

## **Methodological Appendix – Quantitative Reconstructions**

### **Sample**

News organizations: N=10

News reporters: N=70

News items: N= 480

News sources: N=1,307

### **Sampling Procedure**

To guarantee a representative sample of reporters in the first stage of quantitative face-to-face reconstruction interviews, we took the following steps:

(1) A month-long byline analysis of the designated news outlets to create a full, updated list of reporters and their respective news beats.

(2) An analysis of the relative proportion of the three beat clusters – political affairs (government, politics, national security etc.), domestic affairs (crime, health, municipal etc.) and financial affairs (macro and micro, central bank etc.), in the reporting workforce. Eventually this included all hard news beats, excluding sport, culture and life-style.

(3) Sampling of ten reporters from each news organization according to the proportion of the three clusters.

The daily newspapers that appear in the national TGI survey (Israel's only national readership survey) were included in the sample, as well as their news websites and one independent news site. Three financial news organizations were added to fill gaps of economic reporters in news organizations that had no independent economic sections and for the few cases in which the chosen

beats were missing or in which the respective reporter refused to participate in the study.

TV and Radio news were not included in this study. First, since comparisons across Israeli media showed that medium differences in reporting follow the line of timeliness (daily versus instant reporting, both of which are represented here by print and online news), more than the written /broadcast lines (Author 2016). In addition, presentation of TV and radio items, to enable reconstructions of the processes behind their production, require longer interview time due to the cumbersome process of presenting and scrutinizing their content.

The estimated number of journalists in Israel is 3,000, according to the World of Journalism project (Reich, Barnoy and Herzog, 2016). However, this number includes photographers, editors, data analysts and other editorial roles. After cross-referencing our by-line survey results with a private company's data base (Ifat media services), we found 275 news reporters working in the ten news organizations -- 157 of whom in the studied beats. This means that our sample included almost half (45%) of the respective population of news reporters.

The quantitative interviews were followed by qualitative reconstruction (using a methodology that is described in detail in the main paper). The interviews in both stages (the quantitative and qualitative) lasted between 40 and 146 minutes and were conducted between October 2016 and August 2017. The response rate was 86.4% (70/81) in the quantitative stage, and 76% (25/33) in the qualitative one.

## **Questionnaire**

The quantitative questionnaire included more than a hundred questions, most of which cover aspects of newswork that are beyond the scope of this paper. Almost all of the questions were close-ended, with a spectrum of possible answers, that emerged in pilot interviews. Yet, to account

for unexpected replies, reporters were allowed to choose the option “other” in each question and asked to specify the nature of that “other”.

To allow systematic descriptions as possible, reporters were asked to recall the list of sources and number them by order of their contribution to the item. First, the triggering source, then the second and so on. After this mapping, we asked a series of relevant questions about each source separately. Following is that series of questions, that starts with the credibility questions:

1. Please rank how credible is this source in your opinion on a scale of 1-6 (1 – extremely non-credible, 6 – extremely credible).
2. Please rank how credible is the information that this source provided in your opinion, on a scale of 1-6 (1 – extremely non-credible, 6 – extremely credible).

In cases of either inconsistent replies between source and message credibility (2-point difference) or low credibility (3 points and under), a follow-up open-ended questions was immediately presented: “Please explain why you ranked the source and the information the way you did?”. Additional open-ended questions that addressed epistemic issues more deeply, were presented in the qualitative follow-up interviews.

3. What is the role of the source (PR practitioner, senior official, expert, etc.)?
4. What is the gender of the source (male, female, other/unknown)?
5. What sector in society is the source affiliated with (government, private, private person, etc.)?
6. How frequently do you interact with this source? (first time, a couple of times, on a monthly/weekly/daily basis)

7. Please evaluate how important is this story in your eyes on a scale of 1-6 (1 – extremely unimportant, 6 – extremely important).
8. Please evaluate how interesting is this story in your eyes on a scale of 1-6 (1 – extremely uninteresting to 6 – extremely interesting).
9. Were there any substantial factual conflicts between the different sources behind this item?
10. Were the events reported in the story scheduled in advance (e.g. press conference, procedural processes, court hearing,) or unscheduled (e.g. accident and terror attacks)?
11. Was any of the information in the story exclusive (i.e. you were the only reporter who received and published that information)? If so, what percent of the information was exclusive?
12. Was the story based on leaked (an unofficial and unauthorized disclosure) information?

Finally, at the end of the quantitative interview, each reporter was asked a set of personal questions:

1. How many years do you work as a journalist?
2. How many beats do you cover on regular basis? Please specify each beat and estimate how much of your time (in percentages) do you spend working on that beat.
3. What level of education do you have? If any higher education is mentioned: is your higher education in communication, in journalism, or in a field related to your beat?