

Education: It's Complicated

- Children → Vulnerable
- Socialization – social learning
 - Parents, peers generally homogenizing influences
 - School, media generally heterogenizing influences
- Elementary education
 - Teach subject skills, social skills
 - Learn about different kinds of people, cultures
 - Broad notions of right, wrong
- Higher education
 - More specialized subject skills
 - More sophisticated, diverse topics
 - Many students' first time on their own
 - More likely to break with parents' ideology
 - Traditionally more controversial

Education: Issues in Recent Decades

- Loss of other areas of social consensus
- Questioning of “received history”
- Change of racial makeup
- Immigration – change of schools’ approach
- Secular vs. religious education
- Political organizations target school boards
- Rise of the Internet → outrage
- Increase in wariness of institutions
- Rise in home schooling
- School shootings
- COVID-19

Changes in Perceptions & Coverage of Education

- ‘Noble beat’ has become divisive
- Routine coverage can miss important issues
- Reporters’ educational experience often differs greatly from what they’re now covering
- Fall 2018 – nonwhite students outnumber whites
- Question traditional teachings? At what age?
- Education writers need to know politics
- Divisions on basic facts
- Politicians using education as wedge issue – opposite of consensus

Education Coverage: Current Issues

- School choice – access to the best schools vs. making all public schools better
- Critical race theory – how early, or at all?
- Social class issues – rich vs. poor schooling
- Gender and sexuality issues – accommodating students vs. ‘warping’ them?
- Freedom of speech, academic freedom
- School safety – arming teachers?
- In-person vs. remote instruction?
- Value of higher education
- ‘Education vs. Indoctrination’

Types of News Story Audiences

- General (everyone)
- Geographical (neighborhood, region)
- Cultural (ethnic, religious, lifestyle)
- Gender-Based (traditional or non-traditional roles)
- General Subject-Based (sports, A&E, outdoors)
- Specific Subject-Based (baseball, hip-hop, kayaking)
- Age-Based (generational)
- Event-Based (deep coverage of major event)
- Niche (extremely specific)

Trolling and News

- Trolling: Anonymously insulting someone online to annoy or intimidate them
- Gyges Effect: A phenomenon whereby internet users experience a loss of inhibition that they would otherwise not experience face to face
- With little personal interaction, in computer world with no filters or contrition, users lose empathy
- On the early Web, news sites' comment sections became ideal venue for pointless vicious attacks
- This normalized trolling and set stage for even more widespread occurrence in social media
- Insulting can escalate into harassment, stalking and/or violence – criminal activity
- Can have serious real-world effects

Trolling and News

- Journalists have long been popular trolling targets
- Trolling largely began on news and blog sites
- Journalism is meant to draw readers/viewers, and often involves publishing unpopular or controversial facts
- Culture of media bashing in recent decades has emboldened many to blame media for their problems
- Women, minorities, LGBTQ writers often targeted
- Has led to some violence against journalists
- Comments originally meant to be positive feature of online news – now frequently disabled
- Downside of completely unfettered free speech

'Need to Know' vs. 'Want to Know'

News audiences need to know:

- Anything paid for with taxpayer money
 - Government/elections (city, county, state, federal)
 - Schools (elementary, secondary, colleges/universities)
 - Law enforcement & corrections
 - Public institutions (utilities, parks/rec, etc.)
 - Health care/hospitals
 - Transportation (roads/highways, buses/trains, etc.)
- Organizations/institutions that affect public
- Weather/environmental/quality of life issues
- Consumer-related issues
- Anything with direct effects on their lives

'Need to Know' vs. 'Want to Know'

News audiences want to read (statistically popular):

- Anything with direct effects on their lives (neighborhood, regional)
- How tax money is being used
- Stories containing people with whom they identify
- Things they can share with family/friends
- Profiles of interesting people
- Entertainment/celebrity news
- Sports news
- Shocking/unusual stories
- “The real story” – let in on a (so-called) secret
- News that validates how they feel (confirmation bias)

Elements of Newsworthiness

- **Timeliness:** News is what's new; it just happened and people need/want to know
- **Proximity:** Things that happen nearby or will have effects in your area are newsworthy
- **Prominence:** Audiences are interested in things that happen to celebrities, politicians or other well-known people
- **Impact:** Something that had, has, or will have long-reaching or significant effect is newsworthy
- **Conflict:** Can be physical or emotional; open or unseen conflict; people vs. people; people vs. nature
- **Oddity:** People are always interested in the unusual – the person, place, time, event, or context involved is out of the ordinary
- **Human Interest:** Audiences identify with others' achievements, struggles and quirks – usually entertaining or amusing
- **Shock Value:** Stories involving death, scandal, and other lurid or bizarre elements

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'Need to Know' vs. 'Want to Know'

We answer the questions we ask

	WHO DECIDES WHAT THAT IS?	HOW TO KNOW THE STORY "WORKED"?	WHAT KINDS OF STORIES RESULT?	WHEN DOES AUDIENCE FEEDBACK COME INTO PLAY?
WHAT DOES OUR AUDIENCE WANT?	Newsrooms	Analytics	Clickbait	After publication
WHAT DOES OUR AUDIENCE NEED?	Newsrooms	Awards	"Important Stories"	After publication
WHAT DOES OUR AUDIENCE NOT KNOW THAT WE COULD HELP THEM FIND OUT AND UNDERSTAND?	Audiences	Answer Their Questions	Infinite Variety	Pre-Publication



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*this chart contains overgeneralization for the sake of argument

["Give the audience what they want or what they need? There's an even better question,"](#) by Jennifer Brandel, Medium.com, May 25, 2016