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West Virginia Participant 3 (White/female/20), interviewed on October 20, 2021

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Informed Consent to Participate in a Research Study

The Fake News and Information Literacy Project

Stephen M. Underhill, PhD, Principal Investigator



Marshall University IRB

Approved on:	9/17/21
Expires on:	9/15/21
Study number:	1779793

Key Information

You are invited to participate in a research study. Research studies are designed to gain scientific knowledge that may help other people in the future. You may or may not receive any benefit from being part of the study. Your participation is voluntary. Please take your time to make your decision, and ask your research investigator or research staff to explain any words or information that you do not understand. The following is a short summary to help you decide why you may or may not want to be a part of this study. Information that is more detailed is listed later on in this form.

The purpose of this study is to understand the Appalachian experience with fake news and how people determine what is/not credible online. We expect that you will be in this research study for one hour. Though you will be anonymous and your identity will be kept secret, a redacted copy of your interview transcript will be posted online on Marshall University's Digital Scholar website (https://mds.marshall.edu/oral_history/).

You will be asked 64 questions. Your dialogue will be recorded on Microsoft Teams and housed on Marshall University's OneDrive, which is password protected. The recording will be destroyed at the end of the semester (during finals week). To protect your privacy, you will be identified by your state of residence, race, sex, age and participant number. For example, the Digital Scholar website will catalogue your interview with a pseudonym like "Kentucky Participant 5 (White/Male/65), interviewed on October 5, 2021." Please avoid mentioning your name or other identifying information in the interview. Your name will not be on the transcript. The name of the interviewer will not be included in the transcript or otherwise on Marshall University's Digital Scholar website. All identifying information will be removed before transcripts are posted online. But once transcripts are posted on Marshall University's Digital Scholar website, they will be permanent. We will not be able to remove them.

How Many People Will Take Part In The Study?

About 24 people every semester people will take part in this study. A total of 24 subjects are the most that would be able to enter the study per semester.

What Is Involved In This Research Study?

You will be asked a series of 64 open-ended questions about your thoughts and feelings on fake news and disinformation online. You will be asked about your opinion of sensitive social questions like issues of race, class, religion, etc.

With your consent, this interview will be recorded. You will only be identified as "you" during the interview. The Microsoft Teams recording, which will be with the camera turned off, will be stored on Marshall University's OneDrive and will only be shared with the FYS small group, the FYS graduate assistant and the professor. These people will use the recording to verify consent and make a

Subject's Initials _____

redacted transcript. Definitized transcripts will be uploaded to Marshall University's Digital Scholar website (https://mds.marshall.edu/oral_history/).

What Are Your Rights As A Research Study Participant?

You may choose to not take part in the study. You may leave the study up to the point that the interview is complete. Once the redacted transcript is posted on the website a participant may not withdraw. Refusing to participate or leaving the study will not result in any penalty or loss of benefits to which you are entitled. If you decide to stop participating in the study we encourage you to talk to the investigators or study staff first.

The study investigator may stop you from taking part in this study at any time if he/she believes it is in your best interest; if you do not follow the study rules; or if the study is stopped.

Detailed Risks Of The Study

Because the recording will be destroyed at the end of the semester, and because the only a deidentified redacted transcript will be posted online, there is no foreseeable risk in the study.

What About Confidentiality?

We will do our best to make sure that your personal information is kept confidential. However, we cannot guarantee absolute confidentiality. Federal law says we must keep your study records private. Nevertheless, under unforeseen and rare circumstances, we may be required by law to allow certain agencies to view your records. Those agencies would include the Marshall University IRB, Office of Research Integrity (ORI) and the federal Office of Human Research Protection (OHRP). This is to make sure that we are protecting your rights and your safety. If we publish the information we learn from this study, you will not be identified by name or in any other way.

What Are The Costs Of Taking Part In This Study?

There are no costs to you for taking part in this study. All the study costs, including any study tests, supplies and procedures related directly to the study, will be paid for by the study.

Will You Be Paid For Participating?

You will receive no payment or other compensation for taking part in this study.

Whom Do You Call If You Have Questions Or Problems?

For questions about the study or in the event of a research-related injury, contact the study investigator, Stephen Underhill at 304-696-3020 or at underhills@marshall.edu. You should also contact the investigator if you have a concern or complaint about the research.

Subject's Initials _____

For questions about your rights as a research participant, contact the Marshall University Office of Research Integrity (ORI) at (304) 696-4303. You may also call this number if:

- You have concerns or complaints about the research.
- The research staff cannot be reached.
- You want to talk to someone other than the research staff.

Did you receive a copy of the consent form?

Please say Yes or No

Do you agree to take part in this study and confirm that you are 18 years of age or older?

Please say Yes or No

Have you had a chance to ask questions about being in this study and have had those questions answered?

Please say Yes or No

What is today's date?

Subject's Initials _____

West Virginia Participant 3 (White/Female/20), interviewed on October 20, 2021

The participant agreed to the terms of the consent.

Interviewer: Tell me about when you first started using social media and news started to appear for the first time on your feed like Facebook or Twitter.

Participant: I kind of started a bit late to the game on social media, I was probably like in 8th grade, late to the game in terms of like today's society. I'd started in like eighth grade or my freshman year of high school and for as long as I can remember news has been something that's been on my feed, but I think in the past, probably, probably my sophomore year of high school is whenever it got very popular and that was the 2016 election when I started to notice that it was becoming more common that news would be on my feed.

Interviewer: OK, on a normal day, how do you use the Internet?

Participant: A lot on a normal day. I think as a student with research and just trying to keep up with what's going on today I use the Internet pretty consistently every day.

Interviewer: What types of websites do you visit?

Participant: I visit the Marshall Library database a lot. I have a major in the liberal arts so it's a lot of writing. It's a lot of doing research, so I have like 10 tabs open for the library database right now because I'm writing a research paper. But I also use the other things for fun like online games and stuff I guess.

Interviewer: What did you search for online in the last week?

Participant: Oh, a lot of different stuff, I mean a lot of random stuff also. Different things that varies from stuff about research topics to random questions. Just everything under the sun. I look up things for like--if I questioned something I'll look it up. I will type it in. So I mean, that's kind of a hard question to answer. So I think that it's just become so common to look things up like that.

Interviewer: What websites do you visit to pass time when you're bored? What do you do on their sites and why do you use it? Those specific sites?

Participant: I get on YouTube. I get on Snapchat for conversation and also see what people post. It's fun to keep up with what people are doing, I guess. YouTube. Mainly I really like watching, this is gonna sound so freaking boring. This is what I do for fun I guess. I like to listen to different house representatives speaking and like to hear them debating because I think that's like a fun little thing. Just because I think that these are

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supposed to be the nation's brightest and best minds, and I don't know, it's kind of fun to see them get heated about things that are obviously important. I think it's fun and I like to watch podcasts. One in particular is Trillbilliess, but they rarely post videos of them actually like in the room. So whenever they post videos of them talking, I need to watch that. Also, I love a good like Tiny Desk Concert, those online concerts. I like to watch just because I'm like "wow, they're so talented." Like whenever you can hear a musician play without any kind of big equipment or anything, I think that's fun.

Interviewer: Thinking about these questions, what do you think that other people are doing, both people you know when people you don't know? How do other people pass time online?

Participant: I think social media for sure. Mainly, probably, I think a lot of people are on Instagram. I'm not on Instagram. You can't find me, but I think a lot of people, that's probably like their main thing. I think Facebook also. I think Facebook less so for people who are under a certain age, if that makes sense, it's more so Instagram. Maybe that's agist for me to say, but I think it's kind of divided a little bit.

Interviewer: What types of devices do you use to access the Internet? For example phone, tablet, laptop and which do you use the most and the least?

Participant: My phone and my laptop. I would say phone for like social media things, you know for looking at people. That sounds weird. Like looking at photos and things like that. The laptop for more research based things.

Interviewer: What social media forums like Twitter or Reddit do you use; and when, why, and for what do you use them? Please share any social media forums that you try to avoid and why you avoid them.

Participant: I use Snapchat and I do have a Facebook profile, but I haven't been on it in years. I personally avoid Instagram and Twitter. I have a Facebook but I avoid Facebook also. I avoid them, I think for different reasons. I think for Instagram, I think it's really easy to get wrapped up into being obsessed about like body image and things of that nature. And really wrapped up in the superficial. And so I avoid that for that reason. Twitter, I think I don't know why, but mentally I just feel like it's used for people to kind of, not even debate, but just fight. Not hear one another but, to just scream into the void. So and I just see no real purpose for that I guess. I don't think it's an exchange. I don't think it's an appropriate platform for an exchange of ideas.

Interviewer: When thinking about people that you disagree with, please describe which forums you think they likely use and why.

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Participant: I would say probably Facebook, and probably I don't know. Here's the hard thing, I feel like there are always exceptions to the rule, like I know a bunch of people who I align with ideologically who have those platforms also so, that's kind of hard, but probably Facebook. I feel like that's the stereotypical social media platform for the people that I probably would disagree with most.

Interviewer: Describe for me what you do when you want to find something out, when you want to find out something factual.

Participant: I think I have a handful of like reliable sources. I have things that like websites that I visit and things you know where they obviously rant, obviously I probably would agree with the rant. But after I read I'm like OK, let me go check out something else because obviously this is planted like, this was a fun read for me, but this isn't actual. Like if I want to have an actual conversation with someone, this isn't useful for me to not only educate myself but also educate others in a conversation.

Interviewer: How do people around you find out something factual?

Participant: I would hope the same way. I hope that they would have the same process. I think we all have websites and videos and things of people and we're like, yeah, absolutely, they're right. Heck yeah. And then we take a step back and we're like, but let me actually go check this out because this is how I feel. I need to figure out what's actually going on beyond just emotion. I'm not gonna act mighty or righteous that I'm the only one who does that. I hope everybody does that so that's what I like to think.

Interviewer: Everyone comes across things that surprise them on social media, between advertising news and commentary. Could you tell me about a time that you came across content on social media that you doubted was trustworthy or made you distrust its author or its purpose?

Participant: Before we had the vaccines for coronavirus, there's this doctor who came out and was like: Oh all we have to do is inject some medication into the patient's arm and they'll be cured of COVID, like this is a vaccine. And I looked at it and I was like this is not right. Everybody's trying to figure out a vaccine, and you're telling me that basically you would give me a placebo? It wasn't really helping anybody. I saw the people who are posting it and it's very much one of those things where the headline was big and everything flashy and people just read the headline and were like: the government is trying to keep this away from us and everything and I was like: Will you actually read the article? You know, it says that the doctor isn't credited, doesn't have very good history. And then you start to get this idea of like...you start associating

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people who post that kind of stuff with everything else they posted. I was like: I don't trust it, you've ruined your credibility. Anything you post, I don't believe.

Interviewer: So can you tell me about a time when you talk to your friends or family about that type of situation?

Participant: I feel as though I have been very blessed to have parents who are very much freethinkers. They aren't the type of people who read something and they believe it because they read it. You know what I mean? Like they are the type of people who search and look, go to different sources. So I'm very lucky to have parents like that because I think they encouraged me to do the same, and we have different opinions on things, and I think that that's fabulous but with the vaccine and everything, people were posting content like: Oh, you're gonna have issues and we can't trust this. You know, when the vaccine actually did come out? And both my parents were very much like: Look at what the CDC says. Look at what the FDA says. Instead of looking at what this newscaster says. Let's actually look at the facts instead of theorizing about what could happen and look at how much research has been done in the process of making these vaccines. Like how mRNA was used and tested repeatedly before COVID even happened, you know? And talk about how reliable this vaccine is? While it does feel like it's happening really fast, it's really not. Really, it's just we're seeing science in motion and action, you know things that usually don't go noticed in the day, we have a spotlight on.

Interviewer: Tell me about a time you saw this content on the news.

Participant: This content on like COVID and the vaccine and everything? How long have we been in this like two years? Two years ago?

Interviewer: Going on two years I think come in March.

Participant: Yeah. So. I saw it two years ago. Was there a second part to the question?

Interviewer: When did you see it?

Participant: It was always on the news. Like you could not turn on the news and not have Covid be your number one story. I don't think that's true when the election was happening. I think it kind of took a backseat for that. But if we're talking about specifically disinformation, about what was going on, I would say two years ago. We have news stations that are aligned with specific political ideologies, so it depended on what news station you turned on regarding what story they were telling. So I would say it just started as soon as the pandemic broke out in the United States.

Interviewer: If there are social media sites that you think are untrustworthy, what makes it untrustworthy?

Participant: I think every social media site is untrustworthy.

Interviewer: Like, innately?

Participant: I mean, I think of course there are exceptions to institutions or people, figures, who are online who say certain things, that could be trustworthy, if you have someone who has credentials on that social media platform, but I would say social media itself was made to share opinions, and that's what it is, opinions. And those sites don't exchange factual dialogue, so yeah, I guess no social media is really trustworthy fully.

Interviewer: Tell me about your experiences finding conspiracy theories.

Participant: I feel like at this point I don't even have to find them, they're just pushed forward as fact a lot of times or as like a really reasonable explanation, you know? That's something I had a teacher who would say that every thought and idea in an explanation is reasonable, like it should be expressed, but somebody in the class was like: is the explanation true? Like do some do some theories need to be given the same amount of credibility and importance as other reasonable explanations. I think conspiracy theories have become scarily popular these days.

Interviewer: If applicable, please describe a time when you shared content that you thought was true, but later learned that it was not true.

Participant: I don't have an Instagram and I don't use Facebook or like anything where it's like I "shared" it, so I don't really have the capacity to do that. I think I've been wrong in conversation though, if that makes sense.

Interviewer: If applicable, please describe a time when you share things that you knew were not true.

Participant: I don't try to do that. If I know something is false, I'm not gonna preach it because that makes me look bad and just like draw back from what I said earlier. After that person posted that article about the doctor and was like "the governments trying to hide things from us," I stopped believing them. I was like you're not credible anymore. If I know something is fake or if I know something is based in lies or doesn't have any factual evidence, I'm not gonna preach it because I want people to believe what I say when I speak. And I feel like once you break that trust, it's broken forever.

Interviewer: Tell me about a time when a search engine like Google or Yahoo seemed to give you what it thought you were looking for based on what you've already searched for.

Participant: Whenever I look something up online I guess. I guess the articles that pop up, like advertisements. Like oh, "check out this article" or "check out this" tend more to my specific political ideology, if that makes sense. The articles are typically written by people who are liberal. Whether, they're writing about whatever. Also, this can sound kind of odd, but I also get a lot of things that pop up. I'm really big into like Appalachian...the Appalachian Voice and how it's often, I think suppressed, so always deemed unimportant. So I get a lot of articles and things that are like this person from Kentucky, this person from West Virginia is doing this thing very specific to my area and I don't know if that's something that I'm interested in, or if that's something that you tend to like that everybody deals with because they tend to relate more to people who sound like them and know their own personal experience.

Interviewer: Describe a time when you notice that search results somehow seemed tailored to you. If any, where have you seen this? Where have you seen this discussed, like on the news?

Participant: So with this, this is gonna be like a weird question. But is this kind of like your phones are listening to you or your TV's listening to you? I'm not gonna lie, I believe that. I was just talking about how conspiracy theories are stupid but I'll be talking--I swear I'll be talking about something so random and it will pop up. It'll be like try this. But for real, it is spooky. I'll be like: oh, I need to go put air in my tires, and then freaking a commercial, or like an ad will pop up that will be like, "come here, we're going to do this." Or Amazon. Oh, it's always Amazon. I'll be like: I need to get a new winter coat. Literally. Amazon would be like, girl we got you. Here's a winter coat ad and I'm like: what is happening?

Interviewer: So?

Participant: Yes, I have had experience with that.

Interviewer: How do you decide what personal information to provide to social media companies, for example, YouTube or Google?

Participant: Personal information?

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Interviewer: Yeah, the way I interpret it is like, your name, your email, or maybe you're card information.

Participant: I have my email through Google, so really they have access to a lot. You know? They have access to my school email and my personal email, so they have access to things that I'm subscribed to because I get emails from places I visit, go to regularly that I'm a member of that are like: oh, get this coupon, get this whatever to things that I have subscriptions. Different things I like to read and things I would get sent. Like oh, here's this article written about this, so they know my interest. They know where I lay on the political spectrum because of that and then also like they have my school information. They know what classes I'm taking. They know what courses I'm taking. And I think what your major is shows a lot of what you're actually interested in. I guess ads can pop up because they could see that also.

Interviewer: So, tell me some ways or strategies that you used to try to protect your information online--your personal information online?

Participant: I don't use social media and I think that is a tactic. I don't really use like Instagram just because, again, personal reasons and also you don't want that information out there. I worry. I wouldn't want to post something and then years later, regret it. I think people--employers look at that. You know things like that, so I don't want anything too personal--I want my social media to kind of look professional, if I would have it.

Interviewer: So what do you think that people around you do to protect their personal information?

Participant: I think it just depends honestly. All my friends have like Instagram and Twitter and they're very active on it. I would say fairly, but then again, I think compared to me, I'd probably say they are super active on it and they complain that I haven't been on it in a month. I'm on. So, like I guess I'm not it a good gauge for reference. I think my friends are good at knowing what is personal between friends and family and what is OK for social media. The majority of my friends have jobs. Honestly, a lot of my friends have jobs that are associated with the University so they can't have things on their social media that are like: I just did this and that and this and that, where I think other people could. So I think it's a weird line and it's hard to describe but I think most people... it's just like a society thing where we know what is personal and what isn't for social media and I think it depends on, that line depends on, your... this is gonna sound weird...but it depends on a lot of different factors, like region and class.

Interviewer: What have you heard about protecting your identity or personal information on the news? Have you heard your family and friends discuss this?

Participant: Yes. My sister all the time is like: keep your personal information, whatever, because she swears up and down that devices are listening, kind of going back to this. She swears that devices are listening and my parents got an Alexa. And she literally will be like, "Alexa, are you listening?" And, it'll be like, "I don't understand." So, I guess. My family and my friends, like I said, I've heard the same things. I mean my entire life. I've grown up, and I think the people who are working on this, like, study, we all have grown up in a time where it's like...We don't remember life before social media. I mean, maybe like before Facebook. Before Facebook we had MySpace and different things. I think almost our entire lives, we were trained to be like: don't let these people on social media know where you live. Don't let them know what school you go to. And if you do those things, you have to be super careful and you have to make sure not to offend, or then people target you. Or you have to look like a certain way. You can't be too provocative. You can't do this or that. You know you have to protect yourself. And so I think we are trained and we...we're trained to a certain level like we know what is too much information. So I think, like the tactics are just internal instinct.

Interviewer: What do you think of when I say the word algorithms? What comes to your head when I say that word?

Participant: Math.

Interviewer: Math?

Participant: Math.

Interviewer: How have you responded? How have you responded to how Internet companies try to customize or control what you see on their platforms, like in Google searches?

Participant: It feels invasive. Definitely. I think it's like a weird line to tow because I feel as though at first it was like: oh, we can design this so everything you see will be specific to you and you'll like everything that you see because it's for you and you're like wow, that's amazing. Like that's exactly what I want. You cut out the middleman like you're just giving me stuff that I find so interesting. But it does feel invasive and I think it doesn't...It kind of stops people from being exposed to other information and to other sources. It makes people kind of more knowledgeable about what they think and more dumb to what is actually going on.

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Interviewer: What have you heard other people talk about that? Like what have you heard of other people say?

Participant: Nothing. I think, I feel like everybody is like: oh my gosh that's so creepy that's so invasive. That's so in my personal business. But then again, I feel like a lot of people don't like it when they actually see something that is different. Like why is this popping up? Like they get mad about it.

Interviewer: If you were to explain to your friends or family how false information spreads and can be found on the Internet or how to avoid false information, what would you say?

Participant: I would say everything that's written was written by a human, and therefore contains some kind of bias because they write from their perspective on life. And it's important, as a human who is living in our society with other humans that you take into account different perspectives and different opinions because that is when you'll get the most well rounded approach to a situation.

Interviewer: What do you think determines what you've seen online or how things spread?

Participant: I think when a corporation or an institution has enough money they can control what is seen by the public.

Interviewer: How does this work? What is seen online, how it spreads? How does that work?

Participant: Well, I think when you have enough money, you can pay to have certain things spread. If you're like: oh, I want this story spread. I want this idea to be popular, you can pay different internet companies. You can pay Google. And they say we want this article to be the one that pops up first, because it paints us in the best light. Google can make that happen for enough money.

Interviewer: Who do you think benefits from that?

Participant: The corporations that want that, that have that money to spare.

Interviewer: Who do you think made the system?

Participant: I think that this is a system that's happened since, you know, the beginning of time. I guess this idea that people with more money can make things happen. And I

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don't think that it's a new system. I think it's one, hopefully, we're becoming more conscious of and pushing against because it is an unfair system to operate under. But, I think it's something that's been happening for a long time. And it was made by people with money. Money is corrupt. But, also, I want money so it's interesting.

Interviewer: The Internet is full of stories that divide people about things like the coronavirus, the capital riot, Stop the Steal Antifa, Black Lives Matter, climate change, QAnon, and the political parties. If you were to decide, how would you like schools and news to talk about what controls the Internet and what is seen?

Participant: I think like I said before, I think schools should...I feel like this is such like an interesting thing because like education systems and like education reform, is the hill that I will die on. I think, as a whole, schools need to do a better job of discussing bias, of discussing this nonsense idea that I can pull a source from over here and a source from over here, and then call it a day. Like: oh, I explored both sides of an argument. But it's not about exploring both sides of an argument. It's about exploring the different perspectives and lenses that are put on that argument because of where you stand in society and your life, and the world. I think schools need to do a better job of highlighting those perspectives. So I guess kind of discussing bias, not as a black and white thing. I'm not unbiased because I included two sources with different opinions. And it's like: no. But as a writer you still carry bias because you believe one thing over the other, and it's an important. It's important to recognize your own bias as a student. and explore different perspectives and explore why you feel that way. Like, why do you think the way that you do? And I think in high school, I would have had a lot of people who would have been like: oh my gosh, you know I feel the way I do because that's how I was, that's how my parents raised me to believe. That's how you know and explore why you feel those ways instead of proving that the way you believe is correct

Interviewer: OK. If you happen to see the stories about Stop the Steal and the Capital Riot, what do you make of why the protesters were there?

Participant: I'm sure that it's kind of relatively clear what political ideology I align with on this so I'm gonna try and answer this question to the best of my ability without being too...

Interviewer: If you are, if you don't want to answer this question...

Participant: Oh no, I'll answer it..

Interviewer: I know I just wanted to make sure that you're comfortable.

Participant: Yeah yeah yeah no, it's fine. It's just I don't, I mean. I think I definitely have my opinions and that's what they are. They are my opinions and I wanna answer the question to the best of my ability, basing it on what actually happened. I watched. I actually got up early that morning because I wanted to watch the final votes come in for Biden. I'm just that kind of person. I was up the night before till the crack of dawn, waiting to see if Jon Ossoff was gonna be the Representative for Georgia. So it's just I don't know. It's a fun little thing I do, I guess. I know, but I think that stuff is important and so people should be interested in that. But uh, so I watched the Capital Riot kind of explode like from, you know, early in the morning when people are starting to gather to the insurrection. I feel as though while I was watching it, it felt, I mean people who were clearly and obviously frustrated, but were clearly and obviously misinformed and were victims to these political figures and also these news anchors and people who caused and spewed out this misinformation for viewership. You know? To get people to watch, to get people, to get riled up and then as soon as insurrection happened, it was like now why did people do this? Like why did, you know, why? It's awful and it is awful. But you see these news anchors who were like really doubling down on the fact that the election was stolen and these political figures and representatives. I literally watched all night. I watched them stand up and talk about how the insurrection was disgraceful and how they were stepping away from, from saying that the election was rigged and supporting Joe Biden, this process of a peaceful trade of power, transition of power. And I just thought it was funny because I was like: you know you are kind of the people with blood on your hands. You know you're the ones who have supported this and spread that misinformation and gone home and spoken to your communities that voted for you. You know that you said that you would do the best for them. You know you went into these communities and spoke to them and said that that was the truth and now you're standing here and saying that that's a lie. You know? And it's... I think that people were very misinformed and were victims, honestly.

Interviewer: Why do you think that some people dressed in costumes, like hunters and trappers, or with animal pelts or with Norse tattoos? Or as Roman soldiers? Or groups like Cowboys for Trump?

Participant: A lot of the outfits were in association with QAnon. Specifically, the one of that looked like he was wearing Buffalo [headdress], that's actually like the dress for like the head person of QAnon. And also I think it's kind of a call back in reference to times that were extremely divisive, but times that a lot of people unfortunately want to go back to. This kind of idea of raw human strength and grit and whatever. Actual like physical representations of that instead of one's intellectual thought.

Interviewer: What does this mean for stories about voter fraud and voting rights? Where did you learn this and what does it mean to you?

Participant: I think it's interesting. This is an interesting--I feel like I'm elaborating on all of these questions. I feel like voter suppression is something that has been consistent. It's not something like people could vote and there was no voter suppression. There's always been voter suppression and it's a consistent thing with gerrymandering. We have literal areas that are constructed that make it harder for minorities and people from lower economic backgrounds to vote. My own experience as a student, I feel like the voting process is so hard for students and people of the working class which make up the majority of the population. They make it hard for people to get to places where they can vote. My district is back home and my partner's is two hours away and I'm a full time student and I work. And you have to vote in that district. Now I get it, trying to make things orderly and whatever but it makes it very hard. I have seen several videos and I think it's interesting, I'm trying to remember the specific place it was, but the lines to get to vote in the morning were absolutely insane in one district. And then the next district, people were just walking in like they were empty and it was because they're making it harder. People can't spend, you know, the working class, and especially people who are in the lower economic class now, people who are barely making it. They could have kids. They could have other responsibilities and other things going on that day and they cannot wait in line all day. And it is extremely unfair. I unfortunately, I think we're going into reverse. I mean, I'm glad that we're exploring these things and that it's a topic of conversation in Congress, but I think not that long ago we had like that big huge thing going on in Georgia where they made it impossible, I think it was impossible for African American and black voters to fully be counted and that is extremely unfair. I think specifically, the younger generation, the people who will be voting this year and years after will have a distrust of government and will have a distrust of our democratic system. My first political memory is when Obama was elected. And I think that shape...

Interviewer: That's mine, too, actually.

Participant: Yeah, it's like I think it was a big deal. It was a big deal and I think for a long time, I expected things to--I always thought that society moves forward. Government will always move forward. There will be people who push back, but throughout, history always moves forward. And I think personally, because we're gonna get into my personal ideology, I think when Trump was elected it was a real like: What? Because it isn't what I was necessarily taught to believe. What happened? You know? Obama was arguably our most liberal president, and he was the first one I remembered, and so that's what I just thought was normal. You know, and so I think part of the things that I'm interested in politically, part of why I did not vote for Donald Trump was because that was the normal. I think for people who will have this as their first political memory, this will be a shitshow that just happened. They're gonna vote a specific way because of that.

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Interviewer: Kind of switching gears a little bit, what content do you post online if applicable? What type of content do you try to make visible for others to see and what type of content do you try to hide others from seeing?

Participant: I have a job at Marshall, so the only real social media if we also count Facebook and what people post of me, like my family and friends, they know not to post certain things of me. I have a job through Marshall, so I do not post publicly photos of me doing things, like, certain things like if I'm going out with my friends, nobody needs to see that, like nobody--Nobody needs to see that. If you know my friends and I are dressed up for Halloween, so cute, let me take a little snap and post that. Like, that's fine. But I need my job. I don't post certain things. I think people who have, if we look at influencers, like people online, I feel as though I cannot post photos of me of, I don't know, like doing...You know basically being naked because I need my job and my boss would be like, what the heck? You know, you represent Marshall. But influencers, they can do that because that is their social standing in society. They have enough money. They have enough whatever that they don't have a boss. You know? They can just whatever.

Interviewer: Can you remember a time when you were careful about what you chose to "like" on Facebook or Twitter or Instagram because of how it might affect--affect the visibility of other people's contributions and content to your social media feed? Were you ever picky about when you chose to interact with a certain topic or a certain person?

Participant: Yes, definitely 110%. I mean, I've unfriended people and blocked people, because I didn't want--I felt like I couldn't associate with them because like...I mean if I'm embarrassed by what you're posting. Like I know, you know, if I know you and I'm embarrassed and don't want to be associated with you, like how do you think that's going to look for someone who doesn't know you? And just sees me attached to you. It's unfortunate, but I think that definitely yes. I've definitely...Yeah. If we're talking specifically to social media, yes.

Interviewer: Please tell me about a time when you tried to influence or change the kind of content that you see on YouTube or Google, or other social medias by searching differently.

Participant: I think genuinely I search differently. If I know that I'm looking for something that's educational based, I use different language and different keywords than whenever I'm just looking for something fun.

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Interviewer: When you are unsatisfied with the Internet search results, how do you adjust your searches to change those results?

Participant: I become more specific. I rarely, I think I rarely take away words from the search engine. But I always add.

Interviewer: OK, how do you decide if an online source of information is reliable or credible?

Participant: Honestly, a common thing that I do for research papers or just in life, I think this is important to do, I will look up the author and I'll figure out their background. And then also trying to figure out, I think when newspapers and whatever have a specific ideology that they align with and you usually can tell by their mission statements, so sometimes I'll go and I'll read the mission statement for the company.

Interviewer: Can you tell me when you double check information online to verify if it was credible?

Participant: Like just checked online?

Interviewer: Yeah, just like double checked. Like if, like if you were suspicious about something, a certain post or article or whatever it may be. Why like, why were you suspicious about that and what made you suspicious and how did you double-check to see if your suspicions were correct or not?

Participant: Oh my goodness. Going back to the election, there was a boy, I went to high school with and he posted, it was right before the insurrection and everything. He posted a whole thing about how the votes...It was last year and it was a whole thing that was like the votes don't line up. There are more votes for the state of Wisconsin than there are residents. That's what he said. And I was like, hmmm, that doesn't sound right to me. I was like let me give this boy the benefit of the doubt, let me give him--And he like posted like a screenshot from an article and I said let me just, let me just take a second. And I literally went online and I found the article, found the writer. He might as well have been called Mr. Conservative. Uhm? And I was like, oh, OK. And so then I freaking just went online and looked up--I literally went and said, "United States poll numbers for the State of Wisconsin" and it popped up how many people voted, how many votes were cast. And then I literally went and looked up how many residents, how many residents over the age of 18 are in Wisconsin. And the number was like three times the size of the amount of people who voted, and I was like dude. Oh my gosh. People who are counted as a resident, not even like, oh, I'm living here. Like people who are literally residents were counted in the census. Three times the amount of

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people that voted. I was like you're joking. You're joking. And that was a bit frustrating because I know that there are a bunch of other goons, little goons who are reading that and being like...you know. And sadly enough, this kid is smart. He's intelligent, he is capable. He is capable of going out and seeking knowledge, and not spreading misinformation. He is intelligent. And I'm like, why? Why are you like this when you have the capacity to actually...to spread awareness and spread knowledge and truth? And you know it's--I expected more, I guess.

Interviewer: What did your findings make you feel about the website that the information came from?

Participant: It just kind of solidified my ideas I guess. People write with bias and take advantage of those who don't look up anything else, so that's the only thing that they're exposed to.

Interviewer: Please tell me about a time that your friends or family distrusted a website or information on a website. Did they double-check the information from a different source to verify that it was credible?

Participant: Oh my goodness! This is gonna be a bit of a silly story, but I listen to a podcast. And my brother-in-law listens to the same podcasts and we both are Patreon members, which means that we're like subscribed. And I love this podcast. It's called Trillbillies, and it's like the Appalachian perspective on economics, politics, social issues, and life in general, and I love this podcast and they were reading an article about Kentucky, about this town in Kentucky that doesn't have a Police Department. How its disbanded because they had, like first of all, they've lost a vehicle. And they lost the freaking police dog. And like they found that they were pulling over. OK, it wasn't. I'm trying to remember it wasn't in Kentucky, but they were pulling over Kentucky drivers more often than any other drivers because they actually got a kick-back the police officers like, the more people that they pull over, they actually get paid in reference to that in that district. But basically, they did a big huge search of the Police Department and they found that they had spent so much money on weaponry and that they have like more ammo-- cause this is like a small town, they had more ammo than they did residents in the town. So you literally could have shot every single resident. Like, why do you need this? And basically they just got, like, it was like so wild that they just got rid of their Police Department. Like they're, they're like we'll just call it to the next town over. And so, I was like is this true or not really? And I went and my brother-in-law was like, isn't that wild story? And I was like well I'm gonna look it up because that's like really wild and it was true. It was something that's real and I was like, wow, that's wild. I'm gonna have to figure out what town it was. Because, it was wild. In case of people listening to this want to look it up.

Interviewer: How do you think the media should cover stories about fake news or disinformation? Should the media do more to teach people how to verify the credibility of information?

Participant: I don't think that's-- Listen, I don't think that that is really the media's job. I don't think the media's job is to be like. You know, so like this is how you should be, like us as people we should be. You know? They can't be responsible for every individual and their success as an independent thinker. That being said, I think media and news outlets have a responsibility to spread as credible and fair news as possible. And that is a responsibility that they hold. I think, too often we have different, I don't know how to put this honestly, conspiracy theories explored on news outlets and it's wild. And I think that is taking advantage of people who are listening to it for news, listening to it for facts because I think once you see it on that platform you're like, "oh my gosh. Well, it's true. This is news." You know? This is, you know, the news is factual and it's like...No, they're being dishonest and taking advantage of their position and your household.

Interviewer: What are your thoughts on fake news, on the term "fake news"?

Participant: Oh my gosh, it gives me a freaking headache. Just because. I associate it with Donald Trump, like really strongly.

Interviewer: And what is your definition of fake news then? Like what are you?

Participant: Well, let me think about it. Here's a thing. I think I have, I have such like a weird relationship with it. At first Donald Trump, I think he is the one who like coined the term I guess, but I think I was like "oh my gosh, this is so dangerous." This idea that we can't trust fact, things that are presented as fact. We can't, we...We need to be skeptical as people. Everything that's coming from anyone, even if they are extremely credible-- --is false, and I was like that is so dangerous because that's where we, that's how information is exchanged. Pretty regularly when the president speaks, it's on the news. So I can't trust when Doctor Fauci was discussing COVID relief that's on the news? You're telling me? That's so dangerous for us to be like everything that's on the news is fake. It's not true, but that being said, I think that there are stations who constantly spew falsehoods. I do think that that is fake news, you know, so it's like, oh. Like Oh my gosh. It's like a complicated thing. Specifically, we're gonna get into my ideologies. Um, strap in kids! But like specifically Fox News. That would be the example that I would give of fake news. Just because actually. Well, I can't even call it fake news because--and they're the ones who use that term the most. But, they aren't even considered a news station. Fun fact, if you like look it up, because there have actually been lawsuits against

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Fox News for spreading misinformation. And within their testimony, the head honcho guy from Fox News, who's from Australia by the way, that's just a fun tidbit that has nothing to do with anything, I just thought that was fun, he literally is like it's not a news station. He's like we never claim that. He says it says news, but it's not news. It's made for people who are conservative. He's like it's like a fun little thing. Like it's just TV, it's not a news station, so it's technically not considered like, legally, it's not considered a news station, so it's funny that people actually take it that way. But again, it's them abusing their position within the viewer's household. They present themselves as news. It's right there in the title "Fox News". So it's really unfortunate because they clearly know what they're doing. But yeah. That's, that's fake news.

Interviewer: Where is fake news? Like where is it?

Participant: Everywhere. But genuinely, it's just like falsehoods within the happenings of human existence. So it's everywhere. It's social media, it's on TV. It's in what you say to your neighbor.

Interviewer: Who does fake news target?

Participant: This is so hard because on one hand, I want--I think people, this is so hard. Because right off, I wanna say like my first. My first thing was I was gonna say, those who are in a state of vulnerability. You know? I think, for example, how many times have we heard as Appalachians, as West Virginians specifically, as West Virginians, have we had politicians come here and say the coal industry is going to be expanded, jobs are going to come back, you know? Things are happening, right? And it's because the state of West Virginia is in crisis. Not even just economically, but I feel like culturally. Because it has become, coal mining is a part of who we are and I think when politicians come here and say that, that's fake news. You know that is taking advantage of people who are in desperate situations. People who, their families been doing it for forever. You know? Who their economy relies on it. And, I think that fake news takes advantage of us because we are in a vulnerable state. And an emotional state. And while it may be what we wanna hear, it's just not the truth.

Interviewer: What does fake news mean for democracy?

Participant: I think it threatens democracy. This idea that in a democracy we want to believe that all the information is laid out for us. It's spread, is sprawled out everywhere and that we make an informed decision for who we think would represent us the best. What would be best for us as a people? It puts the power in the people's hands. And when we do not believe that information that we are given that's laid-out in front of us, then that makes us question the people who are in power, that makes us question the entire system. So. That's my answer I guess.

Interviewer: Would you say that fake news is a real problem?

Participant: Yes.

Interviewer: OK. What are the politics of it all up in reference to fake news?

Participant: I think it's all politics and money. So the politics of it all, it all is politics. It's all money. Money is politics I guess though.

Interviewer: What new laws or constitutional amendments might we need for the Internet age?

Participant: I think that's hard. It's really hard, I think. Like I said before, I don't think news outlets and media outlets have the responsibility to teach you about bias. You know, I think that that's your own personal responsibility, but I think that they have a responsibility with the position that they hold and decide to give you reliable information. Based as truthfully as they possibly can. So I think that there should be laws to come to, I guess kind of, I guess if something is just outrageously wrong, you know, it cannot, there can be some legal retribution. I think, oh, also like. I think. Businesses and companies should be held responsible for certain like for the insurrection, for example. Ah. So many people were there were like oh, I heard it. You know I heard, I heard that the election was stolen or whatever. I just buffered. The election was stolen from this news outlet or this, you know, whatever and I think that there should be some kind of legal retribution for that.

Interviewer: OK, is there anything else that you would like to share? Just anything?

Participant: I don't think so.

Interviewer: OK, up to wrap up. I'm just going to ask you, what is today's date?

Participant: It is October 20th, 2021.

Interviewer: What is your state of residence?

Participant: West Virginia.

Interviewer: What is your age?

Participant: 20

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Interviewer: What is your gender?

Participant: Female

Interviewer: What is your race?

Participant: Caucasian

Interviewer: And what is your highest level of education completed?

Participant: I have a high school diploma.