„The Media and I —
How the Media Get
Made, and Their Effects"

Workshop-Manual by Julia Rieger

"The Media and I—How the Media Get Made, and Their Effects"

1. Introduction

How are young people represented in the media, and what impact does this have on them? This workshop will focus on two main themes. To begin with, the students will learn about the importance of independent journalism and how we are influenced by the news media, so as to then examine the creation and impact of the media from their own perspective and to discuss where they see their opinions represented. The question of diversity in journalism will also be discussed.

The workshop aims to provide a better understanding of how the news media actually work, while sharpening the students' critical view of news coverage. They should discuss why different perspectives from people with diverse backgrounds are important in journalism, and understand their own positions within this context.

Duration: Approximately two hours
Target group: School students ages 14 and up, youth groups

Required materials

The workshop has been designed so that it can either be run online or in person. In the instructions for the individual sections of the workshop, both methods are described.

Online:

- Internet-capable device (IPad or PC/laptop) for all participants and the workshop leader

- Videoconferencing software on all devices, with small-group work and screen sharing functionality (e.g., Zoom)

- Note-taking application or writing materials

In Person:

- Laptop, projector, speakers

- Four moderation cards marked A, B, C and D

- Moderation cards

- Writing materials for all participants

Time	Duration	Module	Description
09:00	10 Minutes	**Welcome**	Welcome from trainer; introduction to the technology and explanation of the running order
09:10	20 Minutes	**Introduction: Media represen-tations of young people**	Through a self-positioning exercise, the students engage with with two thematic areas: What factors make an issue important for me? How do I get informed?
09:30	20 Minutes	**Importance of the media**	A video will be shown explaining the functioning and importance of the news media. Then the role played by the media in the formation of personal opinions will be discussed
09:50	25 Minutes	**Effects of the media**	The students familiarise themselves with effects of the media such as agenda setting and framing, and discuss how they might be influenced by these
10:15	10 Minutes	**Break**	
10:25	20 Minutes	**Representation in the editorials**	The topic of diversity in journalism will be appro-ached through videos of interviews with journa-lists. In the videos, the journalists speak about the relevance of representation and how more diversi-ty can be created. Students discuss
10:45	15 Minutes	**Conclusion and feedback**	Open Q&A session and summary of the workshop Feedback

3. Running the Workshop

Welcome

During the welcome phase the trainer should introduce themselves and briefly explains the workshop topic. Not too much detail should be gone into at this point, as the first exercise is supposed to lead the students into the topic.

Also, set out ground rules for communication in this phase; for example, whether or not the trainer and the students will address each other formally, how questions can be raised, and that a respectful atmosphere be maintained.

In the case of online workshops, make sure that the students are confident in using the relevant software. For a successful workshop, the students need to understand how to use the chat function and how to vote.

Introduction: Representation of Young People—Self-Positioning Exercise

Preparation: To begin the exercise, get the students to estimate the importance of current media debates, from their own perspective. In order to present the exercise in a more appealing way, two to three collages of stories from the media can be prepared beforehand. The exercise can also be carried out by merely mentioning the topics without a visual aid; in this case, though, the debates should then be outlined more precisely.

Online: Since this exercise involves surveys, create these using an appropriate tool. Some videoconferencing software comes with this function included. To be able to deploy it quickly during the workshop, surveys should be set up in advance (function only available in full version).

Otherwise, external survey tools can be integrated. Surveys can be designed with Mentimeter or slido after registering for free. The students simply log in using a code via their smartphone or laptop.

Classroom: Mentimeter or slido can likewise be used for the in-person version of this seminar. However, the exercise can also be run as a four-corners game. For the latter, prepare four moderation cards in advance, inscribed with the letters A to D; hang these up in the four corners of the room. The students can answer the exercise questions by placing themselves in the corner that corresponds to their answer, or somewhere in between.

Execution: First, run a vote on one or two current issues in the media. The students should vote about how important they consider each issue (A= very important, B = important, C = less important and D = of no importance). Follow this with a round of questions, and elicit the students' reasons why they find a given issue important or not. Ask the students why they positioned themselves where they did, what would make the issue more important for them, and who they think has a say in the media concerning the topic.

Two further questions should now be discussed. Firstly, get the students to position themselves as regards which media they use to get informed, and secondly, regarding where they see their own viewpoints reflected. Moderate this discussion and where required clarify concepts that are brought up.

Now the students should come up with issues that are currently important for them. These examples can potentially be used as examples in later discussions.

Possible discussion topics:

- Why did you place yourself here/click on this answer?

- What makes this issue especially important to you?

- What kinds of people have something to say about this? Do they tend to be young or old, journalists or private citizens?

- What makes an issue important?

Importance of the Media

Preparation: In an online seminar, the video should be watched together using the "share screen" function (including sound). In person, the video can be shown using a projector.

Execution: An animated video will explain certain basic functions of the media. After this the students should discuss the importance of the media. Here, the focus should be on the topic of why independent and diverse news reporting is important for the formation of citizens' opinions. The trainer should moderate and give the students enough space to exchange their ideas and opinions. When more in-depth questions about the media system come up, the trainer should first ask whether one of the students is able to answer the question, but always make sure that the objective situation ends up being correctly represented.

Possible moderation questions:

- Why do journalists work for our democracy?

- What do you think happens when journalism is pervaded by one-sided reporting?

- What should the media do when mistakes are made in spite of proper research?

- If the task of journalism is to inform society and make sure that everyone's voice is heard, do you feel yourselves addressed by this?

- Which journalistic formats do you think are particularly good? Why?

Effects of the Media

This exercise focuses on the effects of the media. In order to make the topic less abstract and to give the students an entry point to their own horizon of experience, ask the students to come up with instances when they were affected by reporting in the media, according to four criteria—feelings, knowledge, attitude and action (e.g., this report affected my feelings, I acted in such-and-such a way after reading this story, etc.) The trainer should come prepared with instances of their own, in order to be able to give an example when necessary.

After this, two concepts of the effects of the media should be discussed.

Agenda Setting describes the function whereby the media creates issues. From among the diversity of topics, the media system selects those considered the most relevant, researches them and thereby influences what will be discussed within society. In theory, this selection is based on certain factors which determine the newsworthiness of an event (e.g., spatial proximity, novelty, etc. - here reference can be made to the first exercise, where the factors that make a news story important were discussed).

In this context, the social effects of agenda setting can be discussed, and also how this has been impacted by social media, e.g., a greater diversity of topics, but no journalistic research.

Framing refers to the so-called interpretive framework within which an issue is presented. Every word used to describe a situation has an influence on how an issue appears, and also there are always various perspectives on a given issue. Here too the students should discuss the impact this has on the media's effects, and especially the role played by the number of different perspectives available on a given issue in the media.

Possible topics for discussion:

- What criteria should journalists use to select which stories appear in the media?

- Before a topic becomes a news story, journalists do research in order to ensure that they correctly convey all of the relevant information. Why does it make sense for journalists to decide which issues are given which degree of importance?

- In consequence, how large is the role, and the responsibility, of journalists?

- Do media that target a younger audience talk about different issues?

- What role do social media play?

- When you discuss a topic with friends, you sometimes hear different facets of the same topic. How does this come about?

- Why is it important to have various perspectives on one topic? – Discuss this in relation to an example.

Representation in the Newsroom

Now that the students have engaged with the role and effects of the media and the topic of diverse perspectives and representation have arisen repeatedly, the last section of the workshop covers the topic of diversity in the newsroom. The students will be asked to apply the concepts they have learned so far to the question of representation. To this end, first the trainer shows the statistics on the number of journalists with a migrant background in German newsrooms. After this, a video is shown. In the video, Nermin Ismail, the chairwoman for North-Rhine Westphalia of the Neue Deutsche Medienmacher*innen (New German Media Professionals), speaks about the relevance of diversity in the newsroom, and the impact on young people when they feel that they are (not) represented.

Before the trainer addresses the students on the topic of the representation of BIPoC[1], they should—especially as a white person—deal with their own position. A starting point for this work can be found the publication "Racism-Critical Pedagogy for Teachers and Multipliers in the Education Sector", by Prof. Dr. Karim Fereidooni (https://schwarzkopf-stiftung.de/rassismuskritik/).

Possible questions for discussion:

● We spoke earlier about the effects of media. What kind of influence do you think the representation of different groups in journalism can have?

● Does it make a difference who writes about a particular issue? What influence might individual biographies have on things like the selection of topics or of interview subjects?

● Statistics about gender balance on German television (https://www.instagram.com/p/BzhjHQJC9TJ/): What effect does it have when men are much more frequently represented?

● How could young people be better represented in the media?

Conclusion and Feedback

In the concluding round, any unanswered questions can be clarified. The workshop leader, together with the students, can once again summarise what has been learned and, where appropriate, reiterate that, due to freedom of the press and media diversity, the situation is very good in Germany, but that there is still work to be done on various problems such as representation in the newsroom. The students should in any case always be critical users of the media and seek multiple sources in order to inform themselves about an issue.

There should finally be time for the trainer to receive feedback from the students in order to collect ideas for the next workshop.

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[1]BIPOC stands for Black, Indigenous and People of Color.

Further information:
Diversity in journalism: https://www.neuemedienmacher.de/handreichung_wir_waeren_dann_so_weit/
Instagram story by Workin' Germany, interview with Nabila Abdel Aziz (start from the middle of the story): https://www.instagram.com/stories/highlights/17847459599121413/)

Publication information

About the Author

Julia Rieger (24) is completing an MA in Empowerment Studies (MA) at the University of Applied Sciences, Düsseldorf. Since 2018 she has been a multiplicator of the Schwarzkopf-Stiftung and runs Understanding Europe workshops. She also completed an apprenticeship as a media trainer for radio at the North-Rhine Westphalian Media Authority. She is an editor and presenter at hochschulradio düsseldorf, and is completing the Journalistische Nachwuchsförderung with the Konrad Adenauer Foundation.

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