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3-7-2022

West Virginia Participant 18 (White/female/55), interviewed on March 7, 2022

<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?

The 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 think it was around 2002.

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

Participant: I use Facebook and Yahoo Mail and Instagram.

Interviewer: OK. What types of websites do you visit?

Participant: Oh, shopping, makeup, travel.

Interviewer: Alright. So, what did you search for online in the last week?

Participant: I think, cabins and Pigeon Forge. I looked up a lot of medical stuff for my husband 'cause he's been diagnosed with some issues. And so, I was looking at information on those medical issues.

Interviewer: OK. What websites do you visit to pass time when you are bored? What do you do on those sites and why do you visit those particular sites?

Participant: I'm mostly on Facebook, just so I know what people are posting and I have family that live away and see what they're posting. That kind of thing.

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 most people do exactly what I do. They're addicted to their friends, and they just get on there and just pass the time away or play games. I know there's lots of people playing that one game online now, but I haven't gotten on that one yet. Wordle or whatever it's called.

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

Participant: I use my Apple phone the most and then sometimes I use a desktop.

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

Participant: I have never gotten into Twitter. It is not a platform that I use or read. I've never even heard of it.

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

Participant: I think that Twitter maybe one even though I've not been on it. I just know a lot of people are and I think that's more a political forum.

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

 Participant: Well, my husband watches the news a lot, that's how we found it on TV. I have posted things that I've seen and reshared things on Facebook and then just recently I got a fact checker that made me get rid of the post because it said it wasn't true.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Participant: And I've never had that before. So, I didn't realize that existed. I'm older, so I know that happens. But I was just like, really shocked that, people put stuff out there that is not true.

Interviewer: Right, right.

Participant: I mean, I thought, well, it's Facebook. It's gotta be. Which is so not the contrary.

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 its purpose.

Participant: Oh, that's a hard one. I guess all this, Russia and Ukraine. There's a lot of things that I don't necessarily trust when I read some of that. So, I did try to figure out if it's not true or if it's true because I know sometimes my son had said that they posted something, and I was so upset about it. He goes "mom, that's a video game that they posted, it's not real". So, I thought I'm going to block those people because then you don't believe that it's true.

Interviewer: OK, share a time when you talk to your friends and family about such content. So, I guess I can go back to what you were just saying.

Participant: Yeah.

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

Participant: Just recently, like yesterday.

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

Participant: I'm just not on there a whole lot, but maybe Facebook I think is untrustworthy. 'Cause people just portray what they want you to see.

Interviewer: Tell me about your experiences finding conspiracy theories.

Participant: Oh, I did a lot of that when the kids were killed.

Interviewer: Where was it at?

Participant: New York, and they were killed in the classroom. I did a lot of conspiracy theories, searches on YouTube and different things like that 'cause there were so many holes in the story, and they never really talk to the parents. I just kept thinking this is not true. This was something the government made up. I mean, I was really into it at that time.

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

Participant: Well, just like the nurse talking about COVID-19 and that they're not getting the equipment they need and all that. And then Facebook banned it and took it down. So, I don't know that's true. I just think that Facebook maybe didn't like what I wrote and maybe it is the truth, but I was shocked that they took that down. They said that it was not factual.

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

Participant: Never.

Interviewer: Tell me about a time when you went to a search engine like Google or Yahoo and it gave you what it thought you were looking for based on what you already searched for.

Participant: Oh, lots of times. You can say something out loud in the room and then all of a sudden you get an advertisement for it.

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

Participant: Like looking for hotels or something like that and then all of a sudden you see on TV there's a special going on that you can get for $59. I looked it up online and then see it on TV, then in my feed.

Interviewer: How do you decide what personal information you will provide? Such as social media companies like YouTube or Google?

Participant: I never do.

Interviewer: Ok. Tell me the ways you try to protect your personal information online.

Participant: I have an app on my phone that I use to protect my personal information and I don't put anything out personal like my phone number or anything like that. Just my email address.

Interviewer: OK. What do you think others around you do?

Participant: I think others around me probably do the same thing, and I know some people have their Facebooks private. Like a lot of my friends, I can look at some of their content, but some of it is not there. When I know for a fact that they've posted something and I can't find it, I assumed that means because they're not my friend and I've just looked on their site, I know that it's private.

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

Participant: Well, I've heard it on the news like death dot entity. You know, different things to protect you. I hear it, but I don't really pay too much attention to it 'cause I know it can happen.

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

Participant: Yeah, I do think that they choose what we see and what we don't see. I definitely know that.

Interviewer: OK. What have you heard others discuss about this?

Participant: Nothing.

Interviewer: Okay. If you were to explain to your friends and family how false information spreads and can be found on the Internet or how to avoid false information, what would you say?

Participant: Don't believe everything you see on Facebook or other platforms because it's not necessarily true. I mean, I was really naive when it came to that issue with Ukraine and stuff

until my son was like, "mom, that's a video game." Then I was like, oh my gosh, people do that. And he was like, "yeah, they do it all the time." My son is really a techie guy. So, he's on the Internet a lot and does a lot of research and stuff. And he was telling me that stuff. And I was like, oh my gosh, I didn't realize that happens, but that's what I would tell him, don't believe everything you see or hear.

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 the system and what do you think controls information online or in our apps?

Participant: I think the more you search it, the more it comes out and people share it and that's how more information gets spread by that one person sharing it, and then another person sharing it, and then people, they'll say "share this and you can like win a trip" or something like that or you get a free vacation and I think that's how it's controlled, by people sharing it.

Interviewer: OK. This one is kind of long, so the Internet is full of stories that divide people about things like the coronavirus, the Capitol Riot, Antifa, Black Lives Matter, climate change, and the political parties.

Participant: OK.

Interviewer: 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: So, I went to school.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Participant: I'm so sorry. I'm probably not the best person to interview about stuff like this.

Interviewer: It's OK, it's alright.

Participant: OK.

Interviewer: OK, and the next one is also kind of long. If you happen to see stories about stop the steal and the Capitol Riot, what do you make of why the protesters were there? Trappers with paint or with animal pelts, or with Norse tattoos, or as Roman soldiers, or in groups like Cowboys for Trump. What does this mean for stories about voter fraud and voting rights?

Participant: I think it sways the voters one way or the other. I just know that there was so much information on those Capitol Riots and stuff like that I was just blown away by that. And I think it does make people decide which way they're going to choose and the way they're going to vote because they see all that and I just think it was horrible.

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

Participant: I learned it basically on Facebook first or the Internet and then I went to the news and watched some of it there.

Interviewer: OK. If you happen to hear about the QAnon movement, what do you make of how they talk about themselves and what others say about them? Why do you think we hear so many conflicting stories? Where did you learn this and what does it mean to you?

Participant: I learned it on the Internet, and I think because there's the right wing and the left wing, and they just posted both their stories and it's conflicting evidence on both sides, so you don't really know. I think they do that to sway us one way or the other, and it's really not necessarily all true.

Interviewer: OK. If you happen to be following the story on the coronavirus, what sense do you make of the different information out there about whether people should get vaccinated and or wear masks? Why do you think people or why do you think we hear so many conflicting stories? What do you think causes the different opinions? Where did you learn this and what does it mean to you?

Participant: I think there was a lot of different information. At first, I was like scared of the coronavirus to get the vaccines and then people got them and then now people are getting symptoms from the vaccines. So, I know my dad is 82 and he said to me the other day that he wished that he would never got them.

Interviewer: Uh-huh.

Participant: Because he felt pressured from the very beginning to get them. And now he says that he wished he wouldn't have gotten them. And I don't really know why he said that, but because he's not really received any symptoms. But I know that they're saying that it's causing heart damage and it's causing blood clots and different things are happening. I have a personal story because my husband had it and he's got long COVID. And I know it's true. So, he was vaccinated.

Interviewer: Right.

Participant: I just can't imagine what would have happened if he wouldn't have had them.

Interviewer: Right. If you happen to be following the coverage on the House Select Committee to investigate the Capitol Riot, what sense do you make of how Republicans and Democrats disagree over the scope or purpose of the community? Where did you learn this and what does it mean to you?

Participant: I've looked at it on the news 'cause I watched the news and I don't really make too much of it. I just know it's gonna be what it's going to be. I just don't really think much about it. I just listened to both sides.

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

Participant: Well, I learned it on both the Internet and TV. I was upset about it, what happened with him. But I don't really feel like there needs to be riots and burning of buildings. I just think that's not good. I understand peaceful protests, that's fine. But the burning of buildings and taking down statues and stuff like that, it's just going way too far. You can prove your point, but you don't have to go to those lengths.

Interviewer: OK. 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 others from seeing?

Participant: I don't really post anything other than like if we go out to dinner and we're dressed up or something like that. And we post a picture because we've gotten dressed up for the day. 'Cause normally we'd just go to work and come back home and then normally if we do something like that or if we go on a vacation, I'll post a few pictures, but I don't post anything political or anything on my Facebook because I'm really conscious about who sees my post, then I don't want to suede anyone 'cause. I have friends from all genres of life, and I don't want to post anything political because I just don't want to go there with any of my friends.

Interviewer: Really.

Participant: 'cause, you know, I just don't want them to think anything different about me. I don't post anything political.

Interviewer: OK.

Participant: It's just the offensive stuff.

Interviewer: Yeah. 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 others, people, other peoples, contributions in content and your social media feed?

Participant: Yes.

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: No, I've never done that.

Interviewer: OK. This goes along with the last question, but it says when you are unsatisfied with Internet search results, how do you adjust your search to change the results?

Participant: Well, I have searched other sites or asked questions to someone else to see if their views were the same, because I know that not everything you read is true. So, I have sought out other platforms to see if they are there. You know, the choices were different. Or whatever they were posting was different. They review their views.

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

Participant: I don't. I just take it for what it's worth and read it and sometimes it bothers me and sometimes I just say, oh, it is probably not true and just go on.

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

Participant: I usually don't.

Interviewer: OK. These questions go along with the last question, but if they're not applicable, that's OK. What made you suspicious? What steps did you take to see if the information was correct and what did your findings make you feel about the website?

Participant: OK. No, I haven't done any of that.

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

Participant: Yes, they have.

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 information?

Participant: Yes.

Interviewer: The term fake news seems to be everywhere right now. What are your thoughts about what it is, where it's at? Who does it target? Who is vulnerable to it and what it means for democracy?

Participant: There is a lot of fake news. Well, I think it's sad because even I have to ask my husband sometimes. Like, is that true? And he'll say no, it's not true or whatever. Or my son will tell me. I think it causes a lot of conflict in families and it can really sway people to something they normally wouldn't because of that information.

Interviewer: Right, OK. And then these go along with that. But is it a real problem? What are the politics of it all? And what new laws or constitutional amendments might we need to make for the Internet age?

Participant: I think they're trying to be stricter on the people that use the Internet and there needs to be guidelines and if something is not true, it needs to be taken down immediately. And because like I said, it's sways people to believe in something and it causes a lot of hurt feelings toward people and families even.

Interviewer: OK, 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: Well, I don't really know this source, I just know maybe someone has shared a specific post it was shared and then you read it and then you're thinking that's true. So, you share it. And I just think that it needs to be taken down immediately. So, it's not shared so many times. And then it's by that point that you realize it's fake news. It's been spread 20 million times. And then all those people have that preconceived notion in their head.

Interviewer: Right, OK. Is there anything else that you would like to share?

Participant: No.