Assignment #1 Part B

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GNED 1407

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This assignment is an exercise in evaluating the credibility of information by comparing, in a respectful and unbiased way, two different sources about the same topic. I will be relating that topic to social issues through the lens of the sociological theory of symbolic interactionism, which focuses on how people come together to form a social understanding with each other. Finally, the essay will conclude with reflection on the assignment and how this process applies to my academic, career, and personal life.

I have chosen to analyze the first option, with the topic "The Family." This entails comparing these two sources: a [statcan.gc.ca](https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/45-28-0001/2021001/article/00032-eng.htm) article to a [family-vlogger](https://taylorfamilyvlogs.com/how-to-keep-kids-active-during-the-pandemic-mom-life/)  post about family health during the pandemic. Option 1 stood out to me because it is concerned with public health during the pandemic, a topic that resonates with me because my late partner passed away in 2021 while he was working from home. He was following his company’s pandemic response plan to stay safe and healthy, but a latent effect of that policy was that no one was around to notice or call for help when he collapsed. Another reason why I chose option 1 is that it involves analyzing the credibility of Statistics Canada compared to a blog post. It feels like it should be obvious which one is more credible, but it is interesting to set aside my bias, question those assumptions, and explore what makes it true.

The two sources under option 1 share only a few similarities. For example, the subheadings in the Statistics Canada article (“Workers who worked from home reported less physical activity” (Watt & Colley, 2021))and the title of the vlogger post (“How to Keep Kids Active during the Pandemic? MOM LIFE” (Taylor, n.d.)) are both conveying information about recreational activities during the pandemic. This shows that they are both trying to reach the same audience, to inform or influence the people who are weighing the health risks of failing to recreate against the risk of contracting COVID while recreating. Families that want to stay healthy during a pandemic need to weigh the options and decide if doing group activities is worth it, when there is a risk that they could contract (or transmit) a communicable disease.

To that end, the Statistics Canada article is stronger because it provides the audience with analysis of data that samples a larger group of people, it cites peer reviewed sources, and it identifies the methodology for collecting the data they use for analysis and visualization.

By contrast, in the vlogger post, Taylor shares anecdotes about their own family’s activity, does not cite any sources, and refers to government announcements without providing any context about which government or links to data and evidence. Therefore, I can see that the basis of the vlogger post is their own opinion, which hurts its credibility as a source of information on which others may base their health decisions, especially when taken in comparison with the fact-based Statistics Canada article.

Overall, the Statistics Canada article is more credible because it is conveying information that is based on peer-reviewed data and facts.

During the pandemic, the symbolic meaning of attending group events shifted as families and individuals grappled with the new risks involved with simple interactions with each other (“30 people took part in what appeared to be social events in different parts of Downing Street, before both gatherings combined in the garden… The claims are set to heap yet more pressure on the prime minister, who is facing calls to resign.” (Walker & Taylor, 2022)). Going to the gym began to carry the stigma of selfishness and became a reputational risk instead of a clear symbol, label, or signal that someone is healthy and fulfilling their expected role in the social constructs of the pandemic. Before the pandemic, the manifest function of going to the gym was to be a healthier person, but during the pandemic, going to the gym had the latent function of spreading the virus. This is why it was so important to rely on credible sources to make informed choices about the health and safety of oneself, family, and community.

Applying Erving Goffman’s theory of dramaturgy (Carl & Belanger), the shifting social dynamics during the pandemic introduced new stage directions for people whose self-image included acting like a healthy pro-social person with a good character. When conflicting stage directions came from new and differing sources about what healthy people with good characters should do, it became crucial to identify which new norms of healthy pro-social behaviour were backed by science and reason.

Personally, what I learned from this assignment was how to think about a topic through the lens of a sociological theory. It is not easy to separate and parse the thoughts that I have about health and misinformation during the pandemic, but this assignment helped me practice thinking about it through the application of an established theoretical framework: in this case, symbolic interactionism. It wasn’t easy, but I tried my best to make the sentences and concepts flow well from sentence to sentence and paragraph to paragraph in this academic essay. It felt good to strengthen the skill of evaluating sources too, because it will be useful for my personal, professional, and academic life going forward. At work, I help design and document business-to-business software-as-a-service tools, which means that I deal with organizing information into hierarchies and providing a trustworthy source of technical product knowledge. If I continue in the knowledge management space, any practice with evaluating sources will be valuable to help me maintain unbiased perspectives on potentially controversial topics like public health and artificial intelligence. Personally, we are heading into provincial and federal elections in a chaotic time in politics, so it will be imperative that I can evaluate sources to help me make informed choices about who to vote for. And academically, I won’t be able to succeed if I can’t identify credible sources and cite them properly, so I am grateful for any opportunity to practice that skill.

Self-Grading Rubric

A chart with text and images

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I have demonstrated achievement of level three by introducing the assignment and topic briefly within the first three sentences of the first paragraph. I relate the reason why the topic is important to me, and briefly summarized the two articles before analyzing them. A white rectangular box with black text

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In my comparison paragraphs, I looked at similarities, differences, audience, purpose, and why that made source B stronger than source A. I made sure to use examples from the articles and my own sources for ideas that were not common knowledge (like the shifting stigmas in the pandemic era).

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I focused on connecting the topic to symbolic interactionism, which I defined in the introduction, and included the key terms “symbols”, “meaning”, “self”, and “interactions” among others. The connections are accurate because I cited the textbook. A white rectangular box with black text

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I gave examples from personal, professional, and academic life about why it will be important to improve my knowledge of information literacy. I have also completed this rubric.A white and black text

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The word count without including the reference page and this rubric is 1008. I did my best with the sentences to make them flow well, and to format this essay in APA style. Everything that was not directly quoted was paraphrased in my own words. A close up of text

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I wrote this article myself with no copying and pasting from generative AI, the textbooks, classwork, or anything else. The only thing I copied and pasted were the titles of the articles when I cited them.

References

Carl, J. D., & Belanger, M. (n.d.). *Think Sociology: Second Canadian edition.* Toronto: Pearson.

Taylor, A. C. (n.d.). *How to Keep Kids Active during the Pandemic? MOM LIFE*. Retrieved from Taylor Family Vlogs: https://taylorfamilyvlogs.com/how-to-keep-kids-active-during-the-pandemic-mom-life/

Walker, P., & Taylor, H. (2022, January 13). *Two Downing Street parties held evening before Prince Philip’s funeral – reports.* Retrieved January 2025, from TheGuardian.com: https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2022/jan/13/two-downing-street-parties-held-evening-before-prince-philips-funeral-reports

Watt, J., & Colley, R. C. (2021, September 17). *Youth—but not adults—reported less physical activity during the COVID-19 pandemic*. Retrieved from Statistics Canada: https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/45-28-0001/2021001/article/00032-eng.htm