

Day 2, April 22, 2017: Afternoon Session – 2:15-3:15 p.m.

**Research Panel:
*Diving Deep into the Layers of Journalism,
the Journalism Practice and Its Audiences***

Chair: Kathleen McElroy, Associate Director, **UT Austin School of Journalism**

- **Maria Clara Aquino Bittencourt**, University Unisinos, Brazil — ***A Reinvention Through Opportunities of Crisis: An Exploratory Exercise on Journalistic Initiatives on Medium***
 - **James Breiner**, University of Navarra, Spain — ***Social Capital to the Rescue of the Fourth Estate: A Playbook for Converting Good Will into Economic Support***
 - **Terry Britt**, University of Missouri — ***The News of Your Youth: Memory and Subjective Experience of Time During Major New Events***
 - **Pei Zheng** and **Saif Shahin**, Ithaca College and Bowling Green State University — ***Through the Twitter Glass: How Social Media Reflect and Influence the Political Climate***
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Maria Bittencourt: Thank you. Hello. My name is Maria Clara Aquino Bittencourt. And I am a researcher and a professor in the Post-Graduation Program of Communication Sciences at University of Vale do Unisinos in Brazil. I'm very, very glad to be here. I was nervous, very nervous, to have to talk in English. But for me to talk after Mellissa Bell and Jeff Jarvis is so hard, [laughs], even in Portuguese. So, I will try to do my best. And I ask for my apologies for my English. If I could do this presentation in Portuguese, it's, I think, so much better, but as we say in Brazil, we cannot have everything. [laughs] So, I will read my presentation, but do not pass my ten minutes.

This paper presents an exploratory exercise of a research project about digital journalism that is guided in the context of crisis, but trying to look for opportunity through an in-depth study on journalistic publications on medium platform. The main goal of this project is to identify uses of medium for production and circulation of journalistic content by some Brazilian and American publications around the platform.

My research question, the research question of this investigation, is, how structured are the forms of production and the dynamics of circulation that drives the journalistic use of the medium platform? Are you listening?

Rosental Alves: Yes.

Maria Bittencourt: OK. OK. ...of the medium platform? Launched in 2012, as you know, media wants to reinvent the model for content publication on internet. The selection of medium for this study was made to the understanding that the features available in the CMS redefine all the online publishing practices. Grouping in a single platform some characteristics of different digital tools, like blogs, social network sites, and the others.

My directions of investigations. As a first step of investigations, it was made a map of journalistic projects on medium, college publications inside the platform, which proposed transformations in the forms of production and the dynamics of circulations of content. The second step, it was a generation of observation criteria on elements related to the processes of production and circulations of content of the projects.

My argumentative threads. I used three argumentative threads to articulate the analysis. The TTR, total time reading, that is used by media as their main measurement system. More than knowing how many people have read our story on medium, what matters is knowing how long each person spent reading a text and how the sidebar was scrolled. I tried to articulate TTR with considerations about depth and reach of journalistic content to analyze a group of journalists publications on medium through another set of criteria.

Here are some of the names of my theoretical reference work in the article, but unfortunately, I don't have time to talk about all of them. And I brought some of them to show you.

And the next slide brings about my methodology. A constructive and qualitative survey was made to identify elements that trigger the perspective of transforming the form of the content in relation to TTR. Consider that the organization of the content on medium works until now through tags because they now are working with talk too. It was defined as a strategy to contain the mapping of Brazilian and American projects.

Four tags: *journalismo* and *journalism jetau* in Portuguese and *journalism* and *digital journalism* in English. Publications with fewer than 1,000 followers were excluded. And then, a final set of six publications in Portuguese and 26 in English was collected, according to a table that is in the article. But here, it's shown here in another form to be better visualized. And here is this visual scheme of this table with these publications in Portuguese and in English with these hashtags.

In order to deepen the study of this publication, a set of four criteria was established to evaluate how these publications incorporated the elements of depth and reach in the stories they published: frequency of publications and size of the stories, nature of content, technical characteristics of digital journalism, and circulation strategies.

And I will talk about some of my results. Because of the time, I won't talk about all of them. The selected publications, both in Portuguese and in English, do not maintain a daily frequency of publication of stories. The frequency of publication and the size of the stories are directly related to the type of content. It is common to find the stories that exceeded ten minutes of reading showing how longer content, deep or not, are common on the platform; thus, the circulation of stories with medium depends on the number of followers of the publications and the profiles that are linked to them. This means that in addition to a battle of recommendation, there is a new fight for the gaining of followers.

The curation of stories that a publication makes can be considered an accelerator of recommendations. Social media such as Twitter and Facebook have a hold that complements the social networking dynamic that medium provides through this recommendation scheme. This publications choice of broadcasting its own content or curating writer's text through medium also interferes with the form of the stories. What should be highlighted here is that just as the reach of the stories ends up depending greatly on the amount of followers of the writers, the deepening depends on how the writers link it to the publication and structured their texts. Publications that carry only their own content have more control over the composition of the stories and the formats used. Publications composed of stories published on medium have less editing power that in this sense, in many cases, no.

Hypertextuality is a resource that can be explored by publications on medium, not only through links within stories, but also through tags which can be used to organize sections of a publication, as well as sections for organizing websites. Medium has been used as a platform for publishing journalistic content of its own by profiles and publications. But consider what has been verified in this study—curation is one of the practices that had defined the journalistic hold in the digital environment. In other platforms, the activity has already been carried out.

Media outlets allow this following the journalist's activity as a guide to publications that even without producing their own content can compose journalistic projects based on the content made available on the platform. And at the same time, the ability of these publications to curate content highlights it as one of the practices that redefines the hold of the journalists in the digital environment.

The projects is still in its initial stages. New steps in data collection and construction of analysis matters are underway. For the journalism industry, the project has relevance when it finds results on the movement in the independent projects... (We are just finishing.) However, the project also aims to observe how big publishers deal with the company's attempt to generate a new business model for publishing content on the internet.

Presently, media develop new features and is organizing its content through talk, as I said before, and implementing a signature system. It is a new set of data to be analyzing inside the project.

Thank you very much for your attention and for the opportunity to be here sharing these results with you.

[Applause.]

James Breiner: I'd like to tell you a little bit about how social capital has the potential to save journalism, and I'm going to give you a little playbook that a number of news media are using, digital news media, digital news natives, eight examples from seven countries, [and] how they are using it.

And so, first of all, to understand what social capital is, why are you here at ISOJ? Probably because you want to see some old friends, you want to make some new friends, you want to make some contacts, you want to share stuff and learn stuff, and you're investing in your own social capital. You're trying to increase your own value to yourself and to your organization. And there's an economic metric for that, and that's how much it costs for you to all fly here, and you know it has value. OK? But it's very difficult to determine the value of social capital even though we all know that personal networks, and the connections that we make, and the relationships that we have, have a lot of value, but it's disguised. It's disguised as friendship. It's disguised as professional relationships. It's disguised as cultural relationships, national identity, [and] all kinds of things like that.

And you can't figure out how much this social capital is worth until you try to activate it. And how do you try to activate it? Well, you might, here, you might meet somebody who you may ask them for a job. You may apply for a job based on meeting them here. Or, you may find a collaborator for a research project, and that has value. Or, you may try to seek funding for a project or something like that. But you don't know how much it's worth until you activate it.

So, social capital, for news startups, the relevance to this is that it's another way of calculating the value of a news organization. Right now in the business world, you calculate the value of a news medium or a news organization by how profitable they are, but these organizations, they lack economic capital, [and] they are unattractive to most investors, because they typically don't show a big profit. But the public is starved for news. You've heard about that all day. They're starved for the kind of news that they can trust. So, trust is a new currency. These news organizations are trying to provide it.

But the social outcomes of what these news organizations do also has value, and this is another way to value—to give a value to what these folks are doing. So, how do you measure social impact? Well, the Media Development Investment Fund is an organization that does invest in media. And how do they do it? They do it by looking at typical stuff like traffic, and users, and revenues, and profits, but also they measure the viability of a news organization—their debt, cash flow, the growth—and then they also look at the impact. Are these organizations doing good coverage of elections? Are they holding their elected officials accountable? Are they doing investigations of corruption? And are other news organizations republishing their work? So, these are new metrics.

The whole goal is to create a better community, to have the journalism contribute to creating a better community. So, many of these organizations—the eight organizations that I’m looking at—they do investigative journalism, and they do accountability journalism, and they do deep-dive journalism. And a lot of this scares investors and it scares advertisers. Because if you’re doing investigative journalism, you’re going to make people angry. A lot of times powerful people. It’s expensive, but it’s a great public service, and it creates trust and loyalty. And we’ve heard a lot about that today, how important that is. And it in itself creates social capital.

The organizations that we’re talking about today, all of them position themselves as highly credible, more credible than the existing media, and they position themselves as being independent. You’ve heard a lot about that today also. So, one of them is Mediapart in France. And when they launched, they said, “We’re gonna do investigative journalism, and we’re gonna have a paywall, and we’re gonna charge people.” And everybody said, “You can’t do that. You’re crazy. It’ll fail.” And they’ve got 120,000 subscribers. They made a profit of 3.6-million over that two-year period; although, they’re fighting the tax collectors in France over that.

And de Correspondent in Holland is another example. Both of these do not accept ads, and they do not accept ads, again, because they want to enhance their position as being credible news sources, not being influenced, being independent. They had a great crowdfunding campaign of \$1.7-million. And they did that based on the strength of the social capital that the founders had, the appeal to the public of this mission-driven organization, which said, “We’re gonna do a different kind of journalism. It’s gonna be independent, and it’s gonna serve you.” It was focused on the users.

El Español in Spain, they also did a crowdfunding campaign of 4-million—equal to \$4-million. They have a founder, Pedro J. Ramirez. They call him Pedro Jota. And Pedro Jota is such a big personality that he attract—he has a lot of social capital. His network is enormous. And he managed to attract about \$18-million to launch this thing; although, it’s struggling a little bit at the moment.

MalaysiaKini in Malaysia, they have a model where they have 16,000 subscribers who are each paying about \$40 a year for their publication. And their model is interesting. It is that only the English speaker version, you have to pay for it. So, a very small percentage of very loyal users. And you’ve heard a lot today about the importance of attracting not big audiences, but loyal users. That’s their model.

That’s also the model of ElDiarioPunto.es in Spain. They have 20,000 *socios* or partners. And this is a free publication. They give it away. And yet, they have 20,000 people who are paying \$66 a year, because they want to get a publication that they believe is free and independent. That’s the mantra of ElDiarioPunto.es. They’re generating about \$1-million—well, it’s a lot more than that now—from less than 1% of their users. Less than 1% of their users. You heard before that The New York Times is generating 90% of their revenue from 10% — 90% of their digital

revenue from 10% of their users. This model is loyal. You want loyal folks who are willing to pay.

La Silla Vacía in Columbia. Their motto: "Help us keep doing the journalism that we believe in." And they have \$100,000 in contributions from their club of super-amigos.

And another example of getting big financial support from creating social capital or tapping into social capital. Texas Tribune, this number is a little bit old, like from.... They're generating maybe \$3-million from events, corporate sponsorships, and contributions. Evan Smith was telling me yesterday. And they do tons of events. They get face-to-face with their users. They create this kind of social capital, that kind of loyal support, people who are willing to pay, to pay for a news medium that's doing something different.

Then here's our guy from Guatemala. He's the eighth guy. Martin [Rodríguez Pellecer, founder, Nómada] says, "You've got to think like a capitalist." And Martin is no right-winger. He's not capitalist at heart, but to support journalism, Martin, he'll do anything. He gets grants, loans. He goes to foundations. He does studies for banks, all sorts of stuff, in order to support—to provide the support for his journalism.

The editor, Ernst-Jan Pfauth, of de Correspondent says, "If you're going to get support for your publication, don't try to sell subscriptions to a publication. Get people to join a movement." And so this idea of, we are for independent media and the freedom of the press, that's the kind of appeal you need to make to tap into social capital.

So, how do you do it? Experienced founders help. These organizations are all operating at a pretty high level in terms of revenue generation and profit, big staffs. The journalistic reputation of the founders is important for attracting talent. Charisma helps [and] public reputation if you want to get subscribers. Connecting unrelated networks adds value. So, we heard a lot about collaboration between, say, a hyperlocal site and maybe a national or international site, but collaboration maximizes your social capital.

Editorial independence creates trust, loyalty. This is currency. This is capital. You can monetize it. It sounds like a dirty word, but you can monetize it. That's how social capital is going to help us save the fourth estate. Weak networks, links, mean more independence, so you don't want to get too close to your supporters. And then, we really haven't figured this out for small media.

So, but, I like this quote to finish with. Ignacio Escolar, "Journalism is a public service, but it's a public service that needs to be profitable." It's got to be good business. So, if you're thinking about founding your own publication, go for it! *Atrévete!*

[Applause.]

Terry Brit: Good afternoon, everyone. Previously in my ISOJ life, I stood here and told you about ways that media organizations were using new media to repurpose or re-present their archival content to either new audiences or audiences that remember the news events when they actually occurred. If you weren't here or you don't remember that, it's okay! It's been archived. You can go to ISOJ.org and do your own little time travel to 2015.

So today, I want to tell you about a study that kind of takes that concept and runs with it. Looking at how people remember news events, in this particular case, from their adolescent years.

So, a couple of things I need to explain. Psychological concepts that were sort of tied into the framework of this study. Autonoetic consciousness sounds trippy, but you actually do it every day or experience it every day and usually several times a day. It is your uniquely human ability to mentally move into the past or into the future and experience a cognitive construction of yourself. OK? Everybody think about that for moment. Just kind of digest that. The second term is something called the reminiscence bump. We apparently—research has shown—we apparently have a proclivity for a lot of our memories, as time goes by, to be tied to our adolescent and young adult years. This is known as the reminiscence bump.

So, I basically took these two concepts and kind of use those as a theory framework to look at, you know, what do we remember about news events from our youth, from our adolescent years, in particular? So, for this study I used the method called video elicitation. It works for photos too. This is a research method where you show visual content to someone, and then you either interview them or you observe them as they respond to that. So, it's a qualitative method.

In this study, I used a convenient sample of some 18-to-23-year-olds from the j-school in Mizzou. I showed them news events that would have occurred when they were between 12 and 19. For pretty much all of the subjects in the study, they were basically between 12 and 15. But the two news events that were selected for this study were a highlights package of CNN's 2012 presidential election night coverage. The other—some of you folks from Austin might recognize the call letters—was a report on the BP oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico in 2010.

And so, I had them watch these videos and then I did an interview with each subject concerning their memories of the news event. Also, memories of things aside from the news event, but which occurred at the same time. And then I also asked them a set of questions regarding how they think about that news event in the past now. And so, that's just kind of a quick summary of, you know, what I was after in terms of research questions for this study. So, this is what I found. Kind of recurring themes throughout the answers that were given in the interviews.

First of all, for the first question about the news events themselves—memory of the news events themselves—a lot of statements regarding emotional affect. With the election night coverage, "I remember being so excited about the results." "I

remember being so disappointed about the results." "I remember the atmosphere in my home on election night." So, a lot of strong ties to emotional affect.

Secondly, visual content. Not really a big surprise there. The people instantly recognized, "Oh, yeah, I remember seeing the electoral map as the results were coming in, and, you know, which ones were red and which ones were blue." With the oil spill, images of oil covered birds and other, you know, endangered wildlife as a result of that rig explosion out in the gulf.

Also, something that I found throughout is that these videos kind of became memory aids, in a way, reminding them of details about these events that they had kind of forgotten in the passage of time. Things like, you know, the fact that there were workers on the oil rig out in the gulf who were killed in the explosion. Several subjects mentioned, "Yeah, I actually kind of forgot about that, how tragic that really was."

So secondly, I was looking at things they remember around the same time of the news event, but maybe not directly about the news event itself. Many subjects remembered the conversations they had with family or friends; sometimes in very exact detail. A lot of things at school. Of course, they were in school at this time. either middle school or early in high school. I got a lot of, "Oh, yeah, we participated in a mock election on the election day at school." Or, several of the subjects mentioned, you know, discussions or sometimes even projects in the classroom that had an environmental tie to it in the wake of the oil rig explosion. In a few interviews, people were able to really give detailed descriptions of places, you know, rooms in the home or, you know, places they were that day of the news event.

Something on the strat-com end. I was amazed at how often this came up. People remembering the Dawn Dishwashing Liquid campaign with using Dawn Soap to clean the oil off the birds. A good number of subjects also talked about family and friends boycotting BP Gas Stations for a while, kind of out of reaction to what had happened out in the gulf.

And then thirdly, and this might be the most important finding of all, people were— I found that people were using the memory of these news events as kind of a measuring tape, in a way, of how they had changed or how their attitudes had changed [and] their levels of interest or concern about the news event or the topic that it was associated with.

And as far as tying all this into, you know, what we've been talking about for the past couple of days, I'll say this, you know, if we're knocking ourselves out here in 2017 creating all this great digital content, how greater the tragedy if 50 years from now it's all gone or it's impossible to access. That is why digital preservation is a really big deal and needs to be treated as such.

So, where I'm going from here or where other researchers might go in this line, this study is still open. What I'm doing now is recruiting older subjects, older

generations, to see if the same kind of things occur in interviews with them about news events that occurred when *they* were in adolescent years. Also, psychophysiology and neuroscience are giving us some great new ways to explore processes that go on inside the mind when engaging with media content, including media content from the past.

Real quick plug for a conference that we host or sponsor through the Reynolds Journalism Institute at Mizzou: Dodging the Memory Hole. If you're a George Orwell fan, you know exactly what that refers to. It is a conference about digital content preservation, and it's very much like ISOJ in bringing together media professionals, researchers, librarians, archivists, information specialists. So RJIOrganizations.org if you want to learn more about that.

And then finally, I will leave you with this note about time: the best adventures of your future are the ones you never expected to take. I'd like to introduce you to one of mine. Her name is Amy Crews, and she is the reference, actually, to that oddly worded title on the first slide, "The end of life as I knew it." She is also the beginning of an even greater one. Because exactly four weeks from today...we are getting married. [audience reacts, applauds] She's supposed to be watching this livestream right now, so if you'll excuse me just a second. [laughter] Hi, Amy! Love you! [audience reacts, applauds] Thank you for letting me have fun up here.

[Applause.]

Pei Zheng: Good afternoon, everyone. So, it's great for both me and Saif to be back as a Longhorn to Austin again. And as to our research, we promise there's a huge linkage—there's a huge linkage between researcher and practitioners. So, we are interested in the current political climate of the U.S. And what we're looking at is through Twitter during the last presidential election cycle. So, everyone in this room, I think, I believe you're all familiar with how important social media platform [such] as Twitter is during some big even such as the presidential election.

And yes, so what we are really looking at is, while the three presidential election [debates] were live on TV, so what are people doing on Twitter at the same time? So, when we mentioned about social media platforms such as Twitter, so we all have the preconception that those social media platforms help to democratize the politics and also the society, because it facilitates the interactions between elites and non-elites, and also it facilitates the discussion among people with different opinions.

But at the same time, researchers also find the echo-chamber facts, which means people on social media only, most of the time, are talking to people who share the similar ideas with each other. So, it's almost against a cross discussion. And as for echo chamber and also the cross discussion, there are people online who lead their opinion and who lead the discussion on social media. And those people who direct and drive the traffic are called opinion leaders.

So, our research questions, basically, are quite straightforward. The first one is, we want to know, what's the dominant topic of the conversation on Twitter during the presidential debates time? And also, how are people connecting and interacting with each other during that time? And at the same time, during those interactions, who are the opinion leaders who drive the discussion and the traffic on Twitter?

So, we collected more than 300,000 tweets during those three debates time. We skipped the vice presidential debates. And we collected for the day of the day of the debate and two days afterwards. And we used a network analysis to represent—to present the connection and interaction among people on Twitter. And also given the large volume of the tweets data, we used top modeling, which is the automated textual analysis to develop an algorithm and let the computer help us to discover the bag of words in all the three debates.

So, here is our result from the top modeling. So basically, we found five topics emerged from the conversation in all the four—in all the three debates. We numbered them 0 to 4. And this is a visualization about the four topics. So basically, you can see the one in the dark blue is Topic 0, which is the second largest topic in all the three debates. And the three colored in brown, [yellow], and silver, they dominate each of the debates; Debate 1, 2, and 3, respectively. And Topic 4 is quite marginalized in all the three debates.

More specifically, Topic 0, which always a bag of words, such as *tonight*, *presidential*, *vote*, *American*, *night*, they represent the debate and the debate in general and also the broadcast of the three debates in a general term. This is the second largest topic in all the three debates. Topic 1 was those key words. It's focused on Obama questioning Trump's credential as leader and also Clinton fact-checked Trump. So, it is the largest topic in Debate 1, and it indicates Clinton won the first debate. But starting from the second debate, the directions shift a little bit.

And with those bags of words, the second debate is really related to the allegation of the sexual assault against Bill Clinton and Trump, and at the same time, the Trump supporters called for fact checking against Clinton and also the mainstream media. So, it is the largest topic discovered in the second debate. So, it indicates in the second debate Trump, in fact, had the upper hand on Twitter.

The third debate goes further on that direction with the focus on the Podesta emails, and allegation of Clinton's lying to the public, and also people blaming the media supporting Clinton being so biased. So with it as the largest topic in Debate 3, it shows Trump actually won the third debate, at least on Twitter.

So, the topic modeling altogether tells us two things. So first, is basically the televised presidential debate not very successfully set the agenda on Twitter, so it has very limited impact on the Twitter debate. So basically, people on the TV and people on Twitter, they're talking about things separately, and there's no really interaction among them. And at the same time, from the topic we identified, it is very clear, like, all the topics are very candidate specific, rather than the top—or rather than the policy oriented. So because the presidential debate should be the

moment that most attention will [be] paid to the policies for the next president, so what we found was real indicative there is a problem with how people are talking about the debates.

And next, the network analysis really presents the network and also the interaction connections among people who are tweeting during the presidential debate time. So from the first debate, this graph visualizes the *mentioned* network, and it is very clear from here, there are basically two camps: one is centered by Hillary Clinton, and another is surrounded by Donald Trump. And with this, this is the *replied* network; basically, like, who replies to whom through the comments. And it gets even more clear that the two camps [are] basically talking to themselves, within themselves, and there is seldom interactions between the two camps. And similar patterns [were] found in the second debate as well as the third debate.

And we have a deeper look into the opinion leaders on Twitter. So basically, those people who are [at the] center at those debates, when people are discussing about the presidential debates, and those with the highest amount of — number of mentions. So from the results, we found three things.

First, most of the opinion leaders are individual accounts, rather than the organizational accounts. And also among those individual accounts, the internet personalities, especially the video bloggers and YouTube personalities, they had a lot of influence on the three debates. This is really like many researchers or like many panelists have talked about during these two days, how important videos are in these days. So, our results also show the same pattern that video bloggers are really important [and] have a real influence on social media these days.

And the third thing we want everyone to pay attention to is activists, especially the conservative grassroots activist. They draw a substantial attention during the debate time. So, as I mentioned before, it used to be — opinion leaders used to be those who are generally elites, such as the journalists, news organizations, and also politicians. But at least from Twitter from those specific debate times, we find out that grassroots activists and the conservative grassroots activists, they play a big role in leading the conversation.

So, two thoughts before we close up. First, we identified the two clusters, which are quite distinctly marked in all the three debates, and at the same time, Trump and Clinton and their supporters hardly interact with each other, and instead, they almost form two mutually exclusive echo chambers with only a few bridges in between. And again through the reply network, we found out, like, people on Twitter, they are very loosely connected with each other, and also the conversation is usually more one-directional than interaction.

So although our data [is] only from the three presidential debate time and is limited for more generalized conclusions, but we believe it indicates some of the — it indicates the current political social life in the U.S. today. Like, the political climate is getting more divided and people are, yeah, it's getting more divided, and the people, there is a lot of cross-discussion in the political climate.

So, thank you, everyone. And my coauthor, Saif, will answer your questions during the Q&A. Thank you.

[Applause.]