Call for Papers

Contemporary updates to journalism theories and concepts

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The theories and related concepts of journalism have gone through a historical period that has challenged their limits in empirical, normative, epistemological and even ontological terms (McBride & Rosenstiel, 2013; Mellado, Georgiou & Nah, 2020; Waisbord, 2017). It is no coincidence that the scenario of uncertainty, reconstruction and resignification of theories and concepts that help explain contemporary journalistic practice is directly related to the disruption journalism has experienced in recent decades, whether as a social institution (Vos, 2019; Vos, 2022; Benson & Neveu, 2005), as a profession (Hanitzsch et al., 2019), as a language (Schudson, 2011; Barnhurst & Nerone, 2001) or as a form of knowledge of concrete reality (Pontes, 2017).

The journalistic field has faced many transformative disruptions: the emergence of economic and cultural globalization since the 1990s (Reese, 2010; Callahan, 2003; Bennett et al., 2004); the financial collapse of journalism's business models, resulting in job precarity and a shrinking workforce (Waisbord, 2019); technological advances culminating in digitization (Pavlik, 2016; Canavilhas, 2012; Mielkniczuk & Barbosa, 2005) and subsequently in the flattening of socio-technical networks (Hermida, 2012; Hanusch & Nölleke, 2018; Primo & Zago, 2014), algorithmization (Lewis, Sanders, & Carmody, 2019; Wölker & Powell, 2021) and artificial intelligence (Broussard et al., 2019; Marconi, 2020; Peña Fernández et al., 2023); political polarization motivated and instrumentalized by the disruptive logic of disinformation (Carlson, Robinson, & Lewis, 2021; Pickard, 2019; Westlund & Hermida, 2021; Ekström, Lewis, & Westlund, 2019; Silva, 2022); impunity for symbolic and physical attacks on journalists (Kim & Shin, 2022); the largest health crisis in world history resulting from the Covid-19 pandemic and its humanitarian, psychological, political, and economic consequences (Pontes, Silva, & Souza, 2021; Papadopoulou & Maniou, 2024; Quandt & Wahl-Jorgensen, 2022), as well as the subsequent waves of scientific denialism (Kalichman, 2009; Miskolci, 2023; Godulla, Seibert, & Klute, 2024); and finally, the crisis of the idea of expertise itself in various social institutions, including journalism (Eyal, 2019; Vos & Thomas, 2018; Zimdars & McLeod, 2020).

This context, however, does not negate the accumulated wisdom of decades of theorizing about journalism, nor the relevance of new studies on the theoretical foundations of the field. On the

contrary, in contexts of crises and structural transformations (Deuze & Witschge, 2018; Waisbord, 2017), such as the scenarios mentioned above, journalism is faced with the question of its own social necessity as a foundation of democracy. Meanwhile, old dilemmas have regained relevance and new tensions have emerged, challenging concepts once stabilized in the set of theoretical formulations to historically explain journalism. Particularly noteworthy in this context is the debate around the notion of journalistic objectivity (Kovach & Rosenstiel, 2014; Schudson, 1978; Gans, 1980; Vos & Finneman, 2017), which is in tension with emergent epistemologies (Moraes, 2022; Harbers & Broersma, 2014; Steensen, 2017).

Another important example is the classic gatekeeping theory originally developed by David M. White (1950) based on the studies of Kurt Lewin (1947a; 1947b). Even in a contemporary scenario of profound changes in journalism, a significant part of the basic elements of the theory - such as Lewin's (1947a; 1947b) notions of forces and channels - have not necessarily lost their theoretical validity and vitality (Shoemaker & Vos, 2009; Heinderyckx, 2017). On the other hand, the scope of dynamics that the theory is able to explain has changed significantly. In this context, there has been a proliferation of new concepts that try to make sense of the theory's contemporary application: secondary gatekeeping (Singer, 2014; Wallace, 2018), algorithmic gatekeeping (Møller, 2022; Van Dalen, 2023; Cardoso, 2023), gatewatching (Bruns, 2005; 2018; Canavilhas, 2010), gatebouncing (Vos, 2019), among others.

It is against this backdrop that this special issue emerged, as part of the celebrations of the 20th anniversary of Brazilian Journalism Research. Among the key questions of interest in the specieal issue are:

- How have journalism research traditions such as framing, newsworthiness, gatekeeping, the spiral of silence, and agenda setting, among others, been challenged – and even reformulated or reinvented – in light of technological, economic, and cultural changes in the contemporary context?

- How can some of the key concepts of journalism research, such as the notions of audience, sources, channels, as well as the selection, production, and distribution of journalistic messages, be rearticulated in the face of deepening economic and cultural globalization, technological advances (culminating in the rise of socio-technical networks, algorithmization, and artificial intelligence), and the disruptive logic of disinformation?

- How are the normative aspects of theoretical formulations about journalism, including notions of freedom of expression, professional ethics and professionalism, objectivity and journalistic authority, and the role of journalistic practice as a "fourth power", challenged by these trends?
All articles must contain between 40 thousand and 55 thousand characters (including spaces) and can be submitted in Portuguese, Spanish, French or English. Once the article has been accepted for publication, any authors whose articles were written in Portuguese, Spanish or French, must also provide an English version.

Important Dates:
Article submission: until January 15, 2025.
Articles accepted: until July 31, 2025.
Edition published: until December 31, 2025.

All submissions for this call of papers must be sent electronically through the Brazilian Journalism Research website: http://bjr.sbpjor.org.br Guidelines for formatting texts can be found at: https://bjr.sbpjor.org.br/bjr/about/submissions

If you have any questions, please send an email to: bjr@sbpjor.org.br

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