Teens, Teachers, and Online Information

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Introduction

- This study will display how teenagers truly interpret the online information they encounter. Long-term, these findings will better help teachers facilitate the development of information literacy skills inside and outside of the classroom.
- Prior research finds that teens use different online tools and platforms with intentionality to accomplish specific outcomes (Jontes, Crnic, Luthar, 2023).
- Activity on social media platforms and algorithms play a huge role in keeping teens up to date with information (Jontes, Crnic, Luthar, 2023).
- The goal of this research is to determine how teenagers interpret online information, what platforms they use, and how they use this information, as well as how teachers facilitate and enhance this online learning.

Research Question 1: How do teens encounter and make sense of information about current events, social issues, and science?

Research Question 2: Do teenagers engage in fact checking processes regarding information found via social media?

Methods

Participants

- 10 high school students ages 13-18 from a high school neighboring the Tallahassee area.
- 7 females, 3 males.

Materials

- Online portal (Qualtrics) for media diary submissions.
- Online portal (Microsoft Teams/Otter.ai) for transcribing interview information and tracking forms, consent procedures, and participant information.
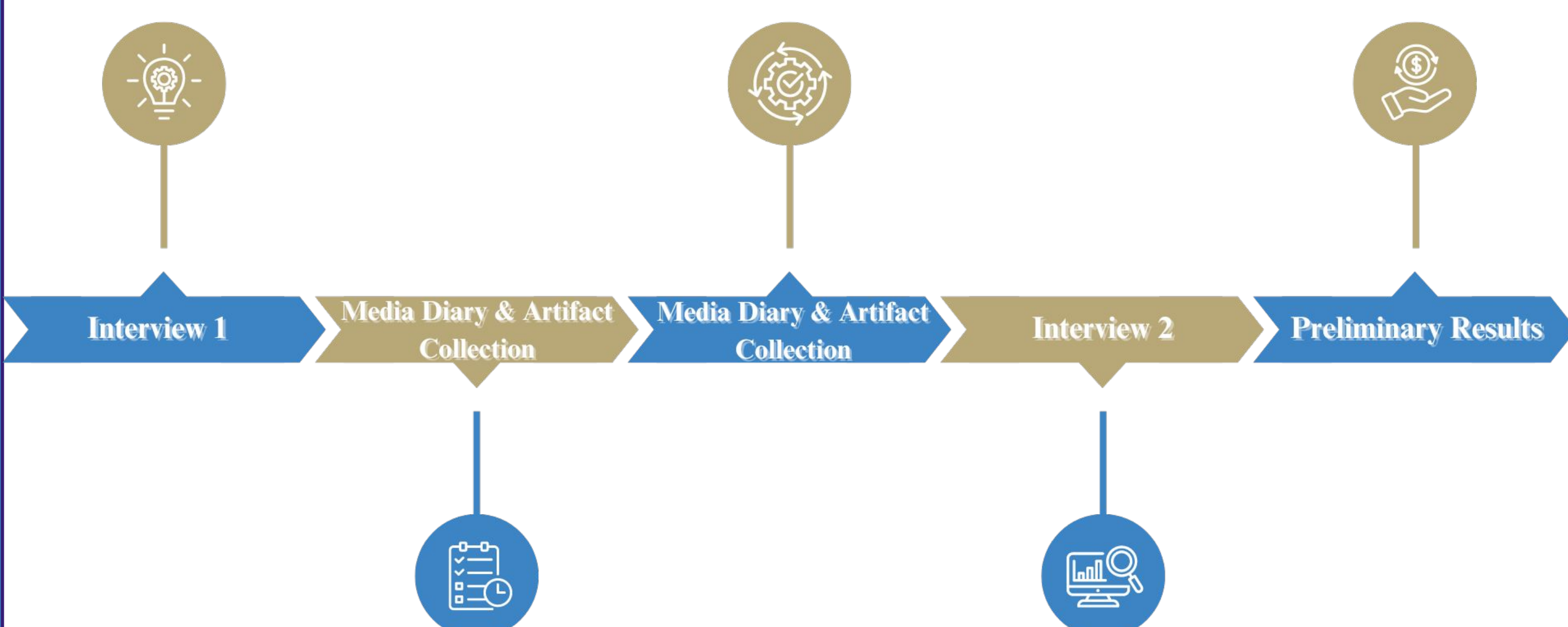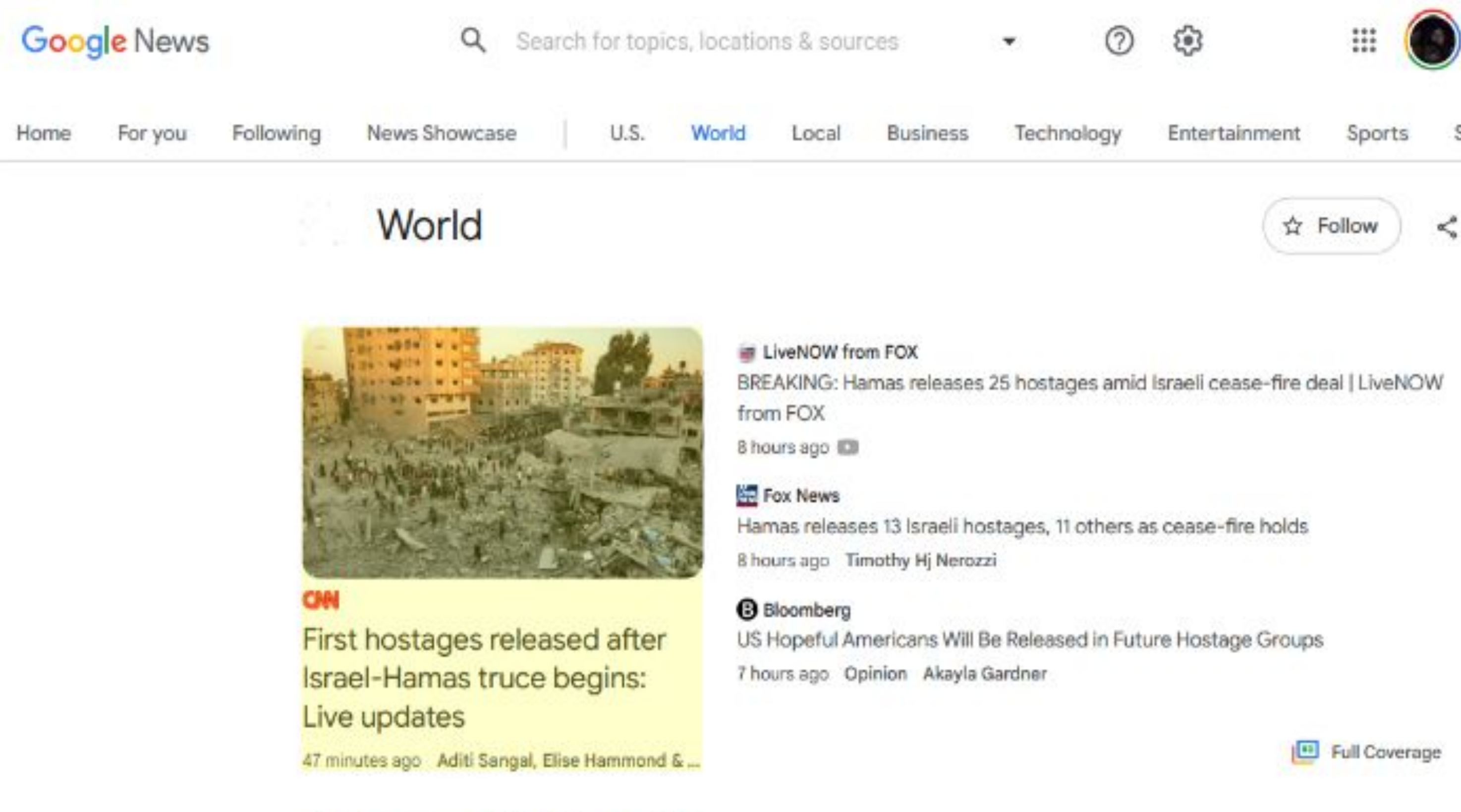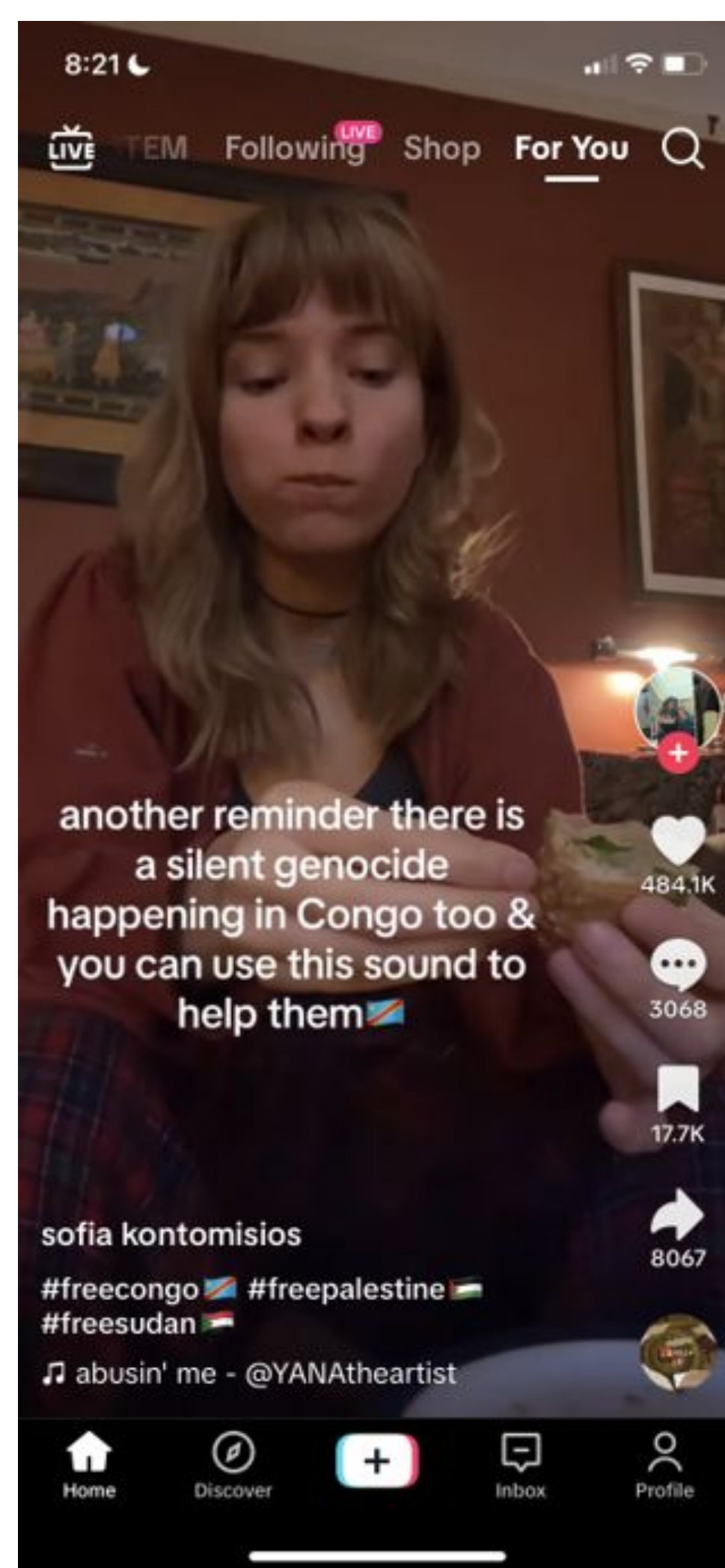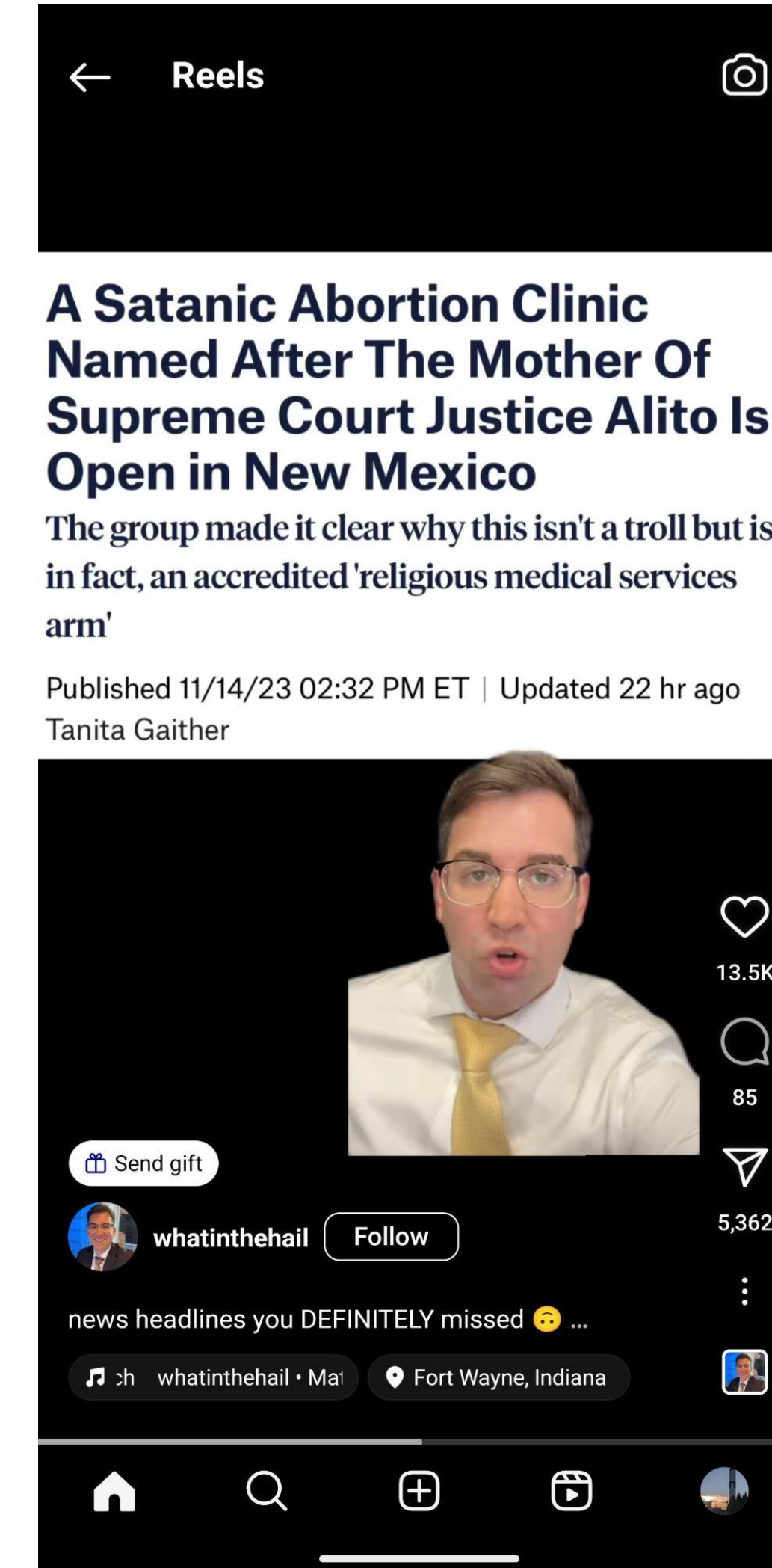
Procedure

Interview 1 → Media Diary & Artifact Collection → Media Diary & Artifact Collection → Interview 2 → Preliminary Results

Figure 1:

Note: Screen capture taken 11/26/2023.

Figure 2:

Note: Participant artifact shared via Qualtrics survey Day 3.

"I'm aware of the possibility it is a sham. And again, it only took me 15 seconds, so I don't think that it would affect me that much" - Participant

Note: Quote for Figure 2 when asked about fact checking.

Figure 3:

A Satanic Abortion Clinic Named After The Mother Of Supreme Court Justice Alito Is Open in New Mexico

The group made it clear why this isn't a troll but is, in fact, an accredited 'religious medical services arm'

Published 11/14/23 02:32 PM ET | Updated 22 hr ago
Tanita Gaither

Note: Participant artifact shared via Qualtrics survey Day 1.

"And I didn't really, I did not fact check it because I didn't feel like it affected me enough to fact check it."- Participant

Note: Quote for Figure 3 when asked about fact checking.

Results/Conclusions

Actively or Passively Searching for Information - RQ1

- Results are preliminary, though they suggest teens are more likely to be passive observers of issues related to social, science, and current events than they are to actively seek this information out.
- Israel-Hamas war is a featured headline during the data collection process (interviews/media diaries) - majority of teenagers unintentionally viewed this information.
- Teenagers also showed dislike for certain content being shared by family and friends, however, this is likely due to them wanting social media to remain a place for entertainment purposes.
- Following issues of interest, teens will often search for issues or be interested in issues if there is more of a connection with them (race, religion, gender identity, etc).

Fact Checking Information - RQ2

- Results are preliminary, but the main conclusion is that teenagers mostly do not fact check, though they feel a responsibility to.
- Observations indicate that there was a general awareness that information seen online was not always credible, however, their decision to fact check was often based on subjective rules like common sense.
- There is a reliance on others to fact check information, such as parents, teachers, and peers.

Limitations and Future Considerations

- Limitations for the study involve the interview based format during which it can be difficult to get teenagers to engage.
- Future considerations may look towards allowing teens, parents, and teachers to learn how to fact check online social media sites and platforms to better understand how news is interpreted.

References

Jontes, D., Črnič, T. O., & Luthar, B. (2023). *Conceptualising liveness and visibility in the news repertoires of adolescents in a polymedia environment.* Media and Communication, 11(4), 164–174. https://doi.org/10.17645/mac.v11i4.7076

Melvin, M. (2023). *Google News: World* https://news.google.com/topics/CAAqJggKIiBDBDQkFTRWdvSUwyMHZNRGx1YlY4U0FtVnVHZ0pWVXlnQVAB?hl=en-US&gl=US&ceid=US%3Aen