

“We’re Playing a Telephone Game”: Understanding How Teenagers Engage with News Through a Simulation

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Introduction

- Understanding how and where to access high-quality news information has never been more important to teenagers, who feel frustrated and mistrust news.
 - Teens and the News, 2020
- The consequences of how young people engage with the news is currently dire.
 - Satariano, 2020
- With misinformation at an all-time high, this study explores how high school students cope with inaccurate information and perceive journalists through observation of their skills in a breaking news simulation and post-study interviews.

Literature Review

- The broader study of media literacy has been converted to news literacy in the past decade to help individuals better understand and engage with news content. (Christians et al., 2009; Fleming, 2014).
 - News Literacy definition (Vraga et al., 2021, p. 13).
 - For young people, NL is considered a foundational step (Mihailidis, 2012; Poindexter, 2012).
- News literacy education takes a variety of forms.

Research Questions

- **RQ1:** What do teenagers know about the news creation process for critical engagement with news?
- **RQ2:** What do teenagers think about news information and the work of journalists?

Method

- Participants and the Simulation Experience
 - Observed and interviews eight Los Angeles high school groups in the Situation Room Experience at the Ronald Reagan Library.
 - N=234 (Each group 25-45 students)
- Observation and Coding
 - “Live” News Reporting
 - News Tweets
 - Group Interviews
 - Interview Data Analysis

Results

- News Process Knowledge
 - Participants aware of what news is supposed to be, but they didn't possess enough knowledge to achieve their desired outcomes in the simulation.
- Perceptions of News Information and Journalists
 - Participants fail to correct inaccurate information and brought their own mistrust of information into how they defined the study experience.
- “The Game of Telephone”
 - “It feels like we're playing a telephone game 'cause, like, in the game telephone, you tell a person a word, and as the word goes around, it gets changed a bit on purpose or on accident—and at the end it's, like, a whole different story.”
- High Expectations for Journalists
 - From trying journalism themselves, the students learned that the work of journalists is fun, but it is not easy.

Discussion

- The young people in the study expressed a real frustration with recognizing what high quality information should be but not having the skills to correct it in the simulation or in their own lives.
- Results also show how the experience reflected the current information environment for the participants by revealing how easily false information can spread and their own responsibility to correct it.

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