

ISOJ 2022: Day 2

Research breakfast

Chair: [Amy Schmitz Weiss](#), ISOJ research chair and professor, **School of Journalism & Media Studies, San Diego State University**

- [Jessica Renee Collier](#), postdoctoral research fellow, **Center for Media Engagement, UT Austin**
 - [Gina M. Masullo](#), associate professor/associate director, **Center for Media Engagement, UT Austin**
 - [Caroline Murray](#), research associate, **Center for Media Engagement, UT Austin**
 - [Talia Stroud](#), professor/director, **Center for Media Engagement, UT Austin**
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Amy Schmitz Weiss Hello. Good morning, everybody. So nice to see your smiling faces at 8:00 on a Saturday for research. You are hard core, awesome people. As many of you know me, some of you do, some of you may not, I'm Amy Schmitz Weiss. I'm ISOJ's research chair. I've been part of ISOJ since 2003. It's wonderful to see so many familiar faces come back in person and to see people online as well and meet new folks that are here. We are so excited this morning to have with us Dr. Talia Stroud and her awesome crew of researchers from the center that are going to be sharing all of their fantastic work from the Center for Media Engagement. I just wanted to tell you a little bit about Dr. Talia Stroud. She holds the E.M. Ted Dealey professorship in the business of journalism and is a professor of the Department of Communication Studies in the School of Journalism and Media, as well as the founding and current director of the Center for Media Engagement, and Interim Director of the Annette Strauss Institute for Civic Life in the Moody College of Communication here at UT Austin. We're so excited to have her with us and for her research fellows to share their awesome work. And what we're going to do is they're each going to present lightning round presentations, and then after that, we're going to open it up for Q&A here in the room, but also online. So if you do have questions for them here to the folks online, please post it to the ISOJ2022 hashtag. And I'm going to turn it over to Talia.

Talia Stroud Thank you so much for being here this morning. It's just such a pleasure to chat with you about some of the research that we've been doing at the Center for Media Engagement. For those of you who aren't familiar, the Center for Media Engagement is an organization that started formally in 2017. And the goal, especially in the realm of journalism, is to help newsrooms meet their business and democratic goals. And so we do that in partnership with newsrooms. And to date, we've worked with over 170 different news organizations, and our tools and strategies have been adopted by over 500 different newsrooms. And what we hope to share with you this morning is just a sprinkling of some of our recent work in the hopes that it might inspire you to think about how your newsroom or your research could be inspired by thinking about engagement and its effects. So what we're going to do is we're going to each give around a five-minute talk, and then we'll open it up for Q&A. So our first presenter is going to be Jessica Collier. Jessica is a postdoctoral researcher at the Center for Media Engagement, and she will soon be an assistant professor at Mississippi State University.

Jessica Renee Collier Okay, thank you for that introduction. Today, the project that I'll be talking about was inspired by this question of once people are on a news site, how can we encourage them to read more news and to use those link sections effectively to encourage recirculation on news sites? So the way that we approached this project was by first partnering with seven local broadcast newsrooms in small to midsize markets across the U.S.. And what we were really interested in was looking at four different features of link presentation that we might be able to test to encourage people to click on links and link sections. And we also recorded the device that people use, so whether they were coming from mobile or PC, and the referral site that they were coming from, so whether that was search, social, or the news site homepage itself. And if we want to look specifically at these features of link presentations that we tested, we looked at placement, so whether links were appearing in the middle or at the end of an article; layout, whether links appeared with images or as text only; the type of content, so whether people would see stories that were related to the story that they were reading at the time, or whether they would see links to content that was trending on the news site at that time. And then we also varied the labels that we used for these link sections, depending on the type of content. So depending on whether they saw popular or related stories, they would get different labels. So there were three categories here: generic, so really straightforward wording, just either related or popular stories; labels that would cue more cognitive motivation, so include including the phrase "learn more"; and then labels that would cue a more social motivation in people, so for example, "what else people can read on this topic?" So after implementing all of these different variations of the way links could appear, we looked at this, we looked at the device type, we looked at referral site to see what combination of these would increase the probability that someone's going to click on a link in a link section to read more news.

And so we measured this over the course of a week on these seven broadcast news sites, and it generated about 1.8 million clicks. So we use that to analyze our data, and here are some very key findings. So those people who were coming from search or the news site homepage were more likely to click on links to related content than they were to click on links to popular content. Additionally, if talking about those presentation features that I mentioned, regardless of the referral site that they were coming from, they were more likely to click on links accompanied by images. So if you look at the search column here, increase adding images to your links almost doubles the probability that someone's going to click on one of them. Some other notable findings that I'll highlight are that users who were coming from search or social were just in general less likely to click on a link than someone coming from the news site homepage itself. If we want to talk about the placement variable or presentation feature that I mentioned, links that appeared at the end of an article were more likely to generate clicks than links that appeared in the middle of an article. So maybe speaking to people's expectations about where links appear on a page. And then finally in general those generic wordings for links, so just saying "related stories" or "popular stories" generated more clicks than our more social or cognitive motivated labels. And that didn't vary by the device type that people were using or the referral site that they were coming from.

So overall, we have some key takeaways for news sites, and we want to admit this bore out in our data, clicks on links are infrequent. But we want to point out that there are ways that seem to generate an increased probability that people click on a link. So from half a percent to a full percent, and in the context of the total number of people visiting a news site every day that can have important financial ramifications. So the paths that people take to news affects their engagement with more news, and we really want to encourage newsrooms to consider those. Additionally, there are ways to tailor link sections based on

the pathways that people are taking, so I've included some of our findings here. This research is also published if you want to read a few more, but considering those pathways and tailoring your link sections to those could be important. And then finally, even regardless of the paths that people are taking to news, always include images with your links is a takeaway that we have for that. So thank you so much, and I will introduce our assistant director, Gina Masullo.

Gina M. Masullo Thank you and good morning. Thank you, Jessica. So this morning I'm going to talk about a study that we did trying to probe into how an audience that doesn't like the news that much or at least the mainstream news very much, how they felt about it, and their observations, and also maybe ways that newsrooms could reach them a little bit more effectively. So for this, we partnered with 27 local newsrooms, and we also partnered with an organization called Trusting News to do this. And the 27 newsrooms all opted in. You know, we had people, as you can see from the map, all over the country, news organizations varying size, some smaller, some more community newsrooms, and some were broadcast, some were print. And we did a survey of their audiences, so distributed through their websites. And we had almost 3,500 people who participated in the survey from all these newsroom audiences, and then the journalists from those newsrooms interviewed 91 of them in depth.

So our big takeaway, which is this part first part, is sort of unsurprising. There's not a whole lot of trust in news. They certainly perceive local news outlets more favorably than national news outlets, which maps on to what we know from many other studies. CNN was mentioned the most as untrustworthy. Fox the most trustworthy, although they didn't trust Fox very much either. And these were all people who identified as either conservative or conservative leaning. Trust was higher for local TV news than local print, which also maps on to other findings. And they were also very concerned when local news seemed to run wire copy or national copy because they felt like that sort of tainted their local, especially newspapers. Now, in the interview specific specifically, the journalists probed like what could newsrooms do to approach you differently? What specifically made you not trust stories? And some of that is really revelatory what we found. You know, they certainly felt stereotyped in the news. They felt like news stories often had a conservative voice that was super extreme. Like one quote from one person, and I love this quote, he's like, "You know, we're not all driving pickup trucks with a Confederate flag off the back. Like there's some of us who are more moderate." And, you know, the news stories tend, because it's more newsworthy, to gravitate to those more extreme voices. So one of the big things they said is like show the diversity of conservative voices. Don't just show the more extreme. There's some people who are more reasonable than that. They also felt like they were treated like a monolith. You know that all conservatives think this, or all conservatives think that. And they said there's a lot of variability in that, and we thought that was particularly interesting because nobody likes to be treated like a monolith. Right? Nobody likes to feel like, you know, everybody who's like me in some way feels X way. They also wanted more diversity in terms of age in particular and race of the conservatives who were quoted in stories. They felt like it was disproportionately old white men. Now, granted, conservatives do tend to be. There's a lot of old white men in them. But their point was that there is more variability than was often reflected in the news pages.

Then when the journalist probed in these interviews into like, what do you mean when you say a story is biased? Their perceptions of bias were, I think, certainly very different from what I would consider bias and very different, I suspect, from what journalists would consider bias. They felt like journalists added context to stories that made them feel like it was a slant. The best example of this was a community center closes in a lower income

neighborhood, and the story about it talks about how this is a blow for that community's health and that it's going to disproportionately hurt people who are income disadvantaged or who are diverse racially or ethnically. They perceived that as, "Well, you're adding all this stuff that has nothing to do with the center closing." Now, certainly we might disagree with that, but I think it's interesting to understand sort of how they saw that. They saw that as this is additional stuff that you're trying to sway us with it. Another concern was they felt like journalists don't like them, and they felt like because of that, they didn't feel as willing to be interviewed. It was challenging to get people to agree to these interviews. Some of the people who agreed to the interviews wanted to talk to me first, and like sort of vet me, and make sure I wasn't going to like indoctrinate them. So there is a lot of distrust even of the process. So the people who did really wanted to get this out there, so that's just something to keep in mind.

So the takeaways that we have for this is it's a challenging thing, right? Because journalists do not want to leave information out of a story that's important, even if it upsets members of their audience. Right? You don't want to pander to a particular subpopulation. But there were some takeaways we felt. First of all, diversity of voices is always a good thing, right? Having a variety of voices in a story and not just focusing on the stream is a takeaway for every sort of group. And listening to people in your community. One big takeaway from this study was the conservatives just love that they were being asked how they felt. And so it seemed like, especially in local communities, in more conservative areas, journalists may be able to just go out and talk to people more, and that could bridge some of that divide. Consider more diversity in hiring. They had a very strong impression that newsrooms were predominantly liberal. And, you know, there's some evidence that that's true in some cases. Right. And they felt like, you know, you diversify in other ways, maybe consider having more diversity in that way. They wanted journalists to focus on facts and story and not interpretation. Again, some of that interpretation, we might argue, is necessary in a story, so that's a fine dance that I think journalists have to do. So our recommendation is just to think that through, like have that conversation. Are we adding this fact? How is that going to be perceived? It doesn't mean you should just not add facts that are key or interpretation that's important, but just to think it through perhaps more. They brought up correcting mistakes. That's something that comes up all the time in trust. Right? They wanted mistakes corrected. That has nothing to do with them being conservatives. It's just sort of a general thing people want. And they also wanted to see balance in stories. You know, their perception of balance might not always be the same perception, I think the journalist, or you, or I might have, but again, I think the key is to just interrogate that. You know, just have a conversation. Are we being as balanced as we could? Could we add different voices? Should we not always rely on this one voice to be the conservative voice in the story? And I'm going to introduce you to Caroline Murray, who is a senior research associate with the Center for Media Engagement. She's going to talk to you about her research.

Caroline Murray Good morning, everyone. I'm Caroline Murray, and what I'm going to be talking about today is a few studies that we've done about how transparency from journalists can help improve trust in the news. So what these studies were looking at is whether if we embedded a card in a news article that kind of explained in a little bit more detail how and why a journalist wrote the story the way that they did, impacted trust in news. And so these cards contained information like why you thought the story was important, why you chose these voices to represent the story. And as you can see here, a section was also like how you took steps to be fair. So kind of just giving readers a little bit more insight into the reporting process. And we looked at this in three different studies, and the reason that we did that is because we wanted to see if this kind of transparency

functioned differently if you were familiar with the news brands or if you were encountering it for the first time. And so these three studies had a very similar design. We asked half of participants to read an article that had a transparency card and then the other half to read the same article just without the transparency card., and then we compared their answers on terms of trust in news and engagement.

So this first study was with a mock news site that we called the News Beat, and we fielded it on Amazon's Mturk. So this would be a site that no one was familiar with because it doesn't actually exist. And what we found in that study was participants did think that the News Beat was more reliable when they read an article with a transparency card versus one without, but it didn't impact all of our measures of trust. So we also asked if the News Beat was accurate, if they were fair, and we didn't see differences based on whether participants viewed an article with a transparency card or without one. So we did a similar study by partnering with the USA Today and The Tennessean, and we surveyed their real news audiences when we did this survey. And this one was much more successful, so transparency cards boosted the perception of trust in the two newspapers for multiple factors of trust. And we did the next study with three McClatchy newspapers, so El Nuevo Herald, The Sacramento Bee, and the Wichita Eagle. And when we did this study, it actually had a different result than our USA Today study, so we didn't see the same difference between people and their levels of trust, whether they read an article with a transparency card versus without. But we also looked at two other things here to kind of understand that difference and the impact of these cards. So we asked people whether they recalled seeing the card in the article that they read in the first place, and overwhelmingly, people did not recall seeing the card at all. There's a slight uptick if the card was placed in line with the text, kind of in the middle of the article, versus at the bottom. But again, these numbers were still pretty small. And the other thing that we asked them to do is view the card outside of the context of a news article, so just by itself and tell us what they thought about it. And when we did that, people shared that they did appreciate this kind of information, that it would make them trust a news organization more. So we were kind of thinking through why it was that the USA Today study in the McClatchy study had different results, we kept coming back to those two factors. That people like this kind of information, they appreciate it, but they just didn't notice the card when they were reading the news article. And that was kind of in line just anecdotally with the design of the two cards you see up here. So in the USA Today study, the card was bright blue, maybe a little bit more prominent. And in the McClatchy study, the card was a lighter gray, so a little more subtle.

So what we can take away from all three of these studies is readers do value transparency from journalists, and it can help increase their trust in some instances. But they have to be aware that these kind of efforts are going on. Right? These efforts have to be noticeable on the page. And that could be a question of design. It can be a question of placement. But ultimately, in order for it to have its intended effect, they need to be aware that it's happening. Another reason that we like the idea of transparency cards is they are a smaller ask maybe than some of these other measures because the journalists already gather all this information when they're going through the reporting process. It's just about making it accessible to readers and boosting their trust in that way. So that is all for me, but I will pass it lastly to Dr. Talia Stroud.

Talia Stroud Thank you so much. And I'm going to share some of our work on quizzes and how they can be really beneficial to news organizations. So we've done quite a number of studies over the past couple of years thinking about how do quizzes work, and can they be effective for news organizations? And so we've been looking at things like, do

they affect how people learn? Do they affect people's interest in politics and news in general? And the big reason to do this is because so many news organizations are using engagement strategies like polls on their site. And this has been incredibly concerning because a poll, if it's returning information on the basis of who took it in the first place, that could actually be misinforming the audience if you have a skewed sample of people that participate in a poll on your news site, which is incredibly worrisome. Okay, so this is our proposal for something else you can do that's engaging, and we've been assessing whether it affects how people learn and whether it influences their interest in news and politics.

Results across a number of studies are hugely supportive of using quizzes on news sites. We've tested different formats, so you could have a multiple choice format, the kind you might remember from school back in the day. You can also have slider formats where you can actually move a dial and determine whether something is like 0% or 100%. And what we see is it increases time on site, people think it's more enjoyable, and they learn from it. These slider quizzes also help people learn in diverse ways. So they're not only learning to just recall things, they're recognizing them. There's all sorts of benefits from a learning perspective. And then finally, political quizzes, and this is some of the research that Gina Masullo has led, helped people feel more knowledgeable about politics and increased their interest in political news. So all sorts of reasons for us to really emphasize and think about incorporating quizzes into new sites.

So our recommendations here are that news organizations can use quizzes. They meet both business and democratic goals, so they're a good thing to incorporate. And we have three tips for news organizations. The first is across our research, we find that the quiz performs better if you incorporate different types of questions. So don't just use multiple question, after multiple question, after multiple choice question. You need to kind of throw in something different, so have a multiple choice one, have a slider one, include one with images. That really engages people to a greater extent than just something that's the same sort of question over and over again. The second point is really be on the lookout for estimates of public opinion that is actually done by rigorous public opinion survey firms. This is a goldmine for ways to create quizzes, and it's something that audiences really enjoy. So if you're asking things like, "what percentage of the public owns a gun?" or, "what percentage of the public uses social media for news?" Any type of survey like that is absolutely fantastic for this sort of a quiz question. And then finally, any sort of statistical or numerical data just lends itself beautifully to these sorts of quizzes. This is also particularly important, I want to add, in this era of misinformation. So Jessica has actually been leading some research that suggests that quizzes can actually be quite powerful in helping people correct their misperceptions about the world. So lots of reasons to do this.

If you're wondering like, how can I do this? Where am I going to find a tool? Well, we actually have a free tool that allows you to do this. It's been used by over 500 different news sites right now. You can go to the site, you can create your quiz, you can customize it, publish it, analyze it. This analyze thing, I want to really draw your attention to. It actually lets you AB test different quizzes on your own site and get results on it, so you can find out for your particular audience what sort of quiz is functioning better than another one. We have a refresh that we're going to be launching next month that includes some new features and new stylistic ways that you can format the quiz tool. So all sorts of ways to use this. We certainly welcome you to do so. There are other tools too. I'm not just hocking this one, but check it out. And feel free to let us know if you notice anything about this, have any suggestions for changes to it. And with that, I will open it up for some Q&A.

Audience Member I had a question for Dr. Masullo. To what degree do you think that your findings about conservatives could be really applied to just about any other group? I mean, particularly listening, diversity. And to what degree do you say maybe this wouldn't compare to other groups?

Gina M. Masullo Yeah. That is a great point. In fact, we did some other studies. We did similar studies with Black Americans. We did another similar study with Hispanic Americans, and very similar takeaway's. And I think the main takeaways of that are the same. Like I said, nobody wants to be stereotyped. Right? Nobody wants what represents their group to be what they consider someone who is very different from them. And I think that's just good journalism not to do that. There's also reasons, systemic reasons, why we rely on the same thing. You know, like a quick story. My dad is super outspoken guy, and he got quoted once in the newspaper. And then the reporter kept calling him for like every story because he's outspoken, and he answers the phone. And he's retired, and he can have a coherent sentence. And, you know, as a journalist for 20 years, I feel that. You know, like you find somebody who's not crazy but gives you the kind of quote you need. You're going to keep going back to them. So I think that is a takeaway, you know, to break out of that, and that's good for everyone. Where I think these findings are different from other groups is the interpretation part, and I think that's a bigger issue. You know, we are doing some additional work on what do people mean when they say the news is biased? And I don't think we fully understand what that means, and I think some of what they mean is problematic because what they want is a worldview that is inaccurate. And so that's where I think it was different. I'm not saying everything they said about bias you should throw out. But I think some of it was like, "I don't want to be confronted with things that make me uncomfortable." And, you know, journalists should be confronting you with things that make you uncomfortable, so that's where I think that it really was different from other groups.

Audience Member I had a question about the transparency cards, and I was wondering if the perception of the cards changed based on the kind of story they were placed in, whether it was an investigation, something deeper that maybe required more explanation about how they came to findings?

Caroline Murray Yeah. So we worked with several different news organizations to do this, and these were news organizations that were invested in these kinds of transparency efforts in the first place. So they selected the stories that they wanted to be used in the study, and they were about vastly different things. But they were all stories that they thought would require this a more in-depth explanation, so they weren't just quick five minute things, right? I think the Wichita Eagle story was about systemic problems with their water supply. And I believe in the USA Today and The Tennessean, they were talking about the placement of an Amazon facility in the local community. So it did happen across topics, but yes, more in-depth stories.

Gina M. Masullo And I can add to that briefly. I'll just add to that too, because I worked with Caroline on this. We didn't specifically test different stories, so we selected all stories that were like more complicated or complicated enough that you'd need a box. But I do think that's an interesting question, that it might work better on different ones, and that might be something we could later test. The other thing about it was one of our takeaways is don't do this with every story, right? You know, like anything you're using to draw attention to it is going to lose its effect if you do it all the time, so be judicious about it.

Audience Member Good morning. I was wondering if, Gina, you could talk a little bit about what the actual stereotypes of conservatives are prominent in coverage? Like, is there a disproportional representation of conservatives in coverage? I know that's beyond the scope of the study presented, but just interested.

Gina M. Masullo I think that is a super valid and important question. And what I will say is we did not do a content analysis. This was interviews with conservatives and their perception, and I stress that word, "perception" is that they're stereotyped. Whether they are indeed stereotyped, I think it's an open question and probably worth studying. I do think, though, that reflecting again on my experiences as a journalist, if I have somebody who is saying something super provocative, that quote is probably going to make it in versus someone who says something more reasoned. So while we don't have a content analysis showing evidence that they're stereotyped, I think it is likely that not everybody feels represented in the media because not everybody feels represented in the media. But I think that's a really, you know, good thing to look at. And we are really dealing here with perceptions. And, you know, perceptions are not reality. I mean, people can perceive lots of things. The other thing about that is some of these what they considered extreme voices do reflect conservatives in our country. Right? So it's not inaccurate. It doesn't mean they're all like that, but some and many are. So, I think sometimes the news media can be this mirror to people that is uncomfortable when they see it in the mirror. You know, you see your face in the mirror and you're like, "Oh, I don't look like that." But you actually do. Actually the mirror doesn't at 10 pounds. Like those 10 pounds are really there. So, yes, I think that's a really valid point.

Audience Member I'm so fascinated by that transparency card. Did you consider not publishing the whole card, but publishing a clickable link at the very, very top of the of the story? That's one. And two, if they had a print version of the report, was there a box printed in the body of the story in print? And what did we learn from that?

Caroline Murray Yeah, so those are great questions and definitely worth testing. I think there's a lot of different contexts that we could examine these in. So this was all online in the case of our sites. So it wasn't printed anywhere, but it could be, right? And the way that it was styled is the boxes that you saw on the slides placed in an online article almost, we were considering at the end, almost like an ad would be. So that was the format there.

Talia Stroud I'll just add one quick thing, which is we've worked with another organization called the Trust Project, and they've had lots of challenges getting news organizations to give up real estate at that part of the page, understandably. So I think there are some practical considerations there. And then in our studies and even in the recirculation work, the probability that people click on a link on a page is just so low that I don't know if a link would have the same impact. And if I look at kind of the global level at our trust work overall, the takeaway that I have is that small changes actually don't matter at all. So doing something like adding an author bio, that's great, but it actually doesn't move the needle at all in our research in terms of affecting people's trust in any way. The only tactic that we've seen persistently work is something big and bold, like lots of changes or something that's really drawing the readers' attention to it on the page. And I think that that's actually a hard thing for newsrooms because making a big, bold change like that is not something that people do every day. But I think to move the needle on trust, that's the level at which the commitment would have to be made.

Amy Schmitz Weiss I have a question for each of you. I'm curious to know exactly where you're going to be taking this research this coming year, as well as maybe other exciting

projects that you have in the works that you may want to share some insider tips about with us this morning? If you want to tell us about what you're working on coming up too? It'd be great to hear from each of you on that.

Gina M. Masullo Thank you. So, I mean, I'll answer that two ways. One, with the project I talked about here, what I really want to do more with that is go into the interviews more and understand more fully. I'm very intrigued with this idea of what the audience in general feels about bias in news, because I feel like as an academic and a former journalist, I have a conception of what a bias story is that I think is very different from the American people. I mean, not just conservatives, but people in general. Like they see bias in stories that I would look at it and be like, this is how I teach my undergrads to do it, so how do you think it's biased? So that's one thing. And I think this conservative voices project as well as some of our other ones, I really am interested in that. The other thing I will mention briefly is we're starting a new project where we're looking at broadcast fact checks and how to do them maybe in a better way. And I'm excited about that because one of the things we like to do at the Center for Media Engagement is solve problems, and not just say there's a problem. Because saying there's a problem is great. I mean, it's important, and you have to do it. We're just at the beginning of this, but that's something I'm excited that I'm working on. And I'll hand it over to Caroline.

Caroline Murray Yeah. So we don't have any transparency specific projects on the docket right now, but one that I'm really excited about, that's a total left turn from this, is we're working on an interview project where we were talking to people who think that the 2020 election was stolen, and trying to figure out how they come to that conclusion, what kind of logic they're using to get there, and then also where they're getting their information. And so we hope to publish that soon.

Talia Stroud And another one that's in the works is when we look to the future and what concerns us most, it's the probability that local information ecosystems are going to face an onslaught of misinformation in 2022 and 2024. And this is co-occurring with something that we all know, which is local newsrooms are having really hard times. Their revenue models are in trouble. Like we've heard this ad nauseum at ISOJ since I've been attending this conference. And to me, though, this is the moment where we have to be super concerned because the field is just ripe for problematic content to be shared at the local level. And it's so smart. Like if I were a person who wanted to share misinformation, I would absolutely be developing a local strategy right now. So what we're doing is we have a project that we're calling Local Misinformation Pipelines, and we're working with some local news organizations to try to figure out how can we help them surface the misinformation that's circulating within their communities. Newsrooms are great at doing the reporting once they know the misinformation is there, but many of them are inadequately staffed and unable to pick up what is the misinformation that's actually circulating in my community that needs to be detected right away, so that we can jump on this, so that we can provide corrective information. And so what we're trying to do is figure out not only how to surface community reports of potential sources of misinformation, but also algorithmically can you figure out what's happening in social media and comment sections in your local community that can give you an early alert to misinformation that's starting to crop up so that newsrooms can proactively tackle that.

And the thing that I'll add about this that is my optimism for the future is not only might the local newsroom be able to share that information, but social media outlets right now rely upon outside sources to determine what's true and what's false. They're not doing fact checking on their own. So wouldn't it be amazing if an outcropping of a project like this was

that social media companies then started to work with local news outlets, creating a new revenue stream, and helping them actually surface misinformation, and then providing the social media companies with the tools to discount that, to deprioritize it in feed. So I have lots of high hopes for this, and we'll see how all this pans out. But it's one that I'm really passionate about because I think that all hands need to be on deck as we look to what's going to happen in the upcoming elections. And I actually don't think this is just a U.S. phenomenon. I think it's actually a global one with the number of elections that'll be coming up in the years right around the corner.

Jessica Renee Collier And actually related to that, Talia alluded to my work on misinformation previously. Right now I'm looking at the possibility that misinformation circulates in communities that don't have resources for local newsrooms, so news deserts, and that work is underway right now to look at the alternatives for newspapers in those spaces. And do people turn to social media? If there are Facebook pages that they're relying on or Facebook groups there to get their information from, what's the quality of that information? Do they trust it, and is that an okay thing? So that's sort of where that work is going right now. We're going to survey people in those communities to see what they think about not having local news and how that impacts their daily life. And hopefully we'll have more soon.

Audience Member It sort of strikes me that the cards, which seem fantastic, are something that journalists are really excited to talk about anyway. I'm just wondering if there's, you know, transparency work about something that newsrooms are less likely to want to broadcast? Maybe about revenue models or sort of how they make their money. It sort of came up when we were talking a little bit about the bias in terms of, anecdotally hearing that, you know, "Oh, politicians pay The New York Times, and that's why they print favorable stories." Is there any work that's being done on sort of the business side with transparency?

Caroline Murray That's a super interesting question. I actually don't know. I haven't heard of any.

Talia Stroud The only thing I can think of is some of the transparency initiatives that people have come up with, like including citations in the articles. There has been some pushback to that from a business perspective, more so because it's hard to incorporate that into the CMS and hard for journalists to incorporate that in the way that some people are advocating that it should be in there, like including a footnote citing everything that you're doing to incorporate in the article. So that I think that a lot of the resistance to that has to do with the business concern. But that's the only thing I can really think of.

Gina M. Masullo Yeah. One thing about that, I mean we've done a study. And this wasn't directly looking at that, but we worked with Google to manipulate what's said in a knowledge panel about a new site. So when you Google a new site, this thing pops up on the right hand side that you probably never knew was called a knowledge panel, but that's what it is. And it's like a little box. And you Google yourself. You might have one too, and it says a little about you. We sort of looked at what was in those. We did test in that sort of like not really the business model, but more sort of like the funding mechanism. And it didn't have an effect on people's trust, but that was one isolated item. And so that doesn't mean it doesn't overall have an effect. It's more like what Talia was saying earlier. Things by themselves don't often have an effect, even if they matter to people. But there is some literature that has shown that if people if news organizations are transparent about funding, that that could actually have a backfire effect. Right? So that's a tricky thing. Like,

because the public, on the one hand, doesn't understand how things go. They think, you know, sources are paid, and that would be probably good for news organizations to say, "Yeah, that's not how it works." But the commercial incentives, especially in the United States, could raise actually distrust with people. It's possible for that to happen. But yeah, there's lots of room for work on that.

Amy Schmitz Weiss Thank you so much. Let's give a big round of applause to our presenters.