their university education provide them with critical skills. The following comment reflect how upbringing environment and access to university studies can foster critical thinking:

‘In UNAM we tend to be more critical, to see beyond what they say us, what they give us. I would say in my family too we are more critical, we don’t really trust the government. I think in my environment we all think the same, we are not very convinced of the official discourse and what they say us ’ (Frida)

Physical access to new media in combination with the necessary cognitive skills for utilization further posit exponential knowledge growth and critical thinking, as suggested by the implications of the digital divide (Buckingham, 2003; Norris, 2011). Quite a few of the respondents discuss how they take part of various news sources that resonate with separate political standpoints and that present diverse approaches to current events in order to, from there, form their own opinions. This process is made possible through a high level of access. The respondents’ critical thinking ability manifest itself as they discuss the implications of the comprehensive energy reform. According to the respondents, the media coverage of the reform has been unquestionably binary. Traditional news media, as the concept is understood within the scope of this study, have exclusively reported positively on the issue while many other alternative news sources have been entirely negative. Because they have acquainted themselves with a variety of perspectives on the issue, they are able to discuss the issue in an informed, illuminated way, highlighting both pros and cons as well as acknowledge unbalanced media coverage. This is how one respondent reflect on binary media reports:

‘It’s like having two sides saying no, yes, hating each other but without having the real dialogue, like what should the country have? What should the politicians do?’ (Cesar)

The exploration of possible origin of critical thinking and where and how it continues to be nurtured among the respondents contributes to the appreciation of how cultural capital and new media access and use form basis for perception.

There are several indicators suggesting that the respondent group has potential to contribute to a more democratic Mexico. Cultural capital in itself account for a person’s advantages and result in higher status in society (Ahrne, 2008) Combined with the reciprocity between
cultural capital and economic capital that has been indicated and reinforced by the strong correlation found between privileged socio-economic background and access to higher education in the Mexican context (Hanushek and Welch, 2006; Tovatt, 2013), it doesn’t seem too far-fetched to suggest that the respondents belong to a relatively privileged social group in the Mexican context. And because access to power is at least partly determined by social class and new media savviness (Ahrne, 2008: Norris, 2011), the potential to influence Mexican politics should be relatively greater among the respondents of this study, and the segment of society that they potentially represent, than the majority of the Mexican society. Noteworthy is also how the respondents geographically are situated at the centre of Mexico’s political scene and media selection (García and Trérê, 2014). The quintessence here is that the respondents’ relative proximity to power in combination with their opposition towards the current state of media/government collaboration carry incentives for change in a more democratic direction for Mexico.

**Summary and Reflections**

The respondents’ perception of the relationship between traditional news media and government in Mexico is deeply rooted and characterized by that of *convergence* of the two institutions and *lack of trust* and *disbelief* in both institutions’ *legitimacy*. Their news behavior is defined by attention to alternative, online news sources. It terms of underlying determinants for perception, large amount of *cultural capital* and *continual access to new media* seem to induce, reproduce and consolidate the respondents’ negative stand towards the Mexican media/government relationship. The interrelation of the perception variables has not been established but it appears as though the relationship is characterized by reciprocity rather than causality.

2. **How can their perception be understood in terms of progress, inequalities, power and in comparison to other countries?**

Through normative theory, political-economic theory and the digital divide, the social implications connected to the respondents’ perceptions of the relationship between Mexican government and the country's traditional news media will be analyzed.

In the previous chapter, the respondents’ perception of the media/government relationship in Mexico was defined and discussed in relation to individual behavior and implications. In the
scope of the second research question, the respondents’ perception of the phenomenon will be placed in a larger social and partly political perspective.

7.6 Improved Media Climate
How media ought to benefit the society in which they operate is at the core of normative theory. A constitutive element of normative theory is expectation on media to foster democracy by providing an autonomous and free space for mediation between individuals and political authority, a public sphere. Today, the two-way communication that new media, and social media in particular, offers, carry great incentives for mediation between citizens and a variety of institutions and social actors (McQuail, 2010). Through new media, engagement and participation in public life can be extended. In addition, the immensity of Internet content makes it relatively hard for any authority to control and regulate (Norris, 2011) which suggest new media are inherently more free and autonomous than other media and as such, beneficial for the sake of democracy.

A striking example of how new media can be utilized for democratic purposes can be found in the #YoSoy132 movement previously mentioned. What started out as a local protest against president Enrique Peña Nieto rapidly grew into a powerful social movement demanding democratization of the Mexican media and political system. Operating primarily through social media, the movement brought about political change and induced widespread engagement for their agenda (García and Treré, 2014; Goggin and Albarrán, 2014).

The #YoSoy132 movement set an example of the potential for improvement with regards to the murky media/government nexus. Although the prevalent jargon among the respondents is characterized mainly by suspicion towards the traditional news media, the government and their relationship, recent improvements are also recognized. Some respondents elaborate on how the media climate in Mexico has become more permissive in recent years. While some reckon that the larger degree of openness originates from government itself, others argue that greater media freedom is the result of the proliferation and possibilities offered by the Internet and particularly by social media, despite authorities’ vexation towards the phenomenon.

Regardless of origin, the current more permissive media climate is assessed with moderate optimism as the respondents feel uncertain about its relative significance and continuance. The following quote serve to illustrate how social media is ascribed positive opportunities but possibly also associated with uncertainty:
'I think with social networks in Mexico is that it’s making citizens feel more connected and powerful and like heard and I think that’s something every government, I think in the world can’t handle, can’t regulate. But I think in the future maybe there’s gonna be regulations for social networks, of course it’s gonna be but we are still not living it so it’s our tool...’

(Daniela)

When discussing the Mexican media climate in terms of improvements, it is highly relevant to underline the significance of the return of the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) back into office. Historically, the relationship between the PRI and Televisa has been strong but as the PRI lost presidency for twelve years, from 2000 till 2012, a greater variety of political views entered the media scene. With the PRI back in power, many perceive the state of the media institution as stagnating (Flannery, 2012). While new media pose opportunities for media democratization in Mexico, there are concurrent indicators suggesting a regressive media climate. The following respondent express concern for what the future might hold:

'Im pretty afriad that with this new government and all this freedom of speech and all this progress that we are enjoying is gonna vanish’ (Carlos)

7.7 Those left behind

The respondents discuss and problematize the significance of new media particularly in relation to less privileged Mexicans. They acknowledge that the majority of Mexicans are not granted the same level of access as them and therefore new medias’ scope is limited, as illustrated by one respondent:

'...not everybody in Mexico can access Internet, like if you have in mind that 50 per cent of the population is extremely poor and I don't know, 40 per cent of the remaining population have access to Internet, there are a lot of information that wouldn't get to the people, if you know what I mean’ (Cesar)

The respondents’ figures are fairly accurate, merely about one third of the Mexican population have some sort of access to the Internet and nearly half of those are young people ranging from 12 to 24 years old (García and Treré, 2014). Thus, a vast majority of Mexicans are excluded from the democratic potential offered by the Internet. Within the digital divide, the phenomenon is referred to as the democratic divide. The democratic divide recognize how Internet users are better capable of engaging, mobilizing and participating in public life than
non-users (Norris, 2011). The implications of the #YoSoy132 movement serve as a telling example of the democratic divide; while young university students with access successfully use new media as an arena for mobilization, as an amplifier of their agenda and consequently manage to influence politics, the already underprivileged are further marginalized as their scope for action remains unchanged.

The respondents’ awareness of their relative privileges also take the form of superiority in relation to other Mexicans. By diminishing the ‘common Mexicans’ and their knowledge base, they distinguish themselves and signify their own intellect, as expressed by one respondent:

'Mexico only thinks about football, about party, things that for example for me are not important but I understand the situation because I study, because I have the opportunity to study. But a lot of people in Mexico they don’t have this opportunity...’. (Juan)

Because the respondents are literate university students exposed to a wide range of perspectives and inputs, they have learned that the Mexican media/government relationship is unsound. Their cognizance of the collusion is contrasted to less privileged Mexicans who they deem are primarily fed with government friendly Televisa and TV Azteca news. Since many Mexicans are not exposed to alternative news sources, the respondents fear that they are incapable of criticizing the authorities, traditional news media and their mutual relationship.

In this regard, Stanig’s (2015) findings on the degree of self-censorship in local Mexican press as associated with repressive defamation laws according to state, is worth mentioning. Although Stanig’s (2015) research doesn't indicate how each state is afflicted accordingly, and considering that the collected data reveals nothing about news media habits adopted by others than the respondent group, it can still be concluded that the respondents included in this study should be less affected by repressive defamation laws than many other Mexicans. As residents of Mexico City, the respondents enjoy the country’s largest degree of news media plurality (García and Treré, 2014), which, per se, makes news media content harder to oversee and complicates defamation reprisals. To those living outside of Mexico City, repressive defamation laws are more likely to affect them negatively through lack of accountability-oriented information. Ultimately, the respondents’ geographical location and digital access should make for a stark contrast to less privileged Mexicans living on the countryside. As demonstrated, inequalities are worsening between information rich and poor which keeps on
asserting itself through the comments made by the respondents. This is how one respondent reflect on the issue:

'There are rumors that PRI pay Televisa, everyone knows they are having this political affair, you know they don't say bad things about the government, they just try to hide things, and the problem is most people in Mexico, that’s the news that they watch’ (Maria)

7.8 Underlying forces controlling media

The above comment is, however, not merely a reflection of information inequalities but also relevant with respect to the implications put forward by political-economic media theory. Because media is vital in informing us about events which we don't have the opportunity to experience first hand, media serve as a base for interpretation of social reality. And since reality is infinite, media are unable to reproduce and depict reality as it is. Consequently, harsh delimitations are made and certain interpretations are favored over others. Political-economic theory, then, suggest that media, as part of a system of domination, ultimately favor interpretations that serve state and economic interests (Dickinson et al., 1998; Strömbäck, 2009). Appreciation of media as an economic and political phenomenon is widely mirrored among the respondents’ statements. They view the political scene and media scene as an exclusive arena for a small Mexican elite who are all related one way or another. By mutually helping each other out, they can obtain more power among themselves:

‘...it has to do with this really close relationship between power and media, like the rich people and the powerful people are all together because they wanna be more rich and more powerful’. (Cesar)

Political-economic theory perceive media as means for legitimizing, maintaining and fuel the prevalent dominance of capitalism and neoliberalism. Consequences are expected to take the form of media ownership concentration and media content serving the interest of the ruling class (McQuail, 2010), both of which is reflected in the above comment and further supported by profit-driven news production and large media networks extended influence, as suggested by Cancino (2013) and Guerrero (2009).

Although Televisa and TV Azteca are subject to a majority of the media/government collusion criticism, the respondents speak of the country’s entire news media landscape as
unbalanced and characterized by extremes where news media tend to take a stand either for or against the government. A strong recurring theme is that of Mexican news media as representatives of various interests, from political parties to corporations. Media portrayal of the energy reform makes a good example of how absence of neutral news can manifest itself in the Mexican context. Mainstream news media like Televisa and TV Azteca are perceived as aligned with a right-wing, pro capitalism and government-supportive agenda which result in almost exclusively positive depiction of the implications of the energy reform. Left-wing, anti-government media, on the other hand, direct nothing but harsh criticism towards the reform. Bottom-line is that the respondents assess the Mexican media landscape as lacking independent news sources but rather exposing the audience to ready opinions. This is how one of the respondents reflect on media coverage of the energy reform:

’...here in Mexico we have a lot of media, media for example news papers they write in favor of the government, but we also have underground newspapers, another newspapers that write against the government. I think in Mexico we don’t have objective media because all the media have a lot of interests...’ (Juan)

7.9 The Independent Exception

Although the respondents assess the Mexican media landscape as largely biased, journalist Carmen Aristegui is referred to as the truth-telling, independent exception. Carmen Aristegui hosted a prominent radio show but got fired shortly after publicly revealing possible conflict of interest with regards to the presidential residence contractor which fueled corruption allegations towards him and the rest of the government (Archibold, 2015; Partlow, 2015). The Carmen Aristegui incident is put forward as proof of a Mexican media/government liaison by the respondents who are convinced government control over media is what ultimately got her fired:

'She [Carmen Aristegui] was critical towards the government, to this government, to every government. And then she made a journalistic research on the house of the president so she was fired, all the small stuff that the government didn't like so she was fired’ (Cesar)

The Carmen Aristegui episode statements can be treated as evidence of how media act on behalf of the ruling class and as such, confirming the relevance of the notions proposed by political-economic theory. The respondents’ accounts of the incident and Carmen Aristegui
per se are, however, also significant in relation to normative expectations on media. Despite the fact that media, in any free society, have no formal obligation to serve public interest, strong links between media and democracy are often presumed (McQuail, 2010). Public interest implies coherence between a given society’s media system and guiding principles in relation to democracy and social values, for instance. Supposedly, media should support the democratic process by providing reliable information on public matters, critically review power holders and should be free from government and other powerful interests control (Strömbäck, 2009; McQuail, 2010). Normative expectations on media are demonstrated among the respondents as they express disappointment towards how the Carmen Aristegui incident played out and as they stress the significance of her achievements in providing reliable journalism and in directing harsh criticism towards the government and political authorities. As displayed by the following comment:

’...She’s [Carmen Aristegui] the one doing all this research, all this journalist work instead of all the others, so she’s the only one not bought or who is not like biased for the government’. (Daniela)

In a sense, the Carmen Aristegui episode encapsulate the David versus Goliath-type situation that seems to prevail in Mexico, where independent media advocates are oppressed by the almighty collaboration between authorities and traditional news media. At the time, Carmen Aristegui’s termination sparked demonstrations and received a great amount of media coverage both at home and internationally (Archibold, 2015: Partlow, 2015). Noteworthy is the following remark in which one of the respondents comment on the Carmen Aristegui situation with positivity, implying that the big fuss surrounding the episode prove that people oppose the current media situation and that people value reliable, independent journalism:

’...I mean I like that people are defending these sort of reporters [Carmen Aristegui] because if they don’t do tell the story, the whole picture, who will?’ (Carlos)

7.10 In relation to other countries
The Mexican media/government nexus is contrasted to European countries by some of the respondents and reveals what at first glance appear to be conflicting approaches. The media situation in European countries are put forward as role models and good examples of sound media climates. As one respondent account for why foreign, and particularly European, news
sources conduct themselves in a more critical manner than do Mexican media, he discusses the possible impact of a longer history of democratic tradition:

'Because they have enjoyed freedom of speech for so many times already, and yeah, people are used to be critic and they are not so easily threatened I guess, I mean we are still scared about the government...'. (Carlos)

The remark corresponds well with Guerrero’s (2009) assessment of Mexican civil society as inadequate in performing their function as monitors of public officials in comparison to consolidated democracies. The ‘level of development’ of civil society is commonly measured in relation to the degree of voting participation and trust in political institutions (Guerrero, 2009). Clearly, suspicion and fear towards government, as reflected in the above comment, are not ideal conditions for strengthening Mexican civil society. On the other hand, other European countries facing similar problems of intertwined media and government are also recognized:

'I think it’s a really close relationship [Between government and media]...It’s like that anywhere in the world, like the UK or anywhere it’s almost the same stuff’. (Cesar)

Although it may appear as if the previous comments represent contrasting views of the Mexican media system in relation to European countries, that is not necessarily the case as the statements have to be understood in their context, respectively. While European news media are specifically emphasized as more independent from government interest than Mexican news media, strong ties between media and government is discussed as a prevailing tendency occurring on a global scale. What the respondents give voice to can ultimately be interpreted as capitalism gaining ground and consolidating its dominance across the globe, as suggested by political-economic theory. However, the seemingly conflicting comments made by the respondents can be read as appreciation for the relative agency of capitalism where Mexico is perhaps more affected by its consequences than European countries.

Summary and Reflections
The intention of posing research question number two was to raise the analysis from an individual to a social level, to place the respondents’ perception in a wider context. To place their perception in a wider context naturally opened up for the possibility of including
numerous perspectives and inputs of which only a few are ultimately included due to space and time limitations.

The respondents’ negative perception of the relationship between traditional news media and government in Mexico is relevant in terms of *progress* as their inclination to choose for alternative news media have introduced them to new media who bear *democratic incentives*. The democratic potential of new media contrasts with the traditional news media who, to a much larger degree, are *controlled by economic forces*. When economic interests are prioritized, *journalism is compromised* and news media cannot live up to *normative expectations*. Ultimately, *inequalities* between information rich and poor are *aggravated* and fueled by the march of capitalism as it is per se inequitable. While this is indeed a global tendency, its impact in Mexico may be more far-reaching than in comparable countries due to the Mexico’s already striking inequality issues.
8. Conclusions and Recommendations

The aim of this study has been to investigate a group of Mexican university students’ perception of the country’s traditional news media and their relationship to the Mexican government with the objective of elaborating on and discussing how the respondents’ perception can be understood in terms of individual and social implications. In the following chapter, the findings will be discussed and conclusions drawn. Suggestions for further research will also be provided.

8.1 Conclusions

The first research question investigates the respondents’ perception of the media/government relationship in Mexico, explores possible determinants for perception and elaborates on the respondents’ individual implications in light of their perception towards the phenomenon. The respondents estimate the relationship between traditional news media and government to be symbiotic and dismiss the legitimacy of both traditional news media and government. For reliable news sources, they go online and access alternative sources, a news behavior facilitated by the competencies provided for by cultural capital and access to new media. The second research question explored the respondents’ perception in terms of social implications concluding that economic incentives permeates the traditional news media and government in Mexico to a degree that normative expectations on media consequently are highly compromised. For more independent news sources, new media offers a variety of alternatives accessible to the respondents of this study but out of reach for many others, less privileged Mexicans.

What this study has revealed is a group of Mexican university students’ perception of the traditional news media and government in Mexico that corresponds well with the image put forward by research and is that of a traditional news media and government collusion which significantly undermine both institutions’ credibility. The danger of media and government convergence ultimately has to do with impairment of democracy. The legitimacy of democracy as the only acceptable principle of governance is an interesting discussion but not one that will be covered here. For now, let’s just assume that there is broad global agreement for democracy as a desirable principle of governance.

Reliable news sources presenting accurate facts and information about current events are indispensable to democratic societies. Only when people are properly informed can they engage in good decision-making regarding their lives, their societies and their governments.
Further, a cornerstone of reliability is independence where news are expected to serve as independent monitors of power (American Press Institute, 2016). Thus, because the basic principle of democracy is that of supreme power vested in the people (Nieminen et al., 2011), it goes without saying that any given society aspiring democracy needs an informed citizenry.

The respondents of this study have expressed concern regarding the Mexican media situation that ultimately has serious democratic implications. If influential media corporations collaborate with the political and economical power, the news branches of those media corporations obviously cannot critically review power holders properly. Their independence is undermined and so is their reliability. Ultimately, those news media will be incapable of catering for an informed citizenry and thus counteract consolidation of democracy in Mexico.

On a more positive note, the respondents’ critical assessment of the traditional news media and government relationship instills hope. Because the respondents belong to a relatively privileged group in the Mexican context, they should be in closer proximity to power and influence than most Mexicans and thus their negative perception of the media/government nexus combined with their relative ability to make a difference carry positive incentives for the future of democracy in Mexico. Also, the respondents’ way of criticizing an unsound media/government relationship implies freedom of expression, although compromised by government control over media corporations, is not weakened to the point where the respondents’ fear conveying their harsh criticism openly.

While the respondents’ position of being young university students with an estimate large amount of cultural capital who successfully make use of new media for accessing various point of views and as a potential arena for dissemination of an agenda that oppose that of the media/government collaboration, one must keep in mind that far from every Mexican have the same opportunities. In a country already characterized by stark inequalities, the already underprivileged are further marginalized as they are denied access to the same privileges as those of the respondents’. While new media cater for the privileged to become better equipped to resist the potential harm to democracy an unholy alliance between traditional news media and government might cause, many others are left behind. The consequences suggested by the digital divide might be especially relevant in the Mexican context where there is cause for concern over traditional news medias’ agenda and where traditional news media play such a central role in many Mexicans’ lives.
In this study, the respondents’ access to alternative news sources that don’t repeat the official discourse conveyed by traditional news media and their possibilities to engage in public life through social networks have been emphasized as democratically beneficial. To that, I wish to make to final remarks of eventual limitations. First of all, it is possible that the respondents exaggerate the independence and reliability of foreign and other alternative news sources that they access online because the alternative, the domestic traditional news media, is in such bad state that any other news source appear adequate in comparison. Secondly, it should be pointed out that the democratic incentives offered by social networks in functioning as public spheres, e.g. Facebook and Twitter, are themselves controlled by economic interests and thus do not necessarily serve the wider public interest.

8.2 Suggestions for Further Research
Considering that this study has specifically examined Mexican university students’ perception and implications of a traditional news media and government relationship, perceptions and implications regarding other groups in the Mexican society have been inferred but most certainly need further research. I would be interesting to further investigate the perception and elaborate on possible implications for those on the losing side of the digital divide. Do less privileged Mexicans share the perception of the traditional news media and government relationship hold by the respondents of study or are they indoctrinated by the official discourse due to lack of alternative news sources?
References

Printed Sources


Internet Sources


Publications


Interview Guide

**Presentation:** Who I am, the purpose of my study, confidentiality, recording,

**Warm up questions:** Name, age,

**Education:** How far along are you? Career, future aspirations, scholarship? Why this school?

**Family:** Are you originally from the city? Where are your parents from? What do your parents do?

**General energy reform:** How would you sum up the implications of the energy reform? What is your general opinion about it? Does it interest you? Will it affect you? Where did you learn about it?

**Media usage:** How often do you take part of news? Through which medium? What media channels? Why those news sources

How would you describe the relationship between the government and the major media institutions?

**News on the energy reform:**
How would you say in general that the media report on the energy reform? Positively, objectively or oppositional?

Do you feel you have a good understanding of what the energy reform will affect the country from the media you take part of?

Do you share these opinions with the people you surround yourself with?

Is the media reporting on the energy reform in accordance with how you perceive the reform?

Do you feel the media has covered the issues of the energy reform in an adequate way?
Is there anything you feel like the media is missing out on reporting on regarding the energy reform?

What would you have liked to know more about?

What criticism towards the energy reform have you noticed in the media?

Anything you want to add? Questions?