Publication Cycles and the Impact of Academic Research on Current Events

Louisa Ha
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As we begin a new academic year, I would like to thank the dedicated services of past associate editors Carolyn Kitch and Wilson Lowrey and past book review editor Ron Rodgers. I would also like to introduce several new faces in our editorial team. First are our new associate editors, Randal Beam of University of Washington and Lana Rakow of the University of North Dakota. Next is our new book review editor, Daniel C. Hallin of University of California, San Diego. With his immense international research experience and expertise in book authorship, our journal will have more reviews of foreign-language books of our scholarly interest in the field. My competent editorial assistant, Dhiman Chattopadhyay, has also completed his 2-year term for the journal in August. Our new editorial assistant is a first-year PhD student Alyssa Fisher. Together, we will continue to provide our readers with the best research articles in the field.

The passing away of Guido Stempel III, Professor Emeritus of Ohio University and the former editor of our journal from 1973 to 1990, on May 31, 2016, is a very sad news to me personally and the journal. He is one of my unofficial mentors. He was my very first article discussant as a doctoral student at a conference in Ohio University. I was one of the early contributors to his Web Journal of Mass Communication Research. After I accepted the editorship of the Quarterly, he shared his precious experience with me on editing the journal and the art of balancing reviewers’ input with independent editorial judgment. He always accepted my review request whenever I needed him to review in a rush or fill in for reviewers that declined the invitation. Even in April when I was working on collecting archive journal issues to complete digitizing all issues of the journal, he still graciously helped me find information. Although he is no longer with us, his love for and contribution to the Quarterly will be remembered.

All eyes are now focused on the U.S. presidential elections; people across the world are debating how the new U.S. President will affect them. I do not need to reiterate the roles that media are playing in politics and how the candidates utilize media to achieve their campaign goals. For this type of current event, how can academic research contribute to the understanding and advancement of knowledge? With its 93 years of history, Journalism and Mass Communication Quarterly (JMCQ) has a rich collection of research articles addressing how news media affect voting behavior in the United States and other countries. We took advantage of the online medium by compiling a virtual theme collection on media and voting. Editor Tom Johnson’s introductory review essay of the collection titled, “Media and Voting: Building Upon the Foundations of Journalism,” explains how previous JMCQ authors examined traditional and
non-traditional news media’s influence on the voting behavior and their theoretical models from the 1960s to present times. These articles have long-lasting impact on our understanding of the topic of media and voting. I hope our readers who are either teaching or researching this topic will find this collection handy and useful.

In addition to the virtual theme collection, we also have several upcoming articles on contemporary political communication research. Online publishing has increased the timeliness and short-term effects of research scholarship. Thanks to the efficient production team of SAGE, several articles have already been published online first such as Jason Turcotte’s “Who’s Citing Whom? Source Selection and Elite Indexing in Electoral Debates,” Lindsey Meeks’s “Aligning and Trespassing: Candidates’ Party-Based Issue and Trait Ownership on Twitter,” Sung Woo Yoo’s “Cognitive Benefits for Senders: Antecedents and Effects of Political Expression on Social Media,” and Jay Hmielowski, Myiah Hutchens, Bruce Pinkleton, and Michael Beam’s “A Spiral of Skepticism? The Relationship Between Citizens’ Involvement With Campaign Information To Their Skepticism and Political Knowledge.” The fast publication cycle facilitates currency of our research scholarship, and we are no longer tied by the backlog of accepted manuscripts.

This issue of the Quarterly also has two political communication articles. Testing the attribute agenda-setting theory in partisan media use, Ki Deuk Hyun and Soo Jung Moon analyze partisan news media’s agenda attributes and correlate them with TV viewers’ polarized evaluation of candidates. They conclude that imbalanced news sources exert strong influence on public opinion, as one-sided information can be more persuasive. Piotr Bobkowski and Patrick Miller utilize national longitudinal survey data of high school students to adulthood to theorize journalism education’s unique contributions to civic development, in terms of voting propensity and community volunteering. These current and upcoming articles will have near-term effects as they are published close to the time of the U.S. presidential elections. Time will tell their long-term effects on political communication scholarship.

Although online comments are an important auxiliary feature of online news, their benefits and drawbacks for the medium have not been well understood. Christian von Sikorski and Maria Hänelt’s experiment shows how valenced online comments affect both perception of the scandalized financial manager and journalistic quality of online news by the perceived opinion climate, responsibility of, and attitude toward the scandalized actor, as well as the contrast effect of negative comments.

Online search is another important behavior to study the public’s agenda. Marcus Maurer and Thomas Holbach advance the agenda-setting theory by demonstrating the different influences of media’s agenda-setting effects on the public’s Wikipedia search of high-certainty topics such as unemployment and high-uncertainty topics such as the Enterohaemorrhagic Escherichia Coli (EHEC) epidemic.

How do journalists differ in their journalistic roles between non-profit and for-profit news organizations? Serena Carpenter, Jan Boehmer, and Frederick Fico use content analysis to measure the four journalistic roles of dissemination, interpretative, adversarial, and mobilization in these two types of news organizations. Non-profit journalists were found to be more likely to include interpretation in stories, while for-profit journalists were more likely to enact the dissemination and mobilization roles.
Although YouTube videos are now a staple in the online world, the history of how journalists negotiated and legitimized such user-generated content (UGC) as a news source has not been explored. Tien Ee Dominic Yeo uses the institutional theory to qualitatively analyze newspaper commentaries about a YouTube video in 2006 to show the diffusion and normative acceptance of UGC in Hong Kong.

The video game industry as a violator of the Right of Publicity is an example of the tension between free speech (media creativity) and commercial use of one’s identity. Matthew Bunker and Clay Calvert’s analysis of two court cases with the application of the same transformative use test shows radically different results by the respective majorities and dissents in the court.

How to improve the coverage of mass shootings to avoid perpetuation of negative attitude toward mental illness patients is important for the society. Laura Wilson, Alesha Ballman, and Theresa Buczek’s experiment shows that even if the article does not mention mental illness or contains expert information, it still contributes to negative attitudes toward people with mental illness. Hence, the ingrained association between mental illness and mass shootings makes news coverage of mass shootings perpetuate the stigma toward individuals with mental illness.

Mitchell Bard’s qualitative analysis of the three Fox News prime-time hosts (Bill O’Reilly, Sean Hannity, and Gretchen Van Susteren) reveals how show hosts play an important role in branding news programs and thus directly affect a network’s self-presentation and credibility. Despite differences in approach, these three Fox News prime-time hosts reinforced the network’s themes of opposing health care reform in August 2009.

Enjoy the articles!

Louisa Ha
Editor
Professor, Bowling Green State University