

## 17<sup>th</sup> Annual International Symposium on Online Journalism

### Day 2, April 16, 2016: Research Panel - 11:30am-12:45pm

**Chair & Discussant:** Kathleen McElroy, Assistant Professor, Oklahoma State University

- **Lu Wu**, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill: ***Did you get the buzz? Are digital native media becoming mainstream?***
  - **Zhaoxi Liu**, Trinity University: ***Toward Omnipresent Journalism: A Case Study of the Real-Time Coverage of the San Antonio Spurs 2014 NBA Championship Game***
  - **Daniel Kilgo and Vinicio Sinta**, University of Texas at Austin: ***6 things you didn't know about headline writing: Sensational form in viral news of traditional and digitally native news organizations***
  - **Hans Meyer and Burton Speakman**, Ohio University: ***Quieting the Commenters: The Spiral of Silence's Persistent Effect on Online News Forums***
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**Lu Wu:** Hi, everybody. Good morning, if it's not too late to say. So my name is Lu Wu, and I'm a doctoral student at UNC Chapel Hill. And today, I would like to talk a little bit about my research in digital native sites, and in particular, how they have transitioned into becoming a major news player in the news media.

So digital native sites or digital startups are newer media organizations that were born and grown entirely online. Some of them started as online content aggregators and probably a few names have already come to your mind, such as BuzzFeed, HuffingtonPost, Gawker.com, or Mashable.com. And when they started out, they didn't necessarily produce their own original content, but in recent years we have seen more and more of them are transitioning into original content producers, and in particular, news content.

And another fact to note is that they are popular among millennials. That gives them a lot of leverage in terms of attracting funding from investors. And also in the very near future, millennials will become a major news consumer group in the world.

So all the facts aside, I think digital native sites are still in the process of establishing themselves as a reputable news source. So there is a lot of uncertainty. They don't know and the audience don't know whether they will be successful and whether the audience will find them to be trustworthy or not. So in certain situations, media ecology scholars have suggested that nascent media would usually resort to traditional organizational formats to help them survive in their own certainly and even thrive in the competition.

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So in other words, they would mimic what other traditional media or legacy media are doing in their daily operations in trying to be successful.

So what I mean by organizations forms, there [are] a few steps you can expect to see. They would hire experienced workers from other outlets. They would adapt news routines in their daily operations. And they would create rules and regulations to bind their managers and their employees. And the last thing, they would specialize their workforce.

So among those steps, there is something -- some of them can easily be observed. So you probably have recalled that some digital native sites have hired experience journalists from other legacy media outlets, and they are refining their editorial policies, right, to guide their employees. But there are other things that are kind of more nuanced and embedded in their daily operation.

So from my study, I would like to see if digital native sites have gone through those transitions to help them establish their news routine [and] that we can expect to see certain changes. Such as, [they] would have a greater number of sources quoted in their stories, and a greater number of official sources quoting their stories as well, and more likely, they would report in a hard news format other than soft news, and the same thing would apply to their political news reporting as well.

So what I did is a content analysis of news articles published by BuzzFeed. The reason I chose BuzzFeed is because it is the second-most visited digital native site back in 2015, according to Pew Research Center, and they also have a well-curated online archive that provides you easy access to all their past content. So I chose two constructed weeks of each year from January 1, 2007 to October 31, 2015. And the final sample size is about 912 articles.

So the first thing I found is a change in their news source; how many sources they have attributed in their news articles. And as you can see, there is a clear surge around 2010 and 2011, and the slope just got deeper after 2012. So I used 2012 as a cutoff point, because in that year BuzzFeed hired Ben Smith from Politico to lead their editorial team to go through a transition into a news agency. So clearly, you can see there is significant changes between before 2012 and after 2012. And the same pattern applied to official sources as well.

And the second thing I look at is changing their news topics. There is still a strong association between the two periods of time, and in both periods of time, political news is the most reported news topic. But we can also see a slight increase in science, sports, education, and also entertainment use. So their topics just got more diverse over the years.

And the next thing I found is there is a change in how their news are reported. Before 2012, over 60% of their news are reported in softer news

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format, and only 36% of them are in hard news format. By that, I mean, the basic inverted pyramid style that are qualified as hard news format. So the proportion kind of reversed after 2012, and you can see almost 60% of their news are in hard news format.

So the same pattern can be seen in their political news reporting as well. So before 2012, almost 70% of their political news are in soft format, and 30% of them are in hard news format. But the trend also reversed after 2012.

And the last thing is, in their political news reporting before 2012, almost one-quarter of their stories do not have attributed sources. But after 2012, the number dropped down to only 4%.

So I think the takeaway from my study is, although it is in their initial stage of trying to build a reputable news brand, I think BuzzFeed is making some progress in terms of adopting news routines that have been used by traditional media, and they are making progress. And those programs are reflected in their daily news production.

So I think it is promising that digital native sites are, you know, making progress and growing into a much bigger force in news business, especially, you know, becoming successful among younger viewers. But it's also important to keep tracking their progress and see in the long-term how they would affect our democratic process.

Thank you. That's all for me.

[Applause.]

**Zhaoxi Liu:** Good morning, everybody. So my study is about.... I did a case study of the San Antonio Express News coverage of the Spurs Game 5. I mean, in the paper, I call it the championship game. I know it's contestable, but for the purpose of my study it just felt pretty intuitive. So that's how I called it in the paper. All right. And this is the San Antonio Express News. I don't know how many of you subscribe to it or read it, but it's the biggest paper in San Antonio.

And also, my study, unlike the previous one, is very qualitative based. So I actually do not have a whole lot of numbers to report. And if you read my paper, there's a lot of narrative. So I guess I will just talk. And maybe some analysis.

All right. Let's see what's the next one. Oh, and so they have a print paper product, of course, and then they have a free website, which is mySA.com. So it's a free website, but they also have what they call a premium website, which you have to pay a fee in order to get access to. So that's San Antonio Express News.

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And this is my research site, which is the newsroom. And I spent about eight weeks there for a summer research grant project, and this is just part of the findings that I was able to get from that eight-week field research.

All right. Then here is the moment when... We love the Spurs. I gather some people probably are from Dallas, so this might not ring very well for you, but I mean the Spurs are just really very much loved in San Antonio. And in 2014, they defeated Miami Heat to claim their fifth NBA title. So it's a huge deal in town.

So, why am I doing this? First of all, I really want to see how the real-time coverage was unfolded by a legacy media organization. San Antonio Express News has been around for over 100 years. And so, how are they sort of like tapping into new trends and get that done?

With that, I tried to advance the concept of omnipresent journalism as sort of like maybe a new model to understand the operation of a legacy news organization. And I also want to explore the implications of such omnipresent journalism, the implications for journalism or news organizations, especially newspaper industry in general. So that's sort of like my papers.

OK. I'm going to show you a little video clip, just so you get a sense, you know, what is going on that night. Let's see if it's going to work.

[Video plays of crowd in a sports bar chanting "Go, Spurs, go!"]

So you sort of like get a sense of the frenzy of that night. This is a sports bar where I was accompanying a San Antonio Express News reporter. So we went through the whole thing. I was with her at the beginning and then a little bit afterwards. So most of the narrative is based on my observation of her work that night. But afterwards, I also interviewed other people who also were involved in this operation.

So the Spurs basically, you know, besides all the sports reporters who were at the arena, AT&T Center, they also sent a dozen reporters around the city to different various locations to gather real-time fan reactions, and then pull out, what I call, three rounds of news presentation. It's not just for this particular reporter. It's for all the dozen reporters who were sent out across the city.

So the first round was actually live tweets. So moments after the reporter arrived at the sports bar, where she was assigned to, the first thing she did was pull out a phone and took a photo and tweeted it. So that was her first tweet. But this was not the first tweet. This is one of the tweets. And she was taking a picture of a family. They were all wearing sort of like the golden hats, so like leftover from Fiesta. And then, you know, just watching [the] game, enjoying the game. So that was the first round. The live tweets, it's

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instantly. It doesn't have a lot of polishing or whatever. It just was done in a few seconds.

And then this photo was added to a collection by mySA.com, which is their free website. So it was added there together with many other photos gathered from around the city. And [it] has a slideshow. And they also have something called a vignette, so it almost is like a live blogging. So each of the reporters, they would just send live tweets, and then they also type up, you know, just kind of like a couple hundred words of small mini-stories. And then a web editor will collect them and pull them together and post it on the website. And these are all during the game. This is not like afterwards. So it's sort of like real time.

And then, of course, the last thing they did was, they will collect the best vignettes, pull out material from the best vignettes. A feature reporter will write a long story. And then some of the individual reporters, they also write their own vignettes, and then print it in the paper. So that's, of course, the next morning the paper is going to be delivered to the city.

So three rounds. First round, live tweets, and second round is the website, and then the third round is sort of like post-game, the print product.

So here is an illustration of what omnipresent journalism is. So, what does the three rounds, you know, altogether represent? First of all, they have.... I think omnipresent journalism has two dimensions. That how I sort of like advanced this concept. It has a.... Let me see if this is going to work. Oh, yeah. So it has a spatial dimension.

Well, let's start with temporal dimension. So it really started at the very beginning of the event. So it's real time. And this is done by the live tweets. So live tweets would start from the very beginning of the event, and it will last, you know, it will just continue. And then the second round is the website. The website will lag a little bit, because it needs to gather the tweets from the reporters. So that's the second round, but it started in the middle of the game and continued. And then the third round is the print paper, and it's mostly after the game. So that's the temporal dimension. It's real time. It goes throughout the entire event.

And then another dimension is spatial dimension. So it's on multiple platforms. It's on social media. You know, from Twitter, it has a share button. It gets spread across social media. And on their website, their slideshow has a bunch of sharing buttons. So it goes across social media as well. So the website, and then the final platform is the print. So it's omnipresent in terms of temporal sense, because it goes throughout the game. It's real time. And it's also in a spatial sense, because it is across platforms.

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And as such, you know, in terms of news organization practice, it's a three-round presentation. It's a three-round routine, basically. And I observed this not just for this game. It's during the like daily operation as well. Reporters keep doing tweets, and their website updates, and then finally the print product. So it's a new routine that they're following, but at the same time, you can see it is combination of new media and old media. And then theoretically speaking, it is also, theoretically speaking, a kind of advanced concept a little bit.

So then implications. First of all, laptop is out. Mobile is in. Because most of the stuff that's done by the journalists, it's all on mobile phones. And this is in my class, and they're practicing mobile journalism. And that's a quote, you know, they want to go where the readers are, so that's the first implication.

The second implication is that the reporter is there. They really are multitasking. You know, are you going to take notes? Are you going to make phone calls? Are you going to just use the mobile phone to live tweet or are you going to type up the story? Not only multitasking. They have to learn to prioritize; otherwise, they fail the task. You have to know at what point you're supposed to do what.

And then another thing is that the print media, it becomes like the holy grail. It's like really the best thing. Their editor told them to save the best for the print media. And these are some of the quotes from people at the newspaper.

I was going to show you this, but I don't have time. It's a spotlight. And when Marty Baron said, "We're going to run the story," and then Ben Bradley, Jr. said, "Damn right, we're gonna run the story." The next thing, you see the printing press running. You just feel the print press—the print paper is so powerful. So maybe there is something about print media. It's not just nostalgia.

OK. Then this is about glitches. They have to deal with, you know, technical glitches and human errors and all that. So omnipresent journalism is not that easy. OK. And so I just mentioned that, so I already mentioned that. And so that's that. I'm going to skip.

And then I want to say, you know, maybe this is the effort to find solutions rather than *the* solution. And also, we have to ask, is omnipresent journalism better journalism? Or, is it [that] it could better inform the public? And what other papers are doing.

Thank you.

[Applause.]

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**Danielle Kilgo:** Thank you. As Kathleen mentioned, my name is Danielle Kilgo. I'm a doctoral candidate here at the School of Journalism at the University of Texas. and this project started from an exploration of wanting to figure out why on earth clickbait was such this terrible, horrible thing. And what we found in academic scholarship was that we had to start sort of at a foundational level, because clickbait had not been operationalized in academic scholarship. We are barely looking at virality in academic scholarship. So this is sort of this foundational article that we wanted to create, so that we could build upon this in future studies.

So this conference really has not shied away from talking about online news. I'm going to not bore you with the specifics, but there's definitely a need for audience engagement with news. There's reformatting that's happened, especially in social media networks. Traditional and digitally native news organizations, which are the two types of organizations that we look at in this viral content of the study, are both required to reformat, especially as social media networks adapt and as the digital landscape evolves.

And so within the social media realm, audience interaction numbers have served as a metric that we can use to evaluate success. And those audience interaction numbers come from up votes, and loves, and retweets, and likes, comments, and shares. So what we did, we decided to look at virality by adding up all the likes, shares, and comments from Facebook. So we're looking at viral Facebook content.

And we wanted to answer the question, what makes news viral? So we wanted to look at a few characteristics. And perhaps a bit ironically, what happened was that we start looking at different characteristics and sensationalism caught our eye. Now, sensationalism is a term that has a really bad rep, and Tiger Woods clearly hates sensationalism as much as most journalists and scholars do. In fact, sensationalism has been derided for being like the sewer of the news industry.

I think that's because we're used to seeing sensationalism a little more like this, right? So we're questioning the president's gender. We're becoming zombies because of Ebola. Or, you're really scared that your children are going to be fed to alligators. And indeed, this is a continuation of the concept of sensationalism as it continued from yellow journalism.

But what Graven and his authors had done in 2001 was separate sensationalism and broadcast news and said that there's two different forms. There's content, which focuses on this tabloid-like style that we just saw in the previous slide, so sex and crime and really odd things—head lists, people at barber shops, right? And then there's form. And form is more of the structure. It's the presentation or the style that the news is in. And so for broadcast, one of the examples that he used was like the panning in and out of a really emotional character on a telenovela or a soap opera.

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So Vinicio and I decided that we would look at online content. And what we decided was that in the textual form this is more of what we're used to seeing in terms of sensationalism. "Oh, my god! Wait till you see this scene!" "This—you won't believe what is happening!" "Here's eight things that you must know about psychological warfare." And so we broke this down into four different kinds of concepts that we want to look at here.

Our four concepts that we used, the first is personalization. And we used that as a writing that directly addresses the reader either through an explicit or implicit pronoun use or through a question, addressing a question to the reader. So, "You must read this."

The second is listicles, which I'm sure you're familiar with. BuzzFeed is in our digitally native sample, and they're like the self-reigned king of the listicle. But I'm here to tell you listicles were here way before BuzzFeed ever was. If you look, for example, at the Seven Habits of Highly Effective People, this was like a long-form listicle that was a two-decade-long best seller, right? So listicles have been effective strategies for organizing complex information into sub-categories that is either seemingly or not seemingly related.

Additionally, we have forward referencing, which is really a complex grammatical concept that we borrowed from other research on clickbait. And instead of explaining it, it's a lot easier to just show a few examples. It references forthcoming information without giving the actual object. So, "This is what happens to your body when you're embarrassed." So instead of this fact or this object is what happens, they are just creating a mystery by not giving that object.

And finally, we look at soft news, which is perhaps the most generalizable, sensational form. And while there are indeed complex operationalizations of soft news, we used perhaps the most simplified one, which is soft news being anything that's not hard or breaking news, so it really loses the temporal immediacy.

So we did a quantitative content analysis of data we got from a subscription of NewsWhip. And NewsWhip is a social media interaction data company that collects over 100,000 news organizations. And we gathered this sample from two digitally native news organizations, BuzzFeed and the HuffingtonPost, and then five traditional news organizations, BBC, CNN, Fox, the Guardian, and the New York Times.

And we looked at a full year of their articles, of all their articles. And what we did is we added up the numbers of shares, likes, and comments, and we picked the top 597 most viral articles, so we're looking at only the most viral articles in this sample. And it's split about 50/50. So our five traditional news organizations made up 291 of our final sample, and then BuzzFeed and HuffingtonPost made up the other half.



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So then we did a content analysis of these sensational forms. And what we found is that sensational form is present in about 70% of viral content. 70% of that is soft news. Additionally, we found that forward referencing is really not that popular here, and that may be because it's associated with clickbait, which is something we can talk about later. But in 2015 in a data study that looked at this forward referencing concept, they are finding that in the Danish news, it's actually more present in viral content. It's about 17% of the time there. So that really opens up this broad idea that sensationalism may not travel internationally.

Additionally, we see personalization and listicles showing up in about a quarter of all of our content. The difference between digitally native and traditional organizations is pretty stark. We see digitally native really conquering sensational form and viral content. We also see that traditional organizations are actually more likely to become viral with soft news, but they aren't likely to use other forms of sensational form.

Important to note that this personalization there at the bottom—the 8%—that's almost all attributed to the Guardian, who has used personalization, the use of 'you,' and the question mark in a lot of their content that was well received by audiences.

So without further ado, here's our list form conclusion of the six things you didn't know, or maybe you do, and now you empirically know, right, about viral headline writing.

Number one, traditional organizations are more likely than digital organizations to go viral with hard news. And this may link to the idea of credibility or partisanship, especially since CNN and Fox were a part of our traditional news organizations. And it also lets us know that on Facebook temporal immediacy does matter, so it does matter that we're still breaking news.

Number two really seeks to answer the question, what is viral news? And in terms of that, we say, ultimately, viral news is the production -- viral news production is about disseminating news that is relatable and narratively written. And we based that off of our findings that soft news and personalization are among the most used forms in this data.

Number three, and perhaps one of the most important, is that sensationalism is not all doom and gloom. Don't think it's all a bad thing. And I take, for example, listicles in the sample. One of the most interacted with articles was one that gave -- one from the Guardian that gave facts about what was happening in Ferguson, Missouri. And it really broke down the different levels of like economic disparity, and ticketing policies, and the policing in black neighborhoods, so that they could talk about really thematic ideas in a list form structure.

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Number four is that digital news is the most successful at sensational forms that we looked at, but they only make up about half of the sample. And this study is based on data from 2014, so it's possible that these sensational forms have now merged and become more commonplace with traditional news organizations.

And finally, and this may be one thing that perhaps you did know, and now, of course, you empirically know, is that there is a significant relationship between sensational form, which has both practical and theoretical implications, but ultimately this gives us a key strategy for reaching and engaging more general audiences as news organizations.

Our future research continues to look at the role sensationalism plays at an international level. That research is with the Digital Media Research Project here at the School of Journalism at the University of Texas. I invite you to check out our website and all of our awesome scholars that are part of that group.

Thank you.

[Applause.]

**Hans Meyer:** All right. Thank you so much. I really appreciate this opportunity. It's kind of rare that we as scholars get a chance to address the industry. And I appreciate every opportunity that I get. I'm glad that Burton is here too. You know, he's very responsible for this research.

And kind of the big key question that we wanted to talk about initially with what we were doing is, why don't people comment at the end of news stories? There's a theory that kind of comes along, and it was really popular back in the 70's, by a German researcher named Elisabeth Noelle-Neumann, who said, "You know what? One of the big reasons that people don't comment is they feel isolated. They don't feel like they're part of the majority—the majority opinion about the topic being discussed." And she kind of got this idea from riding trains. Right? She was riding trains in Germany and saw, you know, nobody is talking to each other. Everybody has got their nose in a newspaper or staring out the window.

And this made us wonder, well, you know, people still ride trains today, but they still don't talk. What do they do? Well, they're all on their cellphones, right? But does the cell phone, or more particularly in this instance, the advent of the internet, [allow] you to do some things that you couldn't normally do? Things like be anonymous. Things like make it so easy to comment. You just can whip out your phone and type a comment in. Has that kind of helped replace and get rid of these isolation effects that Noelle-Neumann found?

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So that was kind of the key question of our study. And we decided one of the best places to study this would be news comments, because news generally tends to be about the opinions of the day. These are the things that a lot of people talk about. But it also represents an opportunity where news professionals, you know, journalists like us in this room, can make a difference. They can do certain things to encourage that conversation.

And this kind of goes back to, and I've heard this quoted in this conference, you know, the key book by Tom—I can't think—Kovach and Rosenstiel—yeah, there we go, thank you. Bill Kovach and Tom Rosenstiel. There we go. Sorry. You know, where they say, "What is the goal of journalism? What are the elements of journalism?" And one of the most important ones is, they say, "Journalism has to provide a public forum." It has to facilitate discussion among members of their communities. So, are comments a place where this is happening?

Comment forums are also a place where journalists can get involved. And they do lots of different things to ensure that comments remain civil or that, you know, people are honest in their comments. These are things like requiring people to use their real names [and/or] requiring them to register before they can comment. Some news organizations even moderate the comments, where you have to go through a procedure to get approved or not every comment is approved right away.

I was at a news organization in Evansville, Illinois. They had this intricate system where they tracked people who had commented and the reactions they'd gotten. It was a way they could automatically ban some people. So, is this what news organizations need to be doing? And really, ultimately, do these things that they're doing make a difference when it comes to encouraging people to comment?

To conduct this study, we were able to tap into a nationwide panel study. We used Clear Voice Panels. And what a panel is.... Some of you have probably participated in them before. You opt in. You say, "I'm willing to take surveys if you give me a small reward, Clear Voice Surveys." Sometimes it's a dollar. Sometimes it's a coupon or something like that. But these are people who opted in. The nice thing about a panel, though, is you have a lot more control of who you can get. And actually, Clear Voice has over a half-a-million people across the United States that have said, "We want to take these studies." So we thought this was a pretty good opportunity to tap into a nationwide audience and ask them about whether they comment at the end of news stories.

So our two key questions were: Do you read the comments? Do you post comments yourself? And why do you do that? We asked a number of different questions both quantitative, you know, both, "Hey, rate your level of agreement with this statement," and qualitative. You know, "Give us a few words about why you don't comment."

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This study really focuses on those quantitative responses, but I can share with you some of the quantitative responses if you choose. There are kind of some that are pretty hilarious, honestly. And then we looked at specifically things that journalists can do that might make a difference in this, and what these panelists' responses to those comments where—or to those actions that journalists can take were.

So we asked them, you know, "Do you notice any moderation going [on]?" "How important is it for you that people use their real names?" "How important is it that you have to register before you place a comment at the end of a news [story]?"

And basically, what we found is that this idea of the spiral of silence, it still exists. Now I say maybe *persists* is a better word than *exists*. Because it's maybe less, but if you just look at the average number of people who said they commented, 18% said they never comment. Only 25% said they often did it. But our big, largest part of our sample said, you know, 57% said they very rarely comment. All right.

And when we asked them why and we looked at some of the quantitative things, these kind of three key points jumped out at us. And these are all the mean scores. Oh, it got a little messed up here. Sorry. So they didn't comment because the story's point of view didn't match with theirs. They also found that the comments—the point of view of the other comments didn't match with theirs. And that they don't really feel that strongly about the topic itself.

These kind of three key measures.... I think actually there's a fourth one. Yeah, sorry. The comments had an aggressive tone. That was also one of the key things that we thought came together to say, this spiral of silence, this feeling of isolation that you might have that makes you not willing to comment still exists.

So what we did is say, well, now, what kind of difference can journalists make in this process? Are those measures that they typically take to ensure that comments remain civil and organized making a difference? So we just said, OK, can we predict what things go into [when] people feel this spiral of silence?

One of the big key dimensions was age. And this is something that journalists unfortunately can't control, obviously. And it's something I think we're probably all familiar with in this. You know, the younger people are, the more less likely they were to feel this sense of isolation in the comment forums.

But also, how important anonymity was to them. Those who said anonymity was really important actually experience higher levels of the spiral of silence

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or this feeling of isolation than those who didn't think it was that important. We saw that same kind of pattern with their reactions to measure that journalists took to eliminate anonymity.

And the credibility that offering comments at the end of a news story offered to that news organization. So again, the more that they thought comments added credibility to the news organization, the more likely they were to feel some sense of isolation and not be willing to comment themselves.

And the other kind of key dimension, and this was kind of the strongest predictor out of all of them, [was] if being able to add a comment at the end of a news story allowed them to feel a sense of community with the news organization [and] with the other people that were commenting.

What this tell us is that, you know, those people who have this high sense of isolation want these things. They want to see credibility in the news organization. They want to see this sense of community.

And so we said, all right, do these things then in turn help us predict if people will end up using a comment themselves? And the key, the strongest predictor in this kind of model that we put together, was if they felt that they were isolated, they were very unlikely to comment. But procedures to eliminate anonymity made a difference, too, OK? But we also in our findings noticed this trend that, you know, you can't go too far, in a sense.

So they wanted to notice that moderation was going [on], notice that journalists had a presence in the conversation, but that they weren't controlling it necessarily. Because what they really wanted most of all, and what kind of made the biggest difference in whether they were willing to comment or not, was whether they experienced this sense of community. In fact, community tends to kind of paper over a lot of the other problems.

So one of the things that we found or the implications that we think this study has for journalists is that they need to get involved. Readers really do notice when they are involved. But don't go too far, all right? Don't take it to the point where it's so hard to leave a comment that nobody is going to do that and nobody is going to go past those rules that you put up.

That also relates to kind of the last point, too, is that, you know, allowing people to be anonymous actually doesn't solve it. People still experience this sense of isolation, but the thing that does make a big difference is this idea of community [and] of bringing people together to kind of a common goal. In fact, if people experience this sense of community, they were more likely to say that anonymity wasn't important to them.

In some of the other research that I've done, you know, when there's a sense of community in an online forum, people actually kind of know who

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people are anyway, whether they're anonymous or not. And they look for other cues that help them kind of form a relationship with people.

If you have any questions about these findings, there's our contact information. Thanks again for this opportunity.

[Applause.]

### **Q&A Session:**

**Kathleen McElroy:** Marcus, go ahead and ask the first question.

**Marcus:** Hi. I'm Marcus. I'm an assistant professor at Sam Houston State. I'm also a Trinity alum and a Spurs fan, so I'm glad to see you here, Zhaoxi. [laughter] We're totally gonna win again. My question is actually for fellow Longhorn, Danielle. I teach headline writing to undergraduate multimedia journalism students and also to graduate students learning about blogging and sort of broader content production. So my question for you is, how would you encourage teaching or how would you embrace teaching headline writing? Would you encourage students, journalism or otherwise, to embrace some of these listicles and sensational models? Or, would you tell them, you know, as students, you should really backpedal away from that? What would you tell a 19-year-old learning how to write a headline?

**Danielle Kilgo:** I think a 19-year-old learning how to write a headline has to consider where they're writing the headline for. I think that's most important. I don't think that personalized listicles appear on the front page of a newspaper, for example. But they probably do and will fit very well on the front page of a news organization website or on a social media campaign.

Now, my results are from Facebook. And what we noticed as part of that data is that what's viral on Facebook is hated on Twitter a lot of the times. And so that's why we actually excluded Twitter from the study. So knowing future research in sensationalism and knowing how this works on different platforms will help sort of guide that answer, I think.

But I think for Facebook that these are really good strategies, because it requires a reformatting for these new digital platforms. And even from the website to Facebook in general, it requires a new type of idea or a new type of writing style. So I would think about the platform first. That's how I'd teach.

**Marcus:** Thanks.

**Kathleen McElroy:** And over here, please.

**Man:** Hi. This is a question about the Spurs real-time coverage. I can't remember if you mentioned it, but could you go really quick through the

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main problems the journalists had while covering and trying to...? You know, I don't know if the same people were updating the blog and tweeting. So just run through that.

**Zhaoxi Liu:** Right. Because I was seeing the stop signs. I was really scared, so I didn't get into that. I didn't know they have a stop sign actually here. So they have two kind of problems. One is tech glitches. For example, if they are in an area that the internet connection is not so well, because they are doing live tweeting, they couldn't send the tweets. So that's one major problem. Another problem is they're doing videos. A lot of times the video wouldn't upload through a mobile phone. So the reporter I was with, she had to use her laptop, but other reporters who did not even bring a laptop, you know, if they had a problem, then they're just dead, so they wouldn't be able to send the video. And so that's tech problems.

And then they have human errors as well, because they're juggling multiple platforms. So you have to send live tweets, and then you have to send the vignettes, and then you have to save some material for the print paper. And so there's one young reporter [who] kind of mixed it up. So she sent the same material to the vignettes, to the photo website, and then the same thing, they sent it to the city desk for the print paper. And therefore, and then, the reporter who's writing the long story is actually pulling—is actually scanning through the vignettes to pull the best stuff to put in his long story. And so, and then therefore, the part that she wrote about was included in the long story. And at the same time, she sent the same material as a standalone piece to the city editor. And so the same material appeared in another standalone piece, and they're just like one page apart in the print paper. So that's like a human error. And it was only seen after the paper was printed. Because they're in a like huge rush that night. So both tech and the human errors.

**Kathleen McElroy:** Well, you know what? I think we're going to go ahead and try to get out of here. But I do want you to ask the panelists this in person while they're trying to eat their box lunches. It's to think about the issue of how -- or the idea that maybe this journalism is what I'm now thinking of as second-person journalism. That it's like this engagement with the reader, whether it's through comments, whether through omnipresent journalism, whether it's through listicles and sensational.

But at the same time, BuzzFeed goes to a more -- in being more traditional, is backing away. So, what is it about hard news that requires distance? Especially since we've heard about advocacy journalism and things like that. And what is it about trying to engage readers that sort of moves away from a hard news model? So we won't discuss it here, because that could be the next two hours, but do find them in the hallways and just ask them these questions. And thanks, everyone, so much for coming to this panel!

[Applause.]