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“You’d be Right to Indulge Some Skepticism”: Trust-building Strategies in Future-oriented News Discourse

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ABSTRACT

This paper explores trust-building strategies in future-oriented news discourse, marked by a high degree of uncertainty. While current research mainly focuses on audiences’ perceptions of news credibility, this study addresses news trust from a production standpoint. We examine the trust-building efforts of media actors, focusing on their discursive labor within the context of election projections. Drawing on rich data from five election rounds in Israel and the US, we qualitatively analyzed 400 news texts and 400 tweets that were produced by 20 US and 20 Israeli media actors. This textual analysis was supplemented by 10 in-depth interviews with Israeli journalists. Our findings demonstrate three types of journalistic trust-building rhetoric in election coverage: facticity, authority, and transparency. These strategies result in a two-fold form of trust, which re-affirms traditional notions of accuracy and validity, while also challenging the ability of newspersons to obtain them in contemporary political and media cultures. Overall, these strategies hold unique opportunities and challenges for sustaining public trust in journalism and illuminate the complex communicative labor involved in building trust with news audiences. Our findings also highlight the importance of studying trust not only in relation to the past and the present, but also in future-oriented discourse.

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Trustworthiness is key to news production (Barnoy and Reich 2020; Ross Arguedas et al. 2022). Yet, there is still much we do not know about the discursive strategies that journalists employ to signal their doubts or beliefs, and to inspire trust among audiences (Gonen, Kampf, and Tenenboim-Weinblatt 2020; Hanitzsch et al. 2019). Future-oriented election coverage (Tenenboim-Weinblatt et al. 2022a; Toff 2019) in particular heightens the challenge of trust management in news production. When the outcomes and implications of unfolding elections cannot be verified in real-time, journalists are required to invest significant effort in building trust with audiences, while managing their own trust with

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sources. Election projections in news coverage thus constitute a paradigmatic case for studying trust from a production standpoint. Examining such projections, moreover, expands the common examination of trust in relation to solely the present or the recent past (Strömbäck et al. 2020).

In this paper, we therefore focus on election projections as a valuable prism for studying the construction of news trustworthiness. By integrating literature on news trust and journalistic future-oriented discourse and analyzing the coverage of the 2019–2020 Israeli elections and the 2016 and 2020 US elections, we illuminate journalists' discursive labor of building trust. We show that journalists generate trust by disguising news production processes and employing a rhetoric of facticity, using passive voice and avoiding justifications. Additionally, strategies of authority and transparency manifestation allow for trust establishment: they stress journalists' credible personas and embed election projections in meta-discourse to generate authenticity and cautiousness. These two parallel strategies invoke a dual form of trustworthiness, which re-affirms news authors' professional and cultural authority (Zelizer 2007) while simultaneously underscoring their relationship with audiences (Karlsson and Clerwall 2019). These identified strategies contribute to the research of future-oriented news and provide a broader understanding of trust from both textual and news production standpoints.

Theoretical Framework

News Trust from a Journalistic Standpoint

Trust and distrust are variously manifested in journalistic routines (Barnoy and Reich 2020; Wintterlin 2020). First, credibility judgments are prevalent in journalistic work. Journalists are required to gain the trust of sources and audiences, while judging the trustworthiness of others on a daily basis (Aharoni and Tenenboim-Weinblatt 2019; Barnoy and Reich 2020). In digital mediascapes particularly, journalists manage their trust not only in human actors, but also in the platforms through which they engage with audiences (Ross Arguedas et al. 2022; Zahay et al. 2021). Second, the manifestations of both trust and distrust in journalism are multifaceted, as journalists are paradoxically required to have faith in their information sources (Barnoy and Reich 2020; Wintterlin 2020), yet to remain skeptical toward them (Davies 2008; Gonen, Kampf, and Tenenboim-Weinblatt 2020). Lastly, as a social institution, journalism plays a significant role in shaping public trust. Journalistic expressions of cynicism might decrease audiences' trust not only in politics (Hanitzsch et al. 2019), but, potentially, also in the news media itself (Ross Arguedas et al. 2022).

Despite this prevalence of trustworthiness in journalists' work, and in a stark contrast to the extensive attention trust has attracted within audience research (Karlsson and Clerwall 2019; Strömbäck et al. 2020), journalists' own trust-related attitudes and practices are seldom examined (Gonen, Kampf, and Tenenboim-Weinblatt 2020; Ross Arguedas et al. 2022). This deficiency might be related to the inclination of journalism studies to dismiss the notion of trust as overly simplistic and to theorize the credibility perceptions of news as merely an "audience issue" (Usher 2018, 565). Instead, journalism scholars tended to focus on the related, but notably distinct, notion of journalistic authority, which involves journalists' professional and cultural legitimacy (Carlson 2017; Usher

2018; Zelizer 2007). This dominant focus on authority has left existing views of trust to almost exclusively revolve around its effects on the public (Perryman, Foley, and Wagner 2020; Strömbäck et al. 2020), making it difficult to understand its rhetorical role in news-making practices.

As an outcome of over-time relations (Barnoy and Reich 2020), trust requires discursive labor (Gonen, Kampf, and Tenenboim-Weinblatt 2020; Zahay et al. 2021). Accordingly, journalists can inspire credibility by adopting an objective style (Karlsson and Clerwall 2019; Zahay et al. 2021), adhering to traditional notions of neutrality and truthfulness (Davies 2008; Henke, Leissner, and Möhring 2020), and using professional transformations to distance themselves from sources (Tenenboim-Weinblatt and Baden 2018). Nevertheless, an opposite strategy of marking proximity to sources, especially knowledgeable ones, can also establish validity and expertise (Blom et al. 2021; Hamo 2015). Alternatively, journalists' employment of eye-witnessing rhetoric and first-person narration can create a sense of familiarity with the reported events (Vodanovic 2022; Zelizer 2007) and endow news stories with authenticity (Coupland 2001; Montgomery 2007; Wahl-Jorgensen 2020).

As part of such trust-building efforts, journalists may also incorporate their own beliefs and doubts into their news products (Aharoni and Tenenboim-Weinblatt 2019; Hanitzsch et al. 2019). Suspicions can be explicitly manifested (Gonen, Kampf, and Tenenboim-Weinblatt 2020). This strategy may culminate in journalists' increasing tendency to express personal opinions and advance subjective analysis in their coverage (Salgado and Strömbäck 2012). In other cases, more subtle textual strategies can be used—from distancing speech verbs (e.g., “claim”), through the use of conditionals (e.g., “if”), to rhetorical questions and irony—in order to embed journalists' own reservations within the tale of the events (Blom et al. 2021; Gonen, Kampf, and Tenenboim-Weinblatt 2020; Salgado and Strömbäck 2012). Combining different textual strategies thus allows journalists to warn readers about suspicious information, while signaling their own credibility as “professional trust allocators” (Barnoy and Reich 2020, 1).

This rich discursive apparatus demonstrates that, much like cultural authority (Carlson 2017; Zelizer 2007), trust is a product of an ongoing communicative labor (Zahay et al. 2021). However, journalists' discursive attempts to produce trustworthy coverage have remained largely understudied. In this paper, we therefore study trust not through its effect on publics, but rather through its construction by communicators. Accordingly, we adopt a sociolinguistic approach (Blom et al. 2021) to locate journalists' trust-building strategies within news texts. To this aim, we specifically focus on future-oriented journalistic discourse.

The Interplay of Trust and Future-oriented News Discourse

Although news trust is theorized as a reflexive weighing of future risks and profits (Luhmann 1979; Strömbäck et al. 2020), it has traditionally been studied in relation to the present or the past. Quantitative approaches to audiences' news trust are often phrased in present tense, asking respondents “to what extent do you trust ...” a news story or outlet (Strömbäck et al. 2020). Qualitative examinations of news trust also tend to focus on the present or near-past, asking individuals about their current estimations of journalism or recent consumption experiences (Aharoni et al. 2022; Karlsson and Clerwall 2019). This retrospective focus of trust operationalizations is at odds with the notion's

theoretical definition, which positions it at the heart of the societal mechanisms for preparing to a shared, unknown future (Luhmann 1979; Usher 2018). Given the inherent future orientation of trust (Henke, Leissner, and Möhring 2020; Wintterlin 2020), expanding this body of research to include prospective discourse is instrumental to an in-depth understanding of news trust and its journalistic construction.

Trust in prospective coverage is especially relevant considering the growing scholarly engagement with news temporalities, and the future in particular (Ananny and Finn 2020; Neiger and Tenenboim-Weinblatt 2016; Pentzold and Fechner 2021). Increasing emphasis is being placed on the temporal aspects of journalism, demonstrating how journalists predict upcoming occurrences, potentially contributing to public self-fulfilling and self-defeating prophecies (Tenenboim-Weinblatt 2018). Examining trust in the context of future-oriented news discourse can therefore lead to a more inclusive understanding of both news trust and journalism as a whole.

Future-oriented discourse, moreover, intensifies the role trust plays in news production. For instance, when speculating how the COVID-19 pandemic will develop or what will be the implications of another Donald Trump presidency, journalists can use various strategies (e.g., historical analogies, sources' predictions). However, they cannot verify such future-oriented assessments. Reporting on what has yet to occur thus transcends traditional journalistic principles (Ananny and Finn 2020; Pentzold and Fechner 2021; Vodanovic 2022) and may expose journalists' own interpretations of what is reasonable and trustworthy. Future-oriented news discourse is therefore a paradigmatic case of news trust; one that aligns with the theoretical definition of trust as a future-oriented emotion (Luhmann 1979) and holds unique opportunities for understanding the role of trust in news production.

Election Projections as Analytical Tools

In this study, we focus on election projections as a prism for studying the journalistic construction of news trustworthiness. As events with measurable outcomes and consequential implications, elections inspire an abundance of media forecasts (Tenenboim-Weinblatt et al. 2022b; Westwood, Messing, and Lelkes 2020). Such forecasts can, in turn, invoke different trust levels (Perryman, Foley, and Wagner 2020; Toff 2019) or incite distrust if proven wrong (Aharoni et al. 2022; Appelman and Schmierbach 2022). The creation, defense, and contestation of election projections therefore require journalists' trust-building efforts and linguistic resources, and provide a useful setting for studying trust from a news production standpoint.

According to Tenenboim-Weinblatt et al.'s (2022b) conceptualization, projections are constructed through an interplay of discursive components: a predicted outcome can be justified by evidential anchors, estimated with probabilities, assessed with normative or emotional evaluations, and may subsequently indicate suitable behavioral implications. Considering this framework, projections offer journalists a range of discursive opportunities to justify and build trust.

First, anchors—including any reasoning used to justify projections (Tenenboim-Weinblatt et al. 2022b)—can prove significant for conveying an impression of reliability, for instance by quoting sources and polls, or relying on historical analogies (Davies 2008; Tenenboim-Weinblatt and Baden 2018). Certain forms of anchors may have credibility

ramifications, potentially imbuing stories with a factual sense (Appelman and Schmierbach 2022; Blom et al. 2021). Yet, even scientific evidence, which audiences often deem credible (Henke, Leissner, and Möhring 2020), may raise suspicion and draw awareness to sources' motivations (Aharoni et al. 2022; Toff 2019).

Probability is another venue for building trust. To communicate the probability that a certain projection will realize, journalists employ uncertainty markers (Simmerling and Janich 2016) and use a variety of likelihood cues. These range from vague references (e.g., "could," "possibly") to more precise estimates (Pentzold and Fechner 2021; Tetlock and Gardner 2015), which can signify either a speculative or a substantiated stance, respectively. Shifting between assertiveness and tentativeness, probability may assist journalists with hedging less trustworthy estimations (Blom et al. 2021; Simmerling and Janich 2016), while also endowing their stories with scientific rhetoric (Henke, Leissner, and Möhring 2020; Pentzold and Fechner 2021).

Informed by these rhetorical mechanisms, in this study we aim to complement the dominant scholarly attention to public news trust (Karlsson and Clerwall 2019; Strömbäck et al. 2020) with an examination of journalists' trust-building strategies. Focusing on election projections as necessitating trustworthiness negotiations, we thus ask: Which discursive strategies do journalists apply in order to build trust with their audiences?

Method

To examine journalists' trust-building strategies in future-oriented discourse, we draw upon rich empirical evidence from two national contexts: the three rounds of the 2019–2020 Israeli general elections, and the 2016 and 2020 US presidential elections, including these races' primaries. While differing in their journalistic cultures (Hanitzsch et al. 2019) and electoral systems, these contexts are similar in their intensified political uncertainty (Shamir and Rahat 2022; Westwood, Messing, and Lelkes 2020) and public skepticism towards media projections (Aharoni et al. 2022; Toff 2019). In the US, Trump's unexpected 2016 victory evoked concerns over media forecasts' validity (Perryman, Foley, and Wagner 2020; Tenenboim-Weinblatt 2018). Similarly, while Netanyahu's April 2019 win was anticipated by Israeli media, his failure to form a government and the subsequent political crisis were unforeseen (Shamir and Rahat 2022). The public attention to inaccurate projections in the US and Israel further complicates journalists' forecasting efforts and requires heightened trust-building strategies. These two electoral contexts are thus a fruitful setting to study the journalistic construction of trustworthiness.

To this end, we qualitatively analyzed texts produced by 20 US and 20 Israeli influential journalists, using: (1) their election coverage across 15 US and 12 Israeli major news outlets; (2) future-oriented tweets posted by a sub-sample of 10 US and 10 Israeli journalists; and (3) in-depth interviews with a sub-sample of 10 Israeli journalists. While the news texts and tweets serve to capture edited and non-institutional trust manifestations, respectively, the interviews contextualize journalists' discursive trust-building strategies. All research materials were collected as part of a large-scale study on political projections.¹

To collect relevant coverage of these elections, we first identified leading news outlets in these countries (for the sampling rationale and full outlet list, please see Supplementary Material, section 1). Building on a broad definition of "professional journalism", which

encompasses a variety of positions with at least some news content responsibility (Hanitzsch et al. 2019, 51), we then mapped all newsmen in these outlets who were involved in the creation and mediation of election coverage. Accordingly, we considered a range of media actors: from traditional journalistic roles (e.g., reporters, commentators), through television and radio hosts, to former politicians who became regular news contributors. While this inclusive approach of journalism as the production of news discourse (Carlson 2016; Hanitzsch et al. 2019) entails some limitations (as noted in the Discussion), it also offers a rich portrayal of trust-building strategies (for a similar variation of journalistic roles in trust research, see Ross Arguedas et al. 2022; Toff 2019).

Based on this initial mapping, our selection of 40 journalists followed several considerations. First, we sought for prominent actors in the production of election coverage in the two studied countries. To this end, we relied on a combination of existing datasets, an expert survey, and social media followership data.² Second, from these identified actors we considered those who had prominent future-oriented coverage, confirming that their news articles and tweets referred to the election outcomes or to their implications. Third, journalists were selected to encompass a variety of outlets, ideologies, and seniority levels (see Tables 1 and 2). Across these variations, we also strived to maintain

Table 1. Characteristics of sampled US newsmen.

Name	Gender	Ideology	Seniority in years ³	Role	Outlet
Donna Brazile*	F	Left	30	Commentator (former political strategist)	TV: Fox**
Robert Costa	M	Unidentified	12	Reporter	Newspaper: Washington Post (WP)
Thomas Friedman*	M	Left	44	Commentator	Newspaper: New York Times (NYT)
Maggie Haberman	F	Left	26	Reporter, Commentator	Newspaper: New York Times (NYT)
Sean Hannity	M	Right	33	Host, Commentator	TV: Fox
Mary Louise Kelly*	F	Unidentified	29	Host	Radio: National Public Radio (NPR)
Paul Krugman*	M	Left	30	Commentator	Newspaper: New York Times (NYT)
Jonathan Lemire*	M	Unidentified	21	Reporter	News agency: Associated Press (AP)**
Jon Levine*	M	Right	15	Reporter	Newspaper: News York Post (NY Post)
Rush Limbaugh	M	Right	51	Host, Commentator	Radio: Premiere Networks (PN)
Rachel Maddow*	F	Left	23	Host, Commentator	TV: MSNBC
Peggy Noonan	F	Right	47	Commentator (former political speechwriter)	Newspaper: Wall Street Journal (WSJ)
Susan Page	F	Unidentified	32	Reporter	Newspaper: USA Today
Joel Pollack	M	Right	12	Commentator, editor	Online: Breitbart
Eugene Robinson	M	Unidentified	46	Commentator	Newspaper: Washington Post (WP)
Rick Santorum*	M	Right	5	Commentator (former senator)	TV: CNN
Kate Shellnutt*	F	Right	16	Reporter, editor	Online: Christianity Today (CT)
Nate Silver*	M	Unidentified	15	Data journalist, Editor	Online: FiveThirtyEight
George Stephanopoulos	M	Left	26	Host, Commentator (former political advisor)	TV: ABC
Karen Tumulty	F	Unidentified	45	Commentator	Newspaper: Washington Post (WP)

Note: *Twitter sub-sample. ** Previous position.

Table 2. Characteristics of sampled Israeli newsmen.

Name	Gender	Ideology	Seniority in years	Role	Outlet
Shirit Avitan-Cohen	F	Right	12	Reporter	Newspaper: Makor Rishon (MR)
Yaron Avraham*	M	Unidentified	11	Reporter, Commentator	TV: Channel 12 (Ch12)
Moran Azulay	F	Unidentified	23	Reporter, Commentator	Online: Ynet
Nahum Barnea	M	Left	55	Commentator	Newspaper: Yedioth-Ahronoth (YA)
Raviv Druker	M	Left	27	Commentator	TV: Channel 13 (Ch13) Newspaper: Haaretz
Itay Gadassi	M	Right	15	Reporter, Commentator	Radio: Kol-Hai
Amos Harel	M	Left	21	Commentator	Newspaper: Haaretz
Jacky Huri*	M	Left	23	Reporter, Commentator	Newspaper: Haaretz
Sima Kadmon	M	Left	37	Commentator	Newspaper: Yedioth-Ahronoth (YA)
Yoav Karkowski*	M	Unidentified	25	Reporter, Commentator	TV: Kan 11
Ben Caspit	M	Center-left	37	Commentator	Newspaper: Maariv Radio: 103
Chaim Levinson*	M	Left	18	Reporter, Commentator	Newspaper: Haaretz
Rina Matzliah	F	Unidentified	39	Commentator, Anchor	TV: Channel 12 (Ch12)
Yehuda Schlezinger*	M	Right	16	Reporter	Newspaper: Israel Hayom
Tal Schneider*	F	Unidentified	18	Reporter, Commentator	Newspaper: Globes**
Amit Segal*	M	Right	23	Reporter, Commentator	Newspaper: Yedioth-Ahronoth (YA) TV: Channel 12 (Ch12)
Tal Shalev*	F	Unidentified	16	Reporter	Online: Walla
Michael Shemesh*	M	Right	10	Reporter	TV: Kan 11
Attila Somfalvi*	M	Center-left	21	Reporter, Anchor	Online: Ynet
Yossi Verter	M	Left	39	Commentator	Newspaper: Haaretz

Note: *Twitter sub-sample. ** Previous position.

comparability between the two national sub-corpora, including US and Israeli newsmen with similar socio-demographic and professional backgrounds.

To sample election coverage by these newsmen, we used a carefully validated set of keywords, combining general election-related terms (e.g., “victory”, “turnout”, “debate”) and direct references to the studied elections and primaries (see Supplementary Material Section 2 for the full keyword list). In the US, sampling comprised two periods, spanning from the first candidacy announcement in each election (by Ted Cruz for the Republican primaries in 24 March 2015; by Tulsi Gabbard for the Democratic primaries in 1 January 2019), until the new president’s inauguration (Donald Trump on 20 January 2017; Joe Biden on 20 January 2021). In Israel, due to repeated failures to form a government, we sampled all three election rounds successively: starting with Avigdor Liberman’s resignation as defense minister and call for early elections (14 November 2018), and ending with the inauguration of a unity government (17 May 2020). The resulting initial dataset included 26,264 texts by the 40 journalists, which were stored on the JAmCAT server for large-scale text analysis. Furthermore, we extracted all tweets posted in these time

frames by a sub-sample of 20 journalists who prominently (re-)tweeted about the election outcomes ($N = 441,071$).

Sampling from this large initial dataset involved automated and manual selections. First, we used validated keywords to identify future-oriented speech, comprising grammatical (e.g., “will”, “going to”), temporal (e.g., “always”, “tomorrow”) and speech act markers (e.g., “predicts”, “expects”) (see: Supplementary Material 3). Second, for each of the selected 40 journalists, we randomly sampled 10 future-oriented media texts from different periods of the campaigns. The first and third authors, together with research assistants, confirmed that the selected texts contain sufficient election projections. Articles with scant projections were manually replaced with future-oriented texts published on a proximate date. For half of the journalists we sampled 20 future-oriented tweets, using the same process of random sampling with manual filtering. Overall, our corpus comprised 400 news media texts and 400 tweets.

To supplement the content analysis and support the identification of trust-building rhetoric, we relied on interview data collected as part of the larger project.⁴ Recruited based on the initial mapping of prominent journalists, interviewees included high-profile Israeli reporters, commentators, and anchors, who created and mediated election projections. Six of the journalists work for prominent print/online news outlets (two for *Yedioth Ahronoth/Ynet*, two for *Haaretz*, one for *Globes*, and one for *Israel Hayom*), and the remaining four work for leading television channels (two for *Kan 11*, and two for *Channel 12*). The interviews were conducted between March and October—during the two 2019 election campaigns. Building on a story reconstruction technique (Reich and Barnoy 2016), which enables a retrospective exploration of discursive choices, journalists were asked about the creation of future-oriented discourse within two of their recent election stories. The resulting “meta-journalistic discourse” (Carlson 2016) was recorded, transcribed, and anonymized (interviewees are henceforth referred to as “Reporter1”, “Commentator4”, etc.). Together, the collected articles, tweets, and interviews illuminate different modes of trust-building within election coverage.

All research materials underwent a multi-stage qualitative analysis. First, we thoroughly read a portion of the texts and extracted all electorate projections, and broader future-oriented utterances (e.g., politicians’ promises, polling data). We then openly analyzed these utterances and developed a shared inductive coding scheme, including the discursive model of projections (Tenenboim-Weinblatt et al. 2022a), along with journalists’ use of positioning styles, modal verbs and meta-discourse (Hamo 2015). After testing and refining our coding scheme, we used the MAXQDA content analysis software to systematically categorize the full corpus (see Supplementary Material section 4 for the full coding scheme). Finally, the identified themes (Corbin and Strauss 2008) were classified into three discursive trust-building strategies in election prospective discourse: a rhetoric of facticity, authority, and transparency.

Findings: Three Trust-building Strategies

Our analysis revealed three trust-building rhetorical strategies in journalists’ prospective election discourse. The first is a rhetoric of facticity, which builds on traditional institution-based trust (Coupland 2001; Hanitzsch et al. 2019) by presenting election

projections as either naturalized or distanced. The second strategy establishes the trustworthiness of the projecting journalist through a rhetoric of authority and expertise. Lastly, the third rhetoric openly exposes the limitations of election projections, manifesting transparency and reflexivity.

Facticity

Facticity involves two sub-strategies: *naturalization*, which relies on unqualified future statements, and *distancing*, which attributes anticipated scenarios to external actors. These strategies achieve a factual impression via opposite means: the former implicitly attributes the projection to the journalist, while the latter separates journalists from the reported projections. Both sub-strategies were typical of traditional journalistic roles (e.g., reporters and commentators) and were less prevalent in projections by other media actors (e.g., former politicians).

Naturalization. Naturalized projections rhetorically extend factual knowledge into the future. They are devoid of probability markers (Simmerling and Janich 2016) and involve little or no justifications. In Coupland's (2001) terms, trust in these instances builds on an "authenticity from-above", which underlines the authority of news outlets while blurring journalists' individual authorship. Naturalization was common in articles by print and online reporters (e.g., Susan Page, Robert Costa, Tal Shalev). It was also found in news texts of broadcast commentators and hosts (e.g., Rina Matzliah, Itay Gadassi) and in their tweets (e.g., Rachel Maddow, Yoav Karkowski).

Absence of modal markers is a prominent characteristic of factual apparent projections. It conceals the relationship between language and reality, and allows journalists to position their texts as indexical representations of the world (Coupland 2001). Naturalization was found in reporters' and commentators' tweets, especially during the 2016 US elections. For instance, less than a month before election day, New York Post reporter Jon Levine declared: "[Hillary] Clinton is going to be the next president" [Twitter, 20.10.2016, US].⁵ Despite the public criticism raised by such unquestioned forecasting (Perryman, Foley, and Wagner 2020; Toff 2019), and regardless of the risk of being proven wrong, naturalization was also prominent in the 2020 elections. For instance, five days before Joe Biden's inauguration, MSNBC host Rachel Maddow alluded to President Trump's unwillingness to attend the ceremony and tweeted: "we'll have a transition of vice presidents [...] but not presidents" [Twitter, 15.01.2021, US].

Lack of modality was also prevalent in news discourse about the implications of different election outcomes. In an article by commentator Thomas Friedman, the prospective agenda of then-candidate Donald Trump was phrased as an unequivocal future state: "He will have no problem playing the moderate unifier – and plenty of people will buy it [...] 'Mexico will have to pay for that wall', Trump will say, but it will be in 'installments'" [NYT, 08.03.2016, US]. Trump's future behaviors, statements, and public acceptance are depicted in this text without any reservations or justifications. While Friedman may have based his projections upon information sources or previous knowledge, these remain invisible to the readers, making the text "mysteriously natural" (Coupland 2001, 424). The quotation marks further enhance the factual impression, presenting Trump's conjectured statement as if it were an accurate direct quote. However, as evidenced in this sub-section, multiple naturalized projections have been decisively disproven.

Contrary to the aforementioned predictions made by Levine, Maddow, and Friedman, Clinton did not win the presidency, neither Trump nor Mike Pence got re-elected, and the expansion of the “Trump wall” was funded by the US rather than Mexico. Consequently, attempting to build trust through employing a rhetoric of naturalization might paradoxically lead to a loss of trust instead.

A rhetoric of naturalization was also found in the coverage of the Israeli elections. Following the formation of a unity government in May 2020, a television reporter anticipated challenges: “One of the main struggles of the next government is the budget. [...] The attitude towards the legal system is a struggle that will persist”⁶ [Avraham, Ch12, 16.05.2020, IL]. Here too, projections are descriptively reported, while disregarding any interaction with sources or audiences, and without expressing any “language of uncertainty” (Simmerling and Janich 2016).

Distancing. Factual impression is also achieved via statements by politicians, experts, or colleagues. Quoting others’ speculations enable journalists to distance themselves from both their sources and the prospective information they provide (Blom et al. 2021; Gonen, Kampf, and Tenenboim-Weinblatt 2020). Unlike non-verifiable projected content, speakers’ act of projecting election outcomes anchors the text in provable past statements. In Israel, distancing was widespread in columns by political commentators (e.g., Sima Kadmon, Yossi Verter, Shirir Avitan-Cohen). In US newspapers, however, distancing was documented in the work of reporters (e.g., Robert Costa, Maggie Haberman, Jonathan Lemire), while commentators and hosts (e.g., Mary Louise Kelly, Rachel Maddow) mostly used it in tweets.

In the Israeli multi-party competition, utilizing others’ speculations was prominent. Projections regarding the unexpected coalition composition ranged from forecasts of continuity, as in a television reporter’s projection: “[Benjamin] Netanyahu: the current coalition is the core of the next coalition” [Shemesh, Twitter, 24.12.2018, IL]; to speculations about changes, as in the words of a television anchor: “Chairman of Israel Beitenu party [...] said there is a high probability that the New Right chairman will not vote for Netanyahu” [Matzliah, Ch12, 08.03.2019, IL].

Distanced projections could also evaluate specific dangers or opportunities (“Capehart has warned Democrats [...]: ‘Trump [...] could prove dangerous to a Clinton campaign’”, Pollack, Breitbart, 23.12.2015, US) or broad fears and hopes regarding the future of the country (“‘any day can be a horror show for America,’ Ms. Pelosi said”, Haberman, NYT, 08.01.2021, US). Such desirability indicators, however, were not attributed to journalists, who often balanced them with opposite assessments. In her analysis of the 2016 Republican primaries, USA Today reporter Susan Page contrasted between Trump and experts’ future assessments: “While Trump seems to take his candidacy seriously, it’s hard to find a political analyst who sees him as a credible contender” [USA Today, 17.06.2015, US]. In the absence of newsmen’s own judgments, such accounts appear objective (Tenenboim-Weinblatt and Baden 2018; Tuchman 1972).

In addition to building on projections by politicians, journalists also commonly relied on experts and opinion polls. Political reporter Robert Costa informed his readers of a pollster’s perspective, without either endorsing or challenging it: “A Republican pollster said Trump’s strident rhetoric about crime the past week is likely to hurt him” [WP, 11.06.2020, US]. Similarly, newspaper reporter Moran Azulay opened her article with an election-poll report: “Tzemach[’s survey] shows [...] that the right is getting stronger” [Ynet, 10.03.2019, IL].

Distancing can also be achieved by blurring the individual identity of newsmen and stressing the media outlet they work for. Accordingly, an interaction with a Republican official was attributed to the newspaper rather than to the reporter: “I think Trump’s going to make a great president,” Dole declared in an interview with USA Today” [Page, USA Today, 21.07.2016, US]. A similar pattern occurred in the leading paragraph of a financial newspaper:

It was reported in a number of outlets that Yesh Atid [party] are considering to join forces with Benny Gantz’s new party [...] The negotiations are allegedly conducted quietly, but both sides deny [...] We approached [them ...] and were told that these claims have no factual basis. It should be noted that the more center-left parties run separately, the harder it will get to replace Netanyahu [Schneider, Globes, 14.01.2019, IL].

Reporter Tal Schneider anchored the possible parties’ unification upon external publications, avoiding self-attribution. She described the negotiation with the epistemic modality “allegedly” and balanced it with the politicians’ denial. Schneider also cast doubt by noting the inconsistency between the politicians’ promises (“to replace Netanyahu”) and their current actions (running separately). Although the text includes the reporter’s evaluations and skepticism, the collective perspective and passive formulations obscure her involvement in the creation of the text and subtly weave her reservations into the narrative (Gonen, Kampf, and Tenenboim-Weinblatt 2020).

A rhetoric of facticity and its trustworthiness implications were also discussed by the Israeli interviewees. One television anchor reported on distancing himself from others’ projections, mentioning that when a source claims something “with his own [mouth],” hedging is unnecessary [Anchor1]. Others noted the importance of avoiding “wishful thinking” [Reporter1] and exhibiting balance and neutrality for trust management:

If you show someone who comes down on Bibi [Netanyahu] you show someone who defends [him ...] It’s very important [...] to be as tight, precise, fair, impartial as possible, [so ...] people understand that when they consume news from you, they receive reliable, well-founded, accurate information [Reporter3].

To summarize, factual rhetoric presents election projections as self-evident and indisputable. Naturalization downplays the role of sources and probability markers, while distancing uses direct and indirect quotes by external sources. Collective perspectives, passive voice, and internal reservation expressions (Gonen, Kampf, and Tenenboim-Weinblatt 2020) further diminish personal authorship and build on the reliability of professional conventions and institutions (Carlson 2017; Tuchman 1972).

Authority and Expertise

A second approach foregrounds journalists’ authority. Accordingly, news actors embrace a personal positioning, highlighting their recognizable personas, exclusive knowledge (Blom et al. 2021; Hamo 2015), and superior prediction capabilities. This type of rhetoric was common in both commentary texts and tweets, especially when produced by veteran male columnists (e.g., Thomas Friedman, Paul Krugman, Nahum Barnea; for an examination of gender and news discourse see: Tenenboim-Weinblatt and Baden 2021). Stressing their authority, commentators and hosts inserted their beliefs into their

prospective analysis. They grounded projections on their own reasoning, using phrases like: “I believe that” [Barnea, YA, 18.09.2019, IL] and “My guess is” [Robinson, WP, 21.07.2015, US]; and provided varied evaluations, from “rosy” futures [Maddow, MSNBC, 19.06.2015, US] to “nightmare” scenarios [Verter, Haaretz, 31.05.2019, IL].

Active provision of justifications served to privilege newsmen’s perspective. Employing eye-witnessing practices (Zelizer 2007), journalists built on their experience to substantiate political projections and signify a reliable impression. Especially in the discourse of senior journalists, anchoring projections included statements like: “I have been covering Israeli politics for three decades” [Caspi, Maariv, 13.01.2019, IL], and: “in the 27 years that I’ve been doing this program ...” [Limbaugh, PN, 28.08.2015, US]. Expertise manifestation is evident in an article by Thomas Friedman, who vaguely alluded to an unfamiliar, past Israeli election. The result is a prospective text which not only conveys information about politics, but also about the projecting journalist:

If, God forbid, there is a major terrorist attack [...] Trump will reap enormous political benefits. [...] Watch out. I’ve seen how one well-timed terrorist attack tilted an Israeli election. [...] One of the lessons I learned covering the Middle East is that the only good thing about extremists is that they don’t know when to stop [NYT, 09.03.2016, US].

While the words “Watch out” negatively evaluate the prediction (along with “God forbid”), this is also a meta-comment to the readers—a warning that given Friedman’s vast knowledge, this unlikely scenario could materialize. Similar examples exist in tweets. Following the failure of Israeli coalition negotiations, television and newspaper commentator Amit Segal tweeted about the prospect of a second election round: “How happy I would be to be wrong, and not have elections. It will fill my life with endless happiness. I’ll buy you all a beer.” [Twitter, 25.05.2019, IL]. The affective forecast (Tenenboim-Weinblatt et al. 2022a) that being proven wrong will make Segal happy paradoxically signals the impossibility of such a mistake. With more than 430 thousand Twitter followers at the time, the unrealistic promise to “buy you all a beer” indicates Segal’s confidence in his projection.

Another avenue for manifesting authority was through qualifying probabilities. High modality displayed projections as guaranteed, employing markers such as: “obviously” [Segal, YA, 01.03.2019, IL], “Surely” [Krugman, Twitter, 17.12.2016, US], and “No question. It’s just a matter of how and when” [Limbaugh, PN, 21.01.2021, US]. Likewise, in a website text Joel Pollak depicts “how the G-20 2017 Will Look Like” [Breitbart, 07.09.2016, US], depending on the elected President. “Clinton would undoubtedly represent more of the same”, writes Pollak, “though she would certainly be greeted more warmly by Angela Merkel.” Although the subjunctive word “would” portrays this script as hypothesized, the high epistemic modality (“undoubtedly”, “certainly”) charges it with assurance.

A knowledgeable positioning also appeared in reports of others’ projections. Contrary to the neutral distancing technique described above, this category opened a space for endorsing or challenging external projections, using expressions like: “correctly, in my view” [Silver, FiveThirtyEight, 03.08.2015, US] and “this is a fantasy” [Levinson, Twitter, IL]. For instance, political reporter Jonathan Lemire undermined a projection, 13.11.2019 by former New York mayor Bloomberg, concluding that it is “remarkably optimistic” [AP, 08.03.2016, US]. Given the dual meaning of “optimistic” as marking both likelihood and desirability (Tenenboim-Weinblatt et al. 2022b), Lemire renegotiated the probability of Bloomberg’s assessment and positioned himself as an expert, who can discern truthful

projections from misinformation. Another example is evident in the weekly column by Amit Segal:

Gantz believes that [...] the ultra-Orthodox will join his bandwagon. To those who justly doubt his ability to do so, he replies, justly as well, that given his lack of political experience he actually has not-so-bad achievements [...] Contrary to everyone, perhaps even contrary to logic, he is not under the impression that the ultra-Orthodox will go all the way in their historic veto on Lapid [a secular politician resented among the ultra-orthodox] [YA, 01.03.2019, IL].

The expressions “justly” and “contrary to logic” position Segal as a knowledgeable judge of reasonable assessments. Referring to “those who ... doubt” Gantz’s abilities, Segal remains ambiguous, possibly alluding to the doubts of colleagues and readers, and by way of emotional outsourcing (Wahl-Jorgensen 2020), even to his own. Framing those doubts as “just[ly]” steers the readers to the “correct” low probability that Gantz will become PM. While legitimizing Gantz’s anchoring information, Segal presents the candidate’s aspiration to secure an Ultra-Orthodox support as irrational. The latter strong assertion is hedged by the epistemic modality “perhaps even”, resulting in a “push” and “pull” pattern (Montgomery 2007), which extends traditional objectivity to address news narratives in an engaging personalized manner (Salgado and Strömbäck 2012).

An authoritative stance was also expressed by several interviewees, who stressed their expertise in “assessing what will happen” [Anchor2], and noted their advanced capabilities in “thinking about what’s next” [Reporter2]. Yet, Reporter2 also revealed feeling “forced to address the future. It’s risky, I don’t like it.” Indeed, in today’s information environment, journalists asserted that their unique political foresight no longer belongs to what Goffman (1959) referred to as “back-stage” processes. Aligning with documented journalistic challenges (Toff 2019), many interviewees depicted public and editorial pressures to provide clear-cut projections. Two well-known television newsmen described how “people bother me all day long” [Reporter5], “asking me in the street ‘what will happen?’” [Anchor2]. The risk of being identified with bold projections is evident in a quote by a newspaper commentator, who recalled “endless fights” with his editor:

A strong headline signed with my name will generate more noise [... But] I’m concerned about whether someone is waiting [...] to expose my mistakes because of political opposition, newspaper antagonism, or just [because they are] competing colleagues [...] I don’t want to be humiliated by predicting something absurd just because [...] an inexperienced editor lacks a headline [Commentator2].

Juxtaposing textual projections with the interviews thus creates a tension. The interviewees opposed to project political outcomes and argued that “journalists are not prophets!” [Commentator1]. Our textual analysis, however, exposes a rich prospective discourse in the US and Israeli election coverage, in which projections are both abundant and frequently presented as accurate. In addition to establishing authority, dissolving this tension between projections’ validity and reliability can be conducted through a third rhetoric, which, as discussed below, allows a reflexive stance.

Transparency and Reflexivity

In line with Goffman’s (1959) self-presentation theory, transparent projections expose “back-stage” information, using hedging strategies and meta-discourse. Positioning

themselves as equal to their readers, commentators contemplated the accuracy of their justifications and probability estimations. They referred to the uncertainty of the future that is “full of surprises” [Noonan, WSJ, 20.08.2015, US] and luck-reliant [Verter, Haaretz, 28.12.2018, IL], and stressed their inability to accurately predict it. Such reflexive discourse openly undermines the appearance of news as natural, drawing attention to the textual attributes of projections, which may be transformed or refuted. This rhetoric was particularly prominent in the texts and tweets by data journalist Nate Silver. It was also prevalent in news texts by partisan commentators and hosts (e.g., Peggy Noonan, Rush Limbaugh, Ben Caspit) and in tweets by Israeli journalists with large followership (e.g., Amit Segal, Tal Schnider, Michael Shemesh).

Reflexivity was dominant in the early 2016 US primaries, when Trump’s announcement of candidacy incited confusion. Columnist Peggy Noonan deemed the republican primaries “not as predictable” as previously portrayed, concluding that: “No one knows [what will happen], because we’re in new territory, with a rogue real-estate developer and reality-TV star as a prime presidential prospect.” Noonan also recognized the evolution of public projections around Trump (“The question has evolved from ‘Will he have an impact?’ [...] to ‘Could he actually be elected president?’”), including her own past projection that did not materialize: “A few months ago I wrote that the 2016 presidential primary looked to come down to Bloody versus Boring [...] Our late-summer report? Different” [WSJ, 20.08.2015, US]. In both countries, gambling metaphors reflected uncertainty, equating the political map to a “poker table” [Caspit, Maariv, 13.01.2019, IL] with “wild-card” scenarios [Maddow, MSNBC, 10.02.2016, US].

In these snippets, trustworthiness relies on journalists’ self-reflection, which conveys an authentic impression (Vodanovic 2022). One common tendency in that respect was undermining the accuracy of election polls, by admitting that they: “don’t mean much” [Silver, FiveThirtyEight, 03.08.2015, US] because they: “tell you very little about who is going to win in all likelihood” [Maddow, MSNBC, 02.04.2019, US]. One interviewee even reported on openly disclosing both her inability to project election outcomes and her distrust in polls:

[When I’m asked about the future, I say] that I don’t know who will win, because [...] I don’t have prophetic abilities [...] that I don’t trust the polls and therefore I don’t think the polls are right, and that I really don’t know [Reporter2].

Some journalists admitted to not being able to predict forthcoming events. Such statements were common in Israeli journalists’ tweets, especially during the ongoing parliamentary crisis. After anticipating that Netanyahu’s AIPAC speech will be “equivalent of the 2015 Congress speech”, a Globes reporter disclosed: “*Note: I don’t really know if all of this will happen, but it seems reasonable to me” [Schneider, Twitter, 24.12.2018, IL]. Similarly, Israel Hayom’s reporter hedged his strong assertion that “The era of Netanyahu is over” with a contract-like reminder that errors are possible: “*It appears *until the next election *E&OE [errors and omissions excepted]” [Schlezinger, Twitter, 17.11.2021, IL].

Beyond signaling authenticity and humor, such disclaimers are expressions of boundary work (Carlson 2016). As one interviewee noted: “People want to know what will happen, it’s human. But this is exactly the limit where, as journalists, we are supposed to say ‘guys, I’m not a gambler, [nor ...] a magician.’” [Anchor1]. Oftentimes, such

disclosures were connected to notions of honesty and trustworthiness. For instance, in response to a caller who probed about the 2022 and 2024 elections, radio anchor Rush Limbaugh declared:

I want to answer your question as honestly as I can [...] I can't predict the future [...] I will occasionally try to have fun and I'll make a prediction. But you're asking me seriously, and [...] I have no idea what's gonna happen [PN, 21.01.2021, US].

Reflexive rhetoric was also created by adopting a collective perspective. Using plural first-person pronouns and presenting future analysis as a dialogue, journalists signify an affinity to their readers (Vodanovic 2022). For instance, signaling that his readers and himself share important suspicions, Nate Silver noted: "You'd be right to indulge some skepticism toward the latest round of speculation about Biden" [FiveThirtyEight, 03.08.2015, US]. Similarly, a report by Shirit Avitan-Cohen, which assesses the role of religious voters in the upcoming elections, highlights the interaction of news authors with their readership:

Who will dominate the agenda in the next two weeks? Netanyahu, Shaked and Smotrich [right-wing party leaders] will work hard on the swinging mandates in religious Zionism [...] And we have not mentioned Blue and White [party] who [...] is courting the religious voters in the West Bank. Cheers dear religious voters, the feast has begun [Avitan-Cohen, MR, 02.09.2019, IL].

The question formulation ("who will dominate?") and plural perspective meta-discourse ("we have not mentioned") (Hamo 2015) substantiate the above projection by creating a shared factual basis. The text ends with a direct appeal to "religious voters", who, given the political and religious orientation of Makor Rishon (Tsfati 2017), are also likely to be the text's readers. A journalist-audience dialogue culminates in an opinion piece by Ben Caspit. Positioning the audience as contributor to his prospective text, Caspit regards the journalistic practice of balancing statements (Tenenboim-Weinblatt and Baden 2018) as a task that can be imagined by his readers: "Gabbay [left-wing party leader] won't say it out loud, but [...] there is a good chance that [he ...] will step aside (insert strong deniability here on your own)." [Maariv, 13.01.2019, IL].

To conclude, transparent projections build on conflicting justifications and emphasize the speaker's tentativeness in order to maintain a reliable record and to minimize the risk of being proven wrong (Simmerling and Janich 2016). Embedded with rhetorical questions and plural-person perspectives, such projections, moreover, try to obtain audiences' trust by reinforcing engagement and authenticity (Vodanovic 2022; Zahay et al. 2021). The result is a reflexive exposure of the backstage of political forecasting, a text wherein readers are provided with news authors' thoughts and reservations.

Discussion

In our study, we have examined trust-building rhetoric in election coverage. Analyzing rich textual data from five election rounds in Israel (2019–2020) and the US (2016, 2020), we have outlined three trust-generation strategies. First, journalists were found to disguise production processes and construct election projections as factual. This was achieved either by naturalization, which diminishes the gap between projected reality

and its textual indicators; or by distancing projections made by others, stressing journalists' role in reporting past statements over their agency in mediating future speculations. The remaining two categories emphasize the projection itself as a signified phenomenon and accentuate its production-related virtues. Authoritative projections embed future-oriented narratives with journalists' authentic experiences and speculations (Blom et al. 2021), positioning them as preferable sources of knowledge about the future. Lastly, an impression of transparency is achieved by exposing "back-stage" information (Goffman 1959), professing reflexivity, and enhancing a dialogue between journalists and audiences (Vodanovic 2022).

These three projecting modes generate different implications for the management of trust. In line with traditional trust-building tactics (Davies 2008; Karlsson and Clerwall 2019; Zahay et al. 2021), a rhetoric of facticity reinforces professional norms of accuracy and objectivity to generate reliability. By contrast, authoritative and transparent projections move from such an institution-based trust, to form a personalized "authenticity from-below" (Coupland 2001). However, they do so by opposite means. Authoritative projections build on speculative journalism (Blom et al. 2021; Salgado and Strömbäck 2012) and stress newsmen's political foresight, positioning them as confident and trustworthy. Conversely, transparent projections undermine journalists' reliability as "fact-tellers" (Zelizer 2007), and invoke a different kind of trustworthiness: one that does not build on an institutionalized authority but exposes the speakers' authentic thoughts and feelings (Coupland 2001); one that does not derive from facticity and naturalization but rather acknowledges the challenges of obtaining them in dynamic and uncertain political cultures.

Some of these trust-building strategies were found particularly characteristic of specific journalistic roles. For example, while a rhetoric of facticity was especially common among reporters, a more authoritative stance was prominent in texts by anchors and commentators. This is not surprising given the vast literature on descriptive versus interpretive journalism (Blom et al. 2021; Salgado and Strömbäck 2012). Nevertheless, our findings also point to considerable similarities between newsmen, as both reporters and commentators occasionally employed a naturalizing passive voice or transparent engagements with audiences. Challenging information verification routines (Blom et al. 2021; Pentzold and Fechner 2021), the case of journalistic projections thus intertwines facts with intuitions, and blurs traditional distinctions between journalistic functions and roles.

Additionally, almost all journalists in our corpus combined more than one rhetoric in their election coverage. In particular, the strategies of authority and transparency were often interrelated. As evident in the words of Yossi Verter—"This time it's not a cliché, it's a truthful alert" [Haaretz, 28.12.2018, IL]—journalists in our study were drawing readers' attention to the banality and even to the inaccuracy of their projections, while simultaneously manifesting their veracity and truthfulness; they hedged their projections as "their own view", but invested lexical resources in establishing those same views as preferable and insightful; they positioned themselves as equal to their readers (Vodanovic 2022; Zahay et al. 2021), yet re-affirmed their cultural and professional authority (Carlson 2017; Zelizer 2007) to prepare those readers toward the future and to alert them about its dire consequences.

Such a pattern of pushing a strong claim and then pulling it (Blom et al. 2021) aligns with the discourse of broadcast news that focuses both on the delivered information and its entertaining qualities (Montgomery 2007). A combination of authoritative and

transparent rhetoric styles may prove productive for attracting public attention to projections and presenting them as trust-deserving. Instead of downplaying journalists, it embeds future scenarios with subjective justifications and opinionated evaluations, while also manifesting cautiousness. Juxtaposing these two discourses thus allows for a constant movement between assertiveness and attentiveness (Blom et al. 2021; Simmerling and Janich 2016), and seeks to gain trust by simultaneously breaking and rebuilding the “boundaries of journalism” (Zahay et al. 2021, 1,042). Such a combination is crucial for critically discussing the unknown future, giving voice to public concerns and hopes, and fostering a collective prospective vision (Ananny and Finn 2020; Blom et al. 2021; Neiger and Tenenboim-Weinblatt 2016).

This same pattern, however, might also prove to be a double-edged sword, given the vast literature on audiences’ credibility judgements (Karlsson and Clerwall 2019; Perryman, Foley, and Wagner 2020). The rhetorical strategies of facticity and authority are especially at risk to backfire, when naturalized or bold projections are refuted. Even with attempts to obtain accuracy and reflexivity, media forecasts pose the risk of misinforming audiences (Blom et al. 2021; Westwood, Messing, and Lelkes 2020). Empirical examinations of election coverage also raise concerns over the ability of journalistic projections to intensify polarized emotions (Tenenboim-Weinblatt et al. 2022a) and to reduce turnout (Westwood, Messing, and Lelkes 2020). Furthermore, as evident in public discussions of erroneous journalistic projections (Aharoni et al. 2022; Appelman and Schmierbach 2022), directing audiences’ attention to the personas of projecting journalists, let alone their previous inaccuracies, might jeopardize public trust in both the accuracy of reported projections and the cultural role of journalism altogether.

In the debate around the cultural authority of journalists (Carlson 2017; Zelizer 2007), our findings attest to the interconnectedness of authority and trust in journalists’ practices and texts. Bridging the empirical examination of these two notions in news production research is instrumental, especially given the severe public and professional attacks on both the authority and trustworthiness of journalists (Carlson 2016; Usher 2018). Our findings also demonstrate the significance of adopting a discursive lens (Blom et al. 2021; Simmerling and Janich 2016) to the study of news trust. Content analysis extends interview-based meta-discourse on the symbolic function of journalistic trust (Barnoy and Reich 2020; Toff 2019; Wintterlin 2020), and illuminates the lexical choices and practical routines through which news trustworthiness comes into being.

This study is not without limitations. First, while the qualitative, inclusive approach enabled us to illuminate trust-building rhetoric across the journalistic field, analyzing the strategies of newsmen with very different backgrounds and discourse domains (Blom et al. 2021) limits our ability to distinguish between trust-building strategies of actors in traditional and nontraditional journalistic roles. Additionally, this study revolves around the production of future-oriented news without examining its public effect. Hence, we cannot determine whether the identified journalistic strategies accomplish the goal of generating audiences’ trust. Further research is therefore required to quantitatively examine the public reception and trust perceptions of future-oriented news discourse. Future studies can also compare trust-building rhetoric used by different newsmen and in additional cultural contexts. Specifically, global south countries—where professional traditions of objectivity and facticity are less entrenched (Hanitzsch et al. 2019)—may give rise to additional strategies. Finally, the editorial and public

demand for projections demonstrated in our interviews calls for further scholarly attention to the challenges and dilemmas of prospective news production.

While ample evidence has denoted the fundamental impact of trust on the public (Perryman, Foley, and Wagner 2020; Strömbäck et al. 2020), news trust is also importantly expressed in journalists' own attitudes and routines (Aharoni and Tenenboim-Weinblatt 2019; Barnoy and Reich 2020; Hanitzsch et al. 2019). By adopting a discursive approach to the study of journalistic trustworthiness, our analysis demonstrates the complexity of trust-building practices in prospective news production. Building on the notion of journalistic projections as a locus of trustworthiness can thus invoke a broader understanding of news trust from both textual and news production standpoints.

Notes

1. The study is part of the PROFECI research project which examines the social dynamics of media projections (ERC Grant 802990).
2. Within the extensive US media market, we used large datasets of political journalists (Usher, Holcomb, and Littman 2018), and of news and social media influencers (<https://www.cision.com>; <https://www.politico.com/blogs/media/2015/04/twitters-most-influential-political-journalists-205510>). Additionally, we sampled journalists with high numbers of Facebook/Twitter followers (more than 500,000/ 100,000 in the US and Israel, respectively), and journalists who were recommended in a survey we conducted with journalism and political communication experts ($N = 20$, 10 US, 10 IL, April 2020).
3. Data about newsmen's seniority is based on Wikipedia.
4. The full corpus comprised interviews with journalists, pollsters, and experts. In this study we used the 10 interviews with journalists who work for Israeli news outlets.
5. Square brackets were added by the authors. Each quote contains information about the outlet, date, and country (IL/US).
6. The quotes included in this article were translated into English by the authors.

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