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West Virginia Participant 13 (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 13 (White/Female/20), interviewed on October 20, 2021

The participant agreed to the terms of the consent.

Interviewer: OK, we're going to jump into our first question. Feel free to elaborate or speak any thoughts that come to mind. Can you 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: Ah, it was probably fifth grade.

Interviewer: When you first started using social media, what type of news started to appear for the first time?

Participant: Oh my gosh. It's got to be like... I have no idea.

Interviewer: That's OK. On a normal day, how would you say that you use the internet?

Participant: To communicate with people.

Interviewer: What types of websites would you visit?

Participant: Apps like Snapchat, Instagram, and Facebook.

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

Participant: I've looked up Quizlets, I've shopped, I've gone to American Eagle, and Victoria's Secret, and that's it actually.

Interviewer: OK, what websites do you like to visit to pass time when you're bored?

Participant: Instagram and Snapchat.

Interviewer: OK, what do you do on these sites?

Participant: Scroll through feeds and pictures and communicate with people.

Interviewer: Why do you visit those particular sites?

Participant: They're the easiest for me to understand.

Interviewer: OK, thinking about these questions, what do you think other people are doing, both people you know and people you don't know, and how do they pass time online?

Participant: I feel as if they do the same thing. Going through Instagram, Snapchat, Facebook, Tik Tok and Twitter.

Interviewer: Okay. What types of devices do you use to access the Internet?

Participant: Smartphones such as iPhones and then my computer.

Interviewer: Which would you say you use the most?

Participant: My phone.

Interviewer: And what about the least?

Participant: My computer.

Interviewer: OK. What social media or forums like Twitter or Reddit do you use?

Participant: Twitter, Snapchat, Instagram, Facebook, and Tik Tok

Interviewer: When, why, or for what do you use them?

Participant: To pass time, and to hear about news, especially through Twitter.

Interviewer: Is there a specific reason that you like using Twitter for news?

Participant: It's easier than just watching TV. I don't like to watch TV.

Interviewer: OK, can you please share any social media sites that you try to avoid and your reasons for avoiding them?

Participant: Pinterest, because I feel like it has too much of a 2010 aesthetic.

Interviewer: OK. When thinking about people you disagree with, which forms do you think that they are likely to use and why?

Participant: Facebook, and that is because I don't know how to say this nicely... Um... Because that's what old people use.

Interviewer: Can you describe for me what you do when you want to find out something factual?

Participant: Sometimes I use Google Scholar, but usually I just look it up on Google. That's horrible, oh my God.

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

Participant: I'd assume Google.

Interviewer: OK, everyone comes across things that surprised them on social media between advertising news and commentary. Can you please describe a time when you came across content that you doubted was trustworthy?

Participant: OK, yeah. Twitter, all the time, just recently I saw one that said they were legalizing marijuana in North Carolina, and I know that it's not true.

Interviewer: OK, was there anything particular that made you distrust its author or its purpose?

Participant: Yeah, it was a Reddit article.

Interviewer: OK. Can you share a time when you talked to your friends or family about such content?

Participant: No.

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

Participant: I haven't watched the news in like four or five years.

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

Participant: People can edit them, almost like Wikipedia, or like Twitter, you can just put your opinion out.

Interviewer: OK. Can you elaborate on that a little bit?

Participant: Because you don't have to have a degree or something peer reviewed to post it. You can just put whatever you want, and people can assume if it's real or not.

Interviewer: OK. Tell me about your experiences finding conspiracy theories.

West Virginia Participant 13 (White/Female/20), interviewed on October 20, 2021

Participant: I find them a lot on YouTube, and they are very interesting. I do believe a lot of them.

Interviewer: Has there ever been a time when you shared content that you thought was true but later learned was not true?

Participant: No.

Interviewer: OK. Has there ever been a time when you shared things that you knew were not true?

Participant: No.

Interviewer: OK, has there ever been 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: Yes, recently I did a research project about the correlation of marijuana and mental illness, and I kept looking up things that would go in my favor. Eventually, this search engine just started giving me this stuff I had been previously looking up if that makes sense.

Interviewer: Yes, very interesting. Can you describe a time when you noticed the search results seemed somehow tailored to you?

Participant: Yeah, when I look up restaurants, I notice that my favorite ones pop up versus my boyfriend's.

Interviewer: OK. Have you ever seen the topic of these search results? Have you ever seen it being discussed on the news?

Participant: Ah, yes.

Interviewer: OK, how do you decide what personal information you provide to social media companies like YouTube, Google, Snapchat, and Instagram?

Participant: Information that you could easily look up, so, birthday, the city I currently live in, just simple things you could find off other people and social media.

Interviewer: OK, can you tell me the ways you tried to protect your personal information online?

Participant: By creating private accounts.

Interviewer: What do you think others around you do concerning protecting personal information online?

Participant: Make their accounts private as well as not putting out private information.

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

Participant: If you don't protect yourself, it's dangerous. That's what I've heard.

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

Participant: I think it's smart for younger people to have restrictions, but once you are above 18 years old, I think it's annoying because we don't need restrictions. I think it's ridiculous when you are in schools on school Wi-Fi, and you can't look up certain things.

Interviewer: Yes. Have you heard others discuss this?

Participant: Yes, especially in high school.

Interviewer: OK, if you were to explain to your friends or family how false information spreads on the Internet or how to avoid false information, what would you say?

Participant: Either check your sources or see who's posting what. You can very much tell by the person who's posting it if it's real or not.

Interviewer: OK, what do you think determines what is seen online or how things spread?

Participant: The government does by controlling, like websites, I guess.

Interviewer: OK, how do you think this works?

Participant: I don't know.

Interviewer: That's perfectly OK. Who do you think made this system?

Participant: The Government.

Interviewer: What do you think controls information online or in our apps?

Participant: The people who created the app.

Interviewer: OK, who do you think benefits from this?

Participant: Oh gosh.... Not us. Maybe the provider, such as the people that make the app.

Interviewer: OK. So, for this next section, I will ask you a series of questions. I am going to ask you about a few recent incidents that have happened, and you tell me if you happen to see any stories or heard about these things.

Participant: OK.

Interviewer: OK, have you heard about things regarding the coronavirus?

Participant: Yes.

Interviewer: The capital riot.

Participant: Yes.

Interviewer: Stop the steal.

Participant: No.

Interviewer: Antifa.

Participant: No.

Interviewer: Black lives matter.

Participant: Yes.

Interviewer: Q Anon.

Participant: No.

Interviewer: OK. 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 don't know how to answer that.

Interviewer: That is perfectly OK. If you happen to be following the story on the coronavirus, what do you make of the different information out there about whether people should get vaccinated or wear masks?

Participant: It's very opinionated, but you're either absolutely for vaccinations and wearing masks or completely against. I feel like a lot of people don't have an in between.

Interviewer: OK, why do you think we hear so many conflicting stories?

Participant: Because everyone has their own opinion, and they feel the need to voice it.

Interviewer: What do you think causes these different opinions?

Participant: The different communities.

Interviewer: If you happen to be following coverage on the capital riot, what since do you make of how Republicans and Democrats disagree over the scope and purpose of the House Select Committee?

Participant: I don't know.

Interviewer: OK, and if you happen to see stories about the Black Lives Matter protests, what do you make of the protests after George Floyd was killed?

Participant: People became much more involved and I feel as if people became more violent but also other communities took it as a sign to create more peaceful protests.

Interviewer: OK, why do you think some burned buildings or other property?

Participant: To get a point across, but they didn't use the correct way to do so.

Interviewer: Can you elaborate that elaborate on that a little bit?

Participant: Yeah, So I think people burnt down buildings and like did destructive things because they wanted to be seen and heard, but they did it in an incorrect manner instead of talking to people and creating peaceful protests.

Interviewer: OK, why do you think protesters denounced the police?

Participant: Because they wanted to show power.

Interviewer: OK, and out of the information we were talking about where did you learn this and what does it mean to you?

Participant: I learned it through social media, and it's really important to me. I feel like I very much stand for Black Lives Matter. I think it's so important, but I don't necessarily agree with how the protests went. I think it got out of hand and it didn't need to go that far.

Interviewer: OK. What content do you post online?

Participant: Photos of experiences such as trips or fun events.

Interviewer: OK, 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 seeking?

Participant: So, I have like my private accounts and my public accounts, and it is for like my family to see because it's more appropriate, such as clothing and language. And then I have finstas or private stories that I keep private just for like 10-15 people that I can post my inappropriate stuff.

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 in your social media feed?

Participant: Yeah, so I don't like anything or share anything political. Specifically on my Facebook because I have some hardcore Republicans on there, such as my family that I would rather not get in fights with.

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

Participant: I don't think I can.

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

Participant: I just changed my wording.

Interviewer: OK. These next set of questions are going to ask about source criticism.

Participant: OK.

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

Participant: I look at the date and who published it.

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

Participant: Yeah, I do this all the time for my experimental psychology class using summons. I have to go through and check the dates all the time to make sure they are still reliable and up to date within a one-year period.

Interviewer: OK, when you double-checked one of these articles, what made you suspicious?

Participant: I don't know.

Interviewer: OK, what steps do you take to see if the information is correct?

Participant: I look at their bibliography.

Interviewer: OK.

Participant: If they have one.

Interviewer: What did your findings about this information make you feel about the website you found it from?

Participant: It will make it untrustworthy if I find incorrect evidence on their website or information.

Interviewer: OK, can you tell me about a time that your friends or family distrusted a website or information on a website?

Participant: Yeah, during this research project that I keep talking about with the correlation of marijuana and mental illness, I showed it to my mother, and she did not believe a thing even though all of my sources were credible.

Interviewer: OK, did they double-check the information from a different source to see if it was credible?

Participant: Yeah, she looked it up on Google.

Interviewer: OK. How do you think the media should cover stories about fake news or disinformation?

Participant: I. think they need to go into it lightly and thoroughly and explain if it's factual or biased information.

Interviewer: Do you think that the media should do more to teach people about how to verify the credibility of information?

Participant: Yes, yes I do.

Interviewer: OK, the next set of questions is going to be involving the term fake news.

Participant: OK.

Interviewer: The term fake news seems to be everywhere right now. What are your thoughts about what it is?

Participant: OK. I think fake news is very biased untrue information.

Interviewer: OK, where do you think fake news is at?

Participant: Everywhere.

Interviewer: OK, who do you think fake news targets?

Participant: Mostly celebrities.

Interviewer: OK. Who do you think is vulnerable to fake news?

Participant: Young teenagers.

Interviewer: OK. What do you think fake news means for democracy?

Participant: I don't know. I have no idea.

Interviewer: That's OK. Do you believe fake news is a real problem?

Participant: Yes.

Interviewer: What do you think the politics of fake news is?

Participant: I have no idea. I guess there isn't any.

Interviewer: That's OK. What new laws or constitutional amendments might we need for fake news and the Internet age?

Participant: You could definitely create new laws to enforce only factual information on websites.

Interviewer: Can you offer examples of where you have seen fake news?

Participant: All over social media.

Interviewer: OK, are there any specific people who publish it?

Participant: TMZ.

Interviewer: What do you think they are trying to get from publishing fake news?

Participant: Attention.

Interviewer: OK, what should be done about it?

Participant: Nothing, we have free speech.

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

Participant: No, I don't think so.

Interviewer: Alright, can you tell me what today's date is?

Participant: October 20, 2021.

Interviewer: Can you tell me what your state of residence is?

Participant: West Virginia.

West Virginia Participant 13 (White/Female/20), interviewed on October 20, 2021

Interviewer: Can you tell me your age?

Participant: 20.

Interviewer: Can you tell me your gender?

Participant: Female

Interviewer: Your race?

Participant: White

Interviewer: And your highest level of education completed.

Participant: High school.

Interviewer: Alright, thank you so much for participating in the fake news and information literacy project.

Participant: Alright. Of course.