**JRP Canada Podcast Transcript — Episode 1 with Lydia Cheng**

*[Upbeat intro music begins. It plays into the background of the voiceover]*

**Kayla Thompson** 00:02

Hello everybody. My name is Kayla Thompson from the JRP Canada team and welcome to the very first episode in our series A Meet the Researcher podcast in preparation for upcoming conference. Between Ideals and Practices: Journalistic Role Performance in Transformative Times is a one-day pre-conference to ICA taking place at Toronto Metropolitan University (TMU) on May 24, 2023. Visit [jrpcanada.ca](https://jrpcanada.ca/) to register now. Today we have a special guest with us who will be presenting her original research at the Between Ideals and Practice conference. Let's welcome Lydia Cheng.

**Lydia Cheng** 00:36

Hi everyone. *[Laughter]* Thanks for having me, yeah.

**Kayla Thompson** 00:41

Hi Lydia, thanks so much for joining us today. Are you excited to join us in Toronto for the conference?

**Lydia Cheng** 00:47

I am super excited. It'll be my first time in Canada. So this is - this is really exciting. Yeah, I can't wait.

**Kayla Thompson** 00:55

So since this is your first time in Canada, do you mind sharing with us where you are from?

**Lydia Cheng** 01:00

Oh, yeah, yeah. So, I'm Singaporean, I'm from Singapore, but I'm currently in Sydney, during my PhD at the University of Sydney. Although I did both my Bachelor's and Master's at NTU (Nanyang Technological University) in Singapore. So that's kind of my background. Yeah.

**Kayla Thompson** 01:14

Okay, nice. So Lydia, you will be presenting some of your original research. Can you give us a sneak peek of what you'll be talking about?

**Lydia Cheng** 01:21

Yeah. So this research, it's, I guess, part of my PhD project. So I've always been interested kind of more in like lifestyle journalism. And that's what I did for my Master's thesis where I looked at women's magazines in Singapore and how they have responded to digitalization in terms of the way they produce their content, the way they look at their audience, etc. And then for my PhD dissertation, I'm kind of expanding that scope and looking beyond just women's magazine, and looking at lifestyle journalism in Singapore in general. And I'm asking them questions like, how do they navigate commercial pressures in their work? How do they navigate the new relationships with like influencers, for example, on Instagram, on TikTok who who are maybe in a way seen as competition. And then of course, I'm also looking at how lifestyle journalists conceptualize their own roles, which is kind of relevant to this pre-conference because I guess in role research in journalism in general, a lot of focus have been put on hard news and political journalism. We don't know that much about lifestyle journalists, how they think about their work, what do they think their role is, what do they think their, you know, service to society is. So that's kind of the questions that I'm trying to explore.

**Kayla Thompson** 02:36

Yeah. Right. Okay. That's so interesting. And personally, I can't wait for your keynote panel, because lifestyle journalism is something that I would love to do in the future. So you said that was an area of interest for you. Is that - have you done a lot of writing in that genre?

**Lydia Cheng** 02:52

Yeah, so I think for most of my publications is kind of within lifestyle content, lifestyle journalism, slow journalism, magazines, again, because there's really not a lot of research, and not a lot of researchers kind of specialize in this area. So that's also like a motivation for me, because I want to, I guess show people that lifestyle journalism is worthy of study. It's not just like fluff and like fun. You know, there's, there's a lot that we can really dig into that would really benefit I think broader journalism studies. So that's kind of where where I situate myself. Yeah.

**Kayla Thompson** 03:26

Yeah. That's amazing. So seeing as the conference is exploring factors shaping journalism and journalistic roles in transformative times, why do you think it's important to talk about and study journalistic roles?

**Lydia Cheng** 03:40

Yeah I think that's such a, actually quite a deep question. Why so why are we even why are we all even in this in this area? *[Kayla laughs]* I think first of all, like digitalization, I think, has changed the journalism landscape so much. The way people consume news, I think, we think about like fake news and all that. I think it's really important to understand how people gain knowledge in today's - in today's age, and also how journalists produce content, why are they producing the content that they produce? I mean, it's all about informing people. And I think that's essential in society. So I think it's really important, especially looking at how digitalization has really changed both production and consumption of news content. And for me, personally, looking at lifestyle in particular, it's really, really asking why do people produce such content? Why do people consume such content? Why do you and I like to look at articles about travel and for - what does it do for us? I think that's also really interesting to explore. Yeah.

**Kayla Thompson** 04:41

Speaking of presentations, is there any other presentation happening at the conference that you're looking forward to seeing?

**Lydia Cheng** 04:49

Oh, I don't think any specific one comes to mind but I think one thing that really stood out when I looked at the program is how diverse it is. And I think that's really really great and actually really important because again, I think a criticism that we see in journalism studies is that a lot of the knowledge that we have and a lot the the research tradition, I suppose everything stems from a very Western perspective, usually, you know, we are looking at how journalism is practiced mostly in the US, maybe to some extent in Europe. And I think a lot of times, we kind of take what we know from these contexts, and we try to apply it to other contexts globally, and if it doesn't conform, we think "That's not journalism." So I think it's really great that at this particular pre conference, I'm seeing research that's coming from everywhere. I think that is so important to really start to diversify journalism studies. So just in general, I think that was one thing that really made me happy. I'm so excited to hear from the researchers all across the world.

**Kayla Thompson** 05:48

No that makes us so happy because, like you said, we do have researchers coming from all over the world. So many different countries will be represented at the conference. So that's really exciting.

**Lydia Cheng** 06:00

Yeah and I think one thing that I would like to add is, I was really excited because this conference, I saw that you are also inviting practitioners, like journalists. And I think that's another important thing to point out is that I think there's also more efforts needed to really bridge that gap between academics and people who actually practice journalism. I think we really need more dialogue that shouldn't be like this. Like we are doing research in journalism, but we're not really talking to journalists, or they're not really reading our research. I think there really needs to be more, I guess, communication between these two parties to see how we can help each other I think. So that's really exciting.

**Kayla Thompson** 06:35

Yes, for sure. So yeah, we'll have a good mix of both researchers and practicing and in-field journalists there to give us really the whole point of view of journalism as a whole in transformative time. Yeah. So that's amazing. *[Outro music fades in]* And I'm so glad that you added that because that's really a key point of this conference that we're having. Once again, thank you so much, Lydia for joining us today. We are so excited to have you as a speaker at our between ideals and practices, Between Ideals and Practices: Journalistic Role Performance in Transformative Times conference. And for those of you listening, if you have not already please do not forget to register for the conference taking place on May 24. We will have presentations from researchers all over the world and cheap accommodations available in Toronto Metropolitan University's residence for the duration of our conference and ICA 2023. Check out details on our website [jrpcanada.ca](https://jrpcanada.ca/) for more.

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