

# DATA ANALYSIS WITH TOPIC MODELS FOR COMMUNICATIONS RESEARCHERS



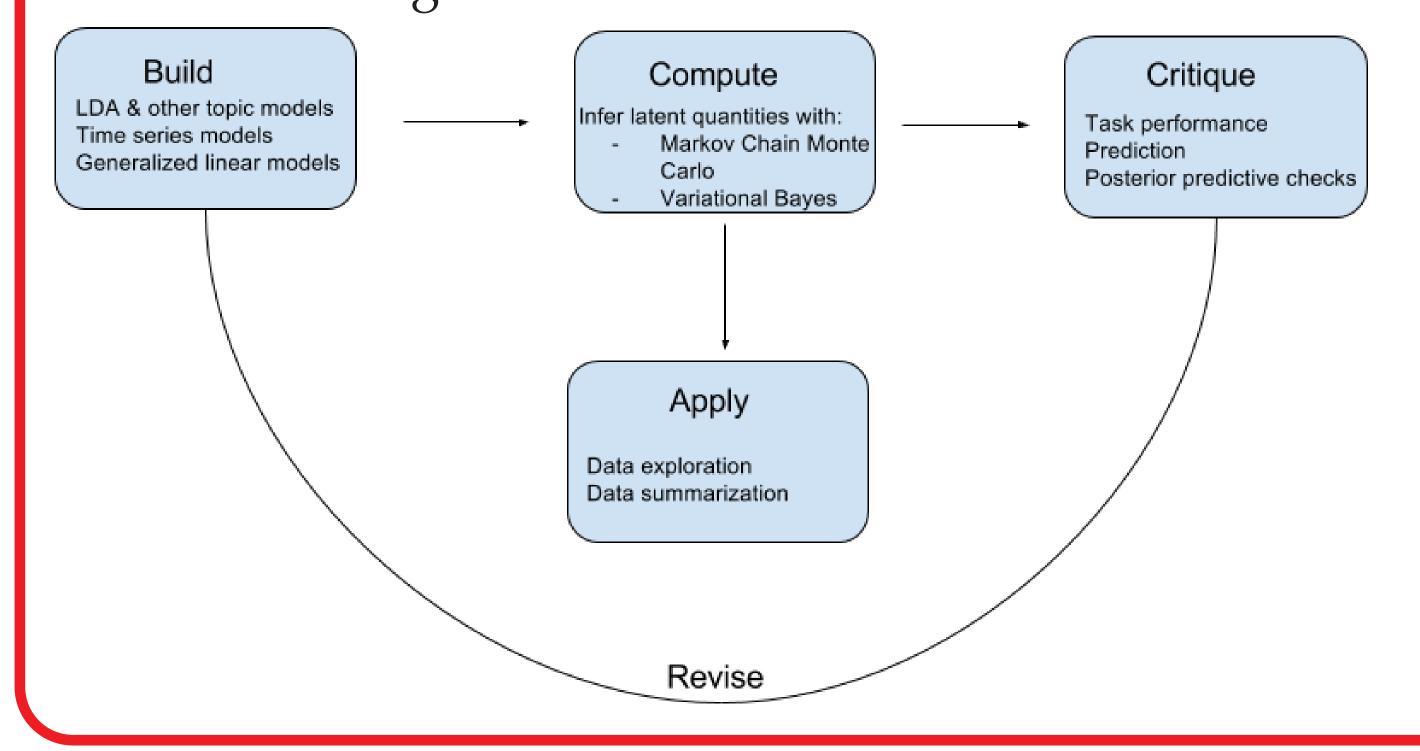
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#### ABSTRACT

We introduce topic modeling as a tool when analyzing textual data. We illustrate our methods with analyses of New York Times transcripts and tweets from three days in March 2016. We argue that such analyses will be useful in mass communications and journalism research. These methods are especially useful for identifying topics, or themes, in large collections of texts, when reading each piece individually is impractical.

#### INTRODUCTION

Social media users flood us with tweets, status updates, and blog posts. Data analysis with topic models enable researchers to identify themes, or topics, in a collection of texts. We present results from separate analyses of 1) New York Times articles from March 19, 20, and 21, 2016 and 2) a collection of tweets (from Twitter) from the same three days. Our manuscript contains computing code to reproduce our findings.



#### METHODS

- 1. Fit latent Dirichlet allocation (LDA) models, separately, to 1) our collection of tweets and 2) our collection of print media articles from the New York Times
- 2. Visualized the topic modeling results with word clouds
- 3. Assessed resulting topics for coherence

#### RESULTS

album tonight house official fly star tonight radio fans rihanna de drake bieber today added band love march listen di priceless songft tour justinplay list watch live night np la stage reaction book playing soundcloud

**Figure 1:** Word cloud for one topic (from a 20-topic model) of tweets from March 19, 20, and 21, 2016.

demichelis basketball goals games home
years mufc back chelsea
day top live league year
won fans state
season st win half iowa good
final play games home
time good
time good
leicester cityman west
football great team today players
player points rashford
marchmadness
manchester premier

**Figure 2:** Word cloud for one topic (from a 20-topic model) of tweets from March 19, 20, and 21, 2016.

plays ballet song movies songs theater story festival life moviefil mplay season role york musical shows set shows set shows set shows set shows set director work musical production work works orchestra bowie played drama album dance sound performance altman series

**Figure 3:** Word cloud for one topic (from a 20-topic model) of New York Times articles from March 19, 20, and 21, 2016.

norwegian crew franklin
coast oceanislands pacific
snow arcticship inuit
small baalsrud food
kelen Watersea north
miles island cruise
windfeet men ships lake
canoe genz
huth di boatrivertrip joel
expedition frozen
baalsruds cabin

**Figure 4:** Word cloud for one topic (from a 20-topic model) of New York Times articles from March 19, 20, and 21, 2016.

### DISCUSSION

From the word clouds above, and those not shown, we find differences between the topics of discussion on Twitter and the topics in the New York Times. For instance, we find in the tweets an entire topic that deals with sports (with an emphasis on soccer) and another topic that involves music and entertainment. The New York Times analysis yields topics that match many of the newspaper sections. The two topics above might be called "Music" and "Travel & Adventure".

## REFERENCES

[1] David M Blei. Build, compute, critique, repeat: Data analysis with latent variable models. Annual Review of Statistics and Its Application, 1:203–232, 2014.