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ABSTRACT

Human rights organizations have long heralded media freedom as critical to holding government accountable and thereby improving a wide range of human rights. Similarly the Internet and social media are assumed to empower citizens by enabling them to document repression and thereby discourage future abuse. So what does this mean for women's rights? I propose that, when it comes to women's rights, the combination of media freedom and Internet access will make a difference and that the effect of media freedom will depend on Internet access. I test my hypotheses across countries and over time and find that the interaction of Internet access and media freedom has positive effects on women's rights regardless of regime type.

The world is starting to grasp that there is no policy more effective in promoting development, health, and education than the empowerment of women and girls. And I would venture that no policy is more important in preventing conflict, or in achieving reconciliation after a conflict has ended. — Kofi Annan, Secretary-General of the United Nations (2006: para 3)

The reality of Dalit women and girls is one of exclusion and marginalization.... They are often victims of civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights violations, including sexual abuse and violence. — Rashida Manjoo, UN Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women, Its Causes and Consequences (2013: para 2)

#dalitwomenfight (2015)

Repression of women is prevalent across cultures and over history. In fact, it is so fundamental that it is often overlooked. Yet, as evidenced by Kofi Annan's speech heralding Women's Day in 2006, there is increasing recognition that addressing and ameliorating women's rights might just be critical to improving the human condition (Hudson et al. 2014). Harnessing the power of the media to bring attention to violations of women's rights is seen by many to be a first step. Indeed human rights organizations have long heralded media freedom as critical to holding government accountable and thereby improving a wide range of human rights. Similarly, globalized digital media, especially the Internet and social media, are

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Color versions of one or more of the figures in the article can be found online at www.tandfonline.com/cjhr.

📊 Data used in the study can be obtained for purposes of replication at: <https://dataverse.harvard.edu/dataverse/jhr>.

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assumed to empower citizens by enabling them to document government repression and to transmit information about the abuses around the world, thereby discouraging future repression. Yet, media are a product of the culture in which they exist, and gender-based repression is often deeply rooted within that culture. Thus, there are many challenges to using media to eradicate the repression of women. The question I seek to answer here is the following: Can a free press make a difference in women's rights, and, if so, under what conditions are free media more or less effective? Moreover, can Internet access, especially access to social media lead to improvements in women's rights?

I propose that, when it comes to women's rights, the ability of media to serve as a fourth estate depends on the combination of media freedom and Internet access. There is evidence that media freedom is not always associated with improved human rights. Whitten-Woodring (2009) found that in an autocracy, free and independent news media were associated with lower government respect for physical-integrity rights (the rights to be free from political imprisonment, murder, torture, and disappearance), but this study was conducted on data for 1980 to 1995, before the widespread availability of online media.¹ Apodaca (2007) found that media freedom and access to radio and television had positive effects on physical-integrity rights, but that Internet availability did not have a significant effect; however, this study was conducted using data for limited years (1989 to 2002 for broadcast media and 1996 to 2002 for the Internet). Moreover, given the cultural roots of gender-based repression, it is unclear whether the findings regarding politically based physical-integrity rights have implications for women's rights. In this study, I build on past research on the role of media in human rights and hypothesize that when it comes to women's rights, media freedom in conjunction with Internet access can be used to create a boomerang effect like that theorized by Keck and Sikkink (1998). In this scenario, marginalized women are able to harness the power of transnational activism through the use of social media and international media to pressure their government to improve their situation. I test this proposal across countries on women's physical security and across countries and over time on women's economic rights and women's political rights and find that the interaction of media freedom with Internet access has a statistically significant and positive effect on women's rights.

In the first section, I discuss the distinct characteristics of women's rights and hypothesize about how accessibility of digital media and media freedom might influence societal and government respect for these rights. In the second section, I detail the data and methods used to develop a multivariate model to test these hypotheses and to identify patterns in the relationship between media accessibility and media freedom across countries and over time. I then present the findings from the statistical analyses, which reveal that the interaction of media freedom and Internet access has a significant, positive, and substantial effect on women's rights. In the concluding section, I discuss the implications of these findings for policy development and future research.

What makes rights women's?

MEERUT: The Baghpat village of Sankrod is suddenly in the limelight for all the wrong reasons. A 23-year-old resident has sought Supreme Court intervention against the Khap panchayat order that a Dalit woman and her sister be raped and paraded naked as payback for their brother's alleged elopement with a married woman from the Jat community. (Rai 2015: para 1)

Though the quote above is from a 2015 *Times of India* article, repression of Dalit women is nothing new. As Dalits or “untouchables,” they are at the bottom of India’s caste system, and as women they have historically been victims of sexual violence. Yet, the Dalit women are not alone. In fact, repression of women may well be the original oppression. Citing research by anthropologists and evolutionary biologists, Hudson et al. (2014) assert that repression of women—from domestic violence to economic, legal, and political inequalities—was probably the first form of systematic structural violence among humans and may be a root cause of human conflict at the civil and international levels. Indeed, one of the challenges in detecting repression of women is that gender inequalities are so widespread and so common that they are often the norm rather than the exception.

Unlike physical-integrity rights, which tend by definition to be determined by political factors, women’s rights (or the lack thereof) are frequently linked to social and economic issues (Bunch 1990). Additionally, with violations of physical-integrity rights, the government is generally the perpetrator, whereas violations of women’s rights are often carried out at the microlevel by nongovernment actors and tolerated at a societal level. With physical-integrity rights, the government is usually directly involved; with women’s rights, the government is generally culpable of a lack of enforcement or, to put it plainly, looking the other way. Of course, one way government can improve women’s rights is by instituting laws protecting women from violence and discrimination, but laws are only effective to the degree that they are enforced (Richards and Haglund 2015). Women’s rights are violated in both the public and private spheres, at the personal level and the systemic level, and these violations can range from discriminatory practices to physical violence. “Women face violence both in the context of the home (perpetrated by family or an intimate partner) and outside the home (perpetrated by various individuals including government agents, employers, coworkers, and teachers)” (Richards and Haglund 2015: 4–5).

Deciding which rights are women’s rights can also be challenging. Pollock (2014) argues that a number of issues, such as human trafficking, HIV/AIDS, access to clean water, and child labor, should also be considered women’s rights because they affect women in developing countries more than men. Furthermore, many of these gender disparities are deeply rooted in cultural and religious traditions (Coleman 2004). Consider, for example, female genital mutilation/cutting (FGM/C). Though the international community has condemned FGM/C as a violation of women’s physical security, it is still widely practiced in 29 countries in Africa and the Middle East (United Nations Children’s Fund [UNICEF] 2013). Yet, with FGM/C, the health risks to women have helped to unify people across cultures in the effort to eradicate the practice, but, in other cases, practices that one culture might deem oppressive are seen by another culture as empowering. Take, for example, the debate over hijabs (headscarves that cover the hair), niqabs (full facial coverings), and burqas (full body coverings). Some have argued that women should have the right to wear these garments as a form of religious expression, but “In Western countries with sizable Muslim citizen minorities or with large-scale Muslim immigration, the question of women’s dress was sometimes used to assert so-called national values, such as secularism and gender equality” (Howard-Hassman 2011: 441).

Human rights are generally divided into two categories: negative and positive. Women’s physical-integrity rights are negative in that they exist on a fundamental level and can be maintained as long as they are not violated; whereas rights like women’s economic and political rights are positive in that their establishment and maintenance require programs and government investment. Of course, as Landman (2006) posited, there are positive and

negative dimensions to all human rights. For example, protection of civil liberties and political rights requires government investment in legal systems and electoral institutions; likewise, the protection of social and economic rights requires antidiscrimination policies (Landman 2006). The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), which was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 1979, defines such discrimination as the following:

[A]ny distinction, exclusion or restriction made on the basis of sex which has the effect or purpose of impairing or nullifying the recognition, enjoyment or exercise by women, irrespective of their marital status, on a basis of equality of men and women, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural, civil or any other field. (United Nations 2009: para 2)

While few would contest that women's rights are human rights, there are many reasons to consider the effect of media on these rights independently from their impact on other human rights. In particular, "many violations of women's human rights are distinctly connected to being female—that is, women are discriminated against and abused on the basis of gender" (Bunch 1990: 486). Although the Western concept of human rights tends to emphasize political and civil rights, those who study women's rights consider socioeconomic rights as well because gender discrimination often has socioeconomic impacts. In fact, some have posited that advocating for women's rights will have economic benefits in developing countries. Coleman (2004) argued that, though gender discrimination exacts a heavy toll on women, "ultimately all of society pays a price for them. Achieving gender equality is now deemed so critical to reducing poverty and improving governance that it has become a development objective in its own right." In fact, some have argued that security of women is crucial to security of the state and world peace (Hudson et al. 2014). Yet, there remain significant gender disparities in many parts of the world, in part because this discrimination is still accepted in many cultures (Coleman 2004).

Where the media come in

In August 2015, the story of two Dalit sisters threatened with a rape order made headlines around the world, prompting some members of the British Parliament to call for their government to put pressure on the Indian government. Amnesty International circulated a petition calling on the Indian Supreme Court to protect the sisters. Though questions emerged about the facts of the story, the Supreme Court did eventually order police protection for the family (Basu 2015). Although it is unlikely this incident will lead to any long-term improvements for the Dalit, it does illustrate how news about violence against women can quickly spread around the world.

Some scholars suggest that globalization in general and globalized communication in particular will help to improve the condition of women. Howard-Hassman (2011) contends that globalization has facilitated the international women's movement because "Easier travel and communication enable women from across the globe to unite and work on common concerns" (445) and that this in turn has helped the movement to minimize potential harmful effects of globalization such as sex trafficking. Yet, Hertel cautions that the effects of globalization require that states take steps to prevent marginalization of women:

[I]f women improve their temporary condition by engaging in globalized production in the formal sphere but the state opts out of its regulatory responsibilities in that sphere or fails to

support women's reproductive and informal sector work, then women's long-term position will not change and can even be eroded by globalization. (2011: 454)

Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch have advocated for media freedom and increased access to online media, arguing that independent news media and online media will improve human rights by letting citizens know and spread the word about repression (Amnesty International 2006). Certainly news media and social media can serve as mechanisms to spread information, and the Internet, in particular, makes it easy to transmit information around the world. If journalists are truly able and willing to provide a voice to the voiceless, it stands to reason that by drawing attention to the plight of marginalized women, journalists and news media might be able to make a difference.

Yet, just because news media have the capacity to function freely and to criticize those in power, does not mean they will do so.² In fact, there may need to be a certain level of respect for women's rights in place before news media would consider covering issues that matter to women. For example, Pollock (2014) found that female empowerment (a measure based on indicators including female literacy, life expectancy, and education) was associated with increased newspaper support for nongovernment intervention to address issues of particular importance to women such as access to clean water. Similarly, access to the Internet and social media do not guarantee that people will use these tools to bring about change or that anyone will pay attention if they try to do so.³ In fact, the prevalence of gender-based repression often goes undetected and unreported because it has been "normalized" (Hudson et al. 2014). Certainly media (including traditional news media and social media) have been complicit in this normalization. Yet, because many, including journalists themselves, believe a key role of the news media is to provide a voice for the voiceless (Kovach and Rosenstiel 2001), the ability of a news media to improve government and societal respect for women's rights is a reasonable test of effective media. Similarly, while much has been made of the potential of the Internet to facilitate communication and to improve human rights, little is known about the effect of Internet access on women's rights.

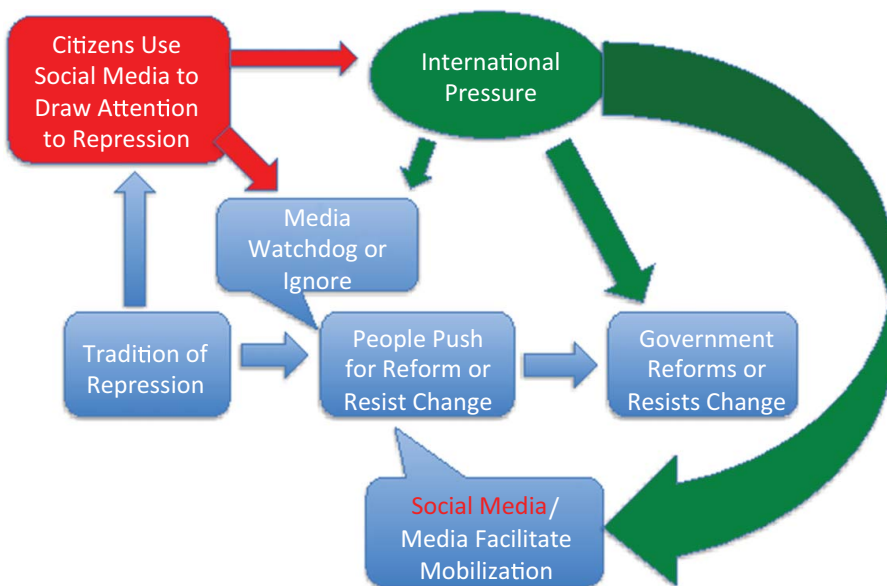


Figure 1. The role of news media and new media on women's rights.

The potential intervening role of traditional news media and social media in the repression of women is depicted in [Figure 1](#). I propose that it is unlikely that the news media will cover violations of women's rights in states where there is a tradition of repression because there is probably a cultural tolerance for such violations. Thus, I expect that *news media will not cover the repression until the violations breach cultural tolerance or there is some sort of external pressure on news media*. This external pressure could come from citizens (international or domestic) using social media to draw attention to the violations. This social-media-generated pressure could also garner attention from international groups and international news media, which, in turn could lead to international governments and nongovernment organizations pressuring the domestic government to stop the repression. Both domestic media and social media could also be used to mobilize protest at the domestic level, which could also lead to reform. This is, in short, a media-driven and Internet-fueled version of Keck and Sikkink's (1998) boomerang effect.⁴

Additionally, I posit that cultural attitudes toward gender equality are likely to influence not only whether women's rights are respected but also the amount of attention and quality of news coverage the media provide. For example, in Burkina Faso in 1975, the practice of FGM/C was common and widely accepted as an important coming-of-age ritual for young women. Because most Burkinabe believed the cutting was appropriate, they were unreceptive to negative messages about it. Therefore, a radio campaign against excision was met with great hostility (Triendregeogon 1982). Of course cultural attitudes can shift over time. As a case in point, attitudes towards female employment began to change in the United States during World War I when women stepped into jobs traditionally held by men. To encourage women to work in factories during the war, the government launched the "United War Work Campaign," which featured posters showing women at work. These images were widely spread through the media and contributed to a shift in attitudes about the role of women (although certainly many disparities remained in place) and likely led to the passage of the Nineteenth Amendment in 1920, which gave women voting rights.

Thus, I propose that media are more likely to report on violations of women's rights when there is some sort of pressure to do so. This pressure could come from a government program (as in the case of the campaigns encouraging women to work in factories during World War I and World War II), but it could also come in the form of international pressure from transnational activist groups and organizations like Amnesty International and/or conditions for foreign assistance. Additionally, I suspect, when they do get involved, news media and social media are more likely to focus on the most egregious and most obvious violations of women's rights. Both news media and social media are drawn to issues and stories that are dramatic, shocking, and unexpected. Therefore, public violence against women and overt political discrimination are far more likely to garner news media and social media attention than private violence against women and ongoing economic discrimination.

As depicted in [Figure 1](#), if there is a tradition of repression of women's rights, it may take international pressure to spur the media to cover women's issues, and it may well take citizens themselves using social media to focus that international attention on the repression. Moreover, social media decrease the costs for citizens to draw international attention to domestic problems and can facilitate the formation of networks of activists seeking to improve women's rights (Keck and Sikkink 1998). Both news media and social media may play intervening roles by serving as mechanisms to facilitate and mobilize protest movements as long as news media are able to function freely and

citizens have Internet access. Thus, I propose that it is the interaction of media freedom and Internet access that could help to mitigate gender-based repression.

Based on the propositions outlined above, this study tests the following hypotheses:

H1: Media freedom is positively related to women's rights.

H2: Internet access is positively related to women's rights.

H3: The effect of media freedom on women's rights depends on Internet access and vice versa.

Research design, data, and methods

To explore the relationship between media (especially media freedom and access to digital media) and women's rights and to test my hypotheses across countries and over time, I developed several statistical models of women's rights. To create these models, I merged data from several datasets. In each model, the unit of analysis is a country-year. In this section, I provide details about these datasets and the selected variables, starting with the dependent variables for women's rights, followed by the primary independent variables of media freedom and Internet access, and a number of additional variables that have been identified from previous research as potentially influencing women's rights.

Dependent variables: Measuring women's rights

As evidenced from previous studies, repression of women takes on many forms. Because I suspect that media will be a more effective mechanism in mitigating violations of political and physical-security rights rather than economic rights, I test my hypotheses on these three types of women's rights using three different dependent variables from two publicly available datasets, the CIRI Human Rights Dataset (Cingranelli et al. 2014a) and the WomanStats Database (WomanStats Project 2015). The CIRI Human Rights Dataset, which focuses on government practices regarding a broad range of human rights, including women's economic and political rights, provides annual coding for about 200 countries from 1980 to 2011.⁵ In contrast, the WomanStats Database focuses exclusively on women's rights and issues and provides comprehensive information about the status of women in 175 countries. For this study, I use the Physical Security of Women Scale for all available countries in the year 2009.⁶ Table 1 shows the distribution of these three women's rights variables for the samples used in this study. Details about these variables and how they were gathered are provided below.

Women's economic rights from the CIRI Human Rights Dataset

CIRI coders assessed all available countries from 1980 to 2011 on several dimensions related to the economic freedom of women, including equality in compensation, hiring and promotion practices, freedom to choose profession without male consent, freedom from discrimination and sexual harassment, and the right to work in the military, law enforcement, and other dangerous occupations. Based on this assessment, each country-year is rated on a scale ranging from 0 (no rights) to 3 (full rights) using two primary considerations, "one, the extensiveness of laws pertaining to women's economic rights; and two, *government practices* towards women or how effectively the government enforces the laws" (Cingranelli et al. 2014b: 77). As shown in Table 1, the majority country-year cases have middle to low levels

Table 1. Measuring women's rights.

Women's Economic Rights 1980–2011 (148 Countries in sample)				
Source: CIRI Human Rights Database	Code		Frequency	Percentage
No economic rights for women; discriminatory laws may exist	0		334	8
There are some laws protecting women's economic rights, but they are not enforced	1		2192	56
There are some laws protecting women's economic rights and these are enforced, but there a low level of discrimination remains	2		1233	31
All or nearly all women's economic rights are guaranteed in law and practice	3		181	5
Women's Political Rights 1980–2011 (148 Countries in sample)				
Source: CIRI Human Rights Database	Code		Frequency	Percentage
No laws protecting women's political rights	0		152	4
There are laws protecting women's political rights, but these are severely prohibited in practice	1		688	17
There are laws protecting women's political rights, but these are somewhat prohibited in practice	2		2831	71
Women's political rights are guaranteed in law and practice	3		309	8
Physical Security of Women for 2009 (143 Countries in sample)				
Source: WomanStats Database	Code	Inverted Code	Frequency	Percentage
No or weak laws protecting women's physical security; honor killings/femicide ignored or accepted	4	0	40	28
Laws protecting women's physical security are rarely enforced; honor killings/femicide generally not accepted	3	1	71	50
Laws protecting women's physical security sporadically enforced; honor killings/femicide rare and condemned by society	2	2	23	16
Laws protecting women's physical security usually enforced, but there are norms against reporting related crimes; no honor killings/femicides	1	3	9	6
Laws protecting women's physical security are enforced; there are no norms against reporting related crimes; no honor killings/femicides	0	4	0	0

of government respect of women's economic rights. In 56% of the cases, there are some laws protecting women's economic rights, but these are not enforced in practice. Only 5% of the cases had full respect for women's economic rights.

Women's political rights from the CIRI Human Rights Dataset

CIRI coders assessed all available countries from 1981 to 2011 on aspects related to the political freedom of women including voting rights and the rights to petition government officials, to join political parties, to run for political office, and to hold government positions, as well as representation (Cingranelli et al. 2014b). As with the indicator for women's economic rights, the coding for this variable ranges from 0 (no rights) to 3 (full rights) and centers on the "extensiveness of laws" pertaining to women's political rights as well as enforcement of those laws and practice. As depicted in Table 1, in most country-year cases (71%), respect for women's political rights was at Level 2, meaning that there were laws protecting women's political rights, but these were somewhat prohibited in practice.

The physical security of women from the WomanStats Database⁷

Coders for WomanStats assessed the physical security of women in 175 countries based on the country's laws and practices regarding domestic violence, rape and sexual assault, marital rape, femicide (meaning the targeted killing of women), and honor killings (WomanStats Project 2015).⁸ Based on this assessment, each country is rated on a scale that ranges from 0 (meaning there are laws against these crimes that are enforced and these crimes are rare) to 4 (meaning there are no laws against these crimes or that existing laws are not enforced, and honor killings and femicide go unpunished). In 2009, there were no countries at the 0 level; thus, in practice, from a women's rights perspective, the best score in 2009 was a 1, meaning that, while there are laws against domestic violence, marital rape, rape and sexual assault, and femicide and these laws are usually respected in practice, "there are taboos or norms against reporting these crimes (or ignorance that these are reportable crimes)" (WomanStats Project 2015: para 2). Only 6% of the country-year cases reached this level of physical security for women. In fact, most cases had low (50%) or no (28%) physical security for women (see Table 1). For ease of interpretation, I have inverted this scale so that higher values mean higher levels of physical security for women. Thus, this inverted scale ranges from 0 (meaning there are no laws or there is no enforcement of laws against the crimes related to women's physical security) to 3 (meaning there are laws protecting the physical security of women that are usually respected in practice, but there are some norms or taboos that sometimes prevent the reporting of these crimes). Using this inverted version of the Physical Security of Women scale keeps it consistent with the two CIRI variables, such that higher values mean higher levels of women's rights.

Independent variables: Media freedom and internet access

When analyzing the effect of media freedom, it is important to use a clearly defined measure of media freedom that is consistent over time. To that end, I use the Global Media Freedom Dataset (GMFD) gathered by Whitten-Woodring and Van Belle (2014). The GMFD is a definition-driven dataset that provides codes for the media environment of all available countries from 1948 to 2012.⁹ Rather than measuring media restrictions, the GMFD categorizes the media environment for each country-year based on a conceptualization of media freedom as the ability of media to hold those in power accountable.

Media freedom from the Global Media Freedom Dataset (GMFD)

Coders for the GMFD project assessed the media environment for each country-year and placed it in one of the following categories: Free, meaning criticism of government and officials is a common part of the political dialogue; Imperfectly Free, meaning there are costs (social, legal, and/or economic) related to criticism of government or officials that limit criticism, but investigative journalism and criticism does occur; Not Free, meaning it is not possible to safely criticize government or officials and media are either indirectly controlled or directly controlled (Whitten-Woodring and Van Belle 2015). This is a categorical coding rather than an interval scale; the difference between media environments coded Imperfectly Free and those coded Not Free is far more substantial than the differences between those coded Free and Imperfectly Free. Therefore, I have combined the Free and Imperfectly Free categories because media in both of these categories function freely.

Internet access from the International Telecommunication Union (ITU)

The ITU (2014) provides an estimate of the percentage of individuals using the Internet based on surveys conducted in each country-year based on guidelines from the ITU. This measure incorporates Internet access via all devices, including smartphones. In my sample, the percentage of Internet users ranges from less than 2 (Liberia in 2000) to 94 (Sweden in 2011) with a mean of about 22. While smart phones are a growing and strikingly important means of accessing online media, particularly in developing countries (Aker and Mbiti 2010), the ITU Internet-penetration dataset incorporates Internet access obtained through mobile technology. Thus, I do not include mobile phone penetration in these analyses.

Control variables

Of course there are factors other than media freedom and Internet access that might influence women's rights. Previous studies have identified democracy and international law as well as a variety of domestic features as factors that might shape human rights. Chief among these is democracy. In fact, when studying the effects of media freedom across a range of regime types, a common question is whether media freedom can exist independent of democracy. While most free media occur in highly democratic countries, there are also cases of free media in nondemocratic settings, and there are cases of democracies in which the media are not free (Whitten-Woodring and Van Belle 2014).

In measuring regime type for an analysis that includes both women's rights and media freedom, it is critical to restrict the definition and measurement to institutional democracy, because definitions and measurements of democracy that incorporate civil liberties might also incorporate freedom of speech and of the press as well as human rights. In order to avoid a tautology, to test my hypotheses, and to account for the variation of media freedom across regime types, it is important to keep these measurements discrete. Though the Polity IV dataset does not incorporate civil rights (Marshall and Jaggers 2002; Choi and James 2006), to address any lingering concerns that some aspect of the Polity scale might inadvertently incorporate media freedom or women's rights, I use the executive constraints variable, the component of the Polity scale found to be the most influential (Gleditsch and Ward 1997).

Executive constraints from the Polity IV dataset

Coders for the Polity IV dataset assessed the level of executive constraints, meaning the degree to which the executive's decision-making powers are limited by accountability groups (these may take the form of a legislative body, an independent judiciary, or a military) such that there are checks and balances on the executive's decision-making process. This variable ranges from 1 (meaning "Unlimited Authority") to 7 (meaning "Executive Parity or Subordination") (Marshall, Gurr and Jaggers 2013: 24–25).

Findings regarding the effects of international law on human rights are mixed. Most studies have found that United Nations human rights treaties have little or no effect on human rights practices (Camp Keith 1999; Hathaway 2002; Hafner-Burton and Tsutsui 2007; Englehart 2009), but a couple of recent studies have found that the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) has a positive effect on women's rights (Hill 2010; Englehart and Miller 2014). Yet, Richards and Haglund (2015) find that over time participation in the CEDAW had mixed effects on laws protecting women, that it was associated with increased legal protections against domestic violence but

decreased protections against rape. Therefore, following Englehart and Miller (2014), I include a dummy variable that indicates whether the country (for the year) in question has ratified CEDAW.

In addition to the CEDAW, I expect the same factors that influence government behavior regarding physical-integrity rights will have similar effects on government respect for women's rights, although not always for the same reasons. I predict that violations of women's rights, as with physical-integrity rights, are more likely to occur when a government is facing a threat of either interstate or internal armed conflict (Poe et al. 1999). Although in the case of women's rights, I expect that violations increase because the government is too distracted by the threats posed by the civil conflict and international conflict on women's rights. To control for conflict, I use the Major Episodes of Political Violence (MEPV) and Conflict Regions, 1945–2012, dataset (Marshall 2013). Specifically, I use the CIVTOT variable to measure the presence and intensity of civil conflict (including civil and ethnic violence and war) and the INTTOT variable to measure presence and intensity of international conflict and war. To qualify as a major episode of violence or war, there must be a minimum of 500 directly related deaths over the entire episode and the magnitude of each episode is coded 0 (no conflict) to 10 (highest magnitude of conflict) and this score is entered for each related country/year. If there is more than one episode for a given country/year, the impact scores are summed (Marshall 2013).

I expect the level of economic development to be important with women's rights. Regarding physical-integrity rights, the rationale is that governments with strong economies enjoy more security from the threat of domestic rebellion; therefore, the healthier the economy, the less likely a government will feel the need to engage in repression (Poe et al. 1999). In the case of women's rights, I expect that in less-developed countries where there are fewer jobs to be had, men may feel more threatened by the prospect of women entering the workforce. Inglehart et al. (2002) hypothesized that modernization drives democratization, which in turn encourages female participation in politics. Moreover, “economic development also brings unforeseen cultural changes that transform gender roles” (Inglehart et al. 2002: 4–5). Of course, the argument has been made that the causal arrow runs in the other direction and that a country's level of development depends on women's economic rights (Coleman 2004). Additionally, Richards and Haglund (2015) find that economic globalization has a negative effect on laws aimed at preventing violence against women. Thus, there is evidence that development and trade have mixed effects on women's rights. Moreover, preliminary analyses indicate that economic development is highly correlated with Internet access. This makes sense intuitively—the more developed a country, the more likely it is to have the infrastructure and resources to facilitate Internet access. Unfortunately, because they are highly correlated, it is not possible to include both Internet access and economic development in the same model because doing so can lead to spurious results. Therefore, I control for economic development only in models that do not include Internet access. To measure economic development, I use the gross domestic product (GDP) per capita. Specifically, I use the RGDPE variable from Penn World Tables Version 8 (Feenstra et al. 2015), which is the expenditure-side GDP chain series that has been adjusted for purchasing power parity (PPP) to compare standards of living across countries and over time. Because GDP per capita has a trend of exponential growth, I transform this variable by taking a natural log.

Previous studies have found that population is negatively related to government respect for human rights because the larger the population the greater the opportunity for rebellion

and repression (Poe and Tate 1994; Poe et al. 1999). Therefore, I include a log of population for each country/year from the Penn World Tables Version 8 (Feenstra et al. 2015).

Since there is no consistent measure of cultural attitudes toward gender equality that is consistent across countries and over time, I use religion as a proxy for cultural attitudes toward gender equality. My justification for doing so is based on research indicating that there is a strong correlation between religion and attitudes toward gender equality (Inglehart and Norris 2003). Inglehart and Norris (2003) found that Orthodox and Muslim faiths were negatively related with support for gender equality and that Catholic and Protestant faiths were positively related to support for gender equality. Specifically, I use variables for the percentage of Christians, Muslims, Hindus, and people with no religious affiliation for each country-year. These are the four largest religious groups, according to the Pew Research Center's Forum on Religion and Public Life (2012). These percentages were obtained from the World Religion Dataset (Maoz and Henderson 2013).

Finally, when analyzing human rights over time, it is standard practice to control for previous levels of human rights (Davenport and Armstrong 2004; Poe and Tate 1994; Poe et al. 1999). The theoretical reason for doing so is that previous respect for human rights (or the lack thereof) may reflect the cultural intolerance (tolerance) for such violations and also may account for persistence in government behavior regarding human rights. Methodologically, this models any autoregression (the effect of past values of human rights on current values of human rights) in the time-series data. Therefore, I use a one-year lag of the dependent variable.

Statistical methods

Using these measures for the dependent and independent variables, I conducted a series of multivariate analyses. Since the dependent variables each had distinct categories that could be placed in a meaningful order but the distance between the categories is unknown, I chose to use ordered logistic regression. Ordered logistic regression is a nonlinear model that estimates the change in the probability of different categories of the outcome variable for a given change in one of the independent variables with the magnitude of this change in probability depending on the levels of all of the independent variables.

Because media freedom can change overnight and Internet penetration has increased dramatically from one year to another in many countries, I use contemporaneous versions (as opposed to lagged versions) of the independent variables. Since the models using the CIRI variables include cases for each country for each year between 1981 and 2011, I suspect there may be unspecified effects for each of these countries. To control for these effects, I employ robust standard errors, clustering on country identification. For the models using the WomanStats data for the year 2009, I do not control for previous physical security of women, because this study has a limited number of cases (143), and including the lag of physical security would likely mask the effects of the other independent variables (Achen 2000).

Results: The effects of media freedom and internet access on women's rights

Overall the interaction of media freedom and Internet access had significant and positive effects on women's rights. These effects are more substantial for women's political rights and the physical security of women than for women's economic rights. Here I present the findings for each type of women's rights.

Table 2. Women's economic rights: The Internet makes a difference.

	Model 1 1981–1995 141 Countries	Model 2 2000–2011 148 Countries	Model 3 2000–2011 148 Countries
Previous Women's Economic Rights	0.000145 (0.000459)	0.00152 (0.00134)	0.00146 (0.00138)
Media Freedom	0.653 (0.33)	–0.04022 (0.27739)	–0.742* (0.301)
Executive Constraints	0.1299 (0.0959)	0.3217*** (0.0842)	0.286*** (0.0854)
Percent with Internet Access	—	0.0374*** (0.00544)	0.0115 (0.0130)
Media Freedom* Internet Access	—	—	0.0328* (0.0143)
CEDAW Ratification	0.3293 (0.274)	0.147 (0.536)	0.229 (0.529)
International Conflict	0.0376 (0.244)	0.497 (0.482)	0.454 (0.495)
Civil Conflict	–0.0776 (0.0711)	–0.2802** (0.0878)	–0.295** (0.0900)
GDP/Capita (logged)	0.7089*** (0.1887)	—	—
Population (logged)	–0.1513 (0.0865)	–0.1231 (0.08)	–0.117 (0.0800)
Percent Christian	–0.113 (0.753)	–0.4339 (0.752)	–0.512 (0.766)
Percent Muslim	–1.612 (0.839)	–1.5329 (0.79)	–1.529* (0.780)
Percent Hindu	–1.246 (1.16)	1.2836 (1.098)	1.466 (1.187)
Percent No Religion	0.852 (1.498)	0.2764 (1.167)	0.0393 (1.187)
Cut 1	2.457** (1.013)	–1.538 (0.841)	–1.868* (0.852)
Cut 2	6.69*** (1.107)	2.191 (0.869)	1.818* (0.867)
Cut 3	10.061*** (1.597)	5.078 (0.915)	4.830*** (0.900)
Observations	1598	1674	1674
Pseudo R ²	0.131	0.213	0.221
BIC	2712.5	3034.1	3014.9

Note. These are results from a series of ordered logistic regressions estimated using Stata 14; Standard errors in parentheses.

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$.

Findings for women's economic rights

The results for women's economic rights are shown in Table 2.¹⁰ Model 1 gives us a picture of the influences on women's economic rights before the Internet became widely available. It includes information for 141 countries from 1981 to 1995. In Model 1, controlling for other factors, only GDP per capita has a statistically significant and positive effect on women's economic rights. Specifically, on average, a one standard deviation increase in GDP per capita increases the probability of having full women's economic rights (Level 3) by about .04 and high women's economic rights (Level 3) by .1 and decreases the probability of having no women's economic rights (Level 0) by .04.¹¹ In this model, media freedom does not make a difference. In Models 2 and 3, which include 148 countries for the years 2000 to 2011, the story changes with the addition of Internet access. In Model 2, media freedom does not have a

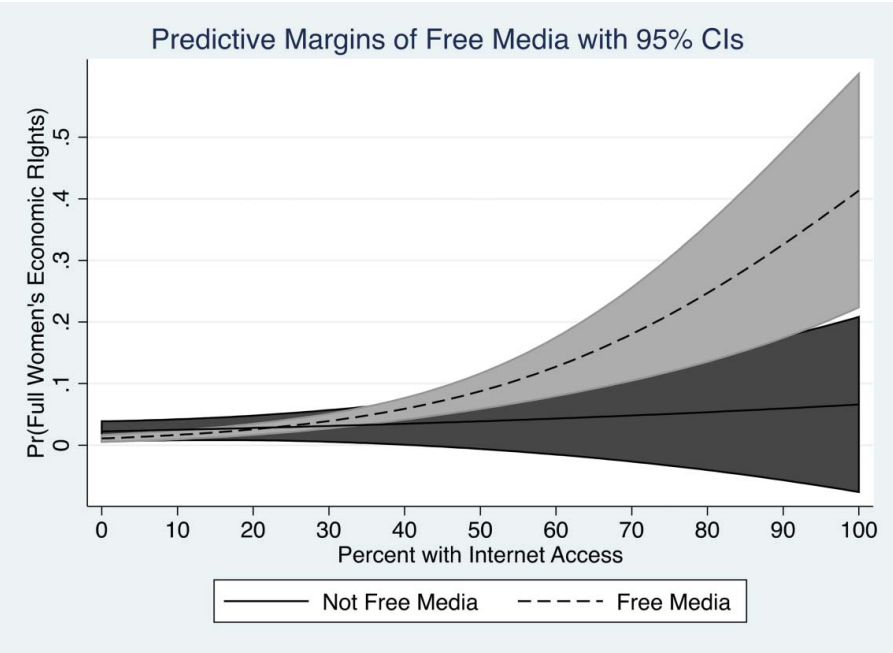


Figure 2. The marginal effects of media freedom and Internet access on the predicted probability of full respect for women’s economic rights.
Note. This figure depicts the predicted probability of full respect for women’s economic rights as Internet access shifts from 0 to 100% in countries with and without media freedom.

significant independent effect, but Internet access does have a statistically significant and positive effect on women’s economic rights. However, fit statistics indicate that Model 3, which includes the interaction of media freedom and Internet access, does a better job of explaining the variation in women’s economic rights.¹² In Model 3, the coefficient for the interaction of media freedom with Internet access is statistically significant and positive but because it must be considered in conjunction with the coefficients for media freedom and Internet access, the substantive effects of this interaction are best interpreted graphically. Figure 2 depicts the predicted probability of full respect for women’s economic rights in states with free media and not free media as Internet access increases from 0% to 100% while other variables are held constant. The dashed line shows that this probability increases in countries with free media as Internet access increases, whereas the solid line shows that the probability remains close to zero in states with not free media, regardless of the level of Internet access; however, the

Table 3. Average marginal effects of executive constraints, civil conflict, and religion on the predicted probability of different levels of women’s economic rights (from Model 3).

	No Rights (0)	Low Rights (1)	High Rights (2)	Full Rights (3)
Executive Constraints(1 standard deviation increase)	-.039***	-.05**	.055***	.034**
Civil Conflict (1 standard deviation increase)	.032**	.019**	-.035**	-.016**
Percentage Muslim (1 standard deviation increase)	.052	.025*	-.053*	-.024*

Note. These are the average marginal effects of changes in the values of the independent variables estimated using SPPost13 (Long and Freese 2014).
* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$.

confidence intervals overlap until Internet access exceeds 90%, indicating that media freedom does not have a statistically significant effect until this level of Internet access is achieved and then the probability of full women's economic rights ranges from about .2 to above .5. Executive constraints have a statistically significant and positive effect on women's economic rights. As reported in Table 3, on average a one standard deviation increase in executive constraints increases the probability of full women's economic rights by 0.34. Holding other factors constant, civil conflict and the percentage of Muslims have statistically significant and negative effects on women's economic rights (Table 3 reports the average marginal effects of these variables). Previous women's economic rights, international conflict, CEDAW ratification, population, and other religions did not have statistically significant effects on women's economic rights.

Table 4. Women's political rights: Media freedom and the Internet make a difference.

	Model 4 1981–1995 141 Countries	Model 5 2000–2011 148 Countries	Model 6 2000–2011 148 Countries
Previous Women's Political Rights	0.00124* (0.000559)	0.00144* (0.000724)	0.00147* (0.000697)
Media Freedom	0.892** (0.337)	0.403 (0.503)	–0.00144 (0.537)
Executive Constraints	0.0239 (0.094)	0.043 (0.137)	–0.00221 (0.136)
Percent with Internet Access	—	0.0234** (0.0075)	–0.0101 (0.0105)
Media Freedom* Internet Access	—	—	0.0408** (0.0124)
CEDAW Ratification	0.599* (0.246)	1.201* (0.523)	1.298* (0.511)
International Conflict	0.0643 (0.235)	–0.388 (0.322)	–0.443 (0.318)
Civil Conflict	0.0156 (0.0737)	–0.134 (0.097)	–0.157 (0.0971)
GDP/Capita (logged)	0.048 (0.185)	—	—
Population (logged)	0.099 (0.105)	0.189 (0.107)	0.192 (0.106)
Percent Christian	0.607 (0.606)	1.675** (0.627)	1.660* (0.671)
Percent Muslim	–1.235 (0.638)	–1.72** (0.594)	–1.707** (0.643)
Percent Hindu	–0.9 (1.233)	–0.476 (1.309)	–0.144 (1.281)
Percent No Religion	1.333 (1.837)	–0.039 (1.27)	–0.472 (1.309)
Cut 1	–1.594 (1.285)	–2.793 (0.871)	–3.230*** (0.883)
Cut 2	0.704 (1.364)	–0.326 (0.781)	–0.759 (0.820)
Cut 3	5.478*** (1.348)	5.596 (0.924)	5.226*** (0.948)
Observations	1623	1675	1675
Pseudo R2	0.131	0.216	0.229
BIC	2712.5	2032	2009.7

Note. These are results from a series of ordered logistic regressions estimated using Stata 14; Standard errors in parentheses.

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$.

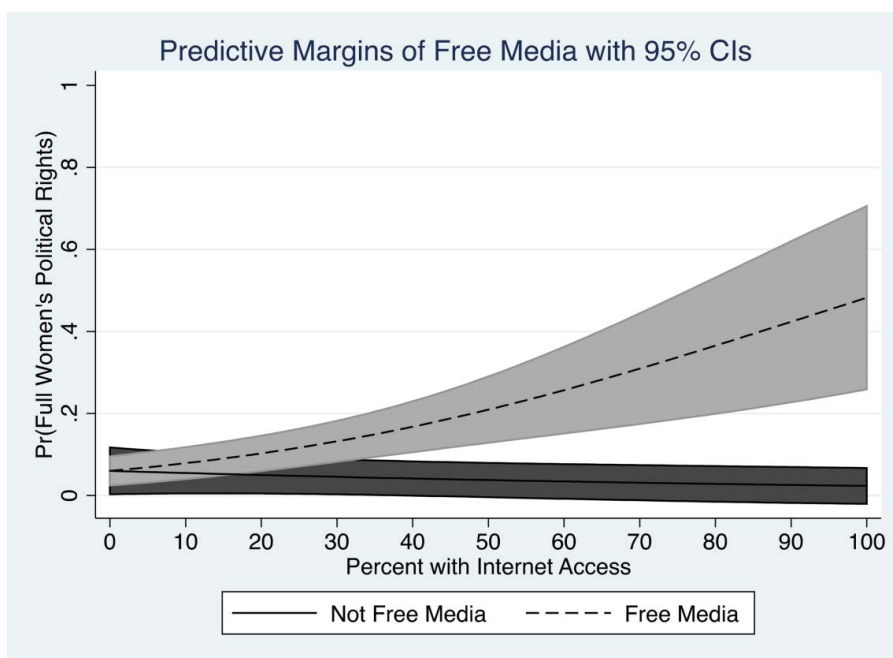


Figure 3. The marginal effects of media freedom and Internet access on the predicted probability of full respect for women's political rights.

Note. This figure depicts the predicted probability of full respect for women's political rights as Internet access shifts from 0 to 100% in countries with and without media freedom.

Findings for women's political rights

Unlike women's economic rights, media freedom does appear to have made a substantive difference in women's political rights, even in the absence of the Internet (see Model 4 of Table 4). Specifically, compared to countries without media freedom, for those with media freedom, the probability of a high level (Level 2) of respect for women's political rights was on average .14 higher, but the effect of media freedom on full respect was not statistically significant. With the addition of the Internet, the effect of media freedom on women's political rights is more pronounced. As shown in Model 5, the Internet has a statistically significant and positive effect, and media freedom does not have independent effect, but, as with

Table 5. Average marginal effects of previous rights, CEDAW ratification, and religion on the predicted probability of different levels of women's political rights for 2000–2011 (from Model 6).

	No Rights (0)	Low Rights (1)	High Rights (2)	Full Rights (3)
Previous Women's Political Rights (1 standard deviation increase)	-.001	-.003*	-.001	.005
CEDAW Ratification	-.023	-.094	.03	.088**
Percentage Christian (1 standard deviation increase)	-.005	-.030**	-.029	.064*
Percentage Muslim (1 standard deviation increase)	.009	.04*	0	-.049**

Note. These are the average marginal effects of changes in the values of the independent variables estimated using SPPost13 (Long and Freese 2014).

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$.

women's economic rights, fit statistics indicate that Model 6 with the interaction of media freedom and Internet access is a better model for women's political rights. Again the effects of this interaction are best interpreted graphically. [Figure 3](#) depicts the predicted probability of full respect for women's political rights in states with free media and not free media as Internet access increases from 0% to 100% while other variables are held constant. The dashed line shows that this probability increases in countries with free media as Internet access increases, whereas the solid shows that the probability remains close to zero in states with not free media, regardless of the level of Internet access. In particular, as Internet access exceeds 30%, media freedom makes a statistically significant difference in the probability of full respect for women's political rights and when Internet access approaches 100%, this predicted probability ranges between .25 and .7.

Also in Model 6, previous women's political rights have a positive and statistically significant effect, indicating that once women have political rights in a state, they have a higher chance of keeping them. CEDAW ratification had a statistically significant and positive effect; on average, the probability of full respect for women's political rights was .088 higher in countries that had ratified the CEDAW (this and other average marginal effects are reported in [Table 5](#)). The percentage of Muslims had a statistically significant and negative effect, and the percentage of Christians had a statistically significant and positive effect. Population, the percentage of Hindus, and the percentage of people with no religion were all insignificant. Interestingly executive constraints did not have a statistically significant effect in any of the models of women's political rights.

Findings for women's physical security

The effects of media freedom and Internet access on women's physical security are similar to those for women's political rights. As shown in [Table 6](#), while media freedom does not have

Table 6. Women's physical security: The effect of media freedom depends on Internet access.

	Model 7	Model 8
Media Freedom	-0.350 (0.621)	-1.338 (0.731)
Percent with Internet Access	0.0506*** (0.0101)	0.00502 (0.0188)
Media Freedom* Internet Access	—	0.0617** (0.0225)
Executive Constraints	0.498** (0.182)	0.420* (0.187)
CEDAW Ratification	0.971 (1.204)	1.141 (1.220)
International Conflict	0.281 (0.695)	0.257 (0.713)
Civil Conflict	-0.608** (0.211)	-0.660** (0.207)
Population (logged)	0.0762 (0.132)	0.0956 (0.132)
Percent Christian	0.372 (0.844)	0.381 (0.863)
Percent Muslim	-1.899* (0.921)	-1.565 (0.924)
Percent Hindu	1.233 (2.009)	2.304 (2.045)
Percent No Religion	-1.361 (1.876)	-1.785 (1.906)
Cut 1	2.457 (1.454)	1.686 (1.496)
Cut 2	6.850*** (1.606)	6.297*** (1.642)
Cut 1	9.182*** (1.703)	8.899*** (1.751)
Observations	143	143
Pseudo R ²	0.345	0.368
BIC	288.9	286.3

Note. These are results from a series of ordered logistic regressions estimated using Stata 14; Standard errors in parentheses.

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$.

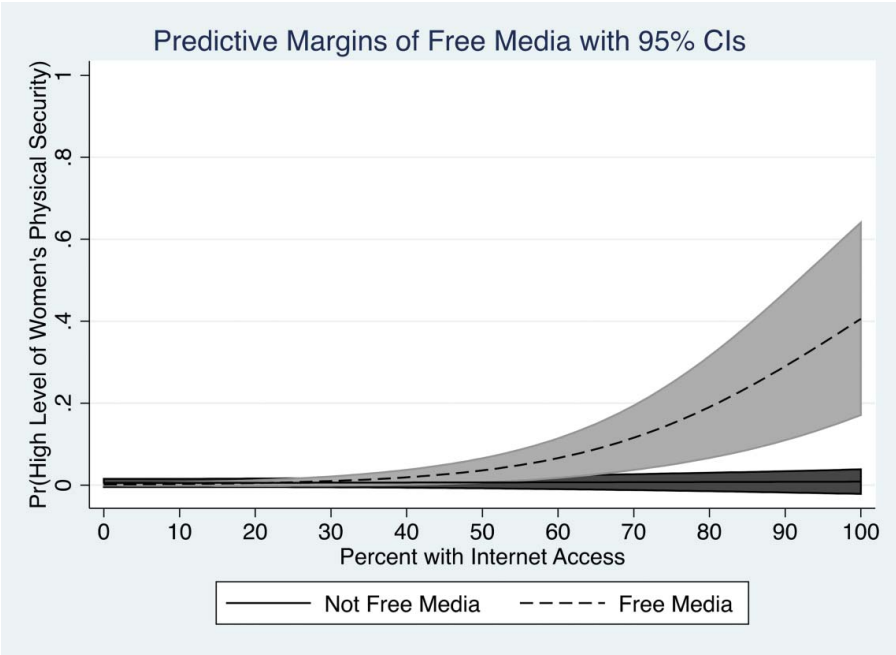


Figure 4. The marginal effects of media freedom and Internet access on the predicted probability of a high level of women’s physical security.
Note. This figure depicts the predicted probability of a high level of women’s physical security as Internet access shifts from 0 to 100% in countries with and without media freedom.

an independent effect on women’s physical security (see Model 7), the interaction of media freedom and Internet access (see Model 8) does have a statistically significant and positive effect on women’s physical security. Once again, fit statistics indicate that the model with this interaction is the better model for women’s physical security. [Figure 4](#) depicts the effect of media freedom on the predicted probability of a high level of women’s physical security as Internet access increases to 100% while other variables are held constant. As indicated by the dashed line, this probability increases in countries with free media as Internet access increases, whereas the solid line shows that the probability remains close to zero in states with not free media, regardless of the level of Internet access. As Internet access approaches 70%, media freedom makes a statistically significant difference in the probability of a high

Table 7. Average marginal effects of executive constraints and civil conflict on the predicted probability of different levels of women’s physical security (from Model 8).

	No Security (0)	Low Security (1)	Medium Security (2)	High Security (3)
Executive Constraints (1 standard deviation increase)	–.093**	–.023	–.028	.042
Civil Conflict (1 standard deviation increase)	.098***	–.038**	–.033*	–.027**

Note. These are the average marginal effects of changes in the values of the independent variables estimated using SPPost13 (Long and Freese 2014).
* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$.

level of women's physical security and, when Internet access approaches 100%, this probability ranges from about .2 to .6.

Executive constraints have statistically significant and positive effects on women's physical security. As reported in Table 7, on average, a standard deviation increase in executive constraints was associated with a .093 decrease in the probability of no physical security for women, but the same increase did not have a significant effect on other levels of women's physical security. Civil conflict has a statistically significant and negative effect. On average, a standard unit increase in civil conflict was associated with a .098 increase in the probability of having no physical security for women (see Table 7). Ratification of the CEDAW, international conflict, population, and religion did not have statistically significant effects on women's physical security once I controlled for the interaction of media freedom with Internet access.

In summary, while there is mixed support for H1, the hypothesis that media freedom will have a positive effect on women's rights, and H2, the hypothesis that Internet access will have a positive effect on women's rights, there is strong support for H3, the hypothesis that the effect of media freedom depends on Internet access. Media freedom had an independent, positive, and significant effect on women's political rights but only in the pre-Internet model. While Internet access had an independent, significant, and positive effect on women's economic rights, political rights, and physical security, this effect was not significant once I controlled for the interaction of media freedom and Internet access. For all three types of women's rights, media freedom had a positive effect as Internet access increased, and Internet access had a positive effect in free media environments. In the next section, I consider the implications of these findings.

Discussion

Overall, these findings indicate that the emergence of the Internet makes a difference in women's rights and that this difference is more pronounced when media freedom is present. Similarly, media freedom is associated with improved women's rights, but only as Internet access increases. Additionally, this interactive effect is more substantive for women's physical security and women's political rights than for women's economic rights. It is really not all that surprising that media freedom and Internet access would have less of an effect on women's economic rights, after all economic issues are generally more complicated and difficult to cover in news media and social media, whereas physical security (especially overt violence) and political issues are more common fodder for news stories and social media posts. Recent coverage of the violence against Dalit women is certainly a case in point.

Though repression of Dalit women has been going on for centuries, their struggle has made headlines in recent years, especially in India, a country with imperfectly free (meaning functionally free) media and an estimated 237.3 million Internet users (about 20% of the population). This coverage comes generally in the form of stories about particular atrocities, for example, the 2014 story of two teenage girls who were gang raped and then hanged from a mango tree in Uttar Pradesh (the same state where a village council is alleged to have ordered the rape of two sisters in 2015). Human rights organizations have sought to leverage this attention to bring about change for the Dalit women (Amnesty International 2015). In March of 2014, hundreds of Dalit women marched across India demanding justice. Throughout the month of marching, they posted updates on Facebook, Instagram, and

Twitter using #dalitwomenfight. In 2015, #dalitwomenfight launched a tour of campuses across North America to raise awareness and international support for their cause. News organizations around the world have covered this movement. Whether these latest efforts will be successful in bringing about change remains to be seen, but certainly #dalitwomanfight is an example of survivors and activists using social media and news media to draw attention to their cause and to pressure their government to improve women's physical security.

In regards to other factors influencing women's rights, it is interesting that the findings for executive constraints were mixed. They had positive effects on women's economic rights and women's physical security but did not have a significant effect on women's political rights. It could be that controlling for previous women's political rights masked any effect of executive constraints. CEDAW ratification was associated with higher levels of women's political rights, but it did not have a significant effect on women's economic rights or women's physical security. Perhaps the CEDAW's lack of an effect on women's physical security should not be surprising, since it does not include violence against women (Richards and Haglund 2015). Findings were also mixed for civil conflict and religion. As expected, civil conflict had significant and negative effects on women's economic rights and physical security but, surprisingly, did not appear to make a difference in women's political rights. International conflict did not have any significant effects. The percentage of Muslims in the population had negative and significant effects on women's economic and political rights but did not have a significant effect on women's physical security. This negative effect could be related to the increased prevalence of more fundamentalist versions of Islam. This effect is similar to that identified by Inglehart and Norris (2003), and it is also in line with the findings of Richards and Haglund (2015). The percentage of Christians in the population had a statistically significant and positive effect on women's political rights but was otherwise insignificant. The percentage of Hindu and no religion did not have significant effects. Finally, population did not have a significant effect on any type of women's rights. In general because these analyses covered a limited number of years in order to focus on the years since the Internet became widely available, it is possible that there simply is not enough data to capture the effects of some of the variables that appear to be insignificant here—in particular executive constraints, civil conflict, and international conflict. Other variables such as population simply may not have an effect on women's rights. Further research is needed as more data become available.

Conclusion

This study presents a first look at the effects of media on women's rights. The findings point to the potential for both media freedom and Internet access to make a difference, particularly in women's political rights and the physical security of women; however, it is the interaction of two that is associated with this positive effect. This makes sense intuitively. Just as media freedom makes it possible for news media to serve as a voice for the marginalized, the Internet makes it possible to spread the news and information about repression around the world. Similarly, Internet access makes it possible for activists at both the domestic and international levels to use social media to pressure local journalists to cover domestic repression, getting around the gate-keeping role of traditional media. Furthermore, activists and journalists alike can employ social media to mobilize international support for women's issues and to pressure

governments to bring about reform. Thus, media freedom and Internet access could be the mechanisms necessary to bring about a boomerang effect (Keck and Sikkink 1998).

Of course this is an optimistic view, and it is also true that social media campaigns tend to encourage passive participation; liking or retweeting a post on social media does not often lead to protest or reform. Yet consistent use of Facebook, Twitter, and old fashioned print and broadcast media may help to build awareness and potentially to shift cultural attitudes over time. Take, for example, the multimedia campaign to eradicate the practice of FGM/C in Burkina Faso, a nondemocracy that has had imperfectly free media since 1991. Initially the government-led campaign met with great resistance and public anger because, although the practice was widespread, discussion of it was taboo. Yet, over time the media campaign has made progress to the extent that the subject of FGM/C is no longer taboo (IRIN 2005). Additionally, though the practice of FGM/C remains common, according to a report by UNICEF (2013) less than 10% of women and girls now support the practice of FGM/C. In spite of this apparent change in the cultural acceptance of FGM/C in Burkina Faso, more than 75% of women and girls have been cut and their physical security remains quite poor. Yet Internet access in Burkina Faso remains quite low, with less than 5% of the population estimated to have access in 2014. As the Internet becomes more prevalent, perhaps women's rights will improve.

Finally, the significant and positive effect of Internet access on women's rights has important policy implications. Certainly it is far easier to increase Internet availability, especially through the introduction of smart phones, than it is to bring about changes in executive constraints and development. However, the evidence here indicates that this positive effect of the Internet depends on a free media environment. This would suggest that programs fostering media freedom might also benefit women's rights. Though previous research has found that, in the absence of democratic institutions, media freedom might have a negative effect on physical-integrity rights (Whitten-Woodring 2009), this study suggests that, when it comes to women's rights, it is the combination of media freedom and Internet access that matters. Perhaps it is because this combination fosters the communication and transmission of information necessary to instigate changes in cultural attitudes, which, in turn, could lead to improvements in women's rights.

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Notes

1. Whitten-Woodring (2009) theorized that media freedom would have different effects on physical-integrity rights in different regime types and tested this proposition with a multiple regression analysis using a pooled cross-sectional time series including 93 countries for the years 1980 to 1995.
2. A case in point is the failure of the mainstream news media in the United States to question the build up to the Iraq war (Bennett et al. 2007).
3. As Tsui (2010: viii) puts it, “The Internet presents a unique opportunity as well as a radical challenge: in a world where everybody can speak, who will listen?”
4. Pollock (2015a, 2015b) also finds evidence of a media-driven boomerang effect. In particular, foreign direct investment was associated with an increase of domestic media coverage emphasizing government responsibility to end human trafficking (Alexandre, Sha, Pollock, Baier & Johnston 2014, 2015).
5. Although CIRI originally included a variable for women’s social rights, this variable was discontinued in 2005.
6. Data are also available for 2007 and 2014, but I have opted to go with the 2009 data because more countries are covered for 2009 than 2007 and because of the limited availability of other variables for 2014.
7. Richards and Haglund (2015) have recently developed a dataset on the strength of domestic laws prohibiting violence against women. Since the focus of this study is more on practice than on legal protections, I have opted to use the WomanStats data.
8. Because of limited availability of other data, we are only able to include 143 of these countries.
9. For more information about the Global Media Freedom Dataset and how it compares to other conceptualizations and measurements of media freedom, see “The Correlates of Media Freedom: An Introduction of the Global Media Freedom Dataset” (Whitten-Woodring and Van Belle 2015).
10. Table 2 provides the results from an ordered logistic regression. The standard interpretation of these coefficients is the expected change in the dependent variable (in the ordered log-odds scale) for a one-unit increase in the independent variable, while all of the other independent variables in the model are held constant. Generally, it is easier to interpret results from this type of analysis by focusing on predicted probabilities of the different levels of the dependent variable.
11. This is an average marginal effect computed using Stata and the `SPost13 mchange` command (Long and Freese 2014).
12. The Bayesian Information Criterion (BIC) is lower for Model 3, indicating that it is the preferred model. Note that the BIC is even lower for Model 1, but, because Model 1 uses a different set of cases, the BICs are not comparable.

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