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**West Virginia Participant 17 (White/male/20), interviewed on
March 23, 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/).

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 17 (White/Male/ 20), interviewed on March 23, 2022

Participant agreed to the terms of the consent.

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

Participant: I was about 12 years old. Kind of a late social media bloomer, and it was kind of cool having all that information at the tip of my finger tips. Not really having to work real hard for it or watch a boring newscast.

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

Participant: I look up relevant information to the field that I'm currently in as well as do school assignments and various other things.

Interviewer: And what types of websites do you visit?

Participant: Mostly educational, sometimes YouTube, you know, stuff like that.

Interviewer: OK. And what did you search for online in the last week?

Participant: There were a couple random things in there for sure outliers, but mainly principles of bio mechanics.

Interviewer: What websites do you visit to pass time when you're bored?

Participant: Favorite pastime would probably have to be YouTube or Instagram because you could just mindlessly scroll through Instagram. Or you could watch an entertaining video on YouTube.

Interviewer: And thinking about these questions, what do you think other people are doing, both people you know and people you don't know?

Participant: I mean, I'm sure it has its fair share of sketchy uses if we're being honest, but I feel like most people use it in a similar way that I do for mainly entertainment and education.

Interviewer: How do other people pass the time online, do you think?

Participant: I think mainly through things like Snapchat, Instagram, Tik Tok because they're very interactive so you can interact with all types of people or without the anxiety of actually approaching someone in real life.

Interviewer: What type of devices do you use to access the Internet? Phones, tablets, laptops, etc.?

Participant: You just said it, pretty much just TV, phone, laptop.

West Virginia Participant 17 (White/Male/ 20), interviewed on March 23, 2022

Interviewer: And which of those do you use the most?

Participant: Definitely my phone.

Interviewer: And the least.

Participant: Laptop.

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

Participant: I use Reddit, not a lot at Twitter. I use Snapchat, Instagram and Tiktok and YouTube.

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

Participant: I use Instagram for mindless scrolling, YouTube for entertainment purposes, Tik Tok to post educational videos, and Snapchat for communication.

Interviewer: And are there any social media or forums that you try to avoid?

Participant: I tend to avoid Twitter. I think people are always looking for problems on there and I don't have time or the patience for that.

Interviewer: When thinking about people you likely disagree with, could you describe which forums you think they likely use and why?

Participant: Definitely Twitter. I feel like everyone disagrees on Twitter just to disagree with people. Tik Tok is kind of the same way, but I don't usually engage in that kind of drama that goes on there. So I feel like mainly Tik Tok and Twitter.

Interviewer: And describe for me what you do when you want to find something factual.

Participant: I go on usually Google Scholar more if it pertains to my field, it is usually on pubmed.com, and I look for credible sources on the topic.

Interviewer: And how do people around you find something factual?

Participant: I have no idea. Sometimes they don't.

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

West Virginia Participant 17 (White/Male/ 20), interviewed on March 23, 2022

Participant: Yeah. So somebody posted a video the other day saying that hypoglycemia should be something that type-one diabetics should try to get into before bed to make them go to sleep. And the fact that he said you should try to be hypo anything really made me question his credibility in the field.

Interviewer: And can you share a time that you talked to your friends or family about that kind of content?

Participant: I talked to my parents about it mainly because they're looking to get on a better diet and I want to prevent them from hearing a lot of this misinformation. So it's as easy and efficient for them as possible.

Interviewer: And could you tell me about a time you saw content like that discussed on the news?

Participant: Not really. I don't watch much of the news much.

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

Participant: What makes any other site untrustworthy is either outdated information or information that is contradictory with a previously well-known correct site said.

Interviewer: Tell me about your experiences finding conspiracy theories.

Participant: I don't really go searching for them. I've heard a couple about Bill Clinton, and a few about the moon landing and even some about the moon existing, which is odd, but yeah, not very expansive.

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

Participant: Yeah. So I shared a video of this guy saying that on a deadlift, if you don't keep your back straight, then you're gonna hurt your spine real bad and that's not entirely true. So I publish an apology video.

Interviewer: And if applicable, could you describe a time when you shared things that you knew were not true.

Participant: Not really. I tend to stay away from intentionally lying to mass groups of people for any purpose at all.

Interviewer: Seems like a reasonable move.

Participant: Yeah, I feel like it's one of the better ones.

West Virginia Participant 17 (White/Male/ 20), interviewed on March 23, 2022

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: I like when it finishes your sentence whenever you didn't type the whole thing.

Interviewer: Yeah, something like that.

Participant: So I mean I type the letter D and if I'm gonna be looking up things like "Dolorean" like the car, which I did the other day, it wanted to send me to Google Docs because I type docs.google.com all the time, so when I type the D it said docs.google.com instead of "Dolorean," and that's pretty obnoxious.

Interviewer: And could you describe a time you notice that search results somehow seem tailored to you? And if anywhere, where on the news have you seen this discussed?

Participant: I haven't really seen it discussed on the news, but certain advertisements pop up on the side of forums. I'm pretty big into fitness so they'll give me an advertisement for like a pair of dumbbells on eBay or something. Stuff like that.

Interviewer: How do you decide what personal information you'll provide the social media companies like YouTube or Google?

Participant: I don't usually. I for the most part just make a password for my accounts. I don't really link anything else to it.

Interviewer: And what are some ways you try to protect your personal information online?

Participant: Something called 2 factor authentication. So every time you want to log into a certain account, they will send a message to the device that made the account and you have to respond from that device and say 'yes it's me.'

Interviewer: What do you think others around you are doing?

Participant: I think that's pretty widely accepted method of protecting a lot of things online. Some people use more sophisticated passwords to protect things in an attempt to better protect their personal information, which I personally do. But yeah, I think that's how they do it.

Interviewer: And what have you heard about protecting your identity or personal information on the news or kind of discussed in your family and friends?

Participant: I heard a lot about it, like cybersecurity attacks on like major mainframes. But I don't think they're gonna be a lot of high tech criminals very interested in my identity.

Interviewer: OK. And if you were to explain to your friends or family how false information spreads and how it can be found on the Internet, what would you say?

West Virginia Participant 17 (White/Male/ 20), interviewed on March 23, 2022

Participant: I would say it starts with somebody being misinformed and other people using that misinformation with malintent usually trying to sell things.

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

Participant: What determines how what's seen online?

Interviewer: Yeah, and how things spread.

Participant: I don't know if there's any one thing that did that determines what is seen online when I guess parental guidelines on kid's computers or legal stipulations, but other than that, I feel like that's what's so great about the Internet is anybody can put anything out there.

Interviewer: OK. And how would that system work? Who benefits from it? Who do you think made the system?

Participant: As I said before, I don't think anybody really made the system. I don't think there is a system for preventing people from saying what they want. I don't think there really is a prevention of freedom of speech online. I think everyone benefits from that.

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 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 don't think they should control what is seen. I think everybody should have access to all information and each individual person makes their own opinions based off of what they see because if you're gonna stop any information from being put out, it kind of ruins the dynamic of freedom of speech, which is how we end up with so many different opinions, which is good and bad.

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? And why do you think some burned buildings or other property?

Participant: They definitely had a reason behind doing it. I don't know that burning peoples buildings was such a great idea. Yeah, I think sometimes they got carried away because to cite one specifically, they took down a statue of Ulysses S Grant. Who was Union, a Union soldier. So I think it was, I think some of it was just mindless destruction and some of it with a purpose, but to each their own.

Interviewer: What content do you post online and what content do you try to make visible for others to see?

West Virginia Participant 17 (White/Male/ 20), interviewed on March 23, 2022

Participant: Mostly fitness related content and some in good-taste jokes. I try to push the fitness related contests content because there's a lot of misinformation in that field. So I like to put out good information for it.

Interviewer: Yeah. And looking at kind of the flip side of that, what content do you try to hide from others, if any?

Participant: I don't particularly there's not any content that I won't post about, it's just people don't usually ask me about anything else, so I don't usually tell them.

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 and your social media feed?

Participant: Yeah on TikTok. I only like videos that I thought I would like to see more of. Uh, like fitness, TikTok videos and nutritional information and memes.

Interviewer: Could you tell me about a time when you tried to influence or change the content of what you see on YouTube, Google or social media just by searching differently?

Participant: I mainly just search for whatever I'm feeling like searching for and if something pops up in relation to that, I either ignore it or if I am interested in it, I'd just go to it. I don't particularly try to influence it.

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

Participant: I check their history of other things that they have posted and the general backlash or support that they've gotten from it, as well as the age of the information that they used to back their information. So like if they had a source and it was from like 2002, I might try to find another source, since that's considerably old, especially in a field where there's so much nuance.

Interviewer: And can you tell me about a time when you double checked information to verify that it was incredible?

Participant: Yeah, it actually had to do with that deadlift flatback thing. Somebody told me that a flat back isn't the determinant of a good deadlift, and he sent me a source and I had to check it with some other sources. And it turns out I was wrong.

Interviewer: And what steps did you take to see if the information was correct?

Participant: I checked his source against other sources.

Interviewer: And what did your findings make you feel about the website in question?

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Participant: Made me feel like it was a little bit more credible than I had previously thought. Yeah, just a little bit.

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

Participant: My dad distrust CNN a lot, but I mean it kind of makes sense.

Interviewer: Does he double check the information on a different source to verify if it's credible?

Participant: Sometimes, but other times he just kind of scoffs at it and laughs.

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

Participant: Absolutely. I think there should be a lot more in terms of information literacy in the public education system, because I think they've done an absolutely atrocious job with it and I don't honestly think that they should do much to cover fake news or give power to disinformation.

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

Participant: I think unfortunately there is no one definition of fake news right now. I think everybody just calls something that they want to believe is incorrect, fake news instead of actually fact-checking it and seeing if it's fake news.

Interviewer: And where do you? Where is it at?

Participant: Ah, it's everywhere.

Interviewer: Who does it target?

Participant: Nobody in specific. It targets whoever the person sending out the information would gain from persuading in the wrong direction.

Interviewer: Who is vulnerable to it?

Participant: Those who don't doublecheck sources, those who don't make sure that they look at places that are more credible than others, and people who are, to put it quite frankly, gullible and believe everything they see.

Interviewer: What does it mean for democracy?

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Participant: Definitely sways some votes and can bring people further away from the end goal.

Interviewer: Is fake news a real problem?

Participant: Yeah, I think it is.

Interviewer: And what do you think the politics of it all are?

Participant: I think the politics of it goes something like this, where it would help my campaign if I were to say this or that, whether I mean it or not or, fitting a narrative, just fitting narratives or fitting the narrative of 1 singular person. It all comes down to narratives.

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

Participant: I think you can run into some trouble with trying to put laws on the Internet, just because of Freedom of Speech. I don't think there should be very many laws on it. I think you should be able to post whatever you want for the most part as long as it's not posting legitimate threats towards others.

Interviewer: And I could you offer some examples of where you have seen fake news? Who are the people who publish it and what are they trying to get from it?

Participant: A bunch of people said that Trump told everybody to drink window cleaner, but what he really said was that a chemical in window cleaner could potentially help contribute to a solution to the coronavirus. I think they said that just because they want to make him look like the bad guy, which is pretty common.

Interviewer: And what should be done about it?

Participant: Like I said, just better information literacy.

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

Participant: Not particularly, I think I've said my piece.

Interviewer: Wrapping things up. What is the date?

Participant: March 23, 2022.

Interviewer: And what is your state of residence?

Participant: Uh, West Virginia.

Interviewer: Your age.

West Virginia Participant 17 (White/Male/ 20), interviewed on March 23, 2022

Participant: 20.

Interviewer: Your gender.

Participant: Male

Interviewer: Race?

Participant: Caucasian.

Interviewer: And your highest level of education completed.

Participant: High school.