

JOURNALISM THROUGH THEATER: HOW AN ART FORM CAN INFORM

Austin, TX – March 21, 2019 – From articles to tweets, journalism has the ability to take many forms. In our latest research, the Center for Media Engagement (CME) partnered with [The Center for Investigative Reporting](#) (CIR) and [StoryWorks](#) to examine how theater and journalism can be combined to create a powerful message.

This study analyzed audience responses to three plays based on investigative reporting. Among other significant results, we found that after the performances, audience members:

- Perceived certain news media roles – e.g., to act as a government watchdog or to advocate for social change – as more important. This happened for two of the plays.
- Evaluated partnering news organizations more favorably.
- Found the plays to be highly informative, believable, credible, accurate, fair, interesting, and enjoyable.

Although there were differences in which play had which effect, we saw changes in people’s beliefs, knowledge, and intended behaviors across the three plays. “This study shows that using journalistic storytelling through theater can help change perceptions of the news media,” says CME researcher Ori Tenenboim. Jennifer Welch, StoryWorks Creator and Artistic Director adds, “We’ve learned that changing the way we experience journalism through investigative documentary theater motivates people to become engaged with newsrooms, building trust between the media and communities.”

The research shows that through theater, news organizations can connect, empower, and inform audiences through a unique and creative medium. Says Annie Chabel, CIR Chief Operating Officer, “The research conducted by the Center for Media Engagement is providing critical insights into new storytelling platforms that can reach and engage diverse communities with credible journalism. Their work is helping us understand how trust in media can be regained, and the role newsrooms can have in bringing together communities.”

To read more about the findings, access the full report on our website:
<https://mediaengagement.org/research/journalism-through-theater>.

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The Center for Media Engagement, part of the Moody College of Communication at The University of Texas at Austin, provides research-based techniques for engaging digital audiences in commercially viable and democratically beneficial ways. Learn more at mediaengagement.org