EXPLICATING JOURNALISM-AS-A-CONVERSATION: TWO

EXPERIMENTAL TESTS OF ONLINE NEWS

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A Dissertation

presented to

the Faculty of the Graduate School

at the University of Missouri-Columbia

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In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Philosophy

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by

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JULY 2009

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and hereby certify that, in their opinion, it is worthy of acceptance.

Professor Stephanie Craft
Professor Steven Osterlind
Professor Esther Thorson
Professor Wayne Wanta
Professor Kevin Wise

To my beloved, Albert McMurry, and to The Posse (Jonathan Groves, Carrie
Brown-Smith and Aimee Edmondson), without whom
I wouldn't have survived doc school

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Explicating Journalism-as-a-Conversation: Two Experimental Tests of Online News

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Abstract

The concept of journalism as a conversation has been richly explored in descriptive studies for decades. Largely missing from the literature, though, are clear operationalizations that allow theory building for purposes of explanation and prediction. Using Steven Chaffee's articulation of concept-explication as a guide, this dissertation conducted a pair of online news experiments to measure the concept, tracing it in literatures as varied as political communication and computer-network analysis, often as an embedded concept.

The first experiment tested whether readers perceive conversational stories as different from traditional stories and as more credible and expert. The second tested *types* of journalistic conversation on these outcomes. Findings suggest the conversational features coorientation/homophily and interactivity are key, not only in distinguishing this type of news but in predicting its perceived credibility and expertise.

Introduction: Why Conversation?

Journalism can't tell the truth because no one can tell the truth. All journalism can do is preside over and within the conversation of our culture: to stimulate it and organize it, to keep it moving, and to leave a record of it so that other conversations — art, science, religion — might have something off which they can feed. The public will begin to reawaken when they are addressed as a conversation partner and are encouraged to join the talk rather than sit passively as spectators before a discussion conducted by journalists and experts.

    – James Carey, "The Press and Public Discourse" *(The Kettering Review,* 1992*)*

Years ago when I was a young police reporter at *The News Tribune* in Tacoma, Wash., I often arrived at work with my personal desk phone already ringing and the snide greeting on the other end from a man claiming to be a longtime cab driver in town. He would chide me for getting yet another address or street intersection wrong in my reporting, sometimes saying the only place I might find the location was the 31st parallel and he was just wondering if that was really where that drive-by shooting or bus crash or whatever took place. Then he would hang up on me in disgust. About that same time in my life, an older man with scratchy, indecipherable speech used to call in to the newsroom phone tip line every day, at all hours. He began with the same utterance and cadence, his words smashed together without pause. As best as my friends and I could tell, it sounded like, "This is the Idaho Kid, and I want to talk to you about the front page of *The News Tribune*," only it came out more like

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"thisistheidahokidandiwanttotalktoyouaboutthefrontpageofthenewstribune!" What followed was a passionate message about something, possibly a genuine news tip. Or not. We never knew. Years later as an editor at *The Seattle Times*, I routinely received similar phone calls on the tip line from another older man, this time in halting English and a slight stutter and always about grammar or *Associated Press* style points we got wrong in the paper. I guessed he might have been a long-retired copy editor from the paper. Regardless, in every case, this caller was right about what we did wrong, and I grew to trust his judgment almost implicitly.

I look back with great interest on those readers and dozens of others who routinely showed up at the paper's lobby uninvited, sometimes in what looked like faded pajamas or in camping gear, or called in to the newsroom night and day. These days it is more the interest of an academic than a practitioner. But in almost every case, I think fondly about the value they brought to daily journalism by simply seeing themselves as part of the process, even when they would rather catapult me out of a cannon to the far side of Uranus than talk again. News, like democracy as they say, is messy.

In much the same vein, public-journalism-reform efforts of the late '80s and 1990s attempted to re-connect American journalists with the citizens they were supposed to serve in a democracy, the ordinary people in hair curlers or slippers who had something to say for or about the news. While many argue about just how successful those efforts were, I believe the Internet is forcing mainstream journalists to re-think those people connections because the Web makes it so easy. E-mail. Chat forums. Instant messaging. Discussion boards. The conversation no longer takes place in letters-to-the-editor, if it ever really did, and the potential for journalists to collaborate with

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ordinary people seems to grow exponentially in the 21ˢᵗ century.

Yet if the news business was slow to react to this potential, the same might be said of academics. While the literature is filled with descriptive studies about the concept of journalism as a conversation, perhaps the best metaphor for thinking about journalism more as a discussion with citizens than a top-down lecture, little work has been done that treats this concept with the proper social-scientific attention it deserves. My dissertation goal was to end that drought by building theory on conversation, starting with a pair of online news experiments.

The challenge initially appeared daunting. In searching for studies that had operationalized conversation either qualitatively or quantitatively, say with a scale, I found little that could set me on a reliable path. And so began the journey of my doctoral research and one of the most fascinating of my life to, first, understand how this idea has been used or understood either as an explicit or embedded concept; find the variables that might highlight features of such journalism; and then imagine the concept in the context of plummeting circulations and credibility studies that at times make mainstream American journalism look like the bastard child of snake-oil testimonials from yesteryear.

I believe journalism conducted as a conversation with citizens deeply involved in the process may well save the mainstream media. If credibility and expertise remain journalistic linchpins to survival, as I think they must, early research suggests people respond well to seeing ordinary citizens as integral to the news. And that should not surprise us. Even the Founding Fathers and philosophers of American Pragmatism understood the vital relationship between ordinary people in a democracy and the press that serves them.

In this dissertation, I tested conversation with a pair of experiments designed to explain and predict this phenomenon. Two issues are important: First, while I recognize the value of citizen journalism that has challenged mainstream journalism's status quo, this dissertation argues journalism is best when private citizens work in concert with trained professional journalists, not as replacements for those professionals. The preponderance of stories on citizen news sites about puppy dogs and parades, though fun and engaging at times, suggests citizen-journalist collaboration is necessary. Nonetheless, in the second experiment, I test a type of journalism, Wikinews, in which the professional journalist is absent, the conversation here being between private citizens. It is important to better understand reader perceptions of such stories. Second, this dissertation does not argue for the elimination of so-called "elite" sources, such as public officials or government bureaucrats, in news stories. How could government watchdog reporting proceed without them? I argue only that news has focused too much on them, and that must change if citizens are to view journalism as relevant and credible particularly in the Internet era.

Chapter 2 literally begins at the beginning of conversation, with democratic theory and media philosophy behind the concept, from the fiery revolutionary Thomas Paine to the sobering ruminations of Dewey in what he called in the 1920s an era of the "eclipsed public." Chapter 3 charts the detective work across myriad disciplines for variables that are features of journalistic conversation for testing, or the heart of the explication process for this dissertation. The launch point here is not with the country's founders but with James Carey's seminal essay from which I quote at the start of this introduction. Our guide on this journey is Chaffee, who devoted much of his life urging

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scholars to explicate concepts because they are, after all, the building blocks of theories. But once we know the philosophy behind the importance of conversation and the variables we might use to test it, what theory exactly works to test it? Though traditional mass-communication theories provide important considerations for understanding audiences and effects, they are ineffective in examining relationships between journalists and citizens, as I argue at the end of Chapter 3. As a professor for whom I have great affection, Dr. Wayne Wanta, clarified for me, classic audience theories explore audience/media-content connections, while media effects/processes explore media impact on audiences. But missing is the relationship between audiences and media *workers*, or the journalists behind the news. More suitable in my mind are theories rooted in psychology and social psychology that address interpersonal relationships between people. For that reason, my research relies on attribution theory to determine whether people attribute more positive qualities, such as credibility and expertise, to journalism conducted as a conversation than a top-down lecture.

The remaining chapters follow the traditional format of a quantitative journal article. Chapters 4, 5 and 6 describe the design, results and discussion from Experiment 1, respectively. This first experiment compared two types of online news stories, traditional and "collaborative," either with or without accompanying biographical videos of smiling journalists, on measures of conversation, credibility and expertise. Chapters 7, 8 and 9 do the same respectively for Experiment 2, which compares three types of conversational journalism on these same outcomes. Those story types: Thorson and Duffy's (2006) so-called "collaborative" news approach; the citizen headline/news update site, Twitter; and the citizen content-creation site, Wikinews. Each looks at the various ways professional

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journalists collaborate directly or indirectly with citizens on news stories, the latter

testing the absence of professional journalists. This experiment, though, is somewhat

more exploratory than the first because 1.) There is little theorizing on conversation

proper in the literature much less *types* of conversational journalism and 2.) There is

little experimental research on the tools and sites I will be testing because they are still

somewhat cutting edge. The final chapter, Chapter 10, offers suggestions for long-term

programmatic research on journalism as a conversation, using multiple methods for

testing the concept both qualitatively and quantitatively, as well as guidelines for news

organizations.

Chapter 2: From Whence We Came: The Roots of Journalism as a

Conversation in Democratic Theory and Philosophy

Conversational journalism, and much of the public-journalism movement that embraced it, has deep roots in democratic theory and media philosophy. In addition to many of the country's founders, scholars from William James, John Dewey and George Mead to the more contemporary James Carey, Jurgen Habermas and Jay Rosen advocate the central role of the press in community-building and democracy. At the heart of these ideas are beliefs in the social responsibility of the media to work for the public good and in the power of private citizens to control their destinies, provided they have the information to do so and become civically engaged. As such, this is a view of citizens as active collaborators with journalists on news, rather than passive subjects of "governing elites" who know what is best for them, as elucidated most prominently in the writings of Walter Lippmann (1922). And though Carey and others largely offer prescriptions for press behavior rather than descriptions, those prescriptions have been borne out in recent decades, particularly in news-reform initiatives. In the Internet era where interaction is king, they are essential to news operations.

Yet somewhat difficult to tease out of these theorists is whether professional journalists are *themselves* members of the public, and just how homogenous that public is. Do journalists stand apart or even above the general public? Is there really only one public or are there many? On might argue journalists, to borrow a phrase from our times, are citizens of the public with benefits. In talking *with* rather than lecturing *to* their fellow citizens, journalists are fundamentally conjoined to citizens in the conversational-journalism project as facilitators of community discourse. But most professional

journalists undergo specialized training either in academia, on the job or both. And they routinely benefit from their occupational status in accessing public documents from agencies, as any private citizen discovers when simply trying to look at police reports, otherwise mundane grist for police-blotter columns across the country. It is unrealistic to think of the public that journalists serve as one homogenous mass, especially in the Internet era. As Kovach and Rosenstiel (2007) explain, sub-publics of citizens may form around some issues of concern, but not others, and that is OK. As collaborators, though, citizens and journalists bear important responsibilities to each other in the form of discourse, and that is where our theorists shine the brightest light of understanding.

Thomas Jefferson, James Madison and Thomas Paine recognized this idea as central to American democracy, which itself takes inspiration from the French *philosophes* Francois Voltaire and Jean-Jacques Rousseau (Altschull, 1990). Indeed, the French philosophers and American revolutionary Paine capture the earliest spirit of conversational journalism, implicitly at least. Though Voltaire generally held contempt for the masses as a barbarous rabble, he argued human understanding is not advanced in the compilation of facts on the histories of kings but on the painstaking attention to the customs and behaviors of *ordinary* people. Not only is this the "bread" of much journalism today, as Altschull (1990) notes, but it elevates the idea of tapping ordinary people over elites to capture a community's stories, an idea central to the concept of conversation and public-journalism initiatives. Even more than Voltaire, Rousseau insisted lawmakers and writers, including journalists, reject the lofty language of the elite in favor of the plain speech of the people so that everyone, including the "Kansas City milkman," as Altschull (1990) suggests, can grasp their ideas. To write *in* the words of

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those people, conversation advocates would argue, is a key step to writing *of* their stories and ideas. For Rousseau, the voice of the private citizen can be heard perhaps best through the press (Altschull, 1990). Paine similarly saw American journalists' role as capturing public opinion, which Rousseau argued is instrumental for popular sovereignty in his vision of the General Will (Altschull, 1990). If information exists for the benefit of the governed and not the government, as Paine argued, journalists who engage in two-way conversation with citizens are in an ideal position to capture that opinion.

In short, Paine and the French philosophers celebrated everyday people's stories. Together, they tell us the voices of ordinary people in everyday discourse count — they count in the construction of community knowledge and they count in democratic rule. In many ways, they make us realize that conversation is the great equalizer in a democracy because we all do it. Journalists, themselves citizens, have the unique responsibility in a democracy as facilitators of discourse because of their work for a mass medium. Some of these ideas have moorings in the philosophical argument of the people's right to know. Altschull (1990) notes the Founding Fathers were not guaranteeing with that right so much the *provision* of information to the public but the right to *express* opinion in the press. The roots of that argument and on which democracy rests can be found most prominently in the ideas of John Milton and in Madison, while the related concept of cultural pluralism and the importance of competing ideas can be found in the pragmatism of James, Dewey and Mead.

Pragmatism, the United States' greatest contribution to philosophical thought (Altschull, 1990), is the philosophy perhaps most associated with American media practices. Its father, James, considered it more a method of inquiry than a theory

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(Altschull, 1990). Pragmatism draws its strength from experience, not thought, and

makes no attempts to answer cosmic questions. It provides a series of guidelines for

actions. "A pragmatist is at home in his laboratory or his editorial office; he does not sit

in his armchair contemplating" (Altschull, 1990, p. 224). Pragmatism is dedicated to the

open not the closed, to the concrete not the abstract, to the Many not the One (Altschull,

1990). The consequences of action are paramount.

The pragmatist best known for stressing the consequences of thought and action

and not their causes is Dewey. He spoke of community, communication via the symbols

of language and public education as the forces of democracy. "Men" become social

creatures via "ideas, sentiments and deliberate behavior. *What* he believes, hopes for and

aims at is the outcome of association and intercourse," and therefore meaning is socially

constructed (Dewey, 1927, p. 25). He held the public in high esteem, arguing it "is

organized in and though those officers who act in behalf of its interests" (Dewey, 1927, p.

28). Association adds to the public's political organization, giving rise to government

and the formation of the political state. He took care to note these are observable,

verifiable facts, in keeping with his pragmatic beliefs, while castigating competing

theories that explained the state by means of "special causal forces and agencies"

(Dewey, 1927, p. 36). While he shared many of the French philosophers' ideas on the

power of ordinary people, he targeted for critique Rousseau's notion of a "General Will"

and the influence of what he described as German metaphysics and mysticism.

For Dewey, democracy is an ideal to work toward and literally begins at home

and in the neighborhood, in the social intercourse of everyday life and, hence, in the

acquisition of community knowledge. Public schools and the press perform a powerful

role in this scenario, "for a thing is fully known only when it is published, shared, socially accessible. Record and communication are indispensable to knowledge" (Dewey, 1927, p. 176). Though he recognized the excesses and sensationalism of the yellow journalism of his time, he believed news would be different if reporters were left to their own interests. In this respect, Dewey reminds us of the collaborative relationship between citizens and journalists, particularly the street-level reporter. Perhaps not coincidentally, no index entry for "reporter," "journalist" or "news" can be found in his seminal volume *The Public and its Problems*. But discussions abound on all three under various entries for "public," suggesting he viewed the public and journalist as somewhat synonymous, at least acting in concert.

It is important to note that Dewey's ideas were a direct attack on those of media scholar and contemporary Lippmann (1922). The latter argued in a time of dwindling voter participation not unlike our own in recent decades that democracy should be left in the hands of ruling elites, who have the time and intellect to understand issues of public importance. Not only did Dewey virulently reject that idea as pompous and dangerous in an era of what he described "the eclipsed public," but he elevated the over-the-backyard-fence neighborly chitchat of ordinary citizens as the basis for community and, ultimately, democracy. Futher, he suggested personalized, socially relevant news could approximate interpersonal communication and stimulate conversation that fuels community life (Dewey, 1927). In other words, he eschewed his European counterparts' trust in authoritative elites for a pragmatic trust in the genuine reasoning and informed rationality of common people, a philosophy that also had deep influence on his friend and cohort social psychologist George Herbert Mead (Anderson, Dardenne & Killenberg, 1996.)

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To Mead, conversation is the essence of *all* human pursuits (Mead, 1934). His exposition of democracy and the public placed communicative interaction front and center. He focused on mind, self and society and the interrelationships among them: mind as the process by which people symbolically integrate, through the medium of language, and reproduce larger societal structures and self as the creation of interacting with others in order to notice differences from them (Anderson et al., 1996). To have a society, then, is to have a conversation.

If conversation can be seen as metaphor for news, its champion in contemporary times is the late James Carey (1992). He urged journalists and journalism scholars to reject traditional notions of the craft as the mechanical transmission of information to the ignorant masses and instead embrace a ritualistic notion of journalism as a culture's conversation with itself, with all citizens, including journalists, on equal footing and sharing a stake in improving democratic self-governance. He castigated journalism's decades-long infatuation with elite sources and their agendas, arguing it left ordinary people and their concerns out of the conversation to the detriment of democracy. He implored journalists to reject an Orwellian world in which public conversation was dead, the silence interrupted only by a television screen and a loudspeaker. Carey's ideas have informed reform efforts in the news business and inspired media scholarship. His work often is cited as benchmarks by proponents of public journalism, sometimes known as civic journalism or communitarian journalism, which seeks to engage citizens in a democracy through better dialogue between citizens and journalists.

So, too, is the work of Habermas (1991; 2006), who sees public dialogue as the essence of democracy. Among the public-journalism movement's intellectual leaders

along with Rosen, Habermas articulated the concept of public sphere as a free and open domain where public opinion can rationally be formed without coercion and in which the mass media can disseminate that opinion (Habermas, 1991). In that sense, he offers the clearest vision of journalists as facilitators of public discourse, within the sphere but in a very particular role. He sees that sphere as an intermediary system of communication between formally organized and informal face-to-face deliberation in arenas at the top and bottom of a political system. Though the structure of most mass communications is impersonal and asymmetrical, he posits, the public sphere could still generate "considered public opinions" (Habermas, 2006, p. 418). The media's role is unmistakable, serving a critical function in a democracy by relaying public conversation.

This is a particular vision of democracy, though. As Wyatt (2007) notes, conventional democratic theories fall into two camps: liberalism, which emphasizes individual freedoms with minimal obligations, and republicanism, which emphasizes shared values with community-based obligations. Beginning earnestly in the 1990s, she says, critics turned to a third tradition that strikes a middle ground between the two: discursive, or deliberative, democracy. Unlike liberalism, discursive theory sees the individual as having a commitment to interactive processes but stops short of the republican view of an ethical community institutionalized in the state. Discourse is a process aimed at intersubjectively achieved agreement among participants in conversation, or exchanges with a purpose. As such, deliberative theories move away from the voting-centric view of liberal understandings of democracy to focus on the *communicative* processes that precede voting (Wyatt, 2007).

Among the most influential discursive theorists today is Habermas. According to

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Wyatt (2007), he gives us key concepts, many of which are invoked by advocates of conversational journalism: communicative action, or the process of social interaction in which participants aim at mutual understanding by intersubjectively validating claims; public spheres, or the sites of communicative actions mentioned earlier where ideal-speech situations can occur; and proceduralism, in which the goal or procedure of discourse is mutual understanding, which leads to coordinated action.

What, then, is the role of the press in a discursive democracy? In her argument for a normative theory of press criticism, Wyatt (2007) argues the press must first and foremost operate as a "genuine public sphere aimed at mutual understanding and intersubjective formation" (p. 109). To do this, the media must not be subverted by political or economic power. That independence is as essential as Kovach and Rosenstiel's (2007) notion of the interlocking public. They posit three broad levels of public engagement. The *involved* public with a personal stake in an issue, the *interested* public with no direct role in an issue but that could respond with some firsthand experience to it and the *uninterested* public, which pays little attention to an issue but might join in the debate once others have laid out the contours. Central to the authors' argument is that we are all members of all three, depending on the issue. In that sense, it is not essential in a discursive democracy for every member of the public to be deeply engaged in all issues — who would have the time? — but that the media strive to provide a forum for such engagement should a citizen want to join the debate.

Yet where Kovach and Rosenstiel (2007) argue for a press whose main purpose is to transmit information to citizens to self-govern, Wyatt argues for a more discursive model, in which the media provide a way to connect members of a disconnected public

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with one another. Here again is the notion of journalists as citizen facilitators of

discussion. This becomes clear in her table of conventional views of journalistic

attributes versus her proposed counterpart views. Among them, respectively: journalism

as an industry/journalism as social practice; information/discourse; monologue/dialogue;

transmission/exchange; journalist as providers/journalists as facilitators; news as a

product/news as a commons; expert knowing/contributing to understanding; official

sources/everyday people (Wyatt, 2007, p. 123).

Her proposed views mesh well with Anderson, Dardenne and Killenberg's (1996),

who built on Carey's (1992) ideas of conversational journalism. For the former,

discourse can involve both deliberation and conversation, with deliberation simply being

a more focused dialogue aimed at solving a problem, a key goal of public journalism.

Though Wyatt (2007) argues the media largely have not lived up to such goals, and that

media critics should put them to the test, many would argue the Internet has radically

changed that reality because it is fundamentally interactive. The days of mainstream

journalists deciding what is news and who should be a part of it are over, ushering in a

model of journalism centered on the kind of discourse cited above. Also helping that

drive are continued audience losses in traditional media, as well as public opinion polls

from Pew Research Center, the Newspaper Association of America and other

organizations that reveal perceived media credibility is low.

Dewey. Carey. Habermas. Together, they and others assert a profound faith in the

reasonableness and wisdom of the common person, and they inform the spirit of public-

journalism reform. How should journalism proceed if it is to fulfill its primary mission

under the First Amendment to serve democracy? As it always has, in a top-down,

authoritative manner, relying heavily on experts and official sources in one-way transmissions of information to the public? As a collaborative, two-way conversation with fellow citizens as audience members, news sources and determinants of the public agenda? If the modern American press has steered away from its democratic roots with ever-increasing reliance on elite sources and elite agendas for news, the Internet may be steering them back. Because people now have a multitude of sources for their news and the ability to customize and prioritize it, some media outlets are trying to re-engage the public in a two-way conversation to make them stakeholders in the creation of that news. This dissertation sought to determine whether that conversation is necessary in the digital age and whether it can make a difference in people's use and trust of the media.

Chapter 3: Getting to the Heart of the Matter: A Search for Variables

to Explicate Conversation

Ken Burns's sweeping documentary of World War II told from ordinary people's point of view. Internet video-sharing site YouTube's entry into televised U.S. presidential debates. Web journals and other blogs covering everything from cooking to car care. In their own way, each reflects a phenomenon peculiar to the early-21st century: stories and conversations elicited from the bottom up, a kind of people's narrative. In these foundering days of mainstream American journalism laden with public distrust (Pew, 2002; State of the News Media, 2007), such narrative is no less present but perhaps of greater importance to citizens in a democracy. It began with a murmur in the public-journalism reform movement of the late-20th century, then roared into the next century with perhaps the most powerful agent of social change since television: the Internet.

Conversation. Collaboration. Interaction. In academic terms, the story of how we got here in journalism, or the explication of the concept of journalism as a conversation, is potentially theory building at its richest. In the absence of such theory, that is the inspiration for this dissertation. Though the concept has origins in the founding of American democracy, the departure point here for explication is the late James Carey's seminal essay on conversation in *The Kettering Review*. Published in 1992, it coincided with the rise of public journalism and perhaps helped clarify its mission to bring journalists and ordinary citizens closer together to improve civic engagement. More remarkable is that the essay fundamentally re-imagines the relationship between journalist and citizen years before the Internet made that not only possible but essential. It is in keeping with Carey's own explication of mass communication as cultural

exchange (1988) rather than the mechanical transmission of information that prevailed in social sciences for decades. People versus machines. Poetry versus science. Carey's (1992) clarion call to journalists to engage ordinary people in a conversation rather than a lecture is as much about the push and pull of ideas in the practice of social science as anything, the individual viewed either as active agent of change or passive subject of scientific scrutiny. The Internet perhaps more than any other innovation clearly bridges these two worlds, its founding a milestone in computer science, its use and diffusion fundamentally democratic. Indeed, the bottom-up, open-source nature of the Internet suggests we are living in a new age of poetics, with power increasingly wielded by Friedman's (1999) "electronic herd."

As such, the explication of journalism as a conversation in the academic literature is a journey across fields as diverse as political communication and computer network analysis. If the late-20th and early-21st centuries have been marked by the global ascendancy of hip hop and the Internet, this is classic mixing, re-mixing and mash-ups of seemingly discordant entities to produce elegant voices for a new generation. Our guide is Stanford's preeminent mass-communication theorist, the late Steven Chaffee (1991), whose roadmaps for theory building direct us, among other things, to seek concepts in far-flung places if need be, to name them when they have no names and to isolate the variables that allow for hypothesis testing, creating clear paths for others to follow. He suggests, "Without explication, our words are nothing more than words and our data add nothing to them. Theory, or more exactly *theorizing*, consists of an interplay among ideas, evidence, and inference" (p. 14).

Time to stretch this concept to see what it offers.

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Let's Talk About Talk: A Brief Word from Communications Scholars

con-ver-sa-tion: [kon-ver-sey-sh*uh*n.] Noun. 1. Informal interchange of thoughts, information, etc., by spoken words; oral communication between persons; talk; colloquy. 2. An instance of this. 3. Association or social intercourse; intimate acquaintance. 4. Criminal conversation. 5. The ability to talk socially with others: *She writes well but has no conversation*. 6. Obsolete -- a. Behavior or manner or living. b. Close familiarity; intimate acquaintance, as from constant use or study. Origin 1300-1350.
> — *Dictionary.com, Unabridged*

Consider the definition above. Probably any school child could come up with something similar because much of it seems commonsensical and familiar. In a nutshell, when we think about conversation, we think about someone talking face-to-face with at least one other person, so no monologues. Unlike many forms of writing, the language and the tone of the exchange is informal, and each person is assumed to play the role of listener and speaker throughout, hence the terms "interchange" and "social intercourse." In addition is the notion of intimacy and acquaintance, or what some might call friendliness. So would a shouting match, nose-to-nose, qualify as conversation? Not under this definition. What about an instant-messaging (IM) exchange between a newspaper reporter and a key witness to a warehouse fire the reporter is covering? Possibly. Cleary missing is face-to-face dialogue, though the exchange probably would be quick and informal and highly interactive, perhaps coming in spurts, misspellings, typos and all.

Computer-interactivity theorists of recent decades provide us with critical links to make the bridge between face-to-face and mediated conversations, to be discussed shortly. But long before this came a branch of interpersonal-communication studies that

turned ordinary chitchat into the stuff of rigorous social-scientific scrutiny, among both qualitative and quantitative scholars.

The clearest example is Conversation Analysis (CA). As both systematic qualitative method and theory, it is the basis of numerous studies on talk. Grice, for instance, (1975, 1978) first described implicit rules that facilitate normal conversation, the most important being cooperation. Leech (1983) expanded on those, noting the role of politeness in cooperation. Central to many rules is the notion of face, or one's self-image (Goffman, 1967) projected during conversation. Harvey Sacks developed the sociological-based theory in the 1960s while looking at how citizens create social order and meaning in otherwise mundane conversations (Sacks, 1992). He did so by looking at real-time interactions and recording them. In contrast is Bales' (1950) Interaction Process Analysis (IPA), a quantitative approach. Comparing the two, Perakyla (2004) noted the research traditions in many ways are diametrically opposed. The former aims at global characterization of interactional situations, while the latter is inductive and aims at characterizing specific layers of organization, such as turn-taking, that give structure to interactions. "For the Balesian tradition, it is the functioning and the structure of a small group, whereas in the Sacksian tradition, it is the structures and practices of human social interaction per se" (Perakyla, 2004, p. 1).

Regardless, each tradition demonstrates much is going on beneath the surface when people talk. Still other communication theorists have explored the role of conversation between doctors and patients (Maynard & Heritage, 2005), supervisors and employees (Wheeless, Wheeless & Howard, 1984), parents and children and husbands and wives (Stafford & Dainton, 1994). In the latter, the authors explored family

conversations and discovered several kinds between husbands and wives, including those that build emotional intimacy, something the authors described missing in all too many marriages. Conversation typologies depending on the nature of relationships distinguish some such studies, and conversational journalism could yield the same.

Together these studies suggest the richness and complexity of face-to-face conversation and offer important clues for thinking about potential features, or variables, of mediated conversation between a journalist and citizen in the Internet era.

Mass communication and journalism research

We begin building theory on journalism as a conversation in earnest in the most obvious place, mass-communication and journalism literature. Here the concept often is named as such, though not always, and can be found mostly in descriptive studies and essays, such as Carey's (1992) *Kettering* article. " Not surprisingly, much of the literature spelling out a new kind of journalism that eschews elite sources for the straight talk of ordinary people springs from the public-journalism movement, either as metaphor, practical advice or sometimes both. In the wake of the 1988 presidential election, for many a low-water mark for political participation and gotcha journalism, editors and scholars alike sought to shore up journalism's democratic mission to serve the electorate (Merritt & Rosen, 1998). Public journalism called for more direct dialogue between journalists and ordinary people, among other things. News organizations across the country began experimenting with town-hall style meetings and other initiatives that brought journalists and citizens together to talk about the community's civic agenda, from the bottom up *(*Lambeth, Meyer & Thorson, 1998*)*. Among the movement's leaders were *The Wichita Eagle*'s Executive Editor Davis "Buzz" Merritt and New York

University's Jay Rosen. Central to the movement's values is the idea of public sphere, whose conceptualization is closely associated with political theorist Jurgen Habermas (1991, 2006). As discussed earlier, he envisioned democracies as realms within which ordinary citizens exchange and debate ideas about how best society should run, with the mass media serving the central role of communicating those ideas to the public at large. Though questions of "which citizens?" and "what's best?" continue to bedevil theorists, particularly for those who think Habermas' communication is too idealized, the notion of a domain of public exchange in a democracy has stuck. Harvard's *Nieman Reports* in 2005 published a thick compilation of essays and studies devoted to public journalism, among them Michael Skoler's (2005) take on the conversation initiative in Minnesota Public Radio's public insight journalism. A 1997 Finnish field experiment operationalized conversation in a series of public-journalism focus groups in Tampere, where citizens answered questions about a city budget crisis (Kunelius, 2001). Among other things, the author found, they tended to ask more values-laden questions than professional journalists, suggesting journalists were overlooking some key community concerns (Kunelius, 2001).

Beyond public journalism, mass-communication researchers have explored the idea of journalism as a conversation, though not necessarily by name, in everything from studies of online viewer mail for NBC Nightly News (Newhagen, Cordes & Levy, 1995) to talk radio (Squires, 2000) and participant TV shows (Lorenzo-Dus, 2005). Popular texts that form the backbone of much journalism education, such as *The Elements of Journalism: What Newspeople Should Know and the Public Should Expect*, assert a newfound relationship between ordinary people and journalists, with each bearing

democratic responsibilities: "And, if journalism is conversation, in the end that conversation includes discourse among citizens as well as with those who provide the news. The citizens, too, have a role. … If they have a question or a problem, they should ask it of the news organization …" (Kovach & Rosenstiel, 2007, p. 110). In *We the Media: Grassroots Journalism by the People, for the People*, meanwhile, Gillmor (2006) extols the rise of citizen blogs and argues technology and increasing public dissatisfaction with "Big Media" demand conversational journalism that engages ordinary people, rather than lectures them.

Among scholarly works, perhaps no book elucidates if not demands journalism as a conversation more passionately than *The Conversation of Journalism: Communication, Community and News* (Anderson, Dardenne & Killenberg, 1996). The authors locate the foundations of their ideas in the philosophical writings of Dewey and his cohort Mead, the former, the authors argue, elevating "conversation as the prototypical communication condition of a democratic public" (p. 21). A free press, therefore, participates in a broad conversation with people. And when they are free, journalists best act as "society's surrogate listeners," situated in a context *with* speakers (p. 130). Kovach and Rosenstiel make similar arguments in outlining their 10 principles of journalism, pointing to promises made in 18th-century newspapers that those publications would be "instruments of social intercourse," in which citizens would constantly debate each other on issues of public concern (p. 170). The newspaper, by this account, not only is a part of the community but a place for the community to gather, listen and talk.

Like Carey's *Kettering* essay, *Conversation* pre-dates the rise of the Internet and offers no clear ways to empirically test key concepts, a shortcoming noted in an

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otherwise positive book review at the time (Stamm, 1996). Yet the authors do yeoman work in their articulation of those concepts, notably conversation, community, credibility and listening. A careful reading suggests possible variables that address their deep concern for the relationship between journalists and citizens in how they relate as people; how they orient to each other around news and ideas; and how trust and credibility bind those relations in a democracy. Those variables, to be discussed in the next section, include social presence, coorientation and homophily. To those we might add friendliness and informality common to most dictionary definitions of conversation, discussed at the beginning of this chapter.

For Anderson, Dardenne and Killenberg (1996), the message to journalists is unmistakable: strengthen your personal and intellectual relations with ordinary citizens and, thereby, strengthen your credibility with them, building community in the process.

Internet/computer theories and research

Perhaps the best tests of journalism as a conversation can be found in literature on computers and the Internet, but, again, not even by name. Such are the distant places to which Chaffee (1991) may have been alluding when he said of explication: "The literature search will be more productive if it ranges widely, finding examples of the full variety of meanings of our concept that are in use" (p. 18). Building theory on conversation in order to explain or predict its use and implications, then, means forging a link between the rich descriptive literature on it, such as Carey's (1992) and Dardenne, Anderson & Killenberg's (1996) work, and the increasingly nuanced research on interactivity, in particular. There, researchers have measured and explored online conversations between journalists and citizens as an embedded concept.

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Why are we finding this in interactivity literature? Kamerer and Bresser's 1997 online newspaper content analysis offers good arguments. In it, they quote several journalists and scholars who hail interactivity as possibly the most important change ever in the relationship between journalist and audience and a linchpin for building public trust, the latter because it gives power to the people. Indeed, a *Wall Street Journal* online editor describes interactivity as the "magic bullet" newspapers have been searching for since the start of circulation declines in the 1960s (Kamerer & Bressers, 1998, p. 2).

Media-equation theory

Among scholars, interactivity is recognized as the bedrock of Reeves and Nass' media-equation theorizing (Sundar & Kim, 2005). That theory posits that people respond to computers and other media as though they were human, as the two researchers showed in a series of experiments at Stanford in the 1990s (Reeves & Nass, 1996). This is because human brains evolved in a world in which all perceived objects were real and only humans possessed human-like shapes and human-like characteristics, such as language, emotion and personality. Anything that seemed real or possessed human characteristics *was* a real human (Reeve & Nass, 1996). In more recent work as part of the university's cHIME (Communication between Humans and Interactive Media) lab, Nass and his colleagues manipulated synthetic voices to project introversion and extroversion (Lee & Nass, 2005), computer personalities to show "caring" (Brave & Nass, 2005) and personalities to indicate race and gender (Lee & Nass, 2002) to further explore peoples' social responses to computers, all with varying degrees of success. In his media-equation work at the university years ago, Fogg (2003) laid a foundation for understanding that those social responses, indeed all responses to computers, highlight

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the *persuasive* power of technology in our lives, in everything from newspaper Web sites

that get us to register personal information to life-like baby dolls embedded with

computer chips that persuade teenagers to avoid pregnancy. Many of these studies

highlight the difference between human-computer interaction (HCI), the focus of most of

these studies, and computer-mediated communication (CMC). The former focus on

peoples' interactions with the computer itself, such as playing cards online with an

avatar, while the latter focus on peoples' interactions with humans *via* computers. Yet the

study of journalism as a conversation suggests one or both can be at play. Minnesota

Public Radio's four-year-old public insight journalism initiative, for instance, represents a

clear example of conversational journalism and one that relies on both forms of

interaction for its success. The initiative's "idea generator," for instance, allows citizens

to post their story ideas and personal expertise on subjects via the Web (Skoler, 2006).

Employees later sift through the information and potentially assign reporters to contact

those sources in person or online. In other words, citizens sometimes interact with the

radio station's Web site or other technologies, while at other times they interact with the

station's journalists via e-mail.

    Interactivity

    In sum, media-equation theory tells us interactivity enhances our social responses

to computers. Interactivity provides human-like cues in human-computer exchanges. It

imbues the interface with agency, thus encouraging users to treat computers as a source

of communication and not merely as a medium, unlike the way we view traditional

mainstream media (Sundar & Nass, 2000). Perhaps most importantly, Schultz (1999)

notes that the public-journalism reform movement in recent years has focused on the *lack*

of interactivity between journalist and audience, with many in the movement calling for "interactive journalism" that stresses audience participation to help create a participatory democracy. As mentioned earlier, many scholars claim a link between the state of democracy and interactive communications stimulated by media organizations. And many theories of democracy rest on the idea of deliberation and "vivid public spheres" (Schultz, 1999).

Based on mass-communication literature, a more apt label for this phenomenon in interactivity literature might be journalism-as-a-conversation. However described, conversation is indebted to interactivity theorizing, which borrows from disciplines as diverse as computer science, social psychology, marketing and communication. Kiousis (1999) notes interactivity is rooted in Wiener's (1948) cybernetic theory, the main difference between this and Shannon and Weaver's (1949) communication model being feedback. Perhaps because of interactivity's diverse disciplinary use, its definitions and operationalizations, as several scholars such as Singer and Thiel (2002) and Tremayne (2005) have explained, greatly differ, making comparisons of studies somewhat perilous. Sometimes interactivity is defined as the functions of a computer system, sometimes as a perceptual variable in the mind of the user, or even both. Similarly, sometimes it is related as a process in communication and sometimes as a characteristic of a medium. In a seminal essay on interactivity in online contexts, Rafaeli (1988) distinguished conversation from interactivity, stressing the former can occur without back-and-forth feedback, though the latter cannot. Indeed, one of the most cited interactivity definitions comes from Rafaeli and Sudweeks (1997), who argue it describes and prescribes the manner in which conversational interactions as an *iterative* process lead to jointly

produced meanings, a definition not unlike Carey's (1992). Also, Rafaeli and Sudweeks (1997) argue that interactivity, at least in group communication, carries a social, binding force and often leads to more sustained, long-term relationships online, something many public-journalism advocates want to see between journalists and citizens. Rafaeli and Sudweeks' (1997) study, like many experimental studies of interactivity, focused on user interactions with text, or the kind of research one might conduct to understand perceptions about how readers interact with journalists and online news texts, be they Web sites of newspapers, magazines, TV or radio outlets.

In short, Singer and Thiel (2002) and Tremayne (2005) urge researchers to be clear about what exactly they are measuring. Research on journalism as a conversation might well borrow from Ha and James' (1998) multi-dimensional interactivity construct, defined as "the extent to which communicator and audience respond to or are willing to facilitate each other's communication needs" (p. 8). Their five dimensions: playfulness, choice, connectedness, information collection and reciprocal communication. The latter four, in particular, speak most directly to the many ways the Internet is allowing audiences more voice and participation in the news they choose.

Psychological concepts and the Web

Audience voice and participation. Perhaps both have been explored best in blog studies of recent years (Hargrove & Stempel, 2007; Johnson & Kaye, 2004; Perlmutter, 2008; Stefanac, 2007). Blogs, or Web logs in the form of personal journals often with invitations for interaction, speak directly to the citizen-journalism movement spurred by the Internet and the accompanying development of special publishing software. Now ordinary people by the millions publish their own news, often riffing on or critiquing

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mainstream journalism (Gillmor, 2006). As this news with "voice" seeps into public discourse, it carries important implications for how the mainstream media define and report news, traditionally viewed as objective, detached. Even before the Internet, research showed audiences respond positively when they sense a real person behind the news. In Newhagen and Nass' (1988) seminal study on the issue, they found audiences viewed news delivered by TV anchors as more credible than news delivered by newspapers, seen as cold, unfamiliar sources. If audiences are looking for a human dimension in the creation and distribution of news, they might well be looking for themselves in that process. Recent research at the Missouri School of Journalism bears this out to some extent. Hamman (2006) explored the concept social presence in an online news experiment, though with unexpected findings: While audiences may sense journalists as social beings in stories manipulated to convey that, audiences do not necessarily perceive those stories as more credible. Research that built on that study using additional psychological variables of coorientation and perceived similarity (Meyer, Marchionni & Thorson, 2007) found strong support for coorientation predicting expertise and credibility, particularly in what Thorson and Duffy (2006) call collaborative news environments: news stories that telegraph the role of ordinary people in the reporting and writing of mainstream media stories. Such collaborative stories can easily be described as conversational journalism in Carey's (1992) and others' sense of bringing citizens directly into the process of mainstream journalism.

But where does that leave us? The latest Missouri experiment found support for social presence predicting credibility in news blogs but not traditional or collaborative stories, suggesting social presence clearly needs more fleshing out in online news studies.

And while coorientation, which describes not a perceived social connection with another person but an intellectual similarity, strongly predicted article credibility in most story types, more research is needed to better understand why. If in 1996 Anderson, Dardenne and Killenberg provided important guideposts for examining these kinds of variables in journalist-citizen relations, building theory on journalism as a conversation in the Internet age requires a firm holding in Web research, always with an eye on issues of credibility and trust, mainstream media's most important cachet in a democracy. There, attribution theory, particularly used in online marketing and management studies, may hold promise. We might even call the phenomena under scrutiny "business as a conversation."

Attribution theory and research

In addition to explicating coorientation, Heider (1946, 1958) gave us attribution theory.   The latter assumes people are driven to understand the causal nature of things around them, as if they were "scientists" (Smith & Hunt, 1987, p. 20). It generally posits people tend to attribute causal explanations for others' behavior to internal, dispositional factors while attributing their own to external, situational ones, showing their own flexibility and adaptability (Gunther, 1991). It suggests an intriguing question for 21st-century journalism: Do citizens attribute different factors or qualities to news as a conversation than traditional journalism? Do they attribute positive qualities to conversational journalism, such as credibility and expertise?

Dominating attribution research are sales and marketing studies, which themselves follow from persuasion research rooted in social psychology (Smith & Hunt, 1987). These marketing studies, which echo interactivity's roots, explore such questions as, how do buyers or message recipients assess the accuracy and truthfulness in

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persuasive communication? What are the underlying causes or perceptions of persuasive messages? Buyers, for instance, generally do not receive messages as well when they attribute profit motive to the seller because the motive detracts from the sellers' credibility (Smith & Hunt, 1987). Even a cursory look at journal databases reveals attribution research in journalism is far less prolific. Some studies, for instance, focus on audience perceptions of individual or societal causes of social problems based on news frames (Coleman & Thorson, 2000). But the richer attribution-theory development can be found in persuasion research. If Fogg (2003) is right about the persuasiveness of technology in our lives, good reason to explore this idea in online news research into journalism as a conversation. Consider the profit-motive question above: Among the more damning criticisms of public journalism over the years, and potentially conversation, is that it creates news that panders to audiences as "community pals" in order to sell stories better (Hoyt, 1995). Attribution research could address this question head on.

Several attribution studies in marketing and sales, then, bear general discussion. Though Smith and Hunt's (1987) experiment pre-dates the Internet, it offers important findings on credibility in business (think journalistic) messages, namely that buyers' acceptance of a message appeal largely is contingent on the extent to which it confirms or disconfirms a seller bias. If a seller makes a strong but one–sided appeal, it confirms bias expectations of the buyer, who then views the message as less credible, likely because it is profit-driven. In contrast, two-sided-message appeals can be good for credibility, disconfirming the expectation of bias and profit motive, which also can lead to deeper message processing (Smith & Hunt, 1987). A similar credibility study asks the

provocative question: Can you build consumer trust by providing uncensored access to competitor price information (Trifts & Haubl, 2003)? The study extends to the online environment signaling theory, referring to cues retailers provide to prospective buyers, and uses attribution theory to explore the principle of correspondence. That principle says that if consumers cannot explain a vendor's action by external factors, it must correspond with the vendor's internal dispositions, which consumers view positively in this case. The authors found support for the correspondence principle but only for vendors in moderate positions in the market in terms of price.

Morales (2005), on the other hand, found consumers tend to attribute positive qualities to firms that show extra effort in business, even if that effort does not directly benefit the consumer, such as tidy store displays. This attributional tendency stems from people's sense that individual have an almost moral responsibility to use resources under their control to the fullest extent (Morales, 2005). Whether firms do so may elicit strong emotional responses from people, from gratitude to anger. Further, a firm's intentions matter: If consumers sense some kind of ulterior motive, they may retaliate by turning away from a product. As applied to journalism as a conversation, these findings beg the question: Might citizens positively view the extra effort of journalists to work closely with ordinary people on stories, invoking feelings of perhaps gratitude, even if those efforts do not directly involve those citizens? Or might citizens view such efforts as audience pandering and retaliate?

As disparate as these attribution studies are, it is not difficult to imagine them at work in journalism research. Providing competitor information suggests fairness and accuracy in reporting, while concerns about trust and credibility strike at journalism's

core values. In other words, attribution might best illuminate the nature of the *relationship* between citizen and journalist in the Internet age, and that is fundamentally what a theory of journalism as a conversation is about. One point is clear: Whether you make detergent or put out a newspaper, you cannot earn credibility these days in the same old ways.

Chapter 4: Experiment 1 — Traditional versus Conversational News

In Chapter 2 we looked at possible variables that might highlight or index features of journalism as a conversation: social presence, coorientation, homophily, interactivity, friendliness and informality. Though it may be obvious, it is important to remember that conversational journalism is not real face-to-face conversation but rather carries some of the important features of such dynamic interpersonal connections.

But how do these variables and credibility go together? Gillmor (2006), Shirky (2008) and others have found people want to participate in and help create the news they consume. Further, Reeves and Nass (1996) have found people respond to computers, television and other media as though they are human, while Newhagen and Nass (1988) found people primarily view newspapers as less credible than television because readers view newspapers as cold and institutional — basically lacking a human presence. Indeed, Meyer, Marchionni and Thorson (2007) and Marchionni, Meyer & Thorson (2008) found in separate experiments that some psychological variables in stories can enhance readers' perceptions of credibility. How these variables measure conversation can be teased out of studies riding the spirit of public-journalism reform efforts of the 1990s, as discussed earlier, especially Carey's (1992) seminal essay on conversation and Anderson, Dardenne and Killenberg's (1996) opus on the topic several years later. A careful reading suggests possible variables that address their 1.) deep concern for the relationship between journalists and citizens, both in how they relate as people and how they orient to each other around news and ideas, and 2.) how trust and credibility bind those relations in a democracy. With conversation defined as collaboration between journalists and citizens in the creation of news, attribution theory allows us to ask: Do readers attribute more

positive qualities to conversational stories than traditional stories?

Social presence

Short, Williams and Christie (1976) introduced social presence 30 years ago, drawing on scholarship that seeks to explain the social phenomena of mediated environments. They defined presence as "the degree of salience of the other person in the interaction and the consequent salience of the interpersonal relationship" (p. 67). Because of the range of research, the concept has no true disciplinary home and numerous definitions (Hamman, 2006). Indeed, researchers have explored everything from social responses to computers (Lee, 2006; Reeves & Nass, 1996) to presence in virtual reality (Biocca, 1997).

This experiment focuses on social-presence research concerning interpersonal communication in an online environment. Personal-communication researchers identify three dimensions of social presence: (1) source attention, defined as the degree to which the source is focused on relative to other cues, (2) co-presence, or the feeling of existing with another person, and (3) mutual awareness or psychological involvement — the feeling of being "known" by another (Gunawardena & Zittle, 1997; Tamborini & Skalski, 2005). This stream of interpersonal communication research defines social presence as the degree of psychological involvement or salience of real people communicating through a mediated environment. This definition is similar to Short, Williams and Christie's (1976) by characterizing social presence as a feature of a medium, not the user. They argued that the social presence of a medium varied according to the number of social cues it offered.

Many current researchers, however, define social presence not as a characteristic

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of the medium but rather how participants use the medium to communicate

(Gunawardena, 1995; Swan, 2002). Consistent with this approach, the present experiment

draws on features of both the medium and user, defining social presence as a measure of

a psychological feeling of distance that can vary depending on the characteristics of the

medium and the message. The focus here is on how journalists can alter the

characteristics of news in order to increase perceptions of social presence. Meyer,

Marchionni and Thorson (2007), for instance, found social presence scores higher in

collaborative than traditional news conditions.

Coorientation

Most research on coorientation, or how people identify with each other based on

shared ideas, has been conducted since the mid-1960s but is an eclectic synthesis of five

older schools of thought dating back to 1902 (McLeod & Chaffee, 1973). Contemporary

research has looked at everything from teenagers' coorientation behavior toward pop

music (Clarke, 1973) to the ways scientists view newspaper reporters based on personal

contacts with them (Ryan, 1982).

In a special edition of *American Behavioral Scientist* devoted to explicating

coorientation, Wackman (1973) identified three coorientation dependent variables useful

in interpersonal research: 1) Agreement, or the similarity between two people's

cognitions about an object; 2) Congruence, or the similarity between one person's

cognition about an object and estimate of another person's cognition about that object; 3)

Accuracy, or the similarity between one person's *estimate* of another's cognitions about

an object and that other person's *actual* cognitions about the object.

Because the journalists in this experiment are not real, and therefore agreement

and accuracy cannot be measured, this study measures congruence to capture participants' awareness and perceptions of the writers of the stories and the writers' ideas about various topics. Using this same definition, Meyer, Marchionni and Thorson (2007) found coorientation scores in collaborative news stories were higher than scores in traditional news stories.

Homophily

Similarity, McPherson, Smith-Lovin and Cook (2001) argue, breeds connection. In their review of dozens of studies on homophily dating back decades, the authors found powerful support for the adage "birds of a feather flock together." Researchers have explored homophily in a wide range of disciplines. Among the definitive studies of homophily in communications is McCroskey, Richmond and Daly's (1975) research that created a scale to measure the concept. They conceptualized homophily as the degree to which interactants are similar to one another, arguing "people's perceptions of other people determine to a major extent whether there is a communication attempt made, and have a major impact on the results of any communication behavior" (McCroskey et al., 1975, p. 323). This experiment uses McCroskey et al.'s (1975) definition to describe a situation in which a reader evaluates a story and its writer based on perceptions of similarity.

Interactivity

Research on interactivity dates back decades (McMillan, 2002; Rafaeli, 1988; Schultz, 2000) but gained prominence with the advent of the Internet and personal computer. Definitions of interactivity vary, some focusing on the interpersonal aspects of online communication (McMillan, 2002; Rafaeli, 1988), for instance, while others on the

mechanical aspects (Steuer, 1992). This experiment relies on Rafaeli's (1988) seminal

explication of interactivity as the interpersonal exchange of messages that create threads,

or strings, that relate back to one another over the course of a transaction (Rafaeli, 1988;

Rafaeli & Sudweeks, 1997). This same definition is the cornerstone for a growing body

of scholarship that explores online participation. Thorson and Rodgers (2006) examined

the research in relation to people's intent to participate in online chats with political

candidates via blogs on candidate Web sites. Hamman (2006), Thorson and Hamman

(2005) and Wise, Hamman and Thorson (2006) also explored participation in various

contexts. Much of the research examines what factors influence a person's decision on

whether, and to what extent, to participate in an online conversation. A key component is

the sociability of a site, as conveyed through the tone and content of ongoing exchanges.

Some members of online communities, or "lurkers," may choose not to participate,

perhaps not to crowd already busy discussions (Nonnecke & Preece, 2000). Thorson and

Hamman (2005) and Wise et al. (2006) found the presence of a moderator in potentially

heated discussions in online political communities can improve people's intentions to

participate.

Stories used in the present conversation experiment were manipulated to reflect

such threads, or message contingency, to capture conversation in the fullest sense. It is

important to note that in Rafaeli's explication of the concept (1988), he argued

conversation is not necessarily the same as interaction. One might consider as

conversation someone responding to something someone else said without further

exchange. As Schultz's (2000) study of *New York Times* staffers' online interactions

with readers demonstrated, that kind of journalist response to a reader is common, though

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hardly transactional as Rafaeli (1988) defines interactivity. This experiment embraces Rafaeli's (1988) distinction on the grounds that journalism as a conversation is more than simply returning a reader's e-mail but fully interacting with the reader as a potential co-creator of news.

Friendliness

A vast body of literature explores how people form impressions of others in conversational interactions. An important aspect is communicator style (Norton, 1983). Garko (1992) notes attraction between people often is more contingent on what they say and do to each other than it is on such personal and psychological factors as attitude similarity. In a series of studies, Norton and Pettegrew (1977) found three variables to be strong predictors of perceived attractiveness in a communicator: attentiveness, relaxed manner and friendliness. This experiment relies on the latter for examining perceptions of journalist interactions with citizens, defining friendliness as a journalist's inviting tone and form of address with ordinary readers as potential collaborators on news stories.

Informality

As with friendliness, informality or casualness distinguish many conversations. Particularly in American English, the common greeting "Hi, how are ya?" perhaps best captures this sense of informality and can be spoken to anyone, regardless of social standing (Althen, 1992; Fairlie, 1983). Indeed, as international scholars often note, English is distinct from many other languages in that it has no verb forms that distinguish the social status of the person you are addressing, suggesting an egalitarianism. The notion that "All men are created equal" leads them to suppose, at least on a theoretical level, that anyone can speak with anyone, without formal introduction or familiarity with

another (Althen, 1992). Appropriately for this experiment, Dicken-Garcia (1998) found in an early look at Internet news that such texts differed tremendously from traditional news because of their causal, "conversational" style. This study explores readers' perceptions of informality at the level of journalist-citizen interactions in Web news stories, defining informality as a casual tone and form of address with ordinary people as potential sources.

Types of news stories

Thorson and Duffy's (2006) media-choice model, which extends uses and gratifications theory to the online environment, identifies several types of news stories from which readers can choose. In their model, these different types are referred to as "voice." Traditional, authoritative news is but one option. Another is collaborative news, such as when journalists report working closely with their audience as sources to cover a story. Perhaps the best example of this is Minnesota Public Radio's public insight journalism initiative, mentioned earlier. According to the station's Web site, tens of thousands of audience members are part of an electronic network the station routinely taps for help on stories. The audience members not only provide relevant experiences and expertise but tips and feedback on stories big and small, and the station telegraphs that information in stories to show the role ordinary people play in news.

But this is just one type of collaboration or, as some might call it, conversation. News organizations throughout the country are experimenting with initiatives that suggest few bounds: MSNBC's online news anchor Brian Williams addressing reader mail live on Webcasts; news organizations' increasing use of crowd-sourcing on Twitter or Facebook to find witnesses during major crises; "Talk to the Journalist" or "Talk to

the Story Source" chat forums advertised on news Web sites. In many instances, the primary goal is for journalists to deepen and improve their reporting by tapping their audiences for their ideas and expertise, basically information-gathering. But you could imagine situations in which story reporting is not the goal. As we know from the interpersonal-communications literature, people converse to establish a personal connection or intimacy; to offer help to another, solicited or unsolicited; to seek such help or understanding; to pass the time or escape life's struggles. Though this experiment compares traditional and collaborative stories in terms of the information-gathering model above, it could help in the creation of a typology of journalistic conversations down the line.

Non-verbal cues

In addition to written cues, researchers identify several non-verbal ways people communicate social information online. "Socioemotional" or "relational functions" of non-verbal behavior can influence person perception and impression formation, as well as the communication of emotions and interpersonal attitudes (Bente, Ruggenberg, Kramer & Eschenburg, 2008).

Among non-verbal material is photographs and video. LaRose and Whitten (2000), for instance, found images can communicate social interest in another. Perhaps contrary to expectations, Noll's (1992) study of the failure of "picturephones" found users sometimes resisted being seen by another, valuing the devices instead for the sheer speed of reaching another. Walther, Slovacek and Tidwell (2001) found photographs in online communication can increase short-term feelings of social presence during a group project, though in the long-term, those same groups might be socially stronger if they rely

on text-only communication in the beginning. Bente et al. (2008), meanwhile, found in a series of studies that mediated communication modes such as video and audio differed significantly from face-to-face communication on person perception and perceived communication quality, among other outcome variables. Their latest findings also show those modes, in addition to computer avatars, differed from text-based experimental conditions.

In sum, the preceding discussion suggests that news stories these days are from homogenous. On the one hand, traditional stories largely convey the media institution's authoritarian voice, written in inverted-pyramid style, with the most important information at the top of the story pyramid and with little concern for establishing a social connection with the audience. Here the conversation essentially is a monologue and not a dialogue — the journalist alone knows what is news and conveys that to the audience, often relying on official sources, such as public officials, to potentially enhance credibility. The audience essentially is a non-entity.

In contrast, conversational-style journalism puts a primacy on socio-psychological connections with ordinary audience members. Rather than talking *at* them, journalists work *with* audience members to more fully capture the truth of a story, whether the subject is state budget cuts or the use of plagiarism software to catch cheaters on college campuses. Here the audience of ordinary people is integral to news-gathering efforts, shifting focus away from so-called elite sources to the experiences and expertise of everyday citizens. In that shift is a profound relationship change between journalist and citizen and one the Internet wrought on a mass scale. If traditional journalism is a lecture, journalism in the Internet era is more like a two-way conversation with citizens,

and an online audience member's perception of that more egalitarian relationship can be captured in conversational features described above: Am I similar to the journalist, both intellectually (coorientation) and demographically (homophily)? Do I sense the humanness of the person behind the news (social presence)? Does this journalist talk *at* ordinary people or interact *with* them (interactivity)? Would I feel comfortable chatting with this journalist (informality)? Does this journalist seem open to ordinary people such as myself (friendliness)? In other words, with both words and images, journalists can convey socio-psychological information that leads to increased perceptions of key conversational features.

In light of the preceding, then, this study predicts the following:

H1a: Collaborative stories will score higher on perceived coorientation than traditional stories in a statistically significant way.

H1b: Collaborative stories will score higher on perceived social presence than traditional stories in a statistically significant way.

H1c: Collaborative stories will score higher on perceived homophily than traditional stories in a statistically significant way.

H1d: Collaborative stories will score higher on perceived interactivity than traditional stories in a statistically significant way.

H1e: Collaborative stories will score higher on perceived friendliness than traditional stories in a statistically significant way.

H1f: Collaborative stories will score higher on perceived informality than traditional stories in a statistically significant way.

Credibility

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Because of the news media's longstanding reliance on the ideal of objectivity and its role in credibility, increasing psychological variables in stories potentially could harm people's trust of the media. Definitions of media-related credibility abound in the literature. Generally, credibility is defined as a multidimensional construct that measures the perceived believability of a message (article), source (journalist or media company) or medium (newspaper, Web site, radio station, etc.). Partly in response to findings that people rated TV news as more credible than newspapers, despite the lack of depth and completeness, Gaziano and McGrath (1986) created a 12-item scale that included questions measuring fairness and community concern and that loaded onto a single factor, credibility. However, Meyer (1988) found their results indicated two factors, believability and community concern, and created a scale reflecting both. Many current credibility measures draw on both scales. This study does too, defining credibility as material produced that the audience views as 1.) factual and accurate (believability dimension) and 2.) concerned mainly about the community's interest (community-affiliation dimension) (Meyer, 1988). This experiment will focus on credibility at the level of the message, or article, and at the level of source (Web site). In light of Newhagen and Nass' (1988) findings that newspaper credibility is most accounted for by the institution, which people view as cold, and research that shows people seek a human presence in news, this study predicts credibility is not just a rational but a social concept.

These social aspects are subtle, if not fragile, though. Meyer, Marchionni & Thorson (2007), for instance, found traditional stories scored higher than collaborative stories on article credibility. However, when coupled with findings that coorientation scores were higher in collaborative than traditional stories, and that coorientation strongly

predicted article credibility in collaborative stories, one might argue that where

coorientation scores are particularly high in collaborative conditions, credibility scores

could surpass those of traditional stories. This would suggest audience members perceive

the journalist tells a more complete story, and hence a more trustworthy one, by allowing

ordinary people into the process. Beyond coorientation, logic suggests that additional

socio-psychological features such as social presence, informality, friendliness and

interactivity together would produce higher credibility scores in collaborative stories than

traditional.

Expertise

Closely related to credibility is the concept of expertise. Source credibility

attracted the attention of social psychologists as a result of the work of Carl Hovland and

his colleagues at Yale University in the 1950s. Hovland, Janis and Kelley (1953)

proposed an approach to attitude and change that includes four determinants: source,

message, recipient and channel. Hovland et al. (1953) suggested a two-dimensional

measure of source credibility, "trustworthiness" and "expertise," arguing a receiver's

tendency to accept a speaker's message would depend on the receiver's perception of

how informed and intelligent the speaker is and how motivated the speaker is to make

valid assertions. Among the indicators of expertise is similarity to receiver in status,

values, interests and needs, or, taken together, social background.

More recently, Perloff (2003) argues expertise, or special skills or know-how, is a

core characteristic of credible communicators. But he notes whether a communicator

should emphasize expertise or similarity to another can be tricky. When an issue concerns

factual matters, for instance, an expert's intellectual knowledge might be more persuasive

than similarity (Perloff, 2003). Journalists must consider this tradeoff carefully because of the media's premium on credibility. Meyer, Marchionni & Thorson (2007), for instance, found readers perceived traditional stories as having greater expertise than other types of news stories, though collaborative was a close second. That same study also found coorientation, or perceived similarity, predicted expertise across several types of news stories, including traditional and collaborative, but explained the *most* variance in collaborative texts. In a sense, then, expertise, like credibility, appears to be a social concept, but perhaps not as much as the latter. Both concepts, though, appear to rely heavily in collaborative contexts on coorientation, or an audience member's perceived similarity with a journalist.

Using Perloff's definition of expertise above, and in light of the previous discussion, this study predicts the following for article type (traditional versus collaborative texts):

H2a: Collaborative stories will score higher on perceived article credibility than traditional stories in a statistically significant way because scores on conversational features will be strong.

H2b: Collaborative stories will score higher on perceived source (Web site) credibility than traditional stories in a statistically significant way because scores on conversational features will be strong.

H2c: Collaborative stories will score higher on perceived expertise than traditional stories in a statistically significant way because scores on conversational features will be strong.

As discussed earlier, images, like texts, can convey a human presence in news.

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Newspapers, for instance, try to foster feelings of personal relationships between news columnists and readers in part by running a photo head shot of the journalist with columns. Given the dynamic possibilities of video on the Internet, this study took image social cues one step further, by including with some texts a one-minute, personal video of a journalist talking about her craft and experiences with the audience. Some of those texts were traditional, some collaborative. So in addition to text potentially eliciting perceptions of conversational features, this study argues the presence of personalized videos will too. Thus, with respect to stories accompanied by personalized videos intended to help enhance perceived relationships between journalists and audience members:

H3a: Stories with personalized videos in both article conditions will score higher on coorientation than those without in a statistically significant way.

H3b: Stories with personalized videos in both article conditions will score higher on social presence than those without videos in a statistically significant way.

H3c: Stories with personalized videos in both article conditions will score higher on homophily than those without videos in a statistically significant way.

H3d: Stories with personalized videos in both article conditions will score higher on interactivity than those without videos in a statistically significant way.

H3e: Stories with personalized videos in both article conditions will score higher on friendliness than those without videos in a statistically significant way.

H3f: Stories with personalized videos in both article conditions will score higher on informality than those without videos in a statistically significant way.

H3g: Collaborative stories with personalized videos will score higher on each of

the above conversational variables than any other condition.

With respect to readers' perceptions of credibility and expertise in stories containing personalized videos, this study argues that the presence of video enhances the perception of a relationship between journalist and audience member. When video is combined with any or all of the conversational features (coorientation, homophily, social presence, interactivity and informality) in the experimental conditions, credibility and expertise scores do well. Thus:

H4a: Stories with personalized videos in both article conditions will score higher than those without videos on article credibility in a statistically significant way.

H4b: Stories with personalized videos in both article conditions will score higher than those without videos on source credibility in a statistically significant way.

H4c: Stories with personalized videos in both article conditions will score higher on expertise than those without videos in a statistically significant way.

H4d: Collaborative stories with personalized videos will score the highest across all conditions on perceived article credibility.

 H4e: Collaborative stories with personalized videos will score the highest across all conditions on perceived source credibility.

H4f: Collaborative stories with personalized videos will score the highest across all conditions on perceived expertise.

With respect to how well participants like the story packages:

H5a: Collaborative stories will score higher than traditional stories on perceived story liking.

H5b: Stories with personalized videos will score higher than those without videos

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on perceived story liking.

H5c: Collaborative stories with personalized videos will score the highest across conditions on perceived story liking.

Methods

This study was an experiment because it offered the most control over variables and the greatest opportunity to see causal connections in journalism as a conversation, which is largely missing from the literature. While scholars obviously cannot generalize to a population of people from an experiment, they *can* generalize to relationships among variables (Shapiro, 2002) and, hence, to theorizing on conversational journalism. This is true even of convenience samples of students (Lang, 1996), the basis of many mass-communication experiments.

Design

This study used a 2 (traditional vs. collaborative article type) by 2 (visual vs. no visual) by 4 (different story topics) within-subjects design. Each participant read and answered questions about stimulus materials in a freeonline.com survey instrument across all four conditions for both factors: four brief stories per person, two collaborative and two traditional, with a video accompanying one story in each article-type condition. As many scholars point out, the advantages of the within-subjects design are many: Each participant serves as his or her own control, reducing error variance and minimizing sample sizes needed for potentially significant effects (Calfee, 1985, pp. 205-243; Campbell & Stanley, 1963). These advantages generally outweigh a key potential confound: participant fatigue from repeated exposures. To minimize fatigue, though, this study limited the number of stories and kept them relatively brief, such that the

participant was in the lab for no more than 30 minutes (see details below).

Stimulus materials, variables measured

Participants answered the same block of questions after each of the four articles. The original articles came from news Web sites but were manipulated to make them apply to University of Missouri-Columbia (MU) and to meet the experimental conditions. They were the same articles used in two earlier experiments (Marchionni, Meyer & Thorson, 2008; Meyer, Marchionni & Thorson, 2007) to minimize story variance as an explanation for findings in the present study. The topics were of potential interest to college students: college drinking behavior, job prospects upon graduation, steroids use in college sports and professors' use of plagiarism tools to catch cheaters. All names and media identifiers in the stories were changed, but the frames, such as mastheads, came from real news Web sites in Missouri to help legitimize the articles. Each article contained roughly 300 words. This study used traditional and collaborative versions of the above topics such that participants had equal opportunity to read each type of article by topic, avoiding a single-message design (Reeves & Geiger, 1994). Those topics were rotated and balanced to minimize potential design-order effects. This produced four versions of the study with various combinations of those stories and videos in different orders.

Media-effects research offers no firm guideline on how many messages or message types each participant should evaluate in each condition. But this experiment avoided use of single messages because of the improbability that any one message varies only on the characteristic under consideration, (Reeves & Geiger, 1994), in this case article type and personalized video. Too many messages, though, can create respondent

fatigue and jeopardize findings. In the case of broadcast messages, for instance, "people may begin to respond unreliably to television after 60 minutes of laboratory viewing" (Reeves & Geiger, 1994, p. 168). As a guide, this study sought to stay within that 60-minute timeframe. Participants were randomly assigned to one of the four versions of the study via a small card bearing the Web address of one survey, each of which hosted on student server space at the university. As mentioned earlier, the stories in each version of the study appeared in one of four random orders to ensure the order in which they read the stories did not prejudice their responses. Question orders after each story also were randomized to minimize pattern-response bias.

Independent variables

Article type (discrete/two levels/manipulated)

The traditional news condition received the least manipulation because its stories came from actual news Web sites. Traditional stories contained no language about the writer, the writer's connection with readers or the variables that theoretically index conversation: coorientation, social presence, homophily, interactivity, informality and friendliness. Those stories upheld the standards and format of traditional inverted-pyramid news stories, conveying objectivity, balance and authority, and largely relied on quotes from official sources, such as government leaders or bureaucrats. (See Attachments 1-4 for stimulus materials.)

The collaborative condition received the most manipulation. The stories included more citizen quotes than traditional stories, as well as information both in the body of the story and in a box atop the story that indicated the fictional reporter was talking to citizens in the community to gather information for the story. Each story itself also

included several references to readers who provided information in the reporting via threads of e-mail exchanges or chat-forum conversations with the writer, to meet Rafaeli's (1988) interactivity definition. The point of view of the story essentially was that of students impacted and included minimal references to official sources, such as school officials, agency leaders, and so forth. Each story in this condition ended with a tagline on how to reach the reporter by e-mail. (See Attachments 5-8 for stimulus materials.)

Personalized (discrete/two levels/manipulated)

In the two non-video conditions, stories contained only a byline and no video of the fictional reporter. In the two video conditions, a 1-minute biographical video preceded the story in the online survey document. A note directed the participant to first view the video then read a story by the reporter featured in that video. The fictional reporter was depicted as smiling at the reader and talking about her journalism interests, education and personal background. The reporters were roughly the same age as the participants in order to enhance feelings of presence and similarity in keeping with text-based conversational social cues in the story. All videos featured students of the same gender and race, in this case young white women, to control for such demographic differences in the study (see videos at the following links on YouTube: **Liz**, at http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0YRfb_qtgAE; **Ashley**, at http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fnZIXm9dGqQ; **Jenn**, at http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EnSX3oy-O9; and **Pat**, at http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QSv0Y-wfTVg.)

This study used only one video in each article-type condition, and each video was

randomly rotated through conditions, with four possible videos of different people. Avoiding a single-message design provided greater confidence that participants responded to the *presence of a video* with a story and not the presence of *one particular video*.

Dependent variables

All survey questions about each story were Likert-style variables with five options, from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5). Some items had negative wording to minimize potential pattern-response bias.

Conversation

The following six variables theoretically indexed conversation as a manipulation check on the IVs. In other words, they revealed whether participants viewed collaborative stories and those containing personalized videos as more conversational than traditional stories and those without videos.

Those six conversational variables:

1. Coorientation (continuous)

The scale to measure coorientation was based on conceptual definitions in the literature, particularly Wackman's (1973): "I felt like this reporter is a person kind of like me," "I understand the story's issue in the same way the reporter does," "I see myself as quite different from this reporter," "I think this reporter has my interests at heart" and "I would find it quite difficult to talk with this reporter on this issue."

2. Social presence (continuous)

This variable was measured using a scale developed by Tamborini and Skalski (2005) and adapted to the current study to apply to a reader-reporter relationship: "I felt

like I got to know the reporter," "At times, I felt like the reporter was in the room with me" and "I thought of the reporter while reading the article."

3. *Homophily (continuous)*

This study relied on McCroskey, Richmond and Daly's (1975) scale to measure homophily but adapted it for a five-point instrument. The questions asked the subject to indicate his or her feelings about the story writer on the following eight issues: "This reporter doesn't think like me," "This reporter is from a social class similar to mine," "This reporter behaves like me," "This reporter is of an economic situation different from mine," "This reporter is similar to me," "This reporter's status is like mine," "This reporter is unlike me" and "This reporter's background is different from mine."

4. *Interactivity (continuous)*

A scale was developed for this study with items based on Rafaeli's conceptual definition of interactivity as an iterative process. "There wasn't much interaction between the reporter and ordinary-people sources in the story," "This reporter seems to have engaged ordinary people to get the story" and "This story resulted from interactions between the journalist and ordinary people."

5. *Friendliness* (continuous)

A scale was developed for this study based on items in the literature, particularly Garko's (1992): "This journalist seems friendly," "This journalist has an open attitude toward people," "This journalist seems like a people person" and "This journalist seems to have an unfavorable attitude toward people."

6. *Informality* (continuous)

This scale also was created for this study based on conceptual definitions in the

literature, particularly Althen's (1992): "The language of the story is informal," "The reporter is speaking casually" and "The language of the story sounds formal."

The following three variables essentially tested how credible and expert participants perceived the media messages.

Article credibility (continuous)

This measure relied on four questions modified from Gaziano and McGrath's (1986) study: "I think the article is accurate," "I believe what I read in the article," "I can trust what I read here" and "I'm not sure the article told the whole truth."

Source credibility (continuous)

This measure for Web site credibility relied in part on the article-credibility scale that Hamman (2006) used. The four questions: "I think the articles on this Web site are accurate," "I don't think I'd trust what I read on this Web site," "I can rely on this site" and "I probably would believe most articles I read on this site."

Expertise (continuous)

This variable consisted of a trio of items based on Perloff (2003): "This reporter sounds like an expert on this topic," "The reporter sounds like she knows what she's talking about" and "The reporter has done her homework on this story."

Story liking (continuous)

Given the story differences outlined above, this study asked the following questions related to how well participants liked the stories: "Overall, I liked this story," "I would read a story like this again" and "Reading this story was enjoyable."

Control variable

Topic interest (continuous)

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This study used topics that might be of interest to college students, but because interest can vary, answers to the following items served as a control: "The topic is interesting to me," "I found this topic boring," "The topic is relevant to my life."

Manipulation checks

Each participant answered four "yes/no" questions at the end of each story package, again in random order to minimize pattern-response bias, to determine whether they perceived the different experimental conditions as planned. This provided a kind of face validity. In other words, did they correctly view the collaborative stories with or without videos as different from the other conditions? Items for those manipulation checks: "There was a video with this story," "The journalist talked to each person in the story," "The journalist collaborated with ordinary people on the story" and "There was a video that introduced the journalist to the reader."

At end of the entire study, the survey asked a two-part question to determine if participants knew what the study was testing, which could jeopardize findings. The first "yes/no" question part: "Do you think you have an idea what this study was about?" If they answered "yes," the survey instructed participants to briefly type out what that might be. (Go to web.missouri.edu/~dmm989/1 to see sample survey.)

Participants, sample size

This study relied on a convenience sample of random students from a large-lecture course on strategic communications research methods in MU's journalism school. These students were targeted because news majors might be inclined to automatically view traditional stories as more credible and expert in light of their training. Participants received credit toward fulfilling a course requirement that they participate in at least three

campus studies. (A handful of doctoral students in the journalism school also participated for class credit). More females participated in the study than males (62.1 percent versus 37.9 percent), perhaps because strategic-communications classes tend to skew female. Other sample demographics: white (93.9 percent), Asian (3 percent) and Hispanic (2 percent); juniors (81.8 percent), seniors (7.6 percent) and graduate students (10.6 percent); native U.S. citizens (93.9 percent) and non-natives (6.1 percent).

Precise estimates of sample size depend on the experimental power the researcher seeks (Calfee, 1985, pp. 138-172). In the absence of literature that measures journalism-as-a-conversation to use as a guide, this study relied in part on the program gPower to determine appropriate sample size a priori for a within-subjects design. Because of confusion in the literature about what the software program means by "number of groups" and "repetitions," two test analyses were conducted, both using relatively conservative parameter estimates of .80 power, .80 correlation and .10 effect size. In the first run, group number was set at "1" to represent one large, within-measure group and repetitions at "4" to reflect the total number of conditions, and the analysis recommended a total sample size of 56. Groups was then set at "2" to represent two major factors tested (article type and video) and repetitions at "2" to reflect these same factors, and the program recommended total sample size of 82. Splitting the difference between the two suggested a total sample size of roughly 65-70. The study ended up with a total of 66 participants.

Lab procedures

The study ran in a reserved computer lab in the J-School. When students arrived, they received consent forms that explained the study and indicated their answers to

survey questions in the experiment would be anonymous. Though the university's

Institutional Review Board granted exempt status in the study and did not require consent

forms, students received forms anyway to ensure they understood the research. After

students turned in the form, they received a card with a Web site address on it

corresponding to one of the four different versions of the study, and they simply went to

the Web page to begin the study, providing randomization necessary for a controlled

experiment (Calfee, 1985, 138-172). Based on experiments of similar design and type

and number of stimuli (Marchionni, Meyer & Thorson, 2008; Meyer, Marchionni &

Thorson, 2007), this study anticipated each participant would need roughly 30-45

minutes to complete the study. That turned out to be correct.

Statistical analyses

It appeared about a half dozen participants' data largely were missing because of

computer crashes in the lab that day of the study. Their answers were eliminated entirely

from the study, leaving complete answers for 66 participants. The next check: answers to

the final two-part manipulation question at the end of the study. While many determined

the study was trying to understand how different types of stories affect perceptions of

credibility, none of the answers suggested eliminating any participants' data. In general,

they also perceived the different experimental conditions, correctly answering questions

related to the video conditions 81 percent of the time and questions related to story

differences 62 percent of the time.

Using SPSS, answers to variable items negatively worded were recoded. To

potentially reduce the total number of items, this study relied on factor analysis, via

principal-components extraction, of items measuring each of the study's 11 variables,

using varimax rotation to aid interpretability (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007). Only factor loadings greater than .40 were analyzed, in keeping with Tabachnick and Fidell's (2007) recommendations, among others. The factor analyses provided important information about how well the items measured the latent constructs in the study in each experimental condition, and in general, most of those items loaded well and in the manner expected. In the case of coorientation and homophily, though, many items between them loaded together across conditions while others loaded weakly and/or on separate factors. So this study used a new, single variable from items with the strongest factor loadings for subsequent analyses. Combining the variables made sense because each essentially measures two types of perceived similarity, with coorientation related more to intellectual similarity and homophily related more to demographic likeness. The items that remained in the study: "I felt like this reporter is a person kind of like me," "I understand the story's issue in the same way the reporter does," "I see myself as quite different from this reporter," "I would find it quite difficult to talk with this reporter on this issue," "This reporter doesn't think like me," "This reporter behaves like me," "This reporter is similar to me," "This reporter's status is like mine," "This reporter is unlike me" and "This reporter's background is different from mine." Also, one item on the friendliness variable consistently loaded on separate factors in each condition, "This journalist seems to have an unfavorable attitude toward people," so it came out.

Cronbach's alpha reliability tests then showed how well the items consistently measured their respective variable. Each variable had strong alphas (see Table 1), most in the range of .85-.99, well above the acceptable cutoff of .70 (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007). This provided confidence in the measures used to test differences in conditions. A

check on baseline dataset assumptions via frequencies, PP-plot scattergrams and histograms revealed variables also largely met the following guidelines: skewness/kurtosis of no more than +/- 3.0 from the mean; no missing scores or outliers; means that vary in each condition; standard deviations of less than 1.0; and relatively small standard-error-of-mean scores, indicating the likelihood of finding those means in the population. The same held for checks on linearity (no significant breaks in scores on scatterplot regression line), normality (scores falling roughly on line) and homoskedacticity (scores not on the line roughly equal above and below it. In general, there were no major problems with variables in the dataset, though skew/kurtosis was somewhat high for some variables. The problem did not appear serious enough, though, to require data transformation.

This study proceeded to a one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) to check differences on the control variable "topic interest" for each of the four stories across conditions. Though participants were expected to find the different story topics equally interesting, in other words no statistically significant differences, quite the opposite occurred. Mean topic interest across conditions on a scale of 1-5 with 5 indicating strong interest was 3.2 for the steroids story, 3.8 for plagiarism, 3.9 for college drinking and 4.3 for the job-market story ($F_{3,260} = 26.58$, p = .00, partial-eta squared of .24, power of 1.0). This meant addressing topic interest, at four levels, as a new independent variable in the study, complicating subsequent analyses. The high rating for the jobs story is particularly intriguing. This study ran in fall 2008 as news spread around the world of the United States' economic collapse and deepening recession, brought on largely by the sub-prime mortgage crisis. Concern about the economy may explain participants' intense interest in

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the jobs story.

Because of the unusually low score for the steroids story and the preponderance of females in the study, an obvious question arose: Might some topic differences be related to participants' gender, with females potentially bringing down scores for the sports story, a traditional male bastion? A one-way ANOVA for all dependent variables across conditions revealed differences on Web credibility ($F_{1,262} = 4.02$, $p = .05$, partial-eta squared of .02, power of .52) and marginal differences on several other variables. Also, within each story topic, Bonferroni post-hoc comparisons for each variable in each condition revealed gender differences not only for the steroids story but others as well, further complicating the picture. Given this study's focus was not on potential demographic differences or conversational differences by topic, the question of gender and topic interest was put aside for later study. No other variables required controlling.

Proceeding to hypothesis tests, this study relied on a series of one-way analyses of co-variance (ANCOVA) and Bonferroni post-hoc comparison tests across all story topics in all conditions, controlling for gender and topic interest.

Chapter 5: Results from Experiment 1

Together, ANCOVAs and regressions generally offered strong support for the variables used to measure conversation, suggesting the operationalization worked, and that conversation is a real news phenomenon. However, participants did not perceive conversational story conditions (collaborative stories with or without personalized videos) as more credible, expert or likable than the other conditions as predicted. Indeed, with a few exceptions, participants perceived all stories in all conditions for all topics roughly the same on these outcome measures. Hypotheses suggested conversational conditions would score higher on these measures because they likely would have significantly higher scores on all of the conversation indices, or coorientation, homophily, social presence, interactivity, friendliness and informality. That was not the case. Where those individual variables were operant in conversational story conditions, though, regressions showed they could be highly predictive of credibility and expertise, sometimes powerfully so.

The ANCOVAs

The first set of hypotheses predicted collaborative story texts would score higher on each of the six conversation variables than traditional texts (see Table 2 below for guide to all hypotheses with respective tables and page numbers).

After eliminating gender and topic interest as influences, one-way ANCOVAs (Table 3 for omnibus tests) and Bonferroni post-hoc tests (Tables 4A-4I) showed support for this on only two variables. (Note, because factor analyses suggested combining items for coorientation and homophily into one variable, hypotheses for both variables are addressed together. Also, all values are reported to the nearest hundredth place.)

Table 2

	Experiment 1 hypotheses	Table(s)	Page
H1a	4A	135
H1b	4B	136
H1c	4A	135
H1d	4C	136
H1e	4E	137
H1f	4D	137
H2a	4F	142
H2b	4G	143
H2c	4H	143
H3a	4A	135
H3b	4B	136
H3c	4A	135
H3d	4C	136
H3e	4E	137
H3f	4D	137
H3g	4A-3E	135-137
H4a	4F	138
H4b	4G	138
H4c	4H	139
H4d	4F	138
H4e	4G	138
H4f	4H	139
H5a	4I	139
H5b	4I	139
H5c	4I	139

Specifically, post-hoc comparisons showed no support for **H1a** and **H1c**:

Collaborative stories without videos will score higher on perceived coorientation and

homophily than traditional stories. The same was true of social presence, **H1b**, meaning

readers did not sense the journalist behind the news any differently across story types, as

well as friendliness, **H1e,** sensing differences in the journalist's openness to readers.

Scores for interactivity, on the other hand, showed support for **H1d** between collaborative

stories (M = 3.64) and traditional stories (M = 2.90) at p = .00. Likewise, scores for the

variable informality were higher for collaborative stories (M = 3.60) than for traditional

ones (M = 3.10) at p = .00, showing support for **H1f**.

The next set of hypotheses did not fare well. Those predicted that collaborative

texts would score higher than traditional ones on perceived article credibility, Web site (source) credibility and expertise. That was not case, meaning the data did not support **H2a**, **H2b** or **H2c**.

The following hypotheses compared the impact of videos, predicting that videos in collaborative and traditional stories would produce higher scores on the conversation variables than stories without videos. In general, the data supported or partially supported the hypotheses, with the exception of coorientation/homophily, **H3a/H3c**: On those two variables, the data offered no support. On the variable social presence, though, collaborative stories with videos (M = 2.97) scored higher than collaborative stories without videos (M = 2.32) at p = .00. So, too, did traditional stories with videos (M = 2.96) versus traditional stories without videos (M = 2.12) at p = .00, showing strong support for **H3b**.

The remaining conversation variables found no support or partial support for video predictions, either for collaborative or traditional stories. On the variable interactivity, **H3d**, the data showed no differences in video conditions. Meanwhile, **H3e**, which addressed friendliness, found support for *either* collaborative or traditional texts. That is, collaborative stories with videos (M = 3.46) scored higher than their non-video counterparts (M = 3.46) at p = .00, while traditional stories with video (M = 3.83) scored higher than their non-video counterparts (M = 3.42) at p = .00. **H3f**, which addressed informality, found no support. And for the final hypothesis in this set, **H3g**, which predicted collaborative stories with videos would score higher than the other three conditions on each of the conversation variables, the data showed no support, though interactivity, friendliness and informality came close, each showing differences in two

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conditions.

The next group of hypotheses predicted the presence of videos would enhance perceptions of credibility and expertise in various conditions, though this turned out not to be case. That is, **H4a**, **H4b** and **H4c** incorrectly predicted personalized videos in both article conditions would score higher than those without, respectively on article credibility, Web credibility and expertise. And much like those three hypotheses, **H4d**, **H4e** and **H4f** incorrectly predicted that collaborative stories with videos would score the highest across conditions on article credibility, Web credibility and expertise.

The final set of predictions for this study, **H5a, H5b,** and **H5c**, addressed how well participants simply liked certain story packages. Those hypotheses also incorrectly predicted, respectively, that participants would like collaborative stories without videos more than traditional stories without videos; like stories with videos better than those without; and like collaborative stories with videos best of all.

The regressions

A series of hierarchical linear regressions (Tables 5-8) helped clarify why predictions for credibility, expertise and liking fared so poorly for collaborative stories, with or without videos. Hypotheses suggested those conditions would score higher on conversational variables than other conditions and, therefore, score higher on outcome measures of credibility, expertise and liking. Instead, ANCOVAs showed sometimes mixed results for the presence of conversational variables in those conditions, suggesting perhaps the story packages themselves did not elicit the responses sought, at least when it came to having all variables in good proportion. Linear regressions in each condition that examined the impact of those conversational variables on credibility measures, expertise

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and liking offered support for this.

After controlling for story-topic interest and demographic variables of gender, race, age, grade and nationality, none of the conversation variables predicted article credibility, Web site credibility or expertise in traditional stories, with or without videos, as expected.

In the case of perceived article credibility, a different variable in each of the other three conditions predicted the measure: interactivity for traditional stories with videos (β = .31, p < .05); friendliness for collaborative stories without videos (β = .51, p < .05); and coorientation/homophily for collaborative stories with videos (β = .57, p < .01).

In the case of perceived Web site (source) credibility, different conversational variables became operant, though some in the opposite manner predicted: social presence marginally so for traditional stories with videos (β = .29, p = .06); coorientation/homophily (β = .40, p < .01), social presence (β = -.25, p < .05) and informality (β = -.25, p = < .05) for collaborative stories without videos; and coorientation/homophily (β = .58, p < .01) and informality (β = -.24, p <. 05) for collaborative stories with videos.

In the case of perceived expertise, several conversational variables were operant or marginally operant and some in the opposite manner predicted: coorientation/homophily (β = .29, p < .05) and interactivity (β = .24, p = .06) for traditional stories without videos; friendliness (β = . 30, p = .06) and informality (β = -.37, p < .01) for collaborative stories without videos; and coorientation/homophily (β = .57, p < .01) and interactivity (β = .23, p < .05) for collaborative stories with videos.

Finally, the greatest predictor across all four conditions for how much participants liked story packages was topic interest, though several conversational variables also were strong predictors in some conditions: topic interest ($\beta = .45$, $p < .01$) and friendliness ($\beta = .30$, $p < .05$) for traditional stories without videos; topic interest ($\beta = .38$, $p < .01$) for traditional stories with videos; topic interest ($\beta = .53$, $p < .01$), friendliness ($\beta = .31$, $p < .01$) and interactivity ($\beta = .23$, $p < .01$) for collaborative stories without videos; and topic interest ($\beta = .48$, $p < .01$) and coorientation/homophily ($\beta = .36$, $p < .01$) for collaborative stories with videos.

Chapter 6: Discussion of Results from Experiment 1

Using attribution theory, this experiment sought to understand whether news audiences attribute more conversational features to collaborative stories than traditional, and, hence, more positive qualities such as credibility and authority. Statistical analyses suggest that it depends somewhat on how you slice the data. It also depends on the particular story topic in question and even on the gender of the audience members and perhaps the journalists to whom they may or may not relate. In other words, journalism-as-a-conversation appears to be a real phenomenon in the perception of news audiences, but it is also complex and nuanced. Only significantly more research will provide a clearer picture.

That said, this experiment offers some strong guideposts, the first being never underestimate the importance of a person's sheer interest in a news topic on media effects. It seems only logical. We take great care as scholars to create or manipulate messages to test particular phenomena, but as Reeves and Geiger (1994) reminds us, any one media message is infinitely describable, and a key characteristic of that message is its subject matter. Though too complicated to report here, preliminary ANCOVAs separated out for each story topic revealed much statistical significance contained in participants' sheer interest in a subject matter, particularly for coorientation/homophily and friendliness.

The real-world context in which an audience member reads that content matters, too. In this experiment, the swirl of anxious news stories surrounding the collapse of the American economy at the time of the study likely increased participants' interest in the job-market story. Such a "history effect" can have a profound impact on research studies,

as scholars found shortly after the JFK assassination (Gravetter & Forzano, 2009), complicating results because of the unprecedented toll it took on the American psyche in modern times. Such may be the case with the current economic recession, but only a meta-analysis of studies from this period likely could answer that question. Beyond the intrusion of real-world events on research, a person's gender, shaped by biological predispositions and socialization, may also exert itself in unexpected ways. This initially appeared to be the case with this experiment's steroids study, and a closer looked supported that suspicion. But gender also appeared to influence other variables in various story contexts and experimental conditions. Lesson learned: Topic and gender might matter, at least when it comes to testing conversational journalism.

Beginning with the first set of hypotheses, this study predicted readers would perceive conversational features moreso in collaborative story texts than in traditional texts.   The data modestly supported this claim, but only for some features. Perhaps not surprisingly, social presence, or the sense of the journalist behind the news, fared poorly compared with video conditions, to be discussed shortly. More than words on a page, actually *seeing* a journalist appears to help convey that person's humanness. Similarly, cooriention/homophily, or the perception of similarity with another, showed no differences in comparisons of story texts, nor did friendliness, suggesting that to know whether a journalist is like you and accessible requires more than just textual hints. Where collaborative texts fared best is in conveying an informal tone and, most of all, interactivity with audience members, the latter literally conveyed in editor's notes atop stories, as well as within stories. Telling readers you reached out to the public in reporting a story successfully conveys community interaction.

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The next set of hypotheses tackled the more difficult hurdles of credibility and expertise, predicting that readers would view collaborative texts as more credible and expert because they would have more conversational features. The answer, as we know, was "no," though that might be because readers did not perceive all of those six conversational features as present in the collaborative texts. That alone might be a steep hurdle, suggesting once again that manipulating texts to clearly convey conversational features is more difficult than it appears when just relying on words.

Several other factors also might be at play. This study avoided using news majors because their classic journalism training could predispose them to view traditional news as more credible and expert than conversational news. Though these 20-somethings might privately be inclined to embrace more conversational-style news on the Internet, their coursework has yet to fully embrace such changes. The same might also be true of the strategic-communications majors recruited for this study, given they are studying at the same journalism school. Depth interviews with some of those recruits might provide answers in the months ahead. The credibility results discussed so far might also be a glass half-empty argument. The data show these young participants viewed conversational-style stories *as* credible as traditional AP-style stories. That alone might suggest a sea change is underway in how the Internet Generation perceives news. Maybe the results are more akin to a glass half-full.

The next few sets of hypotheses on the impact of videos shed a bit more light. The first set predicted both traditional and collaborative stories accompanied by personal videos of journalists would score higher on the six conversational variables than their counterparts without videos. That was the case with only two conversational variables,

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social presence and friendliness, suggesting that journalists can best convey their humanness and a friendly openness with both types of story texts when a video accompanies them. But the more ambitious prediction that collaborative stories with videos would outscore *all* other types of stories on conversational variables also offered insights. Data supported findings for friendliness, interactivity and informality in most conditions. At a minimum, this suggests that collaborative texts with videos can be a formidable combination in conversational journalism. In other words, to practice conversational journalism involves many criteria, as scores on the variables show, but adding video seems to be key. That combination did not, however, lead to higher scores on credibility and expertise as predicted, at least on the surface. Again, the prediction assumed that collaborative stories with videos also would have high scores on all six conversational variables, and as we already know, that did not happen.

The final set of predictions addressed story topic interest and the dependent variable, liking. As we already know, participants did not equally like all story topics. Also not supported were predictions on participants liking collaborative stories without videos better than traditional stories without videos; liking stories with videos better than those without; and liking collaborative stories with videos better than all other story packages. The linear regressions help shed light on these and the other findings. In short, they suggest that unless a researcher is confident in the presence of key conversational features in conversational-style messages, such as coorientation/homophily and interactivity, predicting greater perceptions of credibility, expertise and liking may be misguided. The final experiment of this dissertation tried to tease apart the dynamics of those specific features in different types of conversational journalism, to be discussed

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shortly. But Experiment 1 suggests that where those features are strong and/or in good proportion, credibility and expertise, at least, might follow.

Indeed, regressions generally showed that as conditions became more conversational — first adding video to traditional texts, then altering the text to be more conversational, then eventually adding video to that — the conversational variables became operant and predictive of credibility and expertise in the manner expected, in some cases with sizable R-squared values for individual variables. For instance, coorientation/homophily alone accounted for 49 percent of variance in predicting article credibility in collaborative stories with videos. That variable proved to one of the strongest predictors of both types of credibility and expertise in the more conversational conditions, meaning the extent to which participants perceived themselves as similar to the journalist predicted how much they trusted stories or found them expert. This is almost commonsensical. Many people do not automatically trust strangers. Getting to know a stranger helps. And ultimately realizing that person is *similar* to you helps build trust, as Perloff (2003) and others found over and over again. While this study did not set out to make an argument for newsroom diversity, the data suggest a diversity of journalists whom various citizens might relate to is key to building audience trust.

The proportion of conversational features in stories also is key. The regressions indicated participants recoiled in response to some of those conversational features when evaluating whether a story is credible and expert. This was the case with informality for both Web site credibility and expertise, but only for collaborative stories without videos. Informality also proved problematic for Web credibility in the most conversational condition, collaborative stories with videos. It is as though both of these conversational

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conditions crossed an invisible line with participants to the detriment of trust. It suggests that an informal speaking and writing tone might trigger the perception that the story is more conversational but not necessarily more credible. In addition, the perception of the human behind the news, or social presence, hurt Web credibility in collaborative stories without videos. In other words, if the text appeared to strain to reveal the humanness of the journalist, readers may be suspicious of the organization behind that journalist. Perhaps they wonder if the organization is trying to manipulate them by making the journalist seem like an ordinary person. This is a cynical conclusion but one not entirely inappropriate for a generation heavily targeted by Madison Avenue since childhood. They may have developed shields to the constant blitz of marketing campaigns and advertisements aimed at getting them to buy goods they may not need (Goodman & Dretzin, 2001), or in this study's case, news organizations that present journalists as real people just like them.

On the outcome variable liking, meanwhile, regression scores on conversational variables varied across all four conditions, showing just about any conversational variable could be operant when it came to how much a participant liked a story package. This included traditional stories without videos, the least conversational condition. But the predictor of liking with the largest beta coefficients in all conditions was not a conversation variable but rather this experiment's control variable: topic interest. In other words, whether participants liked a story or story-video package depended most on whether they simply found the story topic interesting. The findings support what any basic psychology textbook might instruct: People make cognitive, or rational, judgments differently from affective, or emotional, ones, depending on the context. This experiment

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suggests that participants may have used more critical, rational evaluations in judging

credibility and expertise while using affective assessments to judge how well they simply

liked or enjoyed stories.

Chapter 7: Online News Experiment 2 — Testing Three Types of Conversation

We are seeing a technological explosion these days in potential tools for conversational journalism, or citizen-journalist collaboration, including the citizen news update/crowdsourcing site Twitter and the citizen news content-creation site Wikinews. National Public Radio, for instance, recently reported on a *St. Paul Pioneer Press* columnist who routinely uses Twitter as a broadcast and information-gathering tool, or for "microreporting" (Garfield, 2008). The journalism training school The Poynter Institute is closely following journalists' increasing use of this tool (Tenore, 2007; Tenore, 2008), as well as the social networking site Facebook (Angelotti, 2008). Journalists turned to the latter for the first time in great numbers while covering the Virgina Tech shooting spree in April 2007 (Angelotti, 2008).

For Experiment 2, it seemed logical to compare these types of conversational journalism from the real world on measures of credibility, expertise and liking. In addition to Twitter and Wikinews was Thorson and Duffy's (2006) collaborative news approach from the first experiment.

This second experiment was exploratory in one key way: In the relative absence of empirical literature on conversational journalism, much less types of this journalism, this study sought to explore to what extent various types might differ on the DVs. The theoretical groundwork for examining this question rests in the literature from Experiment 1, namely that people seek a human presence in the news and judge credibility accordingly (Newhagen & Nass, 1988), treat various electronic media as though they were human (Reeves & Nass, 1996) and respond positively in terms of credibility to the use of ordinary citizens such as themselves in news stories (Hamman,

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2006; Marchionni, Meyer & Thorson, 2008; Meyer, Marchionni & Thorson, 2007). In keeping with Experiment 1, this study still used attribution theory to examine whether readers attribute more positive qualities to some conversational stories than others, while defining conversation as the collaboration between citizens and journalists on the creation of news stories (see pages 35-40 for conceptual definitions of the same variables). Each story type looked at the various ways professional journalists collaborate with citizens on news stories in the broadest sense of the word. But in the case of Wikinews, the journalist essentially is absent, save for two references to mainstream news stories, because the collaboration is between private citizens pulling together information for an article.

Methods

Design: Again to minimize sample size needed and error variance as Calfee (1985) instructs, this study used a within-subjects design. This was a single-factor analysis, with the lone IV being story type at three levels and the same DVs of conversational variables, article credibility, source credibility and expertise from Experiment 1. No videos accompanied stories this time in order to better flesh out textual cues.

Stimulus materials, variables measured

To minimize story variance in findings, this study used three stories with the highest means from Experiment 1. Those stories: job prospects upon graduation, college plagiarism tools to catch cheaters and college drinking. Thus, for each topic, this study had a Twitter, Wikinews and collaborative version, for a total of nine stories. As with Experiment 1, stories were roughly equal in length, or about 300 words. In the case of

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Twitter, the exchange between journalist and fellow Twitterers did not exceed 100 words to minimize participant fatigue after reading both the exchange and short news story that arose from it. Finally, in the event participants were unfamiliar with these types of news venues, a brief note describing each ran at the beginning of each story in the Web survey.

This study again balanced topics and conditions to minimize potential design-order effects. This produced three versions of the online study with various combinations of those stories in different orders. As such, participants had equal opportunity to read each type of article by topic, meaning the study avoided a single-message design (Reeves & Geiger, 1994).

Article type (discrete/three levels/manipulated)

Collaborative: Thorson and Duffy's (2006) collaborative news story appeared more similar to a traditional inverted-pyramid style news story than stories in other conditions, with a masthead from a local Missouri newspaper. The stimulus materials included more citizen quotes than traditional stories, though, as well as information both in the body of the story and in a box atop the story that indicates the fictional reporter was talking to many citizens in the community to gather information for the story. (See Attachments 9-11 for stimulus materials.)

Twitter: Launched in October, 2006, the micro-blogging tool Twitter came into its own as a site where people could quickly update each other on where they were, what was going on and other matters in short posts distributed by instant messages, mobile phones, e-mail or the Web (Java, Song, Finin & Tseng, 2007). Maximum number of characters allowed for any "tweet" is 140, hence its popularity as a kind of headline service, or as news "haiku." The updates resemble those people might use on Facebook,

allowing friends to easily stay abreast of what is going on in each others' lives with minimal effort. Some journalists now are embracing Twitter as a crowd-sourcing tool for quickly accessing citizen sources on various topics and exchanging information.

This study used the Twitter masthead and other design features and typography for authenticity. The "tweet" featured a brief exchange on Twittersearch between a fictional journalist seeking information for a story she was pursuing and ordinary citizens who might know something about the issue. After participants read the exchange, they then read a short news story from a mainstream newspaper Web site that included references to the journalist having used Twitter to help report the story. That story was roughly the same length to those in the other conditions. (See Attachments 12-17 for stimulus materials.)

Wikinews: Like Wikipedia, Wikinews features content written and edited by private citizens, though its self-described "synthesis articles" often point to reference material from mainstream news stories for additional information and background. In its masthead, Wikinews proudly proclaims "The free news source you can write!" to highlight private citizens, not professional journalists, are at the heart of the news operation. Wikinews stories tend to be written in a somewhat informal style, straying at times toward encyclopedic entries because they lack nutgrafs essential to discerning the main point of a news story. The wiki stories also, curiously, do not include bylines of the citizens who wrote them or any other identifying features of the citizen reporter. This is in keeping with the site's mission to present news in a neutral manner, as described in its mission statement on its Web site.

This study used the Wikinews masthead and other typographical features to help

create external validity, as well as no bylines, an informal, almost encyclopedic writing style and "source" lines with references to mainstream news stories. But the stories in this study differed in one way. In order to highlight that the conversation is between citizens, begin/end tags were used in the text to draw attention to the beginning and end of material that each of two citizens contributed to the story. (See Attachments 18-20 for stimulus materials.)

Dependent variables

All survey questions about each story were Likert-style variables with five options, from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5). Some items had negative wording to minimize potential pattern-response bias.

Conversation

The following six variables again theoretically indexed conversation as a manipulation check on the IVs. In other words, they revealed whether participants viewed Twitter, Wikinews and collaborative stories as conversational.

Those six conversational variables:

1. Coorientation (continuous)

The scale to measure coorientation was based on conceptual definitions in the literature, particularly Wackman's (1973): "I felt like this reporter is a person kind of like me," "I understand the story's issue in the same way the reporter does," "I see myself as quite different from this reporter," "I think this reporter has my interests at heart" and "I would find it quite difficult to talk with this reporter on this issue."

2. Social presence (continuous)

This variable was measured using a scale developed by Tamborini and Skalski

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(2005) and adapted to the current study to apply to a reader-reporter relationship: "I felt like I got to know the reporter," "At times, I felt like the reporter was in the room with me" and "I thought of the reporter while reading the article."

3. Homophily (continuous)

This study relied on McCroskey, Richmond and Daly's (1975) scale to measure homophily but adapted it for a five-point instrument. The questions asked the subject to indicate his or her feelings about the story writer on the following eight issues: "This reporter doesn't think like me," "This reporter is from a social class similar to mine," "This reporter behaves like me," "This reporter is of an economic situation different from mine," "This reporter is similar to me," "This reporter's status is like mine," "This reporter is unlike me" and "This reporter's background is different from mine."

4. Interactivity (continuous)

A scale was developed for this study with items based on Rafaeli's conceptual definition of interactivity as an iterative process. "There wasn't much interaction between the reporter and ordinary-people sources in the story," "This reporter seems to have engaged ordinary people to get the story" and "This story resulted from interactions between the journalist and ordinary people."

5. Friendliness (continuous)

A scale was developed for this study based on items in the literature, particularly Garko's (1992): "This journalist seems friendly," "This journalist has an open attitude toward people," "This journalist seems like a people person" and "This journalist seems to have an unfavorable attitude toward people."

6. Informality (continuous)

This scale also was derived for this study based on conceptual definitions in the literature, particularly Althen's (1992): "The language of the story is informal," "The reporter is speaking casually" and "The language of the story sounds formal."

The following three variables essentially test how trustworthy and authoritative they perceive the media messages.

Article credibility (continuous)

This measure relied on four questions modified from Gaziano and McGrath's (1986) study: "I think the article is accurate," "I believe what I read in the article," "I can trust what I read here" and "I'm not sure the article told the whole truth."

Source credibility (continuous)

This measure for Web site credibility relied in part on the article-credibility scale that Hamman (2006) used. The four questions: "I think the articles on this Web site are accurate," "I don't think I'd trust what I read on this Web site," "I can rely on this site" and "I probably would believe most articles I read on this site."

Expertise (continuous)

This variable consisted of a trio of items based on Perloff (2003): "This reporter sounds like an expert on this topic," "The reporter sounds like she knows what she's talking about" and "The reporter has done her homework on this story."

Story liking (continuous)

Given the story differences outlined above, this study asked the following questions related to how well participants liked the stories: "Overall, I liked this story," "I would read a story like this again" and "Reading this story was enjoyable."

Control variable

Topic interest (continuous)

This study used topics that might be of interest to college students, but because interest can vary, answers to the following items served as a control: "The topic is interesting to me," "I found this topic boring" and "The topic is relevant to my life."

Manipulation checks

Each participant answered three "yes/no" questions at the end of each story package, again in random order to minimize pattern-response bias, to determine whether they perceived the different experimental conditions as planned. This provided a kind of face validity. In other words, did they correctly view the three story types as being different? Items for those manipulation checks: "The journalist used the micro-reporting tool Twitter to gather information for this story," "The journalist worked a lot with ordinary citizens in the community to put together this story" and "Private citizens, not professional journalists, put together this story."

At study's end, they answered the same final two-part question from Experiment 1 about whether they knew what the study was testing. The first "yes/no" question part: "Do you think you have an idea what this study was about?" If they answered "yes," the survey instructed participants to briefly type out what that might be.

As with Experiment 1, the first set of hypotheses addressed potential differences for each conversation variable in each story condition. Those variables represent specific features of conversation, and the study predicted those features varied across story conditions based on the unique attributes of the condition or Web tool. To summarize those differences, the two-part Twitter condition literally shows a journalist seeking the help of fellow Twitterers, via the Twittersearch function, to more fully tell a story, then

shows the results of that exchange in an actual newspaper story. That brief, albeit casual exchange was designed to elicit high scores for several conversational features in the news story that followed: social presence, by revealing the human behind the news; informality, by showing a casual exchange between journalist and citizen source in reporting a story; and friendly, by showing the journalist demonstrating an open attitude toward strangers who might be able to offer information for a story. Indeed, while this study expected moderate scores on the other conversational features, scores on these three in the Twitter condition were expected to be higher than in any other condition, hence:

H1a: Scores on the conversation variable social presence will be higher in the Twitter condition than in any other condition in a statistically significant way.

H1b: Scores on the conversation variable informality will be higher in the Twitter condition than in any other condition in a statistically significant way.

H1c: Scores on the conversation variable friendliness will be higher in the Twitter condition than in any other condition in a statistically significant way.

The Wikinews condition differed in several key ways from other conditions. Most obviously, ordinary citizens just like the reader wrote the story, suggesting perceived similarity measures of coorientation and homophily would be higher here than anywhere else. But nothing in the story gave a human dimension to its citizen writers, or social presence. Nor did the story explicitly say they interacted with ordinary people to get the story, interactivity, or reveal the writers as having an open way toward those citizens, or friendliness. As a result, the study predicted scores for these three variables likely would be lower in this condition than any other, hence the following set of predictions:

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H2a: Scores on the conversation variable coorientation will be higher in the Wikinews condition than in any other condition in a statistically significant way.

H2b: Scores on the conversation variable homophily will be higher in the Wikinews condition than in any other condition in a statistically significant way.

H2c: Scores on the conversation variable social presence will be lower in the Wikinews condition than in any other condition in a statistically significant way.

H2d: Scores on the conversation variable interactivity will be lower in the Wikinews condition than in any other condition in a statistically significant way.

H2e: Scores on the conversation variable friendliness will be lower in the Wikinews condition than in any other condition in a statistically significant way.

The final story condition, collaborative news, offered something of a balance between the other two on conversational variables. This study expected scores for all conversation variables here to be strong, though not exceedingly high, and never low. The one exception might be interactivity. Rather than *showing* interaction with readers, as the Twitter condition did, the collaborative stories explicitly *told* readers this in a box atop the story. This alone was designed to drive home the interactivity question with study participants, yielding the highest interactivity scores of all conditions. For other conversation variables, this study expected collaborative stories never to have the lowest among conditions. As in Experiment 1, collaborative stories scored well on friendliness and informality, presumably because the stories telegraphed the journalist's openness to citizen voices and were written in a less stilted manner than traditional stories. They almost scored well on coorientation and homophily, though perhaps moreso when accompanied by video. The only variable collaborative stories fared poorly on was social

presence, but in this second experiment, hypotheses suggested Wikinews stories would score the worst there, hence:

H3a: Scores on the conversation variable interactivity will be higher in the collaborative condition than in any other condition in a statistically significant way.

H3b: Scores on the conversation variable informality in collaborative stories will never be the lowest of conditions in a statistically significant way.

H3c: Scores on the conversational variable friendliness in collaborative stories will never be the lowest of conditions in a statistically significant way.

H3d: Scores on the conversation variable coorientation in collaborative stories will never be the lowest of conditions in a statistically significant way.

H3e: Scores on the conversation variable homophily in collaborative stories will never be the lowest of conditions in a statistically significant way.

H3f: Scores on the conversation variable social presence in collaborative stories will never be the lowest of conditions in a statistically significant way.

The next set of hypotheses addressed perceived credibility and expertise. Recall in Experiment 2 the conversation variables that best predicted both types of credibility and expertise tended to be coorientation/homophily, interactivity and friendliness. Informality and social presence, on the other hand, sometimes worked against these outcomes. In light of the previous hypotheses, this study expected that although the Wikinews stories would be highest on coorientation and homophily, they might do poorly on interactivity and friendliness and, therefore, will not be strong on credibility and expertise. In the same vein, though the Twitter condition was expected to score well on friendliness, its high scores for informality and social presence might work against it on

credibility and authority. That leaves the collaborative condition, where interactivity scores likely would be the highest and where scores on other key predictors of credibility and authority would be moderate in comparison to other conditions and never the weakest. Thus, the following hypotheses:

H4a: Scores on perceived article credibility will be highest in the collaborative condition in a statistically significant way.

H4b: Scores on perceived Web site (source) credibility will be highest in the collaborative condition in a statistically significant way.

H4c: Scores on perceived expertise will be highest in the collaborative condition in a statistically significant way.

The final set of hypotheses address liking. As with Experiment 1, this study expected participants would find the different story topics equally interesting, particularly after removing the low-scoring steroids story and retaining the high-scoring stories on job prospects, plagiarism and college drinking. And because the key predictor for liking in Experiment 1 was topic interest, this study anticipated participants would equally like the story conditions here, meaning no statistically significant differences. Thus:

H5a: Participants will like the different story conditions equally well, meaning no statistically significant differences on the dependent variable liking.

Participants, sample sizes

This study again relied on a convenience sample of random students from two large-lecture courses in the J-School, one course on principles of American journalism, the other on strategic-communications research. Students in the former received extra credit for their participation, while students in the latter were required to participate in at

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least three research studies on campus, of which this experiment was one option. This study allowed news majors to participate because there were no traditional stories they might be compelled to view as more credible and authoritative. Once again, more females (77.6 percent) than males (22.4 percent) took part. Other sample demographics: white (77.6 percent), Asian (17.9 percent) and African-American (3 percent); graduate students (34.3 percent), freshman (28.4 percent), juniors (23.9 percent) and sophomores (10.4 percent); native U.S. citizens (82.1 percent) and non-natives (17.9 percent).

This study largely relied on the previous experiment to determine appropriate sample size, this time with one less experimental condition.

Lab procedures

Under MU journalism department's new SONA experiment-management program, students from the principles course signed up online to participate in the experiment on dates and times of their choosing in the same reserved computer lab as Experiment 1. In the strategic-communications class, the professor passed around a sign-up sheet with different dates and times students could choose from to participate in the study. When students arrived at the lab, they received consent forms explaining the study and indicating their answers to survey questions in the experiment would be anonymous. Though the university's Institutional Review Board again granted exempt status in the study and did not require these forms, this study provided them anyway to ensure students understood the research. After students turned in the forms, they randomly received a card with a Web site address on it corresponding to one of the three different versions of the study hosted on student server space at the university, and the students simply went to the Web page to begin the study, providing randomization necessary for a

controlled experiment (Calfee, 1985, 138-172). Based on experiments of similar design

and type and number of stimuli (Marchionni, Meyer & Thorson, 2008; Meyer,

Marchionni & Thorson, 2007), this study anticipated each participant would need roughly

30 minutes to complete the study, and this turned out to be correct. (Go to

web.missouri.edu/~dmm989/1A for sample survey.)

Statistical analyses

A master file from the three studies revealed three participants' data largely were

missing, apparently because of computer problems again. All of their answers came out

of the study, leaving complete answers for 67 participants. No participants' answers to

the final two-part manipulation question at study's end suggested eliminating their data.

Participants also generally perceived the different experimental conditions, correctly

answering manipulation-check questions in the Twitter condition 95 percent of time, 91

percent in collaborative condition and 79 percent on Wikinews.

Using SPSS, answers to variable items negatively worded were recoded. To

potentially reduce the total number of items, this study again used factor analysis, via

principal-components extraction, on each of the study's 11 variables, using varimax

rotation to aid interpretability (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007). Only factor loadings greater

than .40 remained in the study, in keeping with Tabachnick and Fidell's (2007)

recommendations, among others. The analyses again provided important information

about how well the items measured the latent constructs in each experimental condition,

and in general, most of those items loaded well and in the manner expected. Again in the

case of coorientation and homophily, though, many items between them loaded together

across conditions while others loaded weakly and/or on separate factors. So primary

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statistical analyses used a new, single variable from items with the strongest factor

loadings. Those mostly were the same items from the first experiment, with some

additional ones: "I felt like this reporter is a person kind of like me," "I understand the

story's issue in the same way the reporter does," "I see myself as quite different from this

reporter," "I would find it quite difficult to talk with this reporter on this issue," "This

reporter doesn't think like me," "This reporter behaves like me," "This reporter is similar

to me," "This reporter's status is like mine," "This reporter is unlike me" and "This

reporter's background is different from mine." Also, one social presence item, "I thought

of the reporter while reading the article," and one article credibility item, "I'm not sure

the article told the whole truth," loaded on different factors in all conditions, so both

items came out for subsequent analyses.

Cronbach's alpha reliability tests again indicated items consistently measured

their respective variables. Each variable had strong alphas, slightly stronger in some cases

than Experiment 1 (see Table 9). Most fell in the range of .85-.99, well above the

acceptable cutoff of .70 (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007). Confident in the measures used to

test condition differences, this study proceeded to check differences on the control

variable "topic interest" for each of the three stories across conditions, using a one-way

ANOVA. Topic interest was marginally significant ($F_{2,198} = 2.93$, p = .06, partial-eta

squared of .03, power of .57). Mean topic interest on a scale of 1-5 with 5 indicating

strong interest was 4.0 for plagiarism, 3.8 for college drinking and 4.0 for the job-

prospects story. As a precaution, this study controlled for topic interest in primary

analyses. In addition, the particular version of the study participants took was significant

for inexplicable reasons on several variables. Those variables:

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* Liking: ($F_{2,198} = 3.67$, p = .03, partial-eta squared of .04, power of .67)

* Article Credibility: ($F_{2,198} = 5.30$, p = .05, partial-eta squared of .05, power of .83)

* Web Credibility: ($F_{2, 198} = 4.70$, p = .01, partial-eta squared of .05, power of .78)

* Expertise: ($F_{2,198} = 13.76$, p = .00, partial-eta squared of .12, power of 1.00)

As a result, this study also controlled variation from study/order.

Baseline dataset assumptions checked via frequencies, PP-plot scattergrams and histograms revealed variables generally met the following guidelines: skewness/kurtosis of +/- 3.0 from the mean; no missing scores or outliers; means that vary in each condition; standard deviations of less than 1.0; and relatively small standard-error-of-mean scores, indicating the likelihood of finding those means in the population. Checks of each variable for linearity (no significant breaks in scores on scatterplot regression line), normality (scores falling roughly on line) and homoskedacticity (scores not on the line roughly equal above and below it) also revealed no major problems.

Chapter 8: Results from Experiment 2

Data from this study offered further support for features that theoretically index journalism-as-a-conversation. But unlike Experiment 1, some of this study's strongest findings relate to differences in perceived credibility and expertise. There, participants clearly saw differences in the three conversational story types, relatively consistently rating Thorson and Duffy's (2006) collaborative news approach as more credible and expert than Wikinews or stories derived from the micro-reporting tool Twitter (see Table 10 below for guide to hypotheses via tables and page numbers).

Table 10

Experiment 2 hypotheses	Table (s)	Page
H1a	12B	146
H1b	12D	147
H1c	12E	147
H2a	12A	146
H2b	12A	146
H2c	12B	146
H2d	12C	147
H2e	12E	151
H3a	12C	147
H3b	12D	147
H3c	12E	147
H3d	12A	146
H3e	12A	146
H3f	12B	146
H4a	12F	148
H4b	12G	148
H4c	12H	149
H5a	12I	149

The ANCOVAS

Again controlling for topic interest and now condition order, analyses of co-variance showed perceived differences among story types on most conversation variables (Tables 11 for omnibus tests and Tables 12A through 12I for Bonferroni post-hocs). Two variables, however, showed no differences: coorientation/homophily and social presence. Beginning with the first set of hypotheses on conversation variables in the Twitter condition, **H1a** and **H1b** incorrectly predicted higher scores than other conditions, respectively, on social presence and informality. On informality, the Twitter story actually rated *lower* than the other two conditions: means of 3.04 on Twitter compared with 3.55 on Wikinews at p = .00 and 3.40 on the collaborative story, at p = .05. On friendliness, **H1c,** Twitter (M = 3.62) scored higher than Wikinews (M = 3.41) at p = .04 but not collaborative, which had the highest mean, at 3.72.

The next set of hypotheses about Wikinews found partial support. Most surprisingly, this one condition where scores on coorientation/homophily might be strongest, **H2a** and **H2b**, showed no difference. Nor were scores different in Wikinews on social presence, **H2c**. However, on interactivity, the data offered support for **H2d**. There, the wiki story (M = 2.58) scored lower than both the Twitter story (M = 3.68) at p = .00 and collaborative story (M= 4.0) at p = .00. On the variable friendliness, meanwhile, the wiki story (M = 3.41) was lower than only the collaborative story (M = 3.72), at p = .00, showing partial support for **H2e**.

Hypotheses related to the collaborative condition found strong support. Most suggested scores on conversation variables would never be statistically lowest in that condition. That was the case, either because collaborative scores were statistically higher

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than other conditions, or relatively high but not significantly so. On informality, **H3b**, for

instance, collaborative scores (M = 3.40) were higher than Twittter's (M = 3.04) at p =

.05 but not significantly different from Wikinews' (M = 3.55). On friendliness, **H3c**,

collaborative scores (M = 3.72) were statistically higher than Wikinews' (M = 3.41), at p

= .00, but not significantly different from Twitter's (M = 3.62). On

coorientation/homophily, **H3d and H3e**, collaborative scores (M = 3.29) were higher

than scores for Wikinews (M = 3.25) and for Twitter (M = 3.23) but not significantly.

Likewise, on social presence, **H3f**, scores were relatively high for collaborative stories

(M = 2.46) but not significantly different from Wikinews stories (M = 2.31) or from

Twitter stories (M = 2.59). Finally, on interactivity, **H3a** predicted scores on that variable

would be highest in collaborative stories. That was the case only compared with

Wikinews: the collaborative story's mean (M = 4.00) easily exceeded that of wiki's

(2.58) at p = .00 but was not significantly different from Twitter's (M = 3.68).

The next group of hypotheses suggested collaborative stories would score

significantly higher on perceived credibility and expertise than Wikinews or Twitter

stories. That was completely or partially the case in most cases. For instance, **H4b**

correctly predicted collaborative scores for Web site credibility (M = 3.45) would be

significantly higher than scores for Twitter (M = 3.16, p = .03) and for Wikinews (M =

2.64, p = .00). Meanwhile, collaborative scores for article credibility (M = 3.60) were

significantly higher those for Wikinews stories (M = 2.94), at p = .00, but not

significantly different from scores for Twitter (M = 3.35), partially supporting **H4a**. On

perceived expertise, collaborative scores (M = 3.18) were significantly higher than

Wikinews scores (M = 2.82), at p = .03, but not significantly different from Twitter's (M

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= 3.00).

The final hypotheses of this experiment predicted participants would like stories equally well in different conditions, **H5a,** and that was indeed the case.

The regressions

As with Experiment 1, this study used a series of hierarchical linear regressions to determine if any conversation variables predicted credibility, expertise and liking in any condition (Tables 13-16). As it was, after controlling for study/order, topic interest and demographic variables, coorientation/homophily proved operant in nearly every condition for every DV, much like Experiment 1. Also a powerful predictor in most models was interactivity, while informality and friendliness sometimes worked against credibility and expertise, again like Experiment 1.

Beginning with article credibility, in both Twitter and Wikinews conditions, coorientation/homophily and interactivity predicted the measure. For Twitter, coorientation/homophily ($\beta = .51$, $p < .01$) was stronger than interactivity ($\beta = .28$, $p > .05$). For Wikinews, just the opposite was the case, with interactivity ($\beta = .46$, $p < .01$) stronger than coorientation/homophily ($\beta = .37$, $p < .01$). In the collaborative condition, though, only the control variable grade ($\beta = -.39$, $p < .05$) was a significant predictor, revealing the lower the participant's grade, the higher the score for article credibility.

In the case of Web site credibility, predictors in each condition varied somewhat. In the Twitter condition, coorientation ($\beta = .49$, $p > .01$), interactivity ($\beta = .25$, $p < .05$), informality ($\beta = -.34$, $p < .01$) and the control variable grade ($\beta = .43$, $p < .01$) predicted the measure. In Wikinews, interactivity ($\beta = .39$, $p < .01$), coorientation/homophily ($\beta = .39$, $p < .01$) and the control variable topic interest ($\beta = -.24$, $p < .05$) predicted the

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measure. For collaborative stories, friendliness ($\beta = -.30$, p < .05) and coorientation/homophily ($\beta = .25$, p < .10) predicted the measure, though the latter marginally so.

In the case of expertise, predictors again varied somewhat by condition. In Twitter stories, only interactivity ($\beta = .25$, p < .05) predicted the measure. In Wikinews stories, interactivity ($\beta = .41$, p < .01), coorientation/homophily ($\beta = .36$, p < .01) and informality (B = -.39. p < .01) predicted the measure. In collaborative stories, only coorientation/homophily ($\beta = .38$, p < .01) predicted expertise.

Finally, on the variable liking, coorientation/homophily proved to be the strongest, and in some cases lone, predictor in all conditions. Specifically, in Twitter stories, coorientation/homophily ($\beta = .44$, p < .01) and interactivity ($\beta = .19$, p < .10) predicted liking, though the latter marginally so. In Wikinews stories, coorientation/homophily ($\beta = .37$, p < .01), interactivity ($\beta = .32$, p < .01) and the control variable study/order ($\beta = -.19$, p < .05) predicted the measure. In collaborative stories, coorientation/homophily ($\beta = .36$, p < .01) alone predicted liking.

Chapter 9: Discussion of Results from Experiment 2

This experiment sought to understand whether news audiences differentiate conversational features in certain stories and even attribute more positive qualities to some, such as perceived credibility and expertise. The latter is key, given findings in Experiment 1 suggested no differences between traditional and collaborative stories, at least when looking at ANCOVAs. The current study not only further teased apart how conversational features are perceived in different kinds of stories, but which features and story types clear the more difficult hurdles of perceived credibility and expertise. As it was, readers appeared to react best to a story type that somewhat balances qualities of traditional and conversational journalism: collaborative news. Those stories, unlike the wiki stories, clearly were written by professional mainstream journalists whom participants may be accustomed to reading. But the collaborative texts, unlike many traditional stories, carry a preponderance of quotations from ordinary people rather than public officials and lead with real-people anecdotes. Also, more than the wiki and Twitter stories, collaborative stories clearly and explicitly told readers both in editor's notes and within texts how *much* the professional journalist went out of her way to connect with ordinary people to tell a story. Showing, rather than telling, readers a journalist connected with ordinary people helps, as relatively high scores for the Twitter condition suggest. But telling, even drumming it into readers' heads, appears even more influential, as collaborative scores would indicate. In sum, a look across all conditions at credibility and expertise scores suggests readers favored collaborative, followed by Twitter and Wikinews stories, in that order.

Interestingly, the collaborative stories also were the most contrived in the study.

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Young news consumers in the real world may be more likely to encounter stories written by non-professionals, such as wiki stories, or stories that gently hint at the audience's help, such as the Twitter stories in this study, than stories that intensely telegraph that help in repeated ways, as in the collaborative stories. Yet that intensity appeared to work on several levels. Not only did participants generally rate collaborative stories high on most conversational features, the highest in some cases, but often the highest on key indicators of trust and expertise, too. Here, then, is the strongest evidence between both experiments that stories perceived as having a good proportion of conversational features also yield higher credibility and expertise scores. News organizations would be wise to consider these results. More on this in the final chapter.

Among the more surprising findings in Experiment 2, though, were scores for coorientation/homophily, or perceived similarity. Even when Wikinews *exclaimed* to readers it was written by ordinary people just like them, and not standoffish professionals as some might describe, readers still did not perceive themselves as similar to the writers. What is more, readers gave those wiki stories written by ordinary people the lowest scores on critical measures of credibility and authority, perhaps the clearest evidence that readers trust journalism by professionals, despite Pew research (Pew, 2002) to the contrary. Both experiments also suggest that social presence might work best in video conditions. Unless stories were accompanied by videos of journalists, as was the case sometimes in Experiment 1, social presence barely registered on story packages. In other words, in text-only conditions, readers did not perceive the humanness of the journalist, no matter how hard the words tried to convey it. This is also in line with Hamman's (2006) research, who found still photographs did not always convey human presence as

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expected. Together, these studies echo findings in Newhagen and Nass' (1988) seminal study on perceived differences of TV and newspaper credibility. News consumers do indeed respond well to a human presence in the news, but seeing the journalist live appears to matter most, and for that, there is no substitute. If the multi-platform abilities of the Internet offer any clearer opportunity to newspapers, it is that they can at last show journalists in living, breathing color, reporting and delivering the news with all of the authority news organizations can demonstrate.

Beyond social presence and coorientation/homophily, less clear from Experiment 2 is how other conversational features operate in different news stories. Though this study predicted readers would view the Twitter condition as most informal, particularly in light of the casual exchange shown between the journalist and citizens on Twitter, readers actually responded more to the essay-like prose of Wikinews. The language there was far from crisp and somewhat colloquial compared with professional news stories, and that apparently made a strong impression on readers. Also of interest are scores on friendliness. Again, this study intended the depiction of a quick and casual exchange on Twitter between a journalist and citizens to best show openness and friendliness. But readers responded more to the collaborative stories, which told them in several ways that the journalist had reached out to many ordinary citizens, in effect opened up to them, in her reporting. Telling readers the extent to which the journalist reached out, then, may have made the difference in reader's perceptions.

As with Experiment 1, regressions help clarify how conversational features work toward credibility and expertise, but the analyses also complicate the situation somewhat. Most intriguing is coorientation/homophily's role as a key predictor in almost every story

condition and yet the variable's weak showing in ANCOVAs. In other words, though coorientation/homophily predicted credibility and expertise for most conversational story types, participants did not perceive significant differences on the variable among those story types, despite perceived differences in credibility and expertise. This requires further fleshing out in future studies but suggests, among other things, that coorientation/homophily might work best *in concert* with other variables, such as interactivity and the absence of informality and friendliness, to ultimately produce differences on credibility and expertise. The question is particularly important for understanding collaborative stories, given they generally scored highest on credibility and expertise but also had non-significant coorientation/homophily regression scores. (For what it is worth, collaborative stories had the highest coorienation/homophily mean across conditions in ANCOVAs, at 3.29, but just not high enough to be statistically different from other story types.) Where coorientation/homophily is an unambiguous predictive success in collaborative stories is on the variable liking: That conversational variable alone predicted how much participants simply liked collaborative stories, accounting for 49 percent of the variance in that condition.

Indeed, coorientation/homophily, and to a slightly lesser extent interactivity, were key predictors of story liking in all conditions, much as those variables predicted credibility and expertise. If the data in Experiment 2 tell a story, it is that how much young news consumers perceive themselves as similar to journalists and how interactive those journalists seem to be with the public shape consumers' perceptions of journalist credibility and expertise, and just plain story likability. Much of this could be seen in Experiment 1, as well.

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So, too, with findings on the conversation variables informality and friendliness. These variables proved somewhat problematic in both studies in similar ways, most clearly in Experiment 2 with Wikinews. Readers perceived that story type as the *most* informal of all conditions, and that informality in turn worked against perceived expertise there. Informality also worked against Web site credibility in the Twitter condition, meaning the more casual the journalist appeared to be, the less credible readers found the organization behind her, perhaps as though the organization failed to properly train her. Similarly, the journalist's perceived friendly openness in collaborative stories hurt Web site credibility in that condition. That was especially pernicious given no other conversation variable strongly predicted Web credibility there. Lesson learned: If you want readers to see you as credible and authoritative, take care not to come across too casual or friendly. Future studies should tease apart just how much informality and friendliness is acceptable, if any, though. In Experiment 1, friendliness helped predict article credibility and expertise in collaborative texts, and those were the same texts used in Experiment 2. Friendliness also helped predict how much participants liked collaborative texts in Experiment 1. The issue simply may be a matter of perceived degree.

Chapter 10: Parting Thoughts —Towards Long-Term Research

and Consultation on Conversation

As mentioned at the start of this dissertation, journalism-as-a-conversation research generally is lacking in clear operationalizations, either in qualitative or quantitative studies. If the concept has any value in social science, researchers must do this hard work and do so now amid doomsday predictions for mainstream media. This dissertation traveled long and varied distances in search of ways to operationalize the concept and build theory on it. The results: journalism-as-a-conversation is a real, multi-dimensional phenomenon that can vary across story types but with some predictability. Further, the use of attribution theory here focused less on participants' causal thinking than on how they appear to simply *ascribe* certain qualities and actions to conversational journalism, in keeping with some Web marketing studies cited earlier. But the most potent theorizing in this dissertation seems to be the machinations of conversation itself. A theory of conversational journalism might be just around the corner.

Carey's (1992) call for a new way of doing journalism, elaborated on by Anderson, Dardenne and Killenberg (1996) not long after, could only hint at the possibilities now being realized online. Even as work ensued on this dissertation, Newsvine, purchased by MSNBC.com, announced yet another conversational effort: an NBC Nightly News online broadcast in which the audience can interact with anchor Brian Williams about the news during each segment (Davidson, 2008). For scholars, the research possibilities for exploring journalism-as-a-conversation in the real world are mounting in tandem with the need for clear theoretical propositions. Changes underway suggest a deep level of media transparency, where citizens are both audience and source

of information, passive no more. In the end, history may hold that the Internet's most important legacy was not technological but social, fundamentally re-shaping how we relate to each other as ordinary people. Mainstream news organizations that survive probably will staunchly reaffirm their core values, such as verification and truth, while powering up with citizen voices and expertise, truly a partnership for the ages.

So where do we go from here in terms of conversational research and consultation? First, we must test conversational variables from this study in different contexts, particularly altering the fictional journalists in videos. Might participants respond differently to men? Older people? People of color? The issue of gender is most important, given Experiment 1's gender differences in scores. Indeed, one worrisome prospect is that some credibility and expertise scores moved in the opposite direction predicted because participants do not find young women trustworthy, perhaps for sexist reasons. Or maybe the women's youth, and not their gender, pulled scores down. Regardless, one place to start is fleshing out the gender data from Experiment 1. Depth interviews with some of the male and female participants in that study could shed light on this question. So, too, could a careful statistical analysis of gender differences. Given the already complicated picture of data in Experiment 1, the study proceeded by controlling gender. But the initial analyses before that suggested some curiosities, both within and between genders, particularly on the steroids story. For instance, men perceived themselves as least similar (coorientation/homophily) to the women journalists on that sports story when the story did not include video. Adding video in both story conditions dramatically boosted those scores more for male participants than female participants, though common sense suggests female participants should have responded

more to videos of fellow women. Beyond videos, conversation research ought to look at other modalities, such as audio via podcasts, or even avatars of journalists in different contexts. Does a podcast of a journalist talking to the audience evoke social-presence the same way video does? What if that voice is synthetic and not human? Could you ever substitute an avatar in a video for a real journalist and get expected outcomes? Reeves and Nass (1996) might suggest you could.

Research also must address potential differences in sample populations. Both experiments relied on young college students, most in their early-20s, and all from the university's journalism school. How the news conditions and conversational variables test with older adults who may or may not follow the news remains a mystery but an important question to answer, especially if this research is to be of value to struggling news agencies. While this dissertation's participants might represent digital natives that news executives are trying to attract, the vast majority of paying newspaper subscribers today remain those native's parents and grandparents. Their opinions matter greatly, now and in the near future.

Future research also must address conversational journalism as practiced in the real world. As mentioned in the beginning of this dissertation, perhaps Minnesota Public Radio's public insight journalism initiative is a place to start, including a survey or depth interviews with initiative participants, both in and outside the organization. Content analyses of news sites that practice conversational journalism might better tell us what distinguishes conversational journalism from other types in the real world. The scale from this dissertation might also be adapted to address a unique conversational practice, citizen-prioritizing sites such as Digg.com or Newsvine.com, where the conversation is

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among citizens based on "click votes" of journalistic content.

For news organizations struggling to make sense of changing times, this dissertation provides guidance on how news consumers perceive conversational features in different news contexts and judge those features in terms of credibility, expertise and liking. Several issues stand out. In news contexts that rely on Twitter and perhaps other crowd-sourcing tools, boldly telling audiences how that reporting informed coverage not only might boost perceptions of a story's conversationalness, so to speak, but credibility and expertise, too. With or without relying on such tools, findings from collaborative-news conditions suggest explicitly *telling* rather than *showing* audiences how journalists interact with citizens and saying this in multiple ways is key. Also critical in most story contexts is enhancing perceptions of similarity between audiences and the journalists they follow. Clearly, videos help. So, too, does a diverse newsroom, even in times of layoffs and extreme cutbacks. If there is an argument to be made for keeping an eye on newsroom diversity even while eyeing your bottomline, this dissertation is it. For news consumers, somehow seeing yourself in the journalist you follow matters. For academics, coorientation and homophily clearly measure aspects of perceived similarity and ought to be re-named in future research, say as measuring "likeness."

A somewhat formal tone in various news contexts, traditional or conversational, also seems to matter to audiences. While this dissertation is not arguing for Queen's English, news organizations may walk a precarious tightrope when loosening up their tone with audiences, at least when it comes to credibility and expertise. In non-news contexts, it is the reason why we put on formal suits for job interviews or public presentations: We want to appear to know what we are talking about and be taken

seriously. At the same time, conveying friendly openness to the public without going

overboard, particularly in collaborative-style texts without videos, not only might

enhance perceptions of credibility and expertise but story likability. And while this

dissertation mostly was concerned about credibility and expertise because they are

journalism's cachet, liking is important, too. It may well keep people's attention, or keep

them coming back to a media outlet for news. And attention in an era of plummeting

circulations and audience share cannot hurt the bottomline. Finally, as research on

conversation broadens, so, too, should explorations of typologies. This dissertation

focused on conversation in the form of hard, fast story reporting, or the way journalists

might tell a more complete story by better tapping their audiences and be judged

positively for doing so. This obviously reflects the author's own bias toward reportage as

a former long-time newspaper reporter and editor. But interpersonal-communication

theorists might suggest myriad other types of journalistic conversations beyond reporting,

such as those that simply create emotional bonds between journalist and citizens with no

ulterior motive. A theory of journalistic conversation eventually must account for such

types in the way that interpersonal, face-to-face conversation research does.

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College-drinking study says 1,400 die annually

By Patricia Mallory, Sedalia-Democrat staff

A new National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism report says 1,400 college students die each year from alcohol-related deaths.

In addition to that death toll, "A Call to Action: Changing the Culture of Drinking at U.S. Colleges" reported that 500,000 college students are injured while under the influence of alcohol, and that 150,000 have alcohol-related health problems or try to commit suicide each year.

"A Call to Action" doesn't present the analysis behind each claim, though it references 1998 data published simultaneously in the Journal of Studies on Alcohol. The study's lead author is Ralph Higgins of the University of Missouri Columbia School of Public Health.

The death toll was statistically extrapolated from the data in part using Census figures.

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration defines a fatal traffic crash as being alcohol-related if either a driver or a pedestrian had a blood-alcohol concentration of 0.01 grams per deciliter.

The study does not say if a similar measure was used to count alcohol-related deaths among college students.

Higgins, whose data was used for "A Call to Action," is on the board of Mothers Against Drunk Driving (MADD), which began in 1980 with the goal of reducing drunken-driving deaths.

Mark Goldman, co-chair of the task force that produced "A Call to Action," told the Los Angeles Times, "Our society has always dealt with [college drinking] with a wink and a nod, as a rite of passage. But the statistics that Ralph Higgins has put together are stunning to all of us, even the most seasoned researchers."

Job market improves for class of 2008

By Elizabeth Jones, Journal staff writer

College students graduating in 2008 can expect a modest expansion of the job market following two years of projected double-digit growth in the market, according to a report released by the Collegiate Employment Research Institute at University of Missouri-Columbia.

The job market is projected to expand by 2 percent, according to the 2007-2008 Recruiting Trends report, based on a survey of more than 850 companies. While this is still an increase, it is down from expectations of 14-percent growth in 2006 and 20-percent growth in 2005. The downtown is largely the result of the global recession.

According to the report, there are two types of employers in the job market: Those who are aggressively hiring and those who are cutting back in response to the slowing economy. Despite the downturn, not all areas of the economy are shrinking, said Phil Gardner, director of research at the Collegiate Employment Research Institute and author of the report.

"We've had two years of very rapid expansion, and usually after something like that, we begin to see a slowdown, irrespective of the current mortgage crisis," Gardner said. The companies that are hiring are mostly small, entrepreneurial firms seeking fresh talent or large corporations preparing for the retirement of aging baby boomers, according to the study.

Daniel Hammer, an economics professor, said hiring growth reported in the study still outpaces growth in the number of college graduates.

"That means it's still going to be an OK time to be looking for jobs. If I were a fresh graduate, I'd be pretty happy about this," he said.

Despite this trend, many employers are looking for experienced hires rather than newly graduated college students to save on training costs, Gardner said.

According to the report, graduating business majors, especially sales and marketing, are in the highest demand, followed by engineering and nursing majors.

Diana Pao, a senior in Missouri's business school graduating in May, said she has interviewed with about 10 companies, and the job hunt is similar to her search for internships in previous years.

"It's not always going to be the first company you interview with that gives you an offer."

Faculty divided on use of plagiarism software
By Ashleigh Hickman, Daily News staff writer

The University of Missouri provost's announcement that he has agreed to use an online plagiarism prevention tool for a trial run has sparked mixed feelings from both faculty and students.

While some professors pushed for this site to be used as a preventative measure, others are skeptical about the effectiveness of online plagiarism-prevention tools. Students wonder why the software program has to keep their submissions in its database forever.

Professors who choose to use Turnitin ask students to submit their papers to the online site. Then, turnitin.com generates a customized "originality report," which compares it to Internet searches and databases of student and commercial papers.

Deena Gonzalez, chair of English studies, says she has encountered plagiarism in some classes and asked about the service.

She said, "After nearly a quarter century in university classrooms, as I tell my students, I am able to tell when a paper sounds rather different from other undergraduate papers, and many phrases and sentences can just be Googled. When that fails, Turnitin might be useful."

K.J. Peters, an associate professor and director of the freshman English program, says he will not be using any Web-based service because he believes it profits from the intellectual property of students without compensating them. He called tools such as turnitin.com "mechanically useless" and "corrosive of the student-teacher relationship."

The faculty's statement of professional ethics declares that professors should "respect the confidential nature of the relationship between professor and student and should protect their academic freedom."

According to the site, turnnitin.com is used by thousands of institutions in more than 90 countries and "helps ensure a level playing field for millions of students worldwide." With the Internet's "unlimited potential as a research tool," the company believes that turnitin.com eliminates abuse of online resources and ultimately helps prevent plagiarism.

College players not regularly tested
By Jennifer Smythe, Courier-Post staff writer
Gaps in the NCAA's steroid testing program have allowed performance-enhancing drugs to become a rising problem in collegiate baseball, say several college coaches, including the University of Missouri's.

In the wake of steroid allegations involving Duke's baseball team and Major League Baseball's recent steroid revelations, some college coaches, including Missouri Head Coach Tim Jamieson, are calling for more scrutiny from the NCAA.

The NCAA doesn't regularly test baseball -— or any sport other than football -— for steroids during the regular season. The NCAA does test every sport during postseason play.

The NCAA tests nine athletes outside of football at each Division I school annually for steroids. It also encourages institutions to test their own athletes.

But according to NCAA documents from 2006, the most recent year available, only half of 70 Division I-A institutions that responded to an NCAA survey test for anabolic steroids. Another NCAA report shows the NCAA didn't test a single Division I baseball player for steroids during the 2003 regular season.

The lack of comprehensive testing has given college baseball players an opening to exploit, Jamieson said.

"I think steroids in college baseball is getting out of hand," he said, though he added it has not been an issue with his team. "It filters down from the majors. Steroids in college baseball is a problem."

N.C. State head coach Elliott Avent also said he didn't have a problem on his team but believes steroid use is growing overall.

"You hear things in this business. I've heard things [about steroids in college baseball] for the past four or five years," Avent said. "I think it has trickled down from the major leagues. I think most things from pro sports trickle down."

The ACC has responded by scheduling a symposium on performance-enhancing drugs in Jacksonville, Fla., the day before the ACC Baseball Tournament opened in that city. Wake Forest athletics director Ron Wellman, a former college baseball coach, said he thinks the programs and policies of individual institutions are enough to monitor steroid abuse.

Student says college drinking report may underestimate deaths

VOICES HEARD! Sedalia-Democrat staff writer Pat Scott heard from several readers about the college-drinking report and has incorporated their comments into this story. She's planning a follow-up story this weekend with more comments based on discussions at a forum, scheduled for 5 p.m. in the Spencer Forum meeting room at the newspaper, 1901 S. State St. The Sedalia-Democrat will collect your thoughts at opinions@sedaliademocrat.com or on our Web site — www.sedalia-democrat.com

By Pat Scott, Sedalia-Democrat staff writer
When Stacey Smith and her friends prepared to graduate from the University of Missouri-Columbia in the spring, they pledged their binge drinking days were over.
Two months later, one of those friends was injured in a drunken-driving crash.
She alerted the Sedalia-Democrat this week to a new National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism report that says 1,400 college students die each year from alcohol-related deaths. In an e-mail exchange, she and several friends told the paper the report may barely cover the scope of the problem.
She recently started the community group Friends Against Binge Drinking, which will use a meeting room at the newspaper for a public forum Thursday night to discuss the report's findings.
"When you go to college, it's the first time you have lots of choices and freedoms. It's hard to give that up when you get into the real world," she said.
In addition to the death toll, "A Call to Action: Changing the Culture of Drinking at U.S. Colleges" reported that 500,000 college students are injured while under the influence of alcohol, and that 150,000 have alcohol-related health problems or try to commit suicide each year.
The study's lead author is Ralph Higgins of the University of Missouri Columbia School of Public Health.
Higgins is on the board of Mothers Against Drunk Driving (MADD), which began in 1980 with the goal of reducing drunken-driving deaths. When asked what he thought about Smith's comments, he said he was surprised but happy she contacted the newspaper to help get the word out.
"And I think you'll hear even more at the Thursday forum," he said.

Reach Pat Scott at pscott@sedaliademocrat.com

Good news for college grads: companies are still hiring

Speak up! Boone County Journal staff writer Liz Barton heard from several readers about the job-prospects report and has incorporated their comments into this story. She's planning a follow-up story this weekend with more comments based on discussions at a forum, scheduled for 5 p.m. in the Hatfield Forum meeting room at the newspaper, 701 Juniper St. The Journal will collect your thoughts at opinions@bocojo.com or on our Web site — www.bocojo.com

By Liz Barton, Journal staff writer

Diana Pao, a business major graduating in May, said she has interviewed for full-time jobs with about 10 companies, and the job hunt is similar to her search for internships in previous years.

"It's not always going to be the first company you interview with that gives you an offer," the University of Missouri-Columbia senior said in a series of e-mails with the newspaper.

The good news: Companies are still hiring. Pao and classmates Tom Smith and Kim Parker contacted this newspaper after reading a report about just that.

College students graduating in 2009 can expect a modest expansion of the job market following two years of projected double-digit growth in the market, according to the report released by the Collegiate Employment Research Institute at the University of Missouri Columbia.

And students such as Jane McMurry, who also exchanged e-mails with the newspaper about the report, probably will face better chances than others of finding work because of their business degrees.

The report says those students, along with nursing and engineering majors, are in the highest demand. One engineering student who contacted the paper said she's already received three job offers in the past few months from reputable firms.

For all jobs, the market is projected to expand by 2 percent, according to the 2008-2009 Recruiting Trends report, based on a survey of more than 850 companies.

McMurry said she's relieved by the good news and spreading the word among fellow college seniors.

"I have $10,000 in student loans," she said. "I'm just glad there's a chance I can get a job and starting paying them off."

Reach Liz Barton at lbarton@bocojo.com

Attachment 7

MU turns to technology to catch cheaters

Be heard! Daily News staff writer Anne Swan heard from several readers about the plagiarism software and has incorporated their comments into this story. She's planning a follow-up story this weekend with more comments based on discussions at a forum, scheduled for 5 p.m. in the Honeysett Forum meeting room at the newspaper, 501 Oak St. The Daily News will collect your thoughts at opinions@boonvilledailynews.com or at www.boonvilledailynews.com

By Anne Swan, Daily News staff writer

Plagiarism exists on the University of Missouri-Columbia campus, but a software-tracking system is a poor way to combat the problem, according to comments and stories from readers like you.

More than 100 people have responded to the newspaper's call for information and opinions about the MU Provost Office's decision to offer professors Turnitin, an online plagiarism prevention tool for a trial basis. Most readers said this was a terrible idea.

"I don't want anyone to get away with cheating," MU senior Julie Smith wrote in a series of e-mail exchanges with the newspaper. "But I also don't think it's fair to punish all students."

According to the company's Web site, turnitin.com is used by thousands of institutions in more than 90 countries. Those who responded to the newspaper's request, however, were most upset with how the site does this.

"Once you submit your paper, you never get it back," Jesse Vanderlinden said on the newspaper's online discussion board. " Who knows what the heck they do with it."

Professors who choose to use Turnitin ask students to submit their papers to the online site. Then, turnitin.com generates a customized "originality report" that compares it to Internet searches and databases of student and commercial papers.

To Douglas Gentry, a junior in applied mathematics, this report will always be basically flawed.

 "All this software is going to to do is see if you have the same words as another paper," he said. 'It won't care if they are in different orders or on different topics altogether."

Reach Anne Swan at aswan@boonvilledailynews.com

Certain Restrictions Apply

More needs to be done to curb college steroid use

Sound off! Courier-Post staff writer Jenn Rockwell heard from several readers about college steroids use and has incorporated their comments into this story. She's planning a follow-up story this weekend with more comments based on discussions at a forum, scheduled for 5 p.m. in the Marker Forum meeting room at the newspaper, 1201 Market St. The Courier-Post will collect your thoughts at opinions@hannibal.net or on our Web site — www.hannibal.net

By Jenn Rockwell, Courier-Post staff writer

Fans and former athletes who contacted this newspaper as part of an investigation have confirmed what several college coaches, including University of Missouri Head Coach Tom Johnson, said months ago: Gaps in the NCAA steroid testing program have allowed performance-enhancing drugs to become a rising problem in collegiate baseball.

"I think steroids in college baseball is getting out of hand, " Johnson said, though he added it has not been an issue with his team. "It filters down from the majors. Steroids in college baseball is a problem."

Readers agreed: "If people want to clean up professional sports, they have to start at the college level," Jerome Williams wrote in a series of e-mails with the newspaper.

The NCAA doesn't regularly test baseball, or any sport other than football, for steroids during the regular season. And that has some fans who responded steamed.

"That's probably why the pros have such problems with drugs," Jeff Briggs wrote on the newspaper's message board. "They got away with it scott-free while they were in college."

While those who contacted the newspaper were all quick to point out they didn't see any problems at the University of Missouri, they nearly universally called for stricter testing by the NCAA.

"The NCAA won't let an athlete take a free dinner or even a personal note from the coach's wife, but they'll let baseball players take steroids?" Tina Marie wrote in an e-mail. "What a joke!"

The NCAA does test every sport during postseason play, but only tests nine athletes outside of football at each Division I school annually for steroids.

According to the NCAA document from 2006, the most recent year available, only half of 70 Division I-A institutions that responded to an NCAA survey test for anabolic steroids.

Lisa Mitchell, who identified herself as an MU baseball fan, said it's not enough to hold a seminar about drugs like the NCAA did the day before the ACC Baseball Tournament opened. "It's like D.A.R.E. programs in schools," she wrote in an e-mail. "Just talking to students isn't enough. There has to be penalties."

Reach Jenn Rockwell at jrockwell@hannibal.net

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Good news for college grads: companies are still hiring

By Liz Barton, Journal staff writer

Diana Pao, a business major graduating in May, said she has interviewed for full-time jobs with about 10 companies, and the job hunt is similar to her search for internships in previous years.

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By Anne Swan, Daily News staff writer

Plagiarism exists on the University of Missouri-Columbia campus, but a software-tracking system is a poor way to combat the problem, according to comments and stories from readers like you.

More than 100 people have responded to the newspaper's call for information and opinions about the MU Provost Office's decision to offer professors Turnitin, an online plagiarism prevention tool for a trial basis. Most readers said this was a terrible idea.

"I don't want anyone to get away with cheating," MU senior Julie Smith wrote in a series of e-mail exchanges with the newspaper. "But I also don't think it's fair to punish all students."

According to the company's Web site, turnitin.com is used by thousands of institutions in more than 90 countries. Those who responded to the newspaper's request, however, were most upset with how the site does this.

"Once you submit your paper, you never get it back," Jesse Vanderlinden said on the newspaper's online discussion board. " Who knows what the heck they do with it."

Professors who choose to use Turnitin ask students to submit their papers to the online site. Then, turnitin.com generates a customized "originality report" that compares it to Internet searches and databases of student and commercial papers.

To Douglas Gentry, a junior in applied mathematics, this report will always be basically flawed.

 "All this software is going to to do is see if you have the same words as another paper," he said. 'It won't care if they are in different orders or on different topics altogether."

Reach Anne Swan at aswan@boonvilledailynews.com

Realtime results for **newshound**

---

newshound: nursing jobs especially strong. same with business/accounting. thanks yall. i'll put up link to my story soon.
about 1 hour ago · Reply View Tweet

---

stanman:@**newshound** i'm a med student. i hear job market not bad for us going into next year. u can call/interview me, 785-449-3456.
about 1 hour ago · Reply View Tweet

---

daisyfair:@**newshound** sure, try reaching her at student health, ext. 2204. name is "Rosie." she's a nurse.
about 1 hour ago · Reply View Tweet

---

newshound :@**daisyfair** study actually headed by MU prof. job growth not on par with recent years but not bad either. may i talk to your cousin?
about 1 hour ago · Reply View Tweet

---

daisyfair:@**newshound** my youngest cousin goes to MU. says job outlook doesn't look great. who did the study?
about 1 hour ago · Reply View Tweet

---

newshound: i'm reporter. job market study just came out. modest opportunities for college grads this year. anyone out there in college?
about 1 hour ago · Reply View Tweet

Attachment 13

Realtime results for **newshound**

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newshound: Can anyone get me in touch with prof paralyzed in DUI accident last year? i'll put up link to my story soon.
about 1 hour ago · Reply View Tweet

---

stanman:@newshound i have a daughter in college in Missouri. she helped with MADD campaign in high school. reach her at ldp@ku.edu.
about 1 hour ago · Reply View Tweet

---

daisyfair:@newshound sure, start with Andrea at Institute for Sound Solutions on campus. she'll talk.
about 1 hour ago · Reply View Tweet

---

newshound :@daisyfair study says 1,400 students die yearly. big numbers. can you put me in touch with some of those folks?
about 1 hour ago · Reply View Tweet

---

daisyfair:@newshound i attend MU. whattya need? are students drinking more or less these days? i know of folks who've had friends hurt in accidents.
about 1 hour ago · Reply View Tweet

---

newshound: college drinking study just out. i'm reporter. anyone in college?
about 1 hour ago · Reply View Tweet

Page 1 « Older

Realtime results for **newshound**

---

newshound: thanks yall. this helps a lot. i'll chase down your tips.
i'll put up a link to my story soon.
about 1 hour ago · Reply View Tweet

---

stanman:@newshound u should talk to professor George Keppel. i hear he used to
used to use the software then stopped. could be interesting interview.
about 1 hour ago · Reply View Tweet

---

daisyfair:@newshound try calling student rep's office or even academic provost.
i bet they'll have people to talk to.
about 1 hour ago · Reply View Tweet

---

newshound :@daisyfair do you know anyone wrongly accused of cheating on a
paper? can u put me in touch?
about 1 hour ago · Reply View Tweet

---

daisyfair:@newshound yeah, i'm a sophomore at MU. i hear the software is bogus.
catches non-cheaters along with cheaters. totally unfair.
about 1 hour ago · Reply View Tweet

---

newshound: i'm reporter. doing story on new plagiarism software at MU. anyone
familiar with turnitin.com??
about 1 hour ago · Reply View Tweet

Job market improves for class of 2009

By Jennifer Smythe, Courier-Post staff writer

College students graduating in 2009 can expect a modest expansion of the job market following two years of projected double-digit growth in the market, according to a report released by the Collegiate Employment Research Institute at University of Missouri-Columbia.

The job market is projected to expand by 2 percent, according to the 2008-2009 Recruiting Trends report, based on a survey of more than 850 companies. While this is still an increase, it is down from expectations of 14-percent growth in 2007 and 20-percent growth in 2006. The downtown is largely the result of the global recession. According to the report, there are two types of employers in the job market: Those aggressively hiring and those cutting back in response to the slowing economy. Despite the downturn, not all areas of the economy are shrinking, said Phil Gardner, director of research at the Collegiate Employment Research Institute and author of the report.

"We had two years of very rapid expansion, and usually after something like that, we begin to see a slowdown, irrespective of the current mortgage crisis," Gardner said. The companies that are hiring are mostly small, entrepreneurial firms seeking fresh talent or large corporations preparing for the retirement of aging baby boomers, according to the study.

Rosie Jennings, an MU nursing student, said she is still concerned about finding a job upon graduation.

Contacted with the help of the social-networking site Twitter, Jennings said: "Everybody supposedly needs a nurse, but the economy is still in the tank."

Gardner cautioned many employers primarily are looking for experienced hires rather than newly graduated college students to save on training costs. But business majors, followed by nursing majors and select others in the medical field, are in the highest demand.

Stanley Manning, a pre-med student at University of Kansas also contacted via Twitter, said he finds hope in the data on nursing jobs.

"It may take longer to find a job out there when I graduate, but I figure there will always be a need for people in the medical profession."

College-drinking study says 1,400 die annually

By Jennifer Smythe, Courier-Post staff writer

A new National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism report says 1,400 college students die each year from alcohol-related deaths.

In addition to that death toll, "A Call to Action: Changing the Culture of Drinking at U.S. Colleges" reported that 500,000 college students are injured while under the influence of alcohol, and that 150,000 have alcohol-related health problems or try to commit suicide each year.

"A Call to Action" doesn't present the analysis behind each claim, though it references 1998 data published simultaneously in the Journal of Studies on Alcohol. The study's lead author is Ralph Higgins of the University of Missouri Columbia School of Public Health.

Andrea Jenkins, a staff worker at an institute on that campus, said drunken drivers injured three of her friends in college.

Contacted with the help of the social-networking site Twitter, she said: "Students sometimes drink a lot and that wouldn't be bad, except when they get in their cars and drive."

Linda Parsons, a junior at University of Kansas and also located with the help of Twitter, agreed: "My best friend drove into a ditch and died. You never forget that."

The death toll was statistically extrapolated from the data in part using Census figures. The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration defines a fatal traffic crash as being alcohol-related if either a driver or a pedestrian had a blood-alcohol concentration of 0.01 grams per deciliter.

The study does not say if a similar measure was used to count alcohol-related deaths among college students.

Higgins, whose data was used for "A Call to Action," is on the board of Mothers Against Drunk Driving (MADD), which began in 1980 with the goal of reducing drunken-driving deaths.

Mark Goldman, co-chair of the task force that produced "A Call to Action," told the Los Angeles Times, "Our society has always dealt with [college drinking] with a wink and a nod, as a rite of passage. But the statistics that Ralph Higgins has put together are stunning to all of us, even the most seasoned researchers."

Faculty divided on use of plagiarism software

By Jennifer Smythe, Courier-Post staff writer

The University of Missouri provost's announcement that he has agreed to use an online plagiarism prevention tool for a trial run has sparked mixed feelings from both faculty and students.

While some professors pushed for this site to be used as a preventative measure, others are skeptical about the effectiveness of online plagiarism-prevention tools. Students wonder why the software program has to keep their submissions in its database forever. Ian Glass, an MU student representative located with the help of the social-networking site Twitter, said he's heard about a hundred complaints from students.

"It's overkill," he said. "MU is saying, "You're guilty until proven innocent."

Professors who choose to use Turnitin ask students to submit their papers to the online site. Then, turnitin.com generates a customized "originality report," which compares it to Internet searches and databases of student and commercial papers.

Deena Gonzalez, chair of English studies, says she has encountered plagiarism in some classes and asked about the service.

George Keppel, director of the freshman History program and also contacted with the help of Twitter, says he doubts he will use the service because he believes it profits from the intellectual property of students without compensating them. He called tools such as turnitin.com "mechanically useless" and "corrosive of the student-teacher relationship."

The faculty's statement of professional ethics declares that professors should "respect the confidential nature of the relationship between professor and student and should protect their academic freedom."

According to the site, turnnitin.com is used by thousands of institutions in more than 90 countries and "helps ensure a level playing field for millions of students worldwide." With the Internet's "unlimited potential as a research tool," the company believes that turnitin.com eliminates abuse of online resources and ultimately helps prevent plagiarism.

Sunday, February 1, 2009

[*begin post 1*] Finding work might not be as hard as you think for college students who graduate in 2009. A report from the Collegiate Employment Research Institute at University of Missouri-Columbia says the number of jobs in the country will grow by about 2 percent. That at least is what the 2008-2009 Recruiting Trends report says. It's based on a survey of more than 850 companies. While 2 percent isn't bad, it's down from a giant 14 percent in 2007 and even bigger 20-percent growth in 2006. Newspaper accounts of the study say the job loss is mostly because of the global recession.
The study also says there are two main types of employers in the job market: Those who are innovating and hiring a lot of people for creative projects and those cutting back in response to the slow economy. Daniel Hammer, an MU economics professor, said the number of jobs is still way more than students. [*end post 1*]
[*begin post 2*] Despite this trend, many employers are looking for more experienced people than newly graduated college students. Hiring more experienced people saves on training costs, said Phil Gardner. He wrote the report.
He also said graduating business majors are really needed in the work force, followed by engineering and nursing majors.
Diana Pao, a senior in MU's business school graduating in May, said she has interviewed with about 10 companies, and the job hunt isn't so bad. [*end post 2*]

Sources

▪ Janet White "Where have all the jobs gone?". *The Columbia Daily Tribune*, January 26, 2009

▪ Bill Duin "MU employment study: It's not so bad for graduates afterall". *The Columbia Missourian*, January 27, 2009

Sunday, February 1, 2009

[*begin post 1*] College students might be surprised to learn how many of them die from alcohol each year. A report by the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism says about 1,400 die, a half million are hurt and tens of thousands get very sick from alcohol. One news story says some people even try to kill themselves. The report, called "A Call to Action," doesn't say exactly how it got those numbers. But it does refer to information in an academic journal. The person who wrote the study is Ralph Higgins, who works at the University of Missouri-Columbia School of Public Health. He teaches a popular class about alcoholism and has been a professor for 10 years. [*end post 1*]
[*begin post 2*] The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration says a drunk-driving crash is when either a driver or pedestrian has a blood-alcohol concentration of .01 percent. That usually means someone of average size has had at least a few beers or glasses of wine before hopping in a car or walking down a sidewalk. But state laws are different, and some are even stricter than this definition.
Mark Goldman, who worked on the task force that created "A Call to Action," said, "The statistics are stunning to all of us, even the most seasoned researchers." Goldman says he hopes the study makes parents worried enough to at least talk to their kids about not drinking too much. [*end post 2*]

Sources

- Janet White "College drinking deaths on the rise, study says". *The Columbia Daily Tribune*, January 26, 2009

- Scott Wilson "MU prof warns of rise in college drinking". *The Kansas City Star*, January 26, 2009

Attachment 20

Sunday, February 1, 2009

[*begin post 1*] Not all professors and students are happy about the University of Missouri provost's decision to let teachers try out an online tool to catch cheaters.

A few professors asked the university to use Turnitin. But others aren't sure about how well plagiarism-catching tools even work. Some news accounts say professors who use the tool ask students to submit their papers to its online site. Then Turnitin spits out an "originality report" that compares a paper to Internet databases of student and professional papers.

Deena Gonzalez is an MU English professor and likes the tool a lot.

"After nearly 25 years in classrooms, I am able to tell when a paper sounds rather different from other undergraduate papers, and many phrases and sentences can just be Googled. When that fails, Turnitin might be useful." [*end post 1*]

[*begin post 2*] K.J. Peters is director of the MU freshman English program. He says there's no way he'll use that service. That's because he thinks it profits from the writings of students without giving them something in return.

He called those tools "mechanically useless" and "corrosive of the student-teacher relationship." He also says the faculty's statement of ethics says teachers should "respect the confidential nature of the relationship between professor and student and should protect their academic freedom." [*end post 2*]

Sources

- Janet White "Catching cheaters at MU". *The Columbia Daily Tribune*, January 28, 2009

- Bill Duin "MU provost: 'Plagiarism software good for students and professors'". *The Columbia Missourian*, January 26, 2009

Table 1   Cronbach's alpha for conversation variables (*Coorientation-Homophily, Social Presence, Interactivity, Informality, Friendliness), outcome (dependent) variables (Article Credibility, Web Site Credibility, Expertise, Liking) and control variable (Interest) for each experimental condition in Experiment 1

Variable	Condition	Alpha	Average Alpha
Coorientation/Homophily	Traditional/with Video	.86	
	Collaborative/with Video	.91	
	Traditional/no Video	.87	
	Collaborative/no Video	.86	
	Average		.88
Social Presence	Traditional/with Video	.68	
	Collaborative/with Video	.78	
	Traditional/no Video	.71	
	Collaborative/no Video	.62	
	Average		.70
Interactivity	Traditional/with Video	.87	
	Collaborative/with Video	.89	
	Traditional/no Video	.89	
	Collaborative/no Video	.81	
	Average		.87
Informality	Traditional/with Video	.92	
	Collaborative/with Video	.76	
	Traditional/no Video	.93	
	Collaborative/no Video	.87	
	Average		.88
Friendliness	Traditional/with Video	.92	
	Collaborative/with Video	.82	
	Traditional/no Video	.77	
	Collaborative/no Video	.80	
	Average		.83
Article Credibility	Traditional/with Video	.85	
	Collaborative/with Video	.85	
	Traditional/no Video	.79	
	Collaborative/no Video	.79	
	Average		.82
Web Site Credibility	Traditional/with Video	.82	
	Collaborative/with Video	.77	
	Traditional/no Video	.78	
	Collaborative/no Video	.80	
	Average		.80
Expertise	Traditional/with Video	.74	
	Collaborative/with Video	.75	
	Traditional/no Video	.71	
	Collaborative/no Video	.83	
	Average		.76
Liking	Traditional/with Video	.83	
	Collaborative/with Video	.89	
	Traditional/no Video	.92	
	Collaborative/no Video	.87	
	Average		.88
(Topic) Interest	Traditional/with Video	.71	
	Collaborative/with Video	.79	

	Traditional/no Video	.85	
	Collaborative/no Video	.82	
	Average		.79

* Based on factor analyses, coorientation and homophily were combined but excluding several items.

Table 3   One-Way ANCOVAs (omnibus F tests) for Experiment 1: Impact of story type on dependent variables for all topics, after controlling for topic interest and gender

	Story Type						
Variables	*Traditional/No Video mean (SD)*	*Traditional/With Video mean (SD)*	*Collaborative / No Video mean (SD)*	*Collaborative/With Video mean (SD)*	*F*	*df*	*Partial Eta Square d*
Coorient/ Homophily	3.28 (.51)	3.59 (.50)	3.42 (.52)	3.49 (.61)	1.62	3, 258	.02
Social Presence	2.09 (.67)	3.00 (.75)	2.33 (.60)	2.97 (.85)	25.03 **	3, 258	.23
Interactivity	2.87 (.91)	2.78 (.89)	3.64 (.80)	3.90 (.87)	26.67 **	3, 258	.24
Informality	3.10 (1.00)	3.02 (.89)	3.60 (.69)	3.72 (.60)	12.51 **	3, 258	.13
Friendliness	3.40 (.53)	3.83 (.59)	3.47 (.51)	4.0 (.43)	18.26 **	3, 258	.18
Expertise	3.47 (.58)	3.44 (.59)	3.25 (.62)	3.21 (.62)	3.58*	3, 258	.04
Article Credibility	3.63 (.52)	3.66 (.62)	3.55 (.58)	3.60 (.70)	.60	3, 258	.01
Web Site Credibility	3.62 (.52)	3.63 (.50)	3.55 (.55)	3.58 (.55)	.48	3, 258	.01
Liking	3.35 (.87)	3.42 (.71)	3.44 (.81)	3.44 (.83)	.09	3, 258	.00

^ p < .10   * p < .05   **p < .01

Tables 4A though 4I: Bonferroni post-hoc tests for conversational indices (coorientation/homophily, social presence, interactivity, informality, friendliness) and outcome variables (article credibility, Web site credibility, expertise, liking) in experimental conditions for all story topics in Experiment 1, after accounting for gender/topic interest.

(4A) Coorientation/Homophily

	Mean	Mean Difference	Std. Error	P-value
Collaborative/no video Collaborative/with video	3.41 3.47	-.07	.09	ns
Collaborative/no video Traditional/no video	3.41 3.42	-.01	.09	ns
Collaborative/no video Traditional/with video	3.41 3.58	-.17	.09	ns
Collaborative/with video Traditional/no video	3.47 3.42	.05	.09	ns
Collaborative/with video Traditional/with video	3.47 3.58	-.11	.09	ns
Traditional/no video Traditional/with video	3.42 3.58	-.16	.09	ns

(4B) Social Presence

	Mean	Mean Difference	Std. Error	P-value
Collaborative/no video Collaborative/with video	2.32 2.97	-.64	.12	.00
Collaborative/no video Traditional/no video	2.32 2.12	.20	.12	ns
Collaborative/no video Traditional/with video	2.32 2.96	-.64	.12	.00
Collaborative/with video Traditional/no video	2.97 2.12	.85	.12	.00
Collaborative/with video Traditional/with video	2.97 2.96	.01	.12	ns
Traditional/no video Traditional/with video	2.12 2.96	-.85	.12	.00

(4C) Interactivity

	Mean	Mean Difference	Std. Error	P-value
Collaborative/no video Collaborative/with video	3.64 3.89	-.25	.15	ns
Collaborative/no video Traditional/no video	3.64 2.90	.74	.15	.00
Collaborative/no video Traditional/with video	3.64 2.78	.86	.15	.00
Collaborative/with video Traditional/no video	3.89 2.90	.99	.15	.00
Collaborative/with video Traditional/with video	3.89 2.78	1.10	.15	.00
Traditional/no video Traditional/with video	2.90 2.78	.12	.15	ns

(4D) Informality

	Mean	Mean Difference	Std. Error	P-value
Collaborative/no video Collaborative/with video	3.60 3.72	-.12	.14	ns
Collaborative/no video Traditional/no video	3.60 3.10	.50	.14	.00
Collaborative/no video Traditional/with video	3.60 3.02	.58	.14	.00
Collaborative/with video Traditional/no video	3.72 3.10	.63	.14	.00
Collaborative/with video Traditional/with video	3.72 3.02	.71	.14	.00
Traditional/no video Traditional/with video	3.10 3.02	.08	.14	ns

(4E) Friendliness

	Mean	Mean Difference	Std. Error	P-value
Collaborative/no video Collaborative/with video	3.46 3.96	-.50	.09	.00
Collaborative/no video Traditional/no video	3.46 3.42	.04	.09	ns
Collaborative/no video Traditional/with video	3.46 3.83	-.37	.09	.00
Collaborative/with video Traditional/no video	3.96 3.42	.54	.09	.00
Collaborative/with video Traditional/with video	3.96 3.83	.13	.09	ns
Traditional/no video Traditional/with video	3.42 3.83	-.41	.09	.00

(4F) Article Credibility

	Mean	Mean Difference	Std. Error	P-value
Collaborative/no video Collaborative/with video	3.54 3.58	-.05	.11	ns
Collaborative/no video Traditional/no video	3.54 3.64	-.11	.11	ns
Collaborative/no video Traditional/with video	3.54 3.66	-.12	.11	ns
Collaborative/with video Traditional/no video	3.58 3.64	-.07	.11	ns
Collaborative/with video Traditional/with video	3.58 3.66	-.08	.11	ns
Traditional/no video Traditional/with video	3.64 3.66	-.01	.11	ns

(4G) Web credibility

	Mean	Mean Difference	Std. Error	P-value
Collaborative/with video Traditional/with video	3.58 3.62	-.05	.09	ns
Collaborative/no video Collaborative/with video	3.54 3.58	-.04	.09	ns
Collaborative/no video Traditional/no video	3.54 3.64	-.10	.09	ns
Collaborative/no video Traditional/with video	3.54 3.62	-.08	.09	ns
Collaborative/with video Traditional/no video	3.58 3.64	-.06	.09	ns

(4H) Expertise

	Mean	Mean Difference	Std. Error	P-value
Collaborative/no video Collaborative/with video	3.25 3.21	.04	.10	ns
Collaborative/no video Traditional/no video	3.25 3.49	-.25	.10	ns
Collaborative/no video Traditional/with video	3.25 3.44	-.20	.10	ns
Collaborative/with video Traditional/no video	3.21 3.49	-.28	.11	.05
Collaborative/with video Traditional/with video	3.21 3.44	-.23	.10	ns
Traditional/no video Traditional/with video	3.49 3.44	.05	.10s	ns

(4I) Liking

	Mean	Mean Difference	Std. Error	P-value
Collaborative/with video Traditional/no video	3.40 3.45	-.05	.11	ns
Collaborative/with video Traditional/with video	3.40 3.40	.00	.11	ns
Traditional/no video Traditional/with video	3.45 3.40	.05	.11	ns
Collaborative/no video Traditional/with video	3.40 3.40	.00	.11	ns

Table 5   Hierarchical Linear Regressions for Experiment 1: Impact of conversation variables on article credibility in four experimental conditions, after controlling for story topic interest and demographic variables. (Note, control variables shown in model only when significant.)

Traditional story/no video

Blocks of Independent Variables		Std. Beta	Total R^2	Adjusted R^2
Conversation variables	Coor/Homophily	.12		
	Social Presence	.03		
	Interactivity	.29		
	Friendliness	.08		
	Informality	-.26	.21	.05

^ p < .10   * p < .05   ** p < .01

Traditional story/with video

Blocks of Independent Variables		Std. Beta	Total R^2	Adjusted R^2
Conversation variables	Coor/Homophily	.20		
	Social Presence	.13		
	Interactivity	.31*		
	Friendliness	.13		
	Informality	-.04	.22	.06

^ p < .10   * p < .05   ** p < .01

Collaborative story/no video

Blocks of Independent Variables		Std. Beta	Total R^2	Adjusted R^2
Conversation variables	Coor/Homophily	.12		
	Social Presence	-.14		
	Interactivity	.02		
	Friendliness	.51*		
	Informality	-.16	.36	.24

^ p < .10   * p < .05   ** p < .01

Collaborative story/with video

Blocks of Independent Variables		Std. Beta	Total R^2	Adjusted R^2
Conversation variables	Coor/Homophily	.57**		
	Social Presence	-.04		
	Interactivity	.01		
	Friendliness	-.16		
	Informality	-.12	.49	.38

^ p < .10   * p < .05   ** p < .01

Table 6   Hierarchical Linear Regressions for Experiment 1: Impact of conversation variables on Web site credibility in four experimental conditions, after controlling for story topic interest and demographic variables. (Note, control variables shown in model only when significant.)

Traditional story/no video

Blocks of Independent Variables		Std. Beta	Total R^2	Adjusted R^2
Conversation variables	Coor/Homophily	.06		
	Social Presence	-.03		
	Interactivity	.24		
	Friendliness	.12		
	Informality	-.33	.26	.10

^ p < .10   * p < .05   ** p < .01

Traditional story/with video

Blocks of Independent Variables		Std. Beta	Total R^2	Adjusted R^2
Conversation variables	Coor/Homophily	.24		
	Social Presence	.29^		
	Interactivity	.07		
	Friendliness	.09		
	Informality	.13	.06	.05

^ p < .10   * p < .05   ** p < .01

Collaborative story/no video

Blocks of Independent Variables		Std. Beta	Total R^2	Adjusted R^2
Conversation variables	Coor/Homophily	.40**		
	Social Presence	-.25*		
	Interactivity	.01		
	Friendliness	.24		
	Informality	-.25*	.40	.28

^ p < .10   * p < .05   ** p < .01

Collaborative story/with video

Blocks of Independent Variables		Std. Beta	Total R^2	Adjusted R^2
Conversation variables	Coor/Homophily	.58**		
	Social Presence	-.15		
	Interactivity	.17		
	Friendliness	.10		
	Informality	-.24*	.30	.31

^ p < .10   * p < .05   ** p < .01

Table 7   Hierarchical Linear Regressions for Experiment 1: Impact of conversation variables on expertise in four experimental conditions, after controlling for story topic interest and demographic variables. (Note, control variables shown in model only when significant.)

Traditional story/no video

Blocks of Independent Variables		Std. Beta	Total R^2	Adjusted R^2
Conversation variables	Coor/Homophily	-.23		
	Social Presence	.03		
	Interactivity	.12		
	Friendliness	.12		
	Informality	-.15	.23	.07

^ p < .10   * p < .05   ** p < .01

Traditional story/with video

Blocks of Independent Variables		Std. Beta	Total R^2	Adjusted R^2
Conversation variables	Coor/Homophily	.29*		
	Social Presence	.27		
	Interactivity	.24^		
	Friendliness	-.08		
	Informality	.04	.30	.15

^ p < .10   * p < .05   ** p < .01

Collaborative story/no video

Blocks of Independent Variables		Std. Beta	R^2 change	Adjusted R^2
Conversation variables	Coor/Homophily	.19		
	Social Presence	-.03		
	Interactivity	.17		
	Friendliness	.30^		
	Informality	-.37**	.36	.24

^ p < .10   * p < .05   ** p < .01

Collaborative story/with video

Blocks of Independent Variables		Std. Beta	Total R^2	Adjusted R^2
Conversation variables	Coor/Homophily	.57**		
	Social Presence	-.15		
	Interactivity	.23*		
	Friendliness	-.12		
	Informality	.04	.55	.45

^ p < .10   * p < .05   ** p < .01

Table 8   Hierarchical Linear Regressions for Experiment 1: Impact of conversation variables on liking in four experimental conditions, after controlling for story topic interest and demographic variables. (Note, control variables shown in model only when significant.)

Traditional story/no video

Blocks of Independent Variables		Std. Beta	Total R^2	Adjusted R^2
Control variable	Topic interest	.45**	.42	.41
Converation variables	Coor/homophily	.10		
	Social Presence	.02		
	Interactivity	.11		
	Friendliness	.30*		
	Informality	-.02	.56	.47

* $p < .05$ ** $p < .01$

Traditional story/with video

Blocks of Independent Variables		Std. Beta	Total R^2	Adjusted R^2
Control variable	Topic interest	.38**	.44	.33
Conversation variables	Coor/Homophily	.19		
	Social Presence	.08		
	Interactivity	.12		
	Friendliness	.11		
	Informality	.18	.44	.33

^ $p < .10$ * $p < .05$ ** $p < .01$

Collaborative story/no video

Blocks of Independent Variables		Std. Beta	Total R^2	Adjusted R^2
Control variable	Topic Interest	.53**	.34	.33
Conversation variables	Coor/Homophily	.18		
	Social Presence	-.09		
	Interactivity	.23**		
	Friendliness	.31**		
	Informality	-.03	.68	.61

^ $p < .10$ * $p < .05$ ** $p < .01$

Collaborative story/with video

Blocks of Independent Variables		Std. Beta	Total R^2	Adjusted R^2
Control variable	Topic Interest	.48**	.38	.37
Conversation variables	Coor/Homophily	.36**		
	Social Presence	.09		
	Interactivity	-.08		
	Friendliness	-.12		
	Informality	-.10	.57	.48

^ $p < .10$ * $p < .05$ ** $p < .01$

Table 9   Cronbach's alpha for conversation variables (*Coorientation-Homophily, Social Presence, Interactivity, Informality, Friendliness), outcome (dependent) variables (Article Credibility, Web Site Credibility, Expertise, Liking) and control variable (Interest) for each experimental condition in Experiment 2

Variable	Condition	Alpha	Average Alpha
Coorientation/Homophily	Twitter	.91	
	Wikinews	.87	
	Collaborative	.83	
	Average		.87
Social Presence	Twitter	.73	
	Wikinews	.78	
	Collaborative	.80	
	Average		.77
Interactivity	Twitter	.79	
	Wikinews	.85	
	Collaborative	.81	
	Average		.82
Informality	Twitter	.92	
	Wikinews	.90	
	Collaborative	.90	
	Average		.91
Friendliness	Twitter	.82	
	Wikinews	.78	
	Collaborative	.85	
	Average		. 82
Article Credibility	Twitter	.86	
	Wikinews	.91	
	Collaborative	.83	
	Average		. 87
Web Site Credibility	Twitter	.85	
	Wikinews	.81	
	Collaborative	.82	
	Average		.83
Expertise	Twitter	.81	
	Wikinews	.78	
	Collaborative	.83	
	Average		. 81
Liking	Twitter	.89	
	Wikinews	.88	

	Collaborative	.90	
		Average	. 89
(Topic) Interest	Twitter	.78	
	Wikinews	.78	
	Collaborative	.72	
		Average	. 76

* Based on factor analyses, coorientation and homophily were combined but excluding several items.

Table 11   One-Way ANCOVAs (omnibus F tests) for Experiment 2: Impact of story type on dependent variables for all topics, after controlling for topic interest and study/order

| | Story Type | | | | | | |
Variables	Twitter mean (SD)	Wikinews mean (SD)	Collaborative mean (SD)	F	df	Partial Eta Squared	Power
Coorient/ Homophily	3.21 (.59)	3.26 (.51)	3.30 (.44)	.22	2, 196	.00	.08
Social Presence	2.56 (.80)	2.32 (.65)	2.48 (.84	2.19	2, 196	.02	.44
Interactivity	3.66 (.82)	2.58 (.96)	4.00 (.63)	56.42**	2, 196	.37	1.00
Informality	3.02 (.90)	3.56 (.84)	3.40 (.82)	6.43**	2, 196	.06	.90
Friendliness	3.60 (.57)	3.41 (.48)	3.74 (.52)	6.85**	2, 196	.07	.92
Expertise	2.98 (.87)	2.83 (.74)	3.19 (.79)	3.46*	2, 196	.03	.64
Article Credibility	3.34 (.65)	2.94 (.82)	3.60 (.66)	14.59**	2, 196	.13	1.00
Web Site Credibility	3.15 (.63)	2.64 (.71)	3.46 (.60)	27.28**	2, 196	.22	1.00
Liking	3.22 (.84)	3.14 (.86)	3.43 (.87)	1.84	2, 196	.02	,.38

^ p < .10   * p < .05   **p < .01

Tables 12A though 12I: Bonferroni post-hoc tests for conversational indices (coorientation/homophily, social presence, interactivity, informality, friendliness) and outcome variables (article credibility, Web site credibility, expertise, liking) in Experiment 2 conditions, after controlling for study/order and topic interest

(12A) Coorientation/Homophily

	Mean	Mean Difference	Std. Error	P-value
Twitter Wikinews	3.23 3.25	-.02	.09	ns
Twitter Collaborative	3.23 3.29	-.06	.09	ns
Wikinews Collaborative	3.25 3.29	-.04	.09	ns

(12B) Social Presence

	Mean	Mean Difference	Std. Error	P-value
Twitter Wikinews	2.59 2.31	.27	.13	ns
Twitter Collaborative	2.59 2.46	.13	.13	ns
Wikinews Collaborative	2.31 2.46	-.13	.13	ns

(12C) Interactivity

	Mean	Mean Difference	Std. Error	P-value
Twitter Wikinews	3.68 2.58	1.11	.14	.00
Twitter Collaborative	3.68 4.00	-.29	.14	ns
Wikinews Collaborative	2.58 4.00	-1.40	.14	.00

(12D) Informality

	Mean	Mean Difference	Std. Error	P-value
Twitter Wikinews	3.04 3.55	-.52	.15	.00
Twitter Collaborative	3.04 3.40	-.36	.15	.05
Wikinews Collaborative	3.55 3.40	.16	.15	ns

(12E) Friendly

	Mean	Mean Difference	Std. Error	P-value
Twitter Wikinews	3.62 3.41	.22	.09	.04
Twitter Collaborative	3.62 3.72	-.10	.09	ns
Wikinews Collaborative	3.41 3.72	-.32	.09	.00

(12F) Article Credibility

	Mean	Mean Difference	Std. Error	P-value
Twitter Wikinews	3.35 2.94	.41	.12	.00
Twitter Collaborative	3.35 3.60	-.25	.12	ns
Wikinews Collaborative	2.94 3.60	-.66	.12	.00

(12G) Web Credibility

	Mean	Mean Difference	Std. Error	P-value
Twitter Wikinews	3.16 2.64	.53	.11	.00
Twitter Collaborative	3.16 3.45	-.29	.11	.03
Wikinews Collaborative	2.64 3.45	-.82	.11	.00

(12H) Expertise

	Mean	Mean Difference	Std. Error	P-value
Twitter Wikinews	3.00 2.92	.18	.14	ns
Twitter Collaborative	3.00 3.18	-.18	.14	ns
Wikinews Collaborative	2.82 3.18	-.36	.14	.03

(12I) Liking

	Mean	Mean Difference	Std. Error	P-value
Twitter Wikinews	3.27 3.13	.14	.15	ns
Twitter Collaborative	3.27 3.40	-.12	.15	ns
Wikinews Collaborative	3.13 3.40	-.26	.15	ns

Table 13   Hierarchical Linear Regressions for Experiment 2: Impact of conversation variables (coorientation/homophily, social presence, interactivity, informality, friendliness) on article credibility in three experimental conditions, after controlling for study/order, story topic interest and demographic variables

Twitter

Blocks of Independent Variables		Std. Beta	Total R^2	Adjusted R^2
Conversation variables	Coor/Homophily	.51**		
	Social Presence	.05		
	Interactivity	.28**		
	Friendliness	-.19		
	Informality	-.01	.34	.20

^ p < .10   * p < .05   ** p < .01

Wikinews

Blocks of Independent Variables		Std. Beta	Total R^2	Adjusted R^2
Conversation variables	Coor/Homophily	.37**		
	Social Presence	.06		
	Interactivity	.46**		
	Friendliness	.08		
	Informality	-.14		
+ Control variable	Interest	-.28*	.50	.39

^ p < .10   * p < .05   ** p < .01
+ Variable only significant in combination with all others, so variance explained reflected in final row

Collaborative

Blocks of Independent Variables		Std. Beta	Total R^2	Adjusted R^2
Control variable	Grade	*-.39	.35	.21
	Coor/Homophily	.21		
	Social Presence	.18		
	Interactivity	.07		
	Friendliness	-.18		
	Informality	-.22	.35	.21

^ p < .10   * p < .05   ** p < .01

Table 14   Hierarchical Linear Regressions for Experiment 2: Impact of conversation variables (coorientation/homophily, social presence, interactivity, informality, friendliness) on Web site credibility in three experimental conditions, after controlling for study/order, story topic interest and demographic variables

Twitter

Blocks of Independent Variables		Std. Beta	Total R^2	Adjusted R^2
	Coor/Homophily	.49**		
	Social Presence	-.03		
	Interactivity	.25*		
	Friendliness	.06		
	Informality	-.34**		
+ Control variable	Grade	.43**	.49	.37

^ p < .10   * p < .05   ** p < .01
+ Variable only significant in combination with all others, so variance explained reflected in final row

Wikinews

Blocks of Independent Variables		Std. Beta	Total R^2	Adjusted R^2
Conversation variables	Coor/Homophily	.39**		
	Social Presence	.05		
	Interactivity	.45**		
	Friendliness	.02		
	Informality	-.17		
+ Control variable	Interest	-.24	.48	.37

^ p < .10   * p < .05   ** p < .01
+ Variable only significant in combination with all others, so variance explained reflected in final row

Collaborative

Blocks of Independent Variables		Std. Beta	Total R^2	Adjusted R^2
Conversation variables	Coor/Homophily	.25^		
	Social Presence	.06		
	Interactivity	.10		
	Friendliness	-.30*		
	Informality	-.01	.29	.13

^ p < .10   * p < .05   ** p < .01

Table 15 Hierarchical Linear Regressions for Experiment 2: Impact of conversation variables (coorientation/homophily, social presence, interactivity, informality, friendliness) on expertise in three experimental conditions, after controlling for study/order, story topic interest and demographic variables

Twitter

Blocks of Independent Variables		Std. Beta	Total R^2	Adjusted R^2
Conversation variables	Coor/Homophily	.17		
	Social Presence	.03		
	Interactivity	.25*		
	Friendliness	.11		
	Informality	.00	.42	.29

^ p < .10   * p < .05   ** p < .01

Wikinews

Blocks of Independent Variables		Std. Beta	Total R^2	Adjusted R^2
Conversation variables	Coor/Homophily	.36**		
	Social Presence	.08		
	Interactivity	.41**		
	Friendliness	-.02		
	Informality	-.39**	.60	.51

^ p < .10   * p < .05   ** p < .01

Collaborative

Blocks of Independent Variables		Std. Beta	Total R^2	Adjusted R^2
Conversation variables	Coor/Homophily	.38**		
	Social Presence	.06		
	Interactivity	.07		
	Friendliness	.11		
	Informality	-.22	.39	.26

^ p < .10   * p < .05   ** p < .01

Table 16   Hierarchical Linear Regressions for Experiment 2: Impact of conversation
                           variables (coorientation/homophily, social presence, interactivity, informality,
                           friendliness) on liking in three experimental conditions, after controlling for
                           study/order, story topic interest and demographic variables

Twitter

Blocks of Independent Variables		*Std. Beta*	*Total R²*	*Adjusted R²*
Conversation variables	Coor/Homophily	.44**		
	Social Presence	.10		
	Interactivity	.19^		
	Friendliness	.00		
	Informality	.11	.58	.49

^ p < .10   * p < .05   ** p < .01

Wikinews

Blocks of Independent Variables		*Std. Beta*	*Total R²*	*Adjusted R²*
Conversation variables	Study/Order	-.19*	.16	.14
	Coor/Homophily	.37**		
	Social Presence	.12		
	Interactivity	.32**		
	Friendliness	.04		
	Informality	-.08	.65	.57

^ p < .10   * p < .05   ** p < .01

Collaborative

Blocks of Independent Variables		*Std. Beta*	*Total R²*	*Adjusted R²*
Conversation variables	Coor/Homophily	**.36		
	Social Presence	.17		
	Interactivity	.06		
	Friendliness	-.17		
	Informality	-.16	.49	.37

^ p < .10   * p < .05   **p < .01

VITA

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