

2008 - International Symposium on Online Journalism

Day 2, Panel 4: Citizen Producers, Bloggers, and the Evolution of Journalism

Moderator/Chair:

Iris Chyi, Assistant Professor, School of Journalism, University of Texas at Austin

Panelists:

Alfred Hermida, University of British Columbia (Canada):
The BBC Goes Blogging: Is 'Auntie' Finally Listening? *

Serena Carpenter, Arizona State University, U.S. Online
Citizen Journalism and Online Newspaper Articles: A
Content Analysis of Source Diversity *

Sue Robinson, University of Wisconsin-Madison: A
Mediated, Interactive Call to Action: Audience Perceptions
of Credibility and Authority for a Times Journalist in Print
vs. Online *

* Refereed research papers (blind reviewed)

Alfred Hermida: [No audio in the beginning.] This is from a BBC program from the 1960's called "Points of View." And it was one of the first ones on TV that basically tried to take in what the audience had to say about the BBC. In this case, "Why do you need so many people to do TV?" It's a bit of a caricature of how people conceive of the BBC, but its tone does reflect this idea that the BBC is 'auntie.' And that comes from an attitude where the BBC sort of approaches its audience from sort of an elitist, paternalistic point of view, where it's 'auntie knows best.' We know what is best for you, so let us decide. The BBC, as you all know, global news leader. It's a cultural institution in the UK. But it really has this problem with its image and its relationship with the audience; particularly, when it comes through issues of accountability and transparency. You know, the sort of language that is often used to describe the BBC are things like 'a bloated monolith.' And this came from one of its former director generals. So somebody who was running the BBC said, "Oh, I came in. It was a bloated monolith." And there's words associated with it such as 'monopolistic, elitist, complacent, being poorly managed.'

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And this has been a sort of recurring rhetoric in its 80-year history. When you look back at some of the attempts the BBC has done to try to address these concerns, in the 1980s and 1990s, it put out a whole range of public policy documents on accountability. But when scholars examined this, they said, "Well, it was less about listening to the public and more about [inaudible] the BBC's legitimacy," even though, in theory, it was about accountability.

So what I seek to do through this research is to look at how the BBC has adopted blogging, particularly in its journalism, as two key things. One, as a platform to change journalistic norms and practices, have a great openness in its journalism, and to try to seek to explain some of its editorial decisions. Why it does what it does with journalism and take account of what audiences have to say about it. Methodology you can read for yourself. Probably public policy documents, internal BBC reports by people involved in the BBC strategy that were made accessible. As with something like this, there's a lot of actual content on BBC official blogs, and then on the personal blogs of people involved with that, and correspondence with senior executives such as the current head of the website, the former head of the website, and the game people involved in this process.

When you look back at how the BBC got to having blogs, what you see is a great deal of internal tensions as we would expect in a mainstream media organization. The BBC was a very late adopter of blogs even though it's been credited as being an innovator in the field of online journalism, primarily for the launch of the BBC News website in 1997. But it started experimenting with blog-type ideas. This was the first one in 2001 by a political correspondent, Nick Robinson. And it was called a web blog, but it really wasn't what we would consider a blog. It was more like a reporter's notebook, and people could email in comments, and these were cut and pasted onto the story. So it lacked some [blog] conventions.

Another early experiment came across in 2004 when Kevin Anderson, who is now the head of blogging at The Guardian, went on a road trip in the U.S. to try to get a sense of, what were the issues Americans were concerned about in the lead up to the 2004 Presidential elections? And again, he tried to do it bloggish in tone, but again, it lacked some of the conventions we would associate with blogs.

Now, the background to this experimentation is a period of debate within the BBC as to whether blogs were something that we should be doing. And this is a quote from Mike Smart, who used to run the BBC News website in 2003. This sort of thing sort of indicates some of the resistance there was within established journalists to the idea of blogs. Concerns about editorial values. How do blogs sit with the editorial values of an institution such as the BBC? That's truth, accuracy. It's about impartiality. It's about fairness, privacy, all

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these sort of things. So it's really hard for the BBC to accept something like a new media form like this when it has these well established editorial values and [is] trying to marry, bringing in something very new into its current structure.

The recollections of some of the people involved in this process in the early 2000's in terms of bringing along blogs at the BBC News, part of it was educational. What you see from the internal reports is a big discourse in terms of educating journalists at the BBC what blogs are about. The idea that they are not really understood. Of course, there is the sense that, well, if we start talking about what we are doing, people could write about it [and] we could get some unfavorable press coverage. Technical issues, infrastructure, adopting a new media form, but also sort of strong opposition from people within the organization not thinking that something like blogs would have a place within its journalism.

So what you see is blogs emerged at the BBC from areas in news who actually had a great deal of autonomy from the censor, such as the BBC News websites. When I was there, we were considered sort of the geeks on the seventh floor TV Center doing that internet thing. Nobody really understood what we were and what we were doing, which gives you a lot of freedom.

Blogs also emerged at the evening Current Affairs Program, News Night, which again, traditionally has a lot of freedom to decide what it wants to do. And that freedom gave them the chance to innovate and experiment. What happened at the BBC is that a large push came down to individuals such as Pete Clifton, who is my former boss. But he was the first head of a department who actually made a commitment on the BBC website to set up blogs. He was running sort of an editor's column explaining what was happening at the website. And in 2005, the middle of 2005, he made two big decisions. One, at the website, we should stop calling things blogs, because they weren't. Because everybody was calling things a blog, thinking, hey, this is great, we'll call it a blog. But more importantly, he said, "Okay, we need to invest in setting up a blogging infrastructure and using blogs within our editorial process." And this was very much intended as something the website was going to do with the hope of drawing other parts of the BBC, because you had a head of a department very publicly on the website saying to its audience, "We're going to do blogging and we're going to be far more transparent about it." That indicated a big change within the BBC.

The first one was Nick Robinson. Nick Robinson had been at the BBC, left to go to a commercial TV company, came back to the BBC, and he became the first official BBC blogger on sort of a BBC infrastructure. This was in December 2005. I love his first few lines. "Now, I never thought I'd be writing this, but my name's Nick Robinson, and I'm a blogger." It's almost as if, "Oh, my God, I have to admit this! I'm a blogger." And you get this tone

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in a lot of the entries and the correspondence. They sort of -- it's like admitting they are doing something slightly nefarious.

But what's interesting here is that in the period of under a year, the BBC went from having one blog to having 43. Not all of them in news and current affairs, but a significant number there. In terms of correspondence, we went from having Nick Robinson, one correspondent, a TV correspondent at that, to having 11 correspondents then blogging about it.

What you also had during this period was this BBC editor's blog that was set up by Pete Clifton, but he hoped others in the BBC would join in and explain the editorial decisions. By January 2008, it had posts from 93 editors from 31 news and current affairs outlets. So this was something that was started at the website and suddenly took off across the BBC.

But of course while this was going on, they still had preoccupations that you would expect. Key to that is editorial values. Throughout the BBC literature, BBC policy guidelines, it all talks about impartiality, about a commitment to audiences to be fair, to be accurate. And this forms a key element in how the BBC approached blogs. One thing you see when you look at the BBC is that they have blogging guidelines for staff who have personal blogs, but they don't actually have blogging guidelines for journalists. The assumption is that to be a BBC journalist, the way you write on a blog and you behave in a blog will be exactly the same way you would do if you were reporting for TV, radio, or online. Rory Cellan-Jones is one of the recent correspondents to start blogging. He talks about it. The implicit assumption is [that] you will be impartial. When I was told by my boss to blog, I had no editorial guidance whatsoever. The assumption was, I'm a BBC journalist, I know what I can write, and I know what I can't write. It's a new format, but we still apply the same set of editorial guidelines. So there is an implicit trust in the people chosen to blog.

What you also see is the BBC trying to get across a different type of voice in how it relates to its audience – you know, more informal, greater flexibility. In some ways, move away from what is traditionally associated with the BBC, a sort of abstract voice of authority and something that is a bit more informal, a bit more human. And here, when you talk to broadcast journalists who now start blogging, what they say is that they find it really liberating, because it sort of frees them up from the idea of a one-minute-fifteen or two-minute package, and instead, allows them to expand on what they are writing about and write in a way they could never do in their TV scripts.

And then the BBC editors blog, which is its main editorial platform to explain editorial decisions. This is very much framed by people involved in it. This is Peter Horrocks, [unintelligible], BBC radio, TV, and online news.

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In terms of repairing trust, in terms of accountability, and you might wonder why does the BBC in 2008 worry about repairing trust? Surely, you are the BBC. It's just what you enjoy. Well, the period that blogging was introduced to the BBC coincided with a tremendous turmoil within the organization, when its journalism and its governance was called into question. This came about in 2004 due to the Hutton Inquiry and the Hutton Report, which at the time was described by the Director General at the BBC as "the biggest editorial crisis in BBC's journalism in its 80-year history." So what you see is the spirit of expansion of blogging and the adoption of blogging came at a time when the BBC felt increasingly under scrutiny, felt increasingly a need to be more accountable, felt a need to say, "Well, we have to be far more open, and we need to rebuild the trust that people have in us." And blogs was one way that they were trying to do that.

Of course, there are limits on how this has gone at the BBC. And one of the reviews commissioned by the BBC since its blogging of efforts really chided the corporation for not really linking to other websites. And of course, we know that linking is one of the key assets of blogging. But there were very few links to blogs from the BBC blogs, and they tended to be to more mainstream media. The BBC was very good at using blogs as a publishing platform, but it was less good at engaging the conversation with its audience. So one of the issues there was that correspondents were not responding to comments that people left on their entries. They were talking about what they were doing, they were explaining editorial decisions, but not coming back, reading what people had to say, and taking those onboard. So it was very much still a one-way process. And part of this was simply because of demands of time on these correspondents and these editors, increasingly being asked to work across multiple platforms. For example, one blog, the technology blog, that was started at the beginning of the year, in 11 weeks, it had 7,000 comments. And you sort of wonder, well, if you're a correspondent trying to cover stories, trying to report, trying to talk about what you are doing and read your 7,000 comments and respond to them, that means there's demands on your time and resources, and you have to make a commitment to engage with that. And the issue here is that they just simply don't have the time to do that.

And one preoccupation increasingly has been the actual infrastructure at the BBC. It's blogging software is at least two years old. And what's happened is it's had a huge increase in traffic and commenting on the blogs. And the infrastructure is simply not set up to deal with that. So quite often the blogging infrastructure is running at 100% capacity, which has meant that when people try to leave comments on the blog, they hit 'post' and nothing happens, and then maybe it might go through or they might get an error message. This is something they are trying to address, but they still haven't resolved, because they weren't quite ready for the interest there would be in the blogs and the amount of comments that they would attract.

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So, what do we see from this? Well, the expansion of blogging at the BBC came at one of the most turbulent periods in its history and at a time when its journalism was under scrutiny both inside and outside the corporation. And when you look at the blogs, yes, there is a shift away from the paternalistic approach of the past, trying to present a more human face and to be a little more open about what people are doing. And you see this particularly in the BBC correspondents. They are adopting a very different tone, and they are sort of trying to use the blogs as not merely replicating their journalism on blogs, but trying to add something that they can't put into their journalism through TV or radio.

Broadcast correspondents, when you talk to them about blogs, they see it as a way of really developing a far more personal relationship with the audience. Because if you are TV correspondent, you really have no sense of who the public is out there. It's very much a one-way medium.

But at the same time, things like the editors blogs primarily are used to justify BBC editorial decisions, primarily to justify the BBC's journalistic authority. So yes, there's more open in discussing what we are doing as a corporation, but a lot of it is very much telling the public why we did this as opposed to engaging with them and saying, "We did this. Did we get it right?" It's far more in terms of reinforcing their own authority.

There are some exceptions in some postings, and Steve Hermann, the Editor of the BBC News website is one of the editors who is far more engaged with comments. And yesterday, he was already saying, "I'm taking onboard your comments. We've made some changes here. I've asked the Design Team to look at this." Very much taking onboard the 1,000-plus comments they had on the website redesign.

And there are still issues within the BBC in terms of how far this is accepted as part of its DNA. In some ways, blogging at the BBC developed not because suddenly senior management realized blogging is the way to go, but rather you had several key advocates and nobody got in the way, so they managed to do this. You know, it's such a recent phenomenon that it's hard to say at this stage how indicative this is of this changing relationship and whether it really shows that auntie is listening. I think it shows it's trying to listen and it's trying to change, but the BBC is an institution. It's got an 80-year history. It's got deeply entrenched values. And you have a few people who are really engaged with blogging and what it's about, but it's difficult to say how far that is replicated throughout the organization. But it's fair to say that this is part of how the BBC is trying to reinvent itself as a broadcaster in a sort of multi-channel, multimedia digital age.

Thank you all very much.

[Audience applause.]

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Iris Chyi: Our next paper is from Serena Carpenter from Arizona State University. It's about the message itself. The title of her paper is "U.S. Online Citizen Journalism and Online Newspaper Articles: A Content Analysis of Source Diversity." Please.

Serena Carpenter: There I am. I'm with the Walter Cronkite School of Journalism in Mass Communication. I had to say that, because I know there are some people listening at ASU, and so I'm putting in a little plug for them. I'm also experiencing a little PowerPoint envy because I didn't realize, when I go to conferences, usually, I've never seen so much multimedia and PowerPoints in my entire life, but I have a small life, so... So, what did I study? I was very much interested in online citizen journalism content, and as a researcher, as was said yesterday, I love to research and test assumptions being made about online citizen journalism content. And as we all know, there's lots of assumptions being made about it regarding its accuracy and also its credibility and things like that. The concern arises from the fact that many citizen journalists don't subscribe to the same standards as traditional journalists. So for instance, we are defined mostly by our principles and our adherence to certain principles, such as fairness, somewhat balance, subjectivity, (some would argue about that), accuracy. But those principles are what has defined us for quite a long time. And so if these people who are creating content don't adhere to those principles, some traditional journalists and academics have issues with that.

So my goal for this research was to understand the value of online citizen journalism content. And so what I did with this particular study is I took one measure of journalistic quality, which was source diversity. And that is a measure of journalistic quality because source diversity, if there's a diversity of sources within an article, then likely there's a greater likelihood that article represents a larger population and thus is more accurate.

So numbers about the number of online citizen journalism sites are few. The Knights Citizen News Network lists 450 sites, but of course we all know there's much, much, much more than that. As far as the number of people reading these citizen sites, there's really no data for that, but there are a number of citizen journalists who have blogs. And so the only data I could find was anywhere from 7-to-12% of people regularly read blogs.

So there's a controversy, of course, whether we should be calling these people journalists or not. The courts and academics typically define journalist as someone who works for a news organization, but that is currently being challenged right now as who is a journalist. It has several names, as you can see: grassroots, civic. Civic is a little different. But anyway, I decided to take a risk and define who is a citizen journalist. And yellow here is it's an individual who intends to publish information online that is meant to benefit a community. I really thought about that definition. I'm not going to go into

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how I defined that particular -- defined a journalist, but basically a journalist can be anyone. But whether they are producing quality journalism, that's another issue.

My study. I could not ... you know, how do I decide what to study? And what I did for my particular study is I focused my research on a geographic area, rather than citizen journalists who cover a geographic area, rather than citizen journalists who talk about a particular issue such as education, agriculture, politics. So these are people who write about a specific community. And so that's how I narrowed my definition.

And the rise of citizen journalists can be attributed to a number of factors. Of course, the ease of access to publishing software, content-sharing sites, such as YouTube, Flickr. I wasn't sure whether I should put the number of newsroom layoffs. I think it was a [reactive] thing at first, because it was free. Most people who are citizen journalists will obviously give this content free to news organizations, but that has also, I believe, increased the workload of journalists who work at online news organizations. So I think it's kind of the amount of citizen journalism content on traditional news sites is declining. And then they also basically evolved because they are dissatisfied with traditional news and how traditional news is representing their communities and representing themselves. And so that's typically why you see the rise of citizen journalists.

So I kind of want to show you two sites that I looked at. This one is kind of one end of the spectrum. This one produces -- a bunch of volunteers produce stories about Westport, Connecticut. Then when I grabbed this screen grab, they had a huge picture, but I promise you they actually do produce stories and it's not a photo sharing site. And then the other extreme is the Kansas City Live Journal. And so what... You can't probably read this very well, but what they do is they post events that are happening in Kansas City. And then they talk about, I think they are looking for a babysitter -- oh, a clothing -- a cloth diapering service. So what this is, is this idea of news as conversation, which of course is very controversial as well. So those are two ends of the spectrum of types of sites that I looked at.

I really thought about, what is online citizen journalism content? And when I started thinking about it, I just remember growing up. I grew up in a town called Fairfax, South Dakota. It's about 100 people population. And I remember as a child that I went to my grandma's house, and I would play, like, spools. Spools meaning we didn't have much for toys, but I would stack spools and things like that. And then my grandma would proceed to write about that and put it in the local paper. That local paper, that was news to maybe a few people in that community, not everyone, but it was actually published, but it only went out to about 500 people. So there wasn't as much controversy, because that kind of news has always been published.

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And so when I thought about studying online citizen journalism content, I thought about looking at smaller publications and the trends and trying to identify trends and how they publish content and what their audiences are like. And so I looked at... These are some of the research areas I looked at: alternative, neighborhood, weekly, urban. There's more than that, but you find commonalities among all this research. And what it says, basically, is that these type of publications, which I classify as smaller publications tend to write for like-minded audiences. And because we tend to write those smaller publications for like-minded audiences, those are usually very highly trusted sources of information. And what do they value? Consensus, advocacy, and interpretation. But, you know, they are obviously limited by their resources, which I think will ultimately affect the level of source diversity in their stories. So that's where I based my literature review.

Shoemaker and Reese. Stephen Reese who works here at UT Austin. I'll give him a plug too. This is his theory -- their theory, I should say. But I expected differences in content because I expected, obviously, online newspapers would be faced with different pressures and stuff. Like, they would more likely be subjected to organizational and routine pressures; whereas, online citizen journalists are more likely worried about the people in their community and their opinion of the people in their community. So obviously, I expected differences in content.

This is how I defined source diversity. I looked at the average number of sources. So Project Excellence for Journalism and Gann says, basically, if you have a greater number of sources, you're likely to have more source diversity. One of the biggest criticisms about traditional journalism is its heavy reliance on official sources. I don't... I don't really... You know, for me, I don't think that... I have trouble with that one, because I think that obviously when you are reporting on issues, you have to seek out official sources, because official sources are the ones who tend to know most about a topic. But online citizen journalism could add value to the marketplace if they rely heavily on unofficial sources and they have a different interpretation of issues.

And then obviously, I know that broadcast organizations and newspaper organizations rely heavily on male sources, so I wanted to see if that was true for smaller publications. Because I was kind of surprised I didn't really find a lot of research about smaller publications and use of female/male sources.

Then the other thing is you could have a lot of sources, but that doesn't mean there's a large number of viewpoints. So then I also looked at multiple viewpoints.

And this is... Oh, I've got to tell you how... Now, this is something I'm really passionate about. I welcome any comments or anything from you guys as far as how to study online content, because it is so tough and it is so hard. And

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you have to basically collaborate with a compute programmer to get online content. Because this was actually quite a painful process. But what I did was I... There was no 450-site online citizen journalism list, so where am I going to find all these citizen journalism sites? So first, I went to CyberJournalist.net. They have a list of citizen journalism sites. And then I went to Placeblogger. Now, Placeblogger is a site that basically features blogs that write about places or geographic communities. And then I wanted to do -- what I wanted to do was find two sites, citizen journalism sites, to represent all 50 cities. From that list, I found a total of 72. So from this point, what I did was I took those 72 sites, then I found all the online daily newspapers that matched those sites. So for instance, for the Birmingham blog, I found The Birmingham News. So that's how I got my list. But if you guys have something better or a better way to capture data or anything like that, I would love to hear it.

Okay. So then I had to find my -- get my stories. And so what I predicted--(obviously is based on my observation)--is that citizen journalists do not produce content hourly. Okay? They are not going to update their content every two hours like online daily newspapers. So based on my observation--(so this is for all you out there who are studying this)--based on my observation, they updated content every two to three days. So that's kind of what I found. So what I decided to do was collect data every day for one month, at the same time every day. And then for the daily newspaper, I collected a week in that same month. And so I ended up having, for the citizen journalism, I ended up having more than 2,000 stories. And then for online daily, I had more than 4,000 stories. And then I randomly reduced that. So I know that I just love this stuff, so anyway...

Okay. So, what did I find? This, I, you know, we all probably figured this out, that there obviously is more sources in online newspaper, because likely they have greater resources, and so that was true. Okay. So, and then, online newspapers were much more likely to have an official source present, and online citizen journalism stories were more likely to have an unofficial source present. So that kind of shows you that... And look here, you can see here, there's not much reliance on unofficial, and then here, there's not much reliance on official, so they do offer something different.

(What happened there? Oh, well, you'll forgive me.) Okay. So, and they did -- they did actually rely heavily, I mean, they did better at citing a greater number -- a greater proportion of male and female sources. So online citizen journalism stories or citizen journalists don't -- kind of do a better job at balancing female and male source use.

[Noise. Problem with mike.]

Okay. Great. So anyway, as you can see, most of online citizen journalism content was presented from one viewpoint; whereas, online newspaper is

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kind of around mostly one viewpoint. So, you know, I wasn't really quite happy with that, but...

So in conclusion, I just want to say a few things. First of all, there's a lot of research out there. Not a lot. What research is out there says that -- one other measure of diversity I looked at was that citizen journalism or blogs rely heavily on traditional media sources. Well, basically, my research found that they did not, that online citizen journalists who cover a geographic community rarely relied on traditional, outside traditional media sources. So only 14% of all the stories actually relied on outside [sources]. So I found, like, past research on political blogs says that they rely heavily on it. It seems like, a lot of people, that's a huge criticism that they rely heavily on traditional media. And in fact, they actually do a lot of their own reporting ... kind of, I'm sure. And then also, there needs to be more research done in this area. This is... Basically, my conclusion is that online daily newspapers are better at [inaudible] -- are better at source diversity.

But I've also done and conducted research on looking at other tenets of journalism as well. And some of those tenets include transparency. I did one on community engagement. And then I also did one on content diversity. So what I'm saying [is] there's other, other, other tenets to look at as far as looking at kind of, what is the value of citizen journalism content? And also, again, if you guys have any way to capture or get content... I'm working right now with a computer programmer about web scraping some stuff. But anyway, I'm kind of [done], and I love you all. Bye.

[Audience applause.]

Iris Chyi: Thank you, Serena. Our next presenter is Sue Robinson from the University of Wisconsin-Madison. The title of her paper is "A Mediated, Interactive Call to Action: Audience Perceptions of Credibility and Authority for a Times Journalist in Print vs. Online."

Sue Robinson: Okay. Is this on? All right. I've sort of forgotten how to use PCs. Okay. So I'm a professor at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, as she just mentioned. And this is my fourth or fifth year at the symposium. And my first year here I ran into Nocka^[?] McDaniel, who is a multimedia producer for The New York Times, who travels around with Nick Kristof, who's a columnist writing about Darfur and a bunch of other stuff. But I got into a conversation with Nocka about what they wanted to do with the video and a blog that they produce alongside the columns that Kristof writes about this [inaudible] -- the Sudanese genocide is what I'm looking at. And then while I was there, I also cornered the online editor at that time for The New York Times, Lynn Apkar^[?], and I sat next to him and pestered him until he talked to me. And between he and Nocka and also some of Nick's writings online, it came out that what they wanted to do with the video and the blog is--(no surprise to you guys)-- enhance the authority in the brand of The New York

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Times, prove their credibility with what's going on in, for example, the Sudanese genocide, and there's a bunch of other stuff, enhance an experience and trying to bring a narrative in a different way. But I wanted to find out if that's what was actually happening. So I decided to do -- first I did a literature review about what was out there in terms of multimedia and interactivity, and what kind of meaning people were getting out of those different kinds of ways of telling stories; in particular, for credibility and authority. And there's not a lot out there, and what's out there is kind of conflicted.

So I did a design, my own web experiment. And I did a 2-by-2 design and I gave it to a bunch of students. And I did a bunch of students for a reason, and one being that I wanted people who weren't necessarily familiar with Kristof and Darfur. And in fact, it came out that the people I got -- I got about 330 students to do this survey -- they weren't very familiar with Kristof or Darfur. That's a whole other study right there. [audience laughter] And also, I wanted a homogenous population as possible. And so I had four different conditions. And I'm just going to show you quickly what one of them was. (Oops. All right. Somewhere here I have... Oops. There we are.)

Okay. So for... I had one group just reading Kristof's columns. And I picked two columns from Darfur, and they were both... One reason I picked Kristof is because he writes in a very narrative manner. He uses characters, has a narrative plot, and he fairly stays out of his narrative columns. Although it's first person, he's really more of an omniscient narrative. And so this is one of the columns, and it talks about the janjaweed attacking this village and this man in particular. They--they... He got caught on fire. They started a bonfire on top of him. That's this guy right here. Although, in the newspaper you don't see any of these pictures, it's just the column, as you guys know. And so one group only had this column and another column. One group only had this column plus the blog that Kristof did at that same time with the real comments from people. And they were forced to comment. I made... So that's one -- that's one way in which it wasn't necessarily natural, but every other way I try to keep it as natural an environment as possible.

And the third condition was just a video. This was the video that Nocka did along with Kristof, and hopefully this plays. But I had them watch two videos, and this is part of it.

[Video plays. No audio.]

Okay. So they watched two of these videos. And again, this is the same guy, right? So the narrative is almost exactly the same in terms of the script that Kristof did, but you can see that Nicholas Kristof is now a character in these videos. We're coming along with him. They... Nocka purposefully does the raw footage so that it looks like that we're walking along with Kristof in Darfur

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and whatnot. And they bring their camera along as Kristof goes from hut to hut to demonstrate and to provide evidence for what's going on over there in Darfur. I'm just assuming that people know that there is a genocide going on.

(Okay. So let me try to get back to my... Okay, good. All right.) So from the literature, from my discussions with Nocka and the online editor and from Kristof, I came up with three sets of hypotheses. And basically, I just hypothesized that what they were hoping was happening was actually happening. That those people who read the blog were forced to comment, and those people who watched the video would all perceive Kristof as being more credible than those people who merely read the column.

And then I did the same thing for authority. Okay. So if you think that he's more authority, uh, credible, then obviously, you're going to think he's more authoritative. And then I decided to do a third hypothesis, because then I was thinking, well, what does it matter, right? Well, Kristof wants people in particularly the United States to intervene in what's going on in Darfur. And so all of his columns and his videos and everything goes to that point. "Okay, let's give money. Let's write our congressmen. Let's get something happening here." So all of his... He has very much an advocacy stance. So my third set of hypotheses was, okay, well, who's buying this? If you're just reading the column, are you getting -- are you still feeling as if we need to intervene in Darfur? My hypotheses is that if you believe Kristof to be more credible and more authoritative, then you would buy into that idea, and more importantly, feel a personal call to action.

And what I found was completely opposite of what I had hoped. And actually, they were kind of fascinating results. And I'm going to talk a little bit about the limitations later, because there are a number of limitations to this study, which I'm going through a Phase 2 of this study in the hopes of resolving some of the questions that arose. But for credibility, neither of my hypotheses were supported in any kind of significant manner. But I also did open-ended questions, because I wanted a dual methodological approach, in order to make sure that the open-ended questions would support what the raw numbers were showing. And when you looked at the open-ended questions, we really saw a difference. I did sort of a mini-content analysis. So I looked at those people who only had the column or had the column and the blog. And in half of those... So first of all, everyone thought Kristof was fairly credible. Let me just say that. But the open-ended questions revealed that, in fact, there was a relational effect of who thought Kristof was most credible of all the characters in the narrative.

So I asked people, "What was your impression of Nicholas Kristof? Which of these characters did you find to be most credible?" And then I would list all the characters. And I included Kristof, and I included the old man, and I included all the different characters in that [inaudible]. And in almost half, in

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the text conditions, Kristof was the most credible of all the characters, and in the video, Kristof was the least credible. And here are some of the quotes. This is from the text. "I would hope Kristof is the most credible, because if he isn't, then who knows if the others are even real?" And I got a lot of this kind of thing, "As a writer for the largest national newspaper, his abilities can generally be trusted." Okay. So again, we're associated Kristof with a brand. In the column, they are only getting his byline. And you know, he's first person, but again, he's not a character, so they think of him as The New York Times. They all know it's The New York Times in this experiment, and I did that on purpose. That's kind of to be expected. But in the video, they hated Kristof. I mean, he was annoying. They found him to be sensational. He talked in a monotone voice. [audience laughter] They thought a lot about what he was doing as a reporter. He probably doesn't have 100% knowledgeable in this area. These are all sick, by the way. And then in the press, they found the elderly man credible, because they saw evidence of his burns. So in one way, what Nocka had hoped for, in terms of those video providing proof, was actually playing out here. But, you know, [chuckles], the video is sort of undercutting what they hoped to be happening with Kristof in particular.

Okay. So moving onto the second set of hypotheses regarding authority. Interactivity had no significance whatsoever and neither did modality; however, the opposite was true, which we could kind of assume given the first set of hypotheses, but there's a significant effect that people who only read the column viewed Kristof as being much more authoritative than those people who watched the video.

Okay. So here's my fancy graph. Now, this is an agreement scale. So those people who, number one is Kristof, they disagreed strongly that Kristof is authoritative. Number seven is they strongly agreed. Now these don't seem like they are that different, but in fact they are significant. They did reach significance. And four is neutral.

So you can see here that in the text it just basically visually shows what I just mentioned. And here again are the open-ended questions which supported what the raw data found. But again, we see something happening in these open-ended questions that I find to be kind of interesting. In the column, Kristof is referred to over and over again in a primary source way. "He's an expert." "He's an advocate." "He's an activist." And they usually reference the events of Darfur. "What do you think Kristof's main point was here?" And they would always talk about the news of the Sudanese genocide.

In the video, there was a layer in between the person reading it and what was going on in Darfur, and that was Kristof. And so they started thinking about Kristof as a journalist and judging. They were able to judge him, I guess. So, "He covers international news." "I see Kristof as a man using journalistic pursuits to help spread a message." And they referenced the coverage of

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Darfur, rather than Darfur itself. And Kristof in these were -- was that he was a secondary source.

Okay. The third set of hypotheses was a call to action. Both of these were supported. Perception of Kristof's credibility and authority accounted for nearly a third of the variance of the desire. I just did a regression analysis. And the people who read the column and then were asked to blog were significantly more likely to support Kristof's call to action. So they were saying, "Yes, the United States needs to intervene." And I think that's important to think about. But that's only with the blog and the interactivity. So modality, whether they saw the video or read it in a text, had no mention whatsoever.

Okay. And this is just visually looking at it. The purple line is the column, and the green line is the video. You can see that there's a very significant change here. So once again, these are on an agreement scale of 1 to 7, so it's almost 5.54 people strongly agree that we need to intervene, the United States needs to intervene in Darfur. And that, again, is the people who read the column and then were forced to comment on the blog.

Okay. So in the blog open-ended questions, nuances finding once more. And what was really interesting was that people who were forced to comment used much more emotive language. They use a lot more of the first person. They said, "Yes, we must get in there." And, "I found this to be a very sad story." And they were really more emotionally engaged and personally engaged in what was going on in Darfur and also that the United States needs to get in there. Those people who were not forced to comment... And this didn't matter whether you were watching the video or the text. Much more third person. "The United States, maybe we need... Maybe the United States needs to get in there." They didn't use the first person as much. I just thought that was very interesting.

So some of the conclusions. Basically, some of the literature supported this. That the column is still a very powerful medium. Don't stop writing. And I did this in part because I did some interviews with journalists, and the editors were talking about diverting some of their resources, because they had video and their reporters are blogging now, and that's taking away from the written narrative. And so this study sort of indicates, you know what? The writing is still very much important, especially in terms of conveying meaning, you know, especially if you are a columnist, for example.

Consider the video format and the video narrator carefully. So I think one of the big limitations of this study was that I used Kristof, who is a very provocative reporter and sort of in your face. And if I use somebody else who's maybe kind of a lot more of a wallflower or neutral, I'm going [to get] different views. That's what I'm doing in the next phase. I'm going to do

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that. And I'm also going to do a project where there's no journalist in the video at all to see what happens with that.

And then another limitation is that I used multimedia in a very limited way. I only used video, and of course we have slideshows and all kinds of packages online. And likewise with the interactivity. But finally, just thinking about the blogs as a way to connect on a personal level. What was striking was these guys were 20-year-old Midwestern students who were responding to my survey. And they have, especially in the pretest, it was they had felt no connection whatsoever to what was going on halfway across the world. And the commenting on the blog made them care. And so, I think that was pretty interesting.

That's all I got.

[Audience applause.]

Iris Chyi: Thank you, Sue. Now, let's take questions.

Alfred Hermida: I have a question. Sue, I have a question for you, because I thought it was interesting here. To what extent do you think it was influenced by the idea of the celebrity journalist on video? Because one of the things when I looked at BBC blogs was some of the internal reports were saying we shouldn't use blogs as a platform for our celebrity journalists. That it's not about the journalist, it's about the story. So to what extent do you think in this case the journalist got in the way of the story and that affected how people reacted?

Sue Robinson: Well, first of all, they didn't know who Kristof was. [Gets mike.] Oh, I'm sorry. They didn't know who Kristof was, so for them he wasn't a celebrity in any sense. But there's no doubt that Kristof's presence in that video changed all of their opinions and, in fact, got in the way of them taking away any kind of meaning from that story, because they were so focused on Kristof and his voice and the way that he was running around from hut to hut and whatnot. So, yes and no. [chuckles]

Rosental Calmon Alves: Did you consider that the video...? I mean, the person who saw the video read the column, no? Did not?

Sue Robinson: No.

Rosental Calmon Alves: No. Did you consider that the video is not a story of itself, but part of a body of work that is just a component? And maybe that's why the video doesn't, you know, has not been considered as strong.

Sue Robinson: That... I think that would... That's one of the reasons I want to do a second phase and do something that's more of a package and then

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include the text in it. However with this, as I said, the text and the video mirrored each other. So their script was almost the same. The video stands alone on its own. And in fact, on the story, they are in different places. You can access both of them from either the column or the video, but they are not packaged together as they are in some other kinds of packages.

Rosental Calmon Alves: Yeah. I also like your idea of looking for the two types of video: one with the narrator and one without a narrator, where you can have the very characters telling the story. And I really encourage you to do that, because there is -- because the point is that if you consider this like Alfred was telling, you know, for people who are accustomed with the pattern of television and the kind of narrative that television does, you know, you can maybe say that this is sort of a poor version of that. Because it's like Nocka told us here one of the times he came that, you know, Nicholas Kristof invited one of the networks to go. And he was talking about the difference between them, you know, the ABC crew or NBC had lots of equipment and lots of people, etc., and he had just his backpack and... But I believe there is a new genre of journalism that is being created on video on the internet. And maybe people are not accustomed to that, but we saw last year here very good packages, where there is no narrator, it's just the characters. So if you could do both versions and measure that, that is really wonderful.

Sue Robinson: Yeah, I'm looking for examples if anyone wants to send me one.

Alfred Hermida: See, you also wonder, how much of it was the way the video was done? Here is Kristof visiting a village as opposed to we went to the village to talk to people there to see what we found. From the clip you showed, it looked very much like our correspondent -- this is our correspondent who is going around and talking to these people, like he was the focus and the way it was done. But you wonder, if you have somebody else who's not quite -- maybe still the reporter, but it doesn't feel so much like it's them visiting the village or going somewhere and sort of getting out of way of the story.

Sue Robinson: So more of a broadcast style.

Audience Member: Serena, I was interested in your finding that the online unofficial journalist had fewer official sources, and I'm wondering whether that's because they did not have access to official sources. Which leads me to, I want to coax a comment from you on the subject of, to the degree they gained a greater audience and to the degree official sources realize that it's in their interest to open themselves up to informal journalism being practiced online, are we going to have a co-option? Are we going to have a more aggressive availability of official sources in order to prevent -- in order, in some sense, to curtail the independence of the online journalist?

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Serena Carpenter: So you think that [for] all these other publications there's perhaps -- that official sources will more likely make themselves available to bloggers and online citizen journalists if they see the potential and the power of that?

Audience Member: Yeah, in a word. But I'm wondering, in the immediate term, I'm wondering whether the reason we have so few official sources is because people tried but could not get comment from them because they are blown off by the official sources.

Serena Carpenter: I think it's a geography thing. I just think that they focus on their small, immediate community, and they tend to be more intimate with their audience, and so they know people in an unofficial capacity who can represent their story. And so whereas, people who work for larger news organizations can't always easily access under the deadlines someone who can represent that issue in an unofficial capacity. So I think...

Audience Member: Oh, so you are suggesting then it's the established journalists who actually are not well sourced in ordinary people.

Serena Carpenter: Yes.

Audience Member: Uh-huh. Interesting. Thank you.

Audience Member: It's not a question. It's just an adjunct to what was just said. I think that as this grows, eventually, the official sources will come to recognize its importance. And as an example, a few years ago, maybe a decade ago, in Los Angeles, the Police Department and the mayor didn't have a Public Information Officer who spoke Spanish. But with the growth of the Spanish language media, everybody has now their PIO who speaks Spanish. Not always well, but they do. So I think that that probably will change. It's to be seen.

Audience Member: Sue, going back to your experiment and Rosental's comments, I thought it was interesting that the negative comment on Kristof's video also had to do with his voice and his monotone. And I was wondering if you might extend your experiment to include audio as well, as newspapers are developing their sites and looking for different tools, like video. But audio alone, I was wondering if you might want to include that, because it would give us some idea whether the persuasive power of voice is authoritative or not or can work better than a video.

Sue Robinson: I think that's a great idea. And one of... I keep looking at these packages that have all of that in one. And I really want to use one of those, but I'm kind of curious how I can isolate what is actually causing the effects. So I'm trying to figure that out right now.

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Audience Member: In this case, it's easy, because Kristof does have a terrible voice.

[Audience laughter.]

Alfred Hermida: See, I wonder, do we need to think about in terms of a newspaper shouldn't get all of their reporters doing video/audio, because maybe things like voice, tone matter and impact the audience.

Sue Robinson: Or maybe some training, which there isn't any.

Alfred Hermida: Training is always good.

Sue Robinson: Yeah.

Serena Carpenter: I have a quick question. In your sample, my concern was that, was there -- was it heavily newspaper students or was it -- what kind of students were these?

Sue Robinson: That is a good question. And it was probably -- it was -- the sample itself was kind of skewed, but I did control for things like gender, because we had way more female than we had male. And we had probably half were journalism majors.

Audience Member: Oh!

Sue Robinson: Yeah, there was that.

Audience Member: So you had journalism majors.

Sue Robinson: Mm-hmm. Yeah.

Audience Member: Wow.

Sue Robinson: Oh, no.

[Audience laughter.]

Rosental Calmon Alves: Oh, yeah, that does change a little bit about my concern, because I was a little... I would replicate into a non-journalism, because they were looking for journalistic standards or whatever, especially if they are broadcast people.

Sue Robinson: But if that were true then, then we would have found the same kind of effects with the column, and they didn't talk about the journalism at all in that. It was all the same random sample.

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Rosental Calmon Alves: No, but what is really new there is the thing of video. You know, in the moment that people are investing so much money on video, and that we believe that it is possible to do this cheap video, and for finally the newspaper industry can go after its archenemy, which is the television, and then to come and say, well, the kids are saying that. But one thing that I want to in self-interest say that I think is great is, is that I always say that one of the uniqueness of this conference is to have professionals and researchers together and, you know, the product of this. And you must remember and you were here presenting a paper when Lynn Apkar^[?], who was at the time the Editor in Chief of The New York Times on the web, was in this session and gave a list of things and actually kind of defied saying, "You researchers, with this usual image that we have in the newsroom about researchers, right, you're studying this, but what is really important is this, this, this, and this." And it's funny, because we had several papers that were done responding to that. I don't... I have to check if this was in the list. But, you know, it is really great that we have several editors here and interacting with you guys and becoming a source for ideas, etc. So, thank you very much. It was a great panel.

Iris Chyi: Thank you so much.

[Audience applause.]