Photo of the Day | Boing boing boing boing



UConn students celebrate a warm spring weekend outside. Spring has sprung in Storrs, CT.
PHOTO BY EMMA MEIDINGER, ASSOCIATE PHOTO EDITOR/THE DAILY CAMPUS

Do influencers spoil journalism?

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In the modern world, there are pervasive forces telling you what to wear, what to buy, what to think. They're influencers, and they have become the driving force behind the growth of almost every industry, especially the beauty and fashion industries. What goes unnoticed, however, is the step that many influencers have taken into journalism.

It seems that almost every influencer has a podcast or YouTube channel. With these platforms, they get the sought-after opportunity to interview celebrities and influential figures. With this opportunity, most influencers choose not to ask in-depth questions. Every interview is fun, non-invasive and shallow.

Take Alex Cooper for example. Cooper started her podcast, "Call Her Daddy" in 2018, and has since become the center of celebrity interviewing. However, her questions are surface-level; she aims more to make the guests she hosts feel comfortable than to probe for the information that her audience truly wants. She is formulaic and not conversational.

Though Cooper has technically never been an influencer, the way influencers with platforms interview their guests can most certainly be attributed to her. When Jake Shane, a comedian and TikTok star, started his podcast, "Therapuss with Jake Shane," he set out with the goal of answering listeners' questions in a therapy-style format with his guest co-hosts. There are several episodes of his, however, that deviate from this format. Shane even begins an episode with the singer Role Model in silence, as they try to figure out what to say to each other; this may be comfortable for them, but it differs from what the audience is looking for.

Brittany Tomlinson, commonly known as Brittany Broski, is another example. Originally a TikTok star with a mass following, Tomlinson now runs a show on her YouTube channel titled "Royal Court," where she has interviewed numerous celebrities to determine if they are worthy of her 'royal court.' The format of her show is meant to be light-hearted, like many other sources of entertainment news. But, when influencers ask these questions, do they not trivialize what it means to seek truth?

Interviewing is a part of journalism, and journalism, no matter what, aims to expose the facts. By choosing not to ask difficult questions, influencers in the interviewing space are choosing to portray that finding out the truth from these figures does not matter. If these figures have done something controversial, those issues are often ignored or unaddressed.

Maybe finding the truth shouldn't matter. After all, why should anyone care what a celebrity does? We do not personally know these figures, yet understanding their perspective and the truth as it comes directly from them is extremely important. If after all this, their truth is discounted, does gleaning the truth from anyone even matter? In interviews, should we prioritize making even politicians or people with authority on a topic comfortable over finding out what is accurate?

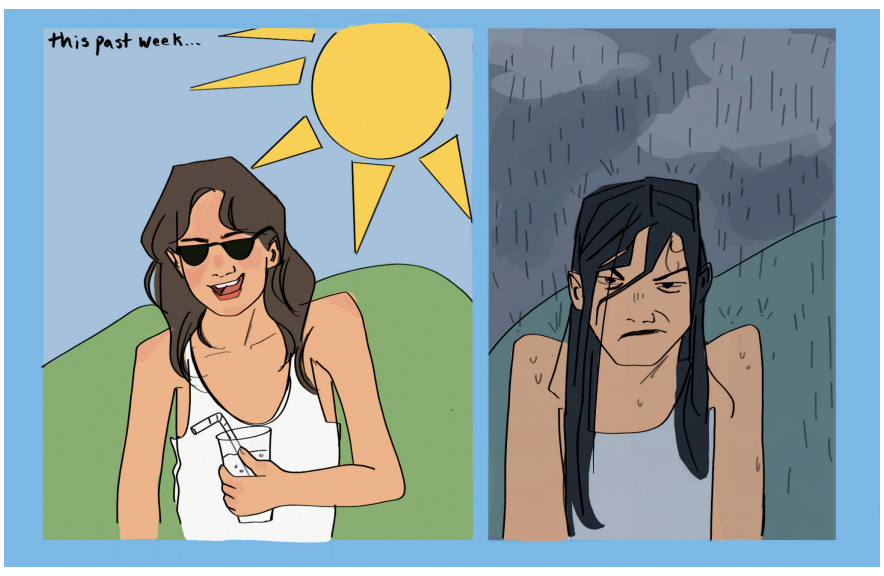
Journalism and the importance of celebrity interviewing never used to be this minimized. Barbara Walters, the celebrated journalist and first female U.S. network news anchor, conducted interviews with various celebrities and influential figures. She was known for asking each of her subjects uncomfortable, blunt questions; she conducted interviews with the knowledge that her audience wanted the truth, and she was responsible for getting it to them.

Even with all her bluntness and candor (she famously asked the Kardashians if they had any real talents), Walters carried out interviews with style and professionalism. Frankly, the interviews of today are missing that. Real journalism has been replaced with content creation that does not match the standard originally put in place, and it needs to change.

There are moments where we need to interview others with sensitivity; people with trauma and those who have just experienced a momentous event need to be across from someone who can sympathize with them and treat them gently. Now, however, celebrities are treated the same as those subjects.

When watching these influencer interviews, ask yourself this fundamental question: Are they really trying to understand the truth, or is the content I am consuming fluff? What Barbara Walters was trying to do with her interviews was reveal the truth. But no interviewer, whether they are a content creator or a journalist, can make an audience itself strive for the facts. As a consumer in this day and age, you must look inward. Do you think the truth matters?

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