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0873: The Fake News and Information Literacy  
Project

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3-8-2022

**West Virginia Participant 16 (White/female/19), interviewed on  
March 8, 2022**

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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 16 (White/Female/19), interviewed on March 8, 2022**

The participant agreed to the terms of the consent.

**Interviewer:** Please 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 started using social media when I was younger. The first time I saw news on social media was on Google.

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

**Participant:** Through Safari or social media.

**Interviewer:** What types of websites do you visit?

**Participant:** Only social media.

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

**Participant:** Great question. I don't really know what my answer could be at the moment.

**Interviewer:** It doesn't have to be exact, just what you think you normally look at.

**Participant:** Normally stuff for school and homework.

**Interviewer:** What websites do you visit to pass time when you're bored and what do you do on those sites and why do you pick those sites?

**Participant:** I normally go on Tik Tok or Instagram. I just watch videos and look at posts because they're funny.

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

**Participant:** I think they do the same thing. Most people will just go on social media sites and look at posts just to see what everybody they know is doing and to watch funny videos.

**Interviewer:** What types of devices do you use to access the Internet? Phones, tablets, laptops? Which do you use the most and which do you use the least?

**Participant:** I normally use my phone. Sometimes I use my laptop for school.

**West Virginia Participant 16 (White/Female/19), interviewed on March 8, 2022**

**Interviewer:** Me too. What social media or forums like Twitter, Reddit do you use? When, why, or what do you use them for? And then please share any that you try to avoid and your reasons for avoiding them.

**Participant:** I normally use Instagram, Pinterest, Facebook and Tik Tok. Just because those are the easiest to navigate. And there they have a lot of helpful things on them. Like normally on Tik Tok and Pinterest, you find helpful hacks and even helpful stuff for daily life. Normally I don't use Twitter, I generally avoid it because it's hard to navigate and there's a lot of just rude stuff out on Twitter that I don't like to see.

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

**Participant:** I feel like there are people that I disagree with use Twitter and look at political stuff a lot on there or just share hateful opinions on it.

**Interviewer:** What do you do when you want to find out something factual and how do you think people around you find something?

**Participant:** I normally Google it and try to find a website that looks legit, and I feel like most people do the same thing. You go on Google and try to find a source that seems reliable enough.

**Interviewer:** Everyone comes across things that surprise 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.

**Participant:** Honestly, on Tik Tok people say stuff all the time and when you look it up to make sure it's true, it never is. People do this for no reason

**Interviewer:** Share a time when you talked to friends or family about such content.

**Participant:** I don't.

**Interviewer:** Tell me a time that you saw such content being discussed on fake news. For example, a time when you saw something that seemed untrustworthy.

**Participant:** I haven't because I don't typically watch the news.

**Interviewer:** Are there any social media sites that you think are untrustworthy and what makes them untrustworthy?

**West Virginia Participant 16 (White/Female/19), interviewed on March 8, 2022**

**Participant:** Genuinely thinks that all social media sites are untrustworthy when it comes to real life information, like I don't trust Instagram or Tik Tok or Pinterest for like important stuff because I feel like people put out a lot of fake things on there.

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

**Participant:** I love conspiracy theories, but people put them everywhere, like YouTube and TikTok. They're interesting, but most of them don't have any factual background to them.

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

**Participant:** I don't think that I have because I normally don't share content like that.

**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 had already searched for.

**Participant:** I searched up TV shows and every time I pop up on Google it automatically shows me news articles about those shows that I have looked at before.

**Interviewer:** Describe a time when you noticed that search results seem somehow tailored to you. And if anywhere, where have you seen this discussed?

**Participant:** Just like I said, whenever I go to Google and there's news articles about the things that I've already talked about or searched up, or even when there's ads about something, I was just talking about, and I see an ad that pops up about the same thing.

**Interviewer:** How do you decide what personal information that you will provide to social media companies like YouTube, Google, and Facebook.

**Participant:** It depends on how personal it is. I don't care to share my gender or birthday because it would tailor to things that people my age and gender like. I wouldn't share anything more detailed like address, or maybe even phone number.

**Interviewer:** How do you think others around you protect their personal information online?

**Participant:** I think the same way I do. For example, if on a website if you use your card then most people won't save their card information. I think they would agree not to do that.

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

**West Virginia Participant 16 (White/Female/19), interviewed on March 8, 2022**

**Participant:** My family has talked about not putting your card information, social security, phone number, or address out there.

**Interviewer:** How do you respond to how internet companies try to customize or control what you see on their platforms like in Google searches?

**Participant:** I don't really mind it because I feel like if I am searching up certain things then they know what I would want to see and I'm fine with that.

**Interviewer:** Yeah, they're kind of like giving you a better experience that way.

**Participant:** Yeah, that's what I think.

**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 just say that if you're looking for correct information, make sure to look at the source and it's coming from and if it's a valid informational website, then you can always normally trust that, but to always just double check the sources and decide whether you think it should be trusted.

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

**Participant:** I think it's the companies that are benefiting from it. I think that the companies benefit the most. These companies here like even Google and all that, have made the system the way it is and decide what you see to help you, but also to help the company.

**Interviewer:** Based on that last question, what do you think controls information online and in our apps?

**Participant:** I don't know.

**Interviewer:** The Internet is full of stories that divide people about things like the coronavirus, the Capitol Riot, Stop this Steal, Antifa, Black Lives Matter, climate change, QAnon, and the 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 feel like with climate change and Black Lives Matter information, everything should just be out there, like all the facts. I'm so tired of hearing opinions on the news about

**West Virginia Participant 16 (White/Female/19), interviewed on March 8, 2022**

these topics. Like just tell me the facts. Tell me what is happening, and I think it should be like that on the news and in the schools.

**Interviewer:** If you happen to see stories about the Black Lives Matter protests and Antifa, what do you make of the protests? After George Floyd was killed?

**Participant:** I think the protests were needed and great. I think that America needed to see what was happening. The citizens needed to see on the news what was happening and why and matters.

**Interviewer:** Why do you think some burned buildings?

**Participant:** Because peaceful protesting is great, but it doesn't always get the attention it should, and I think they're just trying to bring attention to the topic.

**Interviewer:** Why did protesters denounce the police?

**Participant:** Because the police were in the wrong on this situation.

**Interviewer:** Where did you learn this and what does it mean to you?

**Participant:** I learned this through social media and through the news. I think it is important that those things will be put out there because we should be able to understand and witness what is happening in our own country.

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

**Participant:** The content I post online is just pictures and memories with my friends. I try to hide the stuff I shouldn't be doing.

**Interviewer:** OK, that makes sense. 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 and your social media feed like Facebook, Twitter, Instagram?

**Participant:** No, I guess not.

**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:** This is happening right now. I searched a topic on Pinterest once or twice, and now it is on my page, I guess it is all that is on there. And so, I'm trying to change that by searching other things. So that is not the only topic that comes up on my feed.

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

**Participant:** If it's on social media, normally I will double check the information on Google and if it's on Google then I will just make sure it's not dumb. Like information sites like the ones we talked about. The .gov or the .org websites are normally credible.

**Interviewer:** Can you tell me about a time when you double checked information online to verify that it was credible?

**Participant:** All the time on Tik Tok because I see stuff about characters from TV shows that I liked, and about the actors. People just put stuff out there and it's like, 'do I believe this? Yes, or no?' Then I normally go on and double check what they are saying on Google.

**Interviewer:** What made you curious about that content?

**Participant:** Just the people that posted it. If it was a teenager posting content, then I normally wouldn't believe it.

**Interviewer:** What did your findings make you feel about the site?

**Participant:** I mean, it didn't change my opinion or anything.

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

**Participant:** I'm unsure. I don't typically talk to my friends or family about that stuff.

**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 intervention?

**Participant:** Yeah, I think they should do a lot more to teach that stuff. I think they just talk about it. They do a little bit, but even posting stuff on social media sites would make a change because people believe almost everything they hear from social media. Most of the time it's not true. So, I think even the social media companies' posts, like putting something out saying 'this might not be true,' would be great.

**Interviewer:** The term fake news must be everywhere right now. What are your thoughts about what fake news is?

**Participant:** I think that if you don't know if something is credible, then don't post it.

**Interviewer:** Where do you normally find fake news?

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**Participant:** Everywhere from social media to news broadcasts.

**Interviewer:** Who do you think fake news targets?

**Participant:** I think it targets people who don't care or don't want to check whether what they're saying, and hearing is credible.

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

**Participant:** I think that goes with the last question. These people who don't want to check to see if it's credible or not. Which is a lot of people, such as young people and the Boomers.

**Interviewer:** What are your thoughts about what it means for democracy?

**Participant:** I think fake news does effect democracy in the way that it goes against people who don't have the time or the means to go check stuff. So, some of the poorer people that are busier don't have time to check and this could create a problem.

**Interviewer:** Is fake news a real problem?

**Participant:** Yes.

**Interviewer:** What are the politics of fake news?

**Participant:** I don't know what that means.

**Interviewer:** Do you see fake news targeting the right side, the left side of politics or just like everybody?

**Participant:** I think it affects everybody honestly. It's the same reason I don't watch the news is that both sides of the political spectrum are putting out fake news against the other and saying bad things about the other group, and it just creates a whole bunch of mess from the political standpoint.

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

**Participant:** I don't know if there really needs to be a new law or anything, at least not for social media, but even for like the news and for news articles. Like if everyone knows a news site is not posting correct information then there needs to be action done to change that.

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

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**Participant:** I have seen teenagers publish it on social media. I've seen grownups post it all over Facebook. I think people are posting that stuff online to try to change other people's opinions. Like, they'll say fake news about Biden or something. I think that there needs to be a way to filter out what is fake and what is real.

**Interviewer:** That's a good idea. Yeah. Is there anything else that you would like to share?

**Participant:** No, thank you.

**Interviewer:** Last few questions what is the date?

**Participant:** It is March 8th, 2022.

**Interviewer:** What is your state of residence?

**Participant:** West Virginia.

**Interviewer:** What is your age?

**Participant:** 19

**Interviewer:** Your gender.

**Participant:** Female.

**Interviewer:** Your race.

**Participant:** White

**Interviewer:** What is your highest level of education completed?

**Participant:** High school diploma.

**Interviewer:** Ok, Thank you for this interview.

**Participant:** You are so very welcome.