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Digital Literacy and Propaganda

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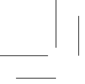
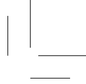
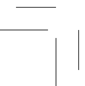
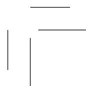

DIGITAL LITERACY AND PROPAGANDA

Special Issue Editors

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The word "propaganda" has a long history and a bad reputation. For many, it connotes both the ravages of the Holocaust and of oppression under Communism. Although the original use of the term referred to the missionary work of the 17th century Catholics aiming to stem the tide of Protestantism, its meaning was reshaped in the 20th century during World War I when propaganda was used to stir nations to world war. Under the Third Reich, all forms of media were used to shape and control public opinion, stifle dissent and promote hatred that led to genocide. As consumer culture developed in the late 20th century, popular culture and advertising brought materialist values to the masses and public relations professionals developed advanced techniques to influence journalistic practice, ensuring that business and corporate interests were prominently featured in public discourse.

Today, propaganda is a part of everyone's daily life both online and offline. It may take the form of partisan news, clickbait, advertising, sponsored content, hoaxes, conspiracy theories or pseudoscience. Propaganda comes out of the mouths of elected political leaders who may (or may not) lie with impunity. When propaganda is used to attack opponents, it can promote mistrust and hatred. All over the world, we see the dangerous consequences of propaganda when it is used as a tool of political power.

With the rise of the Internet and digital culture, propaganda has become increasingly personalized. As algorithms built for the purpose of delivering online advertising offer up an endless supply of persuasion, entertainment and information, propaganda is becoming highly responsive to user behavior. It is also more deeply relational, as family and friends deliver personalized propaganda through social media platforms. Like it or not, propaganda has become a seamless part of everyday life, offering people the comfort of confirming their existing allegiances and beliefs through the dissemination of slogans, memes, images and ideas that reinforce their existing world views.

But propaganda's bad reputation obscures an important reality: it is also essential for democracy. Propagandists may choose to be deeply ethical, using a combination of emotion and information to create social, political and cultural change. Many young activists who have risen to prominence recently, including Malala Yousafzai from Pakistan or Greta Thunberg, the climate change activist who began her work at age 15, use the power of positive propaganda to inspire and engage people around the world. Propaganda can be understood as a form of effective communication that activates strong emotions, simplifies ideas and connects them to people's deepest hopes, fears and dreams. In democratic nations, propaganda helps people make decisions about how to vote. Through propaganda, people can be induced to act together, to overlook our differences and coordinate our actions. Through propaganda, we come to see ourselves as members of the human family, responsible for our collective health and the future of the planet.

Why is propaganda important to media literacy educators? We are now beginning to recognize the risks of the "new shiny object" problem, which sometimes occurs in our community when we focus on the newest technologies and the latest digital platforms. In searching to identify new approaches focusing on our fast-changing digital environments

and identifies, we may discuss disorders, disinformation and fake news without offering appropriate context that helps people understand the present. When addressing fake news, for example, we may risk getting lost in discussions and losing the overall perspective, sometimes merely due to our fear of ghosts from the past.

But the concept of propaganda offers enormous insight on the complex realities we face today, if we are courageous enough to tackle its diverse connotative meanings and to consider how the term is morphing and changing in the global 21st century cultural context. Because definitions of propaganda have changed over time and because people's understanding of the term are inflected by their life experiences and cultural backgrounds, there is a real opportunity for cross-national dialogue about propaganda. Those coming from post-Communist societies, where government propaganda was rampant, think about propaganda in different ways than those who grew up in other parts of the world where consumer culture and advertising were a dominant cultural force. For example, when Renee Hobbs shared the Mind Over Media project with European educators, with support from European Commission's DG CONNECT program, media literacy educators from Western and Eastern Europe started a dialogue about teaching and learning about propaganda. We discovered that the subtle nuances of our cultural backgrounds shapes the way we understand the term itself. At the Mind Over Media website (www.mindovermedia.eu), users can search for examples of propaganda from among 3,000 examples from 40 countries on topics including migration/immigration, climate change, civil rights, crime and law enforcement, food and nutrition, politics and elections, and more. As we discussed how educators may use the platform with their students, the experience challenged our understanding of propaganda because our cultural starting points (influenced by our understanding and experience from the past) shape our thinking. To understand others, we must engage in multiperspectival thinking. This experience led us to wonder about another key question: How do we as global media literacy educators move beyond our own academic bubbles and silos?

This question is a source of inspiration for this special issue. We acknowledge that the media literacy research community and the civil society initiatives that enact media literacy around the world need strong support, especially in countries and regions that are, in some cases, still surrounded by authoritarian regimes and systems. Yet as you will see, the work presented in this volume challenges our understanding of fake news, disinformation, propaganda and digital and media literacy. As you read further, you may wonder: As people develop skills, can they also become better at excluding others? Might increased competence sometimes lead to radicalization? Can we take the best of our communication channels and gain competences but lose inclusiveness and live in the silos surrounded by our tribe members?

In this volume, researchers from different continents and contexts focus on the diverse communities they inhabit, applying a variety of methodological and theoretical concepts. Experiences learned from our colleagues from France, the UK, Croatia, Portugal, Spain, the USA, Mexico, Turkey and India help us to improve our knowledge of existing global praxis and find a new path for future research.

We open this special issue with a paper written by Divina Frau-Meigs, who presents a new approach to information disorders by focusing on risks and opportunities for digital media and information literacy. Frau-Meigs offers up a critique of the "cyberist" worldview and recognizes new risks for democracy in the context of the reorganisation of power through changing technologies advanced by the digital world. As she sees it, the world's cumulative information disorders may force educators to learn more about how "data impact media and media impact data." She raises the question of trust and reliability in institutions and media, noting that it connects with the "the overall democratic cost" however still "hard to prove because it is dissipated and distilled." While analysing existing challenges, she recognizes the paradox of trust in the social media environment. Frau-Meigs does not see a solution in fact-checking but argues that social media platforms may help to create opportunities to develop a "rebooted and retooled" form of media and information literacy.

Another valuable contribution to this special issue of *Media Studies* comes from Julian McDougall. The author adapted and re-purposed for this special issue his article from his forthcoming book, *Fake News vs. Media Studies: Travels on False Binary*. He gathered 25 interviews from multi-stakeholder workshops and managed to capture dialogue between media educators, journalists, students and information professionals. McDougall offers a new path for tackling new information challenges in our society. With detailed recommendations based upon the research, he provides strong arguments for media education to be mandatory in schools "as the first response to the problem of propaganda fake news/disinformation and asking for critical exploration of social media, algorithms and big data to be included in the media education curriculum."

Discussion on fake-news is further elaborated in detail by Ana Melro and Sara Pereira in their contribution, entitled "Fake or Not Fake? Perceptions of Undergraduates on (Dis) information and Critical Thinking." Presenting the results of mixed-method empirical research with undergraduate students in Portugal, researchers explore the following question: "How important is the 'truth' for journalism and for society?" The main goal of their research is to question students' understanding of critical thinking and their perceptions of its relevance. Students' identification of truthfulness and falsehood is associated with their level of education, of course. Melro and Pereira also identify five calls to action from different stakeholders in their society. However, they also go a step further and open a new research question: "how can news and media literacy be fostered in schools and families while addressing changing practices and perceptions of (dis) information?"

Other researchers in this volume take up the task of documenting the need for media literacy competencies of learners, teachers, parents and children, and even journalists. For example, Julieta Flores-Michel and associates examine some of the challenges associated with media consumption among students in Mexico. Flores-Michel strongly emphasizes

the importance of education "as the best way to achieve media literacy" and claims that there is a strong need for further research among students in Mexico. While Mexico is still not yet plugged into huge transnational research projects, in Croatia, a complete overview of media habits of children and parents was made possible as a result of participation in the EU Kids Online project. Danijel Labaš and Lana Ciboci share their comprehensive overview and analysis of parental mediation techniques in Croatia. The article documents the need to hear the voice of parents while building new policies and to recognize them as relevant stakeholders in discussions on media literacy. In point of fact, although the research shows that they are dissatisfied with the inclusion of online safety in the Croatian educational system, their attitudes were not taken into account within the 2019 changes of the curricula.

To understand the role of digital and media literacy in higher education, Yota Dimitriadi contributes with a case study focused on competencies and skills of future teachers, who, according to Dimitriadi, have been rather neglected in previous UK research. The author provides evidence to show that, as future teachers develop digital competencies, they become more confident about their professional expertise and developing identity as educators. Furthermore, Dimitriadi offers up ideas about empowering tutors in education with an effective way of teaching and building new digital learning methods.

Issues of identity surface in Kiran Vinod Bhatia's work on social media and religious identity. In examining Indian adolescents as an example, the author shows how digital literacy is used to enact young people's political and religious identity in ways that contribute to religious polarization, creating echo chambers and belief silos. This research documents a social media ethnography of 49 high school students over a period of eighteen months in villages in Gujarat, India. For these young people, sadly, social media is used to reproduce political polarization and religious discrimination. Bhatia's research sheds new light on the online behavior of children and young people in rural communities showing how online interactions justify and validate prejudice. Young people practice conceptualizing the "religious other" using social media platforms. Through their discourse, they reinforce negative representations of the other in ways that may lead to discrimination and even violence.

While journalists may feel that they are contributing to public media literacy through fact-checking the news, Recep Unal and Alp Şahin Çiçeklioğlu challenge the work of Turkish fact-checkers in their paper in this volume. It is ironic that in an era where many journalism organizations are playing the fact-checking card, there is still so little research about the actual value of fact-checking as it influences the development of public trust and the development of media literacy competencies. They examine the work of Teyit.org, an independent fact-checking organization based in Turkey. This organization aims to prevent false information from spreading online, help media consumers develop their media literacy skills, and develop methods to promote critical thinking. Most of the fact-checking done by Teyit.org focuses on politics as a topic. The organization has been publishing their work in both Turkish and English languages on suspicious content since

2016. This paper is an important step towards developing an overall assessment of the role of fact-checking organizations in Turkey in relation to the development of media literacy competencies among the general public.

Apart from the special issue, in the spirit of cross-national inquiry in media studies and media literacy, we are also introducing a paper by Laura Cervi titled "Similar Politicians, Different Media. Media Treatment of Sex Related Scandals in Italy and the USA." Cervi uses the case study method to identify similarities and differences in reporting about sex scandals by Italian and American media, providing interesting material through a detailed visual, text and journalistic analysis. Such work may inspire scholars and educators to consider how to explore cultural differences in media as a productive way to advance knowledge and understanding among learners of all ages.

In editing this special issue, we pondered the future of digital and media literacy. Certainly the field of media education overall has benefitted from the rising global interest in fake news, disinformation and propaganda. In the last two years we have witnessed a lot of effort by various stakeholders trying to deal with the issue. Politicians, political institutions, media organizations, educational institutions, philanthropies, computer scientists, businesses and civil society organizations have engaged with the problem as they see it. Although the fake-news debate has been an extraordinary opportunity for the field of digital and media literacy educators, we still have not tapped into the full potential of digital and media literacy to empower our citizens to fight for better democracy. Other related issues that continue to trouble us as members of the community of global media literacy scholars and practitioners include the following issues:

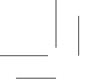
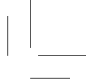
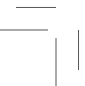
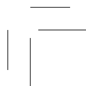
Role of Digital Platforms. Digital platform companies are embracing digital and media literacy education initiatives in response to pressures from governments around the world. As they develop initiatives that enable them to claim that they are being more accountable to the public interest, we could be seduced by the scope and scale of this work. Fancy social responsibility projects provided by industry are attractive to policymakers and they may even be viewed as the only (or most effective) way to respond to the challenges of the present time. But such projects generally omit a focus on the role of digital advertising as the engine of the Internet. They are unlikely to help students distinguish between new forms of advertising that are designed to influence people and will not address the actual or potential harms of highly personalized entertainment, information and persuasion. Without a robust critical dimension, such approaches to digital and media literacy are unlikely to activate genuine critical thinking in relation to the socio-economic contexts in which media messages circulate and have power.

Recognizing Self-Interest. Governments and the business community emphasize the potential of digital literacy to revive our economies, but de-contextualized skills training does little to build the habits of mind and citizenship competencies required

of lifelong learners. Some educators worry about jeopardizing academic integrity while building networks and alliances with business stakeholders, recognizing that buzzwords about digital literacy can also devolve into a form of propaganda itself. For example, when businesses emphasize digital literacy, it is often in a quest to get educational institutional institutions to ramp up job-training programs. Similarly, when journalistic institutions position digital and media literacy as a "cure" for restoring public trust, their real motivation may be rooted in the need to rescue their failing business model. But educators who reject digital learning completely in favor of face-to-face pedagogies may also be operating on principles of self-interest when they trivialize or ignore the genuine benefits of digital learning and digital literacy to learners of all ages.

From Transmission Education to Empowerment Education. One of the biggest dangers of teaching about fake news, propaganda and disinformation occurs in the somewhat natural tendency of teachers to stand on a soapbox and lecture about the problem. Such efforts, often framed in relation to left-wing or right-wing ideologies, can provide valuable information, of course. But lecturing is not sufficient to build the kinds of competencies and habits of mind that are needed to deal with a world saturated with entertaining, informational and persuasive propaganda. We believe that it is important to invest in educational models and instructional practices that empower students, teachers, librarians and other actors through collaborative learning with inquiry pedagogies. Digital and media literacy education can help students use the power of propaganda to make a difference in their local and global communities. As we address the rise of fake news and disinformation, we must interrogate understandings of 'truth' as a key word and cornerstone for both urban and rural communities. After all, truth may be both timeless and eternal or situational and contextual, bounded in time and subject to flux.

Ultimately, digital and media literacy education is a series of inquiries on epistemology. First, understanding the constructed nature of knowledge in digital environments is essential. Next we must practice the exercise of our power as civic actors to express our truth through public expression and communication. Finally, we will need to cultivate empathy, listening skills, humility and multiperspectival thinking, which are needed to thrive in a multivocal and multicultural world. These are among the most important concepts and competencies for contemporary societies to explore in the years ahead.

DIGITALNA PISMENOST I PROPAGANDA

DIGITAL LITERACY AND PROPAGANDA

INFORMATION DISORDERS: RISKS AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR DIGITAL MEDIA AND INFORMATION LITERACY?

Divina Frau-Meigs

ORIGINAL SCIENTIFIC PAPER / DOI: 10.20901/ms.10.19.1 / SUBMITTED: 04.03.2019.

ABSTRACT *This paper analyses the major modifications created by the "social turn" i.e. the emergence of social media. It presents the drastic change of ecosystem created by the three "continents" of the Internet. This sets up the context of deployment for "information disorders" such as radicalisation and disinformation. The analysis then considers the risks and opportunities for Media and Information Literacy: on the one hand, the rise of fact-checking and the increasing interference of social media platforms; on the other hand, the augmentation of the Media and Information Literacy epistemology and the Media and Information Literacy paradigm shift entailed by information disorders. It concludes on an agenda for Media and Information Literacy in 21st century.*

KEYWORDS

FAKE NEWS, INFORMATION DISORDERS, SOCIAL TURN, MEDIA AND INFORMATION LITERACY, FACT-CHECKING

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The transition from Internet 1.0 (online mass media) to Internet 2.0 (pure player social media platforms) is a radical paradigm shift, a transformative moment that turns the postmodernist worldview around the linear organisation of society into legacy.[1] It points to the emergence of a "cyberist" worldview, where information as news, docs and data steers[2] the complex construct of our daily life. The demise of post-modernism (Baudrillard, 1981; Lyotard, 1979) and the dawn of cyberism are visible in the move from space constraints to de-territorialisation, from time constraints to ubiquity, from material constraints to simulation and from human constraints to dis-intermediation of services by data-driven platforms (Frau-Meigs 2011). The prefix "cyber-" connotes this change, with hyphenated words such as cyber-crime, cyber-activism, cyber-war and cyber-bullying that points to the relevance of cyberism to clarify online risks and opportunities. By contrast the prefix "e", as in e-war or e-crime, has not been commonly adopted. The prefix "cyber" implies a "space" while the "e" underlines an electronic technique, still attached to a modernist conception of power as a place linked to a bound territory.

Such major changes are a risk for democracies, if not properly catered by a new way of understanding the cyber ecosystem of media due to such digital augmentation because media help create public opinion and shape decisions related to voting and participating in society. The paradigm shift requires also a change in the way we perceive education and 21st century skills, which entails the update of Media and Information Literacy (MIL), from its old linear view of the press to the cyberist view of the multimedia participatory web (Jenkins *et al.*, 2009; 2016). Taking the scope of these changes requires a critical perspective on several competing narratives: the culture of consumption vs. the culture of participation, proprietary models that commodify content vs. open source models of free information, sharing by design vs. collaborative wiki contributions. In the media narrative, the editorial model of news vies with the information brokerage model where infomediaries (Google and Facebook mostly) collect advertising revenue (Moeglin 2007).

The MIL community of educators currently finds itself in a situation where it needs to effect the transition, even among its own ranks. The timing is not dissimilar to the "stagecoach effect" (Perriault, 2002), when the first train wagons were actually recycled stagecoaches, to make people less scared of the transition from horse power to steam power. With this transition too, the temptation is to apply old protocols to new platforms. But the resistance of pre-digital institutional models and mindsets may actually be a hindrance for understanding the tenets of the digital world and harnessing their opportunities and risks. Changing the vocabulary, the metaphors and the representations in people's minds is key to overcoming the stagecoach effect and to proving the creativity of the MIL community.

[1] The contents of this article were first presented as a keynote speech at the Global MIL Week Conference, Kaunas, 23 October 2018; a shorter version was published in the Lithuanian language in *Lithuanian culture studies contemporary virtual space* 10 (2019): 46-62.
[2] The original Greek meaning of "cyber" is "to steer", "to govern".

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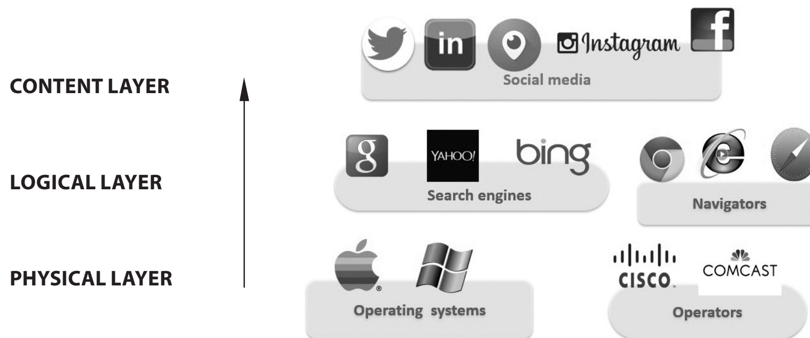
A DRASTIC CHANGE OF ECOSYSTEM: GROUNDED VIRTUAL CONTINENTS

In this period of transition, the shift of metaphors applied to the Internet is also indicative of the changes in people's representations of the digital era. The early image of playful "surfing on the web" cohabits with the current vision of work as "data mining". The incredible lightness of virtual highways is grounded with the heavy pollution of diesel-powered data centres. The three layers of the Internet as described by Yochai Benkler (2000) contribute to this "grounding": the "physical infrastructure" layer through which information travels and is accessed, the "logical" layer of codes and protocols that organize the data into information and the "content" layer that conveys the information to networked communities (Benkler, 2000). These layers take into account the multilevel mental models of cyberspace and their interfaced thought-processes as engineered in digital computing (Leary, 1994). They help understand the new geo-politics created by de-territorialisation, ubiquity, simulation and disintermediation, a geo-politics that brings to mind yet another metaphor, the one of new continents – the continental scope stemming from the fact that social media like Facebook can boast up to 2 billion people online, with their own rules and terms of service, not to mention their own currency.

From the surf...

Since the creation of the Internet, American commercial media have developed a whole dorsal or backbone along the three layers of the Internet. This dorsal creates a "blue continent" (Figure 1), complete with telcos and cable-operators (Cisco, Comcast...), exploitation systems (Apple, Microsoft...), navigators (Safari...), search engines (Google, Bing...) and social media (Facebook, YouTube, Twitter...).



▲ *Figure 1.*
The Blue Continent.
Source: Author, 2019

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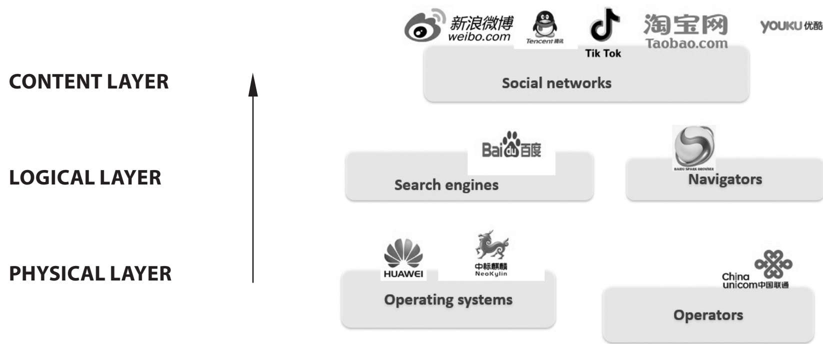
The shared blueness is partly a marketing strategy, as these entities tend to copy each other in their brand placement with recognition by their logos. Symbolically, the colour blue is not a haphazard choice: blue is a soothing colour that removes all angst about uses and practices. It also alludes to the metaphor of surfing on the airwaves of the information super-highways. It connotes a feeling of freedom, of ease and user-friendliness. It is the continent of conspicuous consumption, with commodified contents and services, where participation takes the shape of sharing by design and, increasingly, by obligation.

Another continent has emerged, that is also predicated on a real life sovereign country, the Red continent (Figure 2). The Chinese Internet also has its own three-layered continent: telcos (China unicom), exploitation systems (Huawei), search engine (Baidu), social media (Sina Weibo). In the Chinese context, red connotes luck and happiness, which implies that the Chinese are also sending the message to their users that the Internet is innocuous. And it refers to communism as well, with its specific control and censorship of information within the Great Digital Firewall. Both consumption and participation are carefully monitored and tailored.



▲ *Figure 2.*
The Red Continent.
Source: Author, 2019

Both the blue and the red continent are sending their own ideological considerations about information and media, as mobilizing colours for political purposes is a proven ideological strategy in history, much beyond marketing symbols. Both continents differ from the orange continent (Figure 3) of open source standards. This continent is the least related to a sovereign state and refers rather to the transborder libertarian heritage of the early Internet (Barlow, 1990), with non proprietary protocols to liberate information, that can be developed in any country or region. Here too the colour code is meaningful: orange is a vibrant happy colour, representing the joy that raises the spirits and elicits creativity. It is also the colour of resilience and the colour of alternative, of "free" or "open source" code. This is a differently playful environment, mostly with a friendly bestiary (fox, gnu, duck, penguin, cat...). It recalls the early vision of online freedoms as opposed to information

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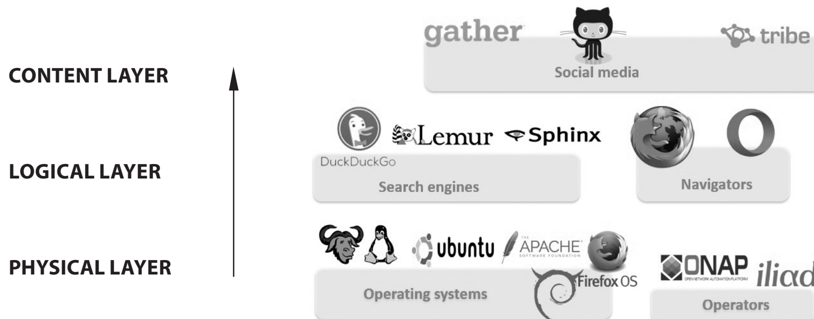
processing via obscure proprietary algorithms. It is the continent of playful participation, open source exchanges and collaborative wiki contributions, where consumption is less conspicuous and more derivative.



▲ *Figure 3.*
The Orange Continent.
Source: Author, 2019

...to the mine

But alongside these relatively reassuring continents, another one has emerged, as data collection became data mining, the black continent, also called the "dark net" (Figure 4). Blackness evokes mystery and secrecy. But also deliberately chosen evil. It is connected with encryption, a view of information as power because secretly kept and used. It hints at illegal actions, by people with dark purposes.

▲ *Figure 4.*
The Black Continent.
Source: Author, 2019

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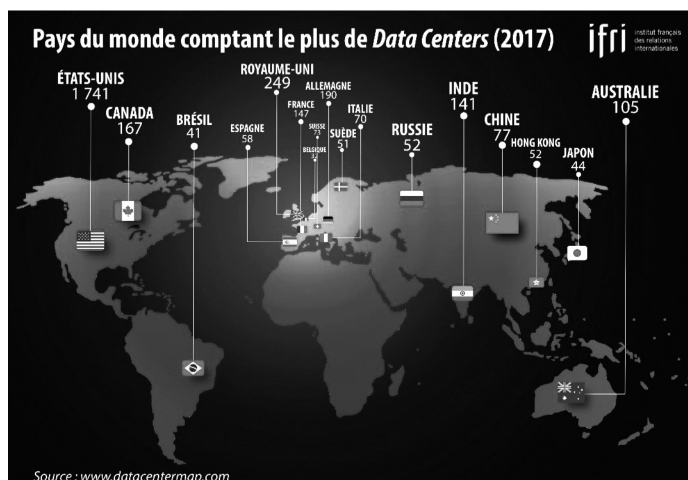
It is a place where hackers and pirates reside, dealing in illegal drugs, illegal substances, illegal arm trade, *etc*. It contains some violet in it, the colour of hidden power and energy, that can be used both ways, as for cryptography (to protect anonymously, for good or bad purposes). In this continent, consumption and participation comingle in chaotic ways.

These virtual continents reflect real life realities that are invisible to the general public and the Internet user, as evinced by the mapping of data centres in the world (Figure 5).



▲ *Figure 5.*
Countries with most data centres (2017).
Source: IFRI, 2017

Their distribution is reflective of the asymmetries in information and data flows that affect sovereign states worldwide. The blue continent (1741 centres in the USA) is very richly endowed (40% of the total of data centres), whereas the red continent (77 centres in China) is much less so, in spite of its billion users. As for large countries like Russia (52), they are under-endowed in proportion to their size or their population, in contrast with neighbouring Sweden (51). As for the other real life continents, such as Latin America or Africa, the information divide is wide, while the grid of the orange and black continents is very distributed across regions. Hence, South Africa and Brazil are quite rich with Free and Open Source (FOSS) communities; communist and post-communist countries are home to information hackers and pirates; so are theocratic regimes in the Middle East. Such a distribution points to a geostrategic reality of the Internet that comingles figments of the cold war and elements of neo-colonialism, and explains the emergence and persistence of "Information disorders".

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EMERGENCE OF INFORMATION DISORDERS

This grounded continental geo-political view of the Internet conveys the huge reorganisation of governance and power undergone by information and media in the digital world. These continents have porous borders, nonetheless, especially due to the agility of the logical layer. Events happening in one have repercussions in others, with offline consequences. This porosity has increased with the "social turn", *i.e.* the advent of social media, in 2004-06. Their incorporation in the US stock exchange in 2012 also created porous borders with real life societal issues, as the stockholders require results and exert pressure on the digital ecosystem. Since then, the virtual continents have been increasingly overlapping with some of the geo-political continents. 2012 is the point in time that marks the beginning of two specific unheard-of "information disorders" that shook public opinion worldwide: online radicalisation and online disinformation.

But it is really since 2017 that the notion of "Information disorder" has made its appearance in research and in MIL circles, supported by researchers in the field of journalism and data. It has been defined around three types of warped information: "disinformation, misinformation and malinformation" with various degrees of deliberation and of intention to harm (Wardle and Kerdhashan, 2017; Marwick and Lewis, 2017; Frau-Meigs, 2019). However, the plural information disorders seems necessary to take into account the interconnectedness of information orders of different kinds (news, docs, data), as well as the asymmetries of information flows across the various blue, red, orange and black continents. They have their own actors, motivations and rhetoric that may lead to hate speech, incitement to terror and downright attacks on notions of truth, peace and democracy.

Radicalisation on the black continent

The war in Syria started a series of ISIL terrorist attacks against the Western world from 2012 on. Online radicalisation tended to develop mostly on the black continent. Terrorists turned out to be early adopters of the Dark net. They used Virtual Private Networks (VPNs), for several purposes, mostly organizing and training. They were empowered to act under cover of the "dark social" platforms like Telegram and used encryption for undercover anonymity while taking advantage of the decentralised nature of the web (Alava *et al.*, 2017).

But cyber terrorists also use the blue continent, for recruitment, propaganda and disinformation, as they are offered a worldwide stage for their otherwise rather secretive activities. With young people as their main target and audience, they utilise all the different platforms at their disposal, like social media, websites, *etc*. They operate with professional quality tools that are vital for their seductive mediatisation activities (viral videos of killed journalists, modified video games, *etc*.). They can adjust their storytelling according to different purposes: to convey victimhood, sense of belonging, calls for war, utopian actions to redress torts.

Research shows that social media do not radicalise on their own but are rather propitious for grooming, and one-on-one messaging. Social media can act as facilitating environments rather than a driving force: they can create echo chambers (Quattrociocchi, *et al*., 2016); they can isolate young people in filter bubbles (Pariser, 2011; Flaxman *et al*., 2016); they can build a collective construct of "us vs. them" that polarizes social spaces online and offline (Weimann, 2015).

Young people and adults as well can be attracted to such interactive user-friendly platforms that rely on the assumption that everyone can participate. They can be easy targets for propaganda, plot theory and misinformation, with extremist and criminal content that creates the feeling of belonging to a "cause" (Weimann, 2015). Social media can facilitate the process of radicalization post-recruitment, through tactical learning, confirmation biases (*i.e.* re-enforcing previous opinions), gathering data and even planning attacks. Social media can foster one-on-one dialogue with individuals that isolate themselves from their real life friends and can be inducted into a new brotherhood with its own ideology (Alava *et al*., 2017).

However, the role of social media cannot be taken separately from the context of the wider media ecosystem (Hassan *et al*., 2018). News and entertainment media also share a responsibility in propagating alarmist reports and focalizing on the role of social media. They tend to present them as one of main explanations of the issue, to the detriment of other societal causes such as religious strife, racism, segregation, unemployment or a deep sense of injustice (Alava *et al*., 2017).

Disinformation on the blue continent

The "fake news" phenomenon came to full public attention in 2016 (US Elections, Brexit), but in fact it had already started in 2012 during the Obama election. "In all cases, the role of social media platforms as major vectors of such disruptive phenomena has been questioned, especially with scandals such as Cambridge Analytica" (Frau-Meigs, 2018) and trials such as the Internet Research Agency vs. the United States of America, that point to Russian interference with Western politics.

The social media of the blue continent have been called to question because they are perceived as a threat to the integrity of information, with damages to trust, opinion-making and democratic societies. Numerous asymmetries existing between Internet 1.0 mainstream mass media and Internet 2.0 social media platforms appeared, such as differences in tax obligations, social responsibilities, advertising constraints and public service obligations (such as diversity, pluralism, and protection of minors). Nothing hinders the social media on the blue continent in their spread of disinformation for traffic and for profit, especially in a context of concentration of ownership and pressure from shareholders on the stock exchange (Frau-Meigs, 2018).

Though it seems mostly a phenomenon of the blue continent, the black continent is also concerned when it comes to disinformation as "hybrid threats", *i.e.* a mix of subversive activities, using conventional and non conventional methods and tools, in a coordinated

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manner by state actors or non-state agents, that are used in time of peace but with war-like objectives of propaganda and destabilization (High level group report, 2018). Cyber hybrid threats mostly deal with the integrity of elections, with implications for trust in institutions and elected representatives. Some rogue state and non-state agents use VPNs and social media alike to launch covert campaigns in favour or against candidates. Fake news is spread through social media posts to be re-amplified by users and white-washed by main stream media, via trolls and bots, that can create the illusion of a vibrant support and a powerful militancy for minority ideas or minority candidates (Frau-Meigs 2018; 2019). As in the case of radicalisation, the digital ecosystem can act as a facilitating environment, with echo chambers, filter bubbles and polarization of ideas and groups.

Converging results

The existence of the grounded virtual continents thus creates challenges for the sovereignty of member states that are complex and may have far-reaching consequences, as they point to information disorders related to the "transverse effect" of information disorders, *i.e.* the transborder, translingual and transmedia nature of Internet networks (Frau-Meigs, 2019). The direct and indirect impacts of "fake news" may lead to long-term deterrence effects with gelling consequences on freedom of speech and freedom to receive and impart information, with inhibiting damages on democratic processes. The overall democratic cost, distilled and hard to evaluate as it is, comes to a lack of trust and reliability in institutions and media, with the added paradox that social media are least trusted while most used.

Most of the research results, be it about radicalisation or disinformation, point to the need to develop resilience in the population and the need to equip young people to be responsible and mindful of online freedoms. Being able to separate fact from fiction, legitimate sources from disreputable sources appears as necessary for preparedness, to anticipate any forthcoming issues. The analysis of existing responses point to self-regulation as the preferred action of the private sector of mass media and social media alike while regulation is the favoured solution of the public sector. Education is the response most wanted by the civic sector, the states and the users. Media and Information literacy more specifically is the plebiscited response, to elicit valid counter-narratives. The information disorders paradigm has given MIL center-stage and has displaced the parallel conversation that was going on about coding and data-mining in schools.

The democratic context suggests that information disorders should not be fought with "hard" legislation (which might lead to censorship) but rather "soft" and "smart" actions (guidelines, codes of good conduct, good practices...), together with transparency, accountability, proportionality and revision mechanisms. As a result, fact-checking has emerged as the new response from both mass and social media while digital MIL appears as the favourite solution from all sectors. It is supposed to stimulate critical thinking, to elicit effective counter-narratives, to provide new engagement models and to do so with multi-stakeholder involvement (including private/public/civic partnerships).

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RISKS FOR MIL

The representation of MIL as the panacea is both gratifying and worrying, as it is not devoid of risks of recuperation by actors outside the field. This is particularly true of the journalistic profession and of the platforms themselves. Journalists have re-invented themselves as fact-checkers and have put the emphasis on their processes, making them more visible to their own constituency and to the larger public. Platforms have endorsed MIL by actually claiming that they perform it. None of these actors recognize MIL competences and MIL pedagogical stances, though they can prove to be complementary allies.

The rise of fact-checking

Fact-checking has emerged as a kind of Media Accountability Systems (MAS) besides press councils or ethical guidelines (Bertrand, 2003). The Poynter Institute for Media Studies has facilitated the process by providing a norm for excellence in fact-checking for the new international fact-checkers network (IFCN). Many national and transnational initiatives adjust to the “transverse effect” of information disorders (Table 1).

Table 1. **Some international initiatives in fact-checking**

Citizenevidence.org (UK):	Amnesty International with YouTube Data Viewer
Crosscheck (USA):	First draft projects for election monitoring
FactCheckEU (EU):	European crowdsourced platform for users
Faktabaari (Finland):	Verification by journalists for elections
FirstDraftnews.com (USA):	Coordination of verification with research
Full Idea Project (Latvia):	Baltic Center for Media Excellence
InVid (EU):	European plug-in to verify online videos
Reality Check (UK):	BBC programme
RevEye (USA):	Google plug-in to verify images
TinEye (Canada):	Website to check images
TweetCred (USA):	Plug-in with credibility scores provided by crowdsourcing

These cyberist initiatives differ from traditional journalistic fact-checking in their use of digital tools as well as in their call on participation and crowd-sourcing. The participating actors can be either journalists or other citizens (researchers, politicians, ...), which may create a tension between the internal processes of the profession and the external contradictory processes of amateur and semi-professionals. Social media platforms have also been funding and sponsoring fact-checking as in the case of FirstDraft or Crosscheck. Besides, calling on the participation of their users, they are also developing machine learning to push for automated fact-checking, with credibility scores as the final aim.

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Fact-checking initiatives have been increasingly presenting themselves as media literacy practices. Journalists have been turning towards schools as a means of sensitizing young people to the importance of verifying information (Table 2).

Table 2. **Some MIL "sensible practices" to counter "fake news"**

Bad News Game (UK):	Game to construct "fake news"
Factbar EDU (Finland):	Journalists in classrooms to teach how to detect fakes
Info hunter (France):	Spicee and Tralalère offer pedagogical tools to decode news
Lie Detectors (Belgium, Germany):	Journalists in classrooms to teach how to detect fakes
Literacia dos media e jornalismo (Portugal):	Journalists training teachers in schools
Mind over Media (USA, EU):	Platform with crowdsourcing strategies to detect propaganda
MOOC DIY MIL (France):	Massive Online Open Course to build MIL projects
News Literacy Project (USA):	Journalists in classrooms to train in news literacy
Youcheck! (EU):	InVID plug-in to be used in classrooms and at large

However, fact-checking could turn out to be an echo chamber for journalists as they discuss their own business among themselves. They have used it to prove the utility of their profession and revise their ethical practices and guidelines. The process could be assimilated to a "Columbo effect" where the users already know the answer to the fake, but look at how the journalists conduct their detective work. They still behave very much in a linear and vertical manner rather than in a multilevel networked manner that would also take into account distributed communities of transmission and viral propagation. It has also led many conspiracy websites to undermine the results and use them to re-enforce their own confirmation biases. These limitations are confirmed by the COMPACT report, an H2020 research project. The report points to the lack of transparency in terms of methodology and stresses the problems of sustainability due to the fragility of funding and the lack of human resources while underlining the low use of automated solutions (Pavleska *et al*., 2018).

More importantly for MIL, these initiatives ignore the history of the field and the development of specific competences beyond critical thinking about news. So their contribution, though useful, could be detrimental in the long run: they attract funds that could otherwise be attributed to full-fledged MIL projects; they provide one-shot school interventions without much follow-up; they do not scale-up to a national level and reach a limited amount of students. "Literacia dos media e jornalismo", a sensible good practice from Portugal points to potential holistic strategies: it aims at empowering teachers to be fact-checkers, with certification, involving both actors from the beginning, with a monitoring guaranteed by public authorities.

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The role of social media platforms

Social media platforms have also appropriated MIL. Google and Facebook have been supporting their own media literacy projects. Google for instance proposes projects in Europe, via YouTube, like "Be internet awesome" (for children 9-11 year old)[3] or "Digital citizenship" for cyber safety[4]. They tend to be confused with operational digital literacy and aim more at creating entrepreneurship online than at exerting critical thinking over the social media. Hence the deep concern of experts about the independence of MIL when provided by the private sectors and actors whose interest are not educational nor vocational but rather economic and market driven through the hidden agenda of branding and marketing.

As with fact-checking, the role of platforms in MIL can be double-edged: they can provide powerful tools and resources while playing up to young people's online engagement and empowerment. But they tend to ignore the history of the field and the development of specific competences, including critical consumption (that can potentially lead to dis-engagement and dis-connection). Therefore, their contribution, though seductive and expedient, could be detrimental in the long run: they have such funds that they could incite the public sector and state actors to disengage and delegate MIL to them; they could substitute the slow scaling up of competences and values in schools with their rapid instrumental and operational strategies.

This overall recognition and legitimacy of MIL then calls attention to its implementation, and its independence from platforms, with the same attendant risks for researchers in the field, as the platforms are funding a lot of MIL-driven projects. The construction of independent knowledge and development remains key to a healthy and independent MIL research field that determines its own agenda and its choice of controversies and methodologies. The question of access to data from the platforms is crucial if MIL is going to provide clues about the information disorders, their production, their reception and their amplification (Frau-Meigs, 2019). It is also crucial to "reduce the attraction of the storytelling engaged by "fake news" and to propose attractive counter-narratives in response, using critical thinking and reducing the cognitive biases on which disinformation relies. On its own terms, MIL can help detect cognitive biases in oneself and in others and can sensitize to the utility of journalism and the benefits of a healthy democracy with its attendant online freedoms" (Frau-Meigs, 2018), of which social media platforms are part and parcel.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR MIL

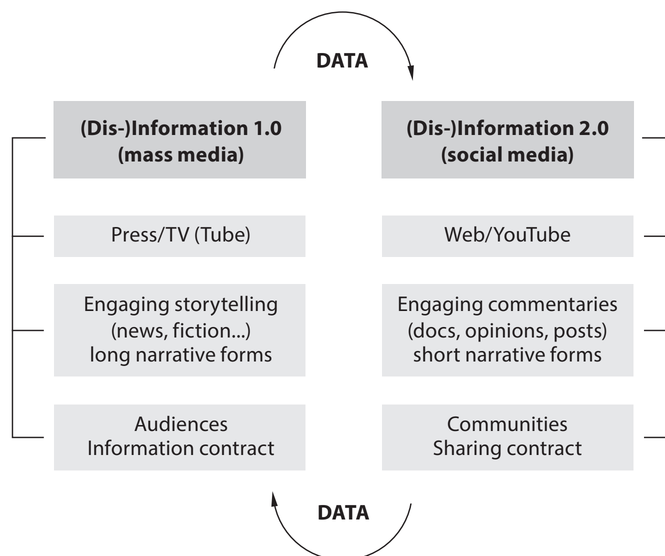
The existence of cumulative information disorders can be an opportunity for a better understanding of the current situation, where data impact media and media impact data. The agency of users, their uses and practices, cannot be separated from platform designs and constraints (algorithms, interfaces, terms of service, ...), from ownership issues

[3] https://beinternetawesome.withgoogle.com/fr_all/interland
[4] www.google.com/safetycenter

(business models, non-proprietary alternatives) and from regulatory problems (hard law vs. soft law, government vs. governance), as the existence of the grounded virtual continents suggests.

Connected MIL

MIL has evolved since its pre-digital stages, where it mostly focused on the written press and television. It has been enriched with the three cultures of information (as news, as docs, as data) and it needs to monitor both media 1.0 (mass media online) and media 2.0 (pure player social media, transmedia storytelling and video games). The two types of media coexist in a shuttle screen situation, where contents and comments coexist, where audiences and communities cohabit, where data mining and its social profiles affects the communication processes of exchanging news and docs (Figure 6).



▲ *Figure 6.*
The shuttle screen situation.
Source: Author, 2019

As a result, the main characteristics of information turn out to be reversible and usable by disinformation, as they can coexist in the same spaces (Merzeau, 2017). The equal access to both information and disinformation is what enables the disorders to play havoc across the continents, especially in the blue continent where both are so dependent on clickbait and advertising for generating traffic and profit. Ultimately, unsupported allegations, distorted opinions turn to accepted “alternative facts”, shaking the very value chain of information and its supporting media organs from the postmodernist era. In the cyberist

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era, the information contract coexists with the sharing contract. In the information contract, based on investigation, the professional expert identifies a problem, analyses it and proposes solutions with reasoned arguments. In the sharing contract, based on experience and engagement, any online participant is surprised/angered by a scandal, calls for change and a desire to alter the agenda and the frame to finally propose reasoned arguments. So even though the end-aim is the same, the validation process and the ratio between empathy/reason, proximity/distance is different.

Ideally, both contracts combined could yield a cyber-contract of the type: identify a problem/scandal; call for change of agenda and framework; engage experts and participants to test changes; adopt solutions with shared and reasoned arguments. This could lead to a newly found balance in the circuits of trust and those of truth, where information quality and integrity would be co-shared and co-cared, in a process of deliberation and contribution (along the model of Wikipedia). In so doing, information becomes again part of the political process and the basis for democratic societies where truth and trust are reached via a lot of mediations.

Because it applies critical thinking to the political, cultural and societal sphere, MIL has also developed its own set of research questions and controversies based on societal stakes, such as protection of minors, well-being on line and off-line, privacy and freedoms... (Livingstone *et al*., 2012; Hobbs, 2011). Such specificities place MIL as the most adequate field to address issues of information disorders and it has been called to the rescue in this capacity with the emergence of radicalisation and disinformation. In fact, these issues are part of the larger paradigm of "harmful content and harmful behaviour" (Millwood Hargrave, 2006), to take into account issues of violence, pornography, harassment... Such issues have led to policy-making decisions to protect young people. They have been a classic in MIL research, especially on the reception side (effects of televised violence on young people, over-consumption of media, unexpected results of video games...). They have been extended to online harms with the effects of radicalized online media on youth and of propaganda on public opinion at large, due to the porosity between the grounded virtual continents.

MIL and the paradigm shift around information disorders

As a result, MIL is ideally placed to provide a comprehensive view of information disorders and to place them in a whole ecosystem of "malinformation", the suffix "*mal-*" alluding to three dimensions of the current ills and evils on line: human *mal*evolence, industrial *mal*practice, and technological *mal*ware. Malevolence is rife because the motivations and rhetoric of the providers of disinformation is human-based and calls on conspiracy, destabilisation, *etc*. Malpractice is high because the creators and users of disorders can monetize them using the usual business circuits of advertising online and the profiling power of algorithms. Malware is on the rise as more and more robotized tools are available for hacking, astro-turfing and capturing information systems unbeknownst of their users (Frau-Meigs, 2019).

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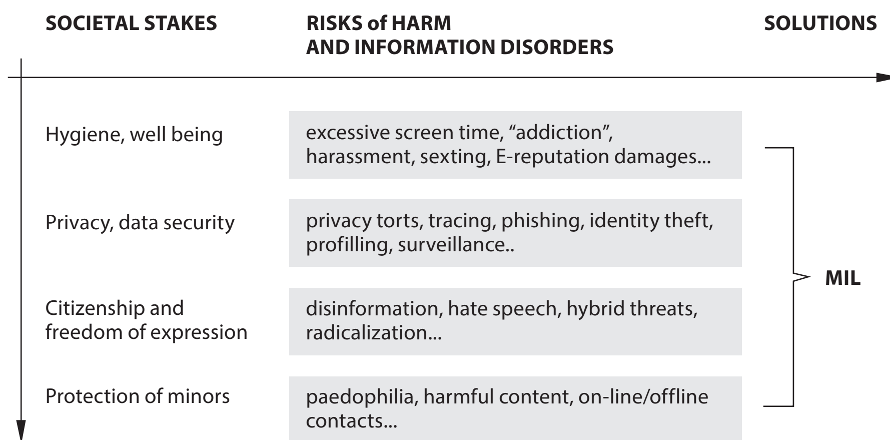
Malinformation takes advantage of the three cultures of information (as news, as docs, as data): news can be faked, docs can be modified without visible trace, data can be trumped with robots acting as humans and pushing some contents more than others. It takes the guise of rumours, satires, urban legends, *etc*. to bring doubts on people's beliefs, institutions and ultimately value systems, being a threat to democratic regimes that are based on trusted information and media.

MIL can provide maps and classifications of information disorders within the larger orbit of harmful content and harmful behaviour (see Figure 7). They are part of the citizenship societal issue, associated with online and offline freedoms, especially freedom of expression. They relate to this "grey zone" of harms that are not illegal or illegitimate in most countries, except within the EU vision of human rights, where the notion of dignity tends to dominate over the notion of freedom of expression. They comingle with hate speech and with other inappropriate discourses and behaviours, around terrorism and racism throughout the different virtual continents



▲ *Figure 7.*
Classification of information disorders.
Source: Author, 2019

By providing comprehensive and articulated models and maps, MIL makes it possible to have a larger understanding of the bigger picture, and consequently to stifle rising media panics. It can also propose pedagogical strategies for creating resilience among young people and fostering diversified refutation techniques and counter-narratives that do not alienate the adepts of malinformation but bring them back to the fold of contradictory debates, to inhabit the virtual continents in a responsible manner.

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Towards a MIL agenda

The European Union seems to have understood this role and it has placed MIL under the auspices of the DG-Connect, the division in charge of implementing the digital agenda (not, as would be expected, under the division of education and culture). The newly-revised AudioVisual Media Services Directive (2018) has rekindled the role of MIL that was being side-lined by the conversation on operational digital skills and coding. The Directive makes Media Education mandatory in the member states (Article 33) asking them to take measures for the development of media literacy skills. Additionally, video sharing platforms have the obligation to provide for effective media literacy measures and tools and raise users' awareness of these measures and tools (Article 28j). As with all directives, this entails a series of harmonisation laws in the member states in the years to come.

However, research shows that MIL suffers from several constraints that hinder its efficacy to counter malinformation and address information disorders while also providing basic cultural knowledge of the grounded virtual continents:

1. the lack of visibility in the curricula and the absence of integration of MIL sets of competences in the other disciplines;
2. the lack of teacher training, be it as initial or continuous stage, that does not prepare teachers to address old and new mechanisms of malinformation;
3. the absence of recognition at the university level where proper research could be conducted;
4. the lack of governance at the ministerial levels where no co-regulatory mechanisms coordinate the work of national agencies, educators and researchers;
5. the chronic deficit of funding and of evaluation that makes it difficult to prove its effectiveness and transferability beyond "sensible practices" (Frau-Meigs *et al*., 2017).

These constraints point to the reverse agenda that needs to be put in place for MIL to scale up beyond sensible practices:

1. the lack of visibility in the curricula could be palliated by making MIL part of the core curriculum of young people in schools, from K1 to K12;
2. the lack of teacher training can be resolved by having MIL be part of the requisite competences to be evaluated by PISA, to gain more visibility and legitimacy while enabling teachers to engage with it;
3. the absence of recognition at the university level could be mitigated by better cooperation between secondary education and higher education, as teacher training programmes are key while research would also benefit from the opportunity to test and observe new pedagogies and new responses to malinformation;
4. the lack of governance at the ministerial levels requires the creation or rebooting (when they exist) of agencies that look after digital education in a cross-sectorial manner;
5. the chronic deficit of funding and of evaluation rests in the responsibilities of states, as they are starting to take stock of the risks to democracy of attacks on information integrity and elections integrity. Social Media Platforms taxation could certainly be a means of ensuring that they are part of the solution after having been part of the problem.

Overall, MIL needs to assert itself as one of the major transliteracies to master soft skills in the 21st century. MIL has to be placed in a shared vision around information culture, digital humanities and creative industries. So as to showcase such a change of framework, the Sorbonne Nouvelle University has created MILCITIZEN, the first research master in MIL, Information Disorders and Digital Citizenship, in 2019. It has placed it within the emerging scholarly domain of "Digital Humanities", so as to stress the transdisciplinary dimension of MIL, intersecting with information and communication sciences, media studies, education, political sciences and governance studies. Such initiatives point to the need to reboot and retool MIL with a forward-looking vision of the "Information Society", and calls for the coordination of all actors so as to promote democratic values in the cyberist era.

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INFORMACIJSKI POREMEĆAJI, RIZICI I PRILIKE ZA MEDIJSKU I INFORMACIJSKU PISMENOST

Divina Frau-Meigs

SAŽETAK *Ovaj rad analizira velike promjene izazvane „društvenim zaokretom", odnosno pojavom društvenih medija. U radu se predstavljaju drastične promjene ekosustava koje su izazvala tri "kontinenta" interneta, što je dovelo do razvoja "informacijskih poremećaja", poput radikalizacije i dezinformiranja. Analiza zatim razmatra rizike i prilike za medijsku i informacijsku pismenost: s jedne strane, porast provjeravanja činjenica i pojačana interferencija platformi za društveno umrežavanje; s druge strane, povećanje polja znanja, vještina i stavova u okviru medijske i informacije pismenosti te pomak paradigme medijske i informacijske pismenosti koji sa sobom povlači informacijske poremećaje. Zaključno se donosi agenda medijske i informacijske pismenosti u 21. stoljeću.*

KLJUČNE RIJEČI

LAŽNE VIJESTI, INFORMACIJSKI POREMEĆAJI, DRUŠTVENI ZAOKRET, MEDIJSKA I INFORMACIJSKA PISMENOST, PROVJERA ČINJENICA

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MEDIA LITERACY VERSUS FAKE NEWS: CRITICAL THINKING, RESILIENCE AND CIVIC ENGAGEMENT[1]

Julian McDougall

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ABSTRACT *This article shares research findings to support the case for media literacy education to facilitate resilient media engagement by young citizens. It shares the outcomes of a project funded by the US Embassy in London, which brought together leading researchers from the United States and UK with a range of key stakeholders, including journalists, teachers, students, librarians and information professionals. This ethnographic research consisted of interviews with prominent members of the stakeholder fields, four multi-stakeholder dialogic workshops and an extensive field review or literature, policy, pedagogic practice and existing educational resources. From the findings of this ethnography, the argument is presented that critical media literacy, if adopted as a mandatory subject in schools and taught as a* dynamic *literacy education, would better equip young citizens with resilience to 'information disorder' (Wardle and Derakhshan, 2017) than reactive resources (such as fact-checking and verification tools) and small-scale projects which focus primarily on competences.*

KEYWORDS

MEDIA LITERACY, FAKE NEWS, MISINFORMATION, RESILIENCE

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[1] The article is adapted and re-purposed for this special issue from *Fake News vs Media Studies: Travels on a False Binary* (McDougall, Palgrave, 2019).

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This article shares the findings of an ethnographic research funded by the United States Embassy in London, consisting of a field review, 25 interviews and four multi-stakeholder workshops, bringing together and capturing dialogue between media educators, journalists, students and information professionals.

As many as possible of the citizens of a democracy must be not only literate but critically literate if they are to behave as full citizens (Hoggart, 2004: 189).

Hoggart wrote about *The Uses of Literacy* in the north of England in 1957, observing the societal implications of 'mass literacy' and half a century later, reflected on the shifts to a 'mass media society'. The book's original title was *The Abuses of Literacy*. The criterion for a democracy in the statement above endured, as it does today, as we consider *The Uses of Media Literacy* (Bennett *et al.,* 2020) – and its abuses - with renewed urgency as we encounter disinformation, 'fake news' and new forms of propaganda and education is increasingly charged with an obligation to respond.

From the findings of this ethnography, the argument is presented that critical media literacy, if adopted as a mandatory subject in schools and taught as a *dynamic* literacy education, would better equip young citizens with resilience to 'information disorder' (Wardle and Derekhshan, 2017) than reactive resources (such as fact-checking and verification tools) and small-scale projects which focus primarily on competences. The latter are described, metaphorically, as 'giving a fish', the former are described as 'teaching to fish'. To use an alternative analogy, the former boosts the immune system, the latter treat the infection (see Rushkoff, 2018).

METHODS

25 interviews with media educators and journalists were transcribed and analysed for key discursive patterns. Participative workshops were held at the Media Education Summit in Hong Kong, the English and Media Centre in London, the National Higher Research University in Moscow and Loughborough University's campus at Olympic Park, London. The total sample, including the interviews and participants in the workshops, is 88 (100, minus double counting, as twelve interviewees took part in a workshop).

This article maps the related and intersecting contextual fields informing the issue at stake; offers a thematic summary of the emerging discourses from the interviews, reports the outcomes of the multi-stakeholder workshops and makes recommendations for the media education community of practice.

Because this research adopts ethnographic principles (trying to see my own community of practice, media education, and that of professional journalism from the perspectives of the people I talked to), the book this article is extracted and adapted from includes personal narratives from the teachers and journalists interviewed. Using this approach also means I am making no claims to have captured a robust, scientific evidence, but instead this is an account of what two main participant groups (media

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educators and journalists), with two supplementary clusters (students and librarians) and overlaps between their roles, are saying about the subject of the research, at this moment in time. This interest in the personal 'journeys' of the participants was influenced by Renee Hobbs's edited collection *Exploring the Roots of Digital and Media Literacy through Personal Narrative* (2016). For Hobbs's project, key media education practitioners identified intellectual 'grandparents' and reflected on their influence on both their personal history and intellectual development. Primarily, Hobbs's method was formative in developing this project – by placing the focus on the way that a field emerges as a horizontal discourse (Bernstein, 1996) and by fusing the public-facing educator and the personal narrative, I wanted to take such a line of enquiry into this research but extend it to the reflections of professional journalists too. For this reason, the interview respondents are named in the book, but they are identified in this article only by their roles as the informed consent given did not include this adaptation. For the same reason, this version only focuses on the professional discourse, and not the more personal, biographical and reflexive aspects.

The participants were recruited through personal networks and events, using purposive, reputational case sampling (these are all prominent, senior and, in many cases, published media educators and senior journalists) and an element of negative case sampling, since I knew that most of the interviewees would resist the binary between media literacy and 'fake news' / disinformation and would therefore seek to complicate matters. Associated activities further connecting me to the sample provided snowball sampling through the existing 'relational network' (Bliss *et al.*, 1983). The interviews were semi-structured, but circulating around the core line of enquiry. After each interview, participants sent me an example, to write about and analyse, as part of the ethnography, as a 'case' or a text – in some cases, this was a teaching resource or lesson plan, in others an article or a visual media text. These will form a 'toolkit' as a key outcome of the US Embassy project. The outcomes of each interview fed into the next as a deliberately partly nomothetic and relational variable. I would share statements from the previous respondent and ask "*what do you think, what's your reaction to that?, do you agree?, do you have similar experiences or ideas to share?"*

My co-researchers for the US Embassy project were Monica Bulger and Paul Mihaildis from the States; David Buckingham, Karen Fowler-Watt and Roman Gerodimos from the UK and Anna Feigenbaum, an American academic working in England.

EXPLORATION

Monica Bulger's research findings from her work in the US with the Data and Society Research Institute provided a call to arms - that media education needs to *develop a coherent understanding of the media environment, improve cross-disciplinary collaboration, leverage the current media crisis to consolidate stakeholders and develop curricula for addressing action in addition to interpretation.* (Bulger and Davison, 2018: 4).

This 'media environment', though, is very complex.

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Whilst both our field review and many of our interviews presented a compelling case for understanding misinformation as nothing new (see Posetti and Matthews, 2018), and certainly propaganda has been an object of study for media education since its inception (see Herman and Chomsky, 1988 and the recent *Mind over Media* project for a sense of the trajectory), a narrative is emerging that situates 'Fake News' as first coming to attention during the 2016 US presidential election, in the form of inaccurate posts with significant viral dissemination on social media, most commonly Facebook. Following a Buzzfeed investigation brought to light an unusual geographical clustering for the originators of these posts, the North Macedonian town of Veles became famous as a kind of 'fake news factory', but the unexpected consequences of this came out of President Trump's enthusiastic adoption of the term to describe negative mainstream news reporting of his actions and policies.

The status of 'fake news' is always configured according to the discourse which speaks it. Take these three examples, all published in 2018, to exemplify:

Print press organisations and broadcasters are in the process of intensifying their efforts to enforce certain trust enhancing practices. This includes cooperating with civil society organisations and academia to formulate and implement skill and age-specific media and information literacy approaches, continue investing in quality journalisms and equip newsrooms with professional automatic content verification tools for audio-visual and text-based reports spread online; ensuring the highest levels of compliance with ethical and professional standards to sustain a pluralistic and trustworthy news media ecosystem (European Commission, 2018: 41).

If journalism is, in some sense, a public service, then an editor has to understand the ethos of public service – something which is of value to a society without necessarily making a direct financial return. This means thinking of this kind of journalism in the same way you might think of a police, ambulance or fire service. You would, as a citizen, expect such services to be run efficiently, but you would not expect them to have to justify themselves on grounds of profit. But now, journalism is facing an existential economic threat in the form of a tumultuous recalibration of our place in the world. And on both sides of an increasingly scratchy debate about media, politics, and democracy, there is a hesitancy about whether there is any longer a common idea of what journalism is and why it matters (Rusbridger, 2018: 360).

The source of 'fake news' is not only the trollism, or the likes of Fox News, or Donald Trump, but a journalism self-appointed with a false respectability, a 'liberal' journalism that claims to challenge corporate state power but, in reality, courts and protects it (Edwards and Cromwell, 2018: xii).

The first extract is from a high-level policy forum, setting out a strategy for solving a problem, across the member states of the European Union. It locates mainstream, professional media as the safeguarding establishment, working to get their own houses in order to maintain and sustain their own trustworthy services for a public at risk from the alternative. The second account, from a *Guardian* editor, is an insider narrative that places this breakdown of trust in an economic context – the internet creates conditions of possibility for free news, journalism responds with a financial strategy rather than making the case for itself as a public service, the rest is already history. The third takes a hammer to this 'existential crisis' discourse by putting the journalists advocated by the European Commission, Rusbridger and his profession at the heart of the problem itself.

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A working definition of fake news or propaganda is to distinguish it by its explicit and deliberate intention to mislead or distort. It is often, but not always, political and it is sometimes used as a kind of attack, for example by one nation on another, to destabilise. But it should also be understood as economic, from 'clickbait' attention generation for advertising and / or the financial trading of data, most famously through Facebook. Related to this, of central importance to how media literacy responds to this, is the question of whether search engines and social media platforms are defined as media providers (of content) or purely technology companies providing services for other parties to share content – in this sense, the regulatory definitions determine not only the political and legal response to 'fake news' but also the academic response.

Definition and verification are only part of this, though. David Buckingham foregrounded the challenges for our project ahead:

Fake news is a symptom of much broader tendencies in the worlds of politics and media.... There are some significant pedagogical problems in how we might deal with fake news. There's a danger here of assuming that we are dealing with a rational process – or at least one that can, by some pedagogical means, be made rational. But from an educational perspective, we surely have to begin with the question of why people might believe apparently 'fake' news in the first place (2019a: 14).

'Fake news' is, then, a symptom of something much bigger and the impact of the economic crash of 2008 is a significant context, if not a direct cause, of 'post truth', rather than thinking of it as a media, technological or 'cyber' phenomenon. The polarisation of social media would then be a manifestation of human behaviour in response to the extremes of a crisis in economics (see Tooze, 2018). It is not just that the de-centering impulses of postmodern mediation led, fifty years or so later, to a relativism that would be, inevitably with hindsight, utilised by powerful agents and extremists – a dystopian '*Uses of Literacy*'. It is also hard to deny that the conditions of possibility for 'post-truth' are to do with the failure of neoliberal politics to avoid, or respond to the economic crash, at the same time as it has succeeded in dismantling traditional conceptions of 'the public sphere', putting the seemingly natural and neutral workings of the market in its place. One important aspect of all this is that we no longer have a shared view, however contested it might have been, of the role of journalism, the concept of 'public interest', 'holding power to account', 'power and responsibility' and, it is argued, there is declining interest, never mind trust, in the need for coherent public sphere:

What is common to the Brexit campaign, the US election and the disturbing depths of YouTube is that it is ultimately impossible to tell who is doing what, or what their motives and intentions are. It's futile to attempt to discern between what's algorithmically generated nonsense or carefully crafted fake news for generating ad dollars; what's paranoid fiction, state action, propaganda or Spam; what's deliberate misinformation or well-meaning fact check (Bridle, 2018: ch 9, para 51).

We can see, then, a problem with trying to apply the 'classic' conceptual competence framework of media literacy to this situation.

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MEDIA LITERACY

A recent review of media literacy education across the European Union reported "an urgent but ongoing need for media literacy educators and stakeholders to document their best practice in the form of empirical classroom research, and to address enduring disconnects between theory and practice, conceptual frameworks and pedagogic practice, and educational/political policy and classroom practices." (McDougall *et al.*, 2018: 63). Best practice was found to involve moving away from competence models and protectionist approaches to embrace, for a more genuinely critical and holistic media literacy, the complexity of 'dynamic literacies' through pedagogy that combine and/or cross boundaries between spaces and roles — the classroom and the extended 'third space', teachers and students working in partnership to co-create learning, and professional development in hybrid combinations of physical and virtual networks.

In the US context, Paul Mihailidis (2018) observes a more optimistic 'state of the art' for a more activist, civic form of media literacy:

Between and beyond explorations of national politicians, refugee crises, the dark web, and fake news, there exists a groundswell of innovative and dynamic small-scale and hyper-local initiatives that have leveraged technologies to impact positive social change in the world (Mihaildis, 2018: x).

Our field review arrived at the conclusion that media literacy should resist the idea that the task is to teach students the difference between fake news and 'the real thing'. Instead, critical media literacy will facilitate healthy cynicism about and resilience to *all* media. Furthermore, where possible, media literacy education should seek to enable a porous 'third space' knowledge exchange (Potter and McDougall, 2017) between academic perspectives on critical thinking about media and students' 'lifeworld' engagements with collective civic media literacies. This pedagogic approach for a more dynamic and agentive media literacy is more likely to foster resilience, to 'teach to fish':

What about looking at the vitality of the patient instead? So rather than coming up with a new algorithm to filter dangerous, weaponized memes from my teen's Instagram account what about if I just make my teen, and our culture, more resilient to this? So I'm trying to promote our humanity so we're less vulnerable to the insanity rather than looking at the insanity as the problem to be fixed (Rushkoff, 2018).

DIALOGUE

The key themes from the field review fed into the interviews and the workshops, which were designed to share perspectives and generate knowledge on four issues, are:

(1) clarifying the problem (the apparent 'information disorder', see Wardle and Derekhshan, 2017) from lived experience of the stakeholders, as opposed to what they had read about it or been exposed to through networks or 'echo chambers'. This was a form of audience / reception study, as we were interested in whether collective framing by stakeholder category;

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(2) identifying any competing or partly integrated discourses around the concept of trust in media and information, and from this, exploring participants' relationships with 'real' journalism now and in the future – put bluntly, why do we need it?

(3) evaluating a range of media literacy resources already in the world – we called this 'testing the wheel', investigating stakeholder perceptions. For example, were some resources appealing to teachers but not to students, how would journalists feel about a resource which situates all media as 'propaganda'?

(4) agreeing on what media education can realistically do, and accepting what is just too big, too external to the social practices of teaching and learning, for us to address. The intention here was to move beyond 'solutionism' (Buckingham, 2019a and 2019c) towards a more viable, modest proposal. Where *do / can* we have agency?

From the interview transcripts, four key discourses emerged which were also articulated frequently in the workshops. For the purposes, and constraints, of this article, three interview quotes are used to represent each discourse, using critical discourse analysis to code and categorise the transcribed statements.

(1) Identity Work

From journalists, mainly, this discourse articulates optimistic legitimation of their practice. In the interviews, this discourse repeatedly insulated truth and trust from both fake news and disinformation online and 'the enemy within' of irresponsible or corrupt news reporting. A sub-genre of this discourse was the distinction between the external threat of fake news and the internal challenge of the kinds of professional malpractice that had led to calls for new forms of regulation, in the UK context. For media educators, there was a tension between seeing themselves as agents of positive change, as the 'go to' for a response to the problem, and the importance of keeping faith in the political project of media education which fosters an analytical understanding that (my words) 'all news is fake news'.

(1a) *In the media market place as a journalist, you are assaulted by fake news, manipulation and the seductive offer of power. All too often now I encounter people in journalism who think all that matters is that you have an opinion. No. What matters is that you vigorously investigate your own opinions, that you take what you believe and you subject it to forensic examination, when you critically see things from the point of view of the other person, with empathy.* (Journalist)

(1b) *For me, fake news is the obvious endpoint of decades of a heavily commodified product (news). To focus on a kind of techno-fix to fake news as though just teaching the kids that if they can identity fake news, all will be fine, is a useful distraction; but it may well result in letting legacy media, which has got us to this problem in the first place, off the hook, as they claim that they, and only they, can show us what the truth is.* (Media educator)

(1c) *I agree that mainstream media is a problem but I think at the moment it's about looking for ways of re-imagining journalism, for me it's a very different space that we're now in, but as a result of something that has been around since the beginning of time.* (Media educator / ex-journalist)

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This third quote converges with the second key discourse – that there is a new aspect of an old problem for us all to worry about.

(2) All News is Fake News?

In this regard, journalists from different organisations were more likely to differ in their specific sense of the boundaries between the past and the now, or between generations and also in the relationship between journalism and media education – some journalists, like the first respondent here, were very open to collaboration, but they were in most cases people who had worked in both roles, whilst others were more defensive and resistant to the failure of media teachers to adequately distinguish between 'real' and 'fake' news:

(2a) *There's a tendency towards tribalism within journalism that really favours practical journalistic experience over other sorts of knowledge and I think it becomes often a position of defensiveness on the part of journalists (and me included, historically). I can think of the fine line between misinformation identifiable in tabloid newspapers that are particularly partisan, taking a particular position on an issue like mass migration or refugees and there's a political line that's being followed, whereas some journalists might draw a line there and say 'well I'm not going to criticise other news organisations, no matter what they do and I'm not going to accuse them of misinformation because to do so would be to break away from the profession'.* (Media educator / ex-journalist)

(2b) *With social media, instantly you are part of the conspiracy, the media, the police and the state are deliberately under-stating the tragedy. So here are multiple versions of events, multiple opposing "truths" and ours becomes one of them. "Where is the media?" Where has the media been?" So we are working to the rules – find sources and establish facts, but on social media those rules don't apply and we are accused of taking the side of the state, part of a conspiracy. I would say that, in my career, something is changing that means it is just so much more difficult to operate ethically as a professional journalist.* (Journalist)

(2c) *It's a demographic shift, old people don't have any media literacy but unfortunately because of the way the world works, old people have a lot of power. And on the other hand, you have extremely cynical opportunistic millennials in Gen-Z who know they can culture-jam. This sort of information fight happens with any sort of new technology. The main difference with the internet vs the printing press, say, is that it's invisible, all-encompassing and immediate. So for a young journalist, you have to understand you're going into a world which is pretty much constantly having its own referendum about something all of the time.* (Journalist)

This quote, again, connects with the third discourse, shared by some journalists and information professionals and by all teachers and students, about the difference between media literacy for its own sake and an educational project which looks to its uses in future society.

(3) Not 'Just' Media Literacy

This was to do with the need for something, variously described as critical, political or moral, to come before, or underpin media literacy – relating to our interest in the 'uses of' media literacy, as opposed to functional skills or vocational training:

(3a) *I would say that youngsters have higher levels of information skills, of digital skills, but they are not media literate always, the problem is students come with the approach 'we know everything about fake*

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news, disinformation, viral campaigns, propaganda'. But when I start to show the examples that I know they were not exposed to, at the end they really become aware of low level of critical thinking in their consuming of media content, especially for social networks. So, the first level is the scale, then we come to the competencies, then we have the critical awareness and then you can include morality in that concept. (Media educator / ex-journalist)

(3b) *I always think that media education encourages that propensity for enquiry. But also as a philosophical and epistemological enquiry, what is this thing that I am looking at, what does it tell me about the world? It's really important to talk about power and capitalism but the way that media education works is to start with the thing that kids are close to, to ask – OK, that thing that you're doing every day, that video, that game, social media or whatever you're doing, what is that really about.* (Media educator).

(3c) *Fake news has kind of reset everybody's GPS, if you want, all the professions – the librarians; the journalists; the researchers; the data scientists; the teachers – it's reset things that we thought were established and engraved in marble, yes? We have to revise our values for the digital world.* (Media educator)

(4) A Matter of Trust

Trust is a key discursive marker in the societal challenge around media literacy, it is heavily loaded and fraught with assumptions (see LSE, 2018 and Buckingham, 2019b). In this more complex, but really the most important discourse for our generation of new knowledge on this topic, media educators, mainly, presented arguments for combining new resources for deconstructing media to locate its biases and / or its distorting properties, but also a cautious approach to both putting 'trust' at the centre of this debate and to seizing an opportunity to regain credibility for our work – back to legitimizing professional identities and thus connecting back to discourse (1) – by situating media literacy in a solutionist discourse with its attendant neoliberal impulse to position citizens as responsible entirely for their own 'uses of media literacy':

(4a) *There are search tools provide students with an opportunity to find the original source of information or the original posting of information on the internet with the web-based article so it provides you with the kind of matrix of how an article draws upon previous articles, perhaps deliberately only selecting particular features from the original post which then of course leads to exposure of bias, some provide a trust rating for students, so I think these kinds of algorithmic approaches to news we wouldn't have had access to ten years ago in media education and now we do, so these tools really need to start to come into the classroom environment alongside the traditional media theory concepts that we've taught very effectively over a number of years.* (Media educator)

(4b) *In a fantastically complicated media environment where the commercial interests are just so huge and the potential for manipulation is so enormous, the burden on ordinary people to be media literate is overwhelming and actually too much for anyone to be expected to manage, which is why I come back to the necessary balance between media literacy and media regulation – which is where we say, as a society, there is a limit to what people can know and learn and manage for themselves and at that point we need to take a structural intervention in the public interest.* (Media educator)

(4c) *The Media Studies literature from the 1980s and 1990s applies to this, Greg Filo's 'Bad News', picking apart reporting of the Miners' Strike, so it's surprising when you think about it that instead of going there we get this simpler narrative of solving a digital problem with digital tools. There's not much in the public discourse about us wanting things to be true so much that we help things go viral without checking, more*

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out of hope than belief. Media education is a good space for that more complex discussion, but I have little faith in the idea that verification tools can save us. (Media educator)

Ahead of our final workshop in London, David Buckingham, Monica Bulger and Paul Mihaildis gave presentations at a public event and Karen Fowler-Watt and Roman Gerodimos joined them in a panel discussion with the audience (see CEMP, 2019).

In the plenary discussion with the mixed stakeholder groups and our subsequent data analysis stages, our line of enquiry shifted from inter-related, competing or tangential discourses, and whether these were framed by role, towards extrapolation of the common ground – from this dialogic research, what could we take forward as multi-stakeholder experiences of 'fake news'; shared desires for trust and truth; the efficacy of media literacy for resilience? Informed by Rushkoff's 'Team Human' call (2018, see also Mason, 2019) for us to focus more on the vitality of the patient, these are presented here as diagnosis, treatment and prevention.

DIAGNOSIS

Fake news is a continuum. Multiple people interpret it in different ways.

Studying poetry at 19, I discovered there is no such thing as truth ... it's a slippery beast.

There was agreement that the problem is not only about information disorder but also the failure of education to create resilient, critical thinkers – "*we need a conversation about the purpose of education. Why is it necessary to be educated? Different modes of education mean different paradigms and worldviews for students"* and "*What is a school education that is fit for the future? Media literacy is peripheral instead of central, that needs to change."* There was also a shared view that the lack of a civil, debating culture in state education is part of the problem.

On questions of trust, participants agreed that the 'blind trust' in social media was a problem, that genuinely trustworthy media would have "no hidden agenda" but that, in the 'post-truth' era, there might be a generational distinction between a broad scepticism ("there's always an agenda") and a more trusting engagement – "*You can piece together your own trust, from different perspectives on twitter*". The dialogue 'zoomed in' in two themes – objectivity is an illusion ("*Get the extreme views from both sides and the truth is somewhere in the middle*"), but *"if you don't trust anybody or anything, then your kind of lost."* – and an agreement that there is a new danger here, in the shape of 'the dark art of the algorithm' and, thus, media literacy is about something new, something else, these days – *"The browser that you choose is not a neutral choice."*

On trust, journalists articulated a different discourse in every group at every workshop, both asserting an insider position and defending the profession:

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My relationship is with my sources, refugees in camps in Libya – anything inaccurate can have real world affects. If I get something wrong, then my sources are going to be in a very bad situation. And if one thing that is wrong, somebody can use that to discredit the entire report.

With breaking news, it's hard to verify things, especially from social media. There is an expectation that the BBC should be first – so the pressure comes from social media.

The difference between articles taking months to verify information compared to those that have taken minutes – there's a difference and we need to be able to distinguish between the two. And that gets confused on social media.

There was also a much clearer sense of definition of terms from journalists than the other groups. Journalists could 'tell the difference' and saw fake news as 'more of a thing'. The closest other group were library professionals, described more in terms of information literacy as checking sources. Students and teachers were generally either more sceptical about the term 'fake news' or less inclined to see a distinction between fake and real.

TREATMENT

Clearly, participants volunteering to attend workshops on media education and disinformation are likely to agree that education is part of the solution. But whilst several of the online resources and fact-checking tools already in the public domain were evaluated positively, there was widespread agreement in the greater need for critical thinking 'before the event' – "*like driving a car, you may not need to know everything that's under the bonnet but it would help if you broke down, and you definitely need to know how to steer*". Extending the metaphor, "*the internet warrior behind a screen is a bit like road rage, so how do we equip people to de-escalate?"*

Two less predictable findings emerged – across the stakeholder groups, participants tended to agree that (1) the fine balance between media education / literacy for critical resilience and the tipping point into distrust of all information was the place where we should be applying our energies and that (2) if the critical thinking fostered in Media Studies (in the UK context) were integrated into all the curriculum, then we would not need Media Studies, but currently, young people are at more risk without it as it is the only place in education where questions of trust in information are located. This is a deeply ironic situation in the UK, where it is derided by politicians and academics in the higher ranked Universities for its lack of 'substance'.

Critical not cynical. Blind faith and unthinking trust is also a problem.

You don't have to assess the problem negatively. Can be a conversational thing and can be a positive thing, while still building a critical mindset and creating skills.

It's moral ownership of what we put out and its broader citizenship, not just a question of media literacy. But studying media is a good place to start, and then broaden out to those issues.

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And on resisting the pitfalls of moral surveillance in the classroom:

Some of this has to be trial and error. As with sex and drugs, there is a danger that teachers being overbearing and just talking down to students might not help. The same is true with media literacy.

The economic modality of education was also enacted. Whilst not a common perspective, this is an important angle, since it moves us beyond a purely oppositional position in terms of the current, 'neoliberal' framing of education:

Economic status for young people is predicated on them being knowledgeable. Knowing what's true and what's not is part of that and provides credibility, as information is currency.

There was less consensus on the value of trust, 'per se'. This seemed a loaded premise, with each group attaching their own emphasis to, perhaps, validate their own agency – trust in journalism; students lacking trust as a rationale for disengagement with the public sphere, teachers as agents in discerning trust; library professionals as custodians of trustworthy information.

PREVENTION

In the recorded conversations, the participants agreed on a way forward for both journalism and education, in an ideal world, making suggestions that resonated with many of the interviews from preceding chapters:

Upfront transparency – we are funded by so and so. Political bias is so and so, open and upfront. Fact and opinion, clearly labelled and signposted.

Journalism that is close to the community and as close as possible to the source.

We need the transparency and the critical education in tandem. It's a matter of balance and dual responsibility.

On the other hand, journalists – as in the interviews – were much keener to prescribe for students an 'appreciation' of their work, and this problematic fault-line has run through this project:

Make students understand good journalism is expensive, and valuing it leads to more of it being done. Don't just criticise. Knowledge surrounding journalism architecture and values is missing.

On extracting the viable agency for resilience, there was consensus that more inter-agency work is crucial in the short term, that this might be a longer term project, but that we should be optimistic:

Everybody's looking for a quick answer, but what we're talking about here is going to take twenty to forty years. We need a new literacy for the twenty-first century and it's not going to happen tomorrow

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and nobody around education wants to hear that. And the corporations are not going to change, their business model is to keep people on their platforms.

There are alliances we should be wary of. Recently we were approached by Russia Today for a partnership, involving our students. Is that an alliance we want? If Google funds a project, what's lying behind that?

The most important alliances in the short term are across the curriculum, media educators working with teachers in Science, Maths, raising media awareness in all subjects, for example there's plenty of fake news about science.

There's that old line – in a democracy, you get the politicians you deserve. Well, in the twenty-first century, we get the information we deserve. If we build resilience in our students, make them critical consumers of media and information, not just cynicism but inculcating critical thinking, then the environment will change. Ultimately, if we teach our students to demand better media, it will happen.

GIVING A FISH, TEACHING TO FISH

A crucial finding from the workshops, during which we evaluated media literacy resources already in the world, was that we need to differentiate between quick, short term, 'reactive' approaches and longer term critical education. The former were described as 'giving a fish' and some examples which met with multi-stakeholder approval are *Be Media Smart*, *The Trust Project, Mind over Media, NewsGuard*, *DeepNews.AI*, *Common Sense.Org* and *Wikitribune*:

For any person, group, company, organization – we can create an index of every fact check that has been done about things they have said – whether those fact checks were done at WikiTribune or elsewhere. And we can collect statements that need to be fact checked. It's a bit rough right now – it's a wiki after all! But I also want to emphasize that it's a playground – if you have a useful idea, please just dig in and get started. It's the wiki way!

In countries with media literacy education initiatives, but no formal, assessed subject in schools (so, everywhere except the UK, currently), we can find a huge range of evidence of 'what works', with varying degrees of scale and, often, in comparison to Media Studies, the successful implementation and outcomes of these pedagogic interventions are something of a progression towards the more holistic, critical media education being by our field review. To take one example, Hodgkin and Kahne's account (2018) of civic media literacy education in response to fake news, in the US, focus on 'what teachers can do' and located three elements – developing nuanced skills and strategies for assessing truth claims, reflective thinking about students' own biases and assumptions and then 'Practice, Practice, Practice' to foster an experiential learning process to cultivate new habits of mind. This is typical of an abundance of such responsive activity across the world (see de Abreu *et al.*, 2017; McDougall *et al.*, 2018; McDougall *et al.*, 2019). It is an example of media literacy practice *in between* the provision of open access resources by the mainstream media, independent third parties, NGOs or the likes of Google and Facebook themselves and a fully formed critical media education. In this sense, these interventions are more than *giving a fish* but less than *teaching to fish*.

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RECOMMENDATIONS

This project addressed, directly, the hypothesis that *Media literacy has become a center of gravity for countering "fake news"*. (Bulger and Davison, 2018: 3) and our findings have enabled us to answer the report's concluding open questions (2018: 21), as follows:

1. Can media literacy even be successful in preparing citizens to deal with fake news and information? *Yes. Media Studies prepares citizens to take a critical, but not a cynical, approach to engagement with all media, including professional journalism, 'mainstream media' more broadly, and social media.*

2. Which groups should be targeted for media literacy interventions? *If our current problems are the work of 'baby boomers', then the civic engagement of young people in schools now is our priority so that, in the future, 'the media' is produced more ethically and consumed more critically. To achieve this, it is paramount that every young person takes Media Studies in school.*

3. How can media literacy programs effectively address overconfidence in skills? This can manifest preemptively (individuals who feel they need no media literacy training) and reactively (individuals who overestimate the effectiveness of their media literacy training). *Media Studies has a track record in working in the 'third space', fostering a porous exchange of critical, theoretical thinking (from teachers) and media engagement (from students).*

4. Are traditional media literacy practices (*e.g.*, verification and fact-checking) impractical in everyday media consumption? How can media literacy initiatives respond to the powerful systems of media il-literacy (*e.g.*, clickbait, feed algorithms) which already condition individuals' media behaviors? *Yes, instead of offering verification tools, we should think of critical media literacy as the best 'toolkit'.*

5. How are groups committed to disinformation and propaganda able to harness the language of literacy and critical analysis to sow new distrust of media and establish adversarial political spaces? *We need a focus on the 'Uses of Media Literacy' rather than a set of apparently neutral competences for citizens. Media Studies / media literacy must prioritise this critical, societal and political dimension.*

6. How will the overlapping efforts of media literacy stakeholders interact? Will new signals for trustworthiness aimed at limiting "fake news" backfire, producing new uncertainty around media messages? *This field ethnography, the set of interviews and the findings from the workshops culminate in a strong, multi-stakeholder consensus that Media Studies should be mandatory in schools. If every young person learns the key concepts of Media Studies – genre, narrative, representation, audience, ideology, and applies 'classic' deconstructive approaches to contemporary media texts, news content and technological developments in mediation, we will avoid both the false binary of 'real vs fake' and the danger of hyper-cynical distrust of all media. Media Studies puts media literacy to work in an academic context, connecting the study of media to questions of history, politics and ethics.*

This research has found agreement in the intersection between media education and journalism that media education should be mandatory in schools as a first response to the problem of propaganda fake news / disinformation. But the potential of the discipline and the prescribed curriculum are not the same thing. Before it can be effective, media education needs a 'reboot' to foster a critical resilience through advanced academic deconstruction of media, combined with theorised production of the same media. The research suggests that this is a more effective and sustainable approach than 'giving a fish'

through fact-checking tools or surface level media / information literacy competences. As Buckingham puts it:

Ultimately, education should do more than simply enable us to understand and to cope with what already exists. It should also encourage us to explore alternatives, and to demand change. (2019: 118).

The data generated from the field review, interviews and workshops lead us to the following three recommendations:

(1) Rather than producing competence frameworks for media literacy, as though it is a neutral set of skills for citizens, media education needs to enable students to apply the *critical* legacies of both Media and Cultural Studies and literacy education on the contemporary media ecosystem;

(2) Media education must adopt *a dynamic* approach to media literacy and increase the experiential, reflexive aspects of media *practice* in the curriculum, with reciprocal transfer between the critical rhetoric above and creative media practice in order to respond academically to media as, primarily, a question of representation. In other words, resilience *to* representation is enhanced by expertise *in* representing.

(3) We need to add the critical exploration of social media, algorithms and big data to the media education curriculum, accompanied by applied practical learning in the *uses* of them for social justice, as opposed to training the next generation in the use of these for even further commercial and political exploitation of one another.

We conclude that media literacy education is already in a good place to be easily adapted and developed for objectives (1) and (2) but as a community of practice we will need a watching brief on (3) in the longer term.

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MEDIJSKA PISMENOST PROTIV LAŽNIH VIJESTI: KRITIČKO RAZMIŠLJANJE, OTPORNOST I PARTICIPACIJA GRAĐANA

Julian McDougall

SAŽETAK *Ovaj rad podupire tezu da je medijsko opismenjavanje ključ za povećanje otpornosti mladih građana pri korištenju medija. Rad prikazuje ishode projekta financiranog od strane veleposlanstva SAD-a u Londonu, koji je okupio vodeće istraživače iz SAD-a i UK-a, uključujući i veliki broj ključnih dionika, primjerice novinare, nastavnike, učenike, knjižničare i informacijske stručnjake. Etnografsko istraživanje uključivalo je intervjue s dionicima iz različitih područja, četiri radionice koje su pozvale na dijalog više dionika iz različitih područja te opsežan pregled literature, politike, pedagoške prakse i postojećih obrazovnih resursa. Nalazi ove etnografije potvrđuju da kritička medijska pismenost, ako je prihvaćena kao obavezan predmet u školama i podučava se kao* dinamična *pismenost, može bolje pripremiti mlade građane da budu otporni na „informacijske poremećaje" (Wardle i Derakhshan, 2017) nego djelovanja koja nastaju kao reakcija na medijski poticaj (kao što su provjera činjenica i verifikacijski alati) te mali projekti koji se primarno fokusiraju na kompetencije.*

KLJUČNE RIJEČI
MEDIJSKA PISMENOST, LAŽNE VIJESTI, DEZINFORMACIJE, OTPORNOST

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FAKE OR NOT FAKE? PERCEPTIONS OF UNDERGRADUATES ON (DIS)INFORMATION AND CRITICAL THINKING

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ABSTRACT *In an increasingly challenging media environment of post-truth and fake news, disinformation may impact the way young people perceive the world. In this study, we seek to understand how young people engage with news, their perceptions around disinformation, and how they see the relevance of critical thinking for their civic and political lives. Using a mixed method model, we developed a focus group activity with a total of 45 participants, based on the analysis of 562 questionnaires previously administered to first-year undergraduates of two Portuguese universities. The results show that although most students report limited critical analysis of information, they do reveal concerns about disinformation in their lives, suggesting a set of actions in order to combat fake news spread. Furthermore, the findings reinforce the need for news and media literacy that concerns a post-fact culture.*

KEYWORDS

YOUNG PEOPLE, DISINFORMATION, FAKE NEWS, CRITICAL THINKING, NEWS AND MEDIA LITERACY

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INTRODUCTION

To understand disinformation and young people, it is important to question "what is seen as news" (Buckingham, 2000: 210) and what role information plays in the daily lives of the young. The rapidly changing ways in which news is accessed, especially through social media, demands a more comprehensive view of news uses and practices. It is argued that news media no longer shape the daily lives of young people as new "de-ritualized" practices take place everywhere, every time (Peters and Broersma, 2013: 8). Today, young people find information on current events in very different ways when compared to past generations, mainly by accessing through mobile phones and on social media (Gonçalves, 2015; Pereira *et al.*, 2015; The Media Insight Project, 2015; Melro and Pereira, 2016). Thus, in a convergent and multi-screen media environment, not only at the level of the contents, but also of the practices (Jenkins, 2015) – given the more incidental (Hermida, 2010; Boczkowski *et al.*, 2017), nuanced and diversified way news is accessed on social media (The Media Insight Project, 2015) – news information struggles to find "a" definition, if there is one.

Not only does news information, as a journalistic genre, compete and negotiate its boundaries with other fields, allowing the emergence of blurred categories, such as "infotainment" (Fidalgo, 2016; Otto *et al.*, 2017), but also the combined ways of accessing news on social media lead to a blending of information with other contents and practices, such as disinformation, social connexion, entertainment and parody (The Media Insight Project, 2015). Besides, as a social construction of reality (Berger and Luckman, 2004), news is a secondary discourse with personal and editorial judgments and values (Rodrigues, 1999: 31), in which the metaphors of objectivity and truth are disclosed through the transparency of the journalistic processes (Kovach and Rosenstiel, 2004: 45) and "strategic rituals" (Molotch and Lester, 1999). Today, however, the question is not how journalism can be more close to the "truth", but how important the "truth" is for journalism and for society.

Beyond a definition of (dis)information itself, it is relevant to understand how people engage with the news and how they perceive its role in their lives (Buckingham, 2000; Peters, 2012; Peters and Broersma, 2017). Following this perspective, we seek to explore undergraduates' perceptions of fake news and (dis)information, since it is a recent and underdeveloped subject in the literature, especially in the Portuguese context. Furthermore, drawing on the news and media literacy framework, from a global paradigm (RobbGrieco and Hobbs, 2013: 22), this paper also addresses student perceptions of critical thinking regarding news information, as well as its relevance in the lives of the young, particularly in a fake news and post-truth world.

THE 'REAL' FAKE NEWS

Although the term "fake news" was initially used in the academic community to mark off infotainment contents from political satire programs, such as *The Daily Show* (Baym, 2005; Brewer and Marquardt, 2007; Crittenden *et al.*, 2011; Balmas, 2014), its definition

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currently includes disinformation of various natures, which are still under discussion within academia. Hence, some recent studies tend to exclude satirical content and to focus on just one type of disinformation that is "intentionally or knowingly fake" (Klein and Wueller, 2017: 6), namely fake news articles that are fabricated for specific purposes.

Regardless of the complicated nature of the term "fake news", dissemination on the Internet and the intention to make so-called "alternative facts" go viral are essential features that contribute to how disinformation is presented today. Although disinformation has always existed in the history of journalism, the viral spread of fake news through social media had its boom in 2016 after the "Pizzagate[1]" scandal, during the US presidential election (Silverman, 2016a), which allegedly led to the election of President Donald Trump, due to a right-wing alignment of the hoaxes (Allcott and Gentzkow, 2017; Starbird, 2017). According to Klein and Wueller (2017: 6), "the vast majority of fake news articles are written about public figures or controversial current events and shared via social media with the hope of going 'viral'". Among the motivations to spread fake or inaccurate contents are political influence and financial gain, especially through clickbait, as well as parody and other forms of social connection or even for psychological reasons in causing harm for harm's sake (Wardle, 2018: 955).

In an article in *Science*, Lazer *et al*. define fake news "to be fabricated information that mimics news media content in form, but not in organizational process or intent" (2018: 1094). Thus, fake news is not ruled by any editorial norms and processes, which ensure certain accuracy and credibility of information, but overlaps with other types of "information disorders, such as misinformation (false or misleading information) and disinformation (false information that is purposely spread to deceive people)" (Lazer *et al*., 2018: 1094). Also supporting the view that fake news might conflate with disinformation, misinformation and mal-information, the Director of Research for the Tow Center for Digital Journalism in New York, Claire Wardle (2017: 20), highlights the importance of distinguishing messages that are true from those that are false. In an attempt to outline disinformation and fake news, Wardle (2018: 953) identifies seven types of "information disorders": (1) false context, when genuine content is presented with false contextual information; (2) imposter content, when genuine sources are impersonated; (3) fabricated contents, when false contents are designed to deceive and do harm; (4) false connection, when headlines, visuals and captions do not support the content; (5) manipulated content, when information is manipulated to deceive; (6) misleading content, when it is used to frame an issue or an individual; (7) satire or parody, when there is no intention to cause harm and is only to fool.

In a similar framework, Damian Tambini (2017: 3–5) of the London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE) identifies different types of fake news, including news that is ideologically opposed or challenges one's perspective. In this regard, several political or public figures and their followers have used the term "fake news" to refer to mainstream

[1] The "Pizzagate" scandal was begun by a group of young people from Macedonia who published conspiracy theories of candidate Hillary Clinton and other democrats being involved in a child traffic ring that operated at a pizzeria in Washington, DC, named Comet Ping Pong (Silverman, 2016b).

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news media that do not align with their political-ideological positions[2] (Klein and Wueller, 2017: 6). In this respect, Tambini (2017) includes not only what has been described as false information itself, but also what is considered fake news, just because one does not agree with or feel comfortable about it (Newman *et al.*, 2017: 20). This approach reinforces the importance of individual perceptions in defining what news or fake news is. In her masters dissertation, Stella Zaryan (2017) highlights the need for a deeper understanding of what fake news represents to individuals and how these perceptions, along with their levels of media trust, have an impact in the definition of fake news. By conducting interviews through Facebook, Stella Zaryan (2017: 30) concluded that for many, fake news is not only fabricated information, but also involves issues around objectivity, false statements and news framing, evoking factual, political and ethical judgments. Aligned with this perspective, this study draws on the approach that young people's uses and perceptions on information and disinformation contribute to the understanding of what news and fake news are (Buckingham, 2000; Peters, 2012; Peters and Broersma, 2017; Tambini, 2017; Zaryan, 2017). Thus, we seek to find out how undergraduates perceive (dis)information, what their understanding is around motivations for fake news spread and what they think about its impact in their lives.

NEWS LITERACY IN A POST-TRUTH SOCIETY

The year of 2016 was especially populated with events, such as the US presidential election, the Brexit referendum in the UK and the Colombian peace agreement referendum, which marked the beginning of a post-truth era leading to questioning the impact of (dis)information in society. For the founding director of the Ethical Journalism Network (EJN), Aidan White, that year has no precedent in the way news is produced and in the way the public seem disinterested in facts, humanity, media accountability, and truth (2017: 4).

According to an Ipsos survey conducted by *BuzzFeed News*, the vast majority of Americans who access fake news, and for whom Facebook is the main news source, believe in what they read (Silverman and Singer-Vine, 2016). On a smaller scale, in Europe, the Globsec report states that 10 million people from Central and Eastern Europe believe in fake news, and that young people are more likely to trust it than any other age group (2017: 9). Furthermore, the impact of disinformation on young people's life, especially on civic and political participation is still unknown. As mentioned by Lazer *et al*. (2018: 1095), "evaluations of the medium-to-long–run impact on political behaviour of exposure to fake news (for example, whether and how to vote) are essentially non-existent in the literature". For the authors, fake news can lead to an increase of cynicism and apathy or encouragement of extremism (Lazer *et al*., 2018: 1095).

[2] In February of 2017, President Donald Trump wrote on Twitter: "The FAKE NEWS media (failing @NYTimes @NBCNews @ABC @CBS @CNN) is not my enemy. It is the enemy of the American People" (https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/832708293516632065).

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Several efforts have been made to address fake news spread, such as the creation of fact-checking organisations or credibility mechanisms developed by social media companies. The International Fact-Checking Network (IFCN), which includes 43 organisations from all over the world, assures that those entities follow the Poynter's code of five principles: non-partisanship and fairness, open and honest corrections, and transparency of sources, methodology and funding (Poynter, 2017). Also, since 2016, Facebook, Twitter and Google have developed their own mechanisms to identify fake or hate speech content across their platforms. However, the so-called "new gatekeepers" (Bell, 2014) have also been accused of using algorithms to filter and censor relevant information on erroneous pretences, as reported by the organisation Onlinecensorship.org (Melro, 2016). While those technology companies made agreements with American and European governments, along with news media corporations, such as the Trust Project (thetrustproject.org), in order to prevent hate speech spread, it is also claimed that these attempts might put freedom of expression at risk. The United Nations, along with the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), the Organization of American States (OAS) and the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR) stated in a declaration about freedom of expression and disinformation, that "general prohibitions on the dissemination of information based on vague and ambiguous ideas, including 'false news' or 'non-objective information', are incompatible with international standards for restrictions on freedom of expression" and therefore should be abolished (United Nations, 2017). Even so, the document highlights the importance of scientific and technological developments to combat disinformation, suggesting fact-checking services available to the public, especially during electoral periods, as well as the adoption of effective regulatory mechanisms in and outside newsrooms (United Nations, 2017).

Apart from the use of automatized mechanisms, media regulation, and third-party intermediates in combating the spread of fake news, it is fundamental to revise the role of news and media literacy in fostering critical thinking to promote civic and political participation. According to Lazer *et al*. (2018: 1095), people tend not to question the credibility of information and accept it uncritically instead, "unless it violates their preconceptions or they are incentivized to do so". In this regard, Mihailidis and Viotty (2017) question what is the role of media literacy in a spectacle and post-fact digital culture? For the authors, whilst many approaches focus on developing citizens' skills to be monitors of information – referring to the diversity of guides and initiatives about spotting fake news –, the priority nowadays, however, is not much about finding the truth itself, but to find personally relevant information that aligns with one's vision of the world (Mihailidis and Viotty, 2017: 10). Therefore, in a post-truth culture, how important is it to know how to critically analyse news? As claimed by Sundar (2016) in *The New Republic*, since "online news readers don't seem to really care about the importance of journalistic sourcing" and trust what their peers share on social media instead, simply teaching how to detect false information represents a small fraction of a bigger problem. If this is the case, and if we are witnessing a new ecosystem of news uses and sharing, then "normative approaches to media literacy may fall short of effectively responding to the emergence of post-fact society" (Mihailidis and Viotty, 2017: 10). Given the inefficacy of the normative

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approach and aligned with a global paradigm of news literacy[3] (RobbGrieco and Hobbs, 2013: 22), Mihailidis and Viotty (2017: 11) propose four considerations for repositioning media literacies to respond to the emerging spectacle and post-fact culture: (1) repositioning media literacies for spreadable connectivity, focusing on the connection between human beings, social inclusion, diversity and recognition beyond mainstream media; (2) repositioning media literacies as mechanisms for caring, in fostering pedagogy and practice from a relational and non-individualistic perspective of skill development; (3) repositioning media literacies as facilitators of everyday engagement, encouraging a sense of belonging to the community and promoting participation on local issues, instead of focusing on individual critical skill attainment, which reflects the idea of young people being prone to be more cynical and less engaged (Mihailidis, 2008); (4) reimagining media literacies as intentionally civic, approaching problems in non-structured ways but centred in its civic impact, addressing how media can be used to cause a realistic impact in politics, culture and society that define democracy.

However, despite its relevance in a context of fake news and post-truth, news literacy may not be the only answer to deal with disinformation. According to David Buckingham (2017), news literacy is not enough to address the problem of fake news. Therefore, he suggests that efforts should be made by technology companies, media organisations and governments for media reform. For Jason Hannan (2018: 2), there are at least two ways of framing the problem around disinformation: one is to focus on *the* media and the citizens through a more aggressive fact-checking by journalists and through news literacy; and the other is to focus *on* media, *i.e.* on technologies of communication and their impact in affect the structure of public discourse. Given these perspectives, we understand that addressing the problem of disinformation might require a combination of efforts that includes an active role of technology companies, news media, governments and, more importantly, the role of education, particularly in including news and media literacy to foster critical thinking of young citizens. However, framing the problem of disinformation with regard to young people requires listening to their voices for a better understanding of how these actions might take part in their lives. Furthermore, by questioning how students perceive critical thinking and its role when encountering (dis)information, this paper gives an insight for further studies on how news and media literacy can be framed in education in order to address disinformation and promote young people's civic and political life in a post-truth society.

DATA AND METHODOLOGY

This paper is driven by the following research questions: (1) how do undergraduates perceive news and disinformation? (2) what are students' understandings of critical thinking

[3] According to RobbGrieco and Hobbs (2013: 22), news literacy has been developed around two distinct paradigms: the American paradigm, developed by Howard Schneider of the Center of News Literacy at Stony Brook University School of Journalism, which focuses on a more pedagogical or functionalist approach, derived from the school of journalism, and debates issues around freedom of press, news values, objectivity, journalistic principles and analysis of news articles; and the global paradigm, as a branch of media education or media literacy, more focused on critical thinking, awareness and participation, debating issues, for instance, around critical analysis of media contents, ideology and power struggles.

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and its relevance when encountering the news, especially in a fake news and post-truth world? To address these questions, we have selected specific data that were collected for a doctoral study about the role of the media and current events in the civic and political lives of young people. The broader study intends to understand the relationship between media and young people comprising two levels of research: one centred in student media uses and perceptions and other centred in the perceptions of media directors and news producers about young people's media practices and interests. In this paper, we focus on the level of the students, which combines both quantitative and qualitative methods through the administration of questionnaires and through conducting focus groups. At this level, the study followed a mixed method design, based on the explanatory model described by Creswell and Clark (2006: 72), in which the qualitative method was used to explain the quantitative results, previously obtained at the first stage. In this respect, the focus groups were conducted as a follow-up and complement to the questionnaires with the same participants, in order to better understand and explore a set of results. Here, we focus mainly on data collected from the first activity of the focus group. However, we also present briefly some of the questionnaire results used for the focus group discussion. The following table (Table 1) shows the association between the questions of the questionnaire, whose results were used to design the questions of the focus group's first activity regarding the study of student main perceptions discussed in this paper: news information, fake news and critical thinking. Even though questions about disinformation were not directly asked in the questionnaires, student perceptions of news information prompted insights on fake news that were then explored in focus groups

The questionnaire was composed of 40 questions (25 closed questions and fifteen open-ended questions), divided into seven thematic blocks[4], and was designed to map student media practices, as well as to understand their perceptions about news information and journalism (such as media interests and media trust) and its connection to their civic and political participation. The questions were previously validated through a pre-test with a smaller sample of the population (n=30) in order to identify consistency problems and wording. The final version of the questionnaire was administered online through LimeSurvey, between February and June of 2016, to a convenience sample of 562 first year undergraduates of a selection of eighteen undergraduate degrees of different fields of study (Social Sciences and Humanities, Health and Sports Sciences, Engineering and Physical Sciences) from two Portuguese universities: Universidade do Minho (UMinho), in Braga and Universidade da Beira Interior (UBI), in Covilhã, which are located in two different geographic regions of the country (coastline and interior). Both the location and undergraduate degree were used as criteria for the sample composition in order to verify significant differences between students from different courses and students living in rural or urbanised areas. The sample of the study is composed of 332 females and 230 males with an average age of 20 years (SD=3.4).

[4] Within the seven thematic blocks of the questionnaire, this paper focuses on blocks (E) characterisation of media practices on the Internet and social media and (F) characterisation of news interests, and perceptions on information and journalism.

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Table 1. **The connection between the questions of the focus group's first activity and the questionnaires**

Perceptions	Focus Group questions (first activity)	Questionnaire questions
News information and journalism *(Research question 1)*	How does news information on the Internet and social media differ comparing to those on traditional media outlets?	(Indirect association for contextualisation purposes) QE1,E2, E5 & E6 – Questions about the frequency of news access on the Internet and social media (closed questions) QF1 – How interested are you in the following journalistic genres: news (closed question) QF9 – What is your opinion about news and journalism? (open-ended question)
	Why would you consider news as a "reflection of reality"?	QF7 – Please state your level of agreement on the following: ...news is a "reflection of reality" (closed question)
	(Media trust) Why would you trust more in the news on traditional media than online news on social media and Internet?	QF3 – Please state your level of trust about current events on the following media: social media, online news media, blogs, newspapers, magazines, radio and television (closed question)
Fake news and disinformation *(Research question 1)*	What is this article about? (introduction) Is the news article fake or not fake and why? Why do you think fake news is published? In your opinion, how can the problem of disinformation be addressed?	The questionnaire does not contain questions about fake news or disinformation, but students made comments about it in the open-ended question QF9.
Critical thinking about the news *(Research question 2)*	What does it mean to you to have critical thinking when reading news information? What underlying powers are you aware of when reading media messages? How do you question and verify information on the Internet and social media?	QF6 – What does it mean to you to be an informed person: ...to have critical thinking (closed question)

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The quantitative analysis performed on the closed questions – containing qualitative variables (nominal and ordinal) – comprehended descriptive and advanced statistics[5] using IBM SPSS. The open-ended questions, as well as the transcriptions of the focus groups were coded in QSR NVivo using a combination of predefined dimensions from the theoretical framework and an exploratory approach of content analysis, in which the categories emerged from the units of analysis (McQuail, 2003: 331). For this paper, we also conducted statistics analysis using Pearson's Qui-square and measures of association (Cramer's V) with the frequencies obtained from the content analysis of the focus groups.

After analysing the data of the questionnaires, the focus groups were conducted in the following year, between March and April of 2017, with the same respondents as in the case of the questionnaires, who were already attending the second year of their undergraduate degree study programmes. Like the sample of the questionnaires, focus group participants were from different courses and the groups were organised accordingly in order to determine if the course had impact on student perceptions when comparing between groups. In total, there were 45 participants from both universities, organised in eight groups up to ten members each, with an average duration of 64 minutes per session. The sessions were developed around two main activities based in two dimensions: information about current events and civic and political participation. The focus groups were transcribed and the names of the participants remained fictitious.

UNDERSTANDING YOUNG PEOPLE AND (DIS)INFORMATION

In order to understand what young people perceive as disinformation, it is important to first introduce what they perceive by news information, as described in Table 1. In this respect, the findings from the content analysis of the questionnaire open-ended questions about student opinions on news and journalism (*n*=496) suggest three main complementary and non-exclusive perspectives: optimistic, when referring to the relevance of journalism in society (36.9%); conditional (5.8%), depending on the circumstances or news media outlets; and critical (52.2%), which include criticisms around media bias, sensationalism, agenda-setting, media trust, money-driven logic and exclusion of youth voices in media discourses. The critical perspective means that students hold a critical view on news and journalism, but does not necessarily mean that one thinks critically when encountering the news. We also sustain that maintaining a critical view on news media is different from being cynical and disengaged, since most students revealed high levels of news interest (58.9%; *n*=526). However, respondents also revealed a great deal of idealisation in their speeches, meaning they tend to answer according to what is socially acceptable and expected in the aims of the study (Buckingham, 2000: 202), building a gap between discourses and practice. In a study with teenagers, Irene Costera Meijer (2007) concluded the existence of a double viewing paradox in the perceptions

[5] The statistics analysis undertaken for this paper include Spearman's rho correlations (rs) between variables of the questionnaire, with 99% level of confidence.

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of young people about the news. While youngsters demand high quality information (sacrosanctity of the news features) and "are very aware of the social status and civic importance that are attributed to quality news" (Costera Meijer, 2007), they prefer to access more soft and entertaining information, as they tend to exclude themselves as an audience. Although the study of Meijer (2007) was conducted with younger individuals, the similarities to the findings of this study are evident, particularly regarding young people's idealisation of the news and of the role of journalism in society, which appears to be more close to a functionalist and traditional view of what news and journalism *should* be.

For the purpose of this article, it is also important to state that even though these students access information mainly through social media on a daily basis (68.1%; n=562) – with Facebook as the most used platform for news access (n=544; p<0.01; $0.25 \leq |r_s| < 0.5$) –, they tend to place less trust in social media news (5.8%; n=538), when compared to traditional media outlets. In the questionnaires, when asked about their opinion of journalism, students reveal this lack of trust in online news by associating it with issues around immediacy, clickbait, misinformation, fake news, and entertainment. As an example, one student stated that: "[journalism] should be as objective as possible and it is losing its credibility due to social media" (Female, Communication Sciences, UMinho). Like this student, most of the respondents of the questionnaire hold an idealised and traditional view about objectivity and accuracy in the news, demanding high quality information, similar to Meijer's (2007) findings. Thus, do these students fully believe in the information they encounter, or do they question it? If the latter, how do they question the news they come across?

The first activity of the focus groups followed a semi-structured script with a set of ten questions around perceptions about (dis)information, news as a "reflection of reality", fake news, media trust, verification and critical thinking (see Table 1). To address these topics, the first activity began with the reading of a fake news article[6] about the US presidential election in 2016 ("Obama Signs Executive Order Declaring Investigation Into Election Results; Revote Planned For Dec. 19th"), published by an imitation of the American broadcaster ABC News (www.abcnews.com) hosted in a Colombian domain (www.abcnews.com.co), on December 16th of 2016 (Illustration 1).

The issues around disinformation and fake news were particularly relevant to this study, since the data collection overlapped with a moment of great fake news spread, during the 2016 presidential election in the USA (Silverman, 2016b). The election and the then candidate, Donald Trump, were also the second most discussed topic by the respondents of the questionnaires, according to the content analysis conducted in that question[7].

[6] The fake news article was presented to students on paper, in both English and Portuguese (translated). They were also given a print copy of the homepage of the news website.
[7] This finding refers to the open-ended question of the questionnaire: QF5 – Please tell us one or two news topics that you most conversed with other person in the last week.

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Illustration 1.

Clipping of the fake news article selected for the focus group activity.

Source: www.abcnews.co

Obama Signs Executive Order Declaring Investigation Into Election Results; Revote Planned For Dec. 19th

By ***Jimmy Rustling, ABC News*** *- December 12, 2016*

President Obama has signed an Executive Order declaring an investigation into the election results and plans for a revote on December 19th. (AP Photo / Dennis System)

In the news article presented in the focus groups, there were several elements that could help determine its falsehood, for instance aspects of the layout and the content, such as: (1) the source and domain of the Colombian website as opposed to the official ABC News homepage; (2) a different logo compared to the official; (3) the section of the homepage where the news was displayed – under "Fashion Week" rather than a topic related to politics; (4) the description of the homepage using humour and parody; (5) the biography and photo of the author also presented in a fictional way; (6) elements in the content, such as the style of the narrative, data inconsistency, fictional sources and false quotations.

After reading the news article, students were asked if they thought the article was fake or not fake and why, starting a dialogue about news, disinformation and critical thinking. Of the 45 participants of the focus groups, over two out of three (71.1%) thought the news was "not fake" (Table 2), mainly because it contained statements from well-known figures of the public sphere. The results displayed in Table 2 were obtained through the frequency of cases coded in the categories "fake" and "not fake" followed by a statistics analysis.

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Table 2. **Frequency of "fake" or "not fake" by students in each focus group* (n=45)**

Group	Undergraduate Degree		Not Fake	Fake	Total
A	Communication Sciences, Management and Basic Education	Count	3	1	4
		%	75.0%	25.0%	100.0%
		Adjusted Residual	0.2	-0.2	
B	Biochemistry	Count	0	4	4
		%	0.0%	100.0%	100.0%
		Adjusted Residual	-3.3	3.3	
C	Architecture	Count	3	0	3
		%	100.0%	0.0%	100.0%
		Adjusted Residual	1.1	-1.1	
D	Sports Sciences	Count	6	0	6
		%	100.0%	0.0%	100.0%
		Adjusted Residual	1.7	-1.7	
E	Aeronautical Engineering	Count	3	0	3
		%	100.0%	0.0%	100.0%
		Adjusted Residual	1.1	-1.1	
F	Cinema and Communication Sciences	Count	1	6	7
		%	14.3%	85.7%	100.0%
		Adjusted Residual	-3.6	3.6	
G	Sociology	Count	10	0	10
		%	100.0%	0.0%	100.0%
		Adjusted Residual	2.3	-2.3	
H	Architecture	Count	6	2	8
		%	75.0%	25.0%	100.0%
		Adjusted Residual	0.3	-0.3	
Total		Count	32	13	45
		%	71.1%	28.9%	100.0%

*$p<0.05$; V=0.82

Apart from mentioning that the article was allegedly from a trustworthy news organisation (ABC News), another reason students mentioned regarding its "truthfulness" was the fact that the news topic was currently on the agenda and talked about by many. Therefore, the probability of an event like that occurring would have been high. As one student says: "in fact, there were many comments saying the votes were forged" (Female, Group G, Sociology, UBI). In the same group discussion, another student replied stating that: "regardless of what people said, the data collected showed that people really chose Hillary over Trump" (Female, Group G, Sociology, UBI). In the literature, it is stated

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that fake news can emerge from rumours or hoaxes (Tambini, 2017), aligning with what people expect to be true. However, the fact that some of these undergraduates believe in information that is aligned with their opinions, either by hearsay or by concurring with their ideologies (Tambini, 2017), challenges the importance of critical thinking in a post-truth society. Since these students do not question the information they encounter, because the "truth" is what is close to their own beliefs, the pursuit for the truth might be less of a priority to them (Mihailidis and Viotty, 2017: 10). Not only are these participants likely to believe in false information, but will probably share it with those around them, as mentioned in the following statement:

The truth is that we never waste much time checking the veracity of information. That is the truth. We read it, have an impression about it and will most likely pass that information to others without checking the facts. (Female, Group B, Biochemistry, UMinho)

Viewed in this way, some participants argue that verifying information is only circumscribed to specific situations, such as in student projects or when the subject captures their interest. Among the resources they would use to check the facts, students mentioned crossing information between different media sources and awareness of certain textual elements that might look suspicious, such as flashy news headlines and use of adjectives.

The thirteen participants (28.9%) who considered the news article "fake" or at least raised doubts about its veracity are mostly students of Communication Sciences (53.8%). As revealed in the statistics analysis for this question, there is a significant and strong association between the undergraduate degree course and viewing the news article fake or not ($p<0.05$; V=0.82). In particular, students of Communication Sciences (group F) are more likely to distrust information, but so are students of Biochemistry (group B). In these groups, students identified most of the elements described before that proved the news falsehood, namely: data inconsistency, a suspicious biography and the author's photo, the description of the homepage and the fact that it was under a misleading section. The domain of the website, the logo and the validity of the quotations were not mentioned. Besides, these students also suspect the veracity of the article because they have not heard about this subject on other media outlets. This finding suggests that Communication Sciences students are probably better prepared and reveal skills of news analysis since they learned it within their university studies, which suggests the need for news and media literacy in other disciplines. However, it also leaves us with an unanswered and curious question as to why Biochemistry students also question more the information than other groups and, on the other hand, why Sociology students do not question it more. Does it have to do with their family background? Are Sociology students not being taught about the media at all?

Why fake news and how to deal with it?

When asked about motivations for the dissemination of fake news, most of the focus group participants pointed to issues of political power or influence, parody and economic profit. In terms of political influence, students stated that fake news can be used to raise

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controversy in order to shape public opinion about a specific issue, denigrate the image of political opponents and to promote a political agenda. As for economic profit, students identified clickbait as the strongest reason, with the gathering of a large number of visualisations and shares over social media aiming to achieve economic gain. In general, the reasons highlighted by undergraduates seem to support the existing literature about the main motivations for fake news spread (Wardle, 2017). The following participant discourse sums up what other students also discussed across all groups:

In my opinion, there are several causes or there are several reasons. One, and probably the most dangerous of all is to cause misinformation in order to promote a political and ideological agenda for people who see their fears being confirmed and start believing in those who preach those ideologies or agendas. Another case of fake news, and perhaps it may be less relevant, is the parody type in order to make things up just to create confusion and spread it, for instance, on Facebook, Twitter, this type of social media to generate more likes, more clicks, more shares, and there are people who gain something with it (...). (Male, Group A, Management, UMinho)

Despite not being able to identify the veracity of a news article, fake news spread raised concerns among all the participants of the focus groups. For instance, this student considers it an alarming situation for society and journalism: "I think the consequences can be disastrous because it makes me rethink what journalism is, what veracity is, what news is (...)" (Female, Group A, Communication Sciences, UMinho). Furthermore, participants were encouraged to discuss what actions should take place in society and in media or technology organisations in order to work around the issue of disinformation. In general, our undergraduates suggested a set of mechanisms and measures to combat the spread of disinformation, which can be arranged in five different areas or spheres of action, as shown in the following table (Table 3).

Table 3. **Spheres of action identified by undergraduates in the focus groups to combat fake news spread**

Sphere of action	Actions	Examples of student comments
News media	Fact-checking and greater transparency of sources.	"...I think it needs more rigorous editorial guidelines and journalistic principles to be followed. Journalists need to be sure they speak to the right persons and that what they say is real". (Female, Group A, Communication Sciences, UMinho)
Social media companies	More active role and collaborative mechanisms of self-reporting.	"I think, given the power that social media have nowadays, they have to play a very active role in this matter because many people do not even read newspapers or go to a news website; they only see a little of what is shown in their news feed. And so, I think Facebook, despite not being a news media, can and should play a very strong role in this regard". (Female, Group A, Communication Sciences, UMinho)

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Sphere of action	Actions	Examples of student comments
Fact-checking organisations	Creating or supporting third party entities dedicated to fact-checking.	"...and even an online platform that would allow us to insert the link to the news and we could know whether the news is fake." (Female, Group B, Biochemistry, UMinho).
Regulation, hetero-regulation and newsroom ethics committees	More regulatory mechanisms for journalists and news organisations.	"...there is a code of ethics for journalists that no one follows, thus there should be another way to regulate it". (Male, Group D, Sports Sciences, UBI).
Education (news literacy)	Developing critical thinking as a way to an informed citizenship.	"...despite journalists being responsible to broadcast information carefully, it is important that people don't be fooled by news and so they need to have certain awareness, a critical thinking to verify information and check for reliable sources to be informed". (Female, Group B, Biochemistry, UMinho.

In line with what was stated by the United Nations (2017), most of these students mentioned the need for a greater accountability of social media platforms without, however, limiting freedom of expression, as shown by the following statement:

For example, I'm not big fan about these measures against hate speech because if an individual wants to say what he wants, he should say it. Now, regarding fake news like these that try to pretend to be from real news organisations, I think Facebook might have a role (...) (Male, Group A, Management, UMinho)

Regardless of recognising the need for a more active role of social media companies, for some students it is still confusing to distinguish between news media and social media. In the questionnaires, over a quarter of the respondents answered "Facebook" instead of writing down the name of a news media organisation they use to follow on social media. This reinforces the blurred conceptions of news information in the online sphere. Furthermore, it is important to understand what undergraduates mean by critical thinking and what its significance is for their daily lives in relation to (dis)information.

CRITICAL THINKING IN A FAKE NEWS WORLD

In the questionnaires, the majority of the respondents (80.3%; *n*=534) agrees that being an informed citizen also means being a critical thinker. Drawing on this result, the focus groups' discussions intended to explore what young people understand by critical thinking and what role it plays when students encounter the news. In the sessions, participants primarily stated that critical thinking means questioning the information that is presented to them. This means doubting or being suspicious about its veracity, as opposed to believing faithfully in it, as explained by this student:

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It is essential to have [critical thinking] otherwise anything we have been told, we will accept it as true, and it can be a big lie, as in these examples where we have been seeing half-truths and half-lies. So we should always have critical thinking to not accept everything they give us. (Male, Group E, Aeronautic Engineering, UBI)

From this perspective, it could be argued that despite the fact that fake news spread might impact student trust in online news – as previously mentioned regarding the questionnaires –disinformation can actually reinforce the need for a greater development of critical thinking in order to be an informed citizen. For these students, the dissemination of fake news stresses the importance of critical thinking and calls for a more active role of citizens. As this participant states:

I think this wave of fake news creates another important thing that is people having to take a critical attitude towards the news. Before, people read the news and almost believed in it because they were credible, but now, people have to filter it and to think if it's true or not and analyse it. And I guess that did not happen before. I think there has been a change in the role of the reader. The reader is not only a person who reads and receives information, but also has to play an active and critical role. (Female, Group A, Communication Sciences, UMinho)

Nonetheless, according to the previous statement, there seem to exist a before- and an after-fake-news spread, meaning that before fake news, critical thinking might have appeared less relevant – since information was viewed as more credible or trustworthy –, which denotes a limited understanding of what critical thinking and journalistic discourse actually involve. Though many participants recognised that they lack critical thinking skills about the news, they highlight that it should be fostered in schools, especially in higher education[8]. This is also shared by Communication Sciences undergraduates who claim to possess more developed critical thinking skills than the majority of their colleagues, due to the fact that they are attending this very course. In the focus groups, Communication Sciences students were also more aware of the statement about news as a social construction of reality (Berger and Luckman, 2004), entailing personal values and specific editorial guidelines, as opposed to reflecting reality as considered by the majority of the respondents in the questionnaires (52.8%; *n*=516). This highlights the importance of media education for a better understanding of media contents. Similarly, Vraga and Tully (2016) found out that undergraduates enrolled in media education courses revealed higher levels of media trust and news literacy, and therefore a greater capacity in understanding the impact of media contents.

Even though these undergraduates consider that thinking critically about the news means questioning the information, the findings from the focus groups reveal the existence of different levels of understanding regarding critical thinking skills. These skills were also lacking the most among students who showed little news interest and engagement. For some students, critical thinking means being able to identify underlying powers in media messages, such as political and economic forces. Additionally, it also means being aware of a set of textual and visual elements at the content level, such as checking inconsistent

[8] Students referred to the development of critical thinking skills through media education in Portuguese secondary schools, especially by including it in the programme of a discipline called "Civic Education".

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data, identifying overstatements and sensationalist styles, analysing narratives, identifying stylistic features, and analysing visual elements (visual grammar) and their meaning in media messages. Despite the fact that student understandings of critical thinking are relevant to the studies on news and media literacy, further studies should be conducted in order to evaluate different levels of critical thinking about (dis)information.

CONCLUSION

In this paper we argue that concepts of information and disinformation are not only defined by a functionalist perspective of news and journalism (Peters and Broersma, 2017: 12), but also by what individuals, in this case young people, perceive and value in information, and by their media uses. Therefore, by discussing media and (dis)information with undergraduates, this paper contributes to a better understanding of young people's practices and perceptions of news and disinformation, in a period that was especially marked by fake news spread and a post-truth culture. Even though fake news spread in Portugal had little expression, compared to the US, and in spite of the fact that the sample consists of a specific subpopulation of the Portuguese society – undergraduates –, our findings may add significance to the international panorama in media and education studies.

Regarding the first research question about undergraduate perceptions of (dis) information, our study reveals that despite disclosing a critical perspective about the news and a demand for high quality information, as part of an idealised and socially constructed speech (Buckingham, 2000; Costera Meijer, 2007), students hardly ever verify or question the information they encounter, unless it is about an issue of their interest or discipline. We also found out that the identification of truthfulness/falsehood of the news article was strongly and significantly associated with student undergraduate degrees. In this sense, Communication Sciences students composed the majority of the participants in the focus groups that were able to identify the news article as fake. These students also revealed greater understanding of the news production and analysis, partly due to being more familiar with the subject, which reinforces the need for news and media literacy in early education. Overall, both students in the questionnaires and in the focus groups raised concerns about disinformation in their lives and even though the majority of the focus group participants failed to identify the news article as fake, they were able to describe the motivations for fake news spread, such as political, economic and parody. Furthermore, they describe disinformation as being problematic to society, and, consequently, they feel the need for it to be addressed without compromising freedom of expression. In this regard, combining the literature (Buckingham, 2017; Hannan, 2018; Lazer *et al.*, 2018) with the student comments displayed in the results section, we suggest that the articulation of the following five actions from different fields of society might be beneficial to address the problem of fake news and raise awareness on disinformation:

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(1) From the media and the journalists – by a greater transparency of the news production and sources, and by verifying information before publishing.
(2) *From social media/technology companies* – by adopting a more active role as intermediaries between the media and the public, providing greater transparency of the algorithms' purposes ("black box"), and by developing collaborative mechanisms of self-reporting for the community of users.
(3) *From third-party agencies of fact-checking* – by establishing partnerships with news media organisations and technology companies in order to verify information.
(4) *From regulatory entities* – by supporting journalistic processes and fostering auto and hetero-regulation inside and outside the newsroom.
(5) *From news and media literacy/education* – by fostering news and media literacy under a global perspective (RobbGrieco and Hobbs, 2013) and in a post-truth framework (Mihailidis and Viotty, 2017) in schools and with families.

Regarding the second research question, the questionnaires showed that critical thinking skills are seen by undergraduates as being important to be an informed citizen. This was also confirmed in the focus groups, where students expressed the need for greater critical thinking as an overall skill of questioning information, especially given fake news spread. However, in the focus groups different levels of understanding of critical thinking were identified regarding (dis)information, in which we noticed that Communication Sciences students are more aware of media content meanings. For undergraduates, thinking critically about the news means being able to identify underlying powers or forces in media messages and also identifying a set of textual and visual elements of the news, for instance, noticing data inconsistencies, exaggerated headlines and understanding the style of the narrative. Because participant comments on critical thinking reveal a greater concern in being able to verify information and detect false information, we understand that student perceptions on critical thinking seem to be more aligned with a functionalist or normative framework (Mihailidis and Viotty, 2017), under an American paradigm of news literacy (RobbGrieco and Hobbs, 2013: 22). Though reinforcing the importance of critical thinking in a global paradigm, we agree with a repositioning of news literacy that is more centred in the connection between young people and their daily lives, fostering a sense of community for civic and political participation in a post-fact society (Mihailidis and Viotty, 2017: 11). In this perspective, how can news and media literacy be fostered in schools and families while addressing changing practices and perceptions of (dis) information?

While acknowledging the limitations of the methods used in this paper, we believe our findings provide a basic understanding of the role of (dis)information and critical thinking about the news in the lives of young people. Furthermore, this paper opens the discussion about the impact of disinformation in young people's civic and political participation.

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LAŽNE ILI ISTINITE? PERCEPCIJE STUDENATA PREDDIPLOMSKIH STUDIJA O (DEZ)INFORMACIJAMA I KRITIČKOM RAZMIŠLJANJU

Ana Melro :: Sara Pereira

SAŽETAK *U sve izazovnijem medijskom okruženju tzv. post-istine i lažnih vijesti dezinformacija može utjecati na percepciju mladih ljudi o svijetu. U ovoj studiji nastojimo objasniti na koji način mladi ljudi pristupaju vijestima, kakva je njihova percepcija o dezinformacijama te koliko je, prema njihovu mišljenju, kritičko razmišljanje važno za njihov građanski i politički život. Na temelju analize 562 anketna upitnika koje su ispunili studenti prve godine preddiplomskih studija dvaju portugalskih sveučilišta formirane su fokus-grupe s ukupno 45 sudionika. Rezultati istraživanja pokazuju da studenti, iako priznaju da nedovoljno kritički analiziraju informacije, izražavaju zabrinutost zbog dezinformacija, sugerirajući niz aktivnosti za borbu protiv širenja lažnih vijesti. Nadalje, nalazi potvrđuju potrebu za pojačanom medijskom pismenošću u svijetu post-činjenica.*

KLJUČNE RIJEČI

MLADI LJUDI, DEZINFORMACIJA, LAŽNE VIJESTI, KRITIČKO RAZMIŠLJANJE, MEDIJSKA PISMENOST

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CHALLENGING STEREOTYPES WITH MEDIA AND INFORMATION LITERACY IN MEXICO

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ABSTRACT *Information overload that affects digital natives and other generations in the 21st century makes it difficult for recipients to analyze the information's truthfulness and quality. In this context, items of fake news pass as facts that could be interpreted as true, which may result in serious issues for the social fabric, especially if immersed in unstable or troublesome political and economic contexts. Still, the problem with disinformation is not limited to fake news because, even when content comes from trustworthy sources and verifiable facts, there are filters that present a subjective, biased and deformed reality. Within this context, we are submitting an example of a positive practice in media literacy targeting Research Methodology students at the Faculty of Communication. During this project, students analyzed the way women and men are shown on the cover of a local printed newspaper* El Porvenir *in the city of Monterrey, Mexico. In broad strokes, the results found a preference for stories showcasing men and stereotypes that place men in the public sphere and women in a private domain.*

KEYWORDS

MIL, FAKE NEWS, TRUSTWORTHY SOURCE, NEWS ARTICLES, GENDER STEREOTYPES, BIASED INFORMATION

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INTRODUCTION

The premise that says "more information does not mean better information" is no longer up for discussion – instead, it suggests the paradox of disinformation. The risks of a misinformed society are serious and do not come solely from fake news published by dubious sources. The sources we consider trustworthy, those which provide "real" news, can give us a biased or partial view of reality in both traditional and digital media by showing half-truths and presenting an incomplete, and even biased, reality.

From the perspective of journalism, the expression 'fake news' cannot be translated literally. In effect, if news is false, it is not news, because in journalism, in principle, there is no false news, so much so that one of the rules is – verification of the facts before publication. However, the expression covers several categories – fraudulent or fragile news; false information (generally with forged sources), manipulated, adulterated or manufactured or 'planted' (with the intention of deceiving) (...) old news; sensationalism (typical of tabloids) lies, makeup, rumors, alternative events *etc*. - all of which threaten the quality of journalism (Parreira, 2019: 92).

In case of social networks, this verification is not a condition due to the fact that a person who produces some content is not necessarily a professional journalist and can be any citizen with access to technology that has an account on social networks and desires to communicate his or her thoughts. This freedom of production and dissemination of content allows social networks to disseminate all types of content that can be false, manipulated, adulterated or planted (based on the above definitions).

Fake news is not a new phenomenon, unlike the extent to which it can be reproduced on social networks. "The fact that the concept of 'fake news' has been adopted in a number of languages indicates the importance of this phenomenon. The loss of centrality of the source, 'viralization', etc. - often diminish interest in the veracity of the news and the critical reading abilities to identify the false. Due to the fact that large proportions of population are registered on social networks, these issues have very direct political consequences, as it was seen in several recent events (Fernández-García, 2017: 66). Recently, it has been called 'post-truth', a concept that was selected by the Oxford Dictionary as 'the international word of the year 2016'. The same dictionary defined it as "the circumstances in which the objective facts influence less in the formation of public opinion those that refer to emotions and personal beliefs" (*ibid.*: 67). "It is a falsehood that continues to be accepted even knowing that it is a false, which does not prevent decisions based on it" (*ibid.*: 67).

In this sense, citizens with media education must have, develop and use competencies to differentiate false from truthful information; detect biases; analyze the context in which the message is being transmitted; classify the source; check and compare the information against other trustworthy sources; and, if needed, spread only the information they have analyzed with these competencies, always keeping in mind the importance of showing respect to all the parties involved in this complicated communication process.

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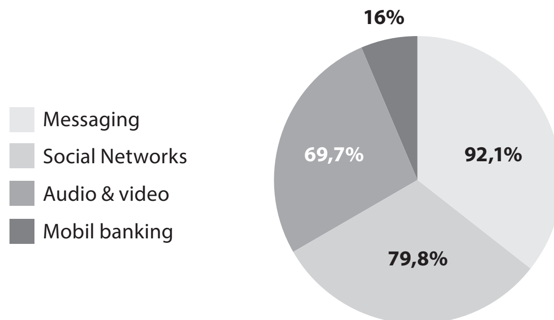
Today, developing these competencies has become essential because, since the printing press first appeared, we have never had so much information available and so much technology to access it easily. Having a mobile device connected to the Internet is more than enough for a user to, literally, access all the information in the world. Even though the problem for Media Education does not circumscribe to digitally-broadcast content, it is important to stress that information overload is indeed caused by the technological advances in digital communication and the Internet, which, in the late 2010s, is represented by a boom of smartphone technologies.

Cheaper and more accessible than a couple of decades ago, smartphones have revolutionized the process of human communication. These devices have combined communication models that needed unique and different processes and channels, such as: interpersonal, group, public and mass communication (Cantú *et al.*, 2009). With these four communication processes now integrated in one communication channel, the economically active population of the 21st century has a more immediate access to even more, and frequently free, information.

For example, in 2016, 64.9% of Mexico's population had Internet access, which equaled 71.3 million users. By 2017, 72.2% of the population aged 6 and older used a cell phone, and 80% of this population used a smartphone, which was also the most frequently mentioned device for connecting to the Internet, showing a preference of 89.7%. These same Internet users chose, with a lower percentage of preference, other devices to connect to the Web, such as PCs, smart TVs, Video Game Consoles, and Tablets (INEGI, SCT and IFT, 2018).



▲ *Figure 1.*
Apps installed by smartphone users in Mexico (2017).
Source: INEGI SCT, and IFT, 2018[1]

With these numbers, as shown in Figure 1., we can easily see, as mentioned earlier, how cellular devices merge interpersonal communication (one-on-one using direct voice

[1] Information based on 36.4 million people according to INEGI's nationwide survey in 49 Mexican cities in rural and urban regions (INEGI, SCT, and IFT, 2018).

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calls or personal messages), small-groups communication (a limited number of people in a group getting in touch simultaneously and with certain order), public communication (forums, blogs) and even mass communication (news and advertisement from diverse sources), as well as many other activities added every day to these devices.

This is how the massification of Internet use brought about an overload in information sent and received by users and how it also changed the roles of issuers and recipients, who in turn have become spreaders of information not created by them.

In a context of public communication instead of personal, and according to their origin, we identified in this analysis two types of messages in information overload:

a. Formal Messages that transmit information created by traditional communication media such as press, radio and television and based on a source acknowledged as official or authoritative.

b. Informal Messages that transmit entertainment, social commentary, derisive or thought-provoking content based on images, videos, and short messages without an identifiable source

Both types of messages are, or could be, the spark that sets the decision-making process of the average citizen in motion. These types of messages may influence decisions such as:

>who to vote for in the next election?
>how to invest for retirement?
>where to live?
>who to trust?
>what position to have regarding immigrants, senior citizens, non-cisgender people, poor and rich people, women, or children?
>whether to accept the anonymous challenges in social media?
>whether to share the information received over social media from contacts or groups?

Even when these situations represent a small sample, they affect society's sustainable development. Is getting a lot of positive or negative information regarding a politician sufficient to define a person's position and a person's vote? How many people really think that more information means greater knowledge?

In order to have a diagnostic view of the stance of social media users on information they receive, we applied a 24-item questionnaire on a sample of 40 people. Participants were 66.6% female and 33.3% male; 75% had a bachelor's degree and 16.6% had a master's degree. Therefore, we assume it is a population with greater MIL competencies. In this sample, 73.9% said that memes should be 'funny' to merit sharing while options like 'human value' and 'general interest' scored 13% each.

It is not a statistically representative sample, but the instrument's pilot exercise, which will be applied massively in the second phase.

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Regarding the question "Do you think the news you get on events and facts are true?" there was a balance in contradictory positions since 41.6% answered "almost always real" and 45% answered "seldomly real". In other words, a significant percentage of people, notwithstanding the fact that they have obtained academic degrees, do not question the source and credibility of the information they get. In this sample, only 39.1% said they "seldomly" checked the information they got, 34.7% said they "always" did, while 26% said "almost always".

The paradox of disinformation, as seen in this small sample, transcends gender and academic degree. Therefore, it is important for the governments of different countries to work on Public Policies for Media Literacy. However, this effort is not easy. The first problem we see is the definition of the concept, which can be: Media Education (ME), Media and Information Literacy (MIL), Computer Literacy and Digital Literacy (Frau-Meigs *et al.*, 2017), among others. Even when all these concepts have their own goals and characteristics, we need to integrate and direct the competencies deriving from each of them, as directed by the European Union in 2007, into a Media Literacy that gives people: "the ability to access, understand, and critically assess different aspects of their contents, as well as to establish ways to communicate in diverse contexts" (Frau-Meigs *et al.*, 2017).

To promote the development of media literacy competencies, countries have different players, as pointed out by Divina Frau-Meigs *et al.* (2017) in the book *Public Policies in Media and Information Literacy in Europe, cross-country Comparisons* which included the analysis of 28 countries in the European Union. These players were identified as: partnerships outside, regulation media authorities, private sector, civil society organization, youth participation, professional organization of specific events and overlapping structures.

Meanwhile, the strategies to develop media literacy competencies range from including them via formal education at basic and upper education institutions, to non-formal education through government campaigns and other actions carried out by the above-mentioned players. In Mexico, there is content supporting MIL at every level in the education sector. We can find, for example, computer courses developing technical competencies on how to use a PC and different software; there are also comprehensive training courses that, without having been specifically created for media literacy, strengthen the competencies needed for MIL.

In this context, Mexico's current Secretary of Education, Esteban Garza Moctezuma, said that Civics and Humanism are essential courses for preserving a healthy social fabric:

In this new stage in the country's public education, Civics and Humanism are two of the courses in the New Mexican School's curriculum that aim to prepare citizens for life through comprehensive development, helping them be ready for coexisting and not just ready for work (Ministry of Public Education, 2019).

Regarding non-formal education, Mexico's Government also carries out other actions to promote Public Policies that support the rights of audiences. This is the case of the Federal Telecommunications Institute (IFT[2]), which was created in 2013 to make sure

[2] The Federal Telecommunications Institute's acronym in Spanish

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the concessionaries of the country's media respect the following guidelines: (Federal Telecommunications Institute, n.d., section II of The Rights of Audiences in its Article 5, pages 7 to 9):

I. Human rights, the greater need of children, and gender equality
II. Content free of discrimination
V. Broadcast shows promoting family integration, sustainable development, the spread of technical and scientific knowledge, and the accurate use of language.
XI. Truthful and timely information.
XXIV. Set mechanisms and programs to promote and contribute to media literacy.

Article 5 also highlights how important it is for audiences to receive content where they can clearly tell what is news and what are the host's opinions; as well as differentiate advertisement from content and, as the document states, avoid broadcasting "advertising or propaganda passing as news or reporters' work" (IFT, n.d., Article 5/XVI, page 9).

By creating the IFT, Mexico has taken a major step towards creating new public policies focusing on the promotion of diverse laws and regulations, such as policies supporting and defending audiences, but the challenge remains to understand how citizens can really exert this right.

Aware that education is the best way to achieve media literacy, this paper analyzes an example of positive MIL practices in the framework of formal education at a bachelor's degree level. We specifically show the strategy used for students of the Universidad Autónoma de Nuevo León's Faculty of Communication Sciences to develop competencies to become an active audience. This experience is part of the Research Methodology for Communication Sciences course, where we transversally teach the scientific method and the Lines of Knowledge Generation as set by the professor in charge of the course, which in our case are MIL and Gender Studies Lines.

The problem presented to the students was based on Article 5, paragraph I from the document called *General Guidelines for the Rights of Audiences* (IFT, n.d.), which includes gender equality. The specific problem was to analyze the roles males and females play in the cover of a local paper in the city of Monterrey, Mexico, based on gender stereotypes.

To carry out this analysis, undergraduate students supported their research on Communication Sciences theories and on documents covering the State of the Domestic and International Arts. Once the theoretical framework was set, students worked with the assigned methodology and then presented their results and conclusions based on the established hypotheses and assumptions as well as on the research questions. In this sense and this order, this paper honors the information covered by the students under the guidance of this paper's authors, as a positive MIL practice experience.

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PROBLEM STATEMENT

In society, and through the years, women have always been placed in an inferior position to men and, consequently, they have been victims of labor inequality, lack of job opportunities, and even physical abuse. The progress of science and technology fosters new knowledge. It would seem obvious that equality in the rights of women and men should move forward shoulder to shoulder to favor a fair balance, but we do not see this happening at the same rate as technological and scientific growth. Mass media, in their traditional and digital formats, are involved in the promotion of this imbalance, this lack of equality in the rights and obligations of women and men; sometimes by manipulating the information they publish, sometimes by projecting gender stereotypes on actors of their content, strongly tipping the scales towards women for the worse.

The reality of the world received by audiences is one chosen by the editors and CEOs of the media. They are the ones choosing which items of news are more relevant, the tone in which they are presented (satirically, ironically, supporting or undermining the event they cover), which actors are more relevant between women and men, and how these actors are shown in the news.

The research's general and specific questions arose from this position.

General Question:

>How are men and women showcased on the cover of a free, printed newspaper in Monterrey, Mexico?

Specific Questions:

>What is the ratio of news showcasing men and women on the cover of a local free, printed newspaper in Monterrey, Mexico?

>What is the space in square inches occupied by images of men and women on the cover stories of this newspaper?

>Which stereotypes are present for men and women on the cover stories of this newspaper?

The following are the hypotheses and assumptions for this research:

>Men are shown in a better light and with higher reputation while women are shown in inferior roles and, sometimes, they are absent.

>The number of items of news showcasing men as the main subject is greater than those showcasing women.

>The space of text in square inches showcasing men is greater than the space showcasing women on the cover stories of the newspaper.

>News includes content with gender stereotypes.

>Gender stereotypes in the news show gender inequality.

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RESEARCH PROBLEM'S CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

This research is based on Gender and Communication theories, as shown below.

Gender Theories

The gender theory arose as a counterpart to the biological theory; it deals with a social construct that we can modify so that women and men can coexist while remaining different and of equal value. Marta Lamas (1999), a Mexican feminist, defines the gender concept as: "the set of ideas, representation, practices, and social prescriptions developed by culture from the anatomical difference of sexes, to symbolize and build socially what is proper of men (the masculine) and what is proper of women (the feminine)," (Lamas, 1999: 84).

In this sense, masculine and feminine traits are not inherent to the reproductive organs, but they are to the social construct deriving from the social imaginary of those organs. Thus, the concept of gender asserts that the characteristics allocated to sex come from the cultural context and not from nature. We are saying then that we decide what these characteristics should be based on our perception of what each society and culture think men and women should be. Therefore, these characteristics may change from one culture to another. The characteristics of what men and women are, and should be, thus become stereotypes.

From the perspective of social psychology, as stated by Pascaline Gaborit (2009), a stereotype has a neutral meaning because it allows for an internal restructuring of the world where "the stereotype is the action through which a person is associated to a particular category," (Brawn, R. 1995, as cited in Gaborit 2009). Yet, when we speak about gender stereotypes, the word stereotype loses its neutrality and becomes a scarlet letter where women are branded with the most negative and less favorable of the categories defining human beings.In this sense, when a stereotype is the way we rationalize the extreme beliefs associated to the behavior or characteristics of certain persons or groups (Allport, G.W. 1954, as cited in Gaborit 2009), it becomes a social imaginary that leads to gender discrimination in a relationship of power where women are submissive or dominated and men are dominant physically, financially, socially and in all spheres of power such as politics, sports or religion.

To analyze the study case proposed in this paper, it is important for us to define the concept of sexism; according to Morgade (2001, page 11, as cited by Araya, 2005): "It is a form of discrimination because, just as other forms of discrimination, it is a practice that tends to pigeonhole people in imposed parameters". These parameters affect both men and women, but tend to favor men, placing women in inferiority, as mentioned before.

Within this context, the idea of gender is built upon social perceptions. And these perceptions, as culturally stereotyped by mass media, generate behaviors.

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Communication Theories

The goal of knowledge is truth, and we expect formal mass media such as press, radio, television – at least in their informative function – to deliver that truth to audiences who, in turn, cast their vote of confidence and credibility to the opinion leaders in different news spaces. Working with the assumption that media does not show the truth, students supported the research problem on the 'gatekeeper theory', which had in Kurt Lewin one of its most important supporters in the 1970s (Lozano, 2007). This theory follows a positivist empirical vision and an analysis of how newspapers editors "chose certain news and dismissed others," (Lozano, 2007: 34); which supports the fact that audiences, or readers, get only partial information on reality.

A weakness of this theory is the fact that it minimizes the information selection process to simple personal or arbitrary decisions of editors. Thus, other and more complex studies were developed, such as *The Sociology of the Production of Messages*. This research trend from the mid-1970s – with representatives such as Shoemaker and Reese (1991), Mauro Wolf (1987), Jesús María Aguirre (1992), and Michael Shudson (1997) – included the analysis of more complex variables such as factors organizations cannot control: media policies, the financial and ideological systems of the context, and others; and internal factors *e.g.* the communicators' personal attitudes and values (Lozano, 2007).

The research exercise carried out by students of the Faculty of Communication did not contemplate analyzing the causes or effect of the selection of the information published by the newspaper because the goal was for students to observe whether this selection had an effect on the roles of men and women on the newspaper's cover page. Next, we will describe the methodology we used to carry out this project.

METHODOLOGY FRAMEWORK

The research problem came from three specific goals, the first two focused on observing and measuring quantitively the spaces on the newspaper's cover showcasing men and women and the third goal aimed to analyze abstract qualities, as shown in Figure 2. Therefore, we worked with a mixed method that allowed researchers to have a "crossing of approaches" (Lincoln and Gubba, 2000 as cited in Hernández *et al.*, 2006), thus providing a holistic view for the issue.

In the mixed method, the qualitative vision gives the issue a better understanding, complexity and depth, while the quantitative vision strengthens the analysis of the frequency, amplitude, and magnitude (Creswell, 2005, as cited by Hernández *et al.*, 2006). The integrating strategy we used corresponds to the supplementary mixed method, also called 'parallel design method', because it was deemed as the best fitting to the problem and the most appropriate rationally (Creswell, 2005, as cited by Hernández *et al.*, 2006). This parallel design let us contrast the qualitative and the quantitative results, combining the advantages of both processes.

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Quantitative objectives	**Quantitative variables**
>Identity the ratio of news showcasing men and women on the cover of a local, free printed newspaper in Monterrey, Mexico >Learn how much space in square inches is devoted to images of men and women on the cover stories of the newspaper	>Number of notes on the cover >Number of cm2 of notes >Amount of cm2 in images
Qualitative objectives	**Qualitative variables**
>Identity the gender stereotypes for men and women present on the cover notes of this newspaper	>Male gender stereotypes >Female gender stereotypes

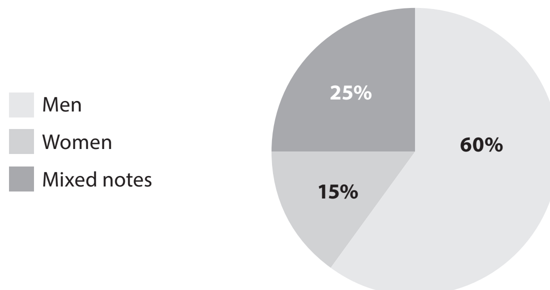
▲*Figure 2.*
Justification of the Mixed Method.

We used the content analysis technique and observation grids for both quantitative and qualitative data. We chose a freely distributed local newspaper *El Porvenir* in Monterrey, Mexico. The sample consisted of the cover pages of the newspaper during the period of one month (March to April 2015), which resulted in the analysis of twelve cover pages. We chose a printed newspaper over a digital one for this exercise because the format made it easier for students to perform a quantitative analysis of the data.

CONTENT ANALYSIS RESULTS

The first research question was: "What is the ratio of news showcasing men and women on the cover of a local, free newspaper *El Porvenir* in Monterrey, Mexico?

Systematically, the newspaper we examined had four stories on the cover. Therefore, we analyzed 48 stories. As it can be seen in Figure 3, a significant space was dedicated to men.



▲*Figure 3.*
Ratio of news showcasing men and women
in a local printed newspaper in Monterrey, Mexico.

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This first result shows an enormous advantage for men: they were showcased as the main subject in 29 cover stories out of 48 in the month's total. Meanwhile, only seven of them showcased women as the main subject in the same period.

The second resesearch question was: "What is the space in square inches for images of men and women on the newspaper's cover stories?"

The results showed that from a total of 316.51 square inches of images analyzed on the newspaper's cover, 272.65 square inches showed men, while women were present in just 43.86 square inches. This clearly shows a tremendous inequality in terms of the size of images devoted to the two sexes.

Table 1. **Presence of men and women in the images on the cover page of a local, printed newspaper in Monterrey, Mexico**

Men	Women	Total
272.65 sq. in.	43.86 sq. in.	316.51 sq.in.
86.14%	13.85%	99.99%

The qualitative question was: "Which stereotypes of men and women are shown in the cover stories of a local, printed newspaper in Monterrey, Mexico?"

It was established that in the twelve issues collected during the month-long observation, and according to the definition and stereotypes set in the theoretical framework, the following labels were used for stereotypes applicable to men: authoritarian, argumentative, decisive, satisfied, possessive. For women, students identified fewer labels: submissive, vulnerable, and protective. The categories that constitute stereotypes emerged as a result of the qualitative analysis of the pages in an exercise in 'grounded theory' (Lincoln and Gubba, 2000, as cited in Hernandez *et al.*, 2006).

For stereotypes applicable to men, students identified connotations that presuppose a domination of the public sphere by males, as seen in *Figure 4*.

In their own words, students who carried out this investigation asserted:

The number of stereotypes we found for women were nominal and, unfortunately, none of them depicted women in a different light; all the stereotypes used for women imply they are still seen as weaker in comparison to men. From seven cover stories in a month, four depict women as submissive, one as vulnerable, and two as protective.

As shown in Figure 5., we concluded that these stereotypes placed women definitively in the private sphere.

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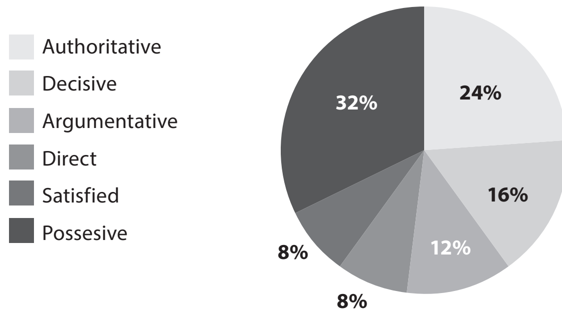
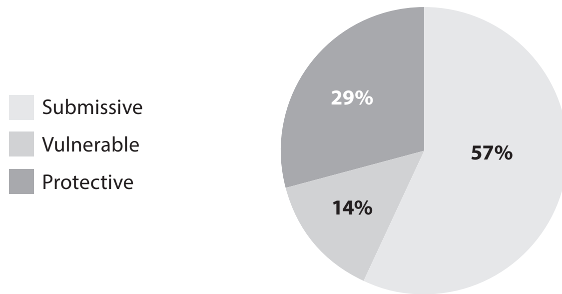


▲ *Figure 4.*
Stereotypes applicable to men in the cover stories of a local, printed newspaper in Monterrey, Mexico.



▲ *Figure 5.*
Stereotypes applicable to women found in the cover stories of a local, printed newspaper in Monterrey, Mexico.

FINAL RECOMMENDATIONS AND DELIBERATIONS

Media literacy education is a joint responsibility of the governments, families, societies, educational institutions, and other organizations. As seen from the viewpoint of formal education, both managers and teachers should implement specific actions that foster the development of MIL competencies in the curricula of the different educational plans, and at every educational level. Although it is important to have learning units that specifically address media literacy, teachers have the responsibility to permeate this topic transversally to every course, linking the development of these competencies to the work we do with our students in and outside our classrooms. Likewise, teachers who also carry out research work should guide the application of the scientific method on issues concerning our own areas of knowledge and following a MIL context.

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Digital natives cannot conceive a world without the information they get from the Internet on diverse devices and over different platforms. Therefore, it is essential for them to have the ability to discern truthful from false information; but they also, as we saw in the exercise we presented, need to tell apart and give a meaning to the filters over which that information is transmitted. It was very satisfying for the authors to read the students' comments:

We realize the theory we chose supports our goal and the research question (Kurt Lewin's Gatekeeper Theory, *1947), which states that mass media exert great influence over the public by choosing which stories are newsworthy and how much space and relevance they get. These lines are enough to make clear the newspaper we analyzed is more interested in presenting news that showcase men instead of women.*

We concluded that the stereotypes applicable to men and women, as shown on the cover of the newspaper we studied, represent a broader form of inequality for women and that these stories foster more interest for the growth of men than for the growth of women; therefore, we accept our hypothesis.

The participation of women compared to that of men on the cover stories of the newspaper is negligible, it does not promote equality, and continue to depict the stereotypes that have applied for men and women for centuries; therefore, there is not any sort of equality among the sexes on the cover of the printed newspaper we studied for a month and, thus, the expected trend is for the newspaper to carry on depicting the same form of inequality in each of its issues.

Students also included important elements of media literacy in the recommendations they made for this project. The following is a selection:

Regarding theory and practice.

>Monitor the proposed problem.
>Foster equality in all the media, especially among those who write for printed newspapers.
>Provide writers with basic training to help foster a healthy coexistence and gender equality at work and in their writings.
>Carry out annual research on the matter and check the progress made on equality.

Regarding methodology.

>We recommend improving this research problem in the future by creating experimental quantitative studies.

Lastly, the authors suggest students introduce these types of academic activities that link different areas of knowledge with MIL in extra-curricular contexts such as forums and conferences within and outside academia as well as in informal contexts, such as neighborhood meetings, conferences for vulnerable groups, and, of course, among their relatives and friends.

Knowledge does not wear out and it enriches the lives of those who give it and those who receive it. Knowledge is a resource that supports the sustainable development of our planet. Let us keep promoting generations of students and their use of knowledge.

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MEDIJSKA I INFORMACIJSKA PISMENOST U SLUŽBI PROPITIVANJA STEREOTIPA U MEKSIČKIM DNEVNIM NOVINAMA

Julieta Flores Michel :: Margarita Emilia González Treviño :: Alma Elena Gutiérrez Leyton

SAŽETAK *Pretrpanost informacijama, koja pogađa ne samo digitalne urođenike nego i digitalne pridošlice, čini proces provjere istinitosti i kvalitete informacija sve složenijim. Zbog toga se često događa da lažne vijesti prolaze kao činjenice koje se interpretiraju kao istina. To može rezultirati ozbiljnim problemima za društveno tkivo, osobito ako se društva nalaze u nestabilnim političkim i gospodarskim kontekstima. Ipak, problemi s dezinformacijama nisu ograničeni samo na lažne vijesti jer, čak i kada sadržaj dolazi iz vjerodostojnih izvora i provjerljivih činjenica, postoje filtri koji predstavljaju subjektivnu, pristranu i deformiranu stvarnost. U ovom radu predstavljamo primjer pozitivne prakse s područja medijske pismenosti usmjeren na studente koji pohađaju kolegij Metodologija istraživanja na Fakultetu komunikacijskih znanosti u Monterreyu, u Meksiku. Studenti su analizirali kako se žene i muškarce prikazuje na naslovnicama jednih lokalnih tiskanih dnevnih novina u Monterreyu. Rezultati istraživanja pokazuju usmjerenost prema pričama koje u prvi plan stavljaju muškarce te ih stereotipno prikazuju u javnoj sferi, a žene u privatnoj.*

KLJUČNE RIJEČI

MIP, LAŽNE VIJESTI, VJERODOSTOJNI IZVORI, NOVINSKI PRILOZI, RODNI STEREOTIPI, PRISTRANE INFORMACIJE

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DIGITAL MEDIA LITERACY, SCHOOL AND CONTEMPORARY PARENTING

Lana Ciboci :: Danijel Labaš

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ABSTRACT *Today's societies live in a world where the media construct reality, which also affects each individual media user. Children and their parents spend most of their time with digital media and contents. Therefore, researchers emphasize the importance of digital literacy of media users. They analyse new phenomena, challenges and risks associated with the anthropological, cognitive and social development of children and young people. An important role in media and digital education is played not only by teachers and schools, but also by parents and family. The aim of this paper is to present and analyse the theoretical approaches to digital media literacy, so-called digital parenting, and to interpret the results of the latest research in Croatia devoted to the digital habits of parents, their attitudes towards parental mediation strategies as well as to their satisfaction with the programmes of media literacy in the education system.*

KEYWORDS

MEDIA LITERACY, DIGITAL LITERACY, CHILDREN, PARENTS, MEDIATION STRATEGIES

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INTRODUCTION

The fact is that today's children "live mediatized childhoods and it is no longer possible to contemplate children's social and cultural worlds without considering the role played by the media" (Pereira, 2013: 172), especially by new digital media (Elea and Miklos, 2017). In fact, the media have an enormous impact on societies and people's lives. Therefore, there is a huge concern about the impact of digital technologies not only on children's lives, but also on the everyday lives of families as Sara Pereira stated when questioning if the introduction of more technology can really lead to better childhoods or even to better human relations.

Mascheroni and Pasquali (2013) state that "Digital media have become a pervasive component of children's lives in contemporary Western societies: children grow up in a convergent media ecology (Ito, 2009, according to Mascheroni and Pasquali, 2013: 84), whereby a variety of everyday practices – self-expression, sociability, learning, games, cultural consumption, *etc*. (Turkle, 2011: 259) – take place"- Furthermore, the authors claim that, in contrary to what is argued by media panics inspired positions (which emphasize the fear that online, mediated relationships are replacing offine, 'authentic' interactions), "children are integrating the online and the offine" (Livingstone, 2009: 31, according to Mascheroni and Pasquali, 2013: 84) in seeking to develop a coherent projection of the self. In other words, Giovanna Mascheroni and Francesca Pasquali, together with Sonia Livingstone, call for a contextualization of media practices within children's own worlds, keeping in mind that contemporary childhood is increasingly mediated, and the media environments are both changing in late modernity (Livingstone, 2009, according to Mascheroni and Pasquali, 2013: 84) and co-determining each other.

Therefore, "positive and negative aspects of media in children's lives cannot be studied without adding the complexity of everyday life. Children have the ability to communicate across cultural borders and they have access to participate in borderless media cultures. Depending on the content and what sense it makes to children we can discuss benefits or losses for the individual user" (Sundin, 2013: 18), and make an analysis of the complex research area of children media use and parents' relation to it.

On the other hand, the new digital environment raises new questions because "the information era has brought about new literacies" (Torres and Mercado, 2006: 260), and one of the most important literacies in the 21st century in our digital societies is critical digital media literacy, which includes not only the possibility of having access to the media, but also – even to a significantly greater extent – the capacity to analyse, to evaluate and to create media contents (Aufderheide, 2013; Buckingham, 2005; Livingstone, 2003; Masterman, 1985, according to Tilleul *et al*., 2015: 76). Divina Frau-Meigs writes: "Since the advent of Web 2.0, Media and Information Literacy (MIL) is facing a new mutation, as interactivity and the Internet of things create a sense of augmentation of online activities, and as the industrial lobbies pressure governments in favour of computer literacy. This pressure is not problematic *per se*, but implies the digital affordances as they affect information under its various definitions (code, data, document, news)" (Frau-Meigs, 2015: 13).

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However, what have these changes and developments in the digital media world brought to the audiences – to children, youth, adults, teachers and parents? Several diverse studies (Lemish and Götz, 2017; Blades *et al*., 2014; Kirsh, 2006) have presented various open questions, problems, risks and even dangers, such as manipulation, violence, fake news, disinformation, propaganda, loss of interpersonal relationships, sensationalism, stereotypes *etc*.

For this reason, in this paper we will present and analyze the results of the first national research project on children's digital habits and attitudes of parents on media literacy in Croatia.

NEW EDUCATIONAL CHALLENGES: FROM LONELINESS AND INTERNET ADDICTION TO DIGITAL DEMENTIA

There is a great discrepancy in the development, but also the recognized importance of media education among European countries. While in some countries the importance of media literacy has been fully recognized by the state that included it in the education system a long time ago, in other countries media education has just begun to develop (Ciboci, 2018). In Croatia, on the issue of the development of media education policy, little has been done since the attainment of state independence in 1991 (Kanižaj and Car, 2015: 23). As Nada Zgrabljić Rotar (2005) points out, civic associations in Croatia are paying more attention to media literacy, which "should be included in all levels of the Croatian education system in the modern concept" due to the fact that within the framework of the curriculum at that time media literacy was present "only as much as it is interesting for teachers within the Croatian language in elementary schools, without appropriate literature and methodology" (Erjavec and Zgrabljić, 2000, according to Zgrabljić Rotar, 2005: 37). Karmen Erjavec also writes that at that time media education "in the Croatian school system was still at the beginning", and that it was mostly limited to film education (Erjavec, 2005: 98). Today's state of media education in Croatia has not changed much. The biggest changes are foreseen by the curricular reform that is currently under way in Croatia, which will be described in more detail below. For instance, more emphasis is put on the changes in communication that were primarily brought about by the usage of digital media.

The author of *Second Self* (1984) and *Life on the Screen* (1995) Sherry Turkle, in her book *Alone Together* (2011), has raised more questions about our interpersonal relationships in communication by asking how computers are changing us as people (Turkle, 2011: X) and why we expect more from technology and less from each other. She does not agree that computers and new digital devices, such as smartphones, iPods, iPads and tablets, are "just tools", adding that people are shaped by the tools they use. The focus of her research on networking was on the young. However, she also spoke with adults who gave her "insight into how the network is changing parenting and communications patterns" (Turkle, 2011: XIII). She underlines that the technology is seductive and that digital connections and "the sociable robot may offer the illusion of companionship without the demands of

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friendship. Our networked life allows us to hide from each other, even as we are tethered to each other. We'd rather text than talk" (Turkle, 2011: 1). In the case of children, she is concerned about their getting comfortable with the idea that a robot's companionship is even close to a replacement for a person, and because teenagers believe that "texting is always better than talking", some of them "comment that it would be good to learn how to have a conversation 'sometime, but not now'" (Turkle, 2011: 65). According to her, the Japanese "take as a given that cell phones, texting, instant messaging, email, and online gaming have created social isolation. They see people turning away from family to focus attention on their screens. People do not meet face to face; they do not join organizations. In Japan, robots are presented as facilitators of human contact that the network has taken away", but there is an open problem: "Robots, which enchant us into increasingly intense relationships with the inanimate, are here proposed as a cure for our too intense immersion in digital connectivity" (Turkle, 2011: 146-147). Therefore, people love their new technologies of connection because "they have made parents and children feel more secure and have revolutionized business, education, scholarship, and medicine", they have changed how we date and how we travel, and "beyond all of this, connectivity offers new possibilities for experimenting with identity and, particularly in adolescence, the sense of a free space, which Erik Erikson called the *moratorium*. (...) Turkle (2011: 152) claims that "real life does not always provide this kind of space, but the Internet does", and warns that "virtual places offer connection with uncertain claims to commitment" (Turkle, 2011: 153). Moreover, the author adds that anxiety is part of the new connectivity (Turkle, 2011: 242). Indeed, more and more people live in what has been called "postfamilial families": "Their members are alone together, each in their own rooms, each on a networked computer or mobile device. We go online because we are busy but end up spending more time with technology and less with each other. We defend connectivity as a way to be close, even as we effectively hide from each other" (Turkle, 2011: 280-281).

Furthermore, teenagers complain that parents do not take their eyes off their phones at dinner and that they bring their phones to school sporting events. "Parents say they are ashamed of such behaviour but quickly get around to explaining, if not justifying, it", adding that they are more stressed than ever and they complain that their employers require them to be constantly online. Finally, parents admit that "their devotion to their communications devices exceeds all professional expectations" (Turkle, 2011: 164), which means that they have some signs of (new) media or Internet addiction (Carlisle *et al.*, 2016; Weinstein *et al.*, 2014) .

In accordance with Turkle's view, Laura Perdew asserts that, "in today's digital world, there seems to be a thin line between technology use and abuse. Many people's Internet habits may seem excessive: sleeping with a smartphone under the pillow, texting one person while having a face-to-face conversation with another, or tweeting from a funeral. But some people cross that thin line even one step further, going from Internet use and abuse to Internet addiction" (Perdew, 2014: 25; Young and Nabuco de Abreu, 2011). In addition to the aforementioned problems with addiction, the problem of obesity, insomnia, hyperactivity or memory problems are often associated with children's use of the media. To these effects, one must add effects of phone addiction by children and

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young people who are neglecting face-to-face communication and conversations (Turkle, according Perdew, 2014: 52-56), and the loss of privacy by "sharing too much" on social networks and in "virtual life" (Perdew, 2014: 57-65).

German neuroscientist Manfred Spitzer coined a new term regarding users of new digital technology: "digital dementia" (Spitzer, 2018), with which he describes an overuse of digital technology resulting in the breakdown of cognitive abilities. Writing on digital dementia, Spitzer starts with studies conducted by Korean researchers who recorded "a significant increase in the number of disorders of memory, attention and concentration as well as emotional and general perception by young people. They described this clinical picture as digital dementia" (Spitzer, 2018: 8).

Another problem raised by Spitzer is multitasking activity performed by children and youth today connected with attention and concentration disorder (Spitzer, 2018: 212-224). As Turkle writes, years ago, there were some "idealizations when it became clear that networked computers facilitated human multitasking. Educators were quick to extol the virtues of doing many things at once: it was how the future wanted us to think. Now we know that multitasking degrades performance on everything we try to accomplish. We will surely continue to multitask, deciding to trade optimum performance for the economies of doing many things at once. But online multitasking, like online reading, can be a useful choice without inspiring a heroic narrative" (Turkle, 2011: 242).

In our modern context, it is a fact that new media and new digital technologies are a challenge in education topics, because new technology can lead to new open questions, challenges, risks and even addiction (Perdew, 2014: 25; Lin and Lei, 2015; Li *et al.*, 2015). On the one hand, at the anthropological level, it can be seen that the new media can harm human relationships and direct interpersonal communication, as Turkle and Spitzer write (Turkle, 2011; Spitzer, 2018. On the other hand, the fact is that children and young people, being socialized by the media (Spitzer, 2018: 104-123), have developed ways of using the media that are completely different from those used by their parents. They do not distinguish between "the world" and "the world of the media". They are children in the world of the Internet and the Internet is part of their "real-virtual" world. However, research that has shown that adolescents are active and self-confident media users, also warns of their marked naivety (hrkids.online, 2018; Buckingham, 2000). The Internet today strongly influences its users and their thinking, but also has influence on their own personality. The problems mentioned by different scholars and researchers related to the use of media, especially of the Internet by children and youth, are: exposure of children to violence and inappropriate content because of the impossibility of legal regulation of all Internet sites, but also the alienation of children, cyberbullying, violence, sexualisation and addiction (hrkids.online, 2018; Young and Nabuco de Abreu, 2011). Keeping in mind that children and youths are increasingly surrounded by the media, we cannot ignore their influence on the behaviour and performance of these children and youths. Furthermore, on the basis of the aforementioned studies by various researchers, we have to think of digital media literacy as a valid, useful and necessary educational key for the future of education in schools and in families, not just for children and youths, but for teachers and parents, too.

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DIGITAL MEDIA LITERACY AS EDUCATION KEY

The thesis that digital media literacy is a valid educational key for the future of education in schools and in families, as mentioned before, is confirmed by Sonia Livingstone and Julian Sefton-Green. They write that "some of the ways in which digitally networked, convergent technologies have entered people's ordinary lives may facilitate socially progressive change – supporting youth participation and creative and learning opportunities and providing resources designed for disadvantaged groups. At the same time, there is reason to fear that those same technologies are, with perhaps grater force, being actively reinvented by powerful elites to ensure that political and commercial logics dominate. However, in drawing attention to technologies in this way, we emphasize that they gain their meaning through particular practices and contexts of design and use" (Livingstone and Sefton-Green, 2016: 5). Continuing this reflexion, they add that "it is not just digital technologies that make for change between the present and previous generations – many other changes have shaped the possibilities for and influences on young people in recent decades, and these changes have been more thoroughly researched and theorized", which will be demonstrated by some of the results of the studies we are going to present and to analyse later in this article, aiming to reveal the habits of using the media by children, young people and their parents. In the aforementioned paper, Livingstone and Sefton-Green aim to answer "abstract historical and sociological questions with the everyday experiences of our class", investigating some points of living in Late Modernity (Livingstone and Sefton-Green, 2016: 23-26), "in which the contrary forces of socio-technological innovation and the reproduction of traditional structures (the school, the family, social class) threaten to pull young people in different directions" (Livingstone and Sefton-Green, 2016: 11). In their research, conducted over the course of one year with 28 teenagers at home, at school, with their friends and online, they discovered that the media "– both mass and networked – were heavily implicated in the domestic settings of values, emotions, and identities" (Livingstone and Sefton-Green, 2016: 15), "that crucial changes to home and family have affected children's and young people's lives over recent decades", and that these "large-scale social changes have implications for the private life of families" (Livingstone and Sefton-Green, 2016: 27), of school and of education (Livingstone and Sefton-Green, 2016: 30-32). For children, the media offer "rich resources to explore and express their growing independence, as well as to engage in pleasures that were not always favoured by their parents" (Livingstone and Sefton-Green, 2016: 156), who were concerned about Internet use.

While Turkle writes about living "alone together", Livingstone and Sefton-Green state that "in the 21st century, coming together 'as a family' is ever more a matter of choice than of necessity", pointing out that families today are "living together and separately" (Livingstone and Sefton-Green, 2016: 164f), concluding that there is a need "to reconcile young people's everyday experiences with the many hopes and fears about youth in the digital age" (Livingstone and Sefton-Green, 2016: 233), the need to manage "the balance between time together and time apart" because "most of the families put a lot of effort into finding ways to come together" (Livingstone and Sefton-Green, 2016: 244-245). In this contemporary context, critical digital media literacy is needed and "founded on

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the legitimate role of media to serve the public's right to be truly informed" (Torres and Mercado, 2006: 260), and to be educated and literate. In fact, in today's digital age, there is no need and no space to talk about a "generational divide" or gap between "digital natives" (children) and "digital immigrants" (parents) because times have changed and we all need to became "digitally wise" and to be dedicated to media digital literacy in our everyday lives. Indeed, in our time, we are talking about digital parenting. And "digital parenting is a popular yet polysemic concept that refers both to how parents are increasingly engaged in regulating their children's relationships with digital media (parental mediation), and how parents themselves incorporate digital media in their daily activities and parenting practices, and, in so doing, develop emergent forms of parenting" (Mascheroni *et al.*, 2018: 9).

The study on parental mediation of children's Internet use carried out by Sonia Livingstone *et al*. came to the conclusion that the diverse array of mediation practices employed by parents can actually be grouped into two broad categories: enabling and restrictive mediation. "While restrictive mediation can be effective in reducing children's exposure to online risks, it has numerous side-effects, because it limits children's opportunities to develop digital literacy and build resilience and discourages children's agency within the child-parent relationship. Enabling mediation, instead, encompasses a set of mediation practices (including co-use, active mediation of Internet safety, monitoring and technical restrictions such as parental controls) that are aimed at empowering children and supporting their active engagement with online media" (Livingstone *et al*., 2017, according to Mascheroni *et al*., 2018: 9-10). According to Mascheroni, *et al*., the question is how "to ensure children's access to online opportunities while protecting them from potential harmful effects. This question is particularly pressing for younger children, who are now increasingly online even before they can talk or walk. However, there is still a paucity of research on parental mediation of very young children regarding their digital media uses. Available research suggests that parents of younger children tend to favour restrictive mediation, though they are inconsistent in their practices and often use touchscreens as a babysitter while they are doing household chores, or as part of a system of reward and punishment for children's behaviour (Chaudron *et al*., 2015). The appropriation of digital media into families' everyday lives is influenced by parenting styles or ethics" (Clark, 2013, according to Mascheroni *et al*., 2018: 10), by their various "equipment" to face the increasing complexity of the digital world and its social and developmental consequences, by inequalities in parental mediation because of parents' different level of education or socio-economic status. "Even among parents of young children, lower income/lower educated parents are likely to experience a generational digital divide and feel less confident in their ability to guide children's use of touchscreens and prevent their exposure to risks. As a consequence, they are reluctant to engage in parental mediation and scaffolding of their children's digital literacy practices. Children are left to experiment on their own, learning by trial and error, or seek out support from their older siblings"(Mascheroni *et al*., 2016, according to Mascheroni *et al*., 2018: 10). Today's children act as agents of change in families; they are introducing new technologies, "reversing existing media rules or creating new rules, guiding their parents' use, and mediating media effects (van den Bulck *et al*., 2016). The so-called 'child-effect' (van den

Bulck *et al*., 2016) invites the researcher to consider mediation as a reciprocal process, whereby both parents and children and the family as a cultural unit are transformed. Families with children are usually early and enthusiastic adopters of new technologies, which, in turn, shape the family's communication practices and media consumption habits. However, and despite the fact that the child-effect can and, to varying degrees, does occur in all families, it has been largely under-investigated so far" (*ibid*., 2018).

How are parents in Croatia facing these new educational challenges? Are they controlling their children or are they more open to monitor, to discuss with their children about the new educational possibilities provided by digital media? These are some of the aims of the different studies that we present and analyse.

THE EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM IN CROATIA AND COMPUTER AND MEDIA LITERACY

As for media education in Croatia, there is no separate school subject devoted solely to the media, but media literacy is a part of the Croatian Language subject in elementary school, from the first to the eighth grade. Therefore, the emphasis is on film and theatre, while the new media are almost completely omitted. Suffice it to say that in eight years, as far as primary school in Croatia is concerned, there is only one teaching unit dedicated to the Internet, in the sixth grade. In this unit, the network is defined and students have to find several web pages on the topics of the Croatian Language and Literature (Vican and Milanović Litre, 2006: 41). The unit does not stimulate critical thinking nor does it address the actuality of the new media, especially in children and young people's life. However, the amount of competences children will actually acquire through compulsory media education depends first and foremost on each teacher individually and his/her decision on how many hours per year will be devoted to media education (many teachers spend less than mandatory nine to ten hours a year) (Ciboci, 2018; Ciboci and Osmančević, 2015).

Apart from the Croatian Language classes, students also acquire key media and digital competences "within Technical Education and Informatics subjects as well as within intercurricular themes" (Kanižaj and Car, 2015: 27). Until this school year, Informatics at elementary school was an extracurricular activity from the first to the fourth grade and an elective course from the fifth to the eighth grade (Vican and Milanović Litre, 2006: 310) which means that not all students had the opportunity to acquire all the necessary digital knowledge. However, pedagogues and psychologists played an important role in all these years of obligatory schooling by holding lectures about Internet security and cyberbullying to children in schools.

Much has changed in the current school year because the experimental curricular reform is underway in Croatia. Along with others, one of the main changes refers to Informatics which has become a compulsory subject in the fifth and sixth grades. Today, within the curriculum of Informatics, students learn about topics such as network security, data protection, electronic violence and concern for their digital reputation, personal data

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protection, inappropriate forms of behaviour and seeking help for unwanted content or contacts (Nacionalni kurikulum nastavnoga predmeta – Informatika – prijedlog, 2016: 5). The proposal of the Curriculum of Informatics is much more up-to-date than the previous one, and it meets the needs of today's average media user. The Curriculum of Informatics significantly complements the curriculum of Croatian Language and offers the competencies needed in today's information age.

The existing curriculum is not to be discarded, but today's students need additional media knowledge to be able to enjoy all the benefits they provide. This knowledge implies taking into account all the dangers they might encounter, with particular emphasis on those related to the Internet, the medium on which children spend most of their free time. Therefore, the parents should have a key role in this process.

PARENTS AS DIGITAL EDUCATORS OF CHILDREN IN CROATIA

In November 2017, the first national representative survey on children's digital habits was conducted in Croatia. The study involved 1,017 children aged nine to seventeen and their parents. The youth sample was stratified in terms of the size of counties, as well as age and gender of the children, and the survey was administered using the CAPI method. The Association for Communication and Media Culture[1] conducted the research in cooperation with the Agency for electronic media, the City of Zagreb, Croatian Telecom, the Croatian Regulatory Authority for Network Industries and the Centre for Missing and Abused Children. The research was supported by the Ministry of Science and Education and the Ministry of Demography, Family, Youth and Social Policy. The research was carried out by Ipsos Puls. The aim of the research was to analyse the habits of children in Internet usage, the exposure to risky contents, but also to analyse the role of parents in using and protecting children on the Internet. The survey was conceptualized and conducted as part of an international research project, the follow-up project of the original EU Kids Online survey conducted in 2010 in 25 EU member states. This paper presents the findings of the EU Kids Online 2017 survey conducted in Croatia in September and October 2017. The preliminary results of the research were published on the official website of the project – http://hrkids.online/. This paper provides unpublished results on parental attitudes about children's Internet usage and their role in ensuring the protection of children on the Internet as well as their satisfaction with media literacy education within the Croatian school system.

The study involved 1,017 parents - 797 mothers and 220 fathers. The questionnaire was answered by the parent in the household who claimed that he or she was better acquainted with the digital habits of the child. As far as the educational structure of the respondents is concerned, 71.8% of them have high school education qualifications, 20.9% have higher education qualifications or higher, while 7.3% of respondents have elementary school qualifications or uncompleted elementary school. Most of the respondents, 82% of them, live in households with an average monthly income, 12.5% in households below

[1] The authors of this paper are members of the Association.

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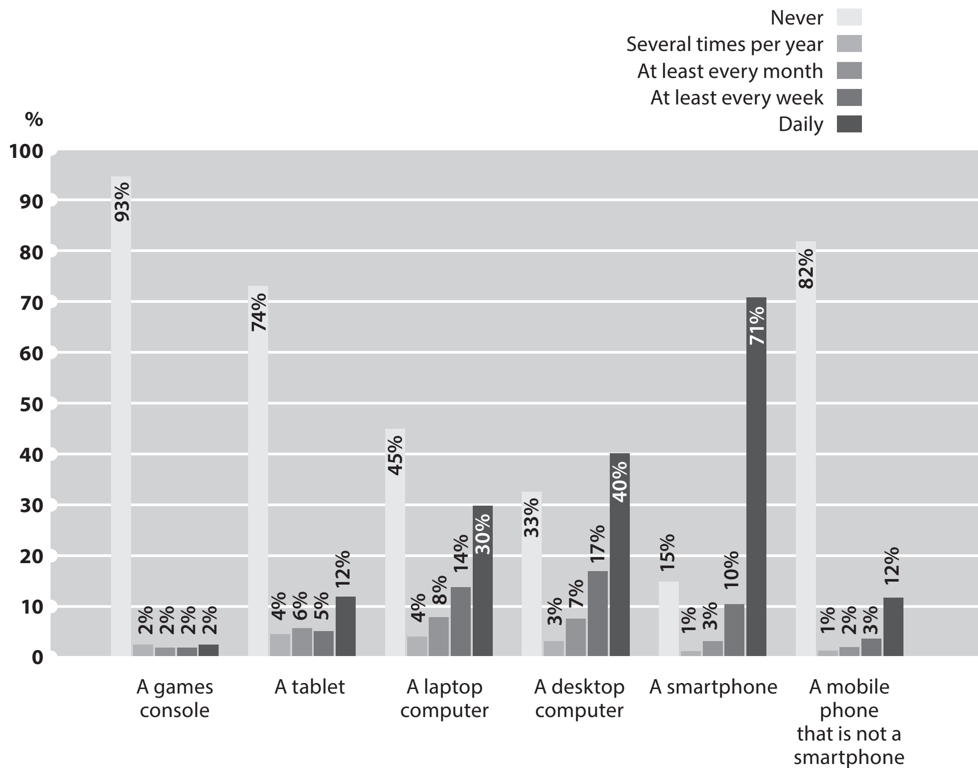
the average monthly income, while 5.5% of respondents live in households above the average income.

Results with Discussion

The Internet is present in everyday lives of parents, not only of children. Specifically, 84.5% of parents use the Internet every day, 8.5% at least once a week, 2.4% at least once a month, 0.4% at least once a year, and only 4.3% of parents do not use the Internet. Parents, as well as children (http://hrkids.online/, 2017), most often access the Internet via smartphones, much more often than via computers, laptops or tablets (Figure 1).



▲ *Figure 1.*
The usage of devices to access the Internet
(N=1 017)

Research showed that 69.4% of parents believe that their child uses the Internet better than they do. The survey found that 71.3% of mothers and 62.7% of fathers think in this manner. Such data should not be surprising given the fact that every fourth parent

was over 30 years old when they first started using the Internet. The results showed that 2.1% of parents started to use the Internet for the first time by the age of 10, 29.8% of parents between 11 and 20 years, 35.8% between 21 and 30 years, 21% between 31 and 40 years, 4.3% between 41 and 50 and 0.6% when they were over 50 years old. There was no difference in the respondents' perception based on monthly income. However, there was a statistically significant difference considering the education of the respondents – those with elementary and secondary education significantly more often believe that children use the Internet better than they do.

Since most parents believe children use the Internet better than they do, it is important to help them, especially by providing information and advice on how to keep their children safe on the Internet. Research has shown that most often parents receive such information from the media, family and friends, as well as from their child's school (Figure 2). However, in the future, as it can be seen in Figure 2, parents would like to receive such information primarily from their child's school and far less from the media themselves. Parents have clearly pointed out that the role of school is not only the education of children, but the education of adults as well. School needs to provide the support to adults in child education, especially in those areas where children spend a lot of their time and potentially have more knowledge than their own parents. Digital education surely is one of them. These results show that parents, when it comes to the safety of children on the Internet, have more confidence in school itself than in the media. Although it cannot be said with certainty, it can be assumed that if parents gain more knowledge of the Internet, particularly of its educative role, it is likely that they will more often encourage the usage of the Internet for educational purposes at home, but further research in this area is certainly needed. Apart from additional research on the role of school in the digital education of parents, it is necessary to explore how to encourage them to participate in school education. Specifically, previous research shows that such education in Croatian schools is most often responded by the same parents, enthusiasts, who often do not need such education, while the parents who need such education most often do not participate in these programmes (Ciboci, 2018).

The graph provided in Figure 2. also shows that many parents (38.2%) receive information about child safety on the Internet from children themselves, which places doubt on their ability to monitor their children, as well as to help their own children in case of exposure to inappropriate content. It is interesting to note that a high 41.7% of parents would like to continue in the future with such practice, showing that parents see nothing wrong in the fact that children are educating them on the use of new media. Although in online contexts "everyone learns from everyone" with the flattening of traditional hierarchies between teachers and learners, parents have much more life experience than children, which enables them to look more critically on media content. The child may be able to teach parents how to open, for instance, a profile on a social network, but is a child aware of both positive and negative aspects of social networks? For example, are they aware of suspect credibility and reliability of information published there? Although children can teach their parents technical knowledge of media and new technologies, parents need to develop critical evaluation of this same media content in children.

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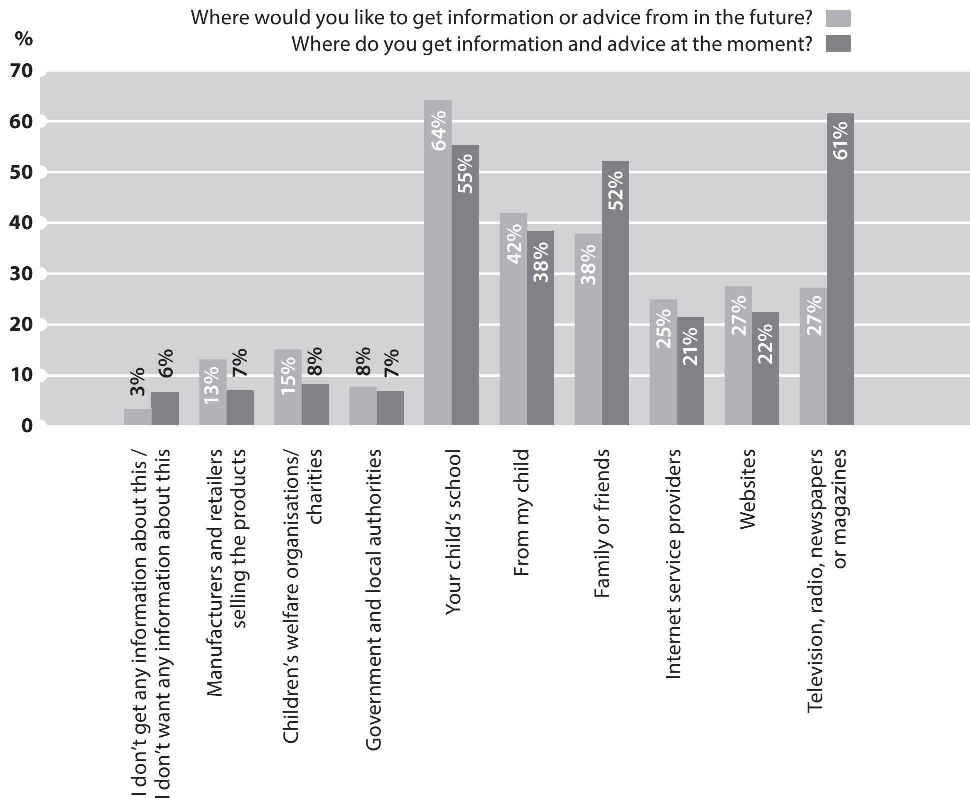
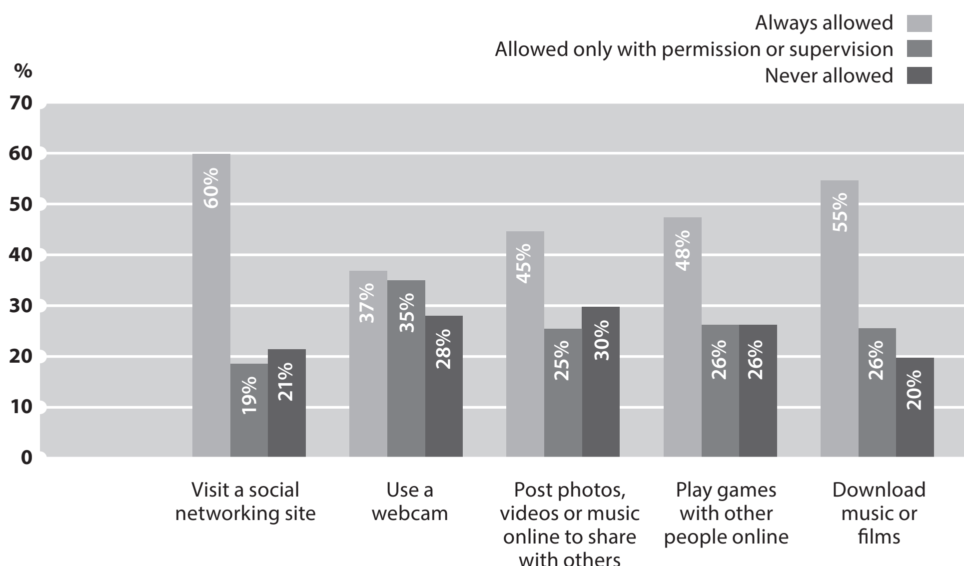


▲ *Figure 2.*
Getting information and advice on how to help and support children on the Internet (N=1 017)

Active or Restrictive Parental Mediation Strategies

The research showed that greater parental engagement in their children's online behaviour is necessary. In point of fact, children have much bigger experience in online contacts with someone they have not met face to face in comparison to their parents' views and attitudes (Ciboci, *et al.*, 2019).

The study showed that parents rarely use restrictive parental mediation strategies. As a matter of fact, 60.1% of parents always allow children to visit social networks, even to children under the age of 13; 44.8% of parents always allow their children to post photos, videos or music online to share with others; 47.5% of parents always allow their children to play games with other people online, while 54.9% of parents always allow their children to download music or films.



▲*Figure 3.*
Parental restrictive mediation strategies
(N=1 017)

When their child uses the Internet, 76.4% of parents talk with their child about what he/she does on the Internet.[2] However, when talking about other parental mediation strategies, parents rarely use them to educate their children. Only 13.4% of parents sit with their child while he/she uses the Internet, 31.4% of parents stay nearby when their child uses the Internet, and 32.7% of parents do shared activities together with their child on the Internet. Parents are rarely involved in raising and educating their children about the Internet, which further indicates the importance of educational institutions.

The above results show that some parents use strategies that are rooted in monitoring practices or co-using strategies and that most parents talk with children about the Internet. What we do not know is what kind of talk is used. Therefore, in the future research it is highly recommended to analyze the content parents are discussing with children.

[2] A multiple choice question, parents were free to check all the boxes if they were engaged in all four practices.

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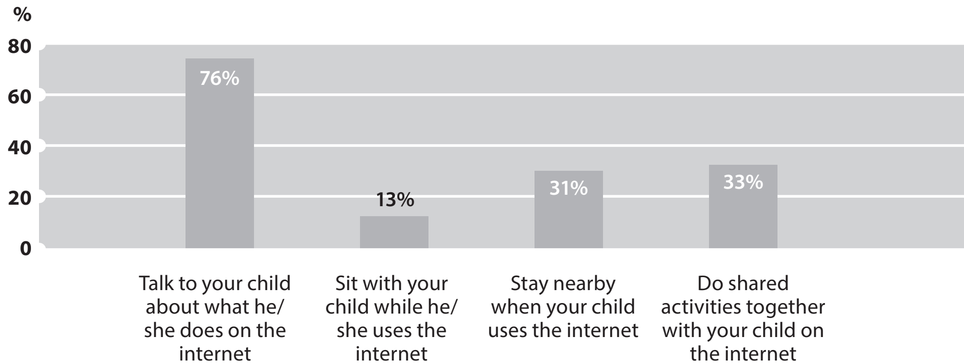


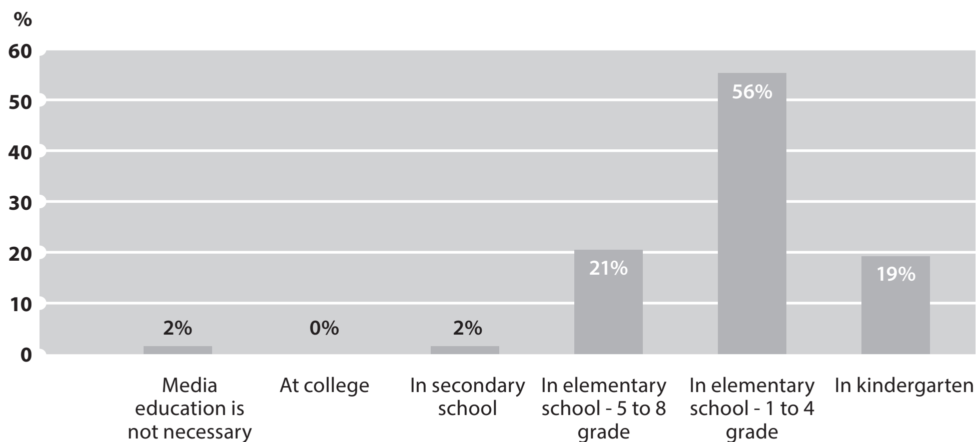
▲*Figure 4.*
Parental active mediation strategies (N=1.017)

Parental Satisfaction with Media and Digital Literacy Teaching in Croatia

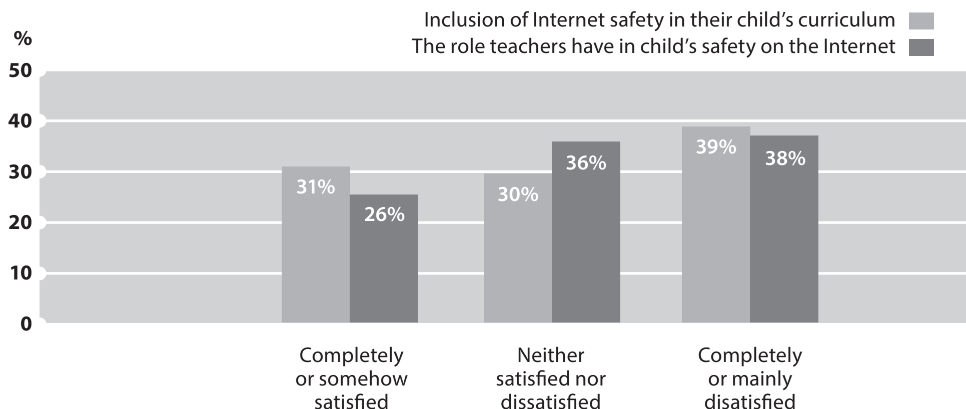
School plays a significant role in children's media education. On the one hand, parents see it as an important actor to transfer knowledge and provide information to parents on how to protect children on the Internet, but, on the other hand, they think that teachers are, together with parents, responsible for children's media education. Our research showed that 80.2% of parents think that media education should be their responsibility, and 74.8% hold the view that educators in pre-school and school should be responsible for educating their children on the media[3].

Although they emphasize the importance of educators and teachers in media education of children, parents still do not recognize the importance of media education of children from the earliest age. Although children spend hours and hours using the Internet even before they go to school and many children start to use the Internet already in their first years of life (Chaudron, 2015), most parents think that media education should start in elementary school, from the first to the fourth grade. Every fifth parent thinks that media education should begin from the fifth to the eighth grade (Figure 5). Only every fifth parent thinks that media education should start from the earliest age, already in kindergarten.

[3] A multiple choice question.



▲*Figure 5.*
Parental opinion on when media education should begin
(N=1 017)



▲*Figure 6.*
Parental satisfaction with digital literacy in schools
(N=1 017)

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Although parents think that teachers play an important role in their children's digital and media education, results show that parents are more dissatisfied than they are satisfied with the inclusion of Internet safety in their child's curriculum as well as with the role teachers have in child safety on the Internet. This shows that parents themselves think that changes, especially in terms of children's online safety, are more than necessary.

CONCLUSION

Today's parents more than ever need help in raising their children. While children are growing up with the media, many parents started to use them at an older age, so it does not come as a surprise that many parents think that children use the Internet better than they do. It can be expected that this knowledge gap in Internet usage will begin to decline when these generations of children who grew up with the Internet from the earliest age start to have their own children. Nevertheless, before this happens, parents need help and educational institutions play a particularly important role. In their research, researchers are increasingly warning about not only the positive, but also the negative effects of the media and media content that may harm the development of children and youth. In addition, parents themselves have to learn how to educate their children in the new digital media environment. However, they lack the knowledge and skills associated with digital literacy and are particularly concerned about the safety of children in the online world. Parents are dissatisfied with inclusion of online safety in the Croatian educational system. They are also dissatisfied with the role of teachers in protecting children on the Internet. On the other hand, as far as media and digital education are concerned, school is seen by parents as a key actor in providing them with information and advice on how to protect children online. Therefore, schools are equally important in the education of parents, not only children. It is important to alert school principals and teachers to the need for the digital education of parents and to continue organizing lectures and workshops on this subject.

Apart from school, parents have often received such information from the media themselves. It shows just how important it is for the media themselves to offer quality content and that their role is to educate media users. Even though the current law in Croatia is applied only to public broadcast media, due to the influence that media have on the lives of media consumers, it is important that the "burden" of media education is equally assumed by all the media. Based on the new Audiovisual Media Services Directive (AVMSD) of 2018, this became obligatory for all the media.

Parents need help in educating children in this digital age. This help is needed by all stakeholders – schools, media, family members, but also children themselves. It is, therefore, important to work on the digital literacy of all media users in order to protect children online and to ensure a peaceful and quality childhood with the media.

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This research has shown the need for further research. In the future, it is recommended to conduct a comparative analysis of other countries and see how they conduct media and digital literacy of adults, especially of parents, and investigate whether this role was taken over by the media or school itself. It would be useful to see how they encouraged parents to attend training in school, especially in areas where they lack knowledge. It should also be worth exploring the ways in which educators in these countries were educated to work with parents. Furthermore, it would be worth exploring the opinions of schools, principals and teachers on this topic. There is a need to conduct qualitative research that will provide deeper insight into how parents educate children about the media, to which topics they devote most of their attention and what kind of advice they provide to them. This is an area that is certainly of great significance and needs to be further explored in future research.

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MEDIJSKA I DIGITALNA PISMENOST: ŠKOLA I SUVREMENO RODITELJSTVO

Lana Ciboci :: Danijel Labaš

SAŽETAK *Živimo u svijetu u kojem mediji konstruiraju stvarnost, ali i utječu na svakoga korisnika medija. Novim digitalnim medijima i njihovim sadržajima posebno su izložena djeca, pa znanstvenici u svojim istraživanjima veliku pozornost pridaju medijskoj i digitalnoj pismenosti. Pri tome vode računa o novim pojavama, izazovima i rizicima koji su povezani s antropološkim, kognitivnim i socijalnim razvojem djece i mladih. Posebnu pozornost posvećuju socijabilnosti djece i mladih, ali i korisnika medija općenito, rizicima razvijanja raznih oblika ovisnosti o internetu i digitalne demencije. Važnu ulogu u medijskom odgoju imaju ne samo učitelji i škole nego i roditelji i obitelj. Cilj je ovoga rada prikazati i analizirati teorijske pristupe medijskoj i digitalnoj pismenosti i takozvanom digitalnom roditeljstvu te izložiti i protumačiti rezultate najnovijih istraživanja u Hrvatskoj o digitalnim navikama djece, odnosno njihovih roditelja, te o ulozi i mjestu roditelja u procesu medijskoga opismenjavanja djece i mladih, kao i o njihovu zadovoljstvu programima medijske pismenosti u odgojno-obrazovnom sustavu.*

KLJUČNE RIJEČI

MEDIJSKA PISMENOST, DIGITALNA PISMENOST, DJECA, RODITELJI, STRATEGIJE POSREDOVANJA

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WHO YOU'RE GONNA CALL? THE DEVELOPMENT OF UNIVERSITY DIGITAL LEADERS. A CASE STUDY

Yota Dimitriadi

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ABSTRACT *In our hyper-connected digitised educational world, university tutors are interested in capitalising on affordances of digital trends in teaching and learning. Students, under the alias of pre-service-teachers, walk among them equipped with digital skills in areas of their interest. How can we encourage collaboration between tutors and students that can promote the use of the digital force wisely, support the development of students' professional identities further and extend tutors' digital competences? The story of nine tutors and eleven undergraduate pre-service-teachers working together on digital partnerships is set against discussions around digital leadership and citizenship. This case study aims to highlight how universities can respond to technology-driven change by engaging students further and support their awareness of digital citizenship. The overall results showed that the informal learning that students have capitalised outside the classroom can be used to scaffold their development of digital citizenship through offline community engagement. It demonstrates the advantage of using such opportunities as a means to encourage citizenship practices among university student communities and the positive impact that such synergies can have on all the participants.*

KEYWORDS

DIGITAL CITIZENSHIP, DIGITAL LEADERSHIP, DIGITAL LITERACIES

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INTRODUCTION AND CONTEXT

There are regular attempts to reflect students' symbiotic relationship with digital technologies, especially their use of mobile devices and social media participation, through higher education significant capital investments (Flavin, 2012) and institution-wide technology foci. Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) are trying to provide space and scope for digital technologies to be used as teaching and learning resources towards the "two interwoven—and deeply political—societal goals of education: to create an informed citizenry and to develop the skills for a workforce" (Boyd, 2015).

As educational institutions are adopting these well-intended technological innovations to inform their policy and practice and support student engagement and differential outcomes, student praxis is measured through metrics, which can dilute the notion of agency and self-management that they are trying to promote. Engagement can turn into compliance as well as surveillance of student participation and interactions, which can leave all stakeholders: HEIs, academics and students vulnerable in "their asymmetrical information and power relations with students" (Prinsloo and Slade, 2016: 159).

The focus of this paper is not on discussing the complexities of learning analytics or questioning the extent to which these investments in data mining can reproduce current dominant approaches if there are no clear data management strategies in place; it aims to consider how, in our continuing attempts to utilise technology proactively to enable student development, we support student personal growth not only through opportunities for them to manage their own learning but also by empowering them to develop leadership capabilities.

Developing student leadership is an integral part of that institutional aspiration. It is represented in participatory institutional initiatives to empower students and engage them as active members in change processes. 'Students as partners' is a popular approach in the UK and internationally (Healey *et al.*, 2014) to engage students in multiple ways at all operational levels of their institutions: from governance and curriculum development to teaching and learning processes through project collaborations, student councils and societies, and student peer mentoring. In this context, it can be argued that students will develop a more active role in their learning and self-awareness, viewing themselves as community members with social responsibility. As a result, they will contextualise their 'quantified self' (Lupton, 2014) as part of the complex nexus that is their identity, and get more involved in the governance of their data (Newman *et al.*, 2018).

In the UK a shift towards students' more involved role with technology has been supported by the repositioning of the school-based curriculum from ICT (Information and Communication Technologies) to Computing in 2014. This change has promoted a focus beyond application-use towards application-development "through programming or networking to solve problems" (Passey, 2017: 425). The new curriculum emphasises the connectivity of modern life with topics like 'the internet of things' and 'big data'. Alongside understanding the skill-based aspects of digital technologies and developing technical

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competences, the current curriculum aims to engage students in critical consideration of the social, ethical and moral implications of digital technology implementations and help them to approach their use of computers and the internet with social responsibility and confidence. The strong emphasis on online safety embraces the 'participatory practices' (Jenkins *et al.*, 2006) associated with networked technologies and social media and allows a consideration around the dialogic relationship between the self and others in that digital praxis. The focus on digital literacies emphasises the need to develop skills in order to engage with online communities in sharing, distributing and meaning making practices safely and respectfully. Beyond protecting the self and individual rights, there is a focus on developing active civic engagement and empathy towards others in online spaces and activities rather than being a passive bystander. While there is a growing appreciation that "the internet can provide important opportunities for the youth to exercise positive social skills and engage with their community in ways that may have positive outcomes for offline civic engagement" (Jones and Mitchell, 2015: 3), there is also the expectation that these skills will be easily transferrable in offline behaviours.

However, there are some challenges associated with such assumption. One of them is around a blurry distinction between digital literacies and digital citizenship. Jones and Mitchell (2015) propose a specific focus on digital citizenship that encompasses "practice[ing] respectful and tolerant behaviours toward others and increase[ing] [online] civic engagement activities" (Jones and Mitchell, 2015: 3). In this context, digital literacies concentrate on skills and procedural knowledge about digital safety and security while digital citizenship provides the scope to encourage youth to actualise their online behaviours into offline community activism. Such an approach can also fit with the user-generated production spaces prevalent today. These environments of social engagement offer users the opportunity "for content creation as well as community building [where] learning becomes embedded in the act of sharing" (Bal *et al.*, 2014: 158). Making more explicit connections between these productive behaviours that young people exhibit online and extending them to offline possibilities may help them to engage further in civic action.

Finding ways to legitimise and bring the informal learning opportunities that such digital engagements offer into the classroom is another challenge; not that these opportunities do not exist but the focus on preventing harm, apprehensions about the impact on the students' digital footprint and personal and professional identity (Brennan, 2011), resourcing implications and lack of clarity of how they can be embedded within current assessment systems may minimise employing them consistently and long-term. This ephemeral approach to the use of the digital for community engagement and participation, rather than mere spectatorship, is also accompanied at times by terminology that exacerbates the lack of an ideological stand for embracing the affordances emerging from networked technologies. The learning that occurs in 'networked publics' (Boyd, 2014: 8), spaces that young people inhabit online, is sometimes contrasted to what is described as 'real life' experiences rather than 'offline', questioning the legitimacy of the learning that may have occurred and its application to all spheres of life.

This dichotomy also presents another challenge about perceptions of young people's use of computers and the internet. While the critique (Bennett *et al.*, 2008) of Prensky's 'digital natives' metaphor (2001) brought to light the complexities of young people's engagement with digital technologies and moved away from a generational demarcation of technology use to considerations of inequalities in digital access and breadth of use (Helsper and Enyon, 2010), it can be argued that the concept inadvertently, in the public imagination, formed expectations around young people's digital skills. As a result, students are expected to demonstrate particular skill-based competences around digital technologies in the classroom. However, these expected skills do not always correlate with young people's networked experiences.

Attempts to include informal learning opportunities into the curriculum can also be greeted with suspicion from the students themselves and result in what can be considered as clandestine uses of mobile devices in teaching sessions. Transferring the "unauthorised, spontaneous, and practical experience" (Bal *et al.*, 2014: 158) that occurs during the informal opportunities that online spaces offer into the structured classroom communities is not seen as overlapping but as juxtaposing. The multimodal code of behaviour that accompanies the elements of play and exploration associated with young people's use of digital media (Jenkins *et al.*, 2006) is sometimes seen as incompatible with classroom norms. The locus of control shifts to a more hierarchical approach and the mediated interaction they foster when posting, texting, sharing can be regarded as 'disruptive' (Goundar, 2014) rather than as a 'disruptive innovation' (Christensen and Raynor, 2003) during sessions.

However, there have been attempts to make links between young people's online engagement and offline community support. Programmes like the UK's successful Childnet's Digital Leaders initiative fosters a peer-to-peer online safety training programme for school-aged students. Students are trained on internet safety and cascade the skills to peers. Through such engagements and acts of 'small citizenship' (Orton-Johnson, 2014: 147) at local level, young people can become community builders and reflect upon their own identity. The critical awareness that accompanies DIY [do-it-yourself] Citizenship (Hartley, 1999), "a practice of putting together an identity from available choices, patterns, opportunities on offer in the semiosphere and the mediashpere" (Jacka 2003: 185) for yourself moves to a DIWO [do-it-with-others] citizenship with co-creative and voluntary choices and knowledge sharing (Hartley, 2010).

Though the term 'leader' alludes to a hierarchical relationship, such peer to peer support systems offer a way to merge digital literacies and digital citizenship practices. While there are many interpretations, definitions, typologies and styles of leadership (Karagianni and Montgomery, 2018; Kelly and Azaola, 2015), they all centre around the "ability to find and synthesise diverse sources of information, to manage self, and to empower others" (Marcketti, 2010: 131), key processes that active citizenship encompasses.

While digital leadership may not be very different to leadership in terms of managing interactions with heterogeneous actors or resources and fostering innovation, the term

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'digital' can also promote the importance for those leaders to have a clear understanding of the interconnection between the problem-solving expertise that human actors and the automation capabilities that non-human resources involved in digital processes can offer. Abbatiello *et al.* (2017) identify that digital leadership should focus on cognitive (*think*), behavioural (*act*) and emotional (*react*) transformations. Their description is based in the corporate world rather than education. However, it identifies the importance of "...blur[ring] the internal and external boundaries in ways that assist transformation" as well as "educat[ing] others..." (Abbatiello *et al.,* 2017: 80). This brokerage between the technical and the human components of a digital innovation can imply some skill-based technical knowledge but also contextual understanding of the setting and a vision of how to bring all elements together to fulfil a brief purposefully. Observational learning that can include apprenticeship or addressing real-life challenges can also act as important sources of leadership development (DeRue and Myers, 2014). Therefore, collaborative ventures around digital technologies can provide a powerful process for organisational transformation either in the corporate world or in education. If such synergies on developing digital citizenship awareness move beyond peer-to-peer to student-to-tutor initiatives they may be able to challenge existing preconceptions around the relevance of informal learning in education.

It is important to recognise the impact that the fast pace of digital innovations has on teachers and academic tutors and their aspirations to keep up-to-date with Technology Enhanced Learning (TEL), the need to reflect and embed digital technologies in their teaching and learning practices as well as pragmatic needs for tutor support, further training and possible impact on their workload. The employment of authentic problem-based tasks around digital technologies through student-tutor partnership can be beneficial for both stakeholders: they can provide an opportunity for students to share their passion for particular technologies and engage in a dialogue about the shaping of their professional identity further ; they can also offer additional support for tutors' digital skills and a platform to develop a less hierarchical dialogue with students about the perceived 'disruptive technologies', such as mobile phones in sessions.

We know the contribution that teacher interactions with students play in the formation of student identities (Doherty and Mayer, 2003). At the same time, such partnerships can allow for closer alignment with the modelling of effective teaching practices and instil in students the idea of Continuing Professional Development and educators' commitment to constructivism approaches to learning. While there is no single accepted model of professional development for HE teachers (Sharpe, 2004), a synergy between tutors and students could bring more understanding about how the student journey can be enhanced creatively by supporting the development of their professional identity in organic and more power-symmetrical ways.

While students cascade their knowledge of digital technologies and the connectivity that these resources can offer, tutors can support them in clarifying further students' responsibilities as budding professionals in contexts that they are familiar with. In this way, tutors can encourage students to take ownership of personal and professional use

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of digital technologies and help them develop agility and employability skills as future leaders. Although not all students have the same range of digital skills and capabilities, such collaborations between tutors and students on the use of digital technologies can also support discussions about wellbeing and self-care practices around use of digital technologies.

THE FRAMING OF THE STUDY

The current study emerged as an action research project based on the aspiration for an inclusive approach to support student voice and informed use of digital technologies. It sought to explore a threefold idea: how can we, at university level, support students' confidence that informal learning on digital technology counts for in their 'formal' learning practices; how to develop participatory practices that allow them to transfer their online skills into active community support; and how to offer students opportunities to reflect on how to manage and self-regulate their connected lives in their transition to their professional lives. Evaluation of each cycle of action can lead to the enhancement and maturity of the project idea and the participants' skills.

This short-scale study involved eleven preservice teachers (students) and nine lecturers (tutors) and took place at a UK-based university in the south-east of England. In the context of the empirical part of the study the term 'students' will refer to those participating preservice teachers rather than school-aged contributors.

The key questions for the first cycle of the project were:
>Are we prepared to engage in a partnership with students on digital literacy?,
>How can we create, manage and evaluate such synergies? and
>What digital competences, leadership and citizenship skills will participant develop as a result of these interactions?

At the case study institution there is a regular Continuing Professional Development (CPD) programme for staff and opportunities for tutors to network and exchange ideas for practice around TEL. However, tutors, as reflective practitioners, are still vocal about aspirations for further support with their digital competences. External metrics around student satisfaction and teaching and learning excellence such as the Office for Standards in Education (OfSTED), the National Student Survey (NSS), the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF), also advocate and evaluate the use of digital technologies in teaching and learning further.

METHODS: DEVELOPING THE DIGITAL LEADERS' (DL) PROJECT

In order to create such synergies, mobilising groups of students and tutors was an important first step for the project to succeed. Time was the second. The timetable for central training is strategically situated in the training year to prepare preservice teachers

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for their school placements and help them reflect on their practice. The idea of Digital Leaders needed to come across as integrated in their practice rather as an add-on to be completed in order to meet the requirements of a taught module. This was especially important in terms of ethics alongside considerations about the balance between voluntary support and tutors' workload pressures. The literature identifies that trust forms the basis of positive tutor–student relationships (Lumpkin, 2008; Nowell, 2014). In order to balance all stakeholders' perspectives and motivations and connect tutor and student voices, it was imperative to create a culture of mutual trust for participation and engagement. While the premise of the project was students as 'partners in learning and teaching' (Healey *et al*., 2014), there could be possible tension and discomfort around power relationships between the traditionally conceptualised academic roles and student agency.

As a step to create shared understanding in an atmosphere of learning and growth, a job description for the student role was put together along with an evaluation form to be completed jointly by students and tutors during their meeting.

Literature review of similar 'Digital Leader' projects, a popular idea at schools, showed that at least two more UK-based universities at the time of the study engaged their students in similar ways; however, in those projects there was more emphasis on utilising student skills for peer-to-peer support while this project was focusing on teaching and learning practices and tutor-student partnership. In addition, their schemes relied heavily on extrinsic motivators (e.g. paying the students and awarding them Open Badges) while the current project relied, at that stage, on students' altruism. Students' contributions were on voluntary basis and were not part of an assessed module. However, the university offers students an employability skills certificate to acknowledge their voluntary contributions. In an attempt to support students' participation further in ways that were meaningful to their professional development the project leader liaised with the employability skills team and the Digital Leaders project was included towards the award.

PARTICIPANTS

The participants included students from the first year cohort on an undergraduate teacher-training programme. The programme prepares students for Primary school teaching (working with five-eleven-year olds). The project leader was the Computing tutor for the course and she organised the tutor- Digital Leader appointments as part of the collaborative and independent tasks students were asked to complete during her sessions; the students who did not participate as Digital Leaders were given other collaborative digital tasks to complete. Digital Leaders were not expected to dedicate additional and out of session-time for the task, though some did willingly. Before the project was introduced to the whole cohort, the project leader had audited the cohort's digital competencies using the *Cascade iTest* (University of Exeter). The results allowed her to encourage three students to participate either because of their good overall digital skills or their expertise in a particular digital area (usually social media skills), and then

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through snowballing, four more students volunteered. The two student representatives were invited to the pilot. The Year 1 Convenor was also consulted and asked to suggest two students who would benefit from the involvement (*e.g.* based on their learning profile or due to attendance and engagement issues). The job description was shared with all the students. The pilot aimed to include ten out of the sixty students in the cohort. However, eleven volunteered (five male and six female students). Traditionally, there are fewer male students on the course. There were eight male students in that first year cohort. They were all young students who had just graduated from school, with the exception of two who had started university after one gap year. The DL group had mixed digital skills (Table 1). The names have been altered to preserve the students' anonymity.

Table 1. **The Digital Leaders project participants**

Digital Leader	Criteria for selection	Tutor supported	Topic
James	Volunteered	female	Graphics editing using PhotoShop
Kiera	Self-confidence and attendance; IT audit: widening participation	male	Video editing using Movie Maker
Alice	Widening participation	male	Social media: Twitter
Aimee	Volunteered (Snowball effect)	male	Social media: Twitter
Tilly	Volunteered (Snowball effect)	male	Social media: Twitter
Holly	Student representative	female	Class Dojo
Barbara	Student representative	female	Edmodo
Rose	IT audit	female	Social media: Instagram
John	Engagement	female	Social media: Setting up a Facebook group
Louis	Attendance and engagement	female	Social media: Setting up a Facebook group
Mark	IT audit	female	Social media: Setting up a Facebook group
Toby	volunteered	female	Taking and including Screenshots in presentations

The project was shared with all tutors at the department and they were all invited to participate. Once the student cohort was decided, tutors were approached directly mainly because, in the past, they had identified TEL priorities for further support (*e.g.* collaboration with Art on PhotoShop; setting up a Facebook group for English; using Twitter for disseminating academic work and ideas in Physical Education, *etc.*). Tutors had also been given the opportunity to complete a JISC self-audit about their digital skills and two of them decided to get involved with the project based on the results from the audit. The Year 1 Convenor was also invited to participate, which gave the project more kudos among students. The tutors' digital skills were mixed, with some of them very confident

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in the use of digital technologies. They were all positive about the idea and wanted to support it and enhance student voice.

PROCEDURE

The project leader facilitated student-tutor interaction by setting up the appointments and making the introductions. Most of the appointments took place during two of the two-hour Computing sessions that the project leader oversaw. Some appointments took place at a time and date that was convenient for both tutors and students. The duration of the appointment was flexible and tutors were understanding of the students' other commitments; meetings were aimed to last between thirty and sixty minutes. In three instances, the collaboration between the tutor and the DL student extended beyond the allocated time, while in two cases the appointments did not take place due to the tutors' busy schedules or the student's absence. In those instances, one student joined a wider group (John) while the other Digital Leader shared her skills with the project leader (Holly).

The tutorials took place in the summer term, towards the end of the training year, and after the group had completed a school placement, which contributed to the shaping of their views around school-based digital applications further. Two weeks before the allocated time for the appointments, the Digital Leaders were invited to a Skype session with a local primary school that had been running a Digital Leaders scheme successfully with their pupils. The undergraduate Digital Leaders interviewed the school-aged children on their role and responsibilities. This was a successful milestone in the project, which cemented the DLs' commitment.

DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS APPROACHES

Data collection took place in two different stages. Data was collected through feedback forms that had to be completed jointly by the tutor and the Digital Leader during their face-to-face support session. The form included eight free-text questions and one closed question. There was a section for the tutor to input their comments, too. Questions like "*How do you reassure the tutor about their ideas and skills?"; "What did you learn about yourself as a leader/supporting tutor?"; "Which part of the interaction with the tutor stood out for you?"; "What does the tutor want to use the technology for? Why?"; "In terms of the SAMR model for digital technology use how does the tutor want to use this digital technology in your view?"* aimed to include loosely all three dimensions (cognitive, emotional, behavioural) Abbatiello *et al.*'s (2017) leadership capabilities framework.

A follow-up semi-structured group interview with all the Digital Leaders took place at the end of the project. They were also invited to share their views individually as well during that meeting. Four decided to produce a video clip to showcase the project to the rest of the University. Qualitative analysis of the group interviews along the three focal points of the study informed the summary of the findings presented below.

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DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS

The study aimed to explore how to develop participatory practices between students and tutors that allow students to transfer their online skills into active offline community support and at the same time gain opportunities to reflect on self-managing and self-regulating their connected lives in their transition to their professional lives, in this case the highly regulated and caring teaching profession. This section discusses the DIWO processes that emerged during student-tutor interactions against the three key questions of the study.

Are we prepared to engage in a partnership with students on digital literacy?

This was the first cycle of a successful, small-scale, short-term pilot study and while the results will not be generalisable, they offered helpful insights as to how to develop the project further. A combination between readiness and willingness from both tutors and students contributed to the success of the pilot study. Tutor support on digital skills was needed and was embedded in real tasks that related directly to students' learning and assessment opportunities. Student participation was mainly based upon their desire to help others and not always on their self-confidence of a wide range of digital technologies. *"I am not good with IT. Computers hate me! How can I be a Digital Leader?"* was Alice's initial response to the call for participants. Through discussion about a range of technologies that she may have be using in her daily life she exclaimed "*Twitter? I am an expert on Twitter! I use it every day! My friends use it, too! It is more popular than Facebook. I didn't think that Twitter counts"*. Such comments point to a possible discrepancy between school-based digital practices and out-of-school use of digital technologies, the informal learning that takes place out of school. They indicate an opportunity to refocus our attention on "a more holistic perspective [that] sees informal and formal contexts of digital literacy as components of a knowledge ecosystem" (Meyers *et al.*, 2013: 357).

The tutors involved in the study recognised the need for further engagement with social media, skills that the Digital Leaders could offer. They acknowledged students' expertise in that area and wanted to bridge the perceived gap between their own skills and the Digital Leaders' experiences. The project was an example of involving students as partners in teaching and learning processes. This intergenerational learning offered coaching opportunities between junior (students) and senior (academics) educational practitioners around the pedagogical uses of digital technologies. Age was not considered in a Prenskyan way as each partner was able to contribute and offer expertise at an equal level: students with skills and tutors with professional experiences. The benefits of such approaches for students and teachers have been recognised in the educational literature (Löfgren *et al.*, 2013) along with the importance of managing these interactions and incorporating "strategy, planning and support (...) if educational outcomes are to be fully realised" (Passey, 2017: 477). Challenges stated by tutors and students did not concern aptitude, attitude or engagement issues; they mainly concerned time requirements. For such partnerships to flourish, they need to be integrated in overall programme structures rather than act as add-ons.

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Some of the students prepared training resources to use with the tutors and reported in their interview that they would find it helpful to *"allow the tutors beforehand to email the Digital Leaders allowing us to have specific things to show"* (James). While none of the participating tutors and students considered that additional preparation as an issue during the pilot study, if their contributions were to be part of regular provision, then their input would have to be carefully planned. Tutors were positive about additional communication that would facilitate planning the tutorial with the Digital Leaders but also appreciated that this exchange could add to the workload of both students and tutors. The focus of the DL project was not to replace institutional support that needs to be in place but empower students' leadership skills and as part of that dialogue bridge informal and formal learning opportunities that the digital offers. In this context, students should have the opportunity to capitalise on their input and gain wider recognition for their support.

All eleven student participants and nine tutors reported positively on their involvement in the project; even in the two cases where the appointments did not take place, the students commented positively on the opportunity they were given to contribute. "*I didn't think myself as a technology expert at the beginning",* Holly and Alice said. Such comments also indicated that these participants did not associate their interaction and expert use of social media and the learning that may be associated with such use as part of their digital profiles; for them, informal and formal learning were distinct processes that did not merge. This was reinforced with comments around the use of social media at schools. "*My school introduced blogging but some pupils sent inappropriate messages to each other and the school dropped it"*, John reported. Considerations around privacy, safety, responsible use and reuse of digital media (Meyers *et al.*, 2013) were emerging and the importance of engaging in a dialogue with the students of how to manage such priorities across school-based and informal learning contexts in ways that enable rather than disable the use of digital technologies.

At the same time hardware challenges like "*Our school computers are very slow and it takes teachers a long time to set them up"* (Toby) and timetabling priorities "*I have not seen the teacher teaching IT or Computing yet"* (Aimee) pointed towards the reality that some schools face, which also shaped these pre-service teachers' views of the application of digital technologies in education and can make the use of networked and online technologies more challenging.

How can we create, manage and evaluate such synergies?

In the cases where the Digital Leaders knew their allocated tutor, they found it enticing that they would be 'teaching' them, especially when they knew that the tutor involved had a senior position on their programme (for instance, year convenor). Most of the appointments took place in the tutors' offices, with one exception, where the Art Studio was used. The university campus already includes some defined hierarchical spaces that may influence the balance in the interactions between tutors and students. While it was not reported in any of the Digital Leaders' or tutors' comments, the selection of a venue for these interactions may be a future consideration.

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The video conferencing session with the primary school acted as a catalyst in the project. The Digital Leaders realised that such initiatives take place and are valued in schools. It reinforced that ideas discussed at university are based on evidence-based practice and extended their thinking beyond the experiences they had during their first training year. It was at that point that the group endorsed the label of the 'digital leader' openly in their interactions with peers.

In this brief and closely-defined pilot project the selection and management of student interactions did not pose significant challenges. The selection of students remains a key priority for the success of such a project. The tutor facilitator supported the interactions and encouraged the individual students' involvement. The project involved participants from a single department. Some of the Digital Leaders mentioned that their positive experiences with the project facilitator who led the Computing sessions and their positive experiences of the Computing sessions influenced their decision to participate. While in a wider project students may not have any interaction with the co-ordinators or the tutors, it poses a question of how to encourage student participation and nurture leadership talent, especially among under-represented student groups.

What digital competences and leadership skills participants developed as a result of these interactions?

The Digital Leaders had already experience and skills in specific digital technologies but also interest in exploring these applications further in an educational context. The level of their digital skills was identified at the outset of the partnership, when the student-tutor pairs were agreed. While we cannot claim that the cognitive capabilities of their leadership profile developed as part of such a brief intervention, it was obvious that behaviours around technology use were influenced as a result of the professional dialogue with tutors. Beyond application skills, after being involved in the training session with a tutor, Digital Leaders started appreciating the impact that personal involvement with social media can have on their digital footprint and professional identity. Mark commented:

I appreciate that I need to be more careful about my presence on social media as a trainee-teacher. Tutor X shared with me her experiences from working at schools and how the headteacher Googles candidates' profiles before they invite them for an interview.

In a way, for both students and tutors the project was all about risk taking: exposing areas for further development in terms of skills, knowledge or understanding of digital technologies. Digital leaders perceived this interaction with tutors as informal and non-assessed and they felt comfortable in engaging in a dialogue about the potential use and possible shortcomings of such technologies in teaching and learning. "*I felt ok telling Tutor Y how I used Class Dojo at my placement school. The children loved it but I am not sure it works for assessment. Tutor Y and I discussed some ideas about formative assessment; it was very helpful!" (Holly)*.

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Digital competence became strongly related to professional expertise and central to teacher identity. The project allowed, even temporarily, for the blurring of boundaries between tutors and students. Students exhibited knowledge of the digital tools but together with the tutors they extended their understanding of digital literacy to an expanded notion of digital citizenship that included safe and responsible practices around the use and engagement of networked technologies and 'building mutual commitments and interpersonal relationships' (DeRue and Myers, 2014: 835). "*I had not reviewed my Facebook privacy settings for a while. I am glad that I did before my meeting with Tutor Z. Facebook had made some changes"* (Louis). Comments like that showed students' emerging questioning of corporate infrastructures that govern their data.

The tutors involved saw the interaction as a helpful opportunity to work both pastorally and academically with the students; especially for tutors on the Secondary Education Teacher Training programme. These young students, who had just graduated from school, offered invaluable insights of their preparations and coursework for their final year public exams (A Levels). In one instance, the partnership extended further. The tutor invited the digital leader (James) to train two Secondary preservice teachers on graphics editing and share his A Level photography portfolio to support the other Secondary students' lesson planning. This additional responsibility enabled the Digital Leader to share his expertise and gain confidence in himself. In response to that invitation James wrote in his evaluation "*I have been asked by the tutor to teach a PGCE [postgraduate preservice teacher] student going into school and teaching Photoshop how to use Photoshop...which I am determined to do"*. Comments like "*you're a superstar"*, "*your humour and friendliness were fantastic"*, "*you went beyond the call of duty"* were shared in writing about James's input by the tutor and the Secondary students. They emphasise the digital but also interpersonal skills that James demonstrated during the interaction. He led the interactions with emotional intelligence: kindness and patience, key leadership and citizenship characteristics.

There was limited but positive evidence about how the digital leader initiative affected aspirations and how these students took these practices into their professional and personal lives further. However, there was evidence of self-regulation and self-actualisation. For instance, attendance and engagement on the Computing module improved, especially for Louis and Kiera, who did not miss any of the sessions for the rest of the module and the following year. The group facilitated the recruitment of a new group of Digital Leaders the following year and actively participated in digital technology events in their capacity as Digital Leaders, such as a University Google Expedition Day.

Their beliefs about leadership as part of citizenship and community support were further informed. The project empowered them to consider that leadership is attainable and an integral part of being an active citizen rather than a bystander. This was a revelation for some of the female students, like Alice and Holly, who started being more vocal during sessions and participated confidently with ideas and questions.

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CONCLUDING COMMENTS

This small scale project aimed to introduce synergies between a group of undergraduate students and tutors on digital skills. It was hoped that the interactions would legitimise students' self-confidence about the contributions that informal learning can make in formal education, enrich their understanding of leadership and digital citizenship as social responsibility and help them appreciate that digital leadership encompasses not only skills but also knowledge and understanding of safe and purposeful uses of technology for themselves and for others. Perceived changes on individuals' practice emerged: tutors developed IT skills in those specific areas while teaching and learning resources were produced as a result of the partnership. The Digital Leaders' self-confidence as digital citizens also developed alongside digital literacy, which included further awareness of their use of social media as teaching professionals. In this context they started questioning the corporate infrastructures that govern their data. The project reinforced the constructivist nature of learning through sharing. There is a need to build on this study longer term to explore how the involvement and experiences of diverse groups of Digital Leaders can influence the development of their leadership identity, active engagement with institutional data and contributions as well as how we can manage such an intervention at an institution-wide scale.

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KOGA ĆETE ZVATI? RAZVOJ DIGITALNIH VOĐA NA SVEUČILIŠTU: STUDIJA SLUČAJA

Yota Dimitriadi

SAŽETAK *U našem hiperpovezanom digitaliziranom obrazovnom svijetu sveučilišni nastavnici zainteresirani su za kapitaliziranje poželjnih digitalnih trendova u obrazovanju i učenju. Studenti, pod nazivom budućih nastavnika, nalaze se među njima opremljeni digitalnim vještinama. Kako možemo ohrabriti suradnju između sveučilišnih nastavnika i studenata koja može promovirati upotrebu digitalnih snaga na zajedničku korist i poduprijeti daljnji razvoj profesionalnih identiteta studenata, kao i digitalne kompetencije sveučilišnih nastavnika? U radu donosimo priče devet nastavnika i jedanaest budućih nastavnika s preddiplomskih studija koji rade zajedno na digitalnom partnerstvu, raspravljajući o digitalnom vodstvu i digitalnom građanstvu. Ovom studijom slučaja želimo pokazati kako sveučilišta mogu odgovoriti na promjene izazvane tehnologijom tako da više uključe studente i podupru njihovu svijest o sebi kao o digitalnim građanima. Rezultati pokazuju da se neformalno obrazovanje koje su studenti stekli izvan učionica može upotrijebiti kako bi se podupro njihov razvoj kao digitalnih građana kroz* offline *angažiranost u zajednici.*

KLJUČNE RIJEČI

DIGITALNO GRAĐANSTVO, DIGITALNO VODSTVO, DIGITALNA PISMENOST

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'IN TIMES OF CRISIS, FOLLOWERS OF ONE TRUE GOD UNITE': SOCIAL MEDIA AND THE FORMATION OF ONLINE RELIGIOUS SILOS

Kiran Vinod Bhatia

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ABSTRACT *This paper is based on a research study designed to explore how adolescents, in situations of political polarization, deploy online networks to articulate, negotiate, and enact their political and religious identities. Based on social media ethnography tracing the online engagements of 44 high school students over a period of eighteen months, and supplemented with in-depth interviews conducted in their village communities, this study explores why social media networks emerge as ideological niches frequented by students to enact their participation as members of their respective religious communities. It suggests that in situation of experienced political polarization and discrimination, students use social media affordances to replicate their offline socio-political and religious engagements onto their virtual spaces and in the process reinforce their radical religious identities.*

KEYWORDS

SOCIAL MEDIA ETHNOGRAPHY, ONLINE RELIGIOUS SILOS, RADICAL RELIGIOSITY, ADOLESCENT STUDIES, INDIA, POLITICAL POLARIZATION

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INTRODUCTION

Various countries in the world are witnessing a surge in the articulation of radical religious ideas through digital networks and online communication. In India, we are witnessing a ritual of discursive, audio-visual, and real time violence, practiced in and through the social media networks (Chaturvedi, 2016). Social media have emerged as an active vector for socializing individuals in an extremist ideology and/or radical religious ideas, through the creation of online religious silos (Bowman-Grieve, 2009). Young people are being socialized through various social institutions such as schools, communities, media, and local systems of governance (Banaji, 2016; Bhatia, 2017, 2018; Bhatia and Pathak-Shelat, 2019) to practice religious discrimination in their everyday interactions with people from a different religious community. Media engagements play a crucial role in enabling young individuals to negotiate with discourses and practices of discrimination thus shaping their everyday interactions in accordance with the dominant narratives prevalent in their societies (Bhatia and Pathak-Shelat, 2017).

Though there are studies which argue that social media allow individuals to transcend their ideological niches and explore alternate truth regimes (Mihailidis, 2014), in this paper, I argue that young individuals, in the absence of critical engagement skills, isolate themselves in one ideological niche and consume information which reinforce their religious prejudice (Mohamed, 2007). They create online communities and networks based on and limited to their offline socializing practices, consequently self-identifying with individuals who reinforce their ideology and perspectives about the religious other.

There is a significant body of literature arguing that young people are at a risk of operating in online echo chambers (Banaji, 2016; Livingstone, 2012) and how this online behaviour influences issues related to the securitization of the youth at the global level. In this study, I expand this theoretical argument based on my empirical findings to emphasize how the online interactions of young individuals are influenced by their offline lived experiences. Given this context, the article answers an overarching question: How do young individuals use social media as performative sites to enact their religious subjectivities?

To address this question, I conducted a social media ethnography and analyzed the lived realities of young individuals who are socialized in a discriminatory religious ideology. Conducting the social media ethnography allowed me to unpack the linkages between young people's online interactions and their offline commitments to their religious communities. Many studies of young people's use of the internet are restricted to a methodology which captures a snapshot of their online activities, *i.e.* what gets posted, tweeted, shared, and so on. This study, therefore, is an important way forward in the area of internet and youth studies because it proposes a methodological framework designed to understand how young people's online engagements share a mutually constitutive relation with their offline activities and experiences. The empirical evidence gathered helps explain why and how young people use their social media to articulate and enact their religious identities. The study also explains why young people fail to transcend the

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ideological limitations imposed by their everyday politico-religious experiences. In the following sections, I argue that it is an absence of safe inter-faith dialogic spaces where young individuals can interact with members from different religious communities which compels them to use their social media networks to seek support of people who share views consistent with their opinions (Conway, 2006).

YOUNG PEOPLE'S EXPERIENCES OF POLITICAL POLARIZATION AND RADICAL RELIGIOSITY

In the recent times, a discriminatory religio-political discourse has gained momentum and propelled various political parties in India to use social networking sites to facilitate new and radical forms of political proselytization. Religion is used as the dominant modality to engender, articulate, and enact political participation with regard to electoral activities as well as everyday engagements in public life (Christiane, 2005). Communal violence and discrimination are, thus, mediated via online networks and operate under multiple logics of politics, education, and religion (Bhatia, 2017). The dominant political discourse circulated in and through social media uses religious discrimination as the *modus operandi* and initiates masses into a culture of silence where any argument against the hegemonic project of reinforcing the communal divide is crushed with online abuse and in some cases offline aggression (Cherian, 2016).

Many studies conducted in similar situations of political polarization in other countries (Weimann, 2015) indicate that adolescents are more susceptible and vulnerable to extremist content. In studies conducted on Islamic radicalization (Salem *et al.*, 2008; Yamaguchi, 2013), it was revealed that social networking platforms allow radical voices to engender "hypermedia seduction" via visual motifs and content rich with themes of graphic violence. When young individuals who have experienced situations of polarization participate in this hypermedia reality, the blatancy of the visual cues and vivid images invokes in them strong emotional and psychological responses as well as violent reactions. Also, the affordances of social networking platforms such as anonymity, unparalleled reach, unmonitored exchange and consumption of information, and intractability, among other things allow young individuals to freely articulate and express the radical ideas which are considered unacceptable in offline spaces inhabited by multiple and diverse voices (Weimann, 2010).

In these closed online communities, when young individuals are continuously exposed to a single narrative of religious discrimination, they start identifying themselves as religious monoliths. Also, in these online social networking communities, young people experience strong affective affiliations with others because, oftentimes, members draw from the same repertoire of interpretations and support each other (Postmes and Brunsting, 2002). Young people who participate in and through these online networks and communities operate within highly emotional environments and so are vulnerable. An expanding literature (Lea and Spears, 2003; Malthaner and Lindekilde, 2015) shows that online social networks that are constituted in and of a single dominant interpretive

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frame and feed on discourse of religious prejudice exploit youth vulnerability. This phenomenon of influencing young individuals through online social networks is more pronounced among "lone actors" or young individuals who are struggling with the needs for belongingness and acceptance (Gill *et al.*, 2014).

Chaturvedi (2016) conducted a study to understand how social media networks are being used by political groups to promote the ideology of religious discrimination in India. Based on her findings, she argues that the materiality of online networking sites allows prejudiced voices, which are otherwise challenged by critical individuals in offline public spaces, to create closed communication enclaves and circulate information befitting their agenda unquestionably. This gives rise to online silos. Studies undertaken by scholars such as Mohamed (2007) and Warner (2010) in countries of the Global North such as the United Kingdom, Germany, Finland, and Australia, argue that social media advance engagement with and the circulation of extremist content. Online networking sites facilitate information circulation in bigger volumes and at larger speed, and in diverse formats especially the visual narratives compelling individuals to be invested emotionally. Due to this, it becomes easier for prejudiced or radical individuals to promote extremist ideas as the dominant discourse and mobilize public opinion (Tsfati and Weimann, 2002). They argue that various extremist groups use social media networks to publish hateful comments, propagating their discriminatory agenda to communities and individuals beyond their geographical reach (Pollock, 2006). These hateful comments constitute what is often theorized as "discursive violence" enacted in online spaces. Discursive violence is defined as violence inflicted on others who have a different ideology through use of words, visuals, and sounds. In other words, when individuals use derogatory language, hateful remarks, abuses, and violent memes online to silence diverse and/or liberal voices they are essentially enacting discursive violence.

Extending this line of inquiry, studies have analyzed the influence of radical online networks on adolescents (Biddle, 2015; Khalid and Leghari, 2014; Blackwood *et al.*, 2015). These studies claim that engaging in extremist content online is a consequence of marginalization experienced by the youth in their offline communities (Khalid and Leghari, 2014). In one such study, Biddle (2015) used experimental design to argue that young people who are more susceptible to the influence of extremist content lack critical skills to evaluate the credibility and bias of a given information source and often remain confined to a single interpretive frame of meaning making. Similarly, a study conducted by Blackwood *et al.* (2015) argues that adolescents raised in situations of political instability and marginalization are vulnerable to radical voices online because engaging with extremist ideas anonymously allows them to express their grievances and give meaning to their lived realities.

Although several studies have been conducted to understand how a discriminatory ideology is perpetuated in and through online networks, most studies focus on large scale commercial online networks. These studies overlook cloaked social media spaces where more information can be revealed about engagement of adolescents with extremist

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content and radical voices. Conducting research linking social media to offline experiences of discrimination requires infiltration of some kind to get access to encrypted and closed-access spaces or proxy sites such as WhatsApp, Facebook Messenger, Hangouts, and the like. In order to access these personal online spaces of networking and communication, researchers must adopt an ethnographic approach and immerse themselves in the lived realities of young individuals, both online and offline.

In this paper, therefore, I use social media ethnography to study high school students in three villages of Gujarat, belonging to two religious communities, *i.e.* Hindus and Muslims, and explore how their social media engagements facilitate the formation of radical religious identities among them. An ethnographic immersion in their social media networks reveals how their media engagements exacerbate the formation of politico-religious silos wherein they acquire radical religious identities. Based on social media ethnography tracing the online engagements of 49 high school students over a period of eighteen months, and supplemented with in-depth interviews conducted in their village communities, this study examines how adolescents negotiate their politico-religious identities in and through their social media networks.

ABOUT THE STUDY

This paper is based on a research study designed to explore how adolescents, in situations of political polarization, use social media networks to enact their political and religious identities. Situations of political polarization can be experienced at two levels: first, at the societal level where the discourses and practices used by political groups reinforce a [religious] discriminatory ideology informed by preferences diverging towards ideological poles (Wojcieszak, 2015; Abrams and Fiorina, 2012); second, at the individual level where partisans view each other as adversaries and develop identities, religious and civic, based on the imagined binaries such as us versus them, self versus the other, victim versus the perpetrator (Pratt, 2015). According to Iyengar *et al*. (2012), political polarization at the individual level operates within the affective realm as it influences ways in which individuals relate to and behave with the demonized [religious] other. Such studies argue that affective polarization has increased with the advent of online networks through which negative remarks imputed on the other are circulated at a faster speed and reach a larger audience (Abramowitz and Saunders, 2008). I build on these ideas to conceptualize political polarization as everyday rituals of participation in public life wherein individuals enact their stake in reinforcing the dominant ideology of religious discrimination at the societal level. This is done through the everyday "practices of microaggression" (Bhatia and Pathak-Shelat, 2019), involving but not limited to violating, abusing, and dehumanizing the religious other in their immediate offline communities.

The young people who participated in this research belong to the rural areas of Gujarat, the westernmost state in India. Through community engagements, local media narratives, education, and political systems of governance, they are raised in an ideology of religious

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discrimination. Data detailing how they are socialized as religious subjects have been published in previous studies (Bhatia, 2017, 2018; Bhatia and Pathak-Shelat, 2017, 2019). Students enact this ideology of religious discrimination by practicing micro-aggression towards the religious other. These experiences of enacting and facing discrimination in the everyday realities often manifest in their online social networks. Also, the access to and participation in their online social groups is based on religious identities and often include members from their offline religious communities. In these online groups, they find it easier to articulate their ideas of religious discrimination without accounting for the authenticity or validity of the discourses they engage in.

In this research, the offline spaces of my student-participants include their village communities, religious organizations, media and communication technologies, and education institutions. I worked in the role of a media educator with 180 school students in these villages over a period of 22 months, starting mid- August 2016. During this phase, I designed an ethnographic research to draw narratives from their communities on how young individuals are socialized within a discriminatory ideology of religious belonging. I explored their how they engage with different forms of media technologies and narratives to identify the ways and means through which they were socialized to discriminate against the religious other. For this purpose, I used ethnographic methods such as in-depth interviews of students and village residents and observation schedules.

The young children from these three villages who constitute the sample of the study range in the age group of 11-14 years, attend classes in a Gujarati medium school, *i.e.* the only municipal primary school in these three villages, and lack English language competencies, *i.e.* they cannot read, write, or speak in English. At the outset, I provided a detailed description of my research to all the students in grade nine, eight, and seven and invited all of them to participate. For this study, I recruited students from the school who volunteered to participate in this research and were willing to add me to their online social groups on WhatsApp and Facebook. In all, 44 students – 34 boys and 10 girls, agreed to participate. They added me on the different social media groups they frequented or were a member of and towards the end of the induction phase I was a part of 30 social media groups. There was a lot of overlap between these groups with regard to both the content that was circulated and the individuals who were identified as group members. Table 1 and 2 outline the key features of the student-participants.

Table 1. **Gender and Age**

Male	77%
Female	33%
12-11 years old	20%
11-13 years old	52%
13-14 years old	28%

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Table 2. **Religion and Languages spoken in offline and online spaces**

Religion	
Hindu	53%
Muslim	47%
Language	
Hindi	18%
Gujarati	55%
Urdu-Gujarati	27%

I also requested the student-participants to seek a written permission from their parents allowing them to participate in the study and give interviews. Some students requested me to brief their parents about the research and I visited their homes to carry out the process. Subsequently, I conducted interviews with 39 students who volunteered to participate in this study. For this study, the data collection phase (observations and interviews) started in September 2017 and continued for a period of eighteen months. I prepared a semi-structured interview-schedule including open-ended questions related to their routines, interactions at school, media environments, and family relations. Extensive observation notes were prepared to analyze when, where, and how students articulated, enacted, and reinforced their religious identities. Observation was conducted at several sites including classrooms, their houses, playgrounds, community centres, village lanes, and other hang-out spaces in the villages. The observation schedule was constructed to examine interpersonal relations among students from different religious communities. The schedule included guidelines to observe how adolescents from the two religious communities interacted with and referred to each other. I also observed the role of adults and village residents in this process. Additionally, I used the observation schedule to examine how adolescents engaged with media technologies and narratives – which media they had access to, whether the access was independent or regulated by adults, how they interpreted the media narratives, who helped them understand media texts, and so on. Finally, I also used observation as a method to examine adolescents' engagement on social media platforms – do they have access to Facebook and WhatsApp? What do they consume and circulate through these networks? Why and how do they use social media to enact their religious identities?

In order to examine their online engagements, I requested my student-participants to add me to their social media networks on Facebook and WhatsApp. In time, I was added onto their social media accounts and groups and I started observing and examining how young people enact their religious identities online. I could see linkages between their offline socialization as religious subjects and their online engagements with radical discourses. I, therefore, decided to conduct a social media ethnography (Hobart, 2010) to allow myself to immerse in their digital life. Social media ethnography is one of the most dynamic methodologies which allow researchers to combine participant interviews

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with relevant online material by following or actively participating in their social media platforms and online communities (Postill, 2010). To trace how social media ethnography emerged as a useful research methodology, it is important to acknowledge the work of scholars such as Baym and Markham (2009), Hine (2008), and Hobart (2010), who argued that the internet is the new emerging site of research and changes the way we understand and conduct qualitative inquiry. These scholars wrote about the Web 1.0 context, very different from the social media platforms we discuss in this paper. Their analysis, therefore, focused on conducting an ethnography of internet examining how the internet allows some communities and cultures to flourish in virtual spaces (Kozinets, 2010). With the advent of social media, there was a felt need to unpack how social relations between individuals were emerging in and through the online networks. This strand of research also focused on understanding how the socialities in the social media spaces between individuals were influenced by their offline lived experiences. Postill and Pink (2012), therefore, developed social media ethnography as a research methodology to conceptualize how ethnographic places which are traceable on the web connect with offline realities of individuals participating in the social media spaces and networks. This methodology can be deployed to examine how linkages between online and offline practices can shape constitution of social groups and the practices they engage in together.

In this research, the online communities of my student-participants consist of members who seek to identify and define public issues based on their religious identities and collaborate with their group members to reinforce radical ideas – often contextualizing these within the larger political milieu of their villages, cities, states, and the country. Examining their discursive participation in their online social communities "involves embracing online ethnography as a textual practice and as a lived craft, and destabilizes the ethnographic reliance on sustained presence in a bound field site," which is exclusively online or offline (Hine, 2000: 43). Online discursive enactment of social identities implicates the physical as well as digital realities of individuals (Hine, 2008; Postill, 2010) and so the focus of this study is to bind together the range of social media discourses on religious discrimination with associated offline contexts of the participants, described in their interviews.

I designed an observation schedule to monitor their social media engagements and prepared extensive notes details issues such as the nature of their social media networks, the kinds of discussions they participated in, the news and/or updates they shared via social media, the kinds of groups (WhatsApp and Facebook) they engaged with, their online friend list, and so on. I also prepared an observation schedule analyzing their social media habits addressing questions such as- Did they check the authenticity of the information before circulating it? How frequently did they post and/or share political and religious content? How often did they promote discriminatory content either by sharing it or consuming it?

These observations were substantiated with in-depth interviews conducted with 44 students to understand how they use social media as a performative site to practice,

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enact, and reinforce their religious subjectivity. Two rounds of interviews were conducted – first, to understand how they experience and practice their religious identities both on/offline; second, to examine if their social media engagements reinforce or challenge the ideology of religious discrimination prevalent in their communities. Each interview lasted for approximately fifty minutes and was conducted in Gujarati. Interviews were transcribed in Gujarati and later translated into English. The pre-publication audio-video tapes and transcripts were shared with the student-participants and their families for respondent validation.

Data were added into the NVivo software program and coded by observations and responses. Data were then analyzed using descriptive coding (Saldaña, 2013) to understand how their offline communicative ecologies socialized them within a discriminatory ideology. I also analyzed how social media networks provided adolescents with closed and regulated spaces wherein their prejudice against the religious other was reinforced by members who share the same ideology. On these social media platforms, the entry-exit of alternative narratives that can challenge the validity of their radical discourse is strictly restricted. Three themes emerged from this analysis, *i.e.* using social media affordances to create religious silos, using anonymity to discursively violate the "religious other", and expressing radical religiosity in offline spaces.

USING SOCIAL MEDIA AFFORDANCES TO CREATE RELIGIOUS SILOS

Based on the findings, I argue that offline experiences of discrimination and violence translate into the use of social media networks to legitimize adolescents' radical ideas and behaviour. Stories from village neighbourhoods, informal and domestic communication spaces, and the local media narratives they consume dovetail into their online engagements and participation. When these young students, for instance, are exposed to anti-minority discourse circulating their mediascapes, they interpret it from within the meaning-making frames endowed upon them through the socialization they receive in their local communities. For instance, many young people in these villages watch and circulate WhatsApp videos related to lynching of the members of religious (and/or caste) minorities in India. When young people watch these videos under adult supervision, they interpret the act of lynching based on what their community members and peer groups suggest. As a result, when young people in Hindu households witness the lynching of Muslims they tend to interpret this incident as "called for" by the Muslim community. Ravi, a Hindu student, explains, "The Muslims kill cows – our mothers. They have asked for the beating. How dare they harm the animal we worship!"

On the other hand, Muslim students interpret this incident as a violent act designed to oppress Muslims in India. In doing so, they often abuse the entire Hindu community and consider the all Hindu residents in their villages as perpetrators.

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There, young students often use their social media platforms to seek information and content consistent with their views to bolster their radical claims and religious prejudice. This creates online religious silos. Many student-participants in the research agreed that instead of seeking alternative narratives and perspectives, they use social media networks to support their arguments and find information to "prove others wrong". Nusheen, a 14-year-old Muslim student, explains:

I remember reading about the Muslim traders[1] being lynched to death over suspicions that they possessed beef. I felt so angry and scared at the same time. My father is a butcher and owns a meat shop... My first thought was "Is he safe?" In such times of anxiety, I talk to my Muslim friends online through WhatsApp and Facebook. I feel safe with them. Also, they understand my anger. When I talk to them I realize it is not our fault; they are evil!

Like Nausheen, many other student-participants claimed that the national anti-minority discourse perpetuated their communication channels and texts through the local news organizations and the informal conversations emerging from their community engagements in the villages. Also, these discourses are interpreted from within the frame of religio-political socialization they receive in their villages.

Let us take the example of Rahim, a 14-year-old Muslim boy, who is a member of four WhatsApp groups, *i.e.* one family group, two groups of Muslim community male friends, and one group consisting of his cousins. All these groups include members only from the Muslim community and they often share political discourse through these networks. These online social communities are also used to discuss issues pertaining the Hindu-Muslim relations in the villages such as the dispute on who can use the grounds surrounding the temple, how girls from the Hindu families are losing their values because they are being encouraged to pursue higher studies, how Muslim boys should not be allowed to mingle with Hindu girls, and how Muslims are richer and making progress despite the political situation due to their faith in *Allah*. Sometimes, during these conversations in WhatsApp groups, Hindu villagers were referred to as *Kafir*, *Haraam*, *Mushrikun, Takfir, Murtad*, and so on, all alluding to a person who refuses to accept the Islamic teachings and the one true God. Rahim explains:

What we see in our societies, we discuss on these groups. When we didn't have phones and WhatsApp, we used to stand in the village lanes to talk. Now, we also do it over WhatsApp. It is easier to just forward a video to explain your point... and there are so many available to show that everyone wants to harass us [Muslims]. Talk to the village elders... they will tell you how Muslims have always suffered.

As is evident, their online engagements are influenced by their offline religious commitments as they learn to use social media to strengthen the sense of belongingness among their religious community. The feeling of solidarity resulting from such social media engagements is "negative" for it builds the community against the imagined religious other who is constructed as a merciless and violent deviant. Also, for bringing this constructed perpetrator into existence, community members use discursive violence as a modality around which the identity of the religious other is articulated.

[1] Some Muslim traders who transport and sell meat in Gujarat have been lynched on the suspicion that they trade beef, a product which is banned in the state of Gujarat (Banaji, 2018).

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When young individuals interact with the religious other in this imagined realm of experience defined by violent discourse and an uncritical interpretation of the socio-political realities, the process engenders animosity and hatred among members from different religious communities.

According to my student-respondents, the imagined realm of experience in social media communities shield the members from external scrutiny and sanctions being imposed in their offline spaces either due to their religious or gender identities (Sageman, 2004). Social media allow young individuals to enact their participation remotely. In other words, the online space enables their virtual selves to be invested in the construction of reality; in the absence of real time physical interaction amongst each other, it isolates them further from their local neighbourhoods where the prevailing reality is more diverse and interspersed with the presence of the religious deviant (Hussain and Saltman, 2014). Let us take the example of Pratik who is an 11-year-old Hindu boy. He is a member of four WhatsApp groups and is very active on Facebook. He explains,

I don't send friend requests to my classmates who are Muslims. I share many things which are in favour of the Hindus... I am a proud Hindu. I don't want to hurt them. Also, they will never like my posts and photos. Why add them to my Facebook? Or talk to them on WhatsApp?

As is evident, their online interactions, though emerging from their offline routines, reinforce their hardliner thinking and pull them away from the realities in their local communities. Let's take another example of Sunil, a 12-year-old Hindu student, who identifies himself as a proud member of the Thakor caste. He has read about cases of lynching and actively participates in discussions on "How to save cows and the Hindu religion from the dictates of *Musalmans*?" through his social media networks. He is a member of two WhatsApp groups and also actively engages with his community friends through Facebook Messenger. Sahil, participating in the discussion related to the lynching of a Muslim man from Rajasthan on the suspicion that he possessed cow meat[2], wrote in his WhatsApp group,

I have observed this in our villages too. Hindus will have to punish them because Musalmans *steal our cows. The* Bharwads *and* Rabaris *in the neighbouring villages have faced this problem because of the* mias[3]*. They steal their cows, kill them, and sell the meat.*

Sahil reads the regional newspapers and watches the local news channel. These regional media channels clearly articulate their ideology of religious discrimination and cater to the populist discourse (Bhatia, 2017; Sonwalkar, 2006). Also, Sahil's WhatsApp profile photo is the image of a Hindu god, *Hanuman*, with the slogan "One *Musalman* said that this photo of a Hindu god won't even get 5000 shares. Let us see how many Ram (Hindu) *Bakhts* (Believers) are there!" Also, Sahil uses his privacy settings to ensure that only his friends on WhatsApp, *i.e.* those he has added in his phone book, can see this display photo. He explains, "I make sure I don't add these Muslim people in my phonebook. I don't

[2] For more details read the article, "Alwar lynching: Pehlu Khan, killed by cow vigilantes, was no cattle smuggler". (https://www.hindustantimes.com/india-news/alwar-lynching-pehlu-khan-killed-by-cow-vigilantes-was-no-cattle-smuggler/story-oHFwJT3e8R8kJn396KEGOO.html)
[3] A slang used for Muslims

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want them to know what I feel or else they will start a discussion and I am bored of proving them wrong."

According to Sahil, online social media enable him and his Hindu friends to create an orchestrated public space where Muslims are not recognized as legitimate participants and thus they have no right to voice their concerns, ideas, and opinions. Online social networks, therefore, enable young individuals with extremist ideas to animate a society and an experience that lies beyond the secular obligations of the country and where the "religious other" is not recognized as a stakeholder in the "meaning-making process influencing the politics of truth in the society" (Power, 2012). This practice of creating online religious silos permits adolescents to design a public sphere based on the politics of exclusion wherein the "religious other" is denied the right to speak, participate, and enact their differences.

It is important to note here that the social media offer several affordances such as the easy entry and exist mechanisms, decentralized participation and networks (Awan, 2007), and uncritical and/or anonymous public engagements in online social communities. Young people rely on these affordances to curate experiences and an imagined public sphere wherein they have the institutional authority, by the manner of being the online group admin, to restrict, deny, and erase differences, personified in the religious other. When Sahil and his friends create a religious silo and engage with political issues in their social media groups, for instance, they present their narrative as the "truth" and reinforce it continuously; the cultural and religious other is disrespected and their values and identities are interpreted as deviant in the dominant culture.

In the next section, I discuss how this engagement with radical ideas is reinforced and translates into discursive violence inflicted on the religious other through social media platforms.

USING SOCIAL MEDIA TO INFLICT DISCURSIVE VIOLENCE UPON THE "RELIGIOUS OTHER"

Though it is argued that online conversations and dialogues shield the participants from the world out there that is harsher, more conflict-ridden, antagonistic, and not always fair (Arntfield, 2015), through this study I claim otherwise. My student-participants use their social media platforms to hurl discursive abuses towards the religious other. Some of the participants claimed that they use their social media networks to identify people who criticize their religious practices and/or political opinions and create fake Facebook pages to hurl abuses at them. On social media platforms, most of the participants claim to be "freer", implying that they are more abusive and harsh while articulating their religious identities.

Rafiq, is a 14-year-old Muslim boy, who claims to be "addicted to social media". When interviewed, he eagerly sent me a friend request on Facebook and added me to his friend

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list. On his timeline, many of his Muslim friends share links to news stories criticizing the Hindus and initiate discussions motivated by their religious prejudice. They shared examples of how they belittle Hindus on various public posts and identify themselves as members of an "ideological army" created to protect their Muslim brotherhood. Kuchiya, an eleven-year-old Muslim boy who regularly comments on Rafiq's timeline, once posted a video made by a local news channel regarding the ban imposed on Muslim youth, restricting them from entering Garba grounds[4]. In the comment thread of this post he wrote, "They [Hindus] think we are interested in being friends with them. In our families, we aren't even allowed to talk to Hindus – they are so dirty and lesser humans. I wish I had the power to teach them a lesson!" To this, his other friends responded with a string of violent abuses hurled towards the imagined Hindu other. The construction and use of these abuses insert in the discursive space shared by Hindus-Muslims an intentionality to defy, violate, and defile the human body of the 'religious other' which is situated in offline sites. Though online discursive violence in the form of abuses and bullying does not always translate into offline acts of aggression, the threat inherent in the discursive act of desecrating the religious identity embedded in the virtual self of the "religious other" gives the abusers a sense of power over them and their community.

In readings of collective violence, dismantling the human body is seen as a sign of dishonouring and/or defiling the entire religious community (Sarkar, 2002). Sapna, a 12-year-old Hindu girl, identifies herself as an "active user" of WhatsApp and Facebook and has many groups on these social media platforms. She explains how abusing the imagined religious other through social media helps her attack the entire community,

On social media groups it is easier to show the Momin *community their true place... they are the weaker community and the foreigners. I sometimes use my fake Facebook profile to join such comment sections where Hindus from everywhere are seeking our support in showing Muslims their true place.*

As is evident from this conversation, in identifying a common and imagined enemy in the "religious other" and attacking this enemy, student-participants experience a sense of solidarity and belongingness. The discursive practices of violating the "other" enable young individuals to be invested in an embodied experience of discriminating and by that virtue dehumanizing the religious other. According to Rakesh, a 14-year-old Hindu student, the anonymity of social media is a "blessing" for it allows the Hindus to express their raw potential without the fear of being recognized. When I asked why people like him experience a sense of fear in expressing their dislike towards Muslims in their local neighbourhoods he explained,

We have to work with these momins *every day. We work together in farms, schools, and villages. If we abuse them for who they are and they know we don't like them, the work will suffer and then our family income will be less. That doesn't mean that they are good people. On social media you can actually tell them who they are, their true worth as the lesser, unreliable, and selfish people.*

[4] For more details read, "Gujarat: Muslims barred from garba events in Bharuch." https://indianexpress.com/article/india/india-news-india/gujarat-muslims-barred-from-garba-events-in-bharuch-3041473/

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As is evident, social media are used by the student-participants to anonymously wage a discursive war with the religious other and translate their radical ideas into discursive activities in which members of their community can participate.

Ruksana, a 14-year-old Muslim girl, feels that when she actually writes a comment criticizing and calling out the faults among the Hindu community or sends her support in the form of a message to a Muslim friend who is being abused by the Hindu trolls, she experiences a sense of accomplishment. She says,

When you actually write a comment that can silence the Hindus who are abusive and mean, you feel as if you are actually supporting your people [religious community]. Through social media, I often extend support to my community members either by liking their comments/posts or by defending my community in my comments from the [religious] abuses hurled at its members.

Like Ruksana, many student-participants agree that engaging in and through social media and posting comments against the religious other help them experience a sense of solidarity among their offline local neighbourhoods. Though they do it in and through words and in cyberspace, the sense of belongingness dovetails into their offline commitments and increases their bonding within their offline religious communities. Many researchers (Bowman-Grieve, 2009; Busher, 2015) have identified and even measured a "sense of virtual community belongingness" among young individuals who see validation in and through their enactment of affective affiliation with their community members on social media networks.

These online engagements sometimes feed into reinforcing their aggressive behaviour towards the religious other in offline spaces such as their classrooms, village lanes, market places, and so on. In the next section, I explore how students use online communicative texts of religious discrimination to validate their sense of hatred towards their classmates belonging to a different religious community.

EXPRESSING RADICAL RELIGIOSITY IN OFFLINE SPACES

Based on my research findings, I argue that the feeling of solidarity experienced in the virtual religious silos can compel young individuals to sever their ties with the religious other in their offline spaces, thus, making them averse to commonplace diversity existing in their local neighbourhoods. For instance, Zabeen, a 13-year-old Muslim student, finds her local neighbourhoods unfriendly and extremely formal. She explains,

In the village lanes, if I come across a Hindu classmate I have to act nice. I have to greet her or else the community members will think I am 'katar'[5]. *It is not as if I don't want to smile and greet them ever. I just don't like staying with them in close proximity. Also, if I wear a hijab and walk through a Hindu neighbourhood I feel strange; maybe a little scared. I wish we could copy [replicate] our social media groups here in the villages. Lock them out!*

[5] *Katar* is a word in Hindi/Gujarati language which is used to describe a person who has rigid religious views and thus refuses to even interact with the "other".

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When I probed her further to find out if she tries to limit her interactions with her Hindu classmates in the school as she does on her social media she said,

Yes. I try very hard. In the classes, for instance, we – Muslim girls, sit together in the last three rows. It helps. If you sit with the Hindu girls they make you feel as if you are impure. Also you can't bring chicken[6] in your tiffin boxes because the Hindu girls then start making faces and all.

Zabeen, Mahin, Ashiyana, and other Muslim girls in grade 8 have a WhatsApp group where they share and discuss classroom assignments and academic issues. They started replicating their classroom groups on their social media platforms. As a result of the politics of exclusion where Hindu classmates are neither invited nor feel welcomed to participate in collaborative learning processes, the constructed reality is constituted of a single truth. Offline religious silos are replicated into online learning spaces so that they never get an opportunity to reconcile their aspirations and interpretations with the experiences and expectations of the religious other.

In one such learning situation, while they sat reading from the history textbook, a discussion was initiated on the rule of the Mughals[7] in the Indian-subcontinent. During classroom discussions, students were hesitant to participate and refused to voice their understanding of the issue. After the class, however, Hindu and Muslims students withdrew into their groups on the playground and started discussing and debating this issue. While the group of Hindu students identified the Mughal emperors as "invaders, prosecutors, cruel, barbaric, and plunderers", the Muslim students elaborated on how the Mughal emperors contributed towards strengthening the art, culture, architecture, and governance in India. In these in-group discussions, students often pulled out their mobile phones to extract information related to this issue. Referring to one such article describing how the Maharashtra government was trying to delete the discussion regarding the Mughal period from the primary school history textbooks, Manoj, a 13-year-old Hindu boy said,

The government knows that they were cruel and the invaders. Why study them. Just yesterday, my uncle shared a video on our family WhatsApp group in which there was detailed information on how Muslims want to convert the entire world. That is not happening! Look at our classmates; they were so upset when the teacher said that Aurangzeb was cruel and vicious. Haven't you seen [the movie] Padmavat![8]

There is a constant exchange between the online engagements in the virtual religious silos and the offline experience of the students in these villages. The online interactions, resource, and engagements are used by young individuals to justify and validate their prejudice towards the "religious other" so that in and through their discourse they reinforce the negative representations of the other pervading the societal fabric.

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[6] Most of the Hindu residents in these villages are vegetarians. They find it difficult to share the dining space with their Muslim classmates because Muslims eat non-vegetarian food items.

[7] Mughals represent the Muslims in India; in the current climate of political polarization, the Muslims are the "other" who do not fit into the right-wing populist idea of the nation. For more details read "No Mughals in Maharashtra" by Sarah Farooqui (https://indianexpress.com/article/opinion/columns/maharashtra-government-history-textbooks-no-mughals-muslim-rulers-4805837/)

[8] Padmavat is Bollywood movie in which the Muslim ruler Khilji is represented as the most cruel and barbaric emperor while his enemy, the Rajput king Ratnasimbha, is portrayed as extremely virtuous and kind. These representations in popular culture often reinforce the discriminatory ideology that Islam is a violent religion.

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There were, however, some student-participants who acknowledge the role of social media and online interactions in reinforcing the communal divide between Hindus and Muslims in their villages. According to Sumit, a 14-year-old Hindu student, social media create an unreal world where the divide between the religious communities is impenetrable and irreconcilable. He explains,

On social media one can control almost everything [who they talk to, what they talk about and hear, who gets to connect with us]. The real world is not that rigid, or is it? I mean there are differences between Hindus and Muslims in our villages but we also live together, talk, and laugh. We work together; sometimes we reach out to our neighbours to ask for sugar and salt!

Sumit and other student-participants emphasize the orchestrated nature of social media groups wherein negotiations with political and religious issues are contained within the dominant interpretive frame reifying the naturalized power dynamics between Hindus and Muslims. The ease with which young individuals can mobilize people to support their ideology of religious discrimination plays a crucial role is drawing young individuals' attention away from lived experiences of co-existence in their own communities. On the social media groups, young individuals operate in a highly decentralized realm where the dynamics of interactions are extremely selective and controlled. As a result of this, young individuals do not have to negotiate with differences or participate in deliberative dialogues to address differences. Ravida, a 13-year-old Muslim girl, feels that this engenders unrealistic expectations among young individuals to create a society that is "free of differences". This aspiration was evident through the interviews conducted with student-participants wherein they claim that their version of an ideal society/community entails a place constituted of and governed by the rituals and expectations of their religious community. Nishant, a 12-year-old Hindu boy, expects that the access to the common public grounds around the Ram temple in the village is restricted to the Hindus because if Muslim children occupy this space, they will pollute its sanctity. Social media allow them to imagine a community where the religious other can be pushed to the margins and be invisibilized from the public sphere. It instills in them a negative aspiration to strive for a homogenous community which is devoid of religious differences. In an attempt to create this imagined society, young individuals often draw inwards towards their respective religious communities while discrediting their everyday engagements with the religious other in their local neighbourhoods as mere obligations.

Participation in these online religious silos, however, intensifies the communal divide between these two communities and reinforces the dominant rationality of religious discrimination.

CONCLUSION

This paper suggests that in situations of political polarization and religious discrimination in societies, young individuals use social media to create and inhabit religious silos. Young individuals experience a sense of solidarity in these online groups

as members share in the same ideology and often exchange views, information, and interpretations which are consistent with the dominant ideology of religious discrimination. For young people who are placed in situations of political polarization and have to constantly negotiate with power structures to articulate and enact their identities, the sense of security extended by their virtual communities act as a "fleece blanket" against the expectations of a polarized world (Busher, 2015). Based on the empirical findings presented in this study, I argue that adolescents use social media networks to engage with co-religionists who reinforce and validate their religious world views and biases. They created enclosed and highly regulated online sites through social media which can be accessed only by those individuals who support their ideology of religious discrimination and/prejudice. This helps young individuals experience a sense of security and belongingness online as they struggle with the lived experiences of discrimination in their offline spaces.

Social media allow young individuals to construct an "imagined reality" where differences are obliterated and a normalized society based on a single "regime of truth and practice" is created. Invisibilizing differences in and through these online religious silos occurs in the practice of discursively violating the "other". Many student-participants in this study claimed that the affordances of social media platforms and networks encouraged them to enact their religious identities in and through the use of discursive violence. Social media are characterised by technical affordances such as easy entry and exit, anonymity, interactivity, ease in production and circulation, and so on. These online platforms are highly decentralized and so used by young individuals to create online communities and networks where they can articulate their religious identity in isolation of the existing religious differences prevailing in the real offline spaces. Social media grant them a discursive field where they can be hateful, can hurl abuses, spread rumours, circulate messages designed to hurt the sentiments of a religious community, and so on, without being held accountable for their actions.

Young individuals, who use discursive violence to extend support to their religious community and its members online, undergo an embodied experience of discriminating against people based on their religious identities. In and through these online articulations, young individuals gather discursive support for their ideas which then, sometimes, manifest in the form of everyday practices of discrimination enacted in their offline communities (Salem *et al.*, 2008).

For these young individuals, social media provide new and more efficient channels, resources, and affordances to articulate their religious identities as experiences in solidarity building by means of discursively violating and excluding the other.

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„U VRIJEME KRIZE, SLJEDBENICI JEDINOG PRAVOG BOGA, UJEDINITE SE“: DRUŠTVENI MEDIJI I FORMIRANJE *ONLINE* RELIGIOZNIH SILOSA

Kiran Vinod Bhatia

SAŽETAK *Rad se temelji na istraživanju koje ispituje kako adolescenti, u situacijama političke polariziranosti, razvijaju* online *zajednice da bi iznijeli, obrazložili i branili svoje političke i religijske identitete. Polazeći od etnografije društvenih medija, praćenjem* online *uključenosti 44 srednjoškolska učenika tijekom osamnaest mjeseci te provođenjem dubinskih intervjua u njihovim seoskim zajednicama, istraživanje nastoji odgovoriti na pitanje zašto se društvene mreže javljaju kao ideološke niše učenika gdje pokazuju svoju uključenost kao članovi određenih religijskih zajednica. To sugerira da u situacijama u kojima su iskusili političku polarizaciju i diskriminaciju učenici koriste pogodnosti društvenih medija da ponove svoj* offline *društveno-politički i religijski angažman u virtualnim prostorima te da u tome procesu osnaže svoj radikalni religijski identitet.*

KLJUČNE RIJEČI
ETNOGRAFIJA DRUŠTVENIH MEDIJA, *ONLINE* RELIGIOZNI SILOSI, RADIKALNA RELIGIOZNOST, ADOLESCENTSKE STUDIJE, INDIJA, POLITIČKA POLARIZACIJA

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THE FUNCTION AND IMPORTANCE OF FACT-CHECKING ORGANIZATIONS IN THE ERA OF FAKE NEWS: TEYIT.ORG, AN EXAMPLE FROM TURKEY[1]

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ABSTRACT *The recent increase in usage of concepts such as 'fake news' or 'post-truth' reveals the importance of digital literacy especially on social media. In the digital era, people's views on different topics are attempted to be manipulated with disinformation and fake news. Fake content is rapidly replacing the reality among new media users. It is stated with concepts such as 'filter bubbles' and 'echo chambers' that there is a greater tendency for people to be fed with content that is ideologically appropriate to their own views and to believe in fake news in this content. This article analyzes the structure and functioning of fact-checking organizations in the context of preventing propagation of fake news and improving digital literacy. The research is based on content analysis of verification activities of the fact-checking organization Teyit.org, which is a member of International Fact-Checking Network in Turkey, between January 1 and June 31, 2018. By conducting in-depth interviews with the verification team, propagation of fake news on social networks, fact-checking processes and their methods of combating fake news are revealed. Our article found that fake content spreading specifically through the Internet predominantly consists of political issues.*

KEYWORDS

DISINFORMATION, FAKE NEWS, FACT-CHECKING ORGANIZATIONS, TEYIT.ORG, TURKEY

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[1] This study is part of thesis titled "The Verification Platforms in Turkey in the Context of Verification of Spreading the News in New Media Environment: Teyit.org Example".

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INTRODUCTION

There have been radical changes in news production and consumption with new media. Along with this, preferences of users have started shifting from traditional media to digital platforms, especially towards social media.

Benn Parr (2008) defines social media as an efficient way to share and discuss information and experiences with other users via the Internet by means of electronic devices (computer, smartphones, *etc*.). A different opinion which emphasizes user-generated content defines social media as "mobile and web-based technologies to create highly interactive platforms via which individuals and communities share, discuss, and modify user-generated content" (Kietzmann *et al*., 2011). According to another definition, which takes a commercial perspective, social media are defined as "a variety of ... online information that are created, initiated, circulated and used by consumers' intent on educating each other about products, brands, [problem or experience about a service]" (Blackshaw and Nazzaro, 2006).

Social media platforms are widely used in Turkey, as in the rest of the world. According to the Simon Kemp (2018) there are 51 million social media platform users in Turkey. This amounts to 63% of the population of the country. The number of users who access social media platforms from their mobile devices is 44 million. According to the research about new media users in Turkey, which was conducted by Çiğdem Bozdağ (2017), it was found that, when it comes to the Internet, the first thing that comes to mind is social media. Also, social media usage constitutes 61% of the Internet usage.

However, new media in general and social media networks in particular are also often used as platforms where false and misleading information spreads because of its nature which enables content to spread rapidly and which allows user-generated content (Lazer *et al*. 2017).

CONCEPT AND TYPES OF FAKE NEWS

The fake news concept is surely not a new phenomenon. However, the discussions on this issue were brought to the agenda intensely once again during the 2016 U.S. presidential election and the Brexit vote in the UK.

Before addressing the effects of fake news and the issue with verification platforms, it is useful to define 'fake news'. In this study, the concept of 'fake news' is defined as content that is delivered to mislead individuals regardless of its motivation.

There are various definitions of fake news in the related literature. Hunt Allcott and Matthew Gentzkow (2017: 213) define 'fake news' as "news articles that are intentionally and verifiably false, and could mislead readers". According to Axel Gelfert (2018: 84) "fake

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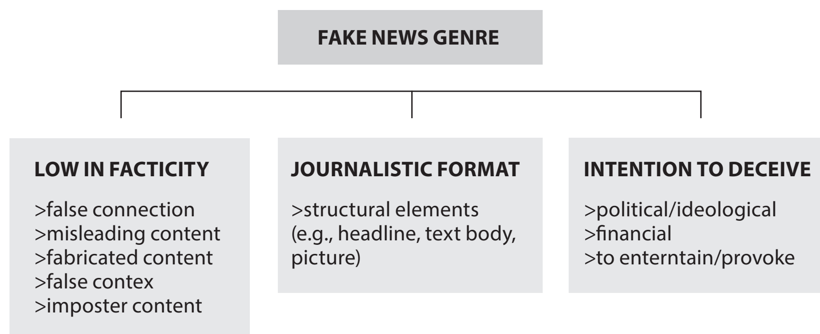
news is the deliberate presentation of (typically) false or misleading claims *as news*, where the claims are misleading *by design*."

'Fake news' is also defined as "the presentation of false claims that purport to be about the world in a format and with a content that resembles the format and content of legitimate media organisations" (Levy, 2017: 20).

David M. J. Lazer *et al*. (2018: 1094), characterize 'fake news' as "fabricated information that mimics news media content in form but not in organizational process or intent". Jana Laura Egelhofer and Sophie Lecheler (2019: 3) state that "most authors agree that fake news contains false information". They also suggest that 'fake news' alludes to two dimensions of political communication: the fake news genre (*i.e.* the deliberate creation of pseudojournalistic disinformation) and the fake news label (*i.e.* the instrumentalization of the term to delegitimize news media)".



▲*Figure 1.*
Characteristics of the fake news genre.
Source: Egelhofer and Lecheler, 2019: 99

Xinyi Zhou and Reza Zafarani (2018: 3) state that "there has been no universal definition for fake news, even in journalism." Thus, it is better to comprehend the forms related to the concept of 'fake news' rather than seeking only one definition.

Claire Wardle (2017) emphasizes that the term 'fake news' is not clear and inclusive enough, because this problem is more than about news itself. It is a situation which includes the whole information system. Besides, according to Wardle, different types of misinformation (unintended sharing of false information) and disinformation (deliberate creation and sharing of information which is known to be fake) cannot be explained solely by the concept of 'fake news'.

According to Wardle and Derakhshan (2017), the term 'fake news' is definitely inadequate to describe the phenomena of information pollution. Therefore, researchers

introduce a new conceptual framework in order to examine the information disorder and to describe three different types. By using dimensions of harm and falseness, they describe the differences between the three types of information; 'Mis-information'**:** False Information + Mistake (Good Intention), 'Dis-information'**:** False Information + Purpose of Harm (Bad Intention), 'Mal-information'**:** True Information + Purpose of Harm (Bad Intention).

Edson C. Tandoc Jr. *et al*. (2018), who examined the academic articles in which the statements of fake news are used, identify the terms such as satire, parody, fabrication, manipulation, propaganda and advertising as frequently utilized.

For instance, 'news satire**'** refers to more exaggerated and entertaining forms of fake news that are part of "mock news programs". Websites like *The Onion* focus on entertainment as well. Satire-like productions are evaluated as 'news parody**'.** This kind of fake news can also be found in Turkey, e.g. *Zaytung* website. In these kinds of websites, it is clear that the content is fake both on the side of the reader and the producer. However, this is not the case for 'news fabrication**',** which is a different type of fake news. It is very hard for readers to identify these kinds of content which are written in the form of news template and which sometimes imitate the images of news organizations. Financial and political motivations or expanding news bots are common reasons for news fabrication. In addition to this, the process of creating a fake narrative via manipulation by using videos and photographs is also called fake news. In the realm of advertising and public relations**,** the attempts to gain trust of the consumers in the form of news which are hyperbolic, eye-catching and sometimes untrue "clickbait", which enables consumers to reach more websites, are considered as fake news. It is also possible to categorize as 'fake news' some of the content that is produced to affect public opinion within the scope of propaganda activities (Tandoc Jr. *et al.*, 2018).

In their research of the 2016 U.S. presidential election, Allcott and Gentzkow (2017) state that there are two main motivations effective in sharing fake news. The first one is commercial profit. Individuals or institutions that would like to have commercial income on a website or a social media account can earn money by creating fake news, posts and content, by clicking on users' websites, by liking posts on social media accounts or by subscribing. The second motivation is ideological. Regardless of being in power or being opposition, individuals, parties and similar formations, that aim to spread or consolidate their own ideology and to appeal to the corresponding masses with fake news by manipulating them, do not refrain from sharing fake news as truth.

FACTORS CAUSING PROPAGATION OF FAKE NEWS

According to Reyes Keyes (2017: 266), the term 'post-truth era' implies that deception has become ordinary at every phase of contemporary life. According to him, the Internet is a remarkable tool for fake news presented as if true, advertisements to deceive users and malicious rumors. The Internet, which is powerful in terms of creating and disseminating data quickly, has also many problems with regard to security and reliability of these data.

Lazer *et al*. (2017) state that social media systems provide an efficient basis for misinformation to spread. This is dangerous especially for political discussion in a democratic society. Social media platforms provide a communication space for everyone who attracts followers. This new power structure enables a small number of individuals who have technical, social or political experience to distribute disinformation or 'fake news' in large volumes. In the broadest sense, 'fake news' means all kinds of false and misleading content such as fabricated reports, hoaxes, rumors, conspiracy theories, clickbaits and satire (Shao *et al*., 2017).

Echo Chambers and Filter Bubbles

Jan Van Dijk (2006) states that there has been a significant increase in the amount of information with new media. And some mediators, such as search engines regulating volume of information and communication or algorithms regulating content, are included into communication processes in order to deal with this intensity. However, according to Van Dijk, it has also some risks. The continuous use of these mediators by individuals can cause their judgment skills to weaken or they may be deprived of many other sources of benefit.

New media users can easily distinguish whether information interests them or not thanks to filtering systems. In fact, this filtering system seems to be a very efficient application at first glance, but its consequences are not always positive. Users never encounter information that can help them to overcome their prejudices because of the filters they create, but they encounter the news close to their own ideas and beliefs. People are entrapped into partisan groups and bubbles where only similar views to their own can get in and they are losing their sense of shared reality and ability to communicate across social/religious lines. At the same time, nationalism, tribalism, immigration, fear of social change and hatred for the different are on the rise again (Kakutani, 2018).

According to the effect of echo chambers, Internet sites allow users to use filtering features and create their own echo chambers. In this way, users do not encounter opposing views in the virtual world: by creating homogeneous groups, they only follow accounts and Internet sources that are close and appropriate to their own opinions (Colleoni *et al*., 2014: 319). Eli Pariser (2011) used the term 'filter bubble' to describe how online personalization leads users to isolate themselves from various views or content. The term 'filter bubble' implies that users on social media such as Facebook and Twitter interact with individuals who conform to their own political tendencies (Hess, 2017). Researchers also worry about the misconceptions that may be caused by the fact that users live in their own filter bubbles closed to different ideas and thoughts (Resnick *et al*., 2013: 95).

In her field work, Suncem Koçer (2019) claims that there is also a similar situation in Turkey. Koçer states that "users follow news platforms and journalists close their own views on social media and believe in news close to their own ideas" and emphasizes that "this is not surprising considering the dimensions of social polarization, foundations and reflections of polarization in the media".

On the other hand, there are also studies proposing that the effects of these ideas should be evaluated in a skeptical way. As An Nguyen and Hong Vu (2019) stated in their reception studies, it is oversimplified and futile to evaluate the concepts like 'echo chamber' without dealing with the socio-psychological dynamics and the ties between news and media content.

Fake Accounts, Bots and Trolls

Bot programs are pieces of software which are created to capture users' private information (files, passwords, *etc.*) by infiltrating into their personal computers. However, bot accounts used on social media platforms are created in any location regardless of time and place.

There are bot accounts in all social media platforms, but their existence and effect are more evident on Twitter. Within a research on Twitter, it has been detected that two-thirds of tweets including links were sent by bot accounts (Wojcik *et al.*, 2018).

One of the activities which are carried out by social bots and which have malicious intents is propaganda. By means of this activity, which is referred to as "artificial creation of grassroots" in the literature, politicians have the opportunity to use propaganda to their own benefit. In other words, this situation is an attempt to create a fake impression on the public in order to support a policy, a person or a campaign of a product.

Chengcheng Shao *et al*. (2017: 96) reviewed 14 million messages on Twitter during the U.S. Presidential election in 2016, and they "find evidence that social bots play a key role in the spread of fake news".

Trolls

The term 'Trolling' is referred to the state of being consciously antagonistic or offensive in computer-mediated communication processes (Hardaker, 2013). Rotimi Taiwo (2014) defines 'trolling' as provocative behavior which aims to provoke other people to react emotionally.

The aims of trolls are to annoy users, to cause discomfort, to spread news which can harm people and to damage an individual's reputation and dignity in public opinion (Coleman, 2012: 113). In this context, the phenomenon of 'troll' can be seen as an important factor for propagation of fake news in order to harm others. Mathew Hindman and Vlad Barash (2018: 16) define the troll accounts as "human-run accounts that usually seek to provoke or to spread disinformation".

Susan Herring *et al*. (2002), who explain the ways of dealing with trolls and trolling, state that a system which would enable blocking of messages by filtering should be created, that users should be informed about online behaviors of trolls and that a strong moderation team should be created, which is to be managed from a centralized place.

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With all these factors, improving digital media literacy against propagation of fake news has gained ground. According to Laura Malita and Gabriela Grosseck (2018: 343), "digital media literacy has a major role to help people to avoid becoming victims of "fake news" and disinformation." It can be said that some activities against fake news contribute to digital media literacy. In this context, verification platforms draw attention as organizations that must be carefully followed.

COMBATING FAKE NEWS AND VERIFICATION PLATFORMS

Development of Verification Platforms

The effect of new media (specifically social media platforms), misinformation of the public with fake news, hiding the truth and important consequences of this act have revealed the need to combat fake news in new media. For this purpose, verification platforms have emerged to check information which circulates on traditional media and especially on social media platforms.

Internet verification/fact-checking platforms were founded at the beginning of the 2000s to verify and check suspicious political statements and news in the USA (Graves and Cherubini, 2016: 6). According to another source, it is possible to date back fact-checking platforms to Ronald Reagan's presidential campaign in the USA in the 1980s (Lowrey, 2015: 377). Hoax-busting websites which emerged in the beginning of the 1990s to deceive, to have fun and to verify false information are also considered as the first examples in this field (Lowrey, 2015: 377). In general terms, Internet news checking platforms, which can be described as platforms providing services to check "claims made in public statements through investigation of primary and secondary sources", are one of the structures emerging to meet this need (Brandtzaeg and Folstad, 2017: 65).

In parallel to popularity and proliferation of verification/fact-checking platforms in the USA, they also started operating in Europe in the mid-2000s. The first fact-checking platform in Europe was established to cover and follow general elections in the UK. After this initiative, similar platforms also came into operation in the Netherlands and France in 2008. Fact-checking platforms in Europe were soon to be used for covering not only election processes, but also other agendas (Graves and Cherubini, 2016: 6).

Today, there are fact-checking platforms which broadcast independently or dependently on an NGO. It is possible to examine fact-checking platforms in three categories in accordance with their areas of concern (Brandtzaeg and Folstad, 2017: 65):

1. Those focusing on online rumors, hoaxes and stories (*e.g.* nopes.com., Hoax-Slayer, HoaxBusters, ThruthOrFiction.com., Viralgranskaren-Metro)
2. Those focusing on political and public claims (*e.g.* FactCheck.org, PolitiFact, The Washington Post Checker, CNN Reality Check, Full Fact)
3. Those focusing on specific topics or studies (*e.g.* #RefugeeCheck, Climate Feedback, StopeFake, TruthBe Told)

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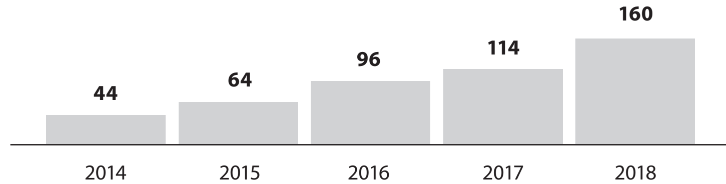
Works of verification/fact-checking platforms are conducted not only with texts, but also with photos and videos. Verification/fact-checking platforms established in the USA and Europe have experienced an increase in numbers in parallel to the number and spread of circulation of fake news. Numerically, there are 160 verification platforms currently active in the world (Duke Reporters Lab, 2019).



▲ *Figure 2.*
The Number of Verification Platforms in the World.
Source: Duke Reporters Lab, 2019

▲ *Figure 3.*
Verification Platforms in the World
(Source: https://www.poynter.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/Screen-Shot-2017-02-28-at-10.21.53-AM.png, 2017)

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Discussions About Verification Platforms

When it comes to discussing Internet verification/fact-checking platforms, the first prominent issue to be considered is the "reliability problem". Petter Bae Brandtzaeg and Asbjorn Folstad (2017) conclude that fact-checking platforms are beneficial, but that they cannot win people's trust completely. In the research, it is indicated that there are four different factors effective on the reliability of the fact-checking platforms. These factors are ownership structure, financial source, structure and aim of the organization, and transparency of the fact-checking process.It is found that the reason why people approach verification/fact-checking platforms with reservation lies in their concern that platforms may have 'political bias'. The existence of verification platforms with partisan attitudes in the past and especially these platforms' attitudes towards rival political candidates and parties during elections formed the basis for concern regarding 'political bias' (Dobbs, 2012: 11). Besides, there are various other concerns: these platforms will not be able to ensure 'objectivity criteria' (covering parties equally on the news, standing at an equal distance) (Kavaklı, 2019: 401), the verification process is open to human-driven mistakes, verification platforms will be insufficient for people who tend to believe in fake news.

Fundamental Principles for Verification / Fact-Checking Platforms

Verification platforms aiming to inform public correctly should not raise doubts about their objectivity, transparency, openness and reliability. In this context, The International Fact-Checking Network which was established in 2015 as a body of the Poynter Institute and which aims to bring together verification/fact-checking platforms (whose number is increasing rapidly across the world) , has created some fundamental principles to ensure their reliability.

These principles are: 'commitment to the principle of nonpartisanship and fairness', 'commitment to the principle of transparency of sources', 'commitment to the principle of transparency of funding and organization', 'commitment to the principle of transparency of methodology' and 'commitment to the principle of open and honest correction of analyses'.

VERIFICATION PLATFORMS IN TURKEY: TEYİT.ORG CASE

Fake news is considered as an important problem in Turkey. According to the *Reuters Institute Digital News Report 2018: Turkey Supplementary Report*, printed news consumption is the last choice of the users, while interest in the Internet and social media is increasing gradually. However, the report indicates that misinformation has become the most important issue over the last years in Turkey because of polarization in politics and media. It is asserted in the report that "49% of respondents stated that they have come across 'stories that are completely made up for political or commercial reasons'. This places Turkey at the top of the list compared with the average of all countries of 26%" (Yanatma, 2018). Hence, the need for fact-checking platforms is strongly felt in Turkey as well.

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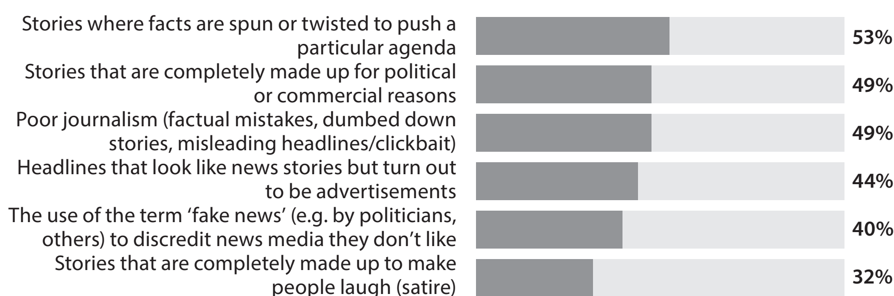

▲ *Figure 4.*
Proportion of people who say they were exposed to each type of misinformation – Turkey.
Source: *Reuters Institute Digital News Report 2018 Turkey Supplementary Report,* 2018: 25

A survey about who should combat misinformation was conducted within the same project. The results show that "78% of respondents thought that media companies and journalists should do more, with 76% choosing technology companies like Facebook and Google". Furthermore, 68% answered that "the government should do more to separate what is real and what is fake on the Internet". However, in the struggle with fake news, there are also different options such as verification platforms.

In this context, as it is the case all around the world, various verification platforms carry out activities in Turkey as well. The platforms claiming themselves as a verification platform in Turkey are listed as below:

>Dogrulukpayi.com (www.dogrulukpayi.com)
>Dogrula.org (www.dogrula.org)
>Gununyalanlari.com (www.gununyalanlari.com)
>Malumatfurus.org (www.malumatfurus.org)
>Factcheckingturkey.com (www.factcheckingturkey.com)
>Teyit.org (www.teyit.org)
>Yalansavar.org (www.yalansavar.org)

The Foundation of Teyit.org and Its Principles

Teyit.org, which describes itself as a "platform helping Internet users to reach to correct information by fact-checking in various fields from misconceptions, suspicious information on the agenda of social media, media's allegations to urban myths", was opened to access on October 26, 2016 by the journalist Mehmet Atakan Foça. Teyit.org is a member of the International Fact-Checking Network.

Foça describes verification process as follows:

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During the years 2015-2016, there were many moments of explosion crises. In those years, the medium people used to consume news was Twitter. Everything was there in times of crisis. We have seen that users were having difficulty in distinguishing what is right and wrong at the time of the crisis. People were trying to help each other. We, I was trying to show to people on my personal page that everything they see is not true, but it was not enough. We were not able to reach so many people. However, I had started talking about verification methods here and there. We aimed to make it professional and bring it to more people (Foça, 2019).

Teyit.org consists of a team of ten (Çavuş, 2019). This team of ten members works as a content team, project team and video team. After the verification process of suspicious news, the platform shares it with the public on teyit.org, facebook.com/teyitorg, twitter.com/teyitorg, Instagram.com/teyit.org and youtube.com/teyitorg. Besides, users have the opportunity to access a weekly newsletter, if they subscribe to a mailing list on teyit.org.

It is stated in the "methodology and principles" section of the platform's website that the verification process has four phases. These phases are as follows:

a) Scanning
Teyit.org editors check news, social media trending topics and news sent by readers. They also use different software such as Dubito.

b) Choosing
Considering the amount of suspicious news the editors of Teyit.org receive, an evaluation is conducted to prioritize the received news. The decision on which suspicious news is to be examined and analyzed first is determined on the basis of whether the news have at least one of these features: virality, importance and urgency (https://teyit.org/methodology/). Teyit.org editor Gülin Çavuş explains how they select the news to be verified:

Apart from the reports received, our editors and writers scan suspicious news by examining the agenda. The process actually proceeds with volunteering. We are sharing works and prioritizing news. We are making a division of labor, who will take care of what. Of course, the verification itself has many processes. Videos can be watched for hours or books are reviewed at libraries. Digital devices are used. We need to know what to suspect. A text or technical information in a video can take you a different point. Expert opinions can also be helpful during the verification process. The real issue is finding a content to suspect and to go after it (Çavuş, 2019).

This is how Foça, who states that it is difficult to produce an idea about what people would believe and would not, explains the process:

The critical thing on prioritizing issue is virality. We try to predict what people would believe and would not. There is no detector for this. It is enough to analyze suspicious content which are shared and liked most (Foça, 2019).

c) Investigation
Basic journalistic tools are used by the editors to verify suspicious content. They also use the digital tools and principles from the Verification Handbook.

d) Result and Analysis

As a result of investigation, an analysis, which consists of only tangible data and facts, is prepared. After all phases are completed, four different conclusions are drawn for the claims analyzed:

▲ *Figure 5.*
Categories of Conclusion for Claims Analyzed by Teyit.org.
Source: https://teyit.org/methodology/, 2016

The conclusions are as follows:

1. **True:** It indicates that data about the analyzed claim is true.
2. **False:** It indicates that data about the analyzed claim is false.
3. **Mixed:** It indicates that data about the multiple proposition contains both true and false information (or both true and ambiguous, or both false and ambiguous).
4. **Uncertain:** It indicates that data are obtained about the analyzed claim, but it states that these data are not enough to draw a conclusion whether the claim is right, wrong or mixed.

Teyit.org was introduced as a nonprofit social enterprise which focuses on social impact and which does not distribute income. Activities are operated under multiple institutional structures due to the lack of proper infrastructures in Turkey for social enterprises. In addition to informing users and society, the platform prepares reports where they also have opportunity to communicate their own activities and they publish translated books. These reports are: "Insight report: what do we doubt on the web?", "Verification handbook: a definitive guide to verifying digital content for emergency coverage", "Verification handbook: For investigative reporting / A guide to online search and research techniques for using UGC and open source information in investigations" and "Media usage and news consumption: Trust, verification, political polarization". The aim of these reports is to verify the assumptions of the platform. The aim is to reveal whether people consume news, how they consume it, how they read and how they verify (Foça, 2019).

The increase in fake news especially during election periods is remarkable in Turkey. The *The Fake News Report* prepared by Teyit.org was focused on the local elections held on 31 March, 2019. According to the report, 61% of Internet users in this period mentioned that

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they had come across the news they thought was a complete lie in the previous week. In the same period, Teyit.org received more interaction and reported more suspicious news than during the previous election. However, the report shows that Teyit.org's analyses are still low compared to the fake news interaction.

Paul Mena (2019) finds that there is a lower possibility for news that is stated as "fake" by verification platforms to be shared on Facebook than news which has no verification information. Facebook cooperates with organizations approved by the International Fact-Checking Network in 35 countries to prevent propagation of fake news in its own platform and to present reliable information flow. In Turkey, Teyit.org carries out verification activities in relation to suspicious content spreading via Facebook. Foça (2018) points out that after detecting a fake post, reaching that post decreases by around 80%, as Facebook states.

Teyit.org detected more than 500 items of fake news between 2016 and 2018. In 2017, for example, in Istanbul an attack on the Reina nightclub was organized. 39 people lost their lives in the attack. Afterwards, photographs of innocent people appeared on both mainstream and social media. However, the editors of Teyit.org revealed that these people were not involved in the attack (Lowen, 2018).

Two reports published by Teyit.org in 2017 and 2018 show increased interest in the platform. While 7,628 suspicious content notifications were sent in the 2016-2017 period, this number increased to 11,518 in the period from 2017 to 2018. The notifications sent to be verified increased by 12.67 percent daily compared to the previous period. In times of crisis, Internet users applied to Teyit.org more and the number of suspicious news propagated during the election period increased by 80 percent (Avşar, 2019).

The Main Principles of Teyit.Org

Teyit.org releases publicly their three main principles (https://teyit.org/methodology/):

Objectivity and Openness

Teyit.org claims that they present the verifiable truth of the news "without being a side of any political discussion". Suspicious news is analyzed by Teyit.org editors. In order to prioritize news to be analyzed, they take three features into consideration which are also shared with the public in the *Methodology* section of their website: the suspicious news should be important, they should be widespread and they should be urgent.

It is stated that, in accordance with the internal verification processes, gathered sources and analyses are also checked by different editors other than the editor who writes the analysis (Foça, 2019).

Correction Policy

Teyit.org emphasizes that all processes are demonstrated clearly in the analyses. They state that the most important thing for Teyit.org is that "while they avert false propagation

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of news or images, they aim to enable following the truth and developing critical thinking reflexes into a habit for all user who get their news on the Internet." (https://teyit.org/methodology/).

In these processes, if there is a mistake, they make analyses by taking "correction requests" into consideration that are received from their social media accounts and WhatsApp hot-line.

Economic Transparency

The information on supporters of Teyit.org is given on their web page in the section *Supporters*. In this context, Teyit.org received support, such as funding and aid in kind from various non-governmental organizations. In order to receive individual contribution, they have also benefited from crowdfunding by taking support of the users over the platform *Patreon* since February 2018. In addition, some forms of collaboration provide income for Teyit.org, too. Teyit.org started flagging false news on Facebook after signing a contract with Facebook in May 2018. In this way, the analysis by Teyit.org is aimed at reducing the use of false news by Facebook users (https://teyit.org/about/).

However, Teyit.org officers state that there is no impact of any funding institutions on any analyses or articles published. They indicate that any intervention attempt towards content policy or methodology of Teyit. org would never be accepted (Foça, 2019).

METHODOLOGY

In order to understand the structure and functioning of Teyit.org, in-depth interviews were conducted with the founder and editors of the platform. In addition, the verification process of the platform was observed in the office located in the capital city of Ankara, Turkey.

However, in order to obtain a quantitative result regarding the content of these verification activities, three basic research questions were prepared in the study.

1. What categories of content does Teyit.org evaluate for the verification process?
2. What types of media (photo, video, text, *etc.*) does this content consist of?
3. What is the medium of propagation of fake news or false information and what is the amount of interaction of content on social media?

Quantitative analysis was used to answer these questions. In this study, the content analysis technique of quantitative research method was used to understand the structure of the verification practices revealed by Teyit. org.

Kevin Coe and Joshua M. Scacco (2017: 1) describe quantitative content analysis as "a research method in which features of textual, visual, or aural material are systematically categorized and recorded so that they can be analyzed."

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Verification analyses of Teyit.org between January 1 and June 31, 2018 were collected from the website (www.teyit.org) and data were examined through a content analysis within the research questions of the study.

First of all, suspicious content delivered to Teyit.org is categorized by subject. These categories are politics, life, health, science, sport, urban myth, magazine, technology, art, jurisdiction, education and economy.

Another category is content type. The content is categorized to determine whether the suspicious content consists of visuals such as photos and videos, news texts or social media messages circulating on Twitter and Facebook. In addition, it was determined whether the content was created for the Internet and social media networks or traditional media in order to understand the means in which this suspicious content was circulated.

Teyit.org also shares images of social media content during its analysis. Thus, the number of likes, dislikes, comments and views on social media reached by the content can be seen even before the review is completed. Based on this data, total interaction numbers of the content are also revealed. Needless to say, this data has a number of limitations and may vary. However, it can still give us an idea of how the content interacts. It is thought that this number is important especially for identifying the field of circulation and interaction of the information which is found to be inaccurate as a result of the examination.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The Subject of the Content

Within the scope of the research, Teyit.org analyzed 164 items of suspicious content between January 1, 2018 and June 31, 2018. In this period of time, suspicious content was analyzed the most within the category of politics, with a total number of 112. It can be seen that suspicious content pertaining to other categories are listed as follows: life (23), health (11), science (5), sport (3), urban myth (3), magazine (2), technology (1), art (1), jurisdiction (1), education (1) and economy (1).

After the verification processes, it was determined that 89% of the suspicious content in the politics category contained false information. As a result of the analysis, it was found that thirteen items of content were true and ten items of content were mixed, containing both true and false information. It was discovered that sixteen items of life news, nine of health news, three of sport and urban myth news and two of magazine news contained false information. It was further detected that all analyzed content of technology and art category were false, news pertaining to the jurisdiction and education categories were mixed and content of the education category was true.

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Table 1. **Evaluation of the first five categories which have the most content in verification processes**

Category	False	True	Mixed
Politics	89	13	10
Life	16	5	2
Health	9	1	1
Science	4	1	-
Sport	3	-	-

Content Type

In the analyses of Teyit.org, it was determined that content which were considered as suspicious on websites and social networks consisted of mostly photos and videos. During the period of analysis, 79 photos, 40 videos, 23 news texts and 22 social media messages were subjected to analysis as suspicious content.

62 of the analyzed photos, 36 of the videos, 14 of the social media messages and 15 of the news texts were determined to be false.

Table 2. **Results of verification process according to the content type**

Content Type	False	True	Mixed
Photo	62	10	7
Video	36	3	1
Social Media Message	14	7	1
News text	15	3	5

Medium of Propagation

Even though the analyses conducted by Teyit.org consist of suspicious content spreading mostly on new media, five content items broadcast on TV channels and one column published in a newspaper were evaluated. Some suspicious items of content were put into circulation on different social networks simultaneously. Facebook (95), Twitter (93), Internet news sites (56) and Instagram (6) are the media in which fake news and false information are most frequently encountered. Besides, five items of content spreading on WhatsApp and for YouTube videos are also analyzed by the editors.

Interaction Numbers

The total interaction number pertaining to suspicious content analyzed in a six-month period is 39,530,247. It is determined that the interaction number of the analyses with **'false'** results is 36,401,391, the interaction number of analyses with **'mixed'** results is 716,221, and the interaction number of analyses with **'true'** results is 2,412,635.

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CONCLUSION

The Internet is considered, especially by young users in Turkey, as more credible and reliable compared to conventional means, such as television and newspaper. Furthermore, news is followed on social media in particular (Bozdağ, 2017). However, content based on false information and fake news which is frequently encountered on the Internet give rise to discussions about reliability of information on new media, and solutions to the problem are sought.

Apart from activities of reporters, media and technology companies and states, this research discusses what kinds of activities verification platforms carry out in the combat with fake news which are spreading rapidly especially on new media. In this context, Teyit.org, which is a member of the International Fact-Checking Network in Turkey and which carries out news verification activity regularly, is analyzed with the aim to reveal the structure and functioning of the verification platforms.

In the first six months of 2018, 164 shares, most of which spread on social media and which were identified by the editors of Teyit.org as suspicious, were analyzed with the content analysis technique.

In our first research question, we focused on the category in which the content handled during the verification process was concentrated. According to this, it was found that more than half of the content which spreads on the Internet and which are flagged as false is about political issues. In the meantime, this conclusion can also be associated with discussions regarding the concepts, such as 'echo chambers' and 'filter bubbles', implying that users mainly follow people who are closer to their own views and that there is a strong tendency of users to believe in content which they find ideologically closer to them. Indeed, researchers draw attention to the tendency that people get informed in a way which will validate their existing beliefs, even if information is not understood clearly (Flynn *et al.*, 2017).

According to our second research question, it was concluded that the suspicious content consists mostly of images such as videos and photographs. Teyit.org examined 79 photographs and found that 62 of them contained false information. In addition, 40 videos were examined and 36 of them were found containing fake or false information.

The third research focused on the diffusion environment and interaction of fake news. The content of the review by Teyit.org was mainly composed of information disseminated through social media (Facebook: 95 items of content, Twitter: 93 items of content). In addition, it was seen that the content, which was determined to be false as a result of the examination, received more interaction on social media.

Especially during periods of crisis (an armed attack, a natural disaster, an election, *etc.*), it is evident that interest in verification activities carried out by Teyit.org is increased. Projects of collaboration with international organizations, such as Facebook, are also

important to ensure that verification processes reach a wider audience. The spread and prevention of false news is, of course, a big issue. Needless to say, merely Teyit.org's activities are not sufficient to eliminate this problem. However, it can be said that it is beneficial for Internet users to share information with a platform that verifies suspicious content. Indeed, since 2016, the number of requests to verify suspicious content has been increasing every year. In addition, Teyit.org's efforts to draw attention to this issue through the reports it publishes on its website and social media accounts may increase the public's knowledge of fact-checking processes.

As in many countries in the world, fake news is an important issue in Turkey, too. In this context, due to the fact that the increasing number of verification platforms contributes to digital literacy of Internet users, namely to their ability to identify fake news in new media, their further development is required in order to provide vitality for the future of democracy, too. This is because of the fact that fake news jeopardizes the level of reliability of news media, thus causing problems in political decision making among citizens engaged in political processes in democracies which are intensely dependent on media to inform their citizens (Jones, 2004; Balmas, 2014).

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FUNKCIJA I VAŽNOST ORGANIZACIJA ZA PROVJERU ČINJENICA U ERI LAŽNIH VIJESTI: TEYIT.ORG, PRIMJER IZ TURSKE

Recep Ünal :: Alp Şahin Çiçeklioğlu

SAŽETAK *Sve veća upotreba pojmova kao što su „lažne vijesti“ ili „post-istina“ otkriva koliko je važna digitalna pismenost, osobito na društvenim mrežama. U digitalnoj eri mišljenja ljudi o pojedinim temama pokušavaju se mijenjati dezinformacijama i lažnim vijestima, pa korisnici novih medija sve više prihvaćaju lažne vijesti kao stvarnost. Pojmovi kao što su „mjehurići filtri“ (engl.* filter bubbles*) i „komore odjeka“ (engl.* echo chambers*) ukazuju na tendenciju da se ljude hrani sadržajem koji je ideološki u skladu s njihovim pogledima i koji podržava lažne vijesti. Ovaj rad analizira strukturu i funkcioniranje organizacija za provjeru činjenica u kontekstu prevencije propagiranja lažnih vijesti i poboljšanja digitalne pismenosti. Istraživanje je temeljeno na analizi sadržaja verifikacijskih aktivnosti organizacije za provjeru činjenica Teyit.org u Turskoj, članice Međunarodnog udruženja za provjeru činjenica, i to tijekom šest mjeseci, od 1. siječnja do 31. lipnja 2018. S članovima tima za provjeru činjenica provedeni su dubinski intervjui kako bi se otkrili procesi provjere činjenica i metode za borbu s lažnim vijestima. Ovaj rad pokazuje da se lažni sadržaj koji se širi internetom u najvećoj mjeri tiče politike.*

KLJUČNE RIJEČI

DEZINFORMACIJA, LAŽNE VIJESTI, ORGANIZACIJE ZA PROVJERU ČINJENICA, TEYIT.ORG, TURSKA

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SIMILAR POLITICIANS, DIFFERENT MEDIA. MEDIA TREATMENT OF SEX RELATED SCANDALS IN ITALY AND THE USA

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ABSTRACT *The article analyzes the media treatment of two sex scandals: the "Stormy Daniels scandal", which involved the current US President Donald Trump in 2018 and the "Ruby scandal", which involved Silvio Berlusconi in 2010, while he was Italy's Prime Minister. By combining both quantitative and qualitative methodologies the aim is to discover whether the media treatment is different, as we can expect since the two countries belong to two different media systems, or if, following the theory of Americanization of political communication, the Italian media will tend to emulate the American model. Furthermore, another aim of this study is to detect whether a shift towards a more Polarized Pluralist model can be identified in the USA, as some authors have started foreseeing. The results will show that both countries' media behave coherently with the traditional feature of their media system, the Polarized Pluralist and the Liberal.*

KEYWORDS

BERLUSCONI, TRUMP, SEX SCANDALS, MEDIA COVERAGE, MEDIA SYSTEMS, POLITICAL COMMUNICATION

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INTRODUCTION

Common sense suggests that sex scandals involving politicians are universal. Nevertheless, studies suggest that their media exposure seems to be a daily occurrence in some democracies and are almost absent in others. Research, in fact, shows that politicians' sex lives exposure is predominately a feature in the USA and the UK (Sabato *et al.*, 2000; Thompson, 2000; Tumber 2004) while in other countries such as, for example, Italy, France or Spain, (Chalaby, 2004; Esser and Hartung, 2004; Holtz-Bacha, 2004; Sparks and Tulloch, 2000; Merkl, 2001; Cepernich, 2008; Van Zoonen, 1998, Downey and Stanyer, 2013; Thompson, 2000) this topic is almost ignored by news outlets. There are very few academic attempts to explain what political, cultural or media variables may be affecting the exposure of political sex-related scandals in different countries. From the political perspective there is some evidence suggesting that the difference may be related to the centrality of the candidate/President and the consequent personalization of politics in certain countries (see Summers, 2007; Thompson, 2000), together with different legislative constraints that protect the privacy of politicians. Media studies, on their side, focus on the commercial pressures on the media and the tabloidization of the press (see Kuhn, 2004, 2007; Tumber, 2004), together with different journalistic cultures, that determine what should be considered 'public' and 'private' (see Barker, 1994; Castells, 2004; Garrard and Newell, 2006; Tumber and Waisbord, 2004a, 2004b). Nevertheless, on the one hand, the personalization of politics which is characteristic of presidential systems such as the United States, has also increased in semi-presidential and parliamentary systems since the 90s (Poguntke and Webb 2005; Wattenberg 1994). On the other hand, the growing professionalization of political campaigns is pushing most of the countries to follow the American model when it comes to political communication – the so-called process of "Americanization of political campaigns" (Mancini and Swanson, 1996).

Under these premises, our intention is to analyze the media treatment of two sex scandals: the "Stormy Daniels scandal", which involved the current US President Donald Trump at the dawn of the 2016 elections, and was exposed in January 2018, and the "Ruby scandal", which involved Silvio Berlusconi in 2010 while he was Italy's Prime Minister.

Donald Trump and Silvio Berlusconi belong to the countries that represent two opposite models of both political and media systems. Italy can be considered the perfect example of the so-called Polarized Pluralist Model (Hallin and Mancini, 2004), characterized by a strong political use of the media, where elites, interest groups and private economic groups can express their ideas, improve their level of consensus and negotiate their interests and goals with other groups (Mancini and Swanson, 1996). The USA, on the other hand, is probably the best example of the Atlantic or Liberal Model, a market-dominated system, based on respect for freedom of speech and thus freedom of the press (Hallin and Mancini, 2004). Nonetheless, they appear to be very similar when it comes to their personal and political profile, and to their communications strategies, especially in their relationship with the media. This resemblance is so evident that following Trump's election, different authors started arguing if, with the advent of the so-called Trumpism, "variants of Polarized Pluralist elements are entrenched in the American news system" (Nechustai, 2018: 1).

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By comparing these two cases we aim at discovering whether the media treatment is different, as we can expect, since the media systems of the two countries are so different, or if, according to the theory of Americanization of political communication, the Italian media tend to emulate the American model also in this kind of news coverage, or, on the other hand, if, in the USA, a shift towards a more Polarized Pluralist model can be identified.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

In order to understand the two cases properly, it is imperative to give some background information about Italy's and the USA's media systems, to introduce the operational concepts of political personalization and mediatization, and finally to contextualize and compare the two political figures.

The Media Systems in Italy and the USA

Daniel Hallin and Paolo Mancini (2006), in their influential work "Comparing Media Systems", describe typical patterns of how political systems, journalism cultures, media policies, media markets, and media uses are connected in a given society. As previously mentioned, according to their framework, Italy can be considered the perfect example of what the authors call the Mediterranean or Polarized Pluralist Model. As they point out, "the late, uneven and conflicting development of liberal institutions in Southern Europe is fundamental to understanding the development of the media in this region" (Hallin and Mancini, 2004: 128). Southern European mass media are inherently involved in the political conflicts that mark the history of this region: this has translated into a strong tradition of considering mass media as means of ideological expression and political mobilization. In Italy, in fact, due to the country's late democratization and the consequent strong role of the State, somehow "hijacked" by the centrality of political parties, the media have never fully developed as autonomous institutions and they have been, and still are, often dependent on the State, political parties, the Church and also private owners, but colluded with political interests. Since the development of commercial media markets has been relatively weak, the system is characterized by an elite-oriented press with relatively small circulation and by a corresponding centrality of the electronic media with a strong public broadcasting system, highly controlled by the government. Political parallelism tends to be high, with a strong tradition of advocacy journalism and, as said, a high level of instrumentalization of the media by the government and by political parties. Consequently, the professionalization of journalism is not strongly developed: it is often difficult to differentiate journalism from political activism and, because of that, the autonomy of journalism is often limited. The USA, on the other hand, can be considered the benchmark for the opposite model, the Atlantic or Liberal Model, since it is characterized by an early democratization, a weak state intervention and a market-dominated system, characterized by a strong respect for freedoms, especially freedom of speech and thus freedom of the press. In this context, we can find an early development of the mass-circulation press, centrality of commercial newspapers and information-oriented journalism. Since the control of the State is very limited – at any rate limited to

the control of the good functioning of the market - political parallelism is low, and internal pluralism predominates. Consequently, journalistic autonomy is more likely to be limited by commercial pressures than by political manipulation (Hallin and Mancini, 2004).

Personalization of politics

Political personalization is a "process in which the political weight of the individual actor in the political process increases over time, while the centrality of the political group (*i.e.*, political party) declines" (Karvonen, 2010: 4). The rise of this individual-centred politics is understood as the result of two interconnected factors: first, the changing features of politics in advanced industrial society, mainly the erosion of the class-based society that led to the decline in party identification and to the weakening of traditional affective ties between voters and parties (Dalton, 2002) that boosted electoral volatility, and second, the technological developments in communication (Mazzoleni, 2000; Meyrowitz, 1985; Swanson and Mancini, 1996). Mass media, in particular television, have played a key role in emphasizing leadership and personal characteristics (Butler and Ranney, 1992; Manin, 1997; Swanson and Mancini, 1996) by bringing candidates' faces and voices into citizens' homes on a regular basis. Subsequently, the Internet fostered this phenomenon, offering opportunities for individual politicians to profile themselves (Balmas, *et al.*, 2014).

The shifting of news coverage from parties to candidates and leaders increases the representation of individual politicians as private persons (Karvonen, 2010; Rahat and Sheafer, 2007): this implies that media stop considering the politician as the occupier of a public role and start depicting him/her as a private individual, as a person. Adam and Maier (2010: 216) define this process "personalization of characteristics" pointing out the change from features regarding politicians' professional competence and performance to features concerning personality traits related to their personal life; Rahat and Sheafer (2007: 68) call it privatization, understanding it as "a media focus on the personal characteristics and personal life of individual candidates"; Van Zoonen (1991: 233) speaks of 'intimization', since "values from the private sphere are transferred to the public sphere"; Langer (2010: 371), finally labels 'politicization of the private persona' the increased media focus on personal life (family, upbringing, *etc.*) and personal qualities, whereby personal revelations cannot be divorced from the political. In other words, mediated political communication implies personalization (Musella, 2015).

In their seminal article, Mazzoleni and Schulz (2001: 251) argued that one of the key aspects of the mediatization of politics is that political actors have become "able to adapt their behavior to media requirements," that is, "they stage an event in order to get media attention", to fit the media's needs as regards timing, location, and the framing of the message.

Trump and Berlusconi: similarities

Many commentators have already pointed out the similarities between these two figures. Donatella Campus (2010: 224) points out four points a politician should follow in order to attract the media: building an appealing image, establishing an emotional

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connection with voters, creating media events, and going personal. Both Trump and Berlusconi, consciously or unconsciously, seem to have mastered the ability to be media attractive: following Campus's four points, I will show that not only do they share many characteristics, but they also seem to share communicational strategies.

In terms of building an appealing image, both are tycoons-turned-politicians[1] who entered politics claiming to be the best option to fix the broken political system exactly due to their extraordinary business background – they both claim to be self-made men[2] - and due to the fact that they do not belong to the political "breed". As a matter of fact, the parties' collapse followed by corruption scandals in Italy (Calise, 2006) and the electorate fluidity in the USA, contributed to making these two outsider figures even more attractive. Moreover, both happen to be celebrities, specifically TV stars: Berlusconi once ran a TV empire[3] and Trump had a hit reality-TV franchise. When it comes to the emotional connection, even though they are far away from being "average people", presenting themselves as non-professional politicians – but very savvy salesmen – allows them to appeal to disgruntled voters by projecting themselves as someone belonging to the "people", a kind of "the guy next door", as someone that you would address in a familiar way (Wood *et al.*, 2016). Specifically, both have been remarkably successful in connecting to their voters in this field – by using a colloquial language made of rude statements[4].

Another interesting fact about their perceived closeness with people is the that fact that by virtue of being perceived as "one of us" they can afford to be sinners with human flaws and weaknesses: in fact, neither of them is afraid of presenting himself as an incurable womanizer and both of them seem to have few limits when it comes to expressing sexist comments of any sort[5].

In addition, thanks to this singular use of inappropriate – or at least unusual - language, and the frequent conscious or unconscious blunders, every time they open their mouth (or twit, in the case of Trump), a media event is automatically created. The examples are uncountable: from Berlusconi's jokes, to his sexist comment about Angela Merkel, to his racist comment about President Obama being "nice and tanned", from Trump's twitter fight with a teen actress to his numerous insulting comments on women, to calling CNN "fake news", *etc*. Finally, they both have mastered the technique of "making it personal" in terms of presenting themselves as the Boss, the strong leader in charge. On the other

[1] Trump's bankruptcies are indeed very well-known and recorded, while Silvio Berlusconi entered politics precisely to save his business from bankruptcy, as demonstrated by the numerous ad hoc laws he promulgated once he became Prime Minister
[2] The USA President often, in his speeches, bragged about his incredible capacity to get good deals, capacity which would put his country in a position to "beat" other countries like China. "CNN (2016) Albany NY, Trump rally: We're going to win so much. Retrieved form: https://edition.cnn.com/videos/politics/2017/08/18/trump-albany-rally-winning-sot.cnn (01/09/2018).
[3] Berlusconi is the controlling shareholder of Mediaset S.p.A., also known as Gruppo Mediaset in Italian, an Italian-based mass media company which is the largest commercial broadcaster in the country. Founded in 1987 by former Italian Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi and still controlled today with a 38.6% stake by his family's holding company Fininvest.
And Berlusconi, for example, declared during a meeting that Italians trusted him due to the fact he would not be tempted to steal money as he was already extremely rich. ANSA (2010, September 12th) http://www.ansa.it/web/notizie/rubriche/politica/2010/09/12/visualizza_new.html_1783567612.html (01/09/2018).
[4] See, for example, in the case of Trump, the "shithole" countries case. https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/trump-attacks-protections-for-immigrants-from-shithole-countries-in-oval-office-meeting/2018/01/11/bfc0725c-f711-11e7-91af-31ac729add94_story.html?utm_term=.f07ba2c73280 (01/09/2018).
[5] See Berlusconi's insult to Angela Merkel. https://www.independent.co.uk/news/people/jeremy-paxman-asks-silvio-berlusconi-is-it-true-you-called-angela-merkel-an-unfckable-lard-arse-9401897.html (01/09/2018).

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hand, as they have a terrible relationship with the press, they show a great ability to depict themselves as innocent victims of a – liberal, in the case of Trump, and red, in the case of Berlusconi – media conspiracy. To conclude, both got involved in sex-related political scandals that went far behind the infidelity or the gossip story, since both cases actually involved serious law infringements or even crimes.

The two scandals

On May 27th 2010, Karima el-Mahroug, also known as Ruby Rubacuori (Eng. *Ruby the hearts stealer*), a 17-year-old Moroccan girl - until then unknown - was arrested for theft. Silvio Berlusconi, at that time the Italian Prime Minister, calls Milan's police station where she was kept and asked for her immediate release to avoid an international incident, alleging that she was Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak's niece. The information was published for the first time on October 28th of the same year, after Milan public prosecutor's office launched an investigation into the incident. The investigators also discovered that Ruby had taken part in several infamous *bunga-bunga* party dinners at Berlusconi's house and allegedly had sex with him in exchange for money, being a minor. In February 2011, Berlusconi was placed under criminal investigation for underage prostitution and for abuse of office, and on June 24th, 2013, Berlusconi was found guilty, but he appealed against the sentence. The trial is still ongoing.

The "Stormy scandal" exploded in January 2018, when the Wall Street Journal reported that in October 2016, only a week and a half before the beginning of the 2016 Presidential election, Donald Trump's personal lawyer, Michael Cohen, had paid Stephanie Gregory Clifford, known professionally as Stormy Daniels, a former porn star, $130,000 in hush money (Rothfeld and Palazzolo, 2018) and made her sign a non-disclosure agreement to buy her silence on the alleged affair she declared to have had with the candidate a decade earlier, in 2006 (a year after he had married Melania, the current First Lady, and just months after she had given birth to their son, Barron). According to the Federal Election Commission, this payment could be considered illegal if proved that it was an in-kind contribution by Cohen to Trump's electoral campaign.[6] The case had a twist on August 21st, when Michal Cohen pleaded guilty to eight federal crimes, two of which involved the President's: specifically, he declared that Trump directed him to make payments to silence two women (Stormy Daniels and Karen McDougal) who alleged sexual affairs with him.

METHOD

These two scandals received an enormous amount of media attention worldwide, both for their gossip and for their political aspects. In order to compare the media treatment, I focused the research on national media outlets, and specifically on national television networks, as television was the medium with the greatest reach both in Italy in 2011 and in the USA in 2018 (Reuters Digital Report, 2018). News and current affairs TV programs, in

6 Under the Federal Election Campaign Act, contributions are, in fact, subjects to limits: in the specific case, an individual contribution has a $2,700 limit, which makes Cohen's payment about $127,300 above the amount he was allowed to donate for the campaign.

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both major commercial and public service channels of the USA and Italy, were gathered during three months starting from the first scandal exposure, *i.e.*, from January 12th to April 12th, 2018 in the USA, and from October 28th, 2010 to January 28th, 2011 in Italy, and a total of 158 hours recordings were coded.

Within the large amount of material collected, I chose to focus my attention on the genre of journalistic interview, specifically on the interview with the protagonists, for two main reasons. First of all, interviews on TV have grown so popular to become a genre themselves, since they exert a special fascination in the eyes of the audience, offering them a unique chance to come, in a certain way, face-to-face with people they would hardly have the chance to know in most cases (Natsvlishvili, 2013: 348). Specifically, in this kind of high-profile cases, interviews with the protagonists are able to reach an enormous amount of people due to their particular relevance. Actually, as it will be explained later, the analyzed Stormy Daniels' interview is the fifth most watched interview in the history of American television. And, last but not least, the interview can be considered one of the – if not the – most important tools journalists have to expand on information and to clarify facts: according to most journalistic manuals, "it is used to formulate or complement a news or report," (Halperin, 2012: 23), *i.e.*, to deepen the basic "who, what, where, how, when and why" of newsgathering. None of the two politicians involved in the scandals released any interview on the topic: in fact, Berlusconi has always kept silence on the topic since then, and neither Trump, has spoken by now. However, the other protagonists did.

Selecting which interview to analyze has been a very easy task in the case of Ruby, since she gave only one exclusive interview in Italy, to the TV newsmagazine "Kalispéra!" in January 2011. Stormy, on the other side, appeared in several programs. Therefore, the first[7] and most watched interview she released on March 25th, 2018, on CBS "60 Minutes" was selected for this analysis.

The videos selected were analyzed by combining two methodologies: on the one hand, they were analyzed from a media perspective to understand what kind of journalistic sub-genre they belong to, and, subsequently, they were analyzed through content analysis. To do so, Femø Nielsen's (2006: 117-118) taxonomy of interviews was adopted. According to the author, it is possible to distinguish between argumentation, declaration and storytelling interviews by analyzing interviewers' speech, posture, gesture and facial expression and his/her interaction with the interviewee. In the argumentation interview, the interviewer adopts a neutral oppositional attitude in order for the interviewee to explain or defend a position; the declaration interview happens when the interviewer invites the interviewee to declare, admit or claim something without challenging it or holding the person accountable; and in the storytelling interview, the interviewer works on getting the interviewee to tell a story by aligning with the interviewee and, possibly, by collaborating in telling the story as well. Thus, the analysis focused attention on

[7] Technically, this interview is not Daniels's first appearance on TV, because on January the 30th of the same year, she was invited as a guest on "Jimmy Kimmel Live": even if she touched the topic this cannot be considered a proper journalistic interview since the host is not a journalist and the program is an entertainment program, rather than a news program, so this appearance was discarded from the analysis.

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the interview structure and the visual aspects of the studio, the protagonists and their interaction.

Subsequently, a computer-based content analysis, which implied using the text mining software Wordstat, was applied to the transcripts. This method of textual analysis, deriving from textual statistics, represents a hybridization of different disciplines such as linguistics, content analysis and statistics itself, and through statistical examination of vocabulary distribution, in terms of word occurrence and co-occurrence, allows identifying the features of a discourse, in terms of "lexical universes". The concept of lexical universe is connected with the concept of semantic field used in linguistics, understood as the network of relationships that a concept maintains with the words that qualify it. Content analysis is often criticized for being too quantitative, and I acknowledge that "the story is not only a string of words, ideas or data." (Gutiérrez-Rubí, 2008: 145), so the reasonable amount of data allowed me to complement and enrich the text mining results with a manual qualitative analysis, aimed at achieving a critical understanding of the retrieved lexical universes and unveiling the story telling techniques behind each discourse.

"60 MINUTES" INTERVIEW

As said, when it comes to the case of Stormy Daniels, the very first journalistic interview she gave on national television after the story emerged, *i.e*. CBS's "60 Minutes" was selected for analysis. The interview, broadcast on Sunday, March 25th, 2018, at 7 pm Eastern/Pacific on CBS stations (and on the CBS digital streaming news service CBSN), was hosted by the journalist Anderson Cooper. "60 Minutes" is a newsmagazine that usually undertakes its own investigations and follows up on investigations started by national newspapers and other sources. It typically consists of two/three long-form news stories: each story is first presented from a studio set with a backdrop resembling pages extracted from a magazine that has already covered the same topic. This episode of "60 Minutes" reached 22.1 million viewers, thus making Daniels' interview the third most-watched interview in the show's 50-year history, and, as already mentioned, the fifth most-watched television interviews ever. The interview was recorded: it actually occurred earlier and was aired in spite of the fact that Trump's lawyer had obtained a restraining order from an arbitrator, which was meant to stop the interview from becoming public. The program was deleted from YouTube for copyright infringement, but both the video and the transcripts of the interview, together with extra materials, are available on the CBS website.

VISUAL ANALYSIS

Studio set-up

The interview takes place in the program's usual setting, characterized by an aseptic yellow light and blurred background, without the presence of any audience, to create an impersonal environment, with the clear intention to keep the focus on the interaction between the host and the guest.

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Direction and camera

The direction mostly uses tight close-ups of both the host and the guest, while background images are very rare. The focus is placed on the guest: the host is less focused and shows no emotional reactions besides listening.

The host and the guest

Both the host and the guest are in formal dress, which gives a rigorous, professional image of the entire scene. Cooper is wearing a dark grey suit and a tie and is shown holding working papers in his hands. Stormy is wearing a coral blouse and a black skirt: she in formal attire but she does not renounce wearing bright colours, which are her signature style.

JOURNALISTIC ANALYSIS

Interview structure

The interview's duration is 28 minutes: 16 of which are dedicated to the actual interview, while the other 12 are occupied by two side consultations, one with an expert, Trevor Potter, former commissioner and chairman of the US Federal Election Commission, and the other with Michael Avenatti, Stormy's lawyer. The interview follows the prototypical structure of an informative interview, rigidly based on the 6 W's. After a short presentation/contextualization, no more information is given about Stormy Daniels's life or background: all the conversation is dedicated to the fact itself and its legal implications. Stormy describes her meetings with Trump, the reasons behind these meetings, the signing of the non-disclosure agreement, the threats she received and her motivations to speak out. The expert is consulted to deepen the legal details of the possible law infringement in Cohen's contribution to the campaign, and Michael Avenatti about the possibility to consider the non-disclosure agreement null or invalid because Donald Trump did not sign it himself.

Journalistic style

This interview can be considered the perfect example of the argumentation interview. The interview is completely fact-centred and the interviewer's attitude is actually neutral and oppositional, in order for the interviewee to explain and defend her position. The journalistic style is the one of probing journalism: the host poses different questions that, somehow, confront the host and force her to deepen in the necessary details and the real reasons for her TV appearance. In fact, the interview starts with the following question: "for sitting here talking to me today you could be fined a million dollars, I mean aren't you taking a big risk?

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TEXT ANALYSIS

The quantitative analysis of the lexical universes confirms the observation about the journalistic style. The conversation sticks to facts, and the story is told in a very precise and aseptic way. Legalistic affirmations are often done: in different occasions, for example, when confronted with sensitive topic, the guest answers “My attorney has recommended that I don’t discuss these things”. As it can be deduced from Figure 1, the most recurrent words are names of the people involved in the scandal, and words related to the story, such as payment, deal, pay, sign, *etc*.

▲*Figure 1.*
Stormy’s interview word cloud.
Source: Author, 2019

Story telling

The qualitative analysis shows that the story is told from a rigorous legal perspective with no place for emotions of any kind. Stormy presents herself as an empowered woman, who knows what she is doing and holds herself responsible for her own actions. When she is asked about the #MeToo movement, for instance, she replies: “I was not a victim. I’ve never said I was a victim. I think trying to use me to further someone else’s agenda does horrible damage to people who are true victims.”

“KALISPÉRA!” INTERVIEW

The interview was aired on January 19th, of 2011, within the night news magazine “Kalispéra!”, broadcast by Canale 5, the most watched private channel in Italy. Canale 5 (in English Channel Five) is an Italian private television station, belonging to Mediaset S.p.A., the largest commercial broadcaster in the country, founded in 1987 by Silvio Berlusconi himself, and still controlled (with a 38.6% stake) by his family’s holding company – Fininvest. The host of the program is Alfonso Signorini, a gossip columnist, with a long

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employment relationship with Berlusconi: besides being a TV host, he is the director of the weekly magazine "*Chi*", property of the editorial group Mondadori which, once again, is controlled by Fininvest, Berlusconi family's holding. The show attracted more than 2 million viewers (24,02% of share) and the episode was the season's best performer. The full interview is almost irretrievable: it is not available in any Mediaset's archives, it has been deleted from YouTube for copyright infringement and only fragments of it are available on the web. The interview analyzed is taken from the authors' personal archive.

VISUAL ANALYSIS

Studio set up

The studio is set up as a traditional home's living room: the guest and the host sit on two green armchairs with a classic country pattern, between them there is a table with a lamp and a flower pot, and on the carpet, next to the host, a blonde Labrador dog sleeps quietly. This setting, together with the relaxing soft blue lights, creates what the journalistic slang calls "the bubble effect", a warm environment, ideal for an intimate conversation. The aim of recreating a familiar setting, in other words, is to make the guest feel so comfortable to the extent of forgetting the presence of the camera and speak out in a confidential environment; and the same familiar environment also increases the emotional closeness, and eventually the bond, between TV viewers and the interviewee. Another interesting detail is the presence of the audience in the studio: even if it is never shown, it is perceived through clapping, laughs and whispering. This is another element of "humanization" of the conversation.

The host and the guest

Both Ruby and the journalist are dressed informally. Signorini's attire is in harmony with the set: he is wearing casual clothes, as if he were really in his living room –with no suit, and the warm colours of his clothes perfectly match the interiors. Ruby somehow represents the stereotypical personification of Berlusconi's televisions' woman[8]: for the occasion she renounces the colourful tight mini-dresses and the heavy makeup she became famous for when the scandal exploded, she is wearing less make-up, but still keeping a sexy "Berlusconi-TV" style, wearing tight jeans, stiletto heels and a transparent blouse with a grey tiger pattern.

Direction and camera

Direction is very important for the construction of this interview: the production, as already mentioned, opts for low lights, and the shots are mostly tight close-ups of both, the host and the guest. Faces are shown in detail and the shots become closer and closer the more the interviewee becomes emotional; the host, on his side, shows empathic reactions (amusement, suffering, tenderness) to each of the guest's statements. Moreover,

[8] The representation of women on Berlusconi's TVs is one of the Italian media hot topic, since women (especially, yet not exclusively) on his channels, are objectified and nudity is very often exposed.

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an extraordinary use of detail shots can be noticed, especially on Ruby's hands: she is holding a tissue in her right hand, and is using it as she becomes emotional when talking about her childhood, while, on her left hand there is an engagement ring. The connection between the ring shot and the interview is made clear at the end, when the host invites Ruby's fiancé on the stage.

JOURNALISTIC ANALYSIS

Interview structure

The host creates the perfect emotional profile interview, aimed at giving a glimpse on the character of the interviewee, more than exploring facts. In fact, everything is about Ruby and her life: no side information is given, no expert is consulted and the host lets the guest explain her story. This interview fits so much this category that many commentators at the time of the airing doubted whether it was information or a scripted drama. The structure is, as a matter of fact, the same of a mini-drama: it starts with Ruby talking about her traumatic past, with a lot of focus on her suffering, then the host brings about the topic of her meeting with the Prime Minister and finally she is asked about her plans for the future. The climax of the interview is reached with a stereotypical happy ending scene, when she declares that she finally found love and she is going to get married, and her fiancé is invited to join her on the stage. The focus on her personal life is also proved by the timing: only 51,33% (7 minutes and 40 seconds) of the time is dedicated to discuss the alleged sexual relations between the minor and the President, the rest, 7 minutes and 16 seconds (48,67% of the total time) is dedicated to trace Ruby's profile by discussing her past and her expectations for the future. Moreover, even within the minutes dedicated to the fact itself, the story is told in a very gossipy style, focusing more on the guest's feelings and sensations than on facts. For instance, the first question about Ruby's first meeting with the politician is as to what she was wearing.

Journalistic style

In terms of Nielsen's categories, this is clearly a storytelling interview, since the host lets the guest explain her story by aligning with her, and also by actively collaborating in telling the story. As mentioned before, the host clearly empathizes with the guest. First, and most importantly, he never confronts or puts the guest in an uncomfortable position: when she declares that she never had sex with Berlusconi and that she received 7000 euros only to attend a dinner, for instance, he takes this answer for granted and does not make any more fact-checking questions. Moreover, as it will be described later, one of the most recurrent words used by the host is "*certo*" (Eng. *sure*, *of course*), used after most of Ruby's answers, as a concept validation. Finally, since Ruby's mother tongue is not Italian (even if she speaks it perfectly), and she is not highly educated, she often makes grammatical, namely verbs conjugations mistakes, so the journalist helps by correcting her, and even by finishing her sentences.

Perhaps because of the above mentioned, Ruby's language is very colloquial, and the host adopts the same register even when referring to the Court case or to the alleged crime. For example, Ruby uses very colourful expressions (in two different occasions she makes her point by using swear words such as "*buttana*" and "*troione di prima categoria*" (both vulgar synonyms for *prostitute*), and the host reacts with an openly paternalistic attitude of amusement, clearly visible from his facial expression and body language. In addition, he always refers to his guest as "*ragazza*" (Eng. *girl*), once again showing closeness and a paternalistic attitude. The audience's applauses, laughs and whispering contribute to the creation of a soft- entertainment talk show style.

TEXT ANALYSIS

As it can be seen in Figure 2, quite surprisingly for an interview that should focus one, very specific fact, the quantitative visualization of most recurrent words is so varied and undefined to make it almost impossible to establish a lexical universe.

▲ *Figure 2.*
Ruby`s interview word cloud.
Source: Author, 2019

As mentioned before, amongst the most recurrent words there is "*ragazza*" (Eng. *girl*), used by Ruby to define herself and by Signorini to refer to her and "*certo*" (Eng. *of course*), a validation word used by the journalist to empathize with the guest. Interestingly, there is the word "*credo*" (Eng. *I believe*), which is one of the most used words by Ruby, accompanied, in the second place by "*sinceramente*" (Eng. *sincerely*). If Stormy's narration was aseptic and assertive, this lexical choice indicates that the focus is on feelings and opinions, thus a partial and personal version of the story. The qualitative analysis will help clarifying this apparently meaningless distribution.

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Storytelling

As said, this interview is easily comparable, in structure and in content to a drama. Actually, two main stories emerge from the storytelling of this interview: a veritable Ruby's fairytale, starting with her difficult beginning and ending with a wedding proposal, and the depiction of the guest as somebody suffering a double personality disorder. If we analyze them following the classical drama pattern, the lexical universes will become very clear.

1. The fairy tale

The interview tells the story of Ruby using a fairy-tale structure. Ruby, described as a defenceless young girl in trouble, is the hero: the most significant words are "*ragazza*" (Eng. *girl*) and "*persona*" (Eng. *person*). Throughout the description, she emerges as an average good girl, whose dream is to become a wife and a mother (both words used by the host). When asked whether she has ever exercised prostitution she answers that she tried once, but she could not "do that", because "as my mama says, you either were born a slut or you cannot become one." (see the video). The villain is her family environment: as mentioned, a lot of time is dedicated to describe the struggles she faced in life, from the abuses suffered during her childhood (she shows the scars these abuses left on her body), to the difficulties of growing up in a strict Muslim household. The environment is also hostile: her birthplace, Morocco, is described as a very difficult place to live in and the economic difficulties she faced, once she moved to Italy, are also exposed. The reference words in this case are "*vita*" (Eng. *life*), "*stress*" and "*difficoltá*" (Eng. *obstacles*).

The pivotal moment of her life is the meeting with Berlusconi. Not only did Berlusconi ever ask her to have sex, but, according to her narration, he was the first person who listened to her "without asking anything back". And also granted her 7.000 Euros as a gift, the first time he met her for a dinner, simply because he perceived she might have been facing a complicated moment in her life. The reference words, in this case, are "*cena*" (Eng. *dinner*), and "*Euro*". Berlusconi is, thus, the fairy godmother who, thanks to his contribution (in this case economic) helped the young lady to overcome her struggles and finally find love. And the happy ending is guaranteed by the fiancé joining Ruby on the stage and talking about their future wedding plans.

2. The double personality

The other story is aimed at making the guest appear as someone suffering of some sort of double personality disorder. Karima openly states that she has always felt the need to lie, to the extent of developing a "parallel life", under the identity of Ruby the hearths' stealer, in order to overcome all the suffering she faced in life. In fact, in the word cloud it can be noticed that the word "*parallela*" (Eng. *parallel*) co-occurs more frequently with "*difficoltá*" (Eng. *obstacles*). She admits declaring she was 24 instead of 17 years old (therefore the President cannot be held accountable for inviting a minor to his dinners), reporting facts that never happened to appear more interesting in front of her friends (therefore we cannot believe in Ruby's telephone tapping, in which she tells her friend about her sexual relations with the President), and she also admits introducing herself

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as Egyptian and not Moroccan (but in this case she does not say she introduced herself as Mubarak's niece). The host insists on accentuating this double personality aspect and indirectly suggests that all her actions should be interpreted in the light of these two parallel lives. The two stories finally come together when she states that after a life as a liar, she has finally found someone, Luca, her fiancé to whom she is completely honest.

CONCLUSION

The results illustrate how "60 Minutes" represents a perfect example of information-oriented journalism: rigorous, fact-based, news driven and objectively reported. The sex-scandal is reported as a case with no space for gossiping or entertainment. Moreover, the very fact that CBS decided to air the interview beyond the President's restraining order, shows a good level of journalistic autonomy. "Kalispera!", instead, stands on the opposite side, with a journalistic style that is definitely closer to an info-entertainment or gossip news program: exactly as most gossip interviews, it appears to be, if not scripted, at least constructed to generate emotions. However, in this specific case emotions serve a specific purpose: everything seems to be moulded in order to exculpate Berlusconi. The entire story-telling is geared towards sanctifying Berlusconi, who emerges as a Good Samaritan; meanwhile the alleged victim, openly defining herself as a compulsive liar, allows the audience to doubt about her trustworthiness. The figure of Trump, on the other hand, is objectively reported as an actor of the news story and the journalist does not sympathize with any person involved, neither suggests any interpretation to the viewer. To sum up, there is no need to underline that the Italian journalist works for a Berlusconi's company to state that his kind of journalism can, without any doubt, be listed within the category of advocacy journalism in which journalists "are advocates, linked to political parties, and very close to being active politicians themselves" (Hallin and Mancini 2004: 266), which is considered one of the main features of the Polarized Pluralist model.

It has to be acknowledged that our sample is small and limited, and, thus, it is difficult to find significant relationships or make strong inferences. However, since the sample size is less relevant in qualitative research, and our aim was simply to expose two specific cases, we can conclude that, in these specific cases, nothing has changed. Both media appear to display the distinctive journalistic culture of their traditional media model: in Italy the practice is still highly politically-oriented and the US medium implements fact-oriented journalism, a typical feature of the Liberal model. As a matter of fact, this case study seems to show how, in spite of the fact that neutrality or even journalistic freedom may be threatened under the Trump-era, the objectivity norm, as displayed by Schudson (2001), seems to be the rule in American journalism. On the other hand, in Italy, as pointed out by Poletti and Brants (2010), even if the commercial logic makes Italian media focus on what sells and forces them to be more sensationalist, the remnants of political parallelism and partisanship (Reinemann *et al.*, 2011) still remain unaltered.

DISCUSSION

Our conclusion may allow to affirm that, in the USA, the existence of a stable, institutionalized, commercial media system is able to resist any attack on freedom of expression and that, on the other hand, in Italy, even within a growing importance of commercial media, the politically-oriented tradition is so embedded in journalism that it stills dominates the news making practices. However, further research is needed to prove these assumptions, especially taking into account that these are not static models, so they can change and adapt throughout the time. Moreover, it is crucial to take into account the role of the internet (Cervi and Roca, 2017) and the growing phenomenon of citizen journalism in setting mainstream media agendas: active participation of citizens, together with the viralization power of social networks, in fact, can potentially force any media – independently of the country, the journalistic culture or the media system they belong to – to include in their agendas topics that, in the old mass media times, would have fallen outside.

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SLIČNI POLITIČARI, DRUKČIJI MEDIJI: MEDIJSKI TRETMAN SEKS-SKANDALA U ITALIJI I SAD-U

Laura Cervi

SAŽETAK *Ovaj rad analizira medijski tretman dvaju seks-skandala: skandala „Stormy Daniels" iz 2018. u koji je bio uključen sadašnji predsjednik SAD-a Donald Trump i skandala „Ruby" u kojem je sudjelovao Silvio Berlusconi 2010. dok je bio talijanski premijer. U radu se koriste kvantitativne i kvalitativne metode, a cilj je otkriti je li medijski tretman navedenih događaja drukčiji, što očekujemo s obzirom na to da dvije zemlje pripadaju dvama različitim medijskim sustavima, te može li se očekivati, na tragu teorije amerikanizacije političke komunikacije, da bi talijanski mediji mogli biti skloni imitiranju američkog modela. Nadalje, drugi cilj ove studije jest otkriti može li se zaokret prema tzv. polariziranom pluralističkom (talijanskom) modelu pronaći u SAD-u, kako su pojedini autori počeli predviđati. Rezultati su pokazali da se mediji u obje zemlje drže svojih tradicionalnih načina tretiranja događaja koji zanimaju javnost.*

KLJUČNE RIJEČI

BERLUSCONI, TRUMP, SEKS-SKANDAL, MEDIJSKO IZVJEŠTAVANJE, MEDIJSKI SUSTAVI, POLITIČKA KOMUNIKACIJA

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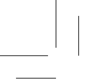
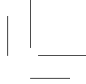
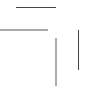
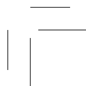

PRIKAZI KNJIGA

BOOK REVIEWS

Giovanna Mascheroni, Cristina Ponte and Ana Jorge (Eds.)
DIGITAL PARENTING: THE CHALLENGES FOR FAMILIES IN THE DIGITAL AGE
Nordicom, University of Gothenburg, 2018., 239 pp
ISBN 978-91-88855-00-8 (print), ISBN 978-91-88855-01-5 (pdf)

As highlighted in the preface of the book *Digital Parenting: The Challenges for Families in the Digital Age*, the issue of parenting in the digital age is a topic that engages a large number of individuals (within the media but also among parents themselves) who are trying to respond to the following challenges: how to mediate children's use of digital media, how to overcome the generational gap in the use of digital media between parents and children, and how to balance between the opportunities offered by digital media and the negative consequences they may have.

These "challenges and opportunities faced by parents in digital times" (p. 11), as emphasized by the editors Giovanna Mascheroni, Cristina Ponte and Ana Jorge, is the main theme of the book divided into three parts (sections): *Digital parenting in context*, *Parental mediation in practice*, and *Challenges, risks and opportunities of digital media for parents and children*.

The first part consists of seven chapters. Sonia Livingstone and Jasmina Byrne, in the first chapter entitled *Parenting in the Digital Age. The Challenges of Parental Responsibility in Comparative Perspective*, point to differences in the way in which parents, in high-income and low-income countries, respond to the challenges of technology in the context of mediation and restrictions towards children's use of media. Another chapter that has an interesting title is *Transcendent Parenting in Digitally Connected Families. When the Technological Meets the Social* by Sun Sun Lim. The author deals with the topic of a new form of parenthood – in households of middle-class families that are extremely digitally connected, in the sense that "parents constantly communicate with their children and guide their children's media use" (p. 12). The third chapter by Isabel Pavez and Teresa Correa *Resistance, Opportunities and Tensions. The Role of Children and Young People in Internet Adoption of Isolated Rural Communities* explores the role of children and young people in adopting the Internet in isolated rural communities of Chile. The fourth chapter *Mediation Practices in Socially Disadvantaged Families* by Ingrid Paus-Hasebrink presents a longitudinal "panel study on the role of media within socialisation of socially disadvantaged families in Austria" (p. 51) along with the analysis of parents' mediation practices. The fifth chapter *Drawn in All Directions. Heritage Language Families' Use of Technology* by Sabine Little focuses on ways in which parents of different cultural and linguistic heritages use digital technology to support heritage language developments in their children" (p. 61). The following chapter *Parental Ethnotheories in Children's Digital and Media Lives* by Marketa Zezulko presents an ethnographic research of seven Czech Roma families to discuss "the possible relevance and value of parents' cultural beliefs (...) to parental mediation and digital parenting theory and practice" (p. 69). The last chapter of the first section *Differing Parental Approaches to Cultivating Youth Citizenship* by Lynn Schofield Clark and Maria José Brites reflects on "how parents and their children negotiate their digital responsibilities and rights during the adolescent years" (p. 81) in the U.S.A. and in Portugal.

The second section also consists of seven chapters. The first chapter *From Media Trusteeship to Parental Mediation: The Parental Development of Parental Mediation* by Thorsten Naab

reviews the theoretical framework of the three "widely discussed strategies of parental mediation" (p. 93): active mediation, restrictive mediation and media co-use. The second chapter *Development of Infants' Media Habits in the Age of Digital Parenting: A Longitudinal Study of Jonathan, From the Age of 6 to 27 Months* by Yehuda Bar Lev, Nelly Elias and Sharona T. Levy presents a study of one child's media use over a two-year period and "family and parent-related factors determining this process" (p. 103). In chapter three *Parental Evaluations of Young Children's Touchscreen Technologies* Leslie Haddon and Donell Holloway present the initial findings "from the Australia-UK Toddlers and Tablets project" in which they explored how parents of children aged 0-5 "evaluate the role of touchscreen technologies in their children's lives" (p. 113). The fourth chapter *Early Gambling Behaviour in Online Games: Parental Perspectives vs. What Children Report* by Rozane De Cock, Bieke Zaman, Maarten Van Mechelen and Jonathan Huyghe addresses the issue of "early gambling practices in online games among primary school children and their parents" (p. 125). The fifth chapter entitled *Maltese Parents' Awareness and Management of Risks their Children Face Online* by Lorleen Farrugia and Mary Anne Lauri presents the results of a qualitative study (focus groups) and survey conducted among children (8-15 years old) and their parents to investigate children's online practices and their parents' knowledge of these practices. In chapter *"Daddy, Your Mobile is Stupid, You Should Put it Away" Media Education from the Perspective of Professionals*, Gisela Schubert and Susanne Eggert provide the perspective of German professional educational counsellors on how parents deal with children's use of mobile media and internet" as well as the ways they try to "improve parental media education" (p. 14). The last chapter of the second section *Digital Parenting in the Netherlands: Putting Theory into Practice* by Jos de Haan, Peter Nikken & Annemarie Wennekers investigates the "Dutch situation on parental guidance of young children's media use" (p. 157).

The last section contains six chapters. The first one, by Veronica Barassi, entitled *The Child as Datafied Citizen: Critical Questions on Data Justice in Family Life* "explores the relationship between parents' digital practices and the production of children's data traces" (p. 169). In the second chapter *The Trouble with "Screen Time" Rules*, Alicia Blum-Ross and Sonia Livingstone analyze the American Academy of Pediatrics' "screen time" guidelines in relation to the experiences of parental mediation (73 diverse families in London). In the following chapter *CHARGE on: Digital Parenting of a Child with Rare Genetic Syndrome with the Help of Facebook Group*, Pille Pruulmann-Vengerfeldt uses auto-ethnography to question "the role a closed Facebook group can play in the life of a parent with a child who has rare genetic syndrome" (p. 189). The fourth chapter *Childbirth Online: The Mediation of Contrasting Discourses* by Ranjana Das analyzes the online discussion on childbirth experiences through two found narratives. Chapter *Sharenting = Good Parenting? Four Parental Approaches to Sharenting on Facebook* by Maja Sonne Damkjaer focuses on parents' practice of sharing photographs and information on their children on social media through conducted multi-case study of eight Danish first-time parent couples. The last chapter *Family photography in a networked age: Anti-sharenting as a reaction to risk assessment and behaviour adaption* by Ulla Autenrieth raises the topic of parents who share family pictures on social networks through the presentation of findings of a research project at the University of Basel entitled *Picturing Family in the Social Web*.

With the variety of covered topics, this book addresses numerous challenges to parents in the digital age. Through established and thoroughly discussed theoretical frameworks and the results provided by much-needed different research projects, it also offers first-hand experiences.

Dunja Majstorović Jedovnicki

Yvonne Anderson, Ulf Dalquist, Jonas Ohlsson (Eds.)

YOUTH AND NEWS IN DIGITAL MEDIA ENVIRONMENT. NORDIC-BALTIC PERSPECTIVES

Nordicom: Swedish Media Council, 2018, 159 pp
ISBN 978-91-88855-02-2 (print)
ISBN 978-91-88855-03-9 (pdf)

In the preface entitled *Youth and news in a digital environment. Nordic-Baltic perspectives* the editors remind us of the technical and technological changes in the media industry that affect the production and distribution of media content. Another additional challenge is the spread of fake news that threatens the media sphere. The focus of these Proceedings is on young people who are dually perceived – as vulnerable consumers who need to be protected or as high-skilled consumers (p. 11).

The Proceedings are divided into three thematic units and fifteen chapters. *Youth Participating in News and Information Production* is the first part, in which Thomas Nygren and Fredrik Brouneús present *The News Evaluator. Evidence-based innovations to promote digtal civic-literacy*. This project is a fruit of collaboration between universities and civil society associations and its purpose is to examine how young people in Sweden are exposed to digital news and how they share it. (p. 20).

This orientation of young people towards digital platforms requires additional digital competence. It also motivated the Norwegian non-profit organization Norsensus Mediaforum to launch the Faktuell 2013 project, presented by Vedat Sevincer, Heidi Biseth and Robert Wallace Vaagan in the chapter *"Faktuell. Youths as journalists in online newspapers and magazines in Norway"*. It is a program that is an innovative model of e-learning and inclusion of youth in the public sphere (p. 31).

A similar project of media literacy is also found in Estonia, and is presented by Kadri Ugur and Eleri Löhmus in the chapter entitled *Non-formal media education. A rich border area of learning*. By describing the Media Injection project, it is shown how it is possible to include young people in media production and help to understand their news value system (p. 47).

The second part of the Proceedings is dedicated to *News Production Conducted by Media Organizations*. Lowe Őstberg presents *Lilla Aktuellt. Public service producing news for young people,* a daily Swedish public service media program which broadcasts news on the children's channel as well. Although the government is concerned about the media content for children aged 8 to 12 in the news, the author reminds us that we can not fully protect them because of the general availability of the media. At the same time we can help them to deal more easily with media challenges. Furthermore, Marita Bjaaland Skjuve and Petter Bae Brandtzaeg in the chapter entitled *Chatbots as a new user interface for providing health information to young people* show how artificial intelligence is involved in creating user experience. Young people are increasingly suffering from various mental

illnesses, so it is very important to provide them with quality information in the digital age (pp. 60, 61), since chatbots can be trusted partners in responding to 'tricky' health issues and help people to open up and thus prevent the dissemination of disinformation related to health issues.

In the chapter *Voicing young people's perspectives. Media influencing as a form of collaboration between youth organizations and the professional media,* Maarit Jaakkola attempts to provide answers to questions on how to involve young people and the public to become more engaged. The media influence today is dominantly presented in a negative context, so the Finnish media are trying to understand the role of the audience in the communication process (p. 74). The idea of the Youth News Voice Center is to identify themes for young people, which are subsequently proposed to editors. Further, Catharina Bucht in the chapter *Printing children's news. Three editors' views on newspapers for a young audience,* shows that printed media have a future and that young people in Scandinavian countries prefer them, in spite of the domination of digital media. The chapter provides interviews with editors of three printed media for children aged 6 to 10. The first of them was Aftenposten Junior from Norway, Børneavisen from Denmark and Mini Bladet from Sweden. The content of children's newspapers is focused on building relationships with readers and monitoring their needs and areas of interest. Compared to content for adults, the criteria for news selection are different - instead of sensationalism and negative news, there are graphic elements which support the story in the first place (p. 85).

The third part of the Proceedings entitled *News Use among Youth* begins with Signe Opermann's chapter *Youth news media use in Estonia*. The Estonian media system is liberal and market-oriented, and includes the Estonian and Russian speaking areas. Although the media market is small, the variety of channels (media and their presence) indicates significant differences (p. 92). Users' preferences with regard to media usage show how traditional media are losing the race with the new ones, and the Estonians see news as a way to broaden horizons as well as to prepare for the future (p. 100). Maria Jervelycke Belfrage, in the chapter *Young people do consume news in social media - with a little help from their friends!,* provides an analysis of news consumption by Swedish high school students. The results have shown that news consumption is the result of incidental exposure, as young people often encounter news on social networks mostly spontaneously or thanks to news alerts or friends' recommendations (pp. 106-110). It is positive that young people can make difference between useful and useless news, and that they are able to separate the need for information from the need for entertainment (p. 112). Nevertheless, young people are often said to intentionally avoid news or consume them uncritically, In the chapter *News consumption among young people in Norway. The relevance of smartphones and social media,* Dag Slettemeås and Ardis Storm-Mathisen show that young people are very interested in news, but there is a difference between young men and young women in its consumption. In addition, Stine Liv Johnson, in the chapter *News kids can use - to play with,* shows the significance and the role of YouTube in the lives of children. The author shows the link between news, media consumption and the game as a model of communication (p. 127) in the online and offline world.

Further, Johan Lindell, in *The Taste for news. Class shaping young people's news use in Sweden',* shows class-based differences. It was established that the middle class is quite media-educated, as contrasted with the working class in which parents are often at work

and children are left alone to the interpretation of social reality (p. 135), which implies lack of communication about media content. Jacob Ørmen talks about media consumption in Denmark with a special emphasis on algorithms that change the role of a gatekeeper in media organizations (p. 141) in the chapter *A generation divided. (Dis)engagement towards news among Danish youth*. Although the Danes are in many aspects similar to other Scandinavians, the author emphasizes an important difference - they are still not willing to pay for the news they consume, as opposed to the others.

Finally, Yvonne Anderson, in the chapter *To share or not to share? News practices in the media life of Swedish youths,* reveals details of the use of social media by young Swedes. By using the qualitative method of deep interviews, it was shown that commenting on social media is a form of individual expression, as well as an attempt at social positioning in the public sphere (p. 151). However, there are those who are reluctant to participate in this form of communication.

The book of Proceedings presents an additional contribution to the study of media literacy and our coexistence with digital media. The book is also a kind of analysis of the Scandinavian model of education where young people are educated for a school for life. The book will be of great use to journalists and editors who work in the media for the purpose of understanding the needs and expectations of children as the youngest and the most vulnerable groups in society. Furthermore, it will be of great use to teachers and students of media, communication and pedagogical orientation, and finally to parents who want to monitor what their children are consuming.

Tanja Grmuša

Seth Ashley, Jessica Roberts and Adam Maksl

AMERICAN JOURNALISM AND ''FAKE NEWS'': EXAMINING THE FACTS

ABC-CLIO, 2018, 239 pp

The book *American Journalism and "Fake News": Examining the Facts*, published by ABC-CLIO in 2018, is part of its Contemporary Debates reference series which deals with current political and cultural issues and controversial claims, primarily in the United States. In the preface of the book it is explained that the purpose of the series is to "give readers a clear and unbiased understanding of current issues by informing them about falsehood, half-truths and misconceptions" (p. ix). Moreover, it is specified that the book is intended for use by general public; in particular, by high school and undergraduate students.

The 239-page book talks about journalism in the United States, while it specifically addresses the problem of the "fake news" which is currently one of the major problems of American democracy, as it is stated in the introduction entitled *Journalism's Role in Democratic Society*. The introduction explains that "at its best, journalism can serve as the cornerstone of democracy by facilitating informed self-government and supporting a shared civic life" (p. xi). However, on the other hand, "at its worst, journalism can distort, mislead, and distract" (p. xi). For this reason, the authors of the book lay out the facts about today's journalism, society and the media, politics, public relations... The authors in question are Seth Ashley; an associate professor of journalism and media studies at

Boise State University; Jessica Roberts, an assistant professor of communication studies at Universidade Católica Portuguesa in Lisbon and Adam Makls, an associate professor of journalism and media at Indiana University Southeast.

American Journalism and "Fake News": Examining the Facts was written through 37 important questions divided into seven thematic chapters. Each question represents one individual entry in the chapter, and all of them are graphically and contentually complementary. Each question is followed by a short and concise answer and then by a more comprehensive and detailed explanation in which facts and recent data, including potential controversy, are presented. At the end of each entry, there is a "Further Reading" section containing a list of important resources.

The first thematic unit *Journalists: What They Do and Whom They Work For* begins with the explanation that "understanding who journalists are and the contexts in which they work is essential to being media literate" (p. 1). Therefore, the authors, by providing additional explanations, give affirmative answers to the following questions "Can anyone be a journalist?", "Are journalists expected to follow any formal ethical guidelines in their work?", "Do traditional newspapers still play a role in modern journalism?" and "Do public relations professionals influence journalists?". On the other hand, the authors claim that journalists, generally speaking, are not representative of the population they serve, and that they do not have the power to decide what should be published or aired, although there are some exceptions. An unambiguous answer has not been given to the question "Are journalists objective?", so the authors conclude that they are not, "but their methods can be, which means their work still can be fair, accurate and complete" (p. 17).

The second chapter is *News Media Law and Economics* and it gives a negative answer to the question "Does the first amendment give journalists any special legal rights?" and a positive answer to the question "Is America's news media landscape dominated by just a few corporations?". The authors also claim that the federal government regulates news media, yet not excessively. They answer the questions "Do newsgathering organisations only publish content that will make them money?" and "Is the American news media system the same as that of the rest of the developed world?" both affirmatively and negatively. Subsequently, they provide a detailed explanation for such a statement within the discussion of the chapters.

The third set of questions refers to *News Audiences* and it gives a positive answer to the questions in the entries "Do liberals and conservatives consume different media?", "Do news media organisations shape their coverage to attract viewers with certain political beliefs?" and "Do audiences influence news content?". On the other hand, the authors argue that it is not true that most Americans get their news online today. "Television, including cable, local, and network television news programs, was still the most popular way for Americans to get their news in 2016, with online sources coming second" (p. 73). There is no answer to the question "Do Americans trust the news media?", whereas the authors explain that it depends on many factors.

The fourth chapter *News and Politics* covers seven issues, thus being the most comprehensive one, including the first. Its first entry answers the question "Are all news media biased?" with an explanation that they are, but not in the ways people typically think. "Subjectivity does not arise so much from personal opinion as much as from journalistic norms and forms" (p. 103). In this unit, the authors give affirmative, or at least partially

affirmative, answers to the questions "Do politicians set the agenda for journalists?", "Do journalist have valid reasons to use anonymous or unnamed sources?" and "Can politicians circumvent journalists by using social media?". When it comes to the question "Is the relationship between politicians and journalists adversarial or cooperative?", the authors claim the correct answer is "both", while, in the authors' view, the answer "yes and no" is adequate to the question "Do news media increase political polarization?". It is also said that news media typically do not focus on the issues and policies that affect citizens when covering elections. Instead, "many news outlets focus disproportionately on polling and scandals" (p. 108).

The fifth unit deals with *'Fake news' and Misinformation.* In this section "fake news" is first defined as an oxymoron. In the next entry it is stated that "President Donald Trump uses the term "fake news" in reference to news organisations that published reports critical of him or that differ from claims he has made publicly, although in some instances he or his administration has later acknowledged the truth of those reports" (p. 145). Despite that, in the entry with the question "Did 'fake news' influence the outcome of the 2016 presidential election?" it is claimed that in 2018 it was still not completely clear. Affirmative answers are given to the questions "Are 'fake News' and other types of misinformation more easily spread because of social media?" and "Can anything be done to stop the spread of 'fake news'?", which is followed by a detailed explanation of the methods within the discussion of the chapter.

The sixth thematic unit deals with *Representation and Reality in News Coverage* and covers the questions "Is the world really as dangerous as news media seem to suggest?" and "Does news coverage of the economy reflect the average American's reality?". It is concluded that the answer in no in both cases. However, when it comes to representation of scientific knowledge and consensus, minorities and women and the reality of war, the authors conclude that it varies from case to case.

The seventh and final chapter is about *The Future of Journalism*. "Is American journalism dying?" is the first question of the unit and the answer is no "although modern American journalism is suffering from variety of ills and challenges that need to be addressed" (p. 197). Affirmative answers are given to the last two questions in the book - "Will technological changes continue to influence how journalism is practiced?" and "Will journalism play a significant role in the future of American democracy?".

Stela Lechpammer

J. Ignacio Callego, Manuel Fernández Sande, Nieves Limón (Eds.)

TRENDS IN RADIO RESEARCH: DIVERSITY, INNOVATION AND POLICIES

Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2018, 364 pp
ISBN-10: 1-5275-1349-1
ISBN-13: 978-1-5275-1349-5

Changes in technology in the last two decades have significantly influenced the development of electronic media. Radio is no exception. In spite of the fact that it is the oldest of all the electronic media, it turns out to be the most resilient one. This book includes the contributions from many authors, and covers a number of aspects, out of

which 'innovation' can be highlighted as the most important one. The development of technology has enabled the development of radio in smaller and specific environments, such as university radio stations. In addition, there has been a strong development of social media and directing radio to other platforms for at least last two decades. Therefore, this book provides a comprehensive overview of this development. The book is divided into three sections and twenty-two chapters, throughout which the editors and authors managed to explain, in a most expert, yet intelligible, way all the 'traps' radio enthusiasts dared to pass due to the galloping and sudden development of technology that has slowed in the past few years. As stated on the book's back cover, it truly explores how academia seeks to systematize the changes taking place in radio in terms of its adaptation to the digital era. The first section of the book, which contains no more than six chapters, deals with the issues of functioning of community radio stations and of the development of university radio stations. Seven authors managed to elaborate how such radio stations function in their own environment. The authors also deal with their enormous impact on the development of the third media sector. Nevertheless, in a certain way, they point out the details which indicate that there are individual differences among countries. The fact that the observed radio stations are restricted exclusively to the Spanish and Portuguese speaking areas, does not diminish the value of the mentioned and its applicability to the rest of the developed world. In this sense, the authors claim that, if the degree of development of these forms of radio is taken into consideration, the direction in which the third media sector is headed, can be identified. In the second, there is a significantly greater number of topics related to innovation in the radio, which fit into a number of interesting segments. Innovations in the radio are not only relying on the fast development of technology but also through increased radio interest due to a much greater availability of various radio segments that were not available throughout the traditional radio eras. More then dozen authors in this section of the book address various segments through which radio operates. The editors of the book made sure that the section includes comparative analyses in some countries with significantly developed media markets, such as Argentina and Spain, In point of fact,, a further development that occurred in these countries during the new digital era gained additional momentum and numerous new opportunities. Apart from the comparative analyses, there are also a number of examples of how radio, as a medium, can affect a large number of social movements and isolated social groups, such as prisoners in Spanish prisons. Educating, as a role of radio, is emphasized as a factor of potential reintegration of individuals into society. Social media and their role as a support to traditional radio, more specifically, the radio of the third sector, enables young people to implement radio as a desirable tool for accepting new knowledge and skills. In the last decade the role of social media in education has been noteworthy, and there can be no negligible influence on traditional media, especially on radio that has been able to adapt to new times in a hundred years of existence and adjust its new inventions and technology to itself and further enhance its appearance. It is argued that attempts at succeding in working on a radio drama and in improving radio advertising through a new sound design were a venture, but the very diversity of themes gives value to this work. At the same time, placing both these themes through the prism of innovation will also intrude on those radio professionals who suspect that media can be presented both in theoretical and practical terms. The

last section, which consists of six chapters, deals with policies and current issues such as piracy, the relationship between artists and the market, the challenges posed to the radio by mobile communications in the digital era. Taking into consideration the fact that that, until recently, radio had been first in the perception of wireless transmission, the authors show in an interesting way the challenges to be met in a future that has already begun. As far as attention of a greater radio audience is concerned, the authors investigate the key questions of the future of the radio spectrum and the effect of the new commercial radio business models which will, not only prolong the life of the radio in the new digital era, but also significantly improve collaboration with the audience, and hence its increase. The title of this book *Trends in Radio Research* covers everything that an interested reader can look for in literature. Without ignoring the fact that research was carried out on large media markets, the same can be applied to a great extent of specific environments. Through research of the sound and radio media carried out in the countries as varied as the United Kingdom, Spain, Poland, Finland, Portugal, Brazil and Argentina, the authors managed to approach these markets and convey the ideas that radio can develop on different platforms and through further digital development. In the first chapter, the editors of the book further explain the purpose of the book, which makes it easier for potential readers to grasp all its aspects. The greatest contribution of the book is the part on innovation in the radio industry and the challenges it is faced with, or it will meet soon in the digital era and further technology advancement. Therefore, this book is a great asset in the context of the global challenges, presented through some examples of large media markets. To quote one of the authors, "at a level relating content and technology, there is the major challenge and developing radio audiences in the digital arena".

Ivica Zadro

INFORMACIJE

INFORMATION

Academy of Arts and Culture in Osijek is organising
4th International Scientific Conference – *European Realities*

/MOVEMENTS/

(Osijek, 12th - 13th December 2019)

International scientific conference *European Realities* is fourth in continuation scientific conference that started in 2013. The conference is engaged in interdisciplinary research and analysis of cultural, educational, artistic and scientific policies in the European environment, as well as their consequences on specific aspects of contemporary social and cultural context. The first meeting, held in 2013, was mainly devoted to the role of national identity in the context of the European Union, and the second meeting, held in 2015, dealt with the issue of cultural, educational, artistic and scientific policies in the context of the 200th anniversary of the birth of Josip Juraj Strossmayer. The third conference, which took place in 2017, emphasized the modern media and media culture.

Overall theme of the meeting to be held in 2019 on the Academy of Arts and Culture in Osijek, Department of Culture, Media and Management is **MOVEMENTS**, in a broad sense. The theme is related to **inevitable adjustments of culture, management, creative industries, media and public communications in general to digital environment.**

In other words, the question isn't will we adjust to new cultural, media and economic trends but rather what is the mode of this adjustment and with which far-reaching consequences. Digital revolution, social media, fake news, cultural production as a supplier led process and many other current social and cultural phenomena must also encourage academic community to take a scientific and analytical approach to face the growth of so called influencer-driven culture and the omnipresent "University of YouTube"; denouncing and calling to the responsibility of social media and broader, internet platforms where they have to prove they care about the truth and serious journalism, or will be properly forced to do so by European regulation. Art, science and culture also need adjustments to new ways of closing the loop of artist, audience, people and place, respecting at the same time the creative processes and the need to understand the market forces that are leading it. The rise of self-employed workers in cultural and creative industries, especially in the design and media industries needs to be mentioned as well as the fact that their career raise is not led by money but rather by its impact on the world.

The answers to questions how to adjust depend on a collaborative and flexible approach, but also on the emerging new collaborative spaces. In this sense, it is precisely the **movements** in new directions, innovative and attractive solutions and more provocative reflections that will strengthen the synergy between activities in culture, economy, especially cultural and creative industries and public communications, enabling the establishment of a stimulating research platform to be summarized in the **fundamental goals** of our gathering:

>Observe media and public communications in the context of the public sphere, different decision making and implementation processes; in relation to its economic potential and opportunities that media offers or through symbolic practices and orientation on meanings that they transmit through media content; as an arena in which different disciplinary traditions and methodological basics in media research can collaborate and exchange knowledge, with the analysis of current and future trends, developments and media phenomena as an aim. This responds to the **conference thematic unit** entitled **Media and Public Communication in Political, Economic and Cultural Environment.**

>Scientific, economical and media aspects of culture and arts synchronically and diachronically examine within the fields of culture and arts and through research in the scope of regional culture, cultural geography, cultural anthropology, cultural tourism, cultural identity, cultural capital, aesthetics, ideology, religious culture, sociology of culture, cultural memory, heritage and space identity, etc. The modalities of facing the new challenges in culture and tracing current trends, such as the strong digital technology interventions in the everyday life culture as well as in the culture and arts research will be presented within the **conference thematic unit Culture and Arts – Scientific, Managerial and Media Aspects.**

>Within the third conference aim and **conference thematic unit** entitled **Cultural and Creative Industries: The Urban Regeneration and Economic Growth Drivers** the main intention is to analyse and compare the cultural and creative industries as well as other related industries economic conditions, to identify external and internal factors necessary for achieving dynamic development, to analyze the influence on Croatian economy and European Union as a whole and to identify further development potentials and directions precisely because the cultural and creative industries are the urban regeneration and economic growth drivers, which is supported by data like the growth of employees, realized income, exports, number of freelance workers, new ways of doing business. Aside from employing a significant number of young new *generation Z* employees, the goal is not just profit, but above all impact.

Some of the **discussion topics** within the **conference thematic units** are:

1. **Media and Public Communication in Political, Economic and Cultural Environment**
   >Information disorder, misinformation's, fake news, censorship, new regulation and new responsibilities
   >User-generated media content and concept of civil journalism
   >The issue of *No limits culture*
   >Public sphere in digital surrounding
   >In (equities) in access, and digital divide
   >Media socialization and media literacy – the future and trend of development
   >Audience and practices of participation in media
   >Ideologies in media, manipulation and propaganda
   >Media discourses: vicarious and participatory
   >Public relations as text and profession

>Freedom of the media protection in digital age
>The concept of postdigital age: are new media still new?

2. Culture and Arts – Scientific, Managerial and Media Aspects
>Regional culture – emotion, tradition, brand
>Cultural and artistic aspects of emotions
>Intercultural (non) communication
>Vernacular values in culture and arts
>Literature and other arts
>Media identities, from stars to selfies
>Cultural representation and power in media
>Popular culture in media
>Cyber culture or breaking boundaries
>The concept of virtual
>Digital cultural assets legal protection in information society
>Culture and arts of diaspora, immigration, refugees
>Culture and Arts, Management and Communications: an educational aspects
>Man – computer – man: the issue of interaction design within the digital information space

3. Cultural and Creative Industries: The Urban Regeneration and Economic Growth Drivers
>The future/trends and projections of cultural and creative industries developments
>The influence / non-conventional practices and digital marketing
>Digital transformation
>Institutional and corporate contribution and foreign partnerships (project and alternative financing)
>Business modelling and financing in digital era
>Developments – shaping and adapting organizations to a dynamic environment (establishment, financing and management)
>Creative economy – creative class
>Media management
>The changing publishing industry
>Reputation economy
>The European legal framework of cultural and creative industries
>Media archaeology and information heritage
>(Post)digital life of museum collections

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Ofcom (2013) *Radio: The Listener's Perspective: A Research Report for Ofcom*. http://stakeholders.ofcom.org.uk/binaries/research/radio-research/ressearch-findings13/listeners-perspective.pdf (20.11.2013.).

UNICEF, Ured za Hrvatsku (2011) *Mišljenja i stavovi djece i mladih u Hrvatskoj*. http://www.unicef.hr/upload/file/351/175805/FILENAME/StavovidjeceimladihuHrvatskoj.pdf (19.11.2013.).

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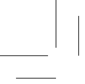
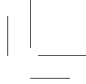
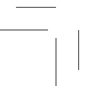
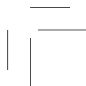

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