Media and the Formation of Scottish Parliament

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MEDIA AND THE FORMATION OF SCOTTISH PARLIAMENT

by

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Abstract

Media and the Formation of Scottish Parliament

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The thesis explored how media interacts with politics, specifically the Scottish Parliament, by considering the representation of the Scottish Parliament in newspapers from the time the Scots voted for a parliament (1997) through the years following the beginning of the Scottish Parliament (1999-2003). It compared various newspapers from Scotland and the United Kingdom during this time and examined their reporting on the parliament. It also evaluated specific differences between the UK and Scottish Parliaments, where they originated and how newspapers and other media were involved in the conversation. This research found that press representation and media framing is important in the formation of government, the Scottish press discussed what the new Parliament could look like and facilitated discussion about the future of the Parliament. It also analyzed the presence of bias in political reporting, which was found to be common in newspapers in the UK. The bias presented in the vote for a Scottish Parliament could be considered justified because it was expected and represented the wider political opinion, but should be used with caution to ensure there is still a correct report of the news. This study is expected to contribute to further research on media representation of politics, specifically with new governments or future political events in Scotland.
In addition to the help I received from professors on my thesis committee, I would like to acknowledge my Mom, Janeen Ashcraft, and my sisters Rachel, Jessica, and Valerie for discussing my project with me and editing. I also grateful to my friends who encouraged me along the way including Tiffany, Katelynn, and Becca, who started this project by convincing me to accompany her to Scotland.

Note: This work will retain traditional British spellings for political parties as well as in quotations from British sources.
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Media and the formation of Scottish Parliament

The Scottish Parliament is a relatively young governing body. Scotland did not have any national government since Scotland decided to join the United Kingdom in 1707, a decision made by the Parliament. Scottish poet Robert Burns wrote that the Scottish members of Parliament were “bought and sold for English gold.”¹ The people of Scotland voted in favor of having their own parliament on September 11, 1997. The Scottish Act to formally create the Parliament was passed in the UK Parliament over a year later and the Scottish Parliament met for the first time since 1707 on May 12, 1999. Although Scotland remains part of the United Kingdom and the parliament derives its power from Westminster, a metonym for the UK parliament, there are many differences between the two parliamentary bodies. The Scottish Parliament emphasizes transparency and allows the press and the people more access than Westminster. It will also consider how some aspects of the Parliament, such as how committees are run, the additional member system, and customs may have originated and how the media was involved in the process. This work will consider framing theory and biases in an analysis of how media, particularly newspapers, covered the vote for a Scottish Parliament in 1997, it’s formation and early years, and the Parliament today.

Literature Review

There are only a few books available which specifically discuss newspapers and other media in relation to the Scottish Parliament, but media references are often present in literature about how the Parliament has succeeded or failed in its first few years. Much of the literature comes from those involved in the devolution of the Scottish Parliament,

¹ Robert Burns, "Such a Parcel of Rogues in a Nation," Scottish folk song.
including scholars, journalists, and politicians who have written about the process and what has been gained from having a government in Scotland. Because of this, most of the available literature is published in Scotland and shows the perspective of the Scots. This review will look at literature research around the media in Scotland, the Scottish Parliament in general and the success or failure of the Scottish Parliament.

Scottish media

Although there is literature that discusses Scottish media, there is little available specific to media about the vote for a Scottish Parliament and the beginning years of the Parliament. Some works about the referendum vote in 2014 touch on significant media outlets and talk about media from that time to show a comparison. *Culture Nation and the Scottish Parliament* is a collection of works that discusses novels and movies, showing how the Parliament had an impact on those forms of media. They discuss a rise in political fiction and show that Scots were more interested in political themed entertainment when they had a parliament specifically for Scotland. These writings showed the significance of Scottish culture in the parliament. One article by Caroline McCracken-Flesher claimed Scottish culture was being close to home, and the new Parliament was a way the Scots were coming home.

*The Media in Scotland*, edited by Neil Blain and David Hutchison, was very helpful as a source about Scottish media. This work discusses the history of Scottish news organizations. Blain and Hutchison the political biases of the news and how that affected politics. Although the book is not specifically about the beginning of the parliament, it does refer to the event and its influence on the press. The proposal to create a Scottish Parliament was commonly called “devolution,” because it devolved some power from UK’s Westminster Parliament back to elected Members of the Scottish
Parliament (MSPs) located in Edinburgh. Devolution led to more political journalism in Scotland and more resources for journalists. One writer from this book said, “the Scottish media, like the newly elected Scottish political class, took on greater responsibility than ever before in the history of the Union. If devolution was going to work, then the overseeing role of the media was going to be central.” The Scottish media developed a habit of criticizing the Parliament in its first years, which the work says was also a trend in the rest of the United Kingdom at the time.

Fiona Douglas’ work entitled *Scottish Newspapers, Language and Identity* studies Scotland’s newspapers and how they interact with Scottish identity. It addresses the history of the Scottish press before the Parliament and how having a Scottish Parliament changed the press atmosphere in Scotland. It argues that Scottish newspapers help to strengthen Scottish identity and culture and considers how devolution would have impacted this relationship.

A journal article by Michael Higgins discussed a study of Scottish nationalism in Scottish newspapers and found they stress the “national character of the political process.” Higgins discusses the change in political Scottish news as reporters shifted from presenting the news with a general Scottish national leaning to reporting on various sides of political issues specific to Scotland. He cites how nationalism is apparent in the newspapers including the use of inclusive pronouns like “we” and “our” to bring a sense of national identity, national symbols in the art of newspapers, and Scottish specific

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political vocabulary like the metonym Holyrood. He argues Scots connected with their culture through the media. “Up until this point, the importance of the Scottish media has resided in its presenting one of the best-established ways in which ‘Scots’ can participate in being Scottish.”

Higgins specifically considers six newspapers reporting on the 1999 vote for their representatives in Scottish Parliament.

Accounts of the new Parliament

One Member of Scottish Parliament, Mike Watson, wrote a book entitled Year Zero about his experience in the first year of the Parliament, comparing it to his experience in the UK House of Lords. Because he had experience in both parliaments, he provides comparisons and talk about the differences in how the two parliaments were run. In his research to write the book, Watson reached out to political reporters and included some of their comments in his work. He discusses how media reporting impacted decisions he made for bills that he supported. Watson also spent time discussing the work he performed on committees and how that work was reported on by the media. Watson sees some of the differences in the two parliaments as positive changes, and is more hesitant about the benefits of others. One of the conclusions in this book is that the Scots are more involved in government since the new Parliament opened.

David Arter wrote a book showing the connections between the Scottish Parliament and Scandinavian-style governments. He argues that in many ways the parliament is more similar to those in Norway and Sweden than to Westminster. The book looks at how the Scottish Parliament relates to others around the world as well.

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4 Higgins, Michael. 634.
including the UK Parliament. This work puts the Scottish Parliament into a wider context.

A journal article written by Douglas Bicket considers how the Scottish Parliament fit in with the UK and EU parliaments, specifically through representations in the media. The work considers the 1999 vote through the first four years of the Scottish Parliament. Bicket says there was little discussion in the media of Scotland’s international relations or potential to become equal to other EU independent nations, however he does say the issue of independence was important. “It is clear from the dominant media packages that independence was a serious issue for discussion-albeit an issue that was framed in ways largely antithetical to the SNP position.”\(^5\) Bicket concludes that the Scottish press was not able to remain completely autonomous from UK politics in the way articles about the new Parliament were framed.

**Evaluating success of the Parliament**

As a new government, some researchers have taken a deeper look at the parliament to see if it has been successful for Scotland in general. Lindsay Paterson in her book *New Scotland, New Politics?* considers the purpose of the new Parliament. She says the purpose of the Labour Party was to keep Scotland in the United Kingdom, whereas the purpose of the Scottish National Party was to become independent of the United Kingdom. Outside of these conflicting ideals, the purpose was to find Scottish solutions to solving issues in Scotland. Paterson looks at the elections and how the proportional

representation impacted each party’s power in the new parliament. She also explains how the new Parliament impacted Scottish cultural identity and social attitudes.

Paul Cairney’s work *The Scottish Political System Since Devolution* discusses the basics of how the new Parliament worked. It discusses the beginning years of the Parliament, but the majority of the book looks at Scottish politics with a wider time frame, starting in 1999 and considering the next twelve years. One purpose of this work was to show the impact of the Scottish Parliament on various public policies. In regard to the media, Cairney talks mostly about the negative press coverage and how it impacted the decisions made in the early Parliament. He does give examples that show how the Scottish press had influence on politics and political decisions made in the early years of the Parliament, and he asserts that the Scottish Parliament had more media attention during its first years than the UK Parliament. Cairney in his conclusion says the Scottish Parliament is not a policymaking body, but rather a “scrutinising, revising and legitimising chamber with limited powers to scrutinise and revise.”⁶ He argues that the powers of the Parliament are limited and the cost for the Parliament was too high, saying the new Parliament doesn’t meet the Scots’ expectations.

**Why media matters in the formation of government**

The Scottish Parliament has had a lot of interaction with the media, especially during the time when it was a new governing body. Cairney said there is evidence that early on the Scottish Parliament had more attention from media and political parties than Westminster throughout the UK, worrying Labour members of Parliament about

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elections. The added media attention is expected because of the newness of the Scottish Parliament, but it distracted British voters from the Labour party at Westminster and brought attention to Scottish nationalism. Because MSPs (members of Scottish Parliament) have smaller constituencies than MPs (members of UK Parliament), they can interact more with their constituents and the media. It is not uncommon to see MSP’s writing for local newspapers and talking to television reporters in the Scottish Parliament building. In a democracy where individuals vote on their representatives, the way the public views what is happening is very important. Their view mostly derives from what is shown in the media. Because many Scots informed through reading daily newspapers, the news organizations have some control over the information that spreads and, through that, the opinions of the people.

**Scottish Parliament history**

The Scottish Parliament, because it is a more recent government, had many different examples of democratic institutions to consider when evaluating what they wanted to represent and how their legislative body would work. The Consultative Steering Group referred to other parliamentary systems in their report. As part of the United Kingdom they had a shared history with their parliamentary government, often referred to as Westminster because of the location by Westminster Abby, and took many of their traditions and ideals from them. Scottish Parliament is often referred to as Holyrood after a former church and palace located outside the Parliament building. However, they also have practices, like their access to the public and the way the

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7 Paul Cairney, *The Scottish Political System Since Devolution: From New Politics to the New Scottish Government*
committees work that some scholars have said make them more similar to Scandinavian parliaments. \(^8\)

The make-up of the Scottish Parliament building can represent the variety of political backgrounds used to develop the parliament. Some of the steel, glass and concrete for the building was manufactured in England, and some in Brazil or Germany. A Spaniard designed the building and it includes wood from Scandinavia. The only material listed in the *Daily Record* for the building that was produced in Scotland at that point was the water. \(^9\) The article said some of the other materials could come from Scotland but only after they offered bids to other European countries. The article seemed to present this distance from Scotland negatively, and it doesn’t line up with much of the media praising Scotland’s culture or the independence the Parliament would bring. Scottish acceptance of other European qualities contrasts what is seen in British media. Cardinal Thomas Winning, a Scottish cardinal from the Roman Catholic church, expressed this difference: “I come from Scotland, Europe, where a sense of nationality and European-ness is emerging in Scotland – the Europhobia which characterizes much of the British Press finds little echo in Scotland.” \(^10\) This quote, used as a “pearl of politics” by *Scots Independent*, argues that there was a distinct difference in how Europe was represented in Scottish media in contrast to the media in other countries. This could simply be an example of a differing world-view in Scotland or the media could have changed the way Scots interacted with the rest of Europe.

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\(^8\) David Arter. The Scottish Parliament: A Scandinavian-Style Assembly?
Before the Parliament was established, Scotland could be considered a nation by some standards, they had set boundaries and a common culture. They even continued to be independent from the United Kingdom in religious and legal systems. Scots also had their own media and local governments which set them apart from the rest of the United Kingdom. When powers were given back to Scotland, often referred to as devolution, the Scots gained more independence while remaining in the UK. Scotland already had many aspects of an independent nation, they had “a population with high levels of Scottish national identity, producing a desire to introduce or maintain policymaking institutions at that national level; and, a means for people in Scotland to articulate and aggregate their interests.”

The addition of the Scottish Parliament gave Scots greater control to decide how they wanted to fit in to the United Kingdom, allowing them to be different in some legal matters.

The Scottish Act specified which powers would be given to Scotland and which would remain with the United Kingdom. Scotland was given control over the National Health Service, education, housing, local government, industrial development, law and order, tourism, transport, prisons, the police, environment, agriculture and fisheries, and sport. The London-based UK Parliament kept many other responsibilities and, until a Brexit agreement is made, the European Union plays a part in some of the powers as well. This means that anytime the Parliament encounters an issue, they need to determine what category it belongs in and whether they have power to make the desired changes. Sometimes issues fall into areas that connect with multiple issues which means some

control is in the UK Parliament and some in the Scottish Parliament. For example, if the Scottish Parliament wanted to do something to make food packaging more environmentally friendly, they have powers devolved over the environment and agriculture, but Westminster reserves the powers for trade and industry so the parliament would need to be careful to not interfere with those areas. This can also make it difficult for constituents with specific issues communicate with the right people because the powers MPs and MSPs have are split based on the issue.

**Methodology**

I had the opportunity to live in Scotland and work with the Scottish Parliament during an internship with an MSP for four months. The Parliament in 2018 was very different from what I would have encountered if I had visited 1999 or 2000. The government is currently led by the Scottish National Party instead of the coalition between Labour and Liberal Democrats that was in power as the Parliament began. Scots had also recently voted to remain in the United Kingdom in another referendum vote for complete independence. There was also a large difference in the media environment, social media has become an important piece of how people in Scotland consume news and various newspapers had changed in readership or ownership. More Scots in recent years are accessing the news on their mobile phones than in the print versions.\(^\text{13}\)

However, the experience allowed me to become familiar with Scottish politics and political parties and how the Scottish Parliament interacts with the United Kingdom and the rest of the world.

Because I was in Scotland, I was able to access archives for Scottish newspapers at the Scottish National Library, and read through newspapers published in the weeks before and after some of the important dates, such as the vote for Parliament, the passage of the Scottish Act and the first session of Parliament. I focused on specific newspapers and considered how they represented what was happening in Scotland and Westminster including *The Scotsman, The Daily Record, Scots Independent, Herald Scotland, The Guardian, and The Sun*. I looked through these sources and analyzed their framing of the conversation around a Scottish Parliament and looked at overall themes of their presentation and bias towards certain political parties. For the papers published daily and available in print I looked through about 45 to 60 issues surrounding important dates and pulled information from any articles relating to the Parliament. I also looked at each of the monthly issues of *The Scotsman* from 1997 through 2001. For papers available online, I searched for specific terms to find articles. I searched for ‘Scottish Parliament’ and names of political party leaders, and ‘Scottish Parliament’ with themes I had found information about in other papers like ‘Additional Member System,’ ‘parliament chamber,’ ‘voting,’ and ‘debates.’ In the papers published after the vote for a Parliament, I specifically searched for mentions of how the Scottish Parliament was expected to run and discussions around the new parliament building and elections. When reading each article, I analyzed the framing of the article, any political leanings, and how it compared to articles on the same topic in other papers.

**Scottish newspapers and media environment**

In Scotland, readership of newspapers is unusually high. Douglas found that in Scotland newspaper readership is second only to China, and is almost 10 percent higher
than newspaper readership in England. A study done in 2001 found 451 per 1,000 Scots pick up a daily newspaper, compared to 271 per 1,000 in England and Wales. Because more Scots consistently read a newspaper, the newspapers have additional reach into what is happening in Scotland. Most of the newspapers in Scotland originated to support a specific political agenda, and although they have become more objective over time. During the vote for an independent parliament, most papers did not hide their opinions but made statements in support of one side or articles with editorialized content supporting a party or opinion. These newspapers are generally less objective than those in the United States, where most newspapers aim to show multiple sides and opinion pieces are separated into a different section of a newspaper.

Editorializing and showing bias without a specific label can be viewed as unethical, especially with American journalism standards. These UK newspapers, however, often openly support a specific political party or bias. When that bias is noted it is not necessarily unethical to report in favor of a specific decision. While most papers in the United Kingdom have a specific bias and are accepted and read because of that political leaning, broadcast news is sometimes criticized for being biased. The opposite is true in the United States where cable news often shows more opinion than the newspapers. Since the vote for a parliament, some of the Scottish newspapers have tried to distance themselves from a specific political party and have said they won’t tell people

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15 Hutchison, I. G. C. "Scottish Newspapers and Scottish National Identity in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries."
17 Wayne, Michael. 2016. "Beneath the Bias, the Crisis: The Press, the Independent Media and the Scottish Referendum."
how to vote in a specific election. However, in the 1997 devolution referendum, most papers were supporting a specific vote which was not unusual for the Scottish press.

*The Scotsman*

*The Scotsman* is the newspaper that was made to “give voice to Edinburgh liberalism in the face of conservative press hegemony.”[^18] It had a circulation of about 75,000 in six months in the early 2000’s. The paper was purchased by the Barclays, a Scottish banking family, in 1995 and was sold ten years later to the Johnston press. *The Scotsman* is very supportive of Scottish culture, and in 1998 began publishing two columns in Gaelic. The paper most frequently attempts to represent Scots in general rather than a political party and pledged in 2017 to remain politically independent and not tell anyone how to vote.[^19] The newspaper did, however, publish an article in 2014 before the vote for independence arguing against the measure. “The conclusion is that we are better together, that Scotland’s best interests lie not in creating division but in continuing in the Union and using its strengths to help us continue in our success.”[^20] They also adamantly supported the Scottish Parliament vote in 1997. “Home rule is the settled will of the Scottish nation. The unfinished business will be finished,”[^21] the front page of *The Scotsman* said on the day after the vote.

Leading up to the vote *The Scotsman* was also clear where its support lay, “If the vote is lost today, devolution is dead,” read a message from *The Scotsman*. “Should Scotland vote ‘No,’ the status quo will be vindicated beyond doubt and independence will

become the last counsel of despair. It is difficult to overstate how humiliating a defeat for reform would be. Who, afterwards, would take us seriously again?” The paper argued that a “no” vote would say Scotland does not care about their future. This newspaper is useful as a media outlet that represents the Scottish culture. Although it can’t be considered to represent Scotland’s opinions in general, it did not seem to represent a specific political party but to give a general representation of Scotland’s ideals or culture. It gives priority to how changes in government work with the Scottish culture and what aspects of culture influence the new government.

*The Daily Record*

*The Daily Record* is a Scottish newspaper which, although traditionally conservative, began to support the Labour Party publically in the 1964 election and has been mostly supportive of the Labour Party since then. It was by far the most read throughout the discussion on the new Parliament, with a readership of over 550,000. It is owned by Trinity Mirror, an English-based company that owns multiple news organizations in the United Kingdom. The paper has been known to attack Labour’s opposition “ferociously,” but during the Labour and Liberal Democrats coalition at the outset of the Scottish Parliament it was “happy to run a campaign against particular legislative proposals.” The Labour Party received the most parliamentary seats in the 1999 vote for the first group of MSPs and was one of the larger parties during the vote for independence. A leader in the Scottish Labour Party, Donald Dewar, supported the

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creation of a Scottish Parliament and encouraged the party members to support it. "The Record’s real Scots believe a Yes! Yes! Vote is the only way forward for Scotland," it reported the day before the election.25 In addition to appealing to “real Scots,” the paper also highlighted in multiple articles that a vote for a Parliament was beneficial for Scottish children.

*The Daily Record* showed strong support of the Labour Party during the election for the first Scottish members of parliament in their advertisements as well as their articles, third party advertisements, graphics. It presented polls which showed strong Labour support saying they were well ahead of the Scottish National Party also referred to as SNP.26 Newspapers which supported the SNP still reported Labour ahead of SNP, but with a different tone. This newspaper also did some interesting things to make political statements, like photo shopping Donald Dewar’s face onto Obi Wan Kenobi and Alex Salmond’s face onto Jabba the Hut,27 which appeared to give more legitimacy to the Labour Party leader.

*Scots Independent*

This monthly paper was clearly in favor of the Scottish National Party, a Scottish Parliament, and Scottish independence. According to their website, the paper began in 1926 and is completely independent but supports the Scottish National Party’s goal of independence.28 The February 1997 issue included the front-page headline: “Easier to achieve independence than devolution,” and another “Why all roads now lead to independence,” showing that the paper wanted to reach for more than a new parliament

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25 We’re Proud to be Scots. *The Daily Record*. September, 10, 1997.
27 The Force is with us … And the Farce is with them. *The Daily Record*. May 6, 1999.
which would be on the ballot later that year. Unlike most articles in *The Daily Record* which only discussed the Parliament and showed hesitation that it could lead to complete independence, *Scots Independent* hoped a devolved parliament would lead Scotland closer to independence. Later editions question whether the Labour Party will make the new parliament just an extension of Westminster or whether it will cater to the Scottish issues. “Will it be a scaled down Westminster-type bear-bit? Or a new experimental legislature like those in some of the former colonies where the functions are different but the ethos is still Mother-of-Parliaments nostalgic.”

The front page of the May 1999 edition is not just dedicated to telling readers how to vote, but telling them how to vote for the SNP candidates. They also devoted a significant portion of the issue to the Scottish National Party Manifesto.

*Scots Independent* was helpful to show the timeline of political news in Scotland. Because it is a monthly paper focused on politics, it provides a concise view of what was happening in Scotland throughout each month. The paper pulled in “Pearls of Politics,” quotes from other media sources or party leaders that related to the story, to show an opposing viewpoint or to clarify a point. This newspaper was also a significant voice of the Scottish National Party and in favor of autonomy. None of the daily newspapers at the time were officially supportive of Scottish independence.

*Herald Scotland*

This Scottish daily paper has been publishing since 1783, and is one of the oldest papers in Scotland. During the time the Parliament was forming this paper was more liberal. The paper, which was originally called *The Glasgow Herald* has not consistently

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supported a political stance. *The Herald* is in competition with the *Scotsman*, which at that time had become more conservative and unionist. At the time, it had a higher readership than The Scotsman with about a 120,000 weekday circulation. The competition between the two papers provided multiple political voices in daily papers. “I spent about 20 years of my career on the *Scotsman* and almost 14 on *The Herald*. I am in no doubt that the rivalry between the two has helped to maintain standards … It is important to have more than one political voice,” Arnold Kemp a reporter and editor, said about the possibility of joining the two papers in 2001.\(^{30}\) *The Herald* provided important news source in Scotland and as a daily paper would have contributed to how the Scots viewed and interacted with the process of starting a parliament.

**English-based newspapers**

Although *The Guardian* and *The New Statesman* are United Kingdom newspapers published in London and Manchester, they were available in Scotland and involved in reporting on the beginnings of the Scottish Parliament and add an English perspective about the move for a new parliament. Regional papers were more popular in Scotland than the national papers, a 1982 study found 79 percent of Scots read Scottish daily papers but 27 percent read national dailies.\(^{31}\) *The Guardian*, along with a Sunday paper called the *Observer*, is part of the Guardian Media Group owned by the Scott Trust Limited.\(^{32}\) During the time period studied it had a circulation of over 400,000. *The New Statesman* is a liberal weekly political paper. In 1996 a Labour MP named Geoffrey

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\(^{31}\) Hutchison, I. G. C. "Scottish Newspapers and Scottish National Identity in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries."

Robinson invested in the paper and became a partial owner.\textsuperscript{33} \textit{The New Statesman} reported on the start of the Scottish referendum campaign noting that “some fascinating political effects are becoming apparent, across the spectrum.”\textsuperscript{34} The paper wrote about how a Parliament could benefit each of the different parties in Scotland, even the small Conservative Party which would be able to be more involved. \textit{The Guardian} reported the anticipated victory of a vote for the Parliament to begin, but also reported that there was “little excitement on the streets”\textsuperscript{35} on the day of the election. Although not published in Scotland, these papers were involved in reporting on the events and the formation of Scottish Parliament. They add some outside perspective and insight into how the events were seen throughout the United Kingdom.

\textit{The Sun} is a tabloid that is available throughout the United Kingdom and is owned by News UK. The paper is typically more conservative than \textit{The Guardian} and had a much higher circulation of about 3,500,000. It also provides Scottish specific reporting and is one of the most read papers in Scotland. \textit{The Sun’s} leading article on July 26, 1997 was in support of the Scottish Parliament. “Let the Scots have their own parliament and they'll make a better job of running their lives than a remote bureaucracy in London can. That is the argument for devolution, one that is hard to oppose.”\textsuperscript{36} Although it supported devolution, it also spoke of the danger in only 20 percent of the UK citizens voting on devolution, not the 80 percent that live outside of Scotland. \textit{The Sun} emphasized that devolution shouldn’t be allowed to break up the UK, a worry that can be seen in other Scottish news sources as well. \textit{The Sun} did not place all its support in

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{33} About Us. \textit{The New Statesman}. https://www.newstatesman.com/page/about
\item \textsuperscript{34} Milne, Kirsty. A Small Squeal of Excitement. \textit{The New Statesman}. August 1, 1997.
\item \textsuperscript{35} Ewen MacAskill. Victory in sight for Yes camp. \textit{The Guardian}. September 11, 1997.
\item \textsuperscript{36} “Danger North of the boarder; Sun says.” \textit{The Sun}. July 26, 1997.
\end{itemize}
the Scottish Parliament idea, but it did publicly support the Labour Party which was in favor of a Scottish Parliament. “We are throwing our weight behind the Labour Party at this election. Their plans for a Scottish Parliament are far from ideal but it’s a start – if the assembly is a shambles it will reinforce the indy argument,” the Sun reported.³⁷ It did this with more hesitation, emphasizing that there should be safeguards for the UK involved as well. Most of the English and members of the Labour Party were not in favor of Scottish independence, even if the tabloid did support allowing a devolved parliament.

**Newspaper coverage of the vote for Parliament**

The date of the vote for a Parliament, September 11th, had significance to the Scottish people as the 700th anniversary of the day the Scottish conquered the English at Stirling Bridge. The Daily Record reported on this significance: “Seven hundred years ago on September 11, 1297 their forebearers joined the fight with sword and pike as Wallace smashed the army of Edward I of England at Stirling Bridge. On September 11, 1997, they chose the ballot box to express their desire to have control over their own affairs for the first time in centuries.”³⁸

A Scottish Parliament was the aim of the Labour Party and the Scottish National Party, the two largest parties in Scotland. The Tories, however, were not in favor of a Scottish Parliament and ran an opposing “No, No” campaign. There were two votes on the ballot, whether there should be a Scottish Parliament and if that parliament should have the ability to tax. The Tories argued that the parliament would cause tax increases, including a 13 percent raise in basic tax rates and higher business rates leading to higher prices and damage to small businesses. “Only a ‘No, No’ vote guarantees no new or

³⁷ Pearl of Politics quote from the Sun in the June 1997 issue of Scots Independent.
³⁸ Kenny Farquharson. The Daily Record. 300-year wait is over. September 12, 1997.
higher taxes. Think twice. Vote no twice,” an ad in *The Scotsman* from the Tory Party said. The discrepancy in the votes for beginning a parliament, and allowing that parliament to collect taxes could show the Tory campaign had some successes in their campaign.

**Arguments for a “Yes, Yes” vote**

In the days leading up to the vote, *The Daily Record* presented arguments in favor of a Scottish Parliament. A few days before the election, it quoted celebrities and party leaders supporting the measure including James Bond actor Sean Connery. He said, “It’s such a fantastic opportunity. I think it has teeth. And, in my own opinion, it’s the next step to independence.”39 Closer to the election the paper argued Scots should vote “yes” for the Scottish children. *The Daily Record* appealed to the emotions of readers by showing the cute faces of children, emphasizing that they owe the vote to the children and that it was their duty to vote for a parliament. *Scots Independent* also used children to encourage support of a Scottish Parliament and an independent Scotland. This argument may not be very logical or persuasive, but it was likely to convince those who were already in favor of the Parliament to go out and cast their vote. On the day of the September 11, 1997 vote, the front page of the *Daily Record* pictured four children and asked for a “Yes! Yes!” vote. “All these children are proud Scots. They are the faces of our nation’s future. It’s our duty to vote Yes, Yes, in today’s referendum,” the caption said.40 Inside the article highlighted a specific child, 2-year-old Andrew Smith, or “wee Andrew, named after Scotland’s patron saint.” The article lists how the Scottish

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39 *Scotland’s leading celebrities tell why they’re giving two thumbs up to Devo. The Daily Record.* September 10, 1997.
Parliament could help Andrew and includes quotes from his parents, It also shares, in all caps, some phrases strongly encouraging a vote including: “we don’t want to wake up tomorrow with a national hangover and a sense of shame,” and, “the Tories have never acknowledged what every Scot knows – that Scotland is special.”  

This article, boldly supporting a “yes” vote for the Parliament, is published as the view of the Record. The paper encouraged not just supporting a parliament but also the need to vote.

In the same article, the Record also used its platform to encourage voting, saying that not going to vote for a parliament would make a laughing stock of Scotland. “If they don’t vote, they’re Tartan barmy." A Scotland that spurns the chance of its own Parliament would be a laughing stock, a nation scared of its own shadow. Not Scotland the Brave but Scotland the Craven. Not Braveheart but Chickenheart … Scotland would become a great place to send picture postcards from but a pathetic place in which to live.”

The Daily Record also used family to bring people to its cause in another article entitled “Do it for Daddy,” where the family of a former Labour leader worked towards a Scottish Parliament for their late father and husband to “bring his dream to life.”

English newspapers, including the Guardian and the Sun, did not share as much of an opinion on the vote or seem to lead readers toward support of a parliament, but its reporting was celebratory showing there was significant support in England for a Scottish Parliament in the days surrounding the vote.

Arguments for a “No, No” vote

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41 Record View. The Daily Record. Seize the Moment: You owe it to the kids of Scotland to vote Yes! Yes!. September 11, 1997.
42 British word for crazy or foolish
Arguments against the Scottish Parliament were present in the media, but not nearly as prevalent. The Tory Party provided ads arguing against Parliament saying it would increase taxes. They also expressed hesitation that voting for a parliament would be considered equivalent to voting for independence. One article argued devolution could “dull the edge of Scotland’s extraordinary cultural renaissance,” while others said the Parliament was necessary for the Scottish culture.

The Daily Record had two articles on the same page, one entitled “Every vote counts. Go out there and do the business!” telling how party leaders were urging people to go out and vote, and the other entitled “No, No team admit defeat.” Although the newspaper was openly supportive of devolution, these two articles comparing the attitudes of Donald Dewar and Alex Salmond with Donald Findlay are an example of The Daily Record telling the story with a strong bias towards devolution. It highlighted that every vote counts and quoted Dewar saying, “This is an opportunity that will not come back if we miss it,” and “we must grab it with both hands.” It started the article saying Findlay, the Tory leader, had admitted defeat. A few paragraphs into the article, however, it said he “insisted” that the campaign could still accomplish a “no” on the second vote and not allow tax-raising powers. Both of these neighboring articles, without any firm sources, assumed that a Scottish Parliament was going to happen before the vote started.

The Scotsman front page headline on the day of the vote, “Rifkind admits ‘No’ campaign defeated as Scotland prepares to vote on its destiny,” supported the idea that

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45 Dave King and Kenny Farquharson. The Daily Record. Every vote counts. Go out there and do the business!. September 11, 1997.
the No campaign was already defeated.\textsuperscript{46} The morning after the vote, newspapers were reporting that a “yes” decision was likely before the official counts were in. Although the paper didn’t officially announce the “yes, yes” vote, many included articles showing rejoicing and assumptions that the Parliament had been won. The feared low turnout for the vote, which was seen in the 1979 referendum for a Parliament, did not seem to be an issue.

\textbf{Princess Diana’s Death}

The news in Scotland was centered on the vote for a parliament until tragedy brought the conversation to a different topic. Princess Diana, a member of the royal family who was loved throughout the United Kingdom, was killed on August 31, 1997 as the Scots were preparing for the vote. This event took over the front pages of newspapers and conversations in other media in early September, leaving the vote on the 11\textsuperscript{th} on the backburner, or at least not on the front page. The political battles and campaigning were officially suspended, but no decision was made to delay the vote.\textsuperscript{47} \textit{The Scotsman} ran a political cartoon on September 7 showing the grave of Diana overshadowing a government building. A headline from \textit{The Daily Record} on September 8, 1997 read, “YES We can grieve for our princess, YES We can build a new Scotland.” The newspaper connected the two events, trying to ensure that it was supporting and discussing the upcoming vote but not skimming over a major event or seeming heartless.

As actor Sean Connery planned to make an argument for a Scottish Parliament, which would be a large media event, \textit{The Scotsman} political editor, Iain Martin argued,

\textsuperscript{46} Ian Bell, Peter MacMahon and John Penman. Rifkind admits No campaign defeated as Scotland prepares to vote on its destiny. \textit{The Scotsman.} September 11, 1997.
\textsuperscript{47} Referendum Campaigns Suspended. \textit{The Scotsman.} September 1, 1997.
“Even the most famous Scot in the world will struggle to stir the political aspirations of a nation in mourning.” Although the campaigns stopped, Diana’s death likely affected the vote. It connected the Scots to the British royal family and their loyalty to the crown. It also pulled major political actors away from the campaign and led them to modify their plans at the end of the race. With the final support for a parliament at almost 75 percent, it is not likely that there was a significant change in the vote from Princess Diana’s death, but it did have a large impact on the media coverage at the time.

**After the Vote**

Nearly 4 million Scots voted in the referendum, and creating a parliament was the clear winner. The official vote counts were 74.3 percent in favor of a Scottish Parliament and 63.5 percent in favor of giving them powers to tax. The attitude after the vote was categorized differently in the various papers. *The Scotsman* reported a high turnout, but said Scots mostly celebrated “in front of the telly” rather than at parties the night of the vote. The *Daily Record* claimed there wasn’t a celebratory mood, but rather a feeling of relief. “Instead of fireworks and street parties, there was a mood of relief – almost bewilderment. After years of disappointment, people struggled to accept they had finally done it.” *The Sun* reported more excitement than the other Scottish newspapers, reporting that Prime Minister Tony Blair “kicked off a huge street party,” and was “mobbed by masses of flag-waving Scots” on the Royal mile.

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The way each paper explained the attitude after the vote is very intriguing. Clearly there were different attitudes at different places and times, but what each paper chose to emphasize makes a statement about how the Scottish people felt and how they would be involved in the process as the Parliament was organized and began.

**Preparing for the Parliament**

After the vote, the work to build and design a Scottish Parliament began. Members of Parliament at Westminster began work on the Scottish Act, which would dictate how the new parliament would interact with the United Kingdom and which powers would be devolved. Political parties discussed their priorities for the new Parliament and how they could make them a reality. A Consultative Steering Group was asked to build a blueprint for how the Parliament would be run. “We wanted a real parliament able to tackle social justice across Scotland, with its own identity and political dynamics,” Jack McConnell said in an interview.\(^5^1\)

In addition to propaganda from various parties and representation in the newspapers and media, there was a group who held a vigil for five and a half years, or 1979 days. 400 people spent time in a makeshift cabin outside the Old Royal High School, which was the site proposed for a Scottish Parliament in the 1979 referendum. Up to 120,000 signed a petition and pledged themselves to keep a “flame of anger and hope burning” and even produced a declaration of Calton Hill – their own plan for a Scottish Parliament.\(^5^2\) Although this document was not necessarily used in planning the new Parliament, it shows that there were Scots who were eager for a Parliament and had plans and opinions for how the new government should work. There were a lot of voices

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for the Consultative Steering Group, and eventually the members of the new parliament, to listen to when making decisions for how the Scottish government would be run.

Even after the Scottish Act passed and the British Parliament gave specific instructions and powers to the Scottish Parliament, there were still many holes in understanding how the two parliaments would work. “The Scotland Act had set out ground rules, but the newly-elected representatives had no precedent on which to base the construction of the Parliament. It made for an exciting and challenging first few weeks.”

Henry McLeish, the devolution minister, oversaw the Consultative Steering Group. The group contained representatives from multiple parties tasked to find a consensus for how the parliament should work. They determined the mechanics of how Parliament would operate and created a report called *Shaping Scotland’s Parliament*. McLeish said, “The establishment of the Scottish Parliament offers the opportunity to put in place a new sort of democracy in Scotland, closer to the Scottish people and more in tune with Scottish needs.” Newspapers reported a consensus being reached among the multi-party group despite many ideological differences.

Many questions about how the Scottish Parliament would be run appeared in the newspapers, inciting curiosity about issues from where the First Minister would live to whether the Members of Scottish Parliament would swear an oath of allegiance to the Queen or to Scotland. The major political parties discussed their priorities for the new Scottish Parliament at conferences, hoping they would be able to create the Parliament

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54 Carlow Alba. *Never mind the power sharing…Donald has to share his house with Helen*. *The Daily Record*. May 7, 1999.
they wanted from the Scottish Act passed by Westminster. The Scottish National Party held a conference at Rothesay, reported on by Scots Independent, where the new parliament and provisions of the Scottish act was discussed, along with “strategic implications for progress to independence.” In the press representation, the SNP was more vocal about bringing additional powers to the Scottish Parliament, while the Labour Party seemed to support the Scottish Act. Reporter Ian Bayne with Scots Independent wrote the SNP priority was “to seek systematically to remove the utterly unacceptable limitations imposed on our parliament’s legislative – as well as its fiscal – powers.”

There was also a lot of effort put into planning the building and a lot of attention given in the media to the shape of the chambers. Most newspaper reports agreed the Scots wanted a chamber unlike the one at Westminster, but the location and the exact shape were up for debate. Scots Independent ran ads asking for people to vote on the shape they would like to see for the parliament chambers, the advertisement depicted a hexagonal shape, which it claimed the schools of Scotland supported. Scots Independent said the Scottish Office planned to consult widely as they made their decisions. No matter what the suggestion, most supported a shape that would take them away from the “yah-boo” style of Westminster politics. Another debate about the building was the cost, the building at Holyrood ended up with a much higher cost than was anticipated which was especially worrying considering the new parliament would have powers to raise taxes to pay for the building. Even after the architect and location was chosen, the Scotsman

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reported the SNP planned to block construction and call for the use of Royal High on Calton Hill instead to save money.\(^{59}\)

**Scots vote for their MSP’s**

*The Scotsman* was dedicated to the vote in the days leading up to May 6, 1999. The articles and advertisements were overwhelmingly talking about the vote and they provided detailed instructions for how to vote in the newspaper. *Scots Independent* also spent a lot of space on the vote in their monthly issue. A columnist argued that whatever the vote turned out to be “the Media will claim that the election was in effect a referendum on independence”\(^{60}\) where the SNP’s share represents the will of the people on independence. If this is the case, it seems Scotland was not ready for independence because they were not close to a majority, but this claim may have altered the way people voted if supporting the SNP was considered equivalent to supporting an independent Scotland.

Other newspapers, like *The Daily Record*, did not have a similar narrow focus on the vote but it had ads and articles about the vote as well including a full-page advertisement for the Labour Party and against the SNP. *The Daily Record* reported SNP support had fallen, citing their own poll that the party would win just 37 seats. It said this would be a “bitter blow” to SNP leader Alex Salmond who was trying to “engineer a late revival against Labour.”\(^{61}\) Its advertisements were pro-Labour Party and on the day of the election it reported Donald Dewar was on course for victory.\(^{62}\) However, the paper still encouraged people to vote and a last-minute push by saying the undecided votes and the

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second votes would make the difference between a simple majority, or an absolute majority of 65 seats.

*The Scotsman* in the days before the election reported Labour’s lead slipping and SNP support growing, it correctly predicted this would be a benefit to the Liberal Democrats who would end up in a coalition government with the Labour Party.\(^6^3\) However, it also reported SNP voters would be more likely to vote than their Labour voters. The poll said overall 71 percent of Scots were certain to vote, the same percentage who voted in 1997. However, this percentage was higher among those in the top two parties with 83 percent of SNP “absolutely certain” to vote and 78 percent of Labour.

Although rain is not infrequent in Scotland the terrible storm on May 6, 1999 could have kept some Scots away from the polls. Voting was slow at the start of the day, but the excitement for a new Parliament still brought millions of people to the polls. *The Daily Record* reported the predicted turnout was close to the 70 percent turn out at the general election.\(^6^4\) After the Labour Party did not receive an absolute majority, a parliament was created with an alliance between the Labour Party and the Liberal Democrats.

**The first session of Scottish Parliament**

The Scottish Parliament met in the Assembly Hall, a temporary location while the building at Holyrood was being built. Edinburgh, although it was the capital of Scotland and the location of the parliament, hadn’t been the capital of governance in Scotland for a while. Tom Brown wrote about Edinburgh, “It is the belly-button of Scotland, perfect for

\(^6^3\) Coalition Looms as Liberal Democrats well placed to benefit as Labour lead slips and SNP support recovers. *The Scotsman*. May 2, 1999.

the making of history.” The day was depicted in some newspapers as being both solemn and silly. “History was being made and people were not quite sure how to rise to the great occasion. It would be nice to say that the first day of the new Parliament was a day when our MSPs matched the moment and made it worth waiting 300 years for … nice, but not true,” reported Tom Brown of The Daily Record. He even reported that the participant who “made the most sense” was a toddler as her mother was taking the oath to become an MSP. The Scotsman worded the lack of pomp and circumstance differently, commenting on confused tourists on the Royal Mile and curious locals, “If a historic thing can be done casually, without much fuss, this had become the Scottish way.” A bigger celebration would happen with the official opening of the Parliament in a few months when the Queen came to visit Scotland. It was reported a few months before the first day that Labour wanted a “low-key opening,” believing a large ceremony would benefit the SNP and build the nationalist agenda. The article accused the Labour Party of “selling Scotland short” by not putting enough effort into planning the opening. The SNP, on the other hand, called for the day to be a national holiday and a full ceremony. Although the size of the ceremony was determined by the leaders in the parties and the government, how the opening was presented in the press would determine how most Scots viewed the opening and what the actual impact would be.

65 Tom Brown. Power is so close, we can almost taste it out on the streets. The Daily Record. May 12, 1999.
The Daily Record discussed the excitement on the streets and throughout landmarks in Edinburgh in their May 12 edition, “You could feel the buzz on the Royal Mile yesterday. It was the buzz of power, the buzz of the place where things happen.” The article also discussed challenges with so many new parliamentary members likening them to “school kiddies” being taught not to interrupt or thump microphones and to give their attention to the Presiding Officer. The newspaper also discussed that the Parliament should be the people’s Parliament rather than a branch of Westminster and focused on the parliamentary tradition of listening to constituents.

A few weeks after the Parliament first met, Queen Elizabeth came to Scotland for the official re-birth of the Scottish Parliament. Even newspapers which openly supported an independent Scotland celebrated the arrival of their monarch. Scots Independent reported that Scotland “hijacked the occasion and made it their memorable own,” but it began the article talking about the triumphant occasion and the Queen.

Scottish Parliament and media access

The Scottish Parliament overall seeks for transparency and accountability. Symbolically, the lights in the unicameral chamber have outlines of people representing the Scots looking in and watching the parliament. Because of the media accessibility, citizens and reporters can keep watch on the MSPs. This was an emphasis as the Parliament was being formed. “Although the Scottish Parliament has faced significant criticism from the media, it decided not to curb media access. Instead the Consultative Steering Group’s Expert Panel on Media Issues recommended ‘minimal rules’ for

69 Tom Brown. Power is so close, we can almost taste it out on the streets. The Daily Record. May 12, 1999.
broadcast proceedings, widespread accreditation not only for national media but also local and specialist journalists and ‘considerable access to MSPs by accredited journalists’ (November 1999: 7).” The Consultative Steering Group was assigned to create the basic rules for how the Scottish Parliament would be run after the Scottish Act was passed, and they determined that media accessibility was in the interest of the Scottish people.

Allowing access between and press and the members, is a focus of the building at Holyrood. At Westminster, while there is a famous press gallery, there is not an area set aside for members of the press to find and talk with Members of Parliament. At Holyrood, the Garden Lobby is positioned between the chambers and the offices of the members, so members are consistently passing through and are obligated to speak to the press when possible. There is also a restaurant with a bar and canteen adjacent the garden lobby. Here they are frequently approached for interviews by members of the press and are also expected to talk to people from the public who are in the building.

**Holyrood vs. Westminster**

In the days after the people of Scotland voted to have their own Parliament, Prime Minister Tony Blair flew to Scotland and said it wasn’t just a good day for Scotland, but also for the United Kingdom. “This is the first step towards modernizing the whole United Kingdom constitution, to bring Government closer to the people,” Blair said in a speech. It is clear when looking at the Scottish Parliament that they are a more modern branch of the parliament at Westminster. Fourteen percent of the MSPs elected in 1999

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72 Tom Brown and Dave King. Daily Record. September 13, 1997. Well done Scotland! Blair in tribute to nation as Devo joy starts to sink in.
had been Members of Parliament in the House of Commons. Although they are both parliamentary systems within the same country, there are many differences in the way each parliament is run. Westminster is bicameral with both the House of Commons and the House of Lords, where Scottish Parliament only has one chamber. They also each have different origins and purposes. “Unlike the ancient institutions of Westminster, the Scottish Parliament was created by the current electorate in an express act because they said continually over a long period that they wanted it,” is how one article described the difference. The two parliaments meant something completely different to the people they represented.

These differences are mirrored in the buildings themselves. Westminster sits right by the Thames and was originally built in 1097 although most of the building is now newer than that. Its architecture is similar to the cathedral it sits near, and it fits in with other old buildings in London. The building at Holyrood is designed using modern architecture, many of the rooms are built to let light in and the shape of the building resembles leaves. The chambers are also very different. At Westminster, the Members of Parliament face each other from opposite sides of the room, where Members of Scottish Parliament sit in a semi-circle, or hemicycle, shape to encourage “constructive debate.” This shape was even used in the Assembly Hall, where the Members of Scottish Parliament met while their building was constructed, showing that the shape and modernization was meant to be an important part of the new Parliament. The chamber was also designed to have the opportunity for the public and the press to have access to

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the gallery. During most days, there is plenty of opportunity for Scots and anyone from the press to sit in the chambers and listen to their representatives’ debate. Once a week during First Minister’s Questions the tickets are often in high demand, but it is still very possible for a Scot to get tickets if they plan their visit in advance.

The semi-circle shape creates no face-to-face confrontation between the parties, although the desk pounding and shouting is still a part of how the MSPs express their opinions. “It is difficult to be precise as to what causes the different feel to the chamber compared to either chamber at Westminster. … The chamber just seems less confrontational, with the members at desks, unlike the House of Commons, where springing to your feet and sounding off certainly feels more natural. There is also the more informal nature of the chamber on the Mound.”

The chamber shape and the arrangement by political party is similar to Denmark and Finland.

Looking at the Parliament chambers, it could be argued that the architects and designers were creating a building with a Scandinavian style. “Reading between the lines of their intentions, it seems the idea was to foster a style of politics diametrically different from Westminster that would be based on high levels of consensus, compromise and cooperation between legislature and executive.” Although there seemed to be a goal to contrast the adversarial practice in Parliament by changing the shape, there is still shouting and banging on desks to emphasize a point or to show opposition. “Sometimes, but not always, the Scottish Parliament almost looks like a mini-Westminster. People are still shouting at each other, still scoring party political points,” said Canon Kenyon Write,

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executive chair of the Scottish Constitutional Convention. Enric Miralles, a Spanish architect, was chosen to design the Scottish Parliament building, which *The Scotsman* said was designed as an “antithesis to Westminster” with an elliptical chamber. The building was expected to both display the aspirations of the Scottish people and have a ‘democratic spirit;’ “they ask more of the architect than they ask of themselves as politicians.”

Additional member system

Another large difference in the Scottish Parliament is voting, they elect MSP’s using an Additional Member System. In 1996 and 1997, people in Scotland began a campaign for the future Scottish Assembly to use an additional member system with the hope that it would allow the parties in the parliament to better represent the percentage of support among the people. The system also makes it less likely that one party will gain an overall majority in the Parliament. “That provision was not included lightly in the Scotland Act, and some political commentators have argued that it was designed specifically to prevent an SNP majority at a future Scottish Parliament election.” They thought an SNP majority could open the door to an independent Scotland. In the additional member system in Scotland, the people vote for a representative for their local district and for representatives in a larger district. The MSPs representing multiple districts are determined by proportional representation which often will allow smaller parties into Parliament from districts where they have a significant enough minority. This

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new two-vote system did require effort to make sure voters understood how to vote, so instructions were placed in advertisements and newspaper articles.

Committees

Another aspect of the Parliament that differs from Westminster is the way the committees are run and the powers they have. In some ways, the committees of the Scottish Parliament resemble some Scandinavian parliaments more than the UK parliament. David Arter wrote a book with the premise that the devolved Scottish Parliament could be considered a Scandinavian-style small democracy and the committees have comparable powers to Swedish and Icelandic committees. The Consultative Steering Group’s report *Shaping Scotland’s Parliament* referred consistently to the parliamentary practices in Scandinavia. Arter even claimed “if the Scottish Parliament is Scandinavian in many of its influences, it is more Scandinavian than the Scandinavian parliaments in its openness and accessibility to the public.”

Scottish committee meetings are held in public, they can be attended by the public, streamed online, or read online through the official report. As a result, the media has more information to spread and the Scottish Parliament is more likely to be influenced by members of the public.

According to Arter, Scottish committees have four separate roles: supervise formation of Executive bills, initiate legislation, deliberate and amend legislative bills, and investigate the Executive branch which is obliged to respond. Some of these powers, Arter explains, are rare in parliaments. Only Wales and North Ireland parliaments have

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power to initiate legislation. Scottish Parliaments also have more flexibility than most in deliberating and investigating legislation. The Consultative Steering Group imagined committees that would be able to thoroughly examine an issue and listen to panels of experts before making decisions.

Arter considered how the Scottish committees were doing a few years into the parliament. Conservative MSP Brian Monteith said the “fundamental problem” was the dual role of legislation and inquiry in a small committee, and that there isn’t adequate time. With all the powers granted to committees in Parliament, many sources reported they did not have the ability to address smaller issues. The Consultative Steering Group originally wanted committees to promote most legislation, but after realizing how few parliaments have that ability they realized most legislation would continue to come from the Executive branch.

BBC reporter Brian Taylor said at Westminster the House of Commons committees are considering legislation, but at Holyrood the committees are “just interested onlookers.” He viewed the Scottish committees as less powerful than those in the UK parliament. However, the Scottish committees do have additional powers to create legislation that Westminster does not. Watson discussed that Scottish committee reports would gather media attention because they “carry considerable weight” and are presented to the entire Parliament even though they don’t always get endorsed with a vote. He said the Westminster equivalent reports are rarely debated and don’t often lead

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84 Arter, David. Page 236.
to action. Watson said as Parliament began to meet he thought committees would be the “engine room of the Parliament,” a view that strengthened throughout the first years of his time in the Scottish Parliament.

Customs

A final difference between the Parliaments in London and Edinburgh is the transformation of customs in the newer Scottish Parliament. The institution does have some customs of its own, but did not take all the customs from the United Kingdom. Many of the customs at Westminster are seen by the Scottish media as being outdated and reminiscent of a different time. Members of Parliament at Westminster would meet from 2:30 p.m. - 10:00 p.m., Holyrood’s schedule matches more closely with normal business hours.

Scottish Parliament was viewed in the newspapers as more progressive than Westminster. One example of this is the push to have more women in Parliament. Even before there was a vote to form the Scottish Parliament, the media talked about the 50-50 campaign supported by the Liberal Democrats and the Scottish Labour Party to ensure there were women in the parliament. The New Statesman reported, “We'll be campaigning for gender equality as the aim for a Scottish Parliament - not the "enhanced representation" Labour has started to speak of.”

First Minister’s Questions

Scottish Parliament adopted Westminster’s practice of asking the Prime Minister questions each week, although the system for asking the First minister questions is a little

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bit different. This decision was made by Donald Dewar, Scotland’s First Minister after the initial elections. *The Daily Mail* reported he introduced some practices used in Westminster, like the questions, because the non-confrontational politics they had tried to set up “failed to capture the imagination of the public.” First Minister’s Questions is a time where the First Minister answers questions from multiple parties about what the government is doing to address specific issues. This allows a time for reporters to hear what is happening in the government each week.

The non-confrontational attitude the media said Scots wanted is present in the questions at Holyrood, but the accountability and opportunity to question the government is still a part of politics in Scotland. “Every change recommended by the First Minister is a blow to those who wanted the Scottish Parliament to be different from Westminster, to get away from the boo politics often associated with the Commons. But it is a reflection of the dawning realisation among many in the Scottish Executive that some of the practices used in Westminster are worth preserving,” the *Daily Mail* article reported. Watson said some Members of Parliament believe that the questions at Westminster create a good impression, he did not agree. “In my experience, when the electorate watches at all, it does so with incredulity, finding the baying and cat-calling reminiscent of a children’s playground. The Scottish Parliament had to do better, had to produce a modern, flexible, responsive legislature. I believe it has succeeded in this.” Although they took the practice from the UK, they altered it to better fit with their own priorities.

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Outside of First Minister’s Questions the Scottish Parliament still debates issues with a different demeanor than the UK parliament. In most debates, speakers are given only four minutes but most will accept questions during their written speeches and allow a civil debate to happen around the issue. They score political points by answering a question from someone who opposes them in a civil manner. There are still responses to what is being said, cheers and desk banging that is occasionally quieted by the Presiding Officer. “Sometimes, but not always, the Scottish Parliament almost looks like a mini-Westminster. People are still shouting at each other, still scoring party political points,” said Canon Kenyon Write, executive chair of the Scottish Constitutional Convention. The differences in the way the Parliament debates were mentioned many times in the press, which put a negative light on the debates in Westminster and showed desire for a more civil political debate in Holyrood.

**Continued discussion about independence for Scotland**

It did not take long after the successful vote to create a Scottish Parliament for talks about Scottish Independence to show up in the conversation. *The Guardian* was one of the papers to report on SNP leader Alex Salmond saying that Scotland will be independent. “We will shortly begin work on our manifesto but I can say right now its centerpiece will be the pursuit of an independent Scotland. I have no doubt that we will achieve that aim within my own lifetime.”\(^9\) The article also cites Tony Blair, Prime Minister, telling members of the Labour Party in Edinburgh that the devolved Parliament would “cement rather than break up” the relationship between England and Scotland. This edition of *The Guardian* seemed not to support an independent Scotland and showed

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concern for Salmond’s optimistic view of the ability for Scotland to become independent. Although the Labour and Scottish National parties joined support for the vote on the Parliament, Labour was not as eager for a completely independent Scottish nation.

According to a Scots Independent journalist, the SNP “hijacked the Referendum campaign” at the Rothesay conference in 1997 shortly after the successful vote for a Scottish Parliament. Previously the party had a policy of no active support of independence but at the event 600,000 supporters of independence, 80-90 percent of the SNP voters polled, would vote yes to independence. They reported likely support outside of the party as well. While the Scottish Parliament was becoming a reality the conversation around independence continued. Scottish author Tom Nairn said in an address “The underground river of Scots national identity has been brought to the surface by the Referendum and is now flowing normally. There is a general acceptance that its destination is independence.”

Some people in Scotland, specifically the Scottish National Party members, still wish to have their own separate government because they have a culture that is unique and different from English culture. A referendum vote in 2014 led to 55 percent of Scots voting to stay in the United Kingdom. In the vote to leave the European Union, Scots clearly voted to remain, when the overall vote was to leave, many feel their interests are not represented. One day while I was in the Scottish Parliament building, citizens made a human chain around the building, demonstrating for an independent Scotland. If a vote for independence is considered again, the media will play a large role both in the

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referendum vote and possibly as the government determines how Scotland will be run independent from the United Kingdom.

Although independence has continued to be a discussion, media in the years examined was had varying opinions on their desire for complete independence and its feasibility. *The Daily Mail* quoted Scottish Secretary John Reid saying the SNP would need more than a majority in a Holyrood election to get their wish for independence, contradicting Donald Dewar.\(^94\) And, when the SNP did gain power in Holyrood, it did not lead to a successful referendum vote and independence in 2014. With Brexit, members of the SNP are even more determined to become independent and are eager for another vote if the break doesn’t go well for Scotland.

**Conclusion**

The press has a very important position in any nation, to keep the people informed on what is happening in their government. Scottish media was heavily involved in the vote for a Scottish Parliament and the efforts to design and organize the new government. Looking at the newspapers during the vote for a Scottish Parliament and the events around its formation, it is clear there was some impact from the reporting. Most of the papers showed support for the Parliament, and they helped lead the conversation about the vote often trying to convince Scots to vote for the Parliament, and later to be active in the vote for their representatives. The media in Scotland is very nationalistic and appeals to Scottish culture. Unique aspects of the Parliament were able to reflect that culture, including its openness to people and the press. The press was influential in how Scottish

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\(^94\) Ian Smith. SNP vote will not end Union says Reid. *Daily Mail*. November 27, 1999.
citizens perceived Westminster, which led to some of the differences between the two parliaments.

Bias in newspapers is expected in Scotland, *The Daily Record* is generally supportive of the Labour Party and *Scots Independent* supports the Scottish National Party, other newspapers which don’t have a clear party they support still took a stance on the vote for a Parliament in Scotland. Although such a stance would not be encouraged in American journalism, it may have been justified in the United Kingdom because the bias was understood and the Scots looked to the papers for editorial comments and ideas. Bias, when it is expected and disclosed, can help readers develop opinions and a connection with groups of people who feel the same way, for example as Scottish papers encouraged a vote for Parliament they built a sense of community and likely led more people to the voting booth. It also could be argued that political leanings could increase a newspaper’s readership, *The Daily Record* which generally supports the Labour Party had more readers in Scotland than *The Herald* which is not biased towards a specific party. However, it is still important for a news organization to acknowledge that there are two sides to ensure they are covering news as opposed to becoming propaganda. Most of these Scottish papers did show the opposite side, although it was not on the front page and was sometimes presented in a negative light.

This study on the Scottish press and its reporting on the events leading up to the opening of the Scottish Parliament can be applied to further research of newspaper coverage in Scotland. Although news has moved away from physical papers and onto the internet and social media platforms, there are enough similarities between the beginning of Scottish Parliament and current events in Scotland to merit connections. Knowing how the Scottish media represents various political leaders and decisions could help predict
coverage of a future independence vote or Scottish response to a Brexit agreement. The comparison in Scottish and British media in Scotland could also be useful as a background for these studies. Because leaders of the two major parties in Scotland were supportive of the Parliament, the newspapers representing those parties were openly supportive as well and aimed to persuade Scots to support a Scottish Parliament as well, this pattern could continue in future votes in Scotland. Although the Scottish press has become less biased toward specific parties since this vote, they were not opposed to editorializing and showing bias in the 2014 referendum vote. If another referendum vote comes, the press will be very involved in the process it can be expected that the press will frame the issue and encourage participation and support of Scottish culture.
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