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## Marshall Digital Scholar

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0873: The Fake News and Information Literacy  
Project

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Fall 10-21-2021

**West Virginia Participant 7 (White/female/46), interviewed on  
October 21, 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/](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/](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](mailto: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 6 (White/Female/46), interviewed on October 21, 2021**

The participant agreed to the terms of the consent.

**Interviewer:** OK, tell me about when you first started using social media and news started to appear for the first time in your feed like Facebook or Twitter.

**Participant:** So, you're asking me when news started to appear instead of just people's posts?

**Interviewer:** Yeah, so I mean it could have been shared information from people who you were friends with or just news in general—Just whenever you first started seeing news on social media.

**Participant:** Probably five or six years ago.

**Interviewer:** Ok. On a normal day, how do you use the Internet?

**Participant:** To look up questions I might have, I just use Google. I use it for social media, shopping, work, FaceTime, and for participating in studies such as this.

**Interviewer:** Okay, what types of websites do you usually visit?

**Participant:** Retail, social media, work websites like WVDE. That's pretty much it.

**Interviewer:** OK, what are some of the things you searched for in the last week?

**Participant:** Probably questions I might have about things of interest to me. If people are sick, I search symptoms on WebMD. Uhm, I guess I should have mentioned that I use WebMD earlier. I search essential oil stuff, address and GPS type of stuff, and product reviews. I do a lot of product reviews to see which would be the better product in their opinion. That's probably it in the last week.

**Interviewer:** OK, so I know you just listed a couple websites, but in general, what websites do you use to pass the time when you're bored?

**Participant:** Snapchat, TikTok, Facebook, Instagram, Amazon, Retail. That's probably it—Oh, and Netflix.

**Interviewer:** OK, what do you do on those websites?

**Participant:** I like to see what people have posted. Sometimes I search things specific things that interest me, like essential oils. I just look and see what people have posted basically.

**Interviewer:** OK, is there anything about those websites specifically that makes you choose them? Why do you like to visit those ones specifically?

**Participant:** My Facebook is because of family, and that's how we keep in touch. With Instagram, I like the idea of just looking at pictures, and plus I follow a lot of people that

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have similar interests as me. TikTok is basically just to fill the void when you truly have nothing else to do. Netflix is mindless television for relaxation. I can't remember what other websites I said. I use Pinterest sometimes to find things, search for things. What else?

**Interviewer:** I can't remember some of the things you said, you said you listed a lot.

**Participant:** I know.

**Interviewer:** That's okay.

**Participant:** We use the Internet a lot here.

**Interviewer:** I can't remember all of them. I think you gave me a good amount.

**Participant:** OK.

**Interviewer:** Thinking about those questions, what do you think other people are doing? Like people you know or maybe don't know? What do you think those people are doing to pass their time?

**Participant:** On social media?

**Interviewer:** Yes, what are some things that people around you are doing to pass the time?

**Participant:** I think people work and do their household chores, or whatever they have to do. I think it depends on the stage of life they're in. I think when you're younger, you're on social media a lot to showcase, so to speak, what you're doing. I think as you have kids, you're not on it as much. You maybe are researching things when your kids get sick, or maybe other things when you're in that season of your life. Then, as your kids get older you have more free time so you might revert back to social media, or Netflix, or mindless Internet searches. I think for every person somehow throughout the day, you're doing a mindful search, which means you're, in my opinion, looking for something specific. Other times you may be doing mindless Internet where you're just filling your time with, you know, TikTok.

**Interviewer:** OK, so what kind of devices do you use to get on the Internet?

**Participant:** A cell phone or laptop.

**Interviewer:** Are those the only two you really use?

**Participant:** Yeah.

**Interviewer:** OK, so which one is your favorite?

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**Participant:** I'm probably on my cell phone more than a laptop, only because of here at the house we don't have an Internet service provider. Everything is through the phone, either as a hotspot for your laptop or through the cell service on the phone itself.

**Interviewer:** I know you listed some already, but I have to ask again, what kind of social media apps do you use?

**Participant:** Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, Snapchat. I don't know if Pinterest is a social media site or not, but I do use Pinterest at times.

**Interviewer:** I would consider it social media. When, why or for what do you use them?

**Participant:** Different social media accounts are for different things like Snapchat, maybe just to send someone a message, you know, to send them a funny thing. I'm not really on Snapchat a lot through the day, maybe like 5 minutes every day. Facebook sometimes to document what might have happened if it was something important or something you wanna share with someone else or your family, or have to look back on later. And Instagram, it's kind of the same thing. I have a different group of people who are on Instagram sometimes versus on Facebook. There's five of my family members who aren't on Facebook, but they're on Instagram, so I might post something there so that they can see it come. TikTok is basically just mindless entertainment. So I guess each social media platform has like a different reason that you might post to it.

**Interviewer:** Uhm, are there any social media apps that you tend to stay away from?

**Participant:** I stay away from Twitter. Originally I was on Twitter because my nephews were on there and I felt like I could stay connected with them and see what they're doing. They were posting there a lot so I joined it, but there's been so much drama on Twitter with Trump and all that. I just took myself off of it.

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

**Participant:** People I likely disagree are probably mostly on Facebook. I feel like Facebook gives everyone a platform to post an opinion, so I feel like everyone is on Facebook, but I'm not sure about what they're doing on other social media sites.

**Interviewer:** Describe for me what you do when you want to find out if something is true or not?

**Participant:** Uhm, I may do a random google search. Now what are you talking about, like specifically like political stuff being true or just anything being true?

**Interviewer:** Uh, just anything. I mean if you see something that you don't know is true, probably something that should be factual, maybe not necessarily like, I don't know, drama other people are sharing, just something factual.

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**Participant:** I may do a Google search and look at the different parts. You know three or four things that pop up, but typically on things like that, I would ask my brother, who is well versed in that political arena. So I'd probably ask someone after I did the search, rather than, you know, believing everything on the Internet, I would probably ask an individual.

**Interviewer:** How do you think people around you find out if something is true? Because I know everyone approaches things they don't know the same way, so people that maybe don't do the same thing as you.

**Participant:** Well, I feel like some people believe everything they read on the Internet and especially everything they read on Facebook, but sometimes I think people can maybe look up things for themselves and think for themselves, but I think the majority is probably Internet searches and Facebook searches. Of course we used to have that fact or fiction website. Everyone went to that for the longest time, but I haven't heard much about that lately.

**Interviewer:** Ok. Everyone comes across things that surprised him on social media between advertising news and commentary. Please describe a time when you came across content that you doubted was trustworthy or made you distrust its author or its purpose.

**Participant:** Let me think a second, something that wasn't factual, and then what was it, how did you know? Just tell about a time that I did?

**Interviewer:** Yeah, just tell a story where you found something that you didn't know if it was true.

**Participant:** Sometimes even if it's things I might agree with if it was true, I find myself thinking there is no way that can be true or that can happen. I am not a person that is going to engage in an argument or a controversial topic, so I will typically just keep scrolling and let it go and maybe send an inbox message to a friend describing how stupid I think someone is, but not on the social media platform, but in a private message.

**Interviewer:** OK, share a time when you talk to your friends or family about such content. I mean, I know you did a little right there.

**Participant:** Yeah, so either like Facebook messenger, or a text message. Or maybe the next day at work, just depending on the content and who might find it interesting would depend on how I how I shared it, shared my thoughts about it, but it will all be done privately. I would not post anything publicly about anything controversial.

**Interviewer:** Ok, tell me about a time you saw such content discussed on the news.

**Participant:** Honestly, I do not watch the news. It's kind of something I started a long time ago before my kids were ever even born. Uhm, I just don't watch the news now. I have heard snippets of the news and things like that, like my husband watches the

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news. So when I'm in and out of the room I might hear some things, but I don't really have a specific story that I can tell you about because I don't watch the news. It's just the thing for me that I just don't watch the news unless it's something local where you know, like my kid was gonna be on it. But as far as national news or Fox News or CNN anything like that, I've made it a point not to watch that.

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

**Participant:** So like social media sites posting like news, is that what you mean?

**Interviewer:** I mean, it could be. Just anything news, like if there's a social media site that shares the most fake news, or you just don't trust the most.

**Participant:** Uhm, probably Facebook. I think has a lot of fake news on it. I think TikTok is catered to your likes on Facebook and dislikes so there's not really anything on there that I'm going to disagree with on TikTok because it's all that "for you" page or however it's geared to show you things you like. Facebook I think does have some things on there sometimes it's, you know, things that I don't necessarily agree with.

**Interviewer:** OK, tell me about your experiences finding conspiracy theories.

**Participant:** TikTok has a lot of that because it's that "for you" page thing and based on things I've liked. I believe in some conspiracy theories, even though I know it's a conspiracy theory. I still think that it probably did happen.

**Participant:** So, tell me, what was the question again?

**Interviewer:** It was to tell me your experience is finding a conspiracy theory.

**Participant:** OK so I think TikTok, and a lot of the things that people say on there I agree with, maybe political things.

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

**Participant:** I typically do not share things like that, all of my sharing is personal things. It's not anything controversial, you know it's things that the kids have done. It's a typical 40 plus year old mom social media account.

**Interviewer:** OK, so there's never been a time where you shared things that you knew were not true either.

**Participant:** No, I've never. Yeah no.

**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 already searched for.

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**Participant:** I really can't think of a time that it has done that. I mean, I'm not saying that that can't happen, for them to tailor what you're looking for because I know like the ads and stuff on Facebook are based on things that you might have searched on Google, but I feel like a lot of times when I search Google it gives both sides of the situation.

**Interviewer:** Describe a time when you notice that search results seemed somehow tailored to you and anywhere where on the news have you seen this discussed?

**Participant:** Maybe not so much with Google, but like ads that pop up in your email or on Facebook or based on your Google searches. I don't really know that I search anything that controversial that it would need to tailor the results to what I wanted to read or hear.

**Interviewer:** How do you decide what personal information you provide to social media companies like YouTube or Google or any other websites you may use?

**Participant:** Well, I feel like no matter what someone is trying to find, like your address or your phone number, it's all out there anyway, so I don't really worry too much about it. I mean my accounts are locked or whatever, like you have to be a Facebook friend to see things or I have to approve you to be following me on Instagram. TikTok, I think I've posted maybe three things so I don't really put a lot of things out there for other people to see, but again, I feel like if someone wanted to find information about you it would not be hard, especially from my Facebook account if we were friends, and I do accept people that I don't know as friends at times.

**Interviewer:** OK, so what are some ways that you try to keep your personal business personal, like how do you protect your personal information online?

**Participant:** Like my phone number and things like that? Is that what you mean?

**Interviewer:** Yeah.

**Participant:** Well, I don't really post it. I know for a long time Facebook wanted to put your cell phone number on there and I never did do that. But again, I feel like if someone wanted to find it, it would not be hard to find.

**Interviewer:** What do you think others around you do?

**Participant:** I know some people who don't use a debit card like their personal debit card online. They may get like a burner card or whatever. I'm not sure what they're called, but you know, like where it preloaded card and I know a lot of people do that. A lot of people don't give out their phone number or their cell phone. Some people have a small following on Facebook because they don't want, you know, their information out there, especially in times like now with people tracking with COVID and seeing where you've been, I know they used that a lot for contact tracing in our school system when COVID first started. They would look through your Facebook profile and see where he

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had been for contact tracing stuff. I thought that was kind of crossing a line there, but I do know that they did it.

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

**Participant:** Like I said, a lot of people don't use their debit card online. In my family, I'm probably one of the few that do, everyone else uses reloadable cards. They don't like to give out their information, even like to hotel clerks, or they never book anything online because they have to give all that out. They don't use Amazon or retail websites just to protect their identity.

**Interviewer:** 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 doesn't bother me. I mean it, it is what it is. If I want to see the other side of the coin, I might do a different search or add words to the search or you know, just add words to the search to get different results.

**Interviewer:** OK, what have you heard other people talk about when it comes to Google searches?

**Participant:** I actually haven't heard anyone talk about that, like with Google searches. I've heard people talk about it when they're having a conversation with someone and they start talking about kayaks, then like all these kayak advertisements come up. But as far as I have never heard anyone talk about how Google is tailoring searches to your preferences.

**Interviewer:** OK, 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:** Avoid news sites, don't believe everything you read on Facebook. Do your own research. I typically ask "How is this gonna affect me?" and if it's not really going to affect me then let it go. We don't worry about it or believe it or share it.

**Interviewer:** OK, what do you think determines what is seen online or how things are spread, and how does it work?

Participant

What do I think? Say it again.

**Interviewer:** Why do you think- this is a long question, it has a lot to it. Do you want to read the whole thing or just go in pieces?

**Participant:** Just go in pieces.

**Interviewer:** Uhm, what do you think determines what is seen online or how things are spread, and how do you work?

**Participant:** What do I think determines what seen online is based on your Google searches? Maybe algorithms. Like for example, my kids TikTok page does not look or sound anything like my TikTok page because it's geared and tailored for them versus me. I think age demographics has a lot to do with it. Probably where you live in the app, the activities that you participate in.

**Participant:** It's gonna be, you know, like what you see, and what was the next part? How do I think it's spread?

**Interviewer:** Yeah, like, how do you think they're spread and like how does it work?

**Participant:** I have no idea.

**Interviewer:** OK, who do you think made this kind of system? And who do you think benefits from it?

**Participant:** Who do I think made the system? Well, I mean that kind of goes back to that conspiracy theories, and I don't really know. I mean, I feel like someone is definitely benefiting from it and someone did invent this system, but I don't know who. And sometimes I appreciate the system because I like to see Ads of things that I'm interested in and then other times it is scary. Like I can't believe they just never heard that conversation or the whole Big Brother is watching conspiracy theory. I think some of it is the government. I think some of it probably is big corporation. So I think it's a mix of a mix of things.

**Interviewer:** And what do you think controls information online or in our apps?

**Participant:** Some sort of algorithm that someone invented, or the government invented? I don't know how they do that. I think some of it is like age demographics. Like you know, TikTok was geared more for younger kids, so that's how it started. But as older people you know, like myself, got involved like for recipes or things that have are of interest to us. It started spreading more that way by gearing it more toward a different demographic group.

**Interviewer:** OK, the Internet is full of stories that divide people about things like coronavirus, the capital riot stopped the steal. Uhm... Antifa, Black Lives Matter, climate change, Q Anon and other political parties. If you were to decide, how would you like schools or the news to talk about what controls the Internet and what is seen?

**Participant:** I really don't know how to answer that question, and those are things that I feel should be talked about within your family and not necessarily in a school system. But on the other hand, sometimes I see kids, you know who the only conversation they have is at school. Because I'm a teacher, but I feel like it would be hard as a teacher to talk about those things and not inflect your personal opinion about it. Which I know a lot of teachers do, especially at a higher level, which I feel is completely wrong. So I'm, I'm really not sure. I mean I have some things that I think, like, I don't think you should be

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teaching your ideals to kids concerning those situations. But I also see where it would be hard to teach about them and not have that personal side of it.

**Interviewer:** OK, do you remember the stuff I listed off at the beginning? The different topics?

**Participant:** Like Black Lives Matter, antifa and stuff like that, yeah.

**Interviewer:** Yeah, oh, there's coronavirus capital riot, Black Lives Matter, climate change. Q Anon and political parties.

**Participant**  
Right? Uh-huh.

**Interviewer:** Which one of those do you feel like you know the most about because I have to ask you questions about at least one of them, and I'd like for it to be the one that you have the most opinions on.

**Participant:** Probably the capital riots.

**Interviewer:** OK, so then I'll ask those ones. Uhm, if you happen to see stories about stop the stealing the capital riot, what do you make of what the protesters were there?

**Participant:** Uh, it kind of goes back to the conspiracy theories again, and I'm only basing my opinion off of a small group of friends who I have who were at those riots. Uhm, I didn't watch any news about it, just basically the footage that they posted on Facebook, like the live footage while they were there and then their thoughts while they were there so I think some of it was government planted like uh, to stir up dissension among the ranks or whatever you want to say that like to stir up controversy to take our eyes off of something else, something bigger, something more important that was happening in the world.

**Interviewer:** OK, UM why do you think some of them dressed in costumes like hunters and trappers, or with animal pelts or with tattoos or Roman soldiers, or in groups like Cowboys for Trump.

**Participant:** I guess to make a bigger statement, like if they're not interviewed, at least then. You know, if the camera is panning from the news that they would be seen that way, or to draw attention to themselves and be interviewed by the news.

**Interviewer:** What does this mean for stories about voter fraud and voting rights?

**Participant:** What does what mean? Tell me tell me more.

**Interviewer:** Uhm, what do you think, like the capital riot and everything that happened at the same time, at the time of the election, what do you think—How do you think that affected voter fraud and voting rights?

**Participant:** Well, I think some of that was started to get, like I said, to re-focus people's attention away from what was happening in other. Political arenas, like you know to, to distract the Americans. Instead of letting them focus on what, what they wanted to like the voter fraud and whatever else was of interest to them.

**Interviewer:** OK, what content do you post and what type of content do you try to make it visible for others to see? And what type do you try to hide?

**Participant:** Well, I think just like every other person in the world, you don't put on there, you don't put on social media things that are, you know, that might reflect badly on your family, whether it's a family feuds, or you know, things about your kids that are not in a favorable light. I post mostly things that are, you know, fun things that happen. UM, I post a lot about natural Wellness because that's a lot of interest to me, a lot of essential oils. It's mostly been about my kids until recently, and then they're not here anymore, so it's about my pets. You typically just post the good things like if something funny happens and I wanna share it. I post things like that. Never anything controversial ever. I think one time in all the years I've been on social media, I posted a controversial post, and it literally got more likes and comments than anything I've ever posted before, so that just goes to show people are looking for things of controversy that they can comment on. Like, you know, be engaged in.

**Interviewer:** Can you remember a time when you were careful about what you chose to like online because of how it might affect the visibility of other peoples contributions and content in your social media feed like on Facebook, Twitter or Instagram.

**Participant:** Yeah, I am especially like that one. Tik Tok I never like anything that I disagree with or I feel is not a UM, the right way to live your life.

**Interviewer:** OK, please tell me about a time when you tried to influence or change the content of what you see. On YouTube, Google or social media results by searching differently.

**Participant:** I'm really I. I mean I, I don't. I don't do that. Uhm, I never really thought about that before. How your searches affect what you see? And so, like even if you know, I just, I've never done that.

**Interviewer:** When you are unsatisfied with Internet search results, how do you adjust your search is to change your results.

**Participant:** I didn't know you could do that. I don't do. I don't do that.

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

**Participant:** Uhm? Well, I guess I just I wouldn't even click on it if I didn't think it was incredible like. Probably word of mouth like you know, this is a reliable site. This is not a reliable site, just basically maybe asking other people. But I don't really research a lot of

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news so. Once I do research something to OK. For instance, say I researched and essential oil for a sore throat. I'm gonna sort through that information like did, did a single person post this or is it a group that is well known? Is it, you know, use my own knowledge to make my own opinion about whether the site is reliable or not.

**Interviewer:** OK, can you tell me about a time when you double checked information online to verify if it was credible?

**Participant:** Uhm, most of the time I would ask someone who is knowledgeable in that in the area specifically that I'm wondering about if the if the web if the website was true, like if it's a medical thing I might ask my neighbor who is a physician's assistant or nurse practitioner. You know someone in the, in the field of what I'm wondering about. I would ask them that I feel is a credible person.

**Interviewer:** OK, what made you suspicious that the information you were seeing might not be true?

**Participant:** Uhm? Maybe it's something that I didn't agree with up or that doesn't sit well with me, you know, like in my beliefs, or you know, if, if I have information like.

**Participant:** Whatever I'm searching, you know, if I don't think it's credible, then

**Participant:** What was the question?

**Interviewer:** What made you suspicious?

**Interviewer:** Do you want me to skip to the next? I think you gave me enough.

**Participant:** OK yeah, just go to the next one. I'm getting tired.

**Interviewer:** Sorry. We're almost done. We're in the last half, I'm only gonna say a couple more questions. We're close to being done.

**Participant:** OK.

**Interviewer:** Uh, what steps did you take to see if the information was correct? You told me that you asked. People that are in your- that you know that you would be credible, right?

**Participant:** Right, yeah? Right?

**Interviewer:** OK.

**Interviewer:** Uhm, why did your findings make you feel about the website?

**Participant:** That you know, maybe it was a phony or you know created and manned by someone who didn't really know what they were talking about. Because everyone on the Internet thinks they're an expert at everything, so you just have to kind of pick and choose what you feel is the correct information and go with that.

**Interviewer:** OK, UM 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:** Uh, it used to be they checked that I think it was truth or fiction or fact or fiction, or there was a website that you could type in part of the post and it would come up like this is fiction. And I saw that a lot and a lot of my friends and family were using that. But anymore it just seems like people read and believe what they want to without checking facts or if it's someone's opinion. They're just looking for someone to validate their own opinions.

**Interviewer:** How do you think that 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 do think that they should, but from where I sit I'm always like, it's the media, they're going to put their spin on it however they want, so I'm not even for sure if I would believe them. If they were trying to tell me how to, how to, how to do it, I just feel like the news is one person point of view on that particular situation, and if a crowd of people watch is something happen, every person in that crowd is going to have a different perception in a different opinion based on it because their connecting it to their own experiences so I may not have the experience is that the person right beside me has. So when they make a connection to their own experience of personal experiences, their perception of what happens completely might be different than mine, even though we watched the exact same thing.

**Interviewer:** Can you give me your own definition of what fake news is?

**Participant:** Every news channel is fake news. If a reporter is reporting it, I feel like it's fake news.

**Interviewer:** OK, where do you, where do you find fake news? Where is it at?

**Participant:** Everywhere on every television channel, on Facebook, on social media. Uh. I just I feel like every news reporter only tells part of the story, and even if it's something I might agree with, I always feel like I would probably still always feel like they're leaving something out.

**Interviewer**

And who do you think it targets and who do you think is vulnerable?

**Participant:** I think it targets a lot of the older generation because they watch the news all the time, like as soon as they get up in the morning they watch the news and before they go to bed they watch the news. I think that's a huge target for fake news. Sometimes I feel like they're just reporting things to suit themselves, so it really just depends on what they're reporting or to who, but they're gonna spin it to suit themselves and what they want, what their agenda is, what they want the end result to be.

**Interviewer:** OK, what do you think fake news means for democracy?

**Participant:** I feel like they spin the news to where it suits themselves. So you, if you if you have someone who's pretty gullible, they may change their vote. They may change the way they think based on some fake news account where they're only telling part of the story. I think young people also are very influential in that regard. They haven't been told or taught that people only tell half truths, even if it's on television, it doesn't make it true.

**Interviewer:** Do you think fake news is a real problem?

**Participant:** Uh, I think it's a huge problem.

**Interviewer:** What are the politics of it all?

**Participant:** Well, I think they're trying to manipulate the American people into believing whatever their agenda is, I mean there's so many agendas it seems like right now in politics. I just feel like they're trying to manipulate people into thinking a certain way, even though that might not have even been the way it happened at all. Manipulation I guess is what I think why I think there's fake news.

**Interviewer:** OK, what new laws or constitutional amendments might we need for the Internet age?

**Participant:** What? New laws or constitutional amendments might we need for the Internet age? Uh, I guess I'm kind of repercussion for, for sharing fake news or. Uhm, especially if you're in a position where you're supposed to be reporting the news in general, and you report, you knowingly report fake news, I think there should be some sort of reprimand for that for sure.

**Interviewer:** OK, please offer some examples of where you have seen fake news.

**Participant:** Well, I don't really watch the news, but I mean, sometimes people share things on Facebook, even if it's in a group, like I voted for Trump and not Joe Biden. It'll be like Joe Biden did this or that, and you know, it exhibits him in a in a poor light, but even I'm like, you know, I didn't vote for him, but I don't think he did that. You know what I mean? Like I feel like it's just sometimes when I look at that I have to think, do you think that could really happen? Even if it's something I agree with and sometimes it's no, I don't think that really happened.

**Interviewer:** OK, who are the people that publish it and what do you think they're trying to get from it?

**Participant:** Typically, it's people on my social media page with a strong political race, and I think they're either bored that morning or they're trying to shed light on what is happening in America and maybe sparking someone to also stand up for, you know things that they feel are wrong. And like I know a lot of it has to do with the mask so you

**West Virginia Participant 6 (White/Female/46), interviewed on October 21, 2021**

know, wear your mask, don't wear your mask. I think sometimes they post that stuff to shed light on a situation, but usually it just stirs up dissension among people.

**Interviewer:** OK, what do you think should be done about it?

**Participant:** Well, I feel like maybe you should stay off social media. You know, I don't really know that you can do anything about it. I think social media just gave people a platform to voice their opinions and say what they think, where before you didn't really have that platform to reach so many people. But I feel like if it's on a news channel then you should be reporting all of the news, not just part of the news.

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

**Participant:** Uhm no. I think we've pretty well discussed everything from these 67 questions.

**Interviewer:** I think so too.

**Interviewer:** Alright, can you tell me the date?

**Participant:** October 21st, 2021.

**Interviewer:** OK, what is your state of residence?

**Participant:** West Virginia.

**Interviewer:** What is your age?

**Participant:** 46.

**Interviewer:** Your gender?

**Participant:** Female.

**Interviewer:** Your race?

**Participant:** White.

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

**Participant:** Masters plus 45 additional hours.