# Journal Details

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#ISOJ The Journal of the International Symposium on Online Journalism is an international journal devoted to advancing the scholarship in the area of journalism and innovative technologies. The editors invite manuscripts reporting original research, methodologies relevant to the study of journalism and innovative technologies (online, tablets, mobile platforms, etc.), critical syntheses of research and theoretical perspectives on journalism today. The journal maintains a social scientific and broad behavioral focus. We encourage submissions from scholars outside and within the journalism and mass communication discipline.

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# Guest Editors' Note

*The ISOJ journal co-editors invited Dr. Boczkowski and Dr. Mitchelstein to be the guest editors of a special themed issue for 2019. They identified the special theme, Digital media and democracy for the Americas for this issue. This special themed issue reflects papers that were blind peer-reviewed for the conference and journal that reflected the theme.*

# Digital media and democracy in the Americas: Renewing a journalism of accountability for extraordinary times

*By Eugenia Mitchelstein, associate professor and director of the communication degree, University of San Andrés, Argentina*
*and*
*Pablo J. Boczkowski, professor, Department of Communication Studies, Northwestern University*

Along with setting the social and political agenda and representing a wide range of public opinions, one of the most important roles of the news media in democratic regimes (Waisbord, 2010) is to hold the powerful, in particular government officials, accountable for their actions (Hughes, 2006; Iyengar and McGrady, 2007; Peruzotti & Smulovitz, 2006; Porto, 2012). Accountability refers to the ability of voters to "discern whether governments are acting in their interest, and sanction them appropriately" (Manin, Przeworski & Stokes, 1999, p. 40). Journalism is an essential actor in the modern process of accountability, conveying to the citizenry information about government decisions and actions that are not always directly available to the public.

In Latin America, print journalists' role as watchdogs has been an essential component of the process of democratization that unfolded during the last two decades of the twentieth century (Alves, 2005; Waisbord, 2000). Scholarship shows that, as democracies

became more stable, and the news industry was hit by dwindling advertising revenues and subscription numbers, watchdog journalism—which tends to be resource-intensive—suffered greatly (Brito, 2003; Gill, 2006; Waisbord, 2009). The diminished importance of watchdog journalism in online news outlets might explain the relative scarcity of studies on the intersection of digital journalism and accountability. However, the three papers included in this special issue on "Digital Media and Democracy in the Americas" for #ISOJ, the official journal of the International Symposium on Online Journalism, examine different instances of journalists holding the government accountable during exceptional circumstances, such as the 2018 FIFA World Cup in soccer-loving Uruguay, natural disasters in Chile, and limits to press freedom in Cuba.

Matías Dodel and his colleagues compare Uruguayan media coverage of the annual revisions of that country's budget bill in 2017 and 2018. They do so through data mining of the three main online news sites in Uruguay. Their account reveals a significant decrease in daily reporting about this crucial instance of accountability during the 2018 FIFA World Cup, in which Uruguay reached the quarterfinals. They find that during the tournament, in a country whose national identity is intimately related to soccer, digital news sites devoted less space to reporting government actions. Rather than following traditional occupational norms of reporting heavily about public affairs events (Boczkowski & Mitchelstein, 2013), these three media sites focused on presumed audience demand for soccer-related items. Thus, the authors conclude that Uruguayan institutions should "consider the externalities of conducting critical democratic debates during sporting mega-events."

Magdalena Saldaña also examines online news coverage of government actions during an extraordinary event: the major earthquake that hit Chile in 2014. Interviews with journalists working for three news sites indicate that they concentrated on the political consequences of this natural disaster and tended to scrutinize President Michelle Bachelet's actions, despite the fact that there were very few casualties and government management of the crisis was competent. Moreover, her analysis shows that journalists chose to ignore traditional human-interest stories. In addition, "despite the high levels of social media penetration in the country, Chilean journalists do not turn to social media to look for alternative sources" or accounts of the earthquake, and instead used social media to contact official sources they already knew. The focus on the president reflected both reliance on institutional sources, and the right-wing media organizations' willingness to expose center-left Bachelet. Thus, Saldaña concludes that, although Chilean journalists worked to hold the president accountable for her actions, they did so pressured by the market orientation and ideological stance of their employers.

The national political culture also influenced the accountability practices undertaken by the 35 young journalists in Cuba interviewed by Shearon Roberts. On traditional state-run print platforms, reporters practiced limited and relatively tolerated modes of critical-constructive public discourse. However, novel digital platforms provided a space for journalists to exercise investigative reporting and communicate their findings to a wider audience. Roberts proposes that Cuban journalists used old (print) media and new (digital) platforms as a "two-pronged strategy" that allowed them to practice "real" journalism

that included truth-telling in an authoritarian country that lacks freedom of the press. Rather than acting as passive intermediaries for government-approved discourse, Cuban journalists circumvented institutional constraints, which, as Shearon argues, "is in itself a form of agency within the confines of tolerated discourse by the state."

The three cases examined hail from very different countries: Chile and Uruguay are established democracies (Polity IV, 2011) with freedom of the press (Freedom House, 2018), while Cuba is an autocracy where all the leading independent news sites "have effectively been blocked or threatened to be blocked by the state in the last five years," as Roberts makes it clear in her piece. However, all the authors included in this special issue highlight that government censorship is not the only possible limitation to the press. In Uruguay, market pressures and presumed interests of the audience may have contributed to decrease journalistic oversight of government actions. In Chile, past dictatorial government actions, such as persecuting left-wing journalists and granting business advantages to families and corporations running right-wing media outlets, resulted in a highly concentrated media landscape in which reporters are pressured to follow a commercial model of journalism that fits with their employers' ideological outlook.

These reportorial practices, as Barbie Zelizer insightfully reminds us in her postscript, contrast with somewhat insular Anglo-American ideals of journalism, and serve to highlight the non-reciprocal relationship between news and democracy:

> While one might argue that journalism has been historically necessary for democracy, the opposite assertion does not hold to the same degree. In fact, circumstances show that democracy has not been necessary for journalism, and the idea that democracy is the lifeline of journalism has not been supported on the ground. (Zelizer, 2013, p. 465)

Apart from underscoring the limitations of taking for granted one model of journalism and democracy to conduct research in various contexts, the papers published in this special issue present two very fruitful streams for both scholarship and activism—what Zelizer, in her contribution to this issue, aptly sums up as "the fundamental question of how to resist."

First, these papers illuminate the fraught relationship between news and democracy, at a time in which skepticism towards media and information is increasing in many corners of the world. For instance, only 21% of Americans said they trust the news media "a lot" in 2018, and 68% of them believed that news media tend to favor one side of the ideological spectrum when presenting social and political issues (Gottfried, Stocking & Grieco, 2018). In a similar survey, only 32% of respondents in the United Kingdom said they trusted the news media (Mitchell, et al., 2018). These low levels of trust in the news media in the "so called foundational democracies" might be influenced by what Zelizer terms "U.S. and U.K. journalism's crippled responses to Brexit and the ascent of Trump." Growing distrust in journalism can also be understood as part and parcel of what one of us has called a "post-institutional era," in which "the power of institutions is in decline and that of social movements is on the rise," thus leading to the weakening of "the cultural

infrastructure of how the media has made knowledge" (Boczkowski, 2018a, para. 6). The cases presented in this issue, from countries in which the news media have not always been considered fair and unbiased sources of information, either due to authoritarian pressures or to corporate interests interfering with the news production process, might work as a projection of the future of journalism in institutionalized democracies. Most importantly, actions taken by journalists to resist these pressures might also signal a way forward for reporters dealing with authoritarian tendencies in the societies and governments they cover.

Second, these accounts provide a window into how digital journalism, in particular, might renew modalities and sources of information availability that reach both journalists and their audiences. Blogs in Cuba allow young journalists to publish news beyond the scope of what is officially sanctioned for print and audiovisual media. In turn, their work in these unofficial outlets enriches their reporting on state-run outlets. However, increased availability of information does not necessarily lead to broader news coverage. In Uruguay, the budget revision in Parliament received comparatively less journalistic attention during the 2018 FIFA World Cup than during the previous year. This was not due to lack of information, but to the dominant focus of leading news outlets on soccer rather than on government actions. In Chile, the myriad of accounts of the 2014 earthquake on social media barely registered on news sites, which continued its routine of using only official sources in their articles. Digital technology proved to be more disruptive for journalists working in an authoritarian regime, than for reporters in democratic countries—who labor with fewer overt constraints and greater reliability of broadband access. News producers facing pressures from either governments, corporations or other collective actors would do well to use whatever technological tools they have at their disposal to resist these pressures and tell the stories that need to be told.

Methodologically, digital media enabled big data analysis in the paper authored by Dodel and his collaborators, helping them compare all the news articles published during the budget revision in two different years, rather than either a sample or the top placed articles. However, Saldaña's and Shearon's decision to conduct interviews with journalists highlight the value of small sample qualitative approaches to understand reporters' opinions and motivations. Just as online news reporters take advantage of different media to source and publish their work, the best digital media scholarship is conducted by integrating and combining different methodologies to further our understanding of the production and consumption of online news and its potential contribution to society.

The three papers call attention to the disconnect between the mainstream of communication scholarship and the actual conditions in which journalism is practiced in many parts of the world. This relates to the frequent difficulty of this scholarship to identify both authoritarian practices even within democratic regimes, and the acts of resistance against government, corporate, and social pressure. If the advanced economies of the West have anything to learn from the rest, the studies published in this volume indicate that risk is not only clear-cut authoritarianism, but also authoritarian practices present even in within the central institutions of a democratic polity. Rather than waiting for fully fledged autocracies to appear where democratic life was once celebrated, scholars and

journalists alike should be on the lookout to "arrest the creep of authoritarianism," as Zelizer proposes in her postscript to this special issue. Pressures and constraints on the media, whether external or self-inflicted, are not exclusively a matter of authoritarian governments. If autocracies routinely censor the press, journalists in each democratic country face their own set of obstacles to speak truth to power and relay that information to their audiences. While, according to Shearon's work, Cuban journalists face censorship on a daily basis, Saldaña finds that corporate pressures and reportorial practices are hampering news work in Chile, and Dodel and his colleagues suggest that popular passions, such as soccer, might also negatively affect journalistic practices in Uruguay. To paraphrase Leo Tolstoy's (2002) famous dictum at the beginning of Anna Karenina, dictatorships are all alike, they all control journalists; every democracy limits reportorial work in its own way.

How should journalism resist authoritarian creep? What role should reporters play in modern liberal societies? How to integrate the institutional practices traditionally undertaken by journalists with the growing influence of movements and the concomitant distrust of institutions, including those that are the backbone of liberal democracy?

Journalism is still one of the most powerful tools to convey not only institutional rationality and practices but also emotions. Rorty proposes that the main role of journalists is to put suffering into language "to help us become less cruel" (1989, p. 141), that is, to make us more accountable to ourselves and to foster solidarity. Thus, journalists should become storytellers on behalf of those who suffer injustice or cruelty. Examples of journalists following and nurturing the liberal traditions can be found in Upton Sinclair's account of immigrant workers in the Chicago slaughterhouses, and also in the Life magazine photo journalists who "filled the pages of Life magazine with pictures of the National Guard beating up striking United Automobile Workers" (Rorty, 1999, p. 54). As Ettema and Glasser argue:

> Listening to lots of different people is essential for Rorty because that is all that we really can do to build a life together. There are no philosophical founda tions—no insight into what is eternally true and no consensus on what is universally human that can secure freedom and justice. There can only be an enlarged and strengthened sense of human solidarity that emerges as we listen to lots of different people tell their stories. (1994, p. 6)

Although Rorty's work was written well before the current crises of institutions, journalism, and expertise, his acknowledgement of the power of human voices and emotions acquire even greater urgency at this particular juncture in which nationalistic, xenophobic, and tribal impulses, fear of economic downturns, and lack of trust in institutions threaten the foundations of democracy in many parts of the world. The combination of the financial crisis in journalism with the political crisis of representative democracies in countries as disparate as France and Brazil highlight the importance of bringing as many the voices as possible to the table. Citizens all over the world increasingly live their lives not with communication devices but within digital environments (Boczkowski, 2018b). In a context in which the physical, social, and media realities seamlessly integrate, "emo-

tion is becoming a much more important dynamic in how news is produced and con-sumed" (Deuze & Becket, 2016, p.2). Therefore, opening "spaces in the news for voices representing the interests and concerns of a greater variety of groups increasingly dis-satisfied with the traditional institutions of society" and shifting "from rationalizing to legiti-mating emotion" (Boczkowski, 2018a, para. 14) would work to strengthen both journalism and democratic cohabitation. The constraints faced by Chilean journalists to incorporate unofficial, human-interest, sources in their coverage of the earthquake; the relative success of Cuban reporters to convey transformations in Cuba through the voices of the new generation of trovadores; and the power of soccer as the origin of Uruguayan national identity highlight the importance of a digital journalism that takes advantage of the possibility to gather, analyze, and combine a plurality of voices and opinions to keep governments and societies accountable by telling the stories that deserve to be told.

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# A case of reverse-agenda setting? How 2018's FIFA World Cup coverage reduced media reporting of Uruguayan budget bill's yearly revision

## By Matías Dodel, Federico Comesaña, and Daniel Blanc

*Through agenda setting, news media become critical for the visibility of political account-ability instances. This article aims to provide statistical evidence for a scenario in which news media shift their reporting agenda anticipating the public's interests or newswor-thiness of an extraneous event (the 2018 FIFA World Cup), reducing the coverage of a critical one-time-a-year accountability instance (the "Rendición de cuentas"). Based on scrapping all publications from the main Uruguayan news media conglomerates a lagged dependent variable Poisson model was fitted on the "Rendición de cuentas" daily news reporting. Findings signal the necessity to consider the externalities of conducting critical democratic debates during mega-events.*

News media reporting plays several critical roles in modern liberal democracies (Lawrence & Suddaby, 2006). This article will focus only on one of these: their potential to modify the exposure, societal discussion and debate of diverse policy issues.

In a perfect-world scenario, citizens are aware and monitoring all critical topics plausible to affect their lives. Nonetheless, in reality a plethora of issues compete for a finite agenda space, which may shift public's attention or news media interests away (Dader, 1990).

This article studies one of these cases, by assessing the effects of an extraneous sport event (the 2018 FIFA World Cup) on the report of a critical one-time-a-year national accountability event in Uruguay: the Uruguayan budget bill's yearly revision, known as "Rendición de cuentas" (see Moraes, Chasquetti & Bergara, 2005 for further details on how the bill's yearly revision fit the Budgetary Process of the Public Sector).

Whereas there is an important cluster of literature on how media reporting sets public agendas on a plethora of issues (McCombs & Valenzuela, 2007), there is consistently less non-anecdotal evidence on news media shifting their reporting agendas anticipating the public's interests (Russel et al., 2014). This article aims to contribute to the literature

by providing empirical evidence of a case of this phenomenon.

The article proposes that the 2018's FIFA World Cup produced a change in the trends of the reporting of the Uruguayan budget bill's yearly revision. In order to provide evidence for this, we developed software crawlers which scrapped all publications within the websites of the three biggest Uruguayan news media conglomerates (El País, El Observador & Montevideo Portal) for an almost two-year period. We then identified all publications concerning the budget bill's yearly revision in order to analyze and fit a lagged dependent variable Poisson model on the count of "Rendición de cuentas'" daily news. We compare the budget bill's yearly revision reporting with and without the effect of the World Cup near its parliamentary entry, providing statistical evidence for a significant decrease of the daily reporting during the 2018 World Cup.

## Agenda Setting

Rogers and Dearing (1988) identify two research traditions concerning the study of agenda setting: public agenda setting by the mass media, and policy agenda setting. Rogers and Dearing(1988) postulate that both traditions are nurtured by Cohen's 1963 seminal work, but whereas the latter started earlier, the former resulted more prolific.

The mass media and public agenda setting's literature conceives agenda setting as the effect of media reporting by setting public agendas more than public opinions itself; "telling people what to think about" not "what to think" (Cohen, 1963; McCombs & Shaw, 1972; Russel et al., 2014). In the words of Dader (1990, p. 295), the agenda setting effect is "... nothing but the orientation, conduction or channeling that the minds of citizens suffer towards a repertoire of issues of public concern, to the detriment of others that are not mentioned or highlighted." Exposure over time of a reduced number of issues or people, makes them prevalent in the minds of individuals and public opinion (McCombs & Valenzuela, 2007).

In the words of some of the fathers of the agenda setting theory, the core concepts of are: an object agenda, and attribute agenda, and the transfer of salience between pairs of agendas (McCombs, Shaw, & Weaver, 2014, p.782). These authors (McCombs et al., 2014) identify seven facets of the development of the agenda-setting theory in its first 50 years: a) the first level of agenda setting (i.e. the salience of objects); b) a second level, concerning the attributes of the salient objects (see Kim, Scheufele & Shanahan, 2002; McCombs & Valenzuela, 2007); c) a third level of agenda setting focalizing in the networked impact of previous levels; d) psychological bases of agenda setting and the notion of need for orientation; e) the consequences of agenda setting for attitudes, opinions and behaviors; f) the merging of media, public and personal views to create satisfying pictures of the world; and g) the origins and determinants of media agendas.

Our article aims to contribute to the understanding of the latter only, the supply side of the agendas we may add, by assessing the peculiar scenario previously described. McCombs et al. (2014, p. 782) identify several factors affecting media agendas such as the "…prevailing cultural and ideological environment to news sources…", the influence

and relationships within the media, the norms and routines of journalism, or the individual characteristics of journalists.

Our study aims to provide evidence on the plausibility of perceived newsworthiness, or news media shifting their reporting agendas anticipating the public's interests (Russel et al., 2014), as another determinant of media agenda.

## Reverse-agenda setting and digital technologies

The traditional understanding of agenda setting proposes that, under finite time and space to cover an almost unlimited number of issues and events, news media make some decision and focus their attention only on some topics (Dader, 1990, p. 295). Thus, the relationship's direction goes from media to the public, varying across issues and audiences, in the strengths and lags of media effects over public opinion (McCombs, 2005; McCombs & Shaw, 1993).

While the correlations between media and public agendas has already been attested, besides scarce anecdotal evidence, the inverse causal direction of this relationship has been far less studied, and results in more ambiguous findings (Aruguete, 2017; Russel et al., 2014).

With the advent of the Internet and online news media reporting, two innovations enabled the improvement of the study of this alternative path of effects. On one side, digital technologies allow researchers to assess almost in-real-time influence or contagion of social media trends to news media reporting and vice versa (Russel et al., 2014). Russel et al. (2014) provided empirical evidence that agenda setting does not follow a one-way pattern from traditional media to individuals, at least concerning political issues in the United States. Aruguete (2017) reviewed the literature that discusses theoretical and empirical consequences of Agenda Setting theory in the relationship between traditional media and new media, broadly corroborating Russel et al.'s (2014) findings in wider contexts. Nonetheless, as most studies have been purely correlational, Aruguete (2017) warns that finding content of one agenda within another agenda does not yield information about its potential to influence.

 The second innovation provided by digital technologies refers to the potential of "big data" techniques which contribute to improve the accuracy of time stamping, text analysis and time analyses for two or more issues competing for new media attention at the same period. This innovation guides the research design of this article.

## Political accountability, transparency and news reporting

Media are not the only source of information about public issues, as the relationship with families, friends and colleagues also informs one's world. Thus, some issues are present in the daily life of individuals while others, mostly introduced by the media (McCombs et al., 2014). As a result, the less present a certain topic is in our daily lives, the more one will turn to the media as a source of information (McCombs & Valenzuela, 2007). In the

case studied in this article, the role of media as the main information source to common citizens (i.e. not politically militant) seems to be even more prevalent, as the budget bill's yearly revision is a political accountability and/or public transparency issue seldom to be discussed in private or family settings.

At its most basic and general level, accountability can be defined as an act or situation in which actors and/or institutions explain or divulge certain actions or situations to a forum or public: an exercise of public transparency. Political accountability is publicly relevant as it can trigger diverse responses from the public sphere and have relevant consequences for democratic nations (Strömberg, 2015).

Nonetheless, political actors are more prone to communicate by themselves the good news than the bad news; this is why objective or transparency political accountability instances are critical. The literature signals that responses to real accountability exercises are of concern for politics, because they may derive in sanctions ranging from the general disapproval of the population to the need to withdraw from the public sphere (Jacobs & Schillemans, 2016).

The media are characterized as having a specific role to play in this arena. Some authors even argue that accountability is one of the most significant social functions of media (Lawrence & Suddaby, 2006). For example, Strömberg (2015) proposes that when the media interact with greater insistence on the elaboration of policies and generate a logic of permanent scrutiny, it is healthier for the democratic system since more information is transmitted to citizens.

Nevertheless, the relevance of the media with respect to accountability has been viewed differently within the literature. While some consider that its role is increasing both in size and specificity (Bovens, 2007), others have argued that there is no clear evidence supporting the claim (Monika et al, 2014). This work does not discuss these issues, but may inform regarding some risks for the accountability and transparency reporting agenda in the form of competing agenda topics or issues.

### News media report, "fútbol" and national identity in Uruguay

The effect of mega-sports events on national interests is not new within the literature (Evans & Kelley, 2002; Gift & Miner, 2017; Van Hilvoorde & Elling & Stokvis, 2010), particularly for South American countries in which "fútbol" (soccer) has a strong cultural relevance at national levels (Amoedo & Queirolo, 2013; Mitchelstein et al., 2017).

Fútbol is a particularly sensitive topic for Uruguayans, partly due to two historical World Cup victories in 1930 and 1950 serving as the basis of Uruguayans' national identity and the narrative of its modern heroes' myths (Giulianotti, 1999; Maneiro & Marchi, 2015). As the 1950's national team manager is credited to have said, "Other countries have their history, Uruguay has its football" (as quoted in Giulianotti, 1999).

Under a World Cup scenario in which the national team had perceived chances to win/

advance to the final rounds (Uruguay advanced to quarter-finals, keeping the national team in competition for three of the four weeks of the tournament), it is feasible that journalists and/or new media's editors could have shifted the agenda prioritizing FIFA's World Cup by "anticipating or estimating public interests," a premise deemed implausible by McCombs and Shaw's original agenda setting theory (Russel et al., 2014 p. 134).

## Research Hypotheses

The research objectives that guide this study are concise: to provide empirical evidence for a reverse agenda setting-like effect. Consequently, the article presents only two hypotheses to be tested. The study's main hypothesis (**H1**) proposes that daily count of "Rendición de cuentas" reports will be significantly reduced during 2018's World Cup compared to the same period in 2017 (without the mega-event).

A second hypothesis (**H2**) refers to the relevance of the budget bill's yearly revision entry to the parliament for the "Rendición de cuentas" reporting. The researchers expect an increase in the trend of the daily count of "Rendición de cuentas" reporting towards its entry to the parliament (**H2a**), as well as a decrease in this number after the bill enters to the legislative body (**H2b**).

## Method

### Data collection

Using data mining techniques, the researchers developed software crawlers that scraped all publications within the website of three of the four biggest Uruguayan news media conglomerates: *El País* (www.elpais.com.uy), *El Observador* (www.elobservador.com.uy) and Montevideo Portal (www.montevideo.com.uy). The researchers created this list based on the IAB 2016 Report's ranking of unique browsers entries to Internet media companies in Uruguay (IAB Uruguay, 2016). The other member of this group, Subrayado (www.subrayado.com.uy), was omitted from the data collection because it publishes content predominantly in video format, functioning as the web portal of one of the main broadcast news shows in the Uruguayan open air TV (Subrayado on Canal 10).

 All text and images from the websites were scrapped, developing three different algorithms for the task, based on the "R" coding language and using the library Rvest. Besides data for news items as a whole, based on Boolean search terms we identified all publications concerning budget bill's yearly revision.

### Design

The study's research design takes advantage of a quasi-natural experiment. The budget bill's yearly revision coincides by mere chance and only sporadically with FIFA's World

Cup, held every four years. In other terms, every four or more years an agenda space dispute occurs between sports (World Cup) and government transparency issues (budget bill's yearly revision), where neither government nor news media are able to modify the time and length of the two competing events. Consequently, comparing the budget bill's yearly revision reporting of two years, one with and another without the effect of the World Cup, will enable to test for this reverse agenda setting effect.

In order to contrast this hypothesis, we fit a lagged dependent variable Poisson model on the count of "Rendición de cuentas'" daily news items.

Additional decisions were taken to limit the model's time scope. Because it is probable that several factors affect the news cycle far away from the budget bill's yearly revision entry to the parliament (see Figure 1), we chose to focus exclusively on a time frame close to the parliamentary entry: approximately two months before, and two months after the entry, in each of the two years for which we collected data (2017 and 2018).

Thus, the strategy consists of two steps. As a first step, a test of identical models for two different series (2017 and 2018) were conducted in order to achieve reasonable levels of fit, controlling/correcting for time-series parameter violations, as well as to test **H2a** and **H2b** related to the trend of the budget bill's yearly revision entry to the parliament. These models do not include any reference to the World Cup.

In a second step, a nested model for the 2018 series only was conducted, including the World Cup period as an additional explanatory variable in the nested lagged dependent variable Poisson model. If the hypothesis is correct, the second 2018 model would improve the first 2018's model fit as well as its explanatory power.

## Measures

### Dependent variable

### Count of "Rendición de cuentas" daily news items

The dependent variable is the count of all daily "Rendición de cuentas" news items. Whereas democratic accountability can be understood as a theme under the agenda setting literature, the researchers opted to work with the Uruguayan budget bill's yearly revision entry to parliament, understanding it as an event that may trigger discussions about governmental accountability and budget distribution (Dader, 1990, p. 302).

Using boolean search terms, the researchers identified all publications concerning the budget bill's yearly revision in each of the three news sites. This was further refined by eliminating potential news items referring to other types of accountability processes. As in Spanish the term "Rendición de cuentas" can be used also to denote any type of

accountability or evaluation-like instance, the researchers looked case-by-case into uncommon news categories in which the term appeared, such as sports and show business. If the use of the term was related to the budget bill's yearly revision, the news item was kept. If not, the entry was deleted and the variable was refined.

### Independent variables

The selected independent variables refer to the World Cup time period, a dummy variable for the days during which the 2018's FIFA World Cup was taking place; the days to budget bill's yearly revision entry to the parliament, a negative integer variable which increases its value the closer to the date in which the budget bill's yearly revision entered to the parliament in each year (value = 0); and the days since budget bill's yearly revision entry to the parliament, a positive integer variable which increases its value the further to the date in which the budget bill's yearly revision entered to the parliament in each year (value = 0).

### Proxy variables

Additionally, two other variables common to time series analyses were used in the models: a one-order lag of the dependent variable in order to get rid of the autocorrelation, and dummy variables indicating the day of the week to correct for news cycle-related seasonality issues (Keele & Kelly, 2006; Wooldridge, 2010).

## Results

Table 1 shows a summary of the news items published by each of the news media websites during each year until September 8, 2018, the last available data point in the analysis (analyses were conducted during September and October 2018).

As the table shows, *El País* has a significantly higher count of news items as a whole, as well as "Rendición de cuentas" news. *El Observador* has a lower rate of daily news items of the three, but has more news items on "Rendición de cuentas" news items than Montevideo Portal. While we will not address this issue here, we hypothesize these differences in favor of *El País* and *El Observador* in relation to the count of the budget bill's years revision news items have to do with their origins and present status as traditional news media outlets (their parent companies still produce printed newspapers).

Table 1. Count of daily news items by news portal

| News Media | News items | | | Rendición de cuentas' news items | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 2017 | 2018 | TOTAL | 2017 | 2018 | TOTAL |
| El País | 27,294 | 30,273 | 57,567 | 615 | 553 | 1,168 |
| El Observador | 18,563 | 19,355 | 37,918 | 444 | 366 | 810 |
| Montevideo Portal | 19,091 | 22,473 | 41,564 | 162 | 204 | 366 |
| TOTAL | 64,948 | 72,101 | 137,049 | 1,221 | 1,123 | 2,344 |

*NOTE: Data until September 8 of each year.*

Additionally, Table 1 shows that whereas the count of news items increased in the three news media sites and as a whole between 2017 and 2018, the reporting of "Rendición de Cuentas" was stable as a whole in the two years, decreased for *El País* and *El Observador*, and increased for *Montevideo Portal*.

Figure 1 shows the timeline graph of the count of "Rendición de cuentas" daily news items across the whole period for which the data was collected: January 1, 2017, to September 8, 2017. The figure shows the World Cup period as well as the dates in which the budget bill's yearly revision entered the parliament in 2017 (June 20) and 2018 (June, 30).

Whereas the graph has considerable noise due to the daily reporting variance, it allows one to see a positive trend in relation to "Rendición de cuentas"' before its entry to the parliament (see the trend line).
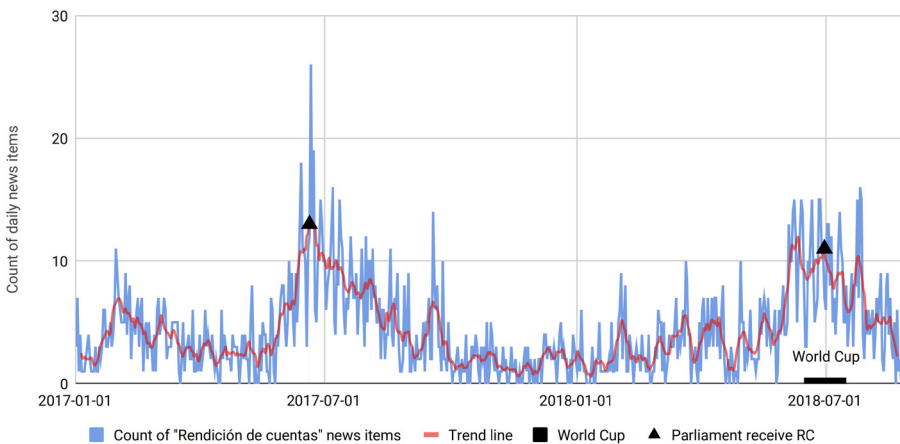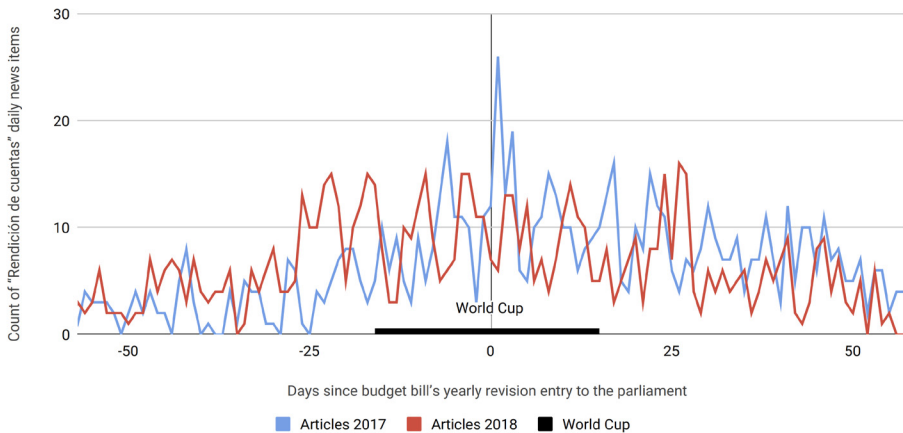


**Figure 1:** Count of "Rendición de cuentas" daily news items

Figure 2 presents the same data but zooming in on the two months prior to and after the "Rendición de cuentas" entry to parliament. Moreover, the figure compares 2017 and 2018 using the days to and from "Rendición de cuentas" entry to parliament to create the time series (zero in 2017 refers to June 20, and in 2018 to June, 30). The World Cup period is signaled in the figure. Figure 2 shows that while "Rendición de cuentas" news reporting follows a similar pattern for both years, as **H2** predicted, 2018's count appears to be higher before the World Cup period compared to 2017's, but not during the event. Nonetheless, the relations are not completely clear and visual analyses are insufficient to assess our hypotheses with statistical certainty.



**Figure 2:** Annual comparison of "Rendición de cuentas" daily news items

## Predicting "Rendición de cuentas" reporting

Table 2 shows the fitting of two identical lagged dependent variable Poisson models on the count of "Rendición de cuentas" daily news items for two different series (2017 and 2018).

These models are not nested and regress the dependent count variable by two key independent variables from **H2** by assessing a trend related to the budget bill's yearly revision entry to the parliament (*days to* and *days since*), as well as a one-order lag of the dependent variable to eliminate the dependent variable error terms' autocorrelation, and six dummy variables (seven minus the reference category) indicating the day of the week to correct for a day-of-the-week-related seasonality in news reporting (Keele & Kelly, 2006; Wooldridge, 2010).

Table 2. Predicting daily news items of the Uruguayan budget bill's yearly revision (2017 and 2018)

| Count | | Year 2017 | | | | Year 2018 | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | Coef. | Std. Err. | P>z | | Coef. | Std. Err. | P>z |
| L1.Count | | 0.017 | 0.011 | 0.141 | | 0.043 | 0.013 | 0.001 |
| Days to | | 0.034 | 0.004 | 0.000 | | 0.016 | 0.003 | 0.000 |
| Days from | | -0.012 | 0.003 | 0.000 | | -0.017 | 0.003 | 0.000 |
| Day of the Week | | | | | | | | |
| | 2 | 0.638 | 0.161 | 0.000 | | 0.689 | 0.157 | 0.000 |
| | 3 | 0.588 | 0.159 | 0.000 | | 0.554 | 0.161 | 0.001 |
| | 4 | 0.889 | 0.152 | 0.000 | | 0.603 | 0.162 | 0.000 |
| | 5 | 0.652 | 0.166 | 0.000 | | 0.61 | 0.163 | 0.000 |
| | 6 | 0.596 | 0.162 | 0.000 | | 0.486 | 0.168 | 0.004 |
| | 7 | 0.366 | 0.168 | 0.029 | | -0.063 | 0.181 | 0.728 |
| Constant | | 1.734 | 0.180 | 0.000 | | 1.545 | 0.173 | 0.000 |
| Log likelihood | | -269.505 | | | | -271.114 | | |
| Number of obs | | 118 | | | | 117 | | |
| LR chi2(9) | | 237.35 | | | | 182.27 | | |
| Prob > chi2 | | 0.000 | | | | 0.000 | | |
| McFadden's Pseudo R2 | | 0.306 | | | | 0.252 | | |
| BIC used by Stata: | | 586.717 | | | | 589.85 | | |
| Deviance goodness-of-fit | | 138.485 | | | | 137.034 | | |
| Prob > chi2(108) | | 0.026 | | | | 0.027 | | |
| Pearson goodness-of-fit | | 124.848 | | | | 130.256 | | |
| Prob > chi2(108) | | 0.128 | | | | 0.063 | | |
| Durbin's alternative test for autocorrelation (proxy on OLS) | | No serial correlation | | | | No serial correlation | | |

Table 2 shows that the predicted day-of-the-week seasonality exists and is statistically significant for most days ($p > .05$) in both years. Whereas the effects of the lagged dependent variable behaves as expected (the count of news in the preview day increases the ones in the next), it is only statistically significant for 2018 ($p > .001$).

Nonetheless, and more importantly to the model, the trends focusing on the day of entry to the parliament are statistically significant ($p > .001$) in the expected direction: previous to its entry the count of news items increases as the day approaches, and after the event it decreases as time goes on; thus, **H2a** and **H2b** are supported.

Both models behave and perform similarly: better than their intercept-only models, with reasonable pseudo R2 values, no serial correlation, corroborated by Durbin's alternative run on the same OLS' models as a proxy, as well as the Poisson's Pearson residual qq-plot and time series line plot (Cameron & Trivedi, 2009). Regarding the Poisson models' fit, in both cases they do not pass the Deviance goodness-of-fit test ($p > .05$) and they both pass the Pearson test (but 2018's far closer to the $p > .05$ threshold).

Table 3 presents nested models for the 2018 series, one of them including the World Cup period as an additional explanatory variable (testing **H1**).

Table 3. Predicting daily news items of the Uruguayan budget bill's yearly revision (2018 nested models)

| Count | | Year 2017 | | | Year 2018 | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | Coef. | Std. Err. | P>z | Coef. | Std. Err. | P>z |
| L1.Count | | 0.043 | 0.013 | 0.001 | 0.040 | 0.012 | 0.001 |
| Days to | | 0.016 | 0.003 | 0.000 | 0.025 | 0.004 | 0.000 |
| Days from | | -0.017 | 0.003 | 0.000 | -0.025 | 0.005 | 0.000 |
| World Cup | | - | - | - | -0.328 | 0.121 | 0.007 |
| Day of the Week | | | | | | | |
| | 2 | 0.689 | 0.157 | 0.000 | 0.660 | 0.158 | 0.000 |
| | 3 | 0.554 | 0.161 | 0.001 | 0.536 | 0.161 | 0.001 |
| | 4 | 0.603 | 0.162 | 0.000 | 0.595 | 0.161 | 0.000 |
| | 5 | 0.61 | 0.163 | 0.000 | 0.634 | 0.162 | 0.000 |
| | 6 | 0.486 | 0.168 | 0.004 | 0.503 | 0.167 | 0.003 |
| | 7 | -0.063 | 0.181 | 0.728 | -0.055 | 0.181 | 0.760 |
| Constant | | 1.545 | 0.173 | 0.000 | 1.892 | 0.215 | 0.000 |
| | | | | | | | |
| Log likelihood | | -271.114 | | | -267.511 | | |
| Number of obs | | 117 | | | 117 | | |
| LR chi2(9) | | 182.27 | | | 189.48 | | |
| Prob > chi2 | | 0.000 | | | 0.000 | | |
| McFadden's Pseudo R2 | | 0.252 | | | 0.262 | | |
| BIC used by Stata: | | 589.850 | | | 587.406 | | |
| Deviance goodness-of-fit | | 137.034 | | | 129.828 | | |
| Prob > chi2(108) | | 0.027 | | | 0.058 | | |
| Pearson goodness-of-fit | | 130.256 | | | 121.550 | | |
| Prob > chi2(108) | | 0.063 | | | 0.143 | | |
| Durbin's alternative test for autocorrelation (proxy on OLS) | | No serial correlation | | | No serial correlation | | |

Besides our core independent variable, there is no relevant variation in any parameters between these nested models, and the controls for serial autocorrelation and seasonality behave similarly to what was described for Table 2 (see Pearson residual plotting and Durbin's alternative test).

However, the main difference between these models resides in the effect of the World Cup time in the daily reporting of "Rendición de cuentas": supporting **H1**, it has a statistically significant negative impact.

Moreover, the inclusion of this variable increases not only the explanatory power of the model (being the pseudo R2 comparable as they are nested), but also reduced the

Bayesian Information Criterion (BIC) by 2.444 points and made it pass both goodness-of-fit tests, thus providing significant evidence of the improvement of the model's fit as a whole (Cameron & Trivedi, 2009).

## Discussion and Conclusion

The present article aimed to provide empirical evidence of an agenda setting scenario in which journalists and/or news media's editors could have shifted their agenda by "anticipating or estimating public interests" (Russel et al., 2014, p. 134) on two competing events.

By using the strengths of a natural scenario in which government transparency issues (budget bill's yearly revision) coincide by chance and only sporadically with FIFA's World Cup, this study was able to provide statistically significant evidence of news media outlets reducing the report of the transparency issues due to mega-sport events where fútbol is critical for the national identity of the country. We did so by fitting a lagged dependent variable Poisson model on the count of "Rendición de cuentas'" daily news items of the three main digital news media outlets in Uruguay (*El País, El Observador* and *Montevideo Portal*).

These models, it provided statistical evidence for: a) **H2** that trends in the amount of ag-gregated "Rendición de cuentas" daily news items were critically determined by the day of the budget bill's entry to parliament; and b) a significant negative effect of the period in which the World Cup was occurring in the daily count of daily news items of "Rendición de cuentas" compared to the previous year. In other words, there is statistical evidence that during the World Cup, news media sites reduced their reporting of the budget bill's entry to parliament compared to previous years.

The article, thus, presents strong evidence of a lesser-studied agenda setting phenom-enon with relevant consequences for how social and political issues are covered by news media. Without clear potential conflicts of interest that could explain the shift in the reporting, our findings signal the necessity to consider the externalities of conducting critical democratic debates during mega sporting events.

Following a considerably old public policy concern, presented 48 years ago by Cobb and Elder (1971), if the politics of agenda building are to be considered, the timing of the political agenda's objects also need to be considered. Whereas we argue for the need for news media outlets to monitor and/or prepare in advance to counter the influence of big sports events over other socially critical agenda topics, this is not a media-only issue. Not only do journalists and newsrooms operate under complex and stressful conditions that may reduce the chances of these precaution taken place, but also government officials and civic servants are accountable for these opposing agenda objects issues. Perhaps the measures taken to avoid this type of phenomenon could arise from the parliament or government itself, more so in countries such as Uruguay in which "fútbol"

plays a key role in national identity.

Finally, the work has several limitations. First, this study only assessed one of the more external layers of the agenda setting phenomenon, and only from the news media side of the equation. Future studies within this research line should include social media data concerning the issues (see Russel et al., 2014) or directly inquiring individuals' preferences (see Mitchelstein et al., 2017); nonetheless this is contentious. Among some of the issues discussed by Aruguete (2017), the author provides evidence both in favor and against the idea that the Internet and social media can be considered a reflection of public opinion. Moreover, a vast corpus of digital inequalities literature clearly signals that as biases and socioeconomic inequalities shape digital engagement, it is not adequate to assume that websites and social media reflect public opinion (see Dodel, 2015; Robinson et al., 2015). More so, the issue is considerably problematic because even popular political surveys with big samples, such as online opt-in panels, present serious biases that hinder adequate representativeness and quality of these studies (Hargittai & Karaoglu, 2018). Future inquiries could delve into more complex levels of agenda setting issues, such as framing or networks (McCombs & Valenzuela, 2007; McCombs et al., 2014). Moreover, this study looked into how two agenda-setting events are affected, but more research should be conducted on the relation between broader agenda themes.

Second, this study opted to fit simple and parsimonious models, which need to be improved in future analyses. The researchers discarded the whole time series to focus on a closer time frame. The role of other political events such as corruption scandals, midterm elections and other policy issues, should be assessed in their impact on the budget bill's yearly revision reporting.

Third, as Keele and Kelly (2006) argue, there is more to dependent variable lagged models than just the violation of an estimator assumption, lagged variables could be also understood as "*…a way to view autocorrelation as a potential sign of improper theoretical specification*". The scope of our work did not comprehensively address any news cycle-related hypothesis. Further work should assess and correct for these potential issues.

Nevertheless, despite these limitations, this article sheds light on the need to study and address the caveats of social and political issues coverage by news media in the wake of mega sporting events.

**NOTES**

Lagged dependent variable models are linear or non-linear models with corrections for autocorrelations or, in terms of Keele & Kelly (2006), a "as a special case of a more general dynamic regression model that is designed to capture a particular type of dynamics in the dependent variable". As this study's dependent variable refers to a count of a phenomenon, a Poisson model was fitted; thus, the term Lagged dependent variable Poisson model.

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# Mixing the old with the new through digital media: How young Cuban journalists navigate a changing Cuba

## By Shearon Roberts

*This mixed method study examined how young Cuban journalists use both traditional and digital media to engage discourse on a changing Cuba. Firstly, this study examined interviews with 35 Cuban journalists at nine media organizations in Cuba. The findings indicated they do report on critical issues in their traditional media jobs in ways that are tolerated under the limitations to freedom of the press. Secondly, this study examined 194 articles published by these journalists on independent digital platforms. Online spaces provided young Cuban journalists the opportunity to publish critical-constructive discourse on a range of topics. The study supports that both traditional and online platforms can work together to sustain the coverage of critical social issues in places where full freedoms for the press are limited.*

In a "Note to the Censor," Cuban online magazine *El Estornudo* notified local readers that access to the magazine's digital platform was blocked in February 2018 by the Cuban government (de Assis, 2018). This form of recent censorship was not isolated as other prominent independent Cuban online sites like *Diario de Cuba*, *CiberCuba* and *Café Fuerte* were also blocked within the same year (de Assis, 2018). In a study of the 14 leading Cuban blog sites by Elaine Díaz Rodríguez, the founder of the Cuban blog *Periodismo del Barrio*, all of the leading sites have effectively been blocked or threatened to be blocked by the state in the past five years (Rodríguez, 2018).

In Cuba, content primarily accessed through digital platforms could face retribution from the state at any time. Therefore, this study seeks to examine how critical discourse appears in Cuba by different groups who work primarily in the media, and as journalists. This study therefore focuses particularly on younger Cuban journalists, who entered their profession after 2010, and who also engage in digital media platforms for journalism and civic discourse. The study seeks to understand attempts to bridge traditional practices of journalism in Cuba with experiments in media opening exemplified through the work of the more prominent Cuban bloggers. A generation of reporters have now come of age in the past 15 years since Cuban bloggers began their experiment with tolerated,

and in some cases, repressed, forms of alternative journalism. Trained in traditional university communication programs, these recent graduates often begin their careers in state-run media organizations in Cuba. However, unlike journalists prior to the 2000s, they have begun their careers at a time of access to digital platforms. The work of early Cuban blogs demonstrated the potential of online platforms for practicing their craft, and engaging topics of concern to their generation. However, the predominant consumers of the leading 14 Cuban blogs remains audiences outside of Cuba. Therefore, this study examined how current Cuban journalists combine the use of digital platforms, in addition to working in traditional media, to primarily engage audiences in Cuba, and not outside of Cuba. It seeks to ask if there is a space to mix both the old journalistic traditions, with newer ones, in tolerable ways, that avoid the threats of censorship, and allow newer entrants into the profession to pursue careers as journalists in Cuba.

## Impact of Cuban Blogs on New Journalists

The experiences of early Cuban bloggers inform the attitudes by younger journalists in this study about the potentials of digital spaces for media discourse. Since 2001, Cuban blog sites have flourished with over half having news operations outside of the country (Rodríguez, 2018). For younger Cuban journalists in this study, limited access to external support networks means they must rely on their jobs in state-run media for their livelihood. To date, scholars count dozens of Cuban blogs that span all topics from politics to culture. Rodríguez (2018) identifies 14 sites, noted for their critical work, and recognized for their journalism standards. This study examined how alternative journalism encourages younger Cuban journalists to push to expand what they cover in both traditional and digital spaces. The majority of the 14 leading Cuban blog sites, Rodríguez (2018) notes, were created after 2014. Yet Internet access for Cubans ranges from 5% to 30%, according to Freedom House estimates, and remains controlled by the Cuban government (Kahn, 2017). Furthermore, Rodríguez (2018) estimated that Cubans on the island only make up the primary source of traffic for less than half of the 14 sites. This study therefore asks how the use of digital platforms, by younger journalists who work in Cuba, can support new discourse for audiences at home.

Therefore, the purpose of this study is not to examine these leading 14 sites and their content, as other scholars have already done (Firchow, 2013; Henken, 2011; Henken & Porter, 2016; Henken & van de Voort, 2014). This study looks precisely at how the presence of major Cuban blogs impacts the practices of journalism by young Cubans who work in legacy and sometimes state-run traditional media. This question remains relevant because the leading sites continue to face the risks of censorship, once Cuban state agencies block domestic access to them. Additionally, the ability of these sites to disseminate among Cubans able to afford access to El Paquete Semanal  or through email access, puts additional constraints on the current distribution model, once access is blocked by the state.

This study examines how over a decade of a form of journalism experimented through Cuban blogs widens the possibilities of practice for a new generation of journalists in Cuba. In this case, this study describes how young Cuban journalists, who still continue

to work in traditional media like state-run newspapers and magazines (old), attempt to transform practices that hybrid the new (digital) and the old, to impact local discourse in media spaces primarily intended for all Cuban audiences. Therefore, this study seeks to evaluate two effects for younger journalists. How has an era of Cuban blogging shaped their understanding of journalism? And secondly, how has an era of Cuban blogging shaped the types of stories and social discourse they choose to report on to local audiences. Media opening has allowed younger Cubans to practice a form of journalism that is "in between," capable of both introducing new discourse within traditional outlets, but also using online media platforms to further the conversation.

The practice may seem less radical in comparison, but the aim and objective are a form of agency from within, knowing that a free press in Cuba is still much further off, but that vital conversations could continue to take place, even in more traditional spaces.

## A Changing Cuba

In April 2018, Cubans for the first time in roughly 60 years had a president whose last name was not Castro. The direction of the nation was transferred to the hands of the country's new leader Miguel Díaz-Canel Bermúdez, who was born in 1960, a year after the Cuban Revolution. Cubans had already experienced incremental social and political changes since 2006, when Raúl Castro succeeded his brother Fidel Castro's 50-year-run leading the state. Raúl's tenure as head of the country brought political changes (term limits) and economic changes (private enterprise) that impacted social outcomes.

These current changes, as Cuban scholar Miguel Angel Centeno (2004) suggested, should be examined within "the limits on both Cuban exceptionalism and the constraints on change in Latin America" (p. 404). The 40 years of Cuban history after 1959, Centeno explained, meant that Cuban society and structure varied from the rest of Latin America and the Caribbean. Cuba differed mostly from its neighbors particularly for its resistance of neoliberalism, reinforced by the Castro regime. Now, Centeno wrote, scholars must acknowledge that the exceptionalism of Cuba has begun to erode, as both migration and remittances are contributors to inequality. Who has access to remittances in Cuba determines social mobility resulting in widened "racial stratification" that Centeno described as resembling an "economic apartheid" (2004, p. 404). The influence of "neoliberal ethos" through the rise of informal commerce in Cuba today, Centeno noted (2004, p. 404), means social conditions in Cuba are now more closely resembling those of its Latin American neighbors.

The 10 years of Raúl Castro's policies also coincided with a rise in Cuban blogging that, in many cases, were alternative, critical voices on a changing Cuba (Henken, 2011; Kellogg, 2016; Rubira & Gil-Egui, 2013; Vicari, 2014). A number of the original Cuban bloggers were part of social and or intellectual movements, and not altogether, necessarily trained traditional journalists (Henken & van de Voort, 2014; Timberlake, 2010; Venegas, 2010; Vicari, 2015). More importantly, the Cuban government has tolerated the work of Cuban bloggers, although blocking sites and surveillance is the primary form of

retribution (Kahn, 2017).

Since the first wave of Cuban bloggers are both a mix of journalists and activists, this study looks at younger journalists trained in traditional journalism in Cuba. This newest cadre of young Cuban journalists has now entered the field, however their training and careers began in the wake of the work of the original wave of Cuban bloggers. Likewise, these recent entrants to journalism were schooled to begin careers in more censored, and self-censored, state-run media outlets. This study therefore identifies how this second wave of media professionals wrestle with the tenets of journalism—the desire to investigate and to report truths—with the realities of working in the media with social and political constraints of state and self-censorship, on their practice (see also Henken & Porter, 2016).

The rise of Cuban blogging has also problematized the tenets of journalism. Western journalism upholds objectivity, facticity, detachment, and non-partisanship as liberal models of journalism that distinguish it from more state-controlled practices of the profession, as is the Cuban case (Lawson, 2002). However, in 2009, Spanish newspaper El País, named Cuban blogger Yoaní Sánchez, the founder of *Generación Y*, as its Havana correspondent. The paper described Sanchez as "a Cuban journalist" who would "provide the reader with a more balanced view of reality" (Lamrani, 2015, p. 83). Sanchez' positions, Lamrani noted, have been strongly in opposition to the Cuban government and have sided with U.S. diplomats in Cuba. In upholding "plurality," Lamrani wrote that in this instance, El País, should have also provided the reader with a "blogger who supports the revolutionary process" (2015, p. 83). The paper's previous correspondent in Havana, Mauricio Vicent, ironically noted the pressures of covering Cuba for a foreign media source, acknowledging years of self-censorship. Lamrani wrote that Vicent confided in a colleague that "if one day I were to write something positive about this country, they would fire me without hesitation" (2015, p. 13).

This observation by Vicent, a Cuban-raised but Western-employed journalist underscores that when it comes to Cuba, both journalists operating with or without the constraints of censorship, self-censor. Likewise, the case of Sanchez' endorsement by a Western media outlet demonstrated that liberal media organizations also forgo notions of impartiality in presenting a Cuban reality. Furthermore, defining the "Cuban reality" differs depending on who is asked. Even among contemporary journalists, Sara García Santamaría (2017, p. 5) noted that Cuban journalists often contradict each other in articulating discourse about the Cuban people. More importantly, Santamaría's examination of discourse within state-run *Granma*, up to 2011, showed "a great degree of anti-status-quo sentiment" (2017, p. 6).

The search for the balance of a mix between traditional practices of journalism and new ones, is the current Cuban journalist's experiment. In media, as it is in Cuba's politics, society, and economy, this exercise is no different. This study therefore builds on this original body of scholarship on Cuban bloggers and Cuban media discourse, by examining specifically traditionally trained, millennial media professionals, who practice journalism on both print and digital platforms in Cuba. Through traditional print platforms, these

young media professionals are able to practice relatively tolerated modes of critical-constructive public discourse and commentary that allowed them to be paid and accepted within the profession, and among professionals at state-run media. Digital platforms then provide the space for expanding journalism practices, in search of "truth-telling" that deconstructs a changing Cuba, in an age of shifting relations with the United States.

This study therefore examined how digital media platforms can serve as intermediary spaces for practicing journalism for Cuban media professionals who still desire to work in traditional media spaces. The collective use of online platforms creates digital echo chambers, where discourse can then be reintroduced into traditional platforms, as a result of the digital chatter. Therefore, external digital platforms become the agenda-setting spaces for social and political discourse that would typically have been self-censored when producing content for traditional platforms. Engaging the digital "chattersphere" therefore allows young Cuban professionals to mix the old and the new, in ways that make critical discourse mainstream and that works to fold the Cuban bloggersphere back into mainstream platforms. This hybrid allows journalists in Cuba to harness blogging for work they wish to engage with Cuban audiences, on traditional, state-run platforms.

## Non-Traditional Media Opening

While Cuba's recent history differs from Latin America in some ways, as Centeno (2004) notes, current changes in Cuba echo shifts that occurred elsewhere in the Americas. The use of Cuban blogs should be examined as part of the theoretical concept of media opening. Media opening is the process to which media systems in non-democratic or authoritarian societies become more free. Scholars like Lawson (2002), Hughes (2006) and Porto (2012) have looked at how media systems in Latin American nations have experienced media opening. Lawson (2002) argued that political liberalization contributes to the opening of the press in Latin America. However, Hughes (2006) also credits the rise of civic-minded, alternative news organizations in Mexico as contributing to media opening there, long before political changes are complete. Porto (2012) found that for Brazil, even newly privatized media conglomerates contributed to media opening by shifting coverage in response to changing public opinion, which acts as a form of consumer demand. In Central America, Rockwell and Janus (2010) cautioned that even democratization does not automatically translate to more press freedoms. When media systems are concentrated in the hands of a small group of elites, news discourse amplified right-leaning political beliefs that reinforce policies that favor the top 1% (Rockwell & Janus, 2010).

These instances of media opening do not entirely fit the current Cuba case. However, media opening in Haiti provides more in common with Cuba as it currently unfolds, than do the other examples of media opening. In Haiti, for roughly three decades, media censorship existed under the Duvalier dictatorship. It began first in 1957 under François "Papa Doc" Duvalier and then under his son Jean-Claude "Baby Doc" Duvalier, who held power until 1986. Like Cuba, independent media in Haiti in this period was tolerated, and in some cases allowed to flourish. Likewise, both state censorship and self-censorship occurred in Haiti during this time. In Cuba, it is blogs that are now tolerated. In the

Haitian case, radio was then the new medium. Radio under dictatorship in Haiti became, and now remains, the dominant platform for news, commentary, social discourse, and information. Led by Radio Haïti Inter, Haiti's first independent radio station, Jean Dominique and his wife Michele Montas-Dominique fostered the station's critical journalism from 1968 onwards (Montas-Dominique, 2001). Stations like Radio Haïti Inter were important because they operated at home, at a time when many journalists had left the country, and set up diaspora media abroad, where Haitians at home were not the primary audience. Radio in Haiti during this period reached domestic audiences providing media discourse that was critical of the status quo. In a sense, Haitian expat media during the dictatorship mirrors the more prominent Cuban blogs that now carry larger external audiences, and are situated further in proximity and accessibility to citizens at home.

To maintain critical discourse and to continue broadcasting to citizens, Radio Haïti Inter deployed several strategies that allowed them to continue their work under the confines of censorship. These strategies ranged from covering human rights movements in other countries in the region, and even in South Africa (Wagner, 2017). By using external news and newsmakers that reflected the efforts of the rights of peoples outside of Haiti, Radio Haïti Inter indirectly did the work of democratic and civic education, without always having to directly address the lack of freedoms at home (Montas-Dominique, 2001). This is not to say that direct critical discourse of the government did not exist at the time, it certainly did. However, the work of civic education, within the confines of an authoritative state, required more nuanced approaches by Haitian journalists under Duvalierism, in order to continue to practice their craft at home. This strategy early on gave news organizations the space to conduct media literacy through covering external events that ultimately educated citizens of the pursuit for freedoms elsewhere, underscoring the lack of freedoms at home.

Even more traditional media spaces in Haiti adopted similar approaches. Haiti's newspaper of record, *Le Nouvelliste*, also pursued a strategy of self-censorship during the dictatorship and survived because of this (Roberts, 2016). However, as Radio Haïti Inter's coverage increasingly addressed instances of oppression in the country, the state shut down the news station twice and forced its owners in exile (Montas-Dominique, 2001). In 2000, the station's founder Jean Dominique and a colleague were assassinated. By this time, the station had paved the way for more domestic journalists, and even those in more traditional newsrooms, to continue the work of critical journalism.

Media opening in Haiti included a combination of the work of critical discourse by native journalists positioned abroad, and a mix of strategies to achieve critical discourse by journalists based in the country. These tactics ranged from using the new media at the time to create new spaces for discourse, producing reportage that could be tolerated by the regime, but that served the larger goal of civic education, and by challenging the status quo by introducing discourse about similar injustices and forms of oppression elsewhere. In covering external movements, and by interviewing and featuring external activists, Haitian journalists at the time used a form of diversion that skirted censorship and indirectly hinted to the lack of freedoms at home (Wagner, 2017). The journalistic tactic here was that in covering foreign fights for freedoms, Haitians in turn became

engaged in their own lack of rights and oppression at home.

This approach to media opening in Haiti during a dictatorship provides a lens with which to categorize how journalists in Cuba, who wish to continue to work at home, in traditional or independent media, pursue "truth-telling" under confines to freedom of the press. The Haitian example therefore bears a closer resemblance to approaches to media opening in Cuba that this study aims to explore with a specific study of young Cuban journalists.

Firstly, there is external, critical journalism, and the dominance of a new, less hegemonic media platform. In the Haitian case, there was the growth of expat/exile media and the local rise of radio. In the Cuban case, these are Cuban blogs that while read in Cuba, carry a larger production, distribution and consumption base outside of the country (Rodriguez, 2018). Yet in Cuba, digital technology allows for the dissemination of new media content, and the use of social media platforms. Secondly, state censorship is enforced, and in-turn, media organizations in the country actively self-censor. This was the case for Haiti, particularly for print and state-owned media, as it is the case for state-run media and some independent media in Cuba. Thirdly, Haitian journalism even amidst forms of censorship still actively covered social and political issues that were critical of the status quo, but did so in ways that spotlighted resistance, without always directly having to openly challenge regimes. As Santamaría's examination of *Granma* shows, challenges to the status quo also appears in traditional media in Cuba (2017, pp. 186-187). These similarities can be reflected in how journalists, still in Cuba, engage in digital spaces, but continue to work in traditional spaces to practice journalism within confines of the existing political climate.

This study argues that this tactic employed by younger Cuban journalists mirrors the measured liberalization within the political and economic realm, but more so in the economic realm in Cuba today. It does not completely do away with state controls of sectors, in this case, state control of media and freedom of speech. However, new platforms allow the media to move the needle and to test the state threshold for acceptable internal debates, as outside influences inevitably change the nature of Cuban socialism. As the Cuban media professionals in this study outlined, these debates are not to call for the end of socialism, or for drastic changes to any positive, sustainable impacts of socialism that make Cuba unique, but to debate how the country can maintain some of the old (successes of the Revolution), by integrating the new (Cuban development in a twenty-first century global world) for the benefit of all Cubans.

## Methodology

"It is the first time in my lifetime we will not have any of the heroes of the Revolution as president," one female Cuban journalist, 26, shared during a field interview in 2017. A new generation of Cuban-trained media professionals are using new media to have external and internal dialogues about this new Cuba. The work of more prominent Cuban

bloggers such as Yoaní Sánchez and Elaine Diaz Rodiguez have paved the way for early use of digital media platforms for freedom of expression in Cuba (Loustau, 2011; Miranda, 2016). However, it was met with state retribution for this group (Firchow, 2013). This mixed-method study included interviews with young Cuban journalists and a content analysis of a sample of the digital content they produce.

### Sample

The purpose of this study was to examine Cuban-trained journalists who still work for state-run or independent media outlets in Cuba, but who also, simultaneously operate or contribute to digital media platforms. This study is based on interviews conducted in 2017, in person in Cuba, with follow up through written correspondence in 2018, when needed, after interviews were transcribed and translated. The study sample includes interviews with 35 Cuban journalists under the ages of 28, from nine media organizations. Within this sample, all 35 journalists were formally trained in university communication programs in Cuba, and all have worked as professional journalists in time spans ranging from one to five years. All of the journalists interviewed have completed stints at state-run media organizations, about one-third continue to do so, one-third work full-time in independent media, and one-third work part-time in independent media mixed with other communications and informal jobs. One-quarter of journalists in the sample either directly host their own blogs, and the remainder are contributors to other shared blog sites. Half of the journalists in this study are based in Havana, while the other half are based in other major cities in the country. One-third of the trained journalists in this group self-identify as Afro-Cubans. Given their current professional work, this study does not disclose information that identifies them or the places and spaces where their work appears.

This study sampled the types of media content young Cuban journalists created for digital platforms. These articles were shared directly with the researcher from blog sites, social media group posts, offline PDFs and via email. The sample articles were used to analyze the types of stories produced primarily for digital platforms, on the journalists' own time, in 2017. Their digital content was either anonymous or published with pseudonyms. In providing the articles directly to the researcher, this allowed the study to verify that the articles were produced by young Cuban journalists, and to recover those that were offline PDFs shared through emails, and not readily available online. For the 35 journalists interviewed, each one shared 2017 digital content for this content analysis. On average some of the journalists produced digital content at least bi-monthly, while others were less frequent, posting once or twice, or every three to six months. In total, 194 digital articles were disseminated through digital platforms in 2017 that served as an additional space for their work being produced at more traditional media sites.

The interviews were transcribed and translated, when not in English. Two coders organized interview responses into two main themes: a) attitudes toward journalism as an ideal; and b) strategies for practicing journalism in Cuba on a daily basis. The content analysis examined the types of platforms used for digital content, as well as the themes (topic) and framing (evaluative position) of the articles provided for the study. The coders

marked each article using the title and lead paragraph to identify the theme. The coders used a coding sheet to note similar topics, and then grouped similar topics into related story topics.

To identify frames, the coders used two framing concepts (episodic and thematic frames). Episodic framing is discourse that presents information around specific events, while thematic frames provide discourse that examines issues not directly connected to a specific event but may stem from ongoing issues and events (Iyengar, 1996). The coders used both the lead (first paragraph) and nutgraph (context paragraph) of stories to determine framing approaches. For additional clarification, the coders continued reading the article until the framing approach was clearly identifiable in the article. Coding themes allowed the coders to analyze what types of issues these journalists used digital platforms to address. Coding frames allowed the coders to analyze how digital platforms expanded spaces for critical evaluation of the themes of the articles.

# Results

In discussing how young Cuban journalists mix the old and the new, this study firstly outlines how they view their profession, and practicing journalism in Cuba. This study presents their insights, based on interviews, on their attitudes about the tenets of journalism, particularly at a time when anyone can blog, but not everyone may be considered a journalist. This study also summarizes their reflections on addressing subjects that are critical on social or political issues. Secondly, this study outlines strategies they have developed for practicing journalism in traditional spaces. Thirdly, this study presents the findings from coding the articles provided for the content analysis. This study then presents the major themes of the sample that demonstrate what issues these journalists addressed in 2017. It also summarizes what framing approaches were most prevalent among the sample. Lastly, it examines how different types of digital platforms were considered more convenient than others, for sharing content on varying subject matter.

## Que es el "Periodismo Real"? What is True Journalism?

### Perceptions on journalistic practice

In the words of one young, male journalist: "El periodismo real revela, investiga o enfada, lo demás no se que es" ["True journalism reveals, investigates and enrages, anything else, I don't know what that is"] (personal communication, August 2, 2017). These are the words of a 26-year-old journalist who works primarily for an independent media organization, but who also produces content for a blog site he manages. He acknowledged that being able to achieve this form of "true journalism" "es una aspiración personal [is a personal goal]." His commitment to being able to practice journalism at its fullest "se debe perseguir hasta el cansancio [is what one must pursue tirelessly]" (personal communication, August 2, 2017).

In distinguishing activism from journalism, one female journalist, 25, who has worked in state-run media, distinguished that journalism is a form of civic engagement through truth-telling: "I have never been interested in becoming an activist because if you are neutral you can have a straight view of reality. If you are impartial, you can just write and be fair about what is going on" (personal communication, July 25, 2017).

Journalistic concepts like impartiality and fairness were also important to the work of presenting truths. The journalists interviewed in this study indicated that for their generation it was important to think critically about all possibilities for developing their state. The future of their country was not about being pro- or anti-state, pro- or anti-government. Rather, they saw their role in public discourse to fairly evaluate the status quo, to indicate what is working and to indicate what is not working in Cuban society.

"Mi generación es muy consciente del tiempo [my generation is aware of the times]," noted one male Cuban journalist, 23, who works for state-run media (personal communication, November, 23, 2017). They are educated on what the revolution has achieved, but they are also aware that for the country to move into the next era, the country would have to undergo gradual change. However, young Cuban journalists stated that any new changes must be mindful of what makes Cuba distinct, particularly in defying persistent challenges that many Latin American and Caribbean countries face. They believe this is also important in contextualizing discourse and telling truths.

According to a 26-year-old male Cuban journalist, who works for an independent media organization, "Our neighbors like Central America or Colombia or the Dominican Republic [have a lot of crime, violence and unrest]. We don't want this for us" (personal communication, August 2, 2017). For Cuba to develop to become "a Norway," a country he named, Cuba will need to begin to provide citizens "more rights" and revisit its laws.

Even evaluation of what has not worked since the Revolution is also part of truth-telling. One male Cuban journalist, 25, stated: "We are an underdeveloped country and our neighbors are not what we want to be. We want to keep our non-violent society, for example, in Central America it's a very huge problem, but we want more freedom in individual issues like maybe to vote freely. So we want some changes, but we don't want that those changes take us to a worse situation. We want changes, oh yeah, we want so many changes" (personal communication, August 2, 2017).

One female journalist, 27, who worked for state-run media, noted that "transparency" in the laws is needed. This can range from the process of voting for a president, to starting an enterprise, to even media laws. The same journalist noted that: "There are no cinema laws in movies, how to make movies, in an independent way, but there are for making movies for a state way" (personal communication, July 28, 2017).

Others emphasized that in their reporting, they highlight the importance of preserving access to basic services. The path to a more liberal and open Cuba does not necessarily mean less state control in some areas. One female reporter, 26, who worked for state-run media stated: "For example, water, it never would be privatized. Electricity, health, I

don't think those important services. They should be public. But I want a country where people could develop their own businesses and could be profitable" (personal communication, August 2, 2017).

Maintaining the standard of Cuba's education is also important in their coverage in traditional media. One female reporter, 28, who works part-time for independent media, noted that education standards are at a disadvantage for younger graduates who must fill positions in teaching but lack the training to prepare Cubans for a modern, technology-driven digital world.

Likewise, since the ability to tap into the informal, private sector jobs are not equally distributed, some Cubans are able to invest in education by way of private tutors, who end up providing more advanced education for some, further undermining the equalizing impact of Cuba's education system, according to this journalist (personal communication, August 2, 2017).

However, at the same time, a female reporter, 24, who works for state-run media, reinforced that coverage about education in Cuba also has to be fair. She noted that compared to the rest of the region and even in the United States, few countries excel in this area. "Education in Cuba is really good, we know it when we go outside the country, they say so" (personal communication, August 2, 2017). However, if the rise of private tutoring is not evaluated, she noted it can provide advantages for some who are able to afford it. It would also divert teachers away from dedicating to public education, because their livelihood can now benefit from private tutoring, at the expense of students who cannot pay privately for such services.

## Strategies for navigating constraints

Young Cuban reporters outlined some tools they have adopted to operate within constraints of traditional media. The first is what can be described as discourse through acceptable outsiders. This involves featuring journalists, writers, and other public thinkers to be featured in interviews that allow these external voices to articulate resistance, struggle, oppression, and global change. In the Cuban context, such sources do not come from the West, particularly the United States, but from Latin America and the Caribbean.

One male reporter, 26, called this "Narrative journalism stories from across Latin America" (personal communication, November 24, 2017). These can be cultural stories that use resistance and movements, even literature, music, popular culture, and other art forms to speak about resistance. Young Cuban journalists said they often use these types of spotlights, features, Q&As and reflective essays that allow outsiders, within Latin America and the Caribbean, to talk about issues in their own countries that resonate with ongoing struggles in Cuba. These accepted outsiders are considered "safe" for traditional news outlets, because they shroud their work in performance or fiction.

One area in which young journalists said they explore critical voices comes from cover-

ing hip-hop and the re-emergence of Cuban "trovadores." Trovas are native to Cuban culture, offering up social commentary and personal lived-experiences through music. However, the current resurgence of trovas, particularly from their own generation, young Cuban journalists noted, have become more political and socially critical in their music.

"Trovadores offer differing perspectives" and provide a good model for traditional journalism to balance and contextualize conflicting public opinion that Cubans carry about the status quo. As one male Cuban journalist, 27, who works for independent media stated: "Trovadores sing about whatever they want to sing about. Trovadores are not marionettes or puppets…the trovadores movements is one of the freest movements in Cuba, mas libres (he added in Spanish)…"  (personal communication, November 24, 2017).

The social commentary of contemporary trovadores encourages civic dialogue on the evolution of Cuban institutions. In featuring the works and performances of trovadores, in stories about culture, young Cuban journalists said they are able to tap into diverse topics about politics and society indirectly through exploring the works of the performances and the art form itself.

A female Cuban journalist, 25, further explained in English that although state policy may perpetuate a singular view about a social issue, there is an active debate elsewhere in society about the status quo. "Here in Cuba, there is a false unanimity for all things that the government proposes. There is not in the parliament, no other ideas, just one, mostly, there is no other proposals than the government proposals" (she stated in English) (personal communication, November 24, 2017). The debates that trovadores raise in their music, she said, broaden the dimensions of how to insert alternative opinions into the public domain, in "safe" ways that allow journalists, like the trovadores, to be tolerated by the state for varying degrees of critical thought.

Another male reporter, 26, who works in independent media, described it as such: "There is debate in the city, not debate in the government" (personal communication, November 24, 2017). In using this "debate in the city" expressed through trovadores and their trovas, journalists write about these civil debates indirectly through spotlighting the artform. The focus then shifts away from whether government is open or transparent, to discourse that frames these cultural movements as representing and engaging the realities of Cubans. Young Cuban journalists present these social critiques through an artform as a way to examine existing social and political concerns but through softer news frames, like music and culture.

Other art forms also provide windows to capture resistance. One female Cuban journalist, 28, noted that Cuba experienced a renaissance for art in the 1980s. Since this period, a good number of this "generation of young artists … have left, a long and complicated story" (personal communication, July 31, 2017). Art has since returned as a medium for social critique, and as reporters they let their reports evaluate the messages of new forms of visual arts. In the past, she noted that forms of resistance also came through a ban on rock music. It was revived from the era when it was an underground culture, but now creates spaces to use music as anti-establishment.

In other ways, young reporters also are able to examine other social issues ranging from race to gender. For instance, stories of police profiling of Black people, particularly through the #BlackLivesMatter movement, serve as jumping points for journalism about issues of race and fairness. Young Cuban journalists, and not just Afro-Cuban journalists alone, said they have used reports from the United States to Brazil, to expose incidents of racism in Cuba. This type of coverage challenges the notion that the revolution automatically created a post-racial Cuba. As one Afro-Cuban female journalist, 23, who works in state media noted, the revolution did open doors for Black Cubans, particularly for those working in the media and in government (personal communication, July 29, 2017). However, racial profiling still persists in subtle and overt contexts for Afro-Cubans.

Lastly, young Cuban journalists said they examine generational change through their work. Where their parents may still tout the benefits of the revolution, they aim to outline how the revolution has become static.

According to one young male Cuban journalist, 26, "I think my generation, from my personal view, I think that we need another real revolution. The thing is that there is the status quo power and it's like it's so institutionalized that it not always responds to people's needs" (personal communication, November 23, 2017).

Here, they have used external headlines to talk about the need to go beyond the existing status quo. One young female reporter, 24, noted that she used coverage of Venezuela's turmoil in its elections after President Hugo Chavez died to identify that when policies have expired beyond their initial objectives, and are no longer sustainable, they trigger unrest. The Venezuelan 2015 elections were an opportunity for coverage in Cuban media of an outcome in a country that supported Cuban development but was either unable or unwilling to make political changes to adapt to economic setbacks. Again, this reporting did not address Cuba directly, but in covering Venezuela's challenges, it caused reflection on the internal status quo. As the reporter noted this type of coverage was to "put this debate metaphorically to challenge people to consider these themes" (personal communication, July 27, 2017).

## Content analysis of the use of digital spaces

The above strategies, outlined in field interviews in Cuba, were developed for practicing journalism at traditional news outlets and platforms. However, these young Cuban reporters also contribute to and produce content for digital platforms for engaging audiences more directly about a changing Cuba and the future of Cuba.

For this study, the researcher analyzed 194 articles published digitally in 2017, and discovered most young Cuban journalists used blog sites as the primary platform for digital content (41.2%). These blog sites were more informal and included a mix of personal narrative, other forms of writings from poetry to short prose, as well as journalism. After blog posts, the second most frequently used digital space for young Cuban journalists was social media platforms, with Facebook group posts being the most frequently used among the sample (29.4%). PDFs that could be disseminated digitally were the third

most common format for digital content (20.1%) followed by email at 9.3%.
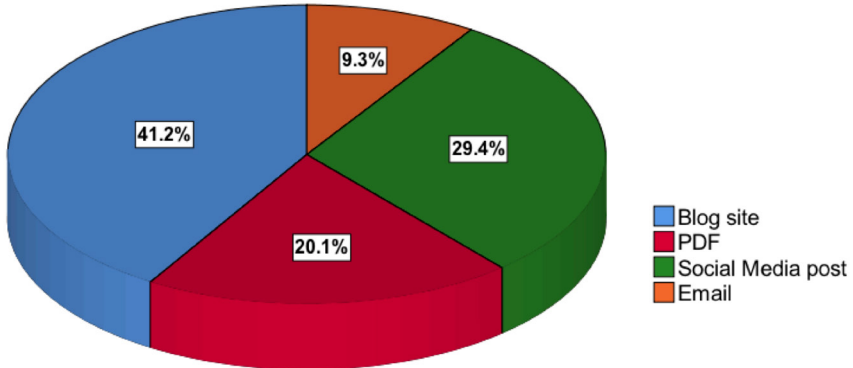


**Figure 1:** The Use of Different Digital Media Platforms in 2017

When coding digital content by subject matter, the most common theme for online content were articles about politics (40.2%). These stories ranged from the change in the Castro regime, new policies and laws, international relations and geo-politics to enfranchisement. Stories on culture were the second most posted content online (20.1%) with features, spotlights and highlights on artists, musicians, novelists, filmmakers and the context of their work in a changing Cuba. Stories on economics and social issues equally represented 10.3% of the sampled online content in 2017. Economic stories covered the growing private sector and impacts on travel and commerce to the island stemming from changes in U.S. policy to Cuba, from the Obama to Trump administrations. Stories on social issues examined issues of gender, identity, civil society and public opinion, with some pieces exploring diversity in Cuban society. Lastly, the sample's remaining two subject areas were education (9.8%) and welfare (9.3%). Content on welfare examined challenges for ordinary Cubans to meet their household needs with current wages and welfare policies. Content on education covered developments and partnerships with   Cuban institutions by others in the region, including state policy and changes for education.
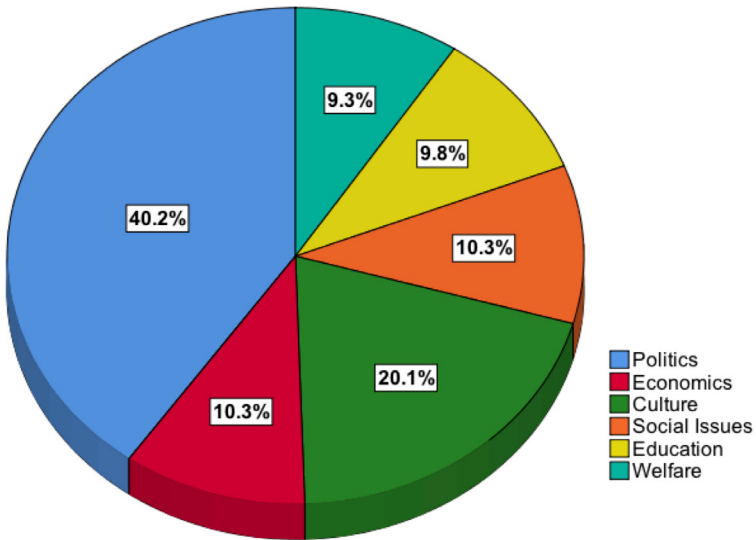
**Figure 2:** The Most Common Topics for Sampled Articles in 2017

In examining framing, the majority of articles were coded as thematic (62%). The largest number of episodic articles were digital content on politics. Roughly 75% of articles on politics were episodic. These stories precisely focused on providing discourse related to a specific statement by a political figure, or policy action in Cuba or towards Cuba. The subject matter with the most thematic approach to framing were stories about welfare. All articles coded under welfare were presented thematically. They were not directly connected to a specific event or news item but examined critical discourse about how changes in Cuba impact both positively and negatively life in Cuba and the lives of Cubans. The topic with the second most episodic framing were articles on economics and social issues. While roughly two-thirds of articles on education and culture were thematic.

## Platforms

In determining which sites to use, young Cuban journalists were more likely to post stories on politics on a blog site (see Figure 3 below). Additionally, stories on economic issues and social issues were equally posted to blogs. Since these stories carried the most frequent coverage within the sample (reference Figure 2), blogs provided a consistent space to update, tag, and reference previous content on the topic. All of the sampled articles disseminated through emails touched on the topic of the welfare of Cubans. Social media platforms shared content on politics, culture and education. PDF documents

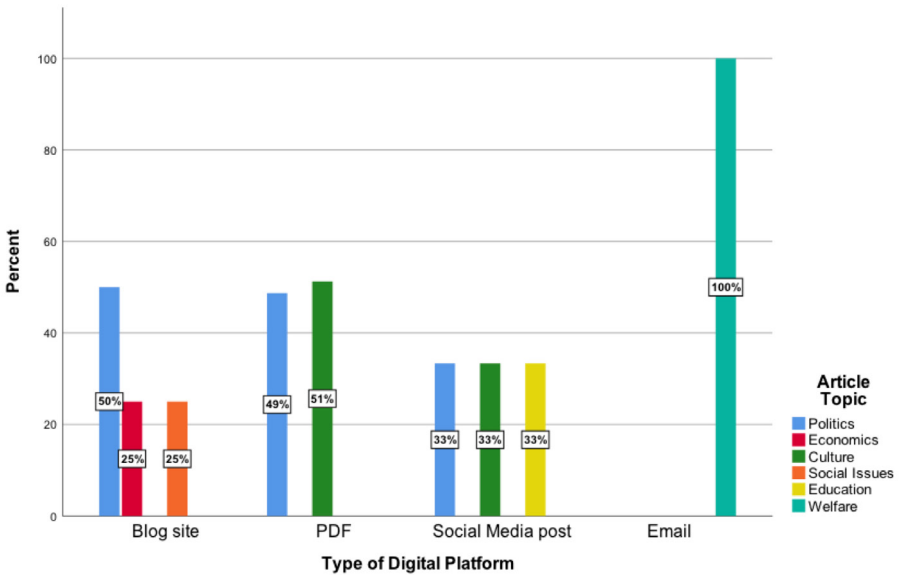published articles on culture, followed by politics.



**Figure 3:** The Most Commonly Used Platforms for Different Types of Topics

## Discussion and Conclusion

Young Cuban journalists in this study hold their professional virtue of presenting "truths" as a standard for practicing the craft in Cuba. This study showed that self-censorship is an over-simplification of what it means to work in a space of limits to freedom of the press. The act of circumventing institutional constraints is in itself a form of agency within the confines of tolerated discourse by the state. This study questioned how 15 years of prominent Cuban blogs may have influenced new Cuban journalists in the early stages of their careers. The answer is that the technology has been more influential than journalistic positioning. Not one of the journalists sampled in this study positioned themselves as pro-Castro or anti-Castro and the like. The journalists interviewed in this study reinforced their impartiality and distinguished themselves from being activists or partisan. They aimed to practice journalism that they considered presented a Cuban reality that reflects both the good and the bad of Cuban society.

New media platforms primarily appealed to their desire to find alternative spaces to present "truths," however, in more direct discourse than was possible in their traditional media jobs. It also served as a space for creating a digital community. In instances when

digital content became public discourse, embodied in the work of trovadores, artists, and performers, then Cuban journalists are able to address this discourse in traditional media platforms, because such discourse is being tolerated in other forms of expression.

The primary finding here is that the use of old and new media is a two-pronged strategy to search for the ability to practice "real" journalism in spaces that lack full freedoms for the press. Digital platforms serve as spaces for young Cubans with online access for engaging online communities in support of their traditional work. It also allows them to gauge digital feedback for more direct approaches to critical coverage and to consider what approaches can be used to push the boundaries of more traditional reports. The digital sites created for these new journalists are relatively new (under three years), and they have not reached the scale of the more prominent sites, nor are they intended to, because these are sites used by journalists who primarily work for traditional media. However, the aim of this group of journalists is to work within existing traditional media to find ways to reach Cubans at home, with those abroad being a secondary audience, in reverse of the prominent 14 sites.

In comparison to the more prominent Cuban blogs that came before it, this practice is relatively less radical. However, it is an approach worthy of noting for newer entrants to the profession, who primarily aim to work in Cuba, for Cuban media, to serve Cuban audiences. Collectively, both efforts are engaging with media opening, from different corners of the profession. As was the case in Haiti under Duvalierism, it harnesses the potentials of a new medium, for new strategies for providing mediated discourse for society that evaluates the status quo.

The examples of media opening in Haiti and even in Mexico (Hughes, 2008) show that small civic journalism exercises both from mainstream and traditional media, over time, laid the groundwork for future media opening. Of course, Cuba's context is unique primarily because of its relationship to U.S. policy towards it, even today under President Trump's administration. Despite the premise that a fully free press remains at odds with the current Cuban state, degrees of freedom of expression can exist, and young Cuban journalists are experimenting in ways to achieve this within the confines of their media system.

## NOTES

[1]Cubans are able to access digital content offline, ranging in censored foreign and domestic media from films, to television series, and website content at different price points on external hard drives distributed to households by middlemen. The weekly packages can sell for as low as one U.S. dollar.

[2]The interviews were conducted in Spanish and English, at the participant's discretion. Responses in Spanish were translated to English by the primary researcher, who conducted the interviews in Spanish.

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# Exposing the president:
# The political angle of a natural disaster in Chile

## By Magdalena Saldaña

*Chile is a country with high levels of digital news consumption but decreasing levels of confidence in journalism and traditional news media outlets. In a place where natural disasters are common, Chilean citizens usually turn to digital and social media to find out more information about how events unfold. By relying on in-depth interviews with reporters who covered the 2014 earthquake in northern Chile, this study examines how Chilean journalists approached a highly politicized natural disaster. Results show that reporters covered the earthquake as a political issue due to editorial prompting, and they used social media as another way to get close to the sources they already know, but not to look for alternative sources. The implications of these findings for media scholars and practitioners relate to the normalization of social media use among journalists, and the influence of a news outlet's political leaning on journalistic practices.*

Digital media have become a major source for news about public affairs (Kleis Nielsen, 2017), and the preferred pathway to receive breaking news (Martin, 2018). In times of crises, social media have proven to be an effective news disseminator: the terrorist attacks in Mumbai in 2008 (Bélair-Gagnon, 2013), the Boston Marathon bombing in 2013 (Lee, Agrawal, & Rao, 2015), and the Ferguson shooting (Desmond-Harris, 2015) are examples of online sources providing real-time information during key newsworthy moments.

When disasters occur, people turn to the news media to gain information about these events (Houston, Pfefferbaum, & Rosenholtz, 2012), and the audience becomes highly dependent on the way the media cover a disaster. In countries like Chile, where natural disasters occur often and are therefore "normalized" (Correa, Scherman, & Arriagada, 2016), this dependency is even more evident. Chilean citizens are increasingly using digital media (including social media) to get their news (Newman et al., 2018), and yet, most of the research about disaster news coverage in Chile is focused on television (Pellegrini, Puente, & Grassau, 2015; Puente, Pellegrini, & Grassau, 2013).

To fill this gap in the literature, this study observes how political reporters from the most important Chilean online news sites covered an earthquake in one of the most active earthquake zones in the world (Jacobson & Stein, 2017).

Disasters are commonly reported as a series of unrelated events, with little to no time to prepare in-depth pieces when informing publics about how a crisis unfolds (Miller & Goidel, 2009). Disaster news stories usually take the human-interest angle—studies show journalists give preference to testimonials and dramatic descriptions of the event over expert analysis (Chouliaraki, 2010; Pellegrini et al., 2015; Ploughman, 1995). Though natural disasters (such as earthquakes, volcano eruptions or tsunamis) are less political than man-made disasters or terrorist attacks, they might create an environment of political significance and carry political implications (Cottle, 2009).

On April 1, 2014, an 8.2-magnitude earthquake struck the coast of northern Chile. Chilean President Michelle Bachelet set a precautionary tsunami alert and evacuated 900,000 people in the north (*Prensa Presidencia*, 2014). Despite the government's timely response to the crisis, the news coverage of the event was critical of Bachelet's performance and contradicted previous research on disaster news coverage: the Chilean news media, and particularly the right-wing news media, covered the disaster from a thematic approach and focused on the political implications of the event instead of using the human-interest angle. By relying on in-depth interviews with reporters who covered the 2014 earthquake in northern Chile, this study examines the context leading Chilean press to frame the disaster as a political issue and challenge common journalistic practices in times of crises.

## Two Disasters, One President

The night of Tuesday, April 1, 2014, a massive earthquake struck off the coast of northern Chile near the town of Iquique. Right after the earthquake, Chile's National Emergency Office told 900,000 coastal residents to evacuate because the magnitude 8.2 shock generated a tsunami. People evacuated calmly through the streets, and once tsunami warnings were canceled (by early Wednesday, April 2), they were able to return home. Compared with other recent earthquakes—such as the deadly Haiti shock in 2010 (Martin, 2013)—the damage and casualties right after the earthquake were very limited.

The government responded to the disaster quickly. President Bachelet declared a state of emergency and ordered a military response within five hours after the earthquake. In her first official press release following these events, Bachelet said, "The tsunami alert was sent promptly" (*Prensa Presidencia*, 2014, para. 2), and, "The country has faced these first emergency hours very well" (Ford & Ahmed, 2014, para. 6). She also emphasized the government's work to protect people's lives and belongings (*Prensa Presidencia*, 2014).

Yet, the night of the earthquake, social media exploded with comments against President Bachelet. Online users called her "jinxed" and advised people in the north not to listen to the president. The wave of negativity in social media, however, was not triggered by

Bachelet's response to the 2014 earthquake, but by her management of a previous natural disaster that caused more than 500 fatalities in 2010.

Bachelet had already been in power from 2006 to 2010, acting as Chile's first female president. During her first term, Bachelet enjoyed high levels of popularity among Chilean citizens, to the point she attained an 84% approval rating by February 2010—the highest level of approval a Chilean president has ever achieved when leaving office (Délano, 2010). On February 27, 2010 (two weeks before she ended her first presidency), an 8.8-magnitude earthquake struck central and southern regions of Chile. The earthquake (also referred to as 27/F) generated massive tsunami waves that caused the deaths of 156 people and the disappearance of 25 more. According to Judge Ponciano Sallés, "Not enough was done to avoid the catastrophic results" of the 27/F disaster, based on the contradictory decisions made by Bachelet's government, who failed to set a tsunami alert right after the earthquake (Bonnefoy, 2013, para. 2).

This important mistake, which was caused by a series of miscommunications between Chile's National Emergency Office and the Navy Hydrographic and Oceanographic Service, triggered disapproval of Bachelet's actions by Chileans. In August 2012, a public opinion poll revealed citizens blamed President Bachelet's government for the 27/F consequences: 73% of the respondents attributed legal responsibilities to the authorities for their poor response to the crisis in 2010 and expected them to be fined or even to go to jail (Cavallo, 2012). Four years later, citizens' criticism remained harsh regarding Bachelet. The government's performance did not gain public approval despite the successful crisis management the night of the 2014 disaster.

Media portrayal of authorities affects public perception of individuals or groups in authority (Littlefield & Quenette, 2007). If the media evaluate an official response as too slow or inappropriate, audiences might assign blame to those in charge, even in the case of events without human control. For example, Strömbäck and Nord (2006) studied the Swedish government's response to the 2004 tsunami disaster in Sumatra. The response from Swedish authorities was rather slow and the government was strongly criticized in the media. Findings indicate Swedish citizens were also highly critical of the authorities, echoing the media evaluation of the government's crisis management. Similarly, Littlefield and Quenette (2007) explored the portrayal of authority during Hurricane Katrina in 2005. They found the media associated negative terms to the federal government and the Department of Homeland Security. Although this study did not observe the public's evaluation of the authorities, it found the media went beyond their role of objective observers and assumed a position to blame those in charge for their lack of leadership to deal with the hurricane's consequences.

Chilean President Michelle Bachelet faced the criticism of the media right after the 2010 disaster in southern Chile. National newspaper *La Tercera* indicated Bachelet's government had shown "incomprehensible weakness and slowness" at managing the crisis (*La Tercera*, 2010), while national newspaper *El Mercurio* called on President-elect Sebastian Piñera to "restore hope" to Chile once he took office two weeks after the disaster (*El Mercurio*, 2010). In this scenario, the media portrayal might have negatively affected not

only public opinion about the government in 2010, but eventually in 2014 as well.

## How Journalists Cover Crises

A crisis is an event in time with "high levels of uncertainty, confusion, disorientation, surprise, shock, and stress" (Seeger, Sellnow, & Ulmer, 2003, p. 125). Natural disasters are an example of crisis situations—people are disoriented and confused about what to do, and unexpected disasters such as earthquakes and tsunamis can be surprising and shocking. The public turns to the media to find out the scope of the harm and the responses initiated by authorities (Seeger et al., 2003).

Disasters are commonly reported as episodic events (Miller & Goidel, 2009). Episodic coverage focuses on the immediate event and gives little or no context about underlying issues or circumstances regarding said event. Conversely, thematic coverage focuses on the big picture, provides context, and identifies causes. "Episodic reports present on-the-scene coverage of 'hard' news and are often visually compelling. Thematic coverage of related background material would require in-depth, interpretive analysis, which would take longer to prepare and would be more susceptible to charges of journalistic bias" (Iyengar, 1991, p. 14). When crises unfold, there is not enough time for in-depth report-ing. As such, journalists inform about characteristics and consequences of a crisis, but they do not provide enough analysis to reconsider disaster management policies, or to anticipate further implications of a disaster (Miller & Goidel, 2009).

The use of official sources in disaster coverage is yet to be determined. Some studies indicate journalists rely heavily on official sources to obtain information about the disaster (Quarantelli, 1981), while other research found journalists are more open to include unof-ficial sources in times of crisis allowing ordinary people to express their problems and frustrations (Andsager & Powers, 1999; Pantti & Wahl-Jorgensen, 2011; Shehata, 2010). During the Mumbai attacks in 2008, mainstream media sought material from social me-dia, with journalists monitoring social media to share eyewitness accounts of the events (Bélair-Gagnon, 2013).

Existing literature differentiates between institutionally driven news and event-driven news. Institutionally driven news "is cued by official activities in official arenas. It is pegged to institutional news beats, official actors, and institutionally defined decision points" (Lawrence, 2000, p. 8). Conversely, event-driven news requires journalists to report beyond the boundaries of official information, offering the opportunity for unofficial sources to voice their concerns in the news media (Shehata, 2010). Reporters have a higher need to distance themselves from dominant voices when political elites initiate the stories.

The earthquake occurring in Chile during April 2014 presents an interesting case of event-driven news with an intense flow of institutionally driven information. While earthquakes belong to the domain of event-driven news—stories triggered by acci-dents or disruptive and uncontrolled events (Wolfsfeld & Sheafer, 2006)—the Chilean government pursued a careful public relations campaign when delivering details about

the 2014 earthquake. President Bachelet did not release any information herself until several hours after the earthquake, once her team confirmed the risk of tsunami and had a clear number of casualties (*La Segunda*, 2014). Although neither the president nor her ministers referred to the 2010 earthquake in their press releases, the media heavily emphasized the differences between the two disasters in terms of the government's performance. Consistent with previous research on disaster coverage, Chilean media stepped outside their role of objective observer and assumed a role as judge of those in authority (Littlefield & Quenette, 2007).

The role of the media during catastrophic events is to communicate warnings, provide a description of the situation, keep the public informed after the event, and contribute to individual and community recovery and resilience (Norris et al. 2008; Quarantelli, 1991; Scanlon, 2007). The current news media landscape in Chile, however, does not always allow for a fair coverage of these events. *El Mercurio* S.A.P and *Copesa* S.A. are the most important news companies in Chile—90% of newspaper ownership for the entire country is concentrated in these two groups (Rao, 2012). As both companies are said to promote the ideas of the Chilean right wing, the lack of ideological diversity in the Chilean print press is worrisome, to say the least. According to a survey of journalists in Chile, reporters complain about pressures from advertisers and media owners: at least 45% of respondents have been asked to cover a story just because it was related to an outlet owner, board executive, or advertiser (UAH, 2013). Understanding the Chilean media ecosystem requires knowing Chile's recent political history. The following section briefly describes the changes introduced by Augusto Pinochet in Chile during the military dictatorship (1973-1990).

## Chile's Political and Media Context

In 1970, Salvador Allende became the world's first democratically elected Marxist president (BBC, 2018). By 1973, the country was deeply polarized between those who supported Allende's radical social reforms, and those who did not agree with a socialist government. On September 11, 1973, a military junta led by General Augusto Pinochet overthrew the government and started a military dictatorship that "imposed a curfew, abolished Congress, and closed or took over schools and media institutions. They banned political parties, labor unions, and other social organizations" (Sorensen, 2011, p. 401). The military regime lasted 17 years and killed, tortured and/or imprisoned more than 40,000 people (The Associated Press, 2011).

Pinochet's military regime significantly affected the Chilean media landscape. Left-wing media were persecuted during the dictatorship, and the press was unable to report on arrests, disappearances, killings and torture. According to Reporters Without Borders (2006), 68 media personnel—including editors, reporters, photographers, cameramen, and printing press workers—were killed or disappeared between 1973 and 1986 for being activists or producing stories against the regime. Consequently, opposition press experienced notable difficulties to survive as compared to those sympathetic with the regime.

Nowadays, "virtually all media has been owned by only a few different individuals and families who were staunch supporters of the Pinochet regime" (Sorensen, 2011, p. 406).

One of the stronger supporters of Pinochet's dictatorship was conservative newspaper *El Mercurio*, the flagship paper of the news media company *El Mercurio* S.A.P. Its owner, Agustín Edwards, collaborated with the CIA to destabilize Salvador Allende's socialist government in the early '70s and supported the military coup in 1973 (González, 2000; Herrero, 2014). Once Pinochet took power, *El Mercurio* openly supported the military regime, and its journalists worked with Pinochet's secret police force by fabricating stories to explain the deaths and disappearances of political prisoners (Sorensen, 2011).

The media company *Consorcio Periodístico* S.A. *(Copesa* S.A.*)* highly benefited from Pinochet's economic reforms. Also associated with Chile's political right (Gronemeyer & Porath, 2015), *Copesa* S.A. was rescued by the military dictatorship when it experienced financial issues after the economic crisis in 1982. It was then acquired by a business group emerging during Pinochet's regime (Mönckeberg, 2009), and nowadays it belongs to businessman Álvaro Saieh, who was also part of Pinochet's group of neoliberal economists (Navia & Osorio, 2015).

The national newspaper *La Nación* is located on a different corner. It used to be state-owned and funded through a mix of state subsidy and commercial advertising. As a government-owned newspaper, "its editorial line was subject to change whenever a new president from a different political party was in office" (Sorensen, 2011, p. 410). Consequently, *La Nación* was seen as a left-wing source between 1990 and 2010, when the center-left coalition *Concertación*[1] ruled the country until President Sebastián Piñera took office. In 2010, Piñera decided to remove all funding for the print version of the newspaper, and *La Nación* became an online-only outlet (Sorensen, 2011). In 2013, the newspaper was sold to a private company, *Comunicaciones Lanet* S.A, which has slowly reduced the staff and the scope of the outlet (journalist from *La Nación*, personal communication, April 10, 2017).

Today, *El Mercurio* S.A.P and *Copesa* S.A. are the largest, most important news companies in Chile (Rao, 2012). The former owns two national dailies, an evening newspaper in Santiago, and at least 20 regional/local newspapers throughout the country (Mellado, 2012), while the latter owns two national dailies, two free morning and evening editions in Santiago, a local newspaper in southern Chile, and three weekly magazines (Mazotte, 2014). The websites of EMOL (acronym for *El Mercurio* On Line) and *La Tercera* are among the most important online news sources in Chile (Newman et al., 2018). Pinochet's neo-liberal policies led to an irrevocable entrenchment of a private, transnational, market-based hegemony in communications and media that harms smaller or alternative outlets, which are increasingly weakened because advertising income is increasingly diverted to mainstream, dominant outlets (Godoy & Gronemeyer, 2012). For a media system to achieve structural pluralism, a variety of media with different owners is required to reflect different viewpoints, acknowledge diverse cultural representations, and offer mutual interaction possibilities (Gronemeyer & Porath, 2015; Klimkiewicz, 2010). However, "Chile continues to suffer from corruption of the military dictatorship, and the

concentration of media ownership limits the democratic debate" (Reporters Without Borders, 2017, para.1).

In this context, how did Chilean political reporters cover a highly politicized event such as the 2014 disaster? Did their editors tell them how to address the stories? Did journalists feel any pressures from their beats? According to Shoemaker and Reese (2014), journalists face several constraints when writing the news. Such constraints come from five levels of influence: social systems, social institutions, organizations, routines, and individuals. Were some levels more influential than others in the context of the 2014 earthquake? This study poses the following research questions:

> *RQ1. How did political journalists from EMOL, La Tercera and La Nación determine the main angle of the 2014 disaster news coverage?*

> *RQ2. To what extent did political journalists from EMOL, La Tercera and La Nación rely on official sources when covering the 2014 disaster?*

> *RQ3. To what extent did political journalists from EMOL, La Tercera and La Nación rely on unofficial sources when covering the 2014 disaster?*

## Methodology

Interviews are an "inter-change of views between two persons conversing about a theme of mutual interest" (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009, p. 2). For this study, semi-structured interviews were conducted with a set of prepared questions allowing additional questions for verification, accuracy and clarity (Kvale, 1996; Taylor & Bogdan, 1998).

Seven journalists were interviewed in the spring of 2017—two from EMOL, three from *La Tercera.com*, and two from *La Nación.cl*. EMOL is the top news website in Chile, while *LaTercera.com* is in the top six (Newman et al., 2018). As explained above, both EMOL and *La Tercera* are outlets linked to the Chilean right wing. *La Nación* (linked to the left-wing at the time of the disaster) does not rank among the top 10 online news sources in the country, but it was included in the analysis to provide ideological diversity to the sample. From April 1 (the night of the earthquake) to April 30, 2014, the three news outlets published a total of 483 online stories: EMOL published 187, *La Tercera* 196, and *La Nación* 100 stories (Saldaña, 2018).

Reporters were selected based on the stories they wrote as well as their willingness to participate. Some stories that were written did not include the name of the reporter who wrote it, and others were written by reporters who did not travel to the north and instead covered the disaster from Santiago. About half of the stories were written by political reporters (who usually did not cover natural disasters) and just a few of those reporters traveled to Iquique to follow the president and cover the crisis *in situ*. From that group, 15 reporters were contacted by email to participate in this study. Ten of them answered, and

seven accepted to participate in a Skype interview.

Calls were recorded using MP3 Skype Recorder, a free software for private, non-commercial use. Interviews lasted between 45 to 60 minutes and were conducted in Spanish. Journalists were asked how they went about writing earthquake-related stories, how they selected their sources, and how they determined the main angle of the narrative. They were also asked about their relationship with official sources and online audiences. All interviews were transcribed verbatim and analyzed following the constant comparative method (Tracy, 2013). The interview quotes selected to illustrate this study's findings were translated from Spanish to English using back-translation procedures to meet the requirements set forth by the University of Texas at Austin Institutional Review Board (IRB) Policies and Procedures (Institutional Review Board Number 2016-04-0085).

Interview subjects constituted a convenience or "purposive" sample of journalists who covered the 2014 earthquake. Purposive samples are selected to fulfill a certain purpose and are not representative of the entire population (Tracy, 2013). A convenience sample was justified as the goal of this study was not aimed to generalize findings to the entire population of Chilean journalists nor to explain how journalists make news-content decision on their daily work. The overarching intention was to achieve a better understanding of how reporters covered a highly politicized natural disaster in Chile.

## Results

### Main Angle of the Coverage

**RQ1** asked how political journalists from EMOL, *La Tercera* and *La Nación* determined the main angle of the 2014 disaster coverage. As described above, the human-interest angle, one of the most prominent angles in disaster news coverage (Houston et al., 2012; Wenger, James, & Faupel, 1980; Yang, 2012), was not the main focus of the reports. Instead, writing about the 2014 earthquake and tsunami was a political decision where the goal was to track President Bachelet's actions in 2014 and remind readers of the decisions she made in 2010.

> The coverage of the 2014 earthquake had a strong political angle. The President had just started her second term, and the 27/F disaster was still foremost on everyone's minds. Knowing how Michelle Bachelet would react to this new crisis became extremely important. I remember being in La Moneda[2] very late at night with my editor telling me I had to get on board the presidential aircraft, even if it meant I had to dress up as a flight attendant … I had to get to Iquique and see how she [the President] would act there. (Journalist from *La Tercera*, personal communication, April 7, 2017, author's translation)

Journalists attribute the political emphasis of the coverage to the unique circumstances of the event—having the same president dealing with two comparable natural disasters in two different terms:

> This happened when she started her second presidency, and the whole campaign of the runner-up candidate [right-wing candidate Evelyn Matthei] was about Bachelet's role in 27/F, blaming her for all those people who died in the 2010 tsunami. Maybe now it is not a hot topic, but in 2014 it was still relevant for the public opinion. It was seen as Michelle Bachelet's biggest problem. And then, right after she took office, another earthquake occurred. The natural, most obvious editorial decision was to cover the disaster from a political perspective. (Journalist from *La Tercera*, personal communication, April 7, 2017, author's translation)

> I remember that everyone was talking about that—the lessons learned from 2010, the government doing a much better job in 2014, a much faster first response to the disaster in the north. There was better organization to distribute food and supplies. I saw the government concerned about their public image, trying not to repeat the mistakes from 2010. (Journalist from EMOL, personal communication, March 31, 2017, author's translation)

Journalists from *La Tercera* mentioned two reasons to bring the 2010 disaster to the readers' attention. First, the paper favors thematic analysis over episodic coverage as much as possible, going beyond the mere description of current events:

> *La Tercera* is always providing context, doing comparative analysis, using infographics. That is a way to distance itself from *El Mercurio*. The editor is constantly expecting you to get information *El Mercurio* doesn't have. (Journalist from *La Tercera*, personal communication, March 31, 2017, author's translation)

Second, reporters indicated the right-wing orientation of the paper plays a significant role when it comes to President Bachelet. Considering Michelle Bachelet is a leader from the center-left coalition that ruled the country between 1990 until 2010, and then again during her 2014-2018 term, *La Tercera* might be particularly severe in its watchdog role:

> *La Tercera* has made its goal to expose President Bachelet. We did a lot of comparative analysis during the 2014 disaster, but behind such analysis was the intention of exposing the President. The paper likes seeing Bachelet weak. (Journalist from *La Tercera*, personal communication, March 31, 2017, author's translation)

## Reliance on Official Sources

**RQ2** inquired about the extent to which political journalists relied on official sources when covering the 2014 disaster. According to the literature, journalists rely heavily on official

actors for the construction of news (Cook, 2005), while political elites are constantly bringing news material to the attention of media organizations (Hänggli & Kriesi, 2012). This inter-dependency "creates a well-organized symbiotic relationship between reporters and official sources" (Lawrence, 2000, p. 5), who rely on each other to communicate ideas to the public.

Journalists, however, are far from simply repeating information provided by institutional voices. Despite their reliance on official sources to report about political events, journalists also shape these events (Entman, 1991). Journalists reframe political information as a way to maintain their gatekeeping power (Pander Maat & de Jong, 2013), and to demonstrate independence and objectivity (Shehata, 2010). The more politicians attempt to influence what journalists report, the more journalists will report on aspects other than those intended by the politicians. This is what Zaller (1998) calls the rule of product substitution—by using official information as a baseline, journalists highlight angles not mentioned by political elites, and include alternative sources, in order to take distance from official information. "If journalists allowed themselves to become a mere transmission belt for the communication of politicians … their professional standing would erode" (Zaller, 1998, p. 114).

Findings from this study, however, reveal a problematic relationship between journalists and their sources. On the one hand, journalists rely on official press releases as little as possible—they see these documents as "the tip of the iceberg"—and they try to find out what information was left out of the release.

> As a journalist, you can't stick to the official account. The starting point is distrust—you must be suspicious. Press releases only show what's convenient for the government. But what's beyond that? (Journalist from *La Tercera*, personal communication, March 31, 2017, author's translation)

But on the other hand, reporters interviewed for this study complained about a *quid-pro-quo* system, where they had to follow political figures' requests to get an interview or to obtain exclusive information.

> Sometimes they [political sources] need you to write something about them and you do it even if it's not newsworthy, because you need to keep your relatioship with them. I wouldn't say it's unethical, but it's certainly an "I'll give you this if you give me that" kind of relationship. (Journalist from *La Nación*, personal communication, April 10, 2017, author's translation)

In some cases, not doing what sources request might have consequences for journalists and their work.

> I once wrote a story about the Minister for Foreign Affairs and he didn't like it, so he stopped taking my calls and even speaking to me. My editor had to talk with him on my behalf. So, you have this power to inform the public and strengthen democracy, but at the same time you have to respond to

political pressures. It's like they [political sources] think we are at their service. (Journalist from *La Tercera*, personal communication, March 31, 2017, author's translation)

This situation is even more difficult for smaller outlets. As mentioned earlier, *El Mercurio* S.A.P. and *Copesa* S.A. are the most important news companies in Chile. Newspapers such as *La Nación*, which do not belong to the main outlets and do not have enough resources to compete with them, are unable to attract the elites' attention.

For political authorities, the most important media are TV stations, some radios, and papers like *El Mercurio* and *La Tercera*. We are never considered for official events, we don't get invited to official trips, and we certainly did not travel with the president to cover the earthquake consequences in the north. (Journalist from *La Nación*, personal communication, April 10, 2017, author's translation)

## Reliance on Unofficial Sources

**RQ3** asked about the extent to which political journalists relied on unofficial sources when covering the 2014 disaster. The interviews suggest reporters did not rely on unofficial voices when writing earthquake-related stories.

News coverage changes as events evolve over time. There are three stages in the news-making process: news discovery, news gathering, and news writing (Pander Maat & de Jong, 2013). Although political elites may be the main source of information in the news discovery phase, journalists are the ones deciding how to expand the story. This includes citing different sources, developing alternative angles and having the final say over how stories are portrayed (Strömbäck & Nord, 2006). Consequently, there is a higher chance of product substitution (Zaller, 1998) during later stages of the news production. Immediately after the earthquake, news stories might have followed the official information, but as the hours passed, journalists might have brought new information and context to understand disaster implications.

Interviews reveal that was not the case, and official sources dominated the news coverage. The political angle they took was crucial to define who was an authoritative voice to speak about the earthquake. As such, in later stages of the coverage, they turned to social media to find out what people were saying about the disaster—"a system of awareness," in Hermida's terms (2010)—but they did not open the gate for unofficial voices to enter the discussion. As shown by previous research, new platforms tend to be normalized to perform the same old routines (Lasorsa, Lewis, & Holton, 2012; Singer, 2005).

I checked Twitter but mostly to see if any political figure or government authority said something about the earthquake. I remember a time when a minister tweeted his opinions about the Communist Party, so I called him to get an interview, or to get at least the same thing he said on Twitter, but on record. (Journalist from *La Tercera*, personal communication, April 7, 2017, author's translation)

> Social media is a very democratic space where everyone can comment, and
> I love that. But I also think a lot of readers are poorly informed, and that makes
> them irresponsible commenters, even dangerous commenters. I do not use
> social media or news comments to write my stories. (Journalist from *La Tercera*,
> personal communication, March 28, 2017, author's translation)

> The only news comments I care about are my sources' comments. If they see
> something wrong in my story, I fix it, at least in the online version of it. I take
> information from news comments depending on who the commenter is.
> (Journalist from *La Tercera*, personal communication, March 31, 2017, author's
> translation)

This last opinion suggests sources are more important than audiences for political jour-
nalists. And the interviews confirm that. Two reporters discussed this issue and indicated
their sources are their actual audience:

> The usual news reader is not my reader. Political analysts, political elites,
> political journalists—they read my stories. Maybe those readers interested in
> politics do so as well, but those are just a few. (Journalist from *La Tercera*,
> personal communication, March 31, 2017, author's translation)

> I think elite newspapers don't write for common people. They write for the
> government and politicians in general. TV is for common people—TV simplifies
> what newspapers write about. (Journalist from *La Tercera*, personal
> communication, April 7, 2017, author's translation)

## Discussion

This study interviewed political journalists from three Chilean online newspapers to learn
how they covered the 2014 earthquake and subsequent tsunami in northern Chile. Chil-
ean journalism has been accused of excessive sensationalism and melodrama (Mujica
& Bachmann, 2015), especially in times of disasters. A study conducted by the National
Television Council found the coverage of the 2010 disaster in southern Chile proved
harmful to the audience as the excessive repetition of devastating images shown in the
media caused anxiety and emotional saturation in much of the public (CNTV, 2010).
Instead of providing information for a better understanding of the catastrophe, stories
mostly focused on the pain of the victims, triggering worry and excessive sadness in
the audience, and engraving images of destruction, suffering and looting in the viewers'
memories (Puente et al., 2013).

Coverage of the 2014 disaster, in contrast, focused on the political aspects of the event.
Though this emphasis could be seen as a more serious, mature approach to disaster
news coverage, findings from this study suggest the political angle had more to do with
the Chilean media ideology and less with a definitive departure from sensationalistic

practices. As observed from the analysis of the interviews, the media coverage regarding the 2014 disaster was highly permeated and influenced by the 2010 narrative. As President Bachelet and her team were strongly criticized for their poor management skills when facing the 2010 disaster, the blame that right-wing media organizations attributed to her government in 2010 persisted in 2014. Whether the media portrayal would have been different had the disaster occurred under a different government—not the same that faced the tsunami and earthquake in 2010—is a question that remains unanswered.

Contrary to what other studies have found regarding unofficial sources in disaster coverage (Andsager & Powers, 1999; Pantti & Wahl-Jorgensen, 2011; Shehata, 2010), stories reporting on the 2014 disaster relied heavily on official sources. The findings suggest that reporters focused on the political angles over human interest angles due to editorial prompting. The reliance on official sources is a burden on journalists, especially when their sources exchange information for media exposure. The nature of political reporting does not allow for unofficial sources to be quoted, and journalists are so immersed in the political ecosystem, that they do not even consider sources other than the members of the establishment. The fact they do not see news audiences as "their" audiences and write stories to be read by political figures and other journalists, reveals how profoundly symbiotic the journalist-source relationship is.

After 29 years of democracy, Chilean journalists no longer face political persecutions or official censorship. Yet, the strong concentration of media ownership is still a barrier to achieving a completely free press. Results from this study indicate that most of the influences journalists faced when covering the 2014 disaster came from the news organization itself, the third level of influence in Shoemaker and Reese's model (2014). Chilean reporters are restricted by market dynamics that privilege a commercial, for-profit model with little room for in-depth, investigative pieces. Even more concerning is the recognition of the ideological motivations from editorial management that journalists revealed in their interviews. Although this study found journalists used a thematic approach to cover a disaster, findings indicate political motives led journalists to change the focus from episodic to thematic. As such, influences coming from the organizational level were even more important than journalistic work routines.

There are high levels of social media news use and political activism in Chile but decreasing levels of confidence in journalism and traditional news media outlets (Navia & Ulriksen, 2017). In this context, social media and news comments are a venue to contest the narratives of mainstream public spheres such as the media or political elites—what Toepfl and Piwoni (2015) call *counterpublic spheres*. Despite the high levels of social media penetration in the country, Chilean journalists do not turn to social media to look for alternative sources. In fact, they often look at users of social media as non-educated and non-elite audiences that are often ignored. Findings show Chilean political reporters use these platforms as another way to get close to the sources they already know. In other words, they normalize social media to perform their day-to-day work (Lasorsa et al., 2012; Singer, 2005).

This study is not without limitations. Although responses from the seven reporters who participated in this project showed consistency, the number of interviews is rather small. Similarly, interviews were conducted three years after the disaster occurred, so perception and memory issues must be considered. Yet, in-depth interviews were the most suitable method to achieve the goals of this study. Any other technique (such as surveys) would have encountered the same problems—subjects not willing to participate, limited recall after three years, etc. The interviews presented in this study provide a rich understanding of journalistic work routines from the reporters' own perspective.

Chile is a country with a fairly stable democracy (Carlin, Love, & Zechmeister, 2014) and high levels of online news consumption—89% of Chilean news consumers get their news from digital/social media (Newman et al., 2018). It is also a place where disasters are "normalized" (Correa et al., 2016) and as such, people's perceptions of natural catastrophes are likely to be affected by factors other than the disaster itself. This ensemble makes Chile an ideal case study to expand scholarship on political implications of disaster news coverage in online news settings.

## NOTES

[1] "Concertación de Partidos por la Democracia" is the name for the coalition of center-left political parties that governed in Chile from 1990 to 2010.

[2] *La Moneda* Palace is the seat of the President of the Republic of Chile.

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# Invited Commentary:
# Whose journalism matters and for whom?

## By Barbie Zelizer , Ph.D.Raymond Williams Professor of Communication Director, Center for Media at Risk University of Pennsylvania's Annenberg School for Communication

The untold aspects of journalism's Anglo-American imaginary are too numerous to be counted. Worse yet, they permeate all kinds of values, beliefs and practices that comprise an unachievable ideal of what journalism is supposed to be. As I argued not long ago, an imaginary ill-suited for addressing current times runs rampant in the study of journalism, made recently visible by U.S. and U.K. journalism's crippled responses to Brexit and the ascent of Trump (Zelizer, 2018). This pristine version of journalism, shaped by a largely unmarked U.S. and British context, drives a misunderstanding of what journalism looks like in multiple parts of the world.

Attending to particulars is especially critical at this point in time, as observers are increasingly recognizing that the West needs to follow the rest. With some of the most settled and presumably stable democracies currently undergoing political intimidation, threat and diminution, it has become clear that the media are emerging as one of the most critical junctures for arresting the creep of authoritarianism. But the fundamental question of how to resist—how media practitioners can secure and maintain an independent and critical presence while accommodating the unkempt and challenging backdrop of authoritarianism—is largely unresolved. How media practitioners imagine their role under increasingly autocratic conditions, how they contemplate acts of resistance and how they act in a way that allows them to accommodate necessarily modified occupational and professional ideals still remain up for grabs.

A slew of explanatory factors helps clarify why push-back is so difficult to come by on the part of institutional actors in so-called established democracies. They range from a deep-seated shared reliance on implicit values and an institutional culture that drives certain ways of thinking and acting to explicit acts of looking the other way, such as the disregard that greets impunity, collusion, corruption, power-sharing and secrecy. Because muzzling or otherwise constraining journalists has long been part of the political

playbook in both autocratic and democratic regimes, it is curious that scholarly thinking about mechanisms of resistance among media practitioners has not been more fully or assertively developed.

This takes on urgency when we recognize that authoritarianism emerges by linking itself, often unseen, to the underside of flailing and troubled democratic systems. Democratic-looking institutions are prime weapons if not window-dressing in the hands of authoritarian regimes (Gandhi, 2008). By not fostering a repertoire of acts that lay the ground for media pushback to intimidation when needed, the ideal vision of journalistic performance, even in the so-called foundational democracies of the United States and the United Kingdom, remains sorely ill-equipped to deal with the inevitable acts of political threat that accompany authoritarian creep.

To be fair, authoritarianism has not been well understood across the board. Winston Churchill was famously quoted congratulating Mussolini in 1927 for succeeding in his "triumphant struggle" against Leninism, unaware of what was to follow. Political theorists have long focused on democratization as the premiere political impulse—where, as Art noted, "democratization was pretty much the only game in town" and authoritarian regimes were "theoretically interesting insofar as they told us something important about their democratic successors" (2012, p. 351). The focus on democracy as a sure-fire corrective to authoritarianism has led observers three separate times to erroneously pronounce the global demise of autocratic rule: in the early interwar years of the 1920s, in the post-World War II period and in the so-called "end" of the Cold War (Motadel, 2016). Theorists of authoritarianism have tended to conceptualize the phenomenon either as a characteristic of government or of personality, without finding a place for the times, spaces and activities associated with the incremental transformation from democratic to autocratic—democratic backsliding, illiberalism or the other mechanisms by which democracies dwindle.

Even the popular image of authoritarianism has gone wanting. As Pepinsky noted in addressing the naivete with which most U.S. citizens regard authoritarian impulses:

> The mental image that most Americans harbor of what actual authoritarianism looks like is fantastical and cartoonish. This vision has jackbooted thugs, all-powerful elites acting with impunity, poverty and desperate hardship for everyone else, strict controls on political expression and mobilization, and a dictator who spends his time ordering the murder or disappearance of his opponents using an effective and wholly compliant security apparatus. (2017, para. 4)

Multiple blinkers thereby continue to obscure authoritarianism's fuller recognition, especially in its incremental states. Without the model of a Gestapo, KGB or Stasi, how much do we know about what platforms of coercion look like? And without current examples of successful and transformative organized resistance and solidarity, how much do we understand about potential avenues of push-back?

This has real bearing on how we understand institutional cultures writ large under the grip of autocratic rule, and it creates difficulties in imagining more fully the gradual shift from democratic to autocratic conditions. In Glasius's words:

> Without really understanding what authoritarianism or indeed illiberalism might look like in a democratic or transnational context, we are in the dark as to what the exact problem is, what the current trends are, and how those trends might relate to other recent tendencies such as populism, xenophobia and nativism… [There is need to] study (that is, define, operationalize, observe, classify, analyze) authoritarian and illiberal practices. (2018, p. 516, p. 527)

Authoritarianism, then, is at heart a complex phenomenon that emerges in varying though patterned ways. Combining a mix of impulses of nationalism, economic isolationalism, unity over pluralism and diversity, xenophobia and hostility toward outsiders, an apocalyptic view of the future, anti-institutionalism, anti-elitism, anti-intellectualism, an unmediated link with the public and contempt for free and critical media, all embodied in a charismatic strongman figure, authoritarianism has become one of the most central political impulses of current times (Finchelstein, 2017). It latches onto troubled democratic regimes, introducing autocratic measures that wrest autonomy away from the public and the institutions professing to work on its behalf. More important, it exists in hybrid conditions in many places around the world, all of them in need of more sustained and critical attention.

All of this makes a special issue on Latin American journalism important. The papers in this issue drive home the point that an understanding of Latin American journalism needs to begin with a discussion of Latin American conditions. Such conditions include the nature of the political environment, the demeanor of media-government relations, the contours of journalistic entities, the mechanisms used to foment institutional change and, most important, the risks and mechanisms of resistance to risk that exist, are imagined and can be acted upon. Specifically, authoritarianism both lurks stealthily and operates openly across the Latin American institutional landscape, demonstrating, as Rockwell and Janus (2010) showed in their analysis of Central American media, that democratization does not necessarily ensure more media autonomy. Or as Fox and Waisbord (2002, p. xxi) noted, "media democratization remains a pending task in Latin America." That makes Latin America supremely qualified to offer a map to the rest of the world, demonstrating not only that media democratization is neither as stable nor as complete as tends to be assumed but that there is much that needs to be better understood of what happens in its stead.

Though the topic of these papers varies, together they demonstrate the omnipresence of authoritarianism, across time and space, in a way that can be critically useful for understanding both tools of intimidation and mechanisms of resistance to political threat. Present either as a concurrent experience or indelible memory from the past, autocratic tendencies in three Latin countries—Uruguay, Cuba and Chile—provide an instructive set of examples for thinking about what media performance looks like in such contexts. It is worth noting, as I did earlier (Zelizer, 2013), that although journalism is necessary

for democracy, democracy is not necessary for journalism. This makes an examination of the news-making apparatus a malleable instrument that easily traverses the divide between democratic and autocratic regimes. In that we are long overdue in providing as detailed an examination of journalism under autocratic governments as we have provided of journalism under democracies, it is high time that we attend to the latter. These papers call on us to do precisely that.

Each paper wrestles with the important question of how to put journalism in the service of democratic ideals, despite either the experience or memory of autocratic rule. With three oft-cited regional challenges of inequality, violence and the environment (Centeno & Lajous, 2018), journalism has a huge role to play in the region. What becomes clear from these papers is that past and present experience with autocratic rule both creates obstacles and drives ingenious and thoughtful mechanisms to resist its reappearance.

Each paper offers a different corrective to the quandary of a free and critical journalism in the face or memory of authoritarianism. Matías Dodel, Federico Comesaña and Daniel Blanc's article on reverse agenda-setting raises the important question of how competing interests shape the news hole in Uruguay, particularly around the simultaneous scheduling of two key events—one legislative, one sports-related. Though competition between different agendas is a well-traveled topic in existing scholarship, Dodel and colleagues add the important point that agenda setting helps keep the government accountable, the trait that some theorists see as the dividing characteristic between democratic and autocratic regimes (ie., Glasius 2018). The authors demonstrate that by anticipating public fascination with the World Cup, journalism does the opposite, losing the chance to keep government accountable by preemptively shifting its coverage away from an important legislative story. Doing so, however, demonstrates a reversal of the agenda-setting process, presumed to flow only from media to public, and a recognition of journalism's ready accommodation of presumed public fascination into the agenda-setting cycle, even when such fascination goes against more refined notions of public interest. Emphasizing a point not regularly embraced by existing literature, Dodel, Comesaña, and Blanc's article thus sets the stage for thinking about how well-established theories about journalism need updating to fit regional circumstances that challenge their parameters.

Moreover, this discussion of reverse agenda setting—in and of itself a useful complication of existing scholarship—is important because it helps us understand some of the functions of journalism's authoritarian backdrop in Latin America. First, the tenor of each competing event orients to different kinds of public engagement—the emotional and frenzied fandom associated with sports versus the rational deliberative investment associated with the news. Though neither response exists in as clear-cut or binary a form as we might imagine, those wishing to stifle the public agenda for hard news are given an opportunity to diminish it by exploiting the popularity of sports events, with the strong appeal of "Futbol" or soccer offering a useful setting for authoritarian regimes to wield their influence. Second, the unarticulated news judgment shown here—by which news organizations voluntarily switched on the sports event instead of the legislative one—is more widely experienced than just in Latin America. But it reminds us of the use-value in recognizing how often and how widely such acts of self-censorship occur. This reversal,

then, of agenda setting has particular ramifications for Latin America that are surely present in the default U.S.-U.K. settings central to journalism's study, and particularly so as those settings experience a shift toward more autocratic rule.

Shearon Roberts takes us to Cuba, where she addresses the degree to which resistance can be found among young Cuban media practitioners. Considering the fact that all of the 14 leading Cuban blog sites have been blocked or threatened with blocking by the state, she notes that Cuban journalists must necessarily develop work-around practices that shield them from surrounding political tensions.

While all such work-arounds are instructive in current times, Roberts focuses on a particular example: how young Cuban media practitioners use digital media to transform traditional media from the inside. Though Cuban journalists often sacrifice living inside the country for a chance to critically and independently tell its news outside, there exist many young Cubans who choose to work in legacy and often state-run media while facing the risks of censorship and other punitive measures.

How these journalists work provides a nuanced and instructive example of how to live with autocratic rule. By working "in between," they mirror the discourse of the independent blogs from outside while knowingly hedging constraints of censorship and self-censorship. Their basic strategy—working through the voices and views of acceptable outsiders—includes covering stories of resistance beyond Cuba, addressing the reemergence of politically-conscious trovadores and focusing on artforms engaged in soft political critique. At the same time, as we know from other geographic contexts (i.e., Han, 2016), the same young Cuban journalists also use digital platforms for voicing more strident critique of the government, either anonymously or via pseudonyms.

Significantly, Roberts' example of what Lawson (2002) labeled "media opening" resembles similar earlier attempts in Haiti from 1968 onwards. Chronicling the similarity between the two cases, she discusses how Radio Haiti Inter engaged in educating for democracy while not directly addressing the lack of domestic freedom. This regional knowledge about how to resist authoritarianism is enormously generative, for it makes explicit a set of cues by which the critical and independent dimensions of occupational and professional identity can flourish within an environment that aims to dismantle it altogether. In the Cuban case, young journalists and new media showed the older journalists and legacy media how to incrementally nudge the needle of repression. Just like reverse agenda setting, this example of reverse modeling inverted the modeling process incrementally, tentatively and creatively. This in itself is refreshing, as it challenges expectations that progressive change is hard to come by under autocratic regimes.

Lastly, Magdalena Saldaña tracks how the reporting of a natural disaster in Chile created an opportunity for political critique. Two massive earthquakes followed by tsunamis—one in 2010 and the second in 2014—occurred under the same Chilean president. Though she handled the second one smoothly, she botched the implementation of alerts following the first, resulting in over 100 civilian deaths.

When right-wing political voices refracted coverage of the second disaster through the first, journalists were unable to craft a work-around.

Why is that so? Saldaña observes that although political persecution and official censorship are entities of the past in Chile, Chilean journalists' experiences of a media landscape filled with arrests, disappearances, torture and murder are still freshly remembered. Moreover, the 17-year Pinochet dictatorship introduced economic and political structures that persist today on Chile's neoliberal landscape. Thus, reporters respond to market dynamics and the strong concentration of media ownership in much the same way that they had responded earlier to the dynamics of repression made familiar by the dictatorship. They sidestep risks, self-limit, close off alternatives, even self-censor as the fiercely symbiotic nature of the source-journalist link determines the coverage that ensues. Even the option of finding alternative sources or activating new media were not acted upon, as journalists, in Saldaña's words, used these options as simply "another way to get close to the sources they already know."

Eschewing the very risk-taking behavior that constitutes the core of critical and independent journalism, the failure to craft a work-around, even decades after the dictatorship ended, demonstrates how insidiously authoritarianism permeates its surround. Again, like reverse agenda setting and reverse modeling, Saldaña offers an example of reverse outreach, where rather than expand to seek additional information from additional sources, as is often claimed of the opportunities afforded by new media, journalists double down to secure more of the same. The parallel with journalism elsewhere in the world is obvious.

The value of these inverted examples of reasoning long attached to discussions of journalism in the Anglo-American imaginary should be clear. Not only do they reverse the direction by which the media are presumed to work in stable democratic systems—fostering reverse agenda setting, reverse modeling and reverse outreach—but they introduce increments, noise, improvisation, hesitation, resourcefulness, creativity and flux into the models formerly thought inscrutable for conceptualizing media practice. At the same time, they challenge the boundary that is presumed to separate present experience from past memory. Practices enacted during periods of repression under authoritarian systems thereby live on after the repression is thought long gone.

All of these papers demonstrate that when trying to figure out how best to address journalism's current tribulations, one can do no better than to go South. Whose journalism matters, and for whom? We need little convincing that what happens to journalism in Uruguay, Cuba or Chile has strong implications for journalism across the Latin American region.

But the question of whose journalism matters and for whom has a broader relevance too, one tied to the budding realization that the Anglo-American imaginary for thinking about the news needs a reset (Zelizer, 2018). When David Frum (2017) wrote "How to Build an Autocracy" in *The Atlantic* of March 2017, he noted that U.S. citizens:

want to believe that everything will turn out all right. In this instance, however, that lovely and customary American assumption itself qualifies as one of the most serious impediments to everything turning out all right. (para. 10).

Put differently, it may be easier to look from afar and assess what happens there as a lesson for how to better understand what might be happening on the home front too.

Latin American media have a rich, granular and complicated relationship with authoritarianism, and it is time that those who are interested in sustaining free and critical media learn from the settings already well-versed in its trappings. Perhaps, then, we might add to the reverse agenda setting, reverse modeling and reverse outreach discussed in these pages the very core of journalists' occupational and professional mindset: imagination. By reversing its direction, those striving for a different journalism for current times might orient to what has been already learned, challenged, negotiated and resisted in Latin America. More fully understanding its settings, where autocratic political parameters have long been more of the rule than the exception, seems an obvious place to start setting journalism back on track wherever autocratic rule has caused it to lose its way.

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