

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.