Marshall University

Marshall Digital Scholar

3-6-2022

Ohio Participant 7 (White/male/18), interviewed on March 6, 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?

Ohio Participant 7 (White/Male/18), interviewed March 6, 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 didn't have Facebook until I had my first phone, which was in 2014, when I was 11 years old. That was when I was allowed to have all that stuff.

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

Participant: I would say getting sports updates, texting my friends through Snapchat, going through Tik Tok and checking my feed through Facebook, Instagram and Twitter.

Interviewer: What type of websites do you visit?

Participant: Most of the time just Google to look up basic facts, or maybe Amazon.

Interviewer: What websites do you visit to pass the time when you are bored? What do you do on those websites? And why do you visit those particular sites?

Participant: I guess Facebook.com could be a website or maybe cool math games.

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

Participant: I know a lot of people that go online just to look at things too or put things in their wish list to buy at a future time, or for their home or clothes. Some people buy their groceries online and a lot of people get their news from online sources instead of watching TV.

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

Participant: I mainly use my phone and my gaming PC. I would say I use my phone more. The device I use the least would be my laptop.

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

Participant: I use Twitter a lot, mainly for getting sports updates like on the NBA, also for movies that just came out. I usually avoid Reddit because there can be things on there that I do not want to see.

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

Participant: There are a lot of stupid people on Facebook that I do not agree with, but that's about all I can think of.

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

Participant: I like to Google it and look for different sources that give me the same answer and I would assume that other people did the same thing.

Interviewer: Everyone comes across things that surprises 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. Share a time when you talked to your friends or family about such content, and tell about a time you saw such content discussed on the news and social media sites that you think are untrustworthy, and what makes them untrustworthy?

Participant: I've seen a lot on Facebook. Movie critics only displaying the negative reviews for new movies that come out, and they have bias with the movies and not displaying the positive reviews. And mainly just showing a bunch of click bait for their articles, and then I couldn't trust them, where I did before. I have talked to my girlfriend about a certain movie that's getting review bombed for the reason I said, like a political reason that certain viewers didn't agree with, and they review bomb a good movie for that reason.

Interviewer: What social media sites do you think are untrustworthy and what makes them untrustworthy?

Participant: I would say Facebook because a lot of the things people share are really opinion based and not factual.

Interviewer: Tell me about your experiences finding conspiracy theories.

Participant: I personally think that some of them are very interesting to think about, but with so much scientific evidence that typically prove them wrong, I don't tend to believe in them very much.

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. Describe a

time when you noticed that search results seem somehow tailored to you. Where on the news, if anywhere, have you seen this discussed?

Participant: I've heard about how some websites can track your other recent website searches so they can give you ads or articles based on what you recently searched. I have seen that a few times whenever, like I'm looking for something on Amazon, say I'm looking for a new chair or something, I will then see like an ad on Facebook for different types of chairs. So I have seen examples of that.

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

Participant: I can choose what I post, when I comment, like, and what I share, or I can go to the settings in most of the social media apps or websites and I can customize what information is shared from my account to their databases.

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

Participant: I use Safari or Google Chrome or Microsoft Edge. You can do a safe search on like an Incognito tab or something.

Interviewer: What do you think others around you do?

Participant: Probably the same thing.

Interviewer: What have you heard about protecting your identity or personal information on the news?

Participant: I've always been told not to share my phone number or address. My grandparents even told me not to put my full name on some social media.

Interviewer: How have you responded to how internet companies try to customize or control what you see on their platforms? Like doing Google searches? What have you heard others discuss about this?

Participant: Most of them, when you first open it, will ask if you want to get like customized ad choices based on your recent searches. You can either hit allow or ask websites not to track your searches. I actually hit the option to ask not to track. I don't really see it as that big of a deal to me.

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?

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Participant: I'd say a lot of articles regarding certain information can be opinion based or have biased information in there and to just actually read what source you're getting it from and don't trust just one source. Start from multiple sources and compare the arguments.

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 the information online or in our apps?

Participant: I would say for different ads, how much money the company puts into paying, but different articles would just be the popularity of the article. Maybe the number of searches for the title? Mainly just the money flow though.

Interviewer: The news 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 in what is seen?

Participant: I don't like it when teachers tell us their opinion because then they will be biased when talking about a certain topic from then on out rather than just have them teach unbiased facts and not their opinion.

Interviewer: If you happen 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 wild 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 mean, I've heard people talk about it. They're upset when things don't go their way, but I don't really know the exact reason why. I try not to get too into that. I don't watch the news very often, especially not enough to form any opinion on that.

Interviewer: Did 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 don't know what the QAnon movement is.

Interviewer: If you happen to be following this story on the Coronavirus, what sense do you make of the kinds of different information out there about whether people should get vaccinated and/or wear masks? Why do you think we were hearing so many conflicting stories? What do you think causes the different opinions?

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Participant: I think there's different information out there because people had different political views, and some revolve around religious views as well. That's why I think there's so many conflicting stories. My personal opinion is I don't think that the vaccine bothered me that much. Some people would say there's like trackers in the virus or in the vaccine. I think that if the government actually wanted to track us, then using our phones, things that we carry on us every single day, would be a better option.

Interviewer: If you happen to be following 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 and purpose of the Committee? Where did you learn this and what does it mean to you?

Participant: I did not know about this. I've never heard of the House Select Committee.

Interviewer: If you happened to see stories about the Black Lives Matter protests and Antifa, what do you make of the protests 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 about this and what does it mean to you?

Participant: I believe that the death of George Floyd was uncalled for. The cop that did it, he should never have done that. I think they burn buildings to get attention. I don't think there should have been as much destruction of property as there was, and they want you to denounce the police because they say they have too much power.

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

Participant: I don't post content on social media myself, so I don't really have anything to hide. I show every now and then those pictures of me and my girlfriend or me and my family.

Interviewer: Can you remember a time when you were careful about what you chose to like online because of how it might affect the visibility of other people's contributions and content in your social media feed like on Facebook, Twitter or Instagram?

Participant: Yes, because the more you like certain things with certain tags, the more it'll show up on your feed. So, when I first start an account on a social media platform I tend to watch what I like so I don't get things that I don't like on my feed.

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.

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Participant: I would say whenever I start getting things on YouTube I don't really care for or care to see I know it's because of the things that I have searched before, so I try to search other things I like so that way it changes my feed and doesn't show the other things I don't care for.

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

Participant: I look up the author, who they are, what their education is, their experience, when the article was posted, and I try to look for any bias or opinion statements in the article.

Interviewer: Can you tell me about a time when you double checked information online to verify if it was credible? 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: I remember one time I looked on the internet to see if my dog could have a popsicle treat and I remember looking at a website that said it was okay to eat, just to make sure it didn't have certain ingredients in it. But it didn't sound very credible to me because it was on a forum like Reddit or Twitter, so then I looked it up again for an actual veterinarian post and it said do not give your dogs any popsicle treats like that because they have chemicals in them that can be very toxic to dogs.

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: Let's say, when my dad saw that the vaccine was ready to go, he did not trust it, because he is an anti-vax person, and he did not double check his source, he just saw something on Facebook that said the vaccine has harmful materials in it and he believed it Immediately without checking twice.

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 credible information?

Participant: Yes, the media should do more to teach people to search for credible information.

Interviewer: The term "fake news" seems to be everywhere right now. What are your thoughts about it? What is it? Where is it at? Who does it target? Who is vulnerable? What it means for democracy? Is it a real problem? What are the politics of it? And what laws or constitutional amendments might be needed?

Participant: I don't think of them as blatantly lying about certain facts, I think about them stretching the truth, having click bait in the title over exaggerating things or not telling the whole

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truth. To try to get a reaction out of you to not believe something or to have a stronger opinion about something.

Interviewer: Who is vulnerable to fake news?

Participant: People who read the articles or have an opinion about what the article was talking about.

Interviewer: What does it mean for democracy?

Participant: It can change the way a certain person thinks and people who are wanting you to vote for someone specific and over exaggerate something or not tell the whole truth about something to get your opinion to sway to the other side of the side they want you to vote for.

Interviewer: Is it a real problem?

Participant: Yes.

Interviewer: What are the politics of it all?

Participant: Trying to sway your vote the other way.

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

Participant: I mean, you can't really control everything people will post but maybe for like actual, credible news sources like Fox or CNN, maybe they shouldn't post so much clickbait or over-exaggerate things like they do.

Interviewer: OK, please offer us 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? What should be done about it?

Participant: I see it a lot on Fox News, they are a very Republican news source, and they always exaggerate things. They try to protect the Republican side and always attack the Democrats in whatever they do. And I don't always trust the things they say because of how biased they are with Republicans. Same thing with CNN about Democrats.

Interviewer: Okay, is there anything else that you would like to share?

Participant: No.

Interviewer: What is the date?

Participant: March 6th, 2022.

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Interviewer: What is your state of residence?

Participant: Ohio.

Interviewer: What is your age?

Participant: 18.

Interviewer: What is your gender?

Participant: Male.

Interviewer: What's your race?

Participant: Caucasian.

Interviewer: What is your highest level of education completed?

Participant: Some college.