0873: The Fake News and Information Literacy Project

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Fall 10-26-2021

Ohio Participant 4 (White/female/18), interviewed on October 26, 2021

<u>Informed Consent to Participate in a Research Study</u>

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 recoding 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:
- o You have concerns or complaints about the research.
- o The research staff cannot be reached.
- o 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?

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 on Facebook or Twitter.

Participant: I started using social media when I hit middle school. Uhm, immediately, news started popping up on Facebook feeds, Instagram, whatever. At the time I had downloaded, ads started popping up immediately.

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

Participant: On a normal day I use the Internet for classes and help with homework, study projects, essays, research, and just waste time.

Interviewer: What types of websites do you visit?

Participant: Uh, I do a lot of medical research on websites. Things that are used specifically for my classes. So, research-wise I look at documentaries and essays.

Interviewer: What have you searched for on the internet in the last week?

Participant: In the last week I looked for, I looked at shoes. I had to do a research essay. Medical terms. And medical structures.

Interviewer: What websites do you visit to pass time when you are bored and what do you do on those websites?

Participant: I spend a decent amount of time on TikTok, Facebook, Instagram. Uh, I like to keep up with family, friends and just pass time.

Interviewer: Thinking about these questions, what do you think other people are doing? Both people you know and people you do not know? How do other people pass time online?

Participant: Whether it be scrolling through Facebook or keeping up with friends and family. Watching sports teams. Uhm, other college students, doing the same thing that I am currently doing.

Interviewer: What types of devices do you use most to access the Internet? Which do you use the least?

Participant: Uhm, I use my phone and my laptop. I use my phone the most and my laptop the least.

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

Participant: Uhm, I use Twitter to keep up with high school sports, college sports, and professional sports, keeping up with athletes is all that I use it for.

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

Participant: I feel like you would use easy access social media. Anything that you can access, where anybody can post anything to make it believable. The first answer that they see, the first comment that is seen is what they are going to go with, they are going to find anything that they can get their answer too easily.

Interviewer: Describe for me what you do when you want to find out something factual. How do people around you find out something factual?

Participant: When it comes to doing anything factual or going to different research documents and certain topics that are around what I am looking for to finding answers, I will go to anything that is written by a professor, that is certified in whatever that topic would be.

Interviewer: Everyone comes across things that surprised them 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 purpose and share a time when you talked to your friends or family about such content.

Participant: A lot of times I will see content across Facebook where somebody else has wrote a post, and it was just their beliefs and what they thought should happen on that said topic and when I talked to somebody about it, they looked at their Facebook and it was the exact same thing, just from other people that are agreeing with it, commenting on it and just continuing to let the train go, if it is real or not, and making everybody believe it is real, continues still.

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

Participant: If it is not backed up by any kind of source, if you cannot physically see who is like there, if there is no way to prove what they are saying is correct and that it is untrustworthy.

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.

Participant: Just this past week I was looking for a medical research article and it had already brought up a research article that I had previously looked for in other articles just by searching one word of what I had initially needed.

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

Participant: I feel like when they put ads up of like shoes and clothes that I have already previously looked at from certain websites that I visited to look for the same thing when they keep bringing up those same ads and I have not looked for them in a while. Feels more like targeting. I found out like they were talking about it on the news a couple of years ago, talking about how everything was going to be directed towards whatever circumstances you were looking at.

Interviewer: How do you decide what personal information you will provide to social media companies like YouTube or Google and tell me the ways you try to protect your personal information online and what others do around you.

Participant: Anything that could give away my identity? I do not use Social Security numbers, I do not use birth dates, I will change so it will not be my actual birth date that I use. Uh. I will only release certain information that it is easy to find by public whether it be the name, age, birthday I will obviously change. I will not release anything that could in the government make me lose my identity.

Interviewer: Have you heard about protecting your identity or personal information on the news or heard your friends or family discuss it?

Participant: Uh, my family discusses it.

Interviewer: How have you responded to how Internet companies try to customize or control what you see on their platforms like in Google searches? Also, whatever you heard others discuss about this.

Participant: I have heard a lot of people say that they do not like it because it makes them feel like everything that they do is always going to be like every search that they make is always going to be found one way or another where they are going to start making assumptions about what they are trying to look for based on what they already have. I feel like it should not technically be allowed. But more commonly than not I have also heard people that say that they like how it gives them options based on what they have already looked for when they are doing Google searches.

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: Make sure that whatever you are reading is written by somebody who is certified to be writing about it, who is somebody who knows what they are talking about, not just anybody that can have an opinion that does not have sources to back it up.

Interviewer: What do you think determines what you have seen online, or how things spread? How does it work? Who benefits? Who do you think made the system and what they what do you think controls the information online or in our apps?

Participant: The information on our apps that will see our posts. Also, I feel like they are also based off recent Google searches. Uhm. If you go to a company's website on Google, you are going to see an ad for the same company later on. If you are on Facebook, you will see it as an ad. I feel like it is mostly controlled by not necessarily the government, but the cell phone providers.

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

Participant: I feel like if schools were to let everything be seen between students, it is going to cause a lot more issues, but it is also going to educate people about what is happening. If it is needed for a class, then it should be available to them. But if it is something that they are trying to learn on their own, or a point that is trying to be proven, then they should not have to worry about what is being searched on their server.

Interviewer: If you happen to see stories about the Black Lives Matter protest and Antifa, what would you make of the protests after George Floyd was killed? What do you think? Why do you think some burn buildings or other property? And why did protesters denounce the police? Where did you learn this and what does it mean to you?

Participant: I feel like after his death, a lot of people had assumed what they only saw on TV and only believe what they heard because they heard it from so many people whether it was true or not is very debatable. I feel like some burned buildings to prove a point or because they felt that they could get away with it. At that time, I feel like others demoted the police officers because they believed it was their fault. I feel like others believe that the police were in the right for doing what they had to do. Uh. When and if you look up anything about it, you are going to have multiple different stories from different points and perspectives most likely to cover the actual story because they do not want the actual truth to get out.

Interviewer: What content do you post online? What type of content do you try to make visible for others to see and what type of content do you try to hide from others saying?

Participant: Uhm. It depends. I keep most of my personal life and what I do and where I am quiet based on location wise. Other than that, I am not too worried about what I post because I do not post a whole lot.

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 people's contributions and content on your social media feed like on Facebook, Twitter, or Instagram?

Participant: Yeah, I was always told from even when I was a kid, I was always told that you have to be careful what you like on any kind of social media platform and what you repost because employers can see it now. Anybody that can look up your name can find you on any kind of social media so it becomes extremely hard to decide whether you want to like and share somebody else's post that might do more damage to you in the long run than it will to them.

Interviewer: 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: Uh, I did not. I really have not ever had to try to change the content of what I am seeing. Most of it is is what I would like if I go shopping when I am bored, most of it is going to be that or anything along the lines of medical.

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

Participant: Uh, I will look up the author of the article and then if the author of the article is credible, or they are somebody who studies the topic that I am looking for and they know like they have an idea what they are talking about then they are credible, most likely.

Interviewer: Can you tell me about a time when you double checked information online to verify if it was credible, but made you suspicious? What steps did you take to see if the information was correct and what did your findings made you feel about the website?

Participant: Uh. We had to do checks for a medical document that we were reading. We had to make sure sources were readable, so we had to look up the author, find other sources that they used to write their article. We had to find sources that they would have used as well to help them to make sure those were credible.

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

Participant: My dad does a lot of online corporate shopping. If it is from an out-of-state company, make sure the company is legit and it is not like somebody trying to fix your car parts or anything like that. That is about it.

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 credibility or information?

Participant: I feel like the media needs to let it be known that there are sources that are not credible in that aspect of it, but even if so, many people do not believe what they hear just even after they hear it. If there is a credible source to it, they still are not going to believe it, just based on their personal beliefs and opinions. So, I feel like even if the news said something like trying to get people to understand how to make sure a source is credible, they are still not going to believe it.

Interviewer: The term fake news seems to be everywhere right now, what are your thoughts about what it is where it is at? But who does it target and who is vulnerable to it?

Participant: If you like fake news, it is mostly brought up by people who do not want to believe what they are being told. They only want to believe what they want to believe, and they only believe that because it is what they think, and if it is not what they think, then it cannot be true. I feel like a lot of people talk about fake news so they can make other people believe their point in their stance rather than trying to get facts.

Interviewer: So, what does fake news mean for democracy? Is it a real problem? What are the politics of it all? Or what new laws or constitutional amendments might we need for the Internet age?

Participant: Uh, I do believe fake news is true. It is hard to say that we will be able to put in any laws in place for the fake news. simply because when looking at the other rules and laws that we have that allow us to have the ability to live life and the other freedoms that we have, putting in a law that says "whatever you say has to be true," it is not highly likely to happen.

Interviewer: Please offer some examples of where you have seen fake news. Who are the people who publish it? What are they trying to get from it and what should be done about it?

Participant: I see a lot of fake news that is being posted on Facebook, Instagram, Twitter. I feel like the people that post fake news are just wanting the likes, the attention from whatever they are posting about. They want to start arguments so they can argue with people and be the center of attention.

Interviewer: Is there anything else that you would like to share?

Participant: Nope, that is it.

Interviewer: All right. Can you tell me the date your state of residence, your age, your gender, your race, and your highest level of education completed?

Participant: Today is October 26th, 2021. State of residence, Ohio. I am 18, Caucasian female. My highest degree of education right now is a high school graduate.