

Editorial

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Dear SComS readers,

Before we introduce the articles collected in this issue, we want to reflect on practices and publication patterns of the last six years. We thereby take up ongoing debates in our field on gender diversity and inequalities in the representation of women in science (Wang et al., 2021). While female authors were strongly underrepresented in journal publications for several decades (Brosius & Haas, 2009), journals in communication and media research recently have seen a trend towards closing the gender gap, with some now showing an equal distribution of female and male authors (Beck, Domahidi, Eilders, Engelmann, & Pentzold, 2023, pp. 2, 5; Trepte & Loths, 2020). The Swiss Association of Communication and Media Research (SACM), and with it SComS, appreciates and supports the recently founded “Working Group Publication Diversity”, led by Sabine Trepte and Michael Scharnow (2023). We contribute to this discussion by reporting

the distribution of male and female authorship in all SComS publications from 2017 to 2022, i.e., all available issues since SComS is published open access (Table 1).

We see that there are more female co-author teams than male co-author teams, and also that women make up most sole authors. However, many articles are also written by a male single author or male co-author teams, together accounting for 27% of all SComS publications since 2017. Moreover, a significant part (32%) is contributed by teams of female and male authors. These mixed author teams have increased over the years, and have most recently accounted for almost half of all authorships. Overall, publications in SComS are characterized by various author constellations in terms of gender and do not show a lack in visibility of female authors, thereby aligning with recent trends in communication and media journals as described above. These data are also in line with a recent study (Müller, Peil, & Weder, 2023) sug-

Table 1: Distribution of gender among SComS authors from 2017 to 2022

Year	Female single author	Female co-author teams	Mixed author teams	Male co-author teams	Male single author	Missing	Overall number of articles
2022	15 %	20 %	48 %	5 %	13 %	0 %	n=40
2021	37 %	10 %	30 %	3 %	20 %	0 %	n=30
2020	35 %	9 %	17 %	22 %	17 %	0 %	n=23
2019	24 %	19 %	33 %	5 %	19 %	0 %	n=21
2018	28 %	17 %	24 %	10 %	21 %	0 %	n=29
2017	27 %	9 %	27 %	5 %	27 %	5 %	n=22
m (2017–2022)	27 %	15 %	32 %	8 %	19 %	1 %	N=165

Note: Data are based on all articles published in SComS from 2017 to 2022, including studies published in the General Section, Thematic Section, and Community Section as well editorials, guest editorials, book reviews, and conference reports. Overall, studies in the General Section and Thematic Section make up the majority of all articles published in SComS. Importantly, gender information is not collected during any step of the publication process. This is why coding of authorship in terms of gender was done by using first names and visual data available online. However, this only allowed us to dichotomously capture gender information by distinguishing between male and female gender. Similar to existing studies, we are aware “that this is only a first step in measuring gender diversity” (Trepte & Loths, 2020, p. 298). Missing=It was not possible to determine gender by name or available online information.



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gesting that the COVID-19 pandemic did not have a gendered impact on the short-term academic output of communication scholars in Switzerland, Germany, and Austria.

The visibility and reputation of scholars is also influenced by awards. We are very pleased to announce that our SComS Best Paper Award 2022, which honors the best article published by SComS in the past year, has been awarded to both female and male authors. As an exception, this year's award has been jointly given to two SComS articles: to Maija Ozola-Schade (2022) for her paper on *"Intergroup relations and media: The effects of media system quality in explaining immigration attitudes"* and to Esa Väliverronen, Tanja Sihvonen, Salla-Maaria Laaksonen, and Merja Koskela (2022) for the article *"Branding the 'wow-academy': The risks of promotional culture and quasi-corporate communication in higher education."* Congratulations to the authors! Ozola-Schade emphasizes that "attitudes are embedded not only in the notion of intergroup relations, they are influenced by the information environment in which public discourse about immigration is shaped" (2022, p. 363). The jurors concluded that the "findings of this comparative study are not only extremely important for research on migration, political communication and journalism, but also illustrate how important freedom of the press and democracy are for the quality of a media system and how this can affect social attitudes." The awarded paper by Väliverronen, Sihvonen, Laaksonen, and Koskela was part of the Thematic Section "Changing Communication of Higher Education Institutions," guest edited by Silke Fürst, Daniel Vogler, Isabel Sörensen, and Mike S. Schäfer. It demonstrates "possible repercussions of a quasi-corporate style of communication on the credibility of the university as a higher education institution in a hybrid media environment" (2022, p. 493). It convinced the jurors because it applies an innovative methodological design by combining content and discourse analysis to critically examine "professional, journalistic and user-generated content." Jurors also highlighted its significant contributions "to current discussions about the change of science and university communication." We sincerely thank the jurors of this year's award for their

excellent work: Hannah Früh, Constanze Jecker, Werner A. Meier, Alexander Ort, Lilian Suter, and Nina Wicke. Furthermore, special thanks go to Joan Ramon Rodriguez-Amat, who serves on our Editorial Board and helped with the preselection of papers.

This issue comprises empirical studies, theoretical papers, and book reviews and, again, originated from various author constellations, including female and male single authorships, female and male co-author teams, as well as one mixed author team. The General Section contains five articles that point in two broad directions: Three articles focus on journalism, analyzing investigative identities and young journalists' working conditions in Switzerland as well as the impact of German television news on knowledge acquisition. Two articles contribute to social media research, addressing public discourse on Reddit in the recent context of the COVID-19 pandemic and conceptualizing affordances and their application in social media research.

The General Section opens with a study from Lena Wuergler and Annik Dubied from the University of Neuchâtel, analyzing "[h]ow print journalists establish authority through their texts." The authors examined 186 investigative articles by print journalists in French-speaking Switzerland. Their analysis reveals discursive strategies for constructing an investigative identity through identity markers that depict journalists as credible knowledge producers. The findings suggest that these journalists create an investigative identity by adopting a watchdog role, demonstrating an "investigative mindset," asserting specialized skills, and demonstrating rigorous verification procedures. These markers are seen as strategic devices for claiming authority within the profession. The article is complemented by supplementary material that illustrates how each discourse strategy can also structure the overall narrative of an investigation.

This is followed by an article on "Young journalists in Switzerland: Results of a survey on aims, working conditions, and future prospects of journalists born in 1990 or later," authored by Lauro Mombelli and Daniel Beck from the University of Fribourg. The study is based on a survey of 195 young journalists

from German- and French-speaking Switzerland about their career motivations, types of employment, salaries, working hours, stress levels, job satisfaction, and future prospects. Findings indicate that young journalists prioritize self-fulfillment and idealistic motives over material gain or status. Most of the respondents have permanent positions, with median monthly incomes between 5000 and 6000 Swiss francs, which varies by media and type of employment. While they perceive a high degree of autonomy, many experience work-related stress and unpaid overtime due to insufficient resources and accelerated work processes. Job satisfaction has declined, and respondents expressed skepticism about long-term careers in journalism.

The third journalism-related article is authored by Benjamin P. Lange, Hanna Jonas, and Frank Schwab, entitled “Bist du schlau? Dann guckst du(,) *logo!* Ein Vergleich der Wissensvermittlung durch die Nachrichtensendungen *Tagesschau* und *logo!* und ihrer sprachlichen Gestaltung“ (“Are you smart? Then you watch *logo!* A comparison of the knowledge transfer by the news programs *Tagesschau* and *logo!* and their linguistic design”). They tested the hypothesis that the German, youth-oriented news show *logo!* facilitates higher knowledge acquisition through its simpler language, when compared to the adult-oriented *Tagesschau*. An online experiment involving 260 participants tested for the knowledge imparted by both programs using specific segments. Software evaluated the comprehensibility of the language used in both shows. Results indicate that *logo!* generally yields higher knowledge levels, partially attributable to its simpler language (i. e., lower word complexity, shorter sentences, and a higher Flesch-Index), though findings were not universally consistent. Interestingly, *logo!* proved more beneficial for individuals with a university degree – an observation that can be aligned with the knowledge gap hypothesis. The study concludes with practical recommendations for the linguistic design of TV news to enhance knowledge acquisition.

In “Lockdown scepticism: Australian and American doom discourse on Reddit,” Margo Van Poucke addresses the widespread consumption of online news during the COVID-19 pandemic and such ensuing be-

havior as doom-scrolling and doom-writing, as reflected on the social networking site Reddit. Using Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL), Pragma-dialectics (PD), and critical theory, the research analyzes discourse from the subreddits r/LockdownSkepticismAU and r/LockdownSkepticism. It explores power, ideology, and argumentation within these communities, suggesting that users compensated for a perceived loss of agency by making improbable statements about the future. It also highlights diverse fallacies made by “doomers” on national COVID-19 prevention policy. Linguistic evidence illustrates the influence of “biopower” in shaping the subscribed social norms. The article contributes to critical discourse studies in the digital era, offering insights into power dynamics and argumentation in COVID-19 discourse on Reddit.

The General Section concludes with a theoretical piece by Tobias Frey from the University of Zurich: “Reconsidering a multi-valent concept: An integrated affordance framework to approach technology and social media use.” After reviewing the origins of the affordance concept and its development in the communication literature, Frey exposes its inconsistent application in social media research. The keystone of his article is an integrated framework that enhances our understanding of affordances and encourages a more accurate use of related concepts and terms within social media research. This framework emphasizes the relational nature of affordances in different technological and social contexts, the abstract nature of individual, relational, and collective affordances and their distinction from outcomes such as practices and structures. It also incorporates effects and dynamics that influence both technology and actors. Finally, the article offers implications for future research that addresses technology and social media use through the lens of the affordance perspective.

This issue is complemented by two book reviews. Frank Esser from the University of Zurich gives an overview of the key features of the comprehensive “Handbuch Politischer Journalismus” (Handbook of political journalism), edited by Marlis Prinzing and Roger Blum. The handbook comprises more than 900 pages and is conceptualized as a bridge

between current research and practice, thereby attracting interested readers among communication and media scholars, politicians and administrators, journalists, and public relations practitioners. Esser praises the book for providing an overview of the various facets and functions of political journalism, with a broad range of interdisciplinary authors and perspectives as well as insights into practices and structures in different countries. It also addresses current challenges and problems in political journalism and is compelling due its practical relevance as well as clear and concise style of writing. Several contributions are written by journalists and focus on current practices and case studies. In the view of the reviewer, Prinzing and Blum have succeeded in editing a sound and useful book thanks to their strong dedication and many years of experience and expertise in the field of political journalism.

Finally, the review by Lorenzo Andolfatto, sinologist from the University of Fribourg, discusses Gianluigi Negro's historiographical work "Le voci di Pechino: Come i media hanno costruito l'identità cinese" (Beijing's voices: How the media constructed Chinese identity). The book offers a vital perspective on the relationship between media and the formation of Chinese national identity, tracing a path from Mao-era loudspeakers to today's Web 2.0. Andolfatto appreciates how it enhances our understanding of Chinese society and media by unveiling a layered ecosystem where political directives, market demands, and international influences coexist and interact. The reviewer also points out that despite the book's success in highlighting the evolution, continuities, and diversity within Chinese media, it might have been even more insightful had it explored the underrepresented voices that challenge the dominant narratives.

We hope you will enjoy reading this issue.

Silke Fürst, Thilo von Pape, and Mike Meißner

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