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## Marshall Digital Scholar

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0873: The Fake News and Information Literacy  
Project

Digitized Manuscript Collections

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3-21-2022

**Ohio Participant 6 (White/male/18), interviewed on March 21,  
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 \_\_\_\_\_

**Ohio Participant 6 (White/Male/18), interviewed on March 21, 2022**

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 was like 13 when I first had Facebook and there was always news on there.

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

**Participant:** To search what is going on with the war or look up interesting facts.

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

**Participant:** Yahoo, the news, Wikipedia, YouTube

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

**Participant:** I've been keeping up with everything happening in Ukraine and I was looking up different state populations because I was bored and curious.

**Interviewer:** What websites do you visit to pass time when you are bored?

**Participant:** YouTube, Wikipedia, and just different websites through Google.

**Interviewer:** What do you do on those sites? Why do you visit those particular sites?

**Participant:** I mostly get on Wikipedia just to hear what some people say that could be completely wrong and I find it funny. I get on YouTube to watch videos of anything. I search for random facts pretty much every day so I use Google a lot and mostly out of curiosity and not actually needing answers for anything educational.

**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'm not sure what they do specifically but most people get on the internet to get on their social media.

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

**Ohio Participant 6 (White/Male/18), interviewed on March 21, 2022**

**Participant:** I use my phone and my laptop. I am on my cell phone every day so I would say I use it the most and my computer the least because I only get on it for school-related purposes.

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

**Participant:** I use Facebook, Snapchat, Instagram, Tik Tok just to keep me entertained when I am bored and to pass time. I don't have any I avoid. I just don't use Twitter as most people do and I am not sure why I just never have.

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

**Participant:** Facebook. I'm from a more controversial town and everyone loves to use Facebook to voice their opinion on matters, especially with politics and then it starts disagreements in the comments by at least a few people and it never fails to start something and I never comment under their post but I'll laugh under my breath about what they had to say.

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

**Participant:** I don't think people around me necessarily care if they find things factual but I'll try to find a good website that is credible and I read newspapers all the time and I try to make sure they are credible.

**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 it was trustworthy or made you distrust the author or its purpose?

**Participant:** I don't think I have.

**Interviewer:** Share a time you talk to your friends or family about such content.

**Participant:** I've talk to my dad a few times about misinformation on Facebook.

**Interviewer:** Do you think there's any social media sites that you think are untrustworthy?

**Participant:** Well, I think there's good parts and bad parts to all of them but I think it's the accounts more than the social media services.

**Ohio Participant 6 (White/Male/18), interviewed on March 21, 2022**

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

**Participant:** I've never really been interested in conspiracy theories and I know they have algorithms that play in your thoughts and feeling and that's never been an interest of mine so I've never really researched much.

**Interviewer:** Share about a time where you shared news that you thought was true but later on found out it wasn't true.

**Participant:** I don't really share much on social media.

**Interviewer:** Tell me about a time when a search engine seemed to give you what it thought you were looking for based on what you've already searched for.

**Participant:** I don't have a specific time but it happens all the time and it kind of weirded me out

**Interviewer:** How do you decide what personal information you provide to social media companies like YouTube or Google? Tell me the ways you might try to protect your information.

**Participant:** I don't do a good job and I don't do anything to protect my identity like I should.

**Interviewer:** How have you responded to having Internet companies try to customize or control the other platforms like in Google searches? What have you heard others discuss about this?

**Participant:** I hardly discuss this with anybody. I mean I think that there should be non-bias results. If I want something, I don't think they should cater to how I feel and I think they should be actual facts not opinions pieces. I don't want bullshit. I just want the truth.

**Interviewer:** If you were to explain to your friends and your family how false information can spread on the Internet or how to avoid misinformation, what would you say?

**Participant:** There are fact-based websites and creditable sources that fact check, and I try to use these things that use truth and not opinion, and if I get a look for things, I don't use Fox news and CNN, I go to *New York Times* or something like that.

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

**Ohio Participant 6 (White/Male/18), interviewed on March 21, 2022**

**Participant:** I think a lot of it has to do with your opinion. We talked in my class about the use of groupthink discussions and how it divides our views, and people get in their trenches in their views, and further with surrounding themselves with likeminded thinkers.

**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 think schools need to realize the necessity for creditable sources and not Facebook and other social media outlets. I think people need to get away from their phones and read the newspaper every once in a while.

**Interviewer:** If you happened to see stories about Stop the Steal and the Capitol Riot, what do you make of why the protesters were there? Why do you think some dressed in costumes like hunters and trappers, 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 the protesters were there because of information, especially the Stop the Steal movement. I think that after years of opinion pieces in the news, people don't have trust of the government. Someone told me one time that after hearing something over and over again, you'll start to believe it even if it's bullshit and I think that's a true case here. I think that the people, especially in high political offices like the former president right now, for months he talked about how the election was stolen and it caused a distrust in the government and the institutions that we have in place in the country to ensure that we have a safe and secure elections. I think that the people of the Capitol Riots were misinformed and I think they were misguided. They think they did the right thing but I think ultimately what they did was an act of treason and terrorism, but they didn't see it that way because of the information they received.

**Interviewer:** Why do you think that some dressed in costumes like hunters and trappers or with animal pelts at two with Norse tattoos or as Roman soldiers or in groups like Cowboys for Trump

**Participant:** Well I think a lot of it is a show of unity. Like in the military, we wear uniforms. I think these costumes are obscure, but I think in a way I want to know what side they are and I think the Roman soldier aspect shared the deep aspects of the romanticism in the United States that Julius Caesar was killed by the Senate and I think that was a way of representing their idea of tyranny in our government and I don't know about the other costumes but I think they were

**Ohio Participant 6 (White/Male/18), interviewed on March 21, 2022**

obscure personally and I thought they were strange but don't know what those guys were doing but it was weird.

**Interviewer:** What does this mean for stories about voter fraud and voting rights?

**Participant:** That's a tough one. The voter fraud issue is one that has been created and had a snowball effect that month of being talked about and there is no actual evidence for this. People hear these things and they start to believe them even if there was no evidence of fraud or voting fraud. And on the other hand, voting rights is one of the most essential rights in this country. It is the right to vote and we voted for years for suffrage rather than just 1865 for a black man or 1919 with women. It has always been a struggle for suffrage in this country and I think people think it's way more successful.

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

**Participant:** I've read about it in a few articles. I listened to podcasts that MSNBC did about the Capitol Riots and how this misinformation bubble led the people to do an unthinkable act to our country.

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

**Participant:** I don't really post on social media. I'm not really active on social media so I can't give a good answer there

**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 in your social media feed, like on Facebook, Twitter, or Instagram? 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? Or When you are unsatisfied with internet search results, how do you adjust your searches to change the results?

**Participant:** The post you like seems to reappear on your page more often and if I like something once, it seems like it's there again. And if I get sick of seeing that, I'll make an effort to not like it for a while so I can get off my page.

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

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**Participant:** I check the sources usually and I'm kind of being hypocritical because I use Wikipedia all the time and it's a known unreliable source. But if I'm reading about the news or something, I've tried to find a credible source.

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

**Participant:** I have a few times especially if I see things on social media, I'll look them up to see if I can find them an actual source and not just somebody ranting on Facebook about it.

**Interviewer:** What made you suspicious?

**Participant:** If there's no sources given, that can make me suspicious. Or if it's someone I know that just talks about things on Facebook, I just like to look it up and see if I can find either a journalist with a good record or a media outlet that is reliable to find out if it's true.

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

**Participant:** I thought that they are definitely more bland than you might find out on social media, but I think that they're much more accurate.

**Interviewer:** 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:** I don't know. I don't really talk to my friends or family about these sort of things.

**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:** Sure yeah, we definitely should but I think a lot of the news outlets are playing into their bases and their businesses more than they are getting and giving trusted resources. They won't care if they don't get the truth because the viewers believe them, so if you're listening to Fox news or NBC, they're going to play into their base whether you're left or right on the political spectrum and networks don't care if the information is right because they get more money off of your viewership and they can attract more viewers with some of these polarizing ideas.

**Ohio Participant 6 (White/Male/18), interviewed on March 21, 2022**

**Interviewer:** The term "fake news" seems to be everywhere right now. What are your thoughts about what it is? Where it's at? Who it targets? Who is vulnerable to it?

**Participant:** It depends on who using the term "fake news." Former President Trump uses "fake news" to describe CNN all the time. I think CNN is a pretty credible source. I heard at one point that the FCC didn't categorize Fox News as news, they were classified as entertainment and he didn't talk about that. But on the left side, you have people talking about how it's fake news so people use it as an argument but neither side really cares, it's just not going to bring people together it's an issue that divides people more.

**Interviewer:** What it means for democracy? Is it a real problem? What are the politics of it all? I know you mentioned some answers to the last question that related to these ones so you're more than welcome to add onto that.

**Participant:** Yeah, it's a real problem. Our democracy is in trouble and I think social media is the root of the problem. For the first time ever, I feel like our democracy and European countries, that we're going to set the stage for no more operating democracies, and that scares the hell out of me but it is what it is and I tell people and you try to come together and try to compromise and try to get away from these fake news, but I don't know if there's a change in the future, but the politics now seems like liberals wanna seem more liberals, and conservatives want to seem more conservatives. There's no attempt to compromise there's no attempt to unify. I think that unless this country takes a big step in the right direction that we are in peril and that scares the hell out of me.

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

**Participant:** We have freedom of speech rights, and the first amendment guarantees, and that's one of the fundamental rights. I think it would be hard to overstep that right when it comes to lying, and they have the right to lie essentially. As far as rules go, I don't think they could ever get something to overpass that, but I think there's something we should do.

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

**Participant:** Facebook definitely. There are some real problems with fake news there. Usually people where I'm from in a conservative area are on Facebook and are usually on the conservative side of the spectrum, and they are posting things that cater to their views and I think that it gives them voice. In this modern day, it's all about being louder and it's causing the most chaos and I think people just wanna be noticed.

**Ohio Participant 6 (White/Male/18), interviewed on March 21, 2022**

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

**Participant:** No I don't think so

**Interviewer:** What is the date?

**Participant:** March 21,2022

**Interviewer:** Your state of residence?

**Participant:** Ohio

**Interviewer:** Your age?

**Participant:** 18

**Interviewer:** Your gender?

**Participant:** Male

**Interviewer:** Your race?

**Participant:** White

**Interviewer:** Your highest level of education completed?

**Participant:** Highschool diploma