Transformation of Professional Education to Journalism Research and Education Section-From Critical Pedagogical Theory to Meaning-Based Practice

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Journalism education and the news business have something new in common these days: Each has fallen behind and, in their separate struggles to catch up; each is chasing a moving target. The profession of journalism and its academic side are both confronting new media realities in which scholars and practitioners need to be engaged with their communities through conferences that could accommodate these new realities.

Academic conferences are places of situated learning dedicated to the exchange of knowledge. Knowledge is exchanged between colleagues who are looking to enhance their future research by taking part in several formal and informal settings through sessions, discussions and social events (Reychava & Te'eni, 2009). Conferences are significant arenas for the exchange of ideas and for networking among professionals. However, the main challenge for any conference is to provide formal and informal forums where scientific knowledge can be exchanged through dialogue and learning (Hatcher, Wiessner, & Storber-Wallker, 2006). Often, participants are exposed to new theories that enable them to understand and predict outcomes of interest (Cook & Wyndham, 1953; Kerlinger & Lee, 2000). However, little is known about the content and processes of knowledge sharing in the different settings of conferences such as lectures, discussions and social settings that make up a conference.

At this point, it is worth stepping back and posing a very simple question: what are the aims of scientific conferences? Do they exist to provide a forum in which researchers can discuss their most recent results with their peers, make announcements of startling new discoveries, and help educate the younger members of the community who are fortunate enough to be there?

In a book titled: "Five Minds for the Future," Harvard University psychologist Howard Gardner issues a call for new ways of learning that will prepare us to think globally and function in a world dominated by information, science and technology, and the conflicts among cultures. Gardner's five minds would master one or more disciplines, would possess capabilities to synthesize information, would be creative, would be respectful, and would work in an ethical manner (Giles, 2007).

These are values worth considering in the conferences deals with journalism research and education through the approach of invisible college that will be discussed later in the paper. They should be part of the larger consideration about how to shape dynamics of such conferences and fields for the near term and create a new foundation for the longer term incentives. This should not be a discussion of how to graft the latest onto the existing, by tearing up the current traditional wisdom of conferences and rethink the field as one of rigorous scholarship and practice.

The research argues that traditional wisdom of conferences (seniority, old ways of organization and the Anglo-American dominance) conveyed messages that are at odds with the new and innovative ideas that include not exclude and that that scope enlarges the diversity of participation and counter argues the simple submission and acceptance of such messages by senior members.

Kitchin and Sidaway (2006) argue that scholarship should challenge rather than simply serve; it should not be afraid to diverge from popular opinion established by the senior scholars of what should do. Bauder

(2006) also challenges younger scholars and practitioners to challenge the given by being more self critical and self-reflective insight to resist and transform processes of reproduction inherent to the power structures of the conferences by old guards in academia and more specifically to geography. In this context, it is the fresh blood of graduate students and early-career faculty to be important potential agents in the transformation of the academic field (Bauder 2006).

Responding to such calls, this intervention examines events at the characteristics of the transformation of *Professional Journalism* section into *Journalism Research and Education* section at the International Association for Media and Communication Research (IAMCR) aims to contextualize and interrogate the problematic nature of academic meetings that might affect the aspects of academic reproduction at the site of the conference.

The media continue to undergo remarkable change. To what extent have recent and continuing changes in JRE section could enhance or constrain academics and practitioners' potential to benefit their careers, research and professional reproduction during the conference? A key point here is the element of representation and aesthetics, and the related criteria to changing relations between representation and power? What notable changes have there been in representations of gender, of ethnic and religious groups, of different types of body? What new forms and genres are developing to represent contemporary experience and identity of research? How are traditional genres mutating, and with what effect on quality? How are the current themes adopted to the emerging challenges of transformations? How new technologies are change the aesthetics of journalism research and education?

This research is an attempt to clarify what an unquestionably chaotic moment is in journalism. The decades- long decline in audience for mainstream media; the concurrent rise of web-based bloggers and citizen journalism sites, and as suggested by James R. Compton and Paul Benedetti that the explosion in social media tools in a time when there is an unmistakable exacerbating worldwide economic collapse have all washed together to form a seemingly compelling though incoherent explanation for the inevitable replacement of traditional media. In this context, one has to think out of the box to try to offer a space through conferences that could accommodate the changes in the industries and the skills and values needed in the academic field.

> "The current change, in one sentence, is this: most of the barriers to group action have collapsed, and without those barriers, we are free to explore new ways of gathering together and getting things done" (Shirky, 2008).

The institution of journalism has its own political economy. Critical scholarship puts forward structural theories of media determination that suggest media production is constrained by market forces beyond the control of individual media organizations and their elite owners and managers (Baker, 2007; Herman and Chomsky, 1988; McChesney, 2004).

Journalism has grown in tandem with the professionalization of journalism, so much so that journalism education and professionalization are sometimes treated the same. The increasing practice of journalism outside of professional news organizations makes it rational to suggest the urgent need to widen the scope of practical journalism education to include semi-professional and non-professional forms.

In the meantime, there are several factors play a decisive role in structuring today's world of research: the need for substantial financial and technology resources, strict cost management, closer ties between public sector and private sector research, multidisciplinary and international research teams.

According to Article 19 of the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, the practice of Journalism is a human right belonging to "everyone." Such a normative vision has been proposed by John Hartley in his essay, "Journalism as a Human Right." Hartley emphasized that professional journalism evolved a "strong culture of separation between insiders and outsiders." However, this view perceives insiders being those who work in formal newsrooms, while outsiders are those who are not that certainly makes a gap and urges to find ways to assess the so-called insiders and outsiders, and find links to bridge and connect by research.

The main conception of this research is to attempt construct meaning-based educational theory that could enhance, or even create a foundation for greater tolerance and mutual respect among and between divergent schools of journalism and scholars as well as practitioners attending international conferences. This could provide possibilities for pedagogical praxis to assist journalism scholars and practitioners in constructing the means for hope, possibility and personal transcendence.

This research attempts to have an insight of how researchers have been adapting a more liberating approach to journalism education and research, by applying the work and thought of "Paulo Freire's liberatory educational practice" that involves the movement from a hierarchical method from following western schools of thought in research into a more dialogic approach that emphasize the ways in which researchers can become active participants in the conference sessions with the aim of improving their research competencies and level their research excellence.

To serve this goal, the research attempts to assess and evaluate how the journalism scholarly work related to journalism research and education that has been developing over the last four years since the section has been developed and transformed both qualitatively and quantitatively.

I think that it is very crucial to go beyond professional education into a more structured with multi-thematic subdivisions especially poignant in an association like the *International Association for Media and Communication Research* (IAMCR), where many of the members and contributors come from hegemonic, soft-authoritarian cultures teaching journalism and might not be supporting research in that direction in particular that the field of journalism (education and research) is affected by commercialization and political detachment in any country. This double-edged effect of structure and functionality of journalism research and education compels a re-think among journalism educators and practitioners for a long period of time with the ways and bridges to link these two components for a long time.

The research paper attempts to unveil how to examine the meaning-based education as it applies to participants contributing to the JRE section, by identifying who contributed what, in what themes, what gender? What methods of research? In addition, the research combines literature from participatory development, critical pedagogical and spiritual theory and praxis, while emphasizing examples of the implementation of such approaches from different regions.

It is thus pertinent to refer to Joseph Pulitzer when he defended his vision for a journalism college, he took for granted that it should focus on the training of professional journalists, however debates never ended with regard to what could be taught of skills, news judgment, conscience, and moral courage with strong scepticism about the business side to be included in this education or not? But there was a consensus that the journalism programme should aim to create a specialized class of practitioners.

And even after a century of the original argument, journalism education has developed its different schools and programmes all over the world with many variations and interpretations of what is journalism in

domestic cultures and what could be used out of them in specific political settings. And almost all the reviews of journalism education, whether the UNESCO-sponsored *Model Curriculum* or the Carnegie-Knight Initiative on the Future of Journalism Education are generally entrapped in the traditional wisdom .

This growing tension between professional journalism and education may be felt most acutely in authoritarian societies as suggested by Ibrahim Saleh, but it is not foreign to other non coercive societies. The implications of such restricted setting undermine any potential and make the educators more susceptible to the power lying in the hands of knowledgeable elites that steers a lot of contradiction and any claim that education in a democracy is the means by which educators can take control over their own lives and denying them the means by which they can see this control demonstrated or put it into practice.

Isabel Macdonald's survey of debates surrounding journalism education in North America expressed concerns, criticized the assumption that journalism schools could uplift the professional journalistic values of their students. In the meantime, this assumption neglects the structural problems, especially ownership that determines journalists' working conditions.

Journalism education brings together two areas that are in flux. Each is based on a series of theoretical suppositions, some of which are based in the historical, cultural and industrial experiences of a rather narrow slice of people coming from, and/or educated by, colonial powers. But the difficult question remains in comprehending how can journalism research and journalism education, be constructed and taught to new generations in differing ways when existing styles of news coverage and presentation disempowered and disenfranchised the majority as a result of commercialisation, lack of vision, discrepancies in curricula and absence of skills and competencies.

Paulo Freire argues that journalists and journalism educators must engage in ongoing dialogues to develop their own styles of journalism, and of education, by stating their power to make and remake, to create and recreate; faith that the vocation be fully human is the birthright of all people, not the privilege of the elite. However, the international competence is needed here to compete and position oneself in this global challenge, which is defined by Fantini as "a complex of abilities needed to perform effectively and appropriately when interacting with others who are linguistically and culturally different from oneself"

Most of the literature uses a range of more or less related terms to discuss and describe intercultural competence, including intercultural communicative competence (ICC), trans-cultural communication, cross-cultural adaptation, and intercultural sensitivity, among others. But the main idea here is to emphasize the ability to step beyond one's own culture and function with other individuals from linguistically and culturally diverse backgrounds.

This type of inquiry goes under various names, including design-based research (Barab & Squire, 2004; Wang & Hannafin, 2005), design and development research (Richey & Klein, 2007), and formative research (Reigeluth & Frick, 1999) that combines qualitative and quantitative methods and contributes to both theory and practice. This research approach here is certainly influenced by the design research and methodology of Cross (2001) and the design pedagogy exemplified by Schön (1983; 1985). In addition to the goals of Cross and Schön, the research considers the issue of social responsibility (Carspecken, 1996) and critical pedagogy to greatly affect the research approach and outcome, including the ultimate goals of improving the quality of design research outcomes and identifying artifacts of design pedagogy that have the potential to harm researchers or create situations of unequal power and/or unnecessary bias in the reviewing process.

The dilemma remains in how to identify and promote journalistic excellence by organizing conferences to offer a robust increasingly eclectic repertoire to different researchers coming from different backgrounds to help them appreciate the power and continuing relevance of daily requirements and challenges. And if journalism is recognized as a human right owed to all, then international conferences on journalism should include researchers from different schools of thought and age groups and experiences who subscribe to this perspective. But most of the international conferences expect experienced researchers to possess around twenty key skills and competencies that might not be already mature in newly qualified researchers, who are more diverse, and vary based on many socio-political and economic factors that simply shape and affect the potential of the researcher and the way he or she could improve overtime (Lamblin & Etienne, 2010).

Many times, the researchers attempt to submit their research papers in international conferences with the hope of building up networking and assess these competences in relation to other scholars in the same field. Yet participating in a conference, where you use a different language from the mother tongue language, being in a different setting and pitching an interest to unknown audience and colleagues play a unique role in offering researchers and practitioners the opportunity to develop their intercultural competencies. The acquisition of such competencies may be important not only for individual enrichment and communicative proficiency but also for providing future educators, professionals, and leaders with the capabilities necessary for promoting successful collaboration across cultures (Risager, 2007).

The main argument here is that such ability of researchers and practitioners to master certain competencies varies between countries and cultures that reflecting different philosophies of competency development and the relations existing between the academic and business worlds.

In the last four years, the Professional Education section at the *International Association for Media and Communication Research (IAMCR)* was transformed from one of the smallest sections into one of the largest sections, the Journalism Research and Education (JRE) section[1]. This growing interest to address work-related problems and/or to improve work processes and products has been challenged endlessly in particular with many related issues such as adaptation, language hegemony and cultural barriers.

The JRE section uses the networking power of IAMCR to bring Industry and Academia together with the assumption that such community could be the catalyst that will spark a positive transformation in the interaction between Industry and Academia that will pave the way for empowering and enlightening scholars, practitioners and students from different backgrounds with new and better opportunities, practical research work and a deeper understanding of their future work environments.

The aim of the section restructuring is to leverage the strengths of its stakeholders including Industry, Academia and Media to transform and replace the former equation that exists between Industry and Academia and usher in an era of change that brings the Academia closer to finding solutions for the Industry. To achieve this goal, the strategy is to create a healthy proactive relationship with incentives such as the research award annual meeting, engaging young and new members to chair and serve as discussants to stipulate their sense of belonging and engagement.

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[1] The JRE section has five main themes: International collaborative research in journalism research: New challenges and emergent perspectives, innovations in journalism, the profession of journalism, methods for quantifying professional journalism & generic studies of journalism. JRE section publishes three journals (Journal of Applied journalism and Media Studies published & two JRE online journals (English and Portuguese Editions).

If the objectives are to be met, a better meaningful dialogue will be established, which will empower the JRE members real research and work experience during their studies and opening up better career prospects for them and bring value for them through the exciting possibilities inherent in such a collaboration.

Taking the JRE section as a case study might help understand how the researchers (old and new) participating in the section over the years could explain the increasing number of participation of the section members, as well as the great improvement of the quality of research excellence and the praxis between theory and practice in the section over these years. The question remains in how that change was accomplished and how it can be adapted for other situations. The nature of this approach is in the pragmatic tradition of Dewey, Peirce, and others.

It is needless to mention here that some of the older generations had strong resistance to the change that was projected in deeply embedded defensive reaction to discount the entire endeavour, and an attempt to court professional endorsement. These problems, among others, may have provided the impetus for the recent changes in the journalism research and education section, which include an articulation of the possible "values and competencies[2]" as suggested by Mary M. Kennedy to be associated with this restructuring of the section.

Conceptual framework:

In the context of developing professional education section into journalism research and education section, one has to refer to the previous works in building the section, first by Kaarle Nordenstreng, University of Tampere in Finland and later by Beate Josephi, Edith Cowan University, Australia. It is thus pertinent to refer to Karl Mannheim, when he mentioned that it is not ideal to think about current achievement as a result of single action, but rather perceiving as thinking further what others have thought before. For one thing, academics and practitioners' as preformed patterns of thought and of conduct, which raise intriguing ontological and epistemological questions that relate to the notion of "the invisible college" that has long guided research on the sociology of science, especially the diffusion of knowledge in scientific communication as a sub-field of sociological investigation.

The researcher here dealt with JRE members as "the invisible college"[3] that has been under examined till today. Such community has already developed its own disciplinary histories and collegial relationships. As such, the JRE section could be considered as driving forces that advance the field's knowledge through such venues with its annual meetings, deliberations and publications. I think that such disciplinary-like community' and its intellectual and scholarly practices deserve attention. The purpose of this study is twofold: charting the changing landscape of the section over the past five years and, second, to determine the contemporary form and content of the invisible college and how it affected participation and dealing with the challenges in the field of journalism research and education.

The main premise here is to inquire and understand how members of JRE as an academic community engaged in knowledge production implies that its members take up certain social positions, embrace specific

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[2] "Values and competencies" suggest that journalism educators try to locate the balance between habits of mind and skill acquisition that could resolve some of the historic ambiguity of purpose in journalism education.

[3] Lievrouw wrote: "An invisible college is a set of informal communication relations among scientists or other scholars who share a specific common interest or goal." The invisible college is a "community of scholars" that has collegial relevance and potential for its members. As such, it is closely related to the central premise of the sociology of knowledge perspective: social relationships influence modes of conceiving and
doing things.

epistemological interests in the world, and exhibit mutual dependence in the section to enhance and discuss how to improve their competencies.

Theoretically, the existence of the invisible college entails processes of "socialization, communication and interaction" among participants with a "shared cognitive content." This does not mean researchers in any specialty are physically closer to one another; the invisible college is no longer bound by geographical closeness. The study seeks to determine the specialty structure and advances of knowledge in journalism-related mass communication research. It attempts to assess the role of the invisible college in the generation of theory and methods in the field.

Figure 1: Number of sessions
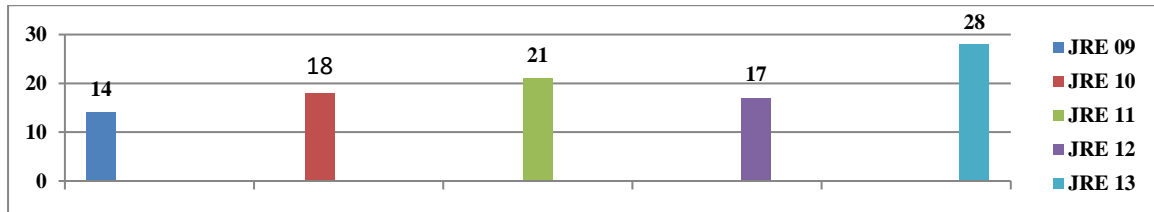
(Fig 1) One could easily identify the fluctuations of the number of sessions from (14) in 2009 to the maximum of (28) in 2013 depending on a number of criteria include the cost of travelling and accommodation etc.

Figure (2) Themes/Years
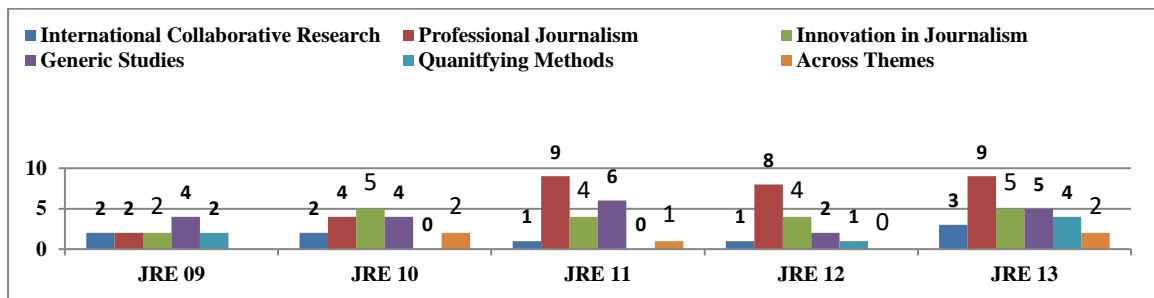
(Fig 2) clearly projects a growing interest to most of its five themes with the exception of quantifying methods that seems to be still not part of the general interest. It is also obvious that professional journalism is a recurrent theme over the last five years in particular since 2011, which is followed by innovation in journalism that has positioned itself in the second category with a stable focus to many researchers.

Figure (3) Ration between males and females as main authors
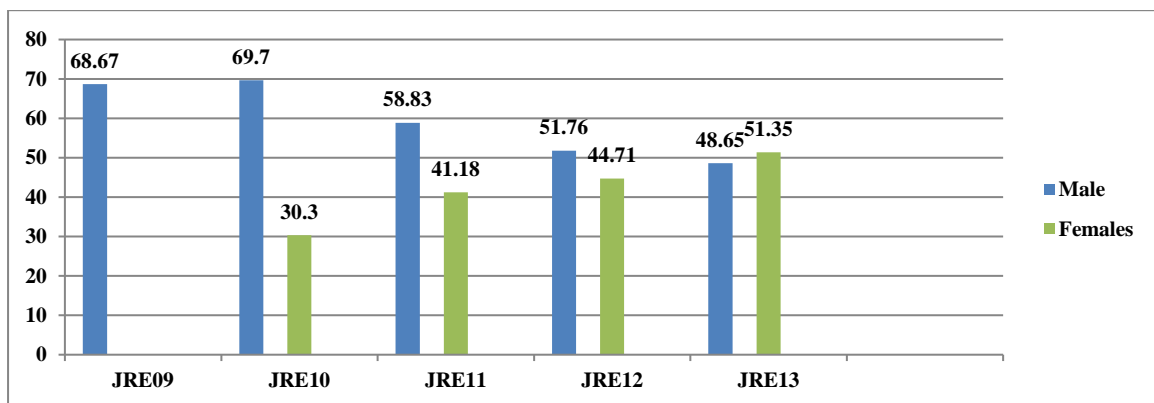
(Fig 3) clearly indicates a change in the gender balance over the last five years as a result of the restructuring of the section. For example, the male dominance of the members declined from (68.67%) in 2009

in comparison to female presence of less than (32%) to female dominance as main authors in 2013 (51.35%) in contrast to males (48.65%).

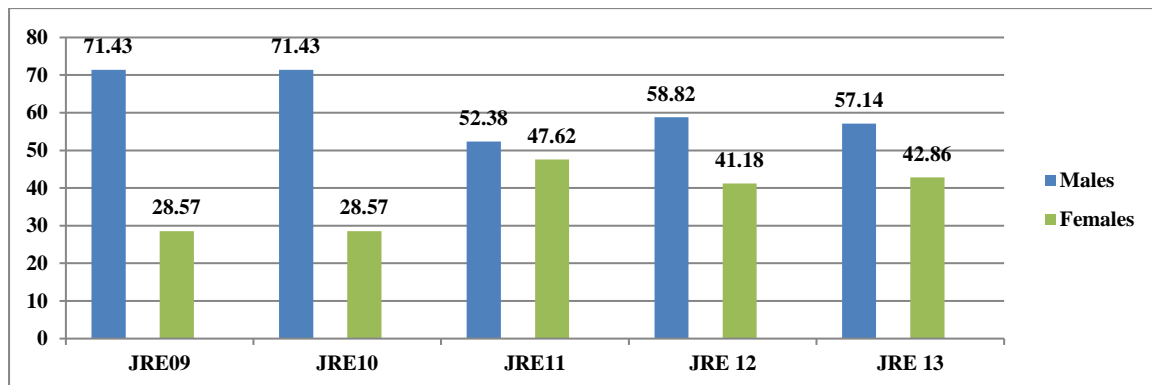Figure (4) ration of males versus females serving as chairs and discussants

Figure (4) reflects a complete change in the female engagement in the JRE section over the years from male dominating with (71.43%) in 2009 to (57.14%) in 2013, though the section to further push for balance but the ration is levelling up over the years.

Discussion and conclusive observation:

Journalism conferences come in all shapes and sizes; more often than not they follow a tried and trusted formula. Invariably there are talks and poster sessions with researchers higher up the academic totem pole giving the longer lectures, those lower down giving shorter talks, and finally, the graduate and undergraduate students presenting posters describing their work. Sometimes larger meetings also host expositions, where companies display their wares and try to entice potential customers by giving away promotional items.

Knowledge sharing in the formal settings of the JRE sessions might be depending on a number of criteria such as the relevance of the subject of the presentations contributed primarily to future research, but also to creation of social relationships and job enhancement. The latter two contributions represent the self interests of the attendees in the present. At the same time, knowledge sharing in the formal settings on Methodology appeared the main trigger to the initiation of meetings.

In the formal settings people get together on the basis of their previous research or field of interest; thus exchange of knowledge is focused on a narrow area that can benefit both parties. In contrast, in the informal settings, the social setting does not dictate a specific area of research that would draw only experts in that area. Thus knowledge sharing relies on serendipity and on whether people happen to speak to the right people. Moreover, there is a lower chance of common ground between the conversers, which makes knowledge sharing more difficult.

A clear message permeating all the articles is that, in spite of many quantitative changes in the representation of female researchers and practitioners in the JRE section, though gendered power is still relayed through organizational culture, research opportunities, pedagogy, and budget practices. Some of this is overt and identifiable, as in the low number of women attending in the earlier conferences (JRE09). However, gender inequalities can also be subtle, elusive, and normalized via everyday practices such as networking and the construction of identities and opportunities.

One cannot deny the fact the conferences like any other entities demonstrated a high level of responsiveness to change in relation to the market economy, globalization, and the new skills agenda. Medieval

traditions of elitism and "ivory-towerism" are being challenged. The time is now ripe for the changes sweeping throughout the international conferences like IAMCR to incorporate a recognition of the need for gendered change.

The research also suggests that a strong connection between the formal and informal settings in terms of contribution. In particular, knowledge sharing about the subject matter in the informal settings contributed heavily to the creation of social relationships. The ability of the attendees to make effective use of knowledge sharing, however, depended on whether the attendees had the appropriate knowledge of 'who knows what'; hence the formal settings supported and created better opportunities for knowledge sharing in the informal settings. Traditionally, in social settings people are usually attracted to others who are most like themselves or who are most likely to agree with them. However, when attendees succeeded in finding colleagues with the same interest on methodology, they showed a higher initiation of meetings, leveraging collaboration in future research.

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