



## CELEBRATING TWO DECADES OF ACADEMIC PARTNERSHIP: The Brazil-U.S. Colloquium on communication studies

*Comemorando duas décadas de parceria acadêmica: Colóquio Brasil-Estados Unidos de estudos da comunicação*

*Coloquio Brasil-EE. UU. sobre Estudios de la Comunicación: Celebrando dos décadas de colaboración académica*

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This special issue celebrates two decades of collaboration between researchers in Brazil and the United States. For twenty years, Brazilian and American professors lead this important effort that has truly benefitted generations of scholars by bringing together researchers from across the Americas in a very special academic partnership. The fruit of these labors is not simply regularly held meetings during these two decades (including meetings held via Zoom due to COVID-19). Nor is the fruit of these endeavors limited to publications, although these have also been important outputs marking scholarly milestones. Indeed, as this journal special issue shows, the Brazil-U.S. Colloquium on Communication Studies continues to produce scholarship reflecting this very special relationship that acts as a constant impetus for international solidarity and knowledge exchange.

The special issue begins with an article by the 2025 Keynote Speaker for the Colloquium: Silvio Waisbord. Professor Waisbord is on the faculty of George Washington University where he serves as Professor in the School of Media and Public Affairs. His many other international contributions are too numerous to cite but include Editor of the *International Journal of Communication* and Past President of the International Communication Association. The title of his article is “Comunicação, democracia e a tirania da economia da atenção”/“Communication, democracy, and the tyranny of the attention economy,” Waisbord brings together an important dissection of the attention economy as it relates to communication practices and democratic wellbeing. Focusing his gaze on attentional resources, Waisbord argues that placing the attention economy at the center of communicative analysis is vital in order to understand “algorithmic attention in the digital society” that allows us to probe “expression, dialogue, (mis)information, and other communicative phenomena” in the Age of AI. As Waisbord makes clear, without proper understanding of attention as a human resource, we cannot understand how communication occurs via digital media, networks, and the like. For while digital media in democratic societies allows for virtually unlimited transmission of content, the value of the content is only realized when scarce attentional resources are secured. In his words: “Any type of communication, format, or intention demands attention; otherwise, it has no reach or impact...Without attention, expression is pure expression—a manifestation of ideas, feelings, sensibilities—but not necessarily communication, as it has no audience or interlocutors. For communication to exist, attention is needed.”

The concept of attention is implicit in the next article “Dinâmica dos grupos de interesse na regulação das plataformas digitais no Brasil: propostas para estabelecer regras sobre as receitas das notícias online”/“Interest Group Dynamics in Regulating Digital Platforms in Brazil: Efforts to Set Rules on Online News Revenues” by Jonas Valente (Oxford Internet Institute), Renata de Oliveira Miranda Gomes (University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign), and Fernando Oliveira Paulino (University of Brasília). Just as Waisbord underscores the significance of attentional resources, Valente et al. show how the crisis in advertising revenue is spurred by this shift. As they write: “The concentration of online content distribution and advertising revenue by platforms has fundamentally changed the traditional media landscape, triggering a crisis for publishers who relied on those revenues.” As the authors make clear, policymakers are only beginning to grapple with regulations that have long been shaped by “powerful, competing interest groups.” As the article makes clear, as the digital revolution accelerates, “The core of this battle lies in the redistribution of economic value and the establishment of new market rules to address the unequal bargaining power between legacy media and digital giants.”

The implications of the shift to digital media is also clear in entitled “Framework Para a Construção de uma Narrativa Digital Visual no Jornalismo: Diálogo Interamericano na Produção do Conhecimento”/ “Framework for Building a Digital Visual Narrative in Journalism: Inter-American Dialogue in Knowledge Production.” From attention to democracy and policy, this next contribution offers a meaningful comparison of digital visual narratives in journalism thanks to insights from the authors Cristiane Fontinha Miranda (Universidade Federal de Santa Catarina (UFSC), Florianópolis, Santa Catarina, Brasil) and Maria José Baldessar (Universidade Federal de Santa Catarina (UFSC), Florianópolis, Santa Catarina, Brasil). Their study “addresses the challenge of adapting traditional journalism to the complexity of the Web by employing theories from Emotional Design, Interface Design, and Design Thinking to propose a conceptual framework that guides this process.” Drawing on their expertise in qualitative methodologies, they offer rich comparative data from interview with both journalism professionals and scholars in Brazil and the United States. In so doing, they show us the importance of taking “comparative and interdisciplinary perspectives on the production of convergent content for multiple platforms and devices.”

This comparative perspective is also at the heart of the article “Tendências nas análises de discursos metajornalísticos na cobertura política brasileira por jornais estadunidenses” / “Trends in metajournalistic discourse analysis in Brazilian political coverage by U.S. newspapers” by Marcos Paulo da Silva (Universidade Federal de Mato Grosso do Sul, Campo Grande – Mato Grosso do Sul – Brasil). Continuing the theme

of professional evolution in Brazilian and American journalistic fields, da Silva provides an analysis of “metajournalistic discourse in Brazilian political coverage by U.S. newspapers. Metajournalistic discourse is defined as professionals engaging in discussions, both within and outside the profession, about its normative foundations.” Through cross-national comparison, we see how normative assumptions about the field of journalism have wide-ranging implications about how political themes are treated, in particular populist issues and leaders, which is both timely and relevant in Brazil and the United States. Finally, the author reveals how varied legal frameworks shape the industry in each country, an angle of vision that readers will find of great value.

Taking comparison of professional fields further, the next article continues cross-national comparison in sports in the two countries. The article is entitled “Mídia e Cultura Esportiva : o esporte na TV aberta do Brasil e dos Estados Unidos”/“Media and sports culture: sports on broadcast television in Brazil and the United States” by Ana Paula Goulart de Andrade (Universidade Federal Rural do Rio de Janeiro – Seropédica – Rio de Janeiro – Brasil) and Igor Vieira Ferreira (Universidade Federal Fluminense – Niterói – Rio de Janeiro – Brasil). Drawing on theoretical frameworks established by Berger and Luckmann, they examine the importance of television in creating a significant professional subculture in both Brazil and the United States. They offer a nuanced comparison between Brazilian and American sports broadcasting thanks to their analysis of parallel programming case studies in each country (TV Globo’s Esporte Espetacular and NBC’s One Team: The Power of Sports (NBC)). As they find, there are both “...similarities and differences in the production, circulation, and consumption of sports audiovisual content...” The result of which is an “interface between culture, sport, and audiovisual media” leading to a distinct conception of sports and society across the two nations.

As these cross-national projects in communication studies show, researchers in Brazil and the United States share an abiding commitment to excellence in research methods. The next article is “Ferramentas para as Ciências Sociais Públicas na era digital: Estratégias interpretativas para a análise de conteúdos de interesse público”/“Tools for Public Social Science in the Digital Age: Interpretative Strategies for Content Analysis in the Public Good” by Laura Robinson (Santa Clara University – Santa Clara, California – United States). Robinson extends this theme to examine the growth of digital platforms in Brazil and the U.S. that may not be well served by big data approaches. Instead, Robinson argues that using automated coding and other strategies is not ideally suited for those researchers “contributing to public-facing social sciences in which narrative, storytelling, and naturally occurring discourse are prominently featured.” Robinson, offers a nuanced approach to content analysis strategies for interpretively oriented qualitative researchers: “In providing replicable methodological tools to analyze data interpretively, this research provides a toolkit for qualitative researchers engage in Public Social Science in an age of contentious politics.”

Finally, the special issue closes with “Estudando as elites antigas e novas: as elites em uma sociedade em processo de digitalização”/“Studying Elites Old and New: Elites in a Digitizing Society” by Jeremy Schulz (University of California Berkeley, California, United States). Continuing the thread of cross-national comparison, Schulz continues the discussion of rigorous social science methods critical to communication scholars. Training his attention on elites in the digital age, Schulz not only offers a blueprint for sampling, recruiting, and interviewing members of various types of elites but also “shows how various recruitment and interviewing strategies may be adapted to take advantage of contemporary digital platforms in order to identify and recruit individuals who are not tied to particular workplaces or organizations.” As Schulz concludes these strategies will become increasingly important to better understand both professional digital elites, as well as the more elusive elites who populate contemporary content creation and gig platforms.

In closing, it is more important now than ever to keep our focus on global connections shared by Brazil and the United States rather than succumbing to the temptation to be preoccupied by what is “close to home” in our own national contexts. As we see, the articles are marked by the recurrence of several important approaches to communication research: constant comparison, cross-national case studies, and rigorous methods, all of which highlight both similarities and differences across the *Countries of the Future: Brazil and the United States*. This special issue highlights this commitment not only with these seven articles, but the twenty years of care and commitment after the idea of Professor José Marques de Melo (*in memoriam*) and under the leadership of Sonia Virgínia Moreira who has shared this journey with American partners including Joseph Straubhaar (University of Texas at Austin), Vicki Mayer (Tulane University, New Orleans), John Baldwin (Illinois State University), Samantha Joyce (Saint Mary’s College of California), and Laura Robinson, as well as generations of scholars in Brazil and the U.S.