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0873: The Fake News and Information Literacy
Project

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**West Virginia Participant 24 (White/female/39), interviewed on
March 24, 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 24 (White/Female/39), interviewed on March 24, 2022

Participant agreed to the terms of the consent

Interviewer: OK, first question, 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: Wait, the first time I started using social media or the first time I started seeing news on social media.

Interviewer: A little on this question is screwed up. Tell me about when you first started using social media and then news started to appear for the first time on your feed like Facebook or Twitter.

Participant: OK, I didn't start using any social media until 2011 when I had Ava, and when I had that I really didn't use it that much. I would say when I noticed news on it was 2016, when I started using it more cause I really just didn't care until then.

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

Participant: At work I use my email, QuickBooks is what I use. Marshall's website to get on banner. I also use the internet to read Washington Post articles and I get in TikTok now. On a daily basis, I use my CO2 thing.

Interviewer: OK, what types of websites do you visit?

Participant: Well, I just said a few so Washington Post, Marshall, Herald dispatch, Debbie SAZ, and chase, I get on there a lot.

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

Participant: A summary of what I said, so I searched the Greenbrier for spots. For this weekend and the last, did you say month or week?

Interviewer: Week.

Participant: I was looking up stuff to do in Philadelphia. Like bagel shops, and where the best cheesesteak place is.

Interviewer: What websites do you visit the first time when you are bored?

Participant: Oh gosh, Homme takes and definitely take dog.

Interviewer: What do you do on these sites?

West Virginia Participant 24 (White/Female/39), interviewed on March 24, 2022

Participant: I've been really looking at under the desk news, because it has current up-to-date things about the Ukraine situation. Also, see goofy videos that make me laugh.

Interviewer: Why do you visit those particular sites?

Participant: I like TikTok because it's concise. I can get on there for a couple of minutes and catch up on news instead of reading some long article. If I had more time, I'd get on Washington Post or actually pick up a newspaper and read it.

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

Participant: I think a lot of people waste time on social media and you know there's a lot of websites out there with news where you do not know where their sources are coming from. It is kind of scary where everyone gets their news now. Especially what's happening in today's world, it is scary how easy it is to manipulate people through the news.

Interviewer: What types of devices do you use to access the internet? Like phones, tablets, laptops, and which do you use the most and least?

Participant: I mean, I would say my desktop I use most to work on. Obviously eight hours a day I got two monitors just staring at me. For news and stuff, I'm usually on my phone.

Interviewer: What social media or forums 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 TikTok, Facebook, Instagram, I've been on the fence about getting rid of Facebook because of all the data breaches and all the problems coming out with it and how much they spy on you to figure out what kind of ads to target us. It kind of creeps me out. I haven't really done it, so I can't really say I avoid it.

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

Participant: It depends on the topic to be honest. I mean, I'll Google it to begin with. If it is something medical, I would ask a doctor.

Interviewer: So, in terms of news, where would you look for something factual?

Participant: A local news I would trust like herald dispatch or WC UM. When it's like a bigger news story, I do a sweep. I don't just read one. I do not go to CNN or Fox News, but I mean I'll read the same story on like four different websites and get the gist of what's going on, because I don't feel like everything is kind of slanted anymore.

West Virginia Participant 24 (White/Female/39), interviewed on March 24, 2022

Interviewer: Fair enough.

Participant: UK news is pretty good to read just to get an outside view of what is going on. I get emails from the UK so I kind of read up.

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

Participant: Oh gosh, when thinking about someone who doesn't agree with me?

Interviewer: Yeah, and what kind of platforms do you think they use?

Participant: Oh geez, this is easy. I mean Fox News is like, right up there and that they call it the Trump TV or Trump forums, or I don't even know what it is called, like Omni or something. It's like they have their whole platform. It's kind of interesting.

Interviewer: So, you would not go there for factual information?

Participant: Well, the problem I have with it is that the sources are shady. The same goes for CNN, though I know they'll put stuff on there. It's just opinion based, not fact based. So, you must watch what you are reading.

Interviewer: Everyone comes across things that surprised 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: Like news from a news station or from, you know, just anybody on Facebook because that happens a lot every day on Facebook.

Interviewer: Any instance like social media or news outlets.

Participant: I think the one that really gets under my skin right now is that there are so many people just blatantly blaming President Biden for the gas prices and gas prices are global, this has nothing to do with what the President is doing. If someone comes out and says that whether it's Facebook or a news site is just irritating.

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

Participant: I'm sure you're aware of this, but I discuss it Grammy and not Mary and Sharon almost every day. Sometimes it's local politics, but here lately I've just kind of gotten sick of it. I don't like to, I think I'm worn out from the past, what? Five years of politics? So it just seems like everything comes back to politics. I'm just tired of it.

West Virginia Participant 24 (White/Female/39), interviewed on March 24, 2022

Interviewer: Uh-huh. OK. Tell me about a time you saw such content discussed on the news, like non-trustworthy things.

Participant: Not every day. I think it's a choice whether you want to avoid it or not. I try to you know, there's only so much you can avoid though.

Interviewer: Right, OK.

Participant: If you want to stay up on current news and I have been reading more news because of the war in Ukraine, Russia, nuclear war threats, sanctions, and you know I'm pulling this.

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

Participant: For me, it would be having untrustworthy sources, which means they have crap credentials or shady origins. You can't figure out who's actually behind the source. That really irritates me. Or science based on "junk science," I saw a lot of that during COVID. You know, like spoons sticking to me. You're getting tracked!

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

Participant: I've always liked YouTube, I use that platform a lot. Everyday, actually. A lot of conspiracy theories I have found there,

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

Participant: Geez. I'm sure there's something.

Interviewer: Have you ever spread a rumor about someone?

Participant: A rumor?

Interviewer: Yeah, maybe you thought it was true and it wasn't.

Participant: I'm sure I have, I mean I don't go around telling people bull crap though.

Interviewer: So no answer I guess?

Participant: I can't really think of anything.

West Virginia Participant 24 (White/Female/39), interviewed on March 24, 2022

Interviewer: Right, OK I understand. If applicable, please describe a time when you shared things that you knew were not true.

Participant: I don't do that, I just don't.

Interviewer: OK, fair enough. 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: OK, like I was searching for one thing and it gave me something else?

Interviewer: No, like you had searched for something before, so the next time you searched for something similar it gave search results that seemed tailored to you.

Participant: Oh, well if you delete your cache that won't happen.

Interviewer: OK, but has it ever happened to you?

Participant: I mean, I've looked up stuff I was going to buy from a store, like Shein or something, and it'll take me right there to it again.

Interviewer: So like stores?

Participant: Yes. Definitely stores. Sometimes I look for home improvement stuff from Lowe's and Home Depot to compare prices and brands to see which ones are best. I always do that before I go to the store, so I know exactly what I'm getting.

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

Participant: Definitely Facebook. It's really creepy. I mean, I can't even this has happened to me before, like I will be thinking of something. I won't say it out loud. I haven't searched for it. And it'll show up on my news feed. That creeps me out. I have a habit of deleting those ads, like, you know how you can click on the icon that says you never want to see this again? I do that.

Interviewer: Yeah, OK. On the news, have you seen this discussed?

Participant: What, about results being tailored to you?

Interviewer: Yeah.

Participant: Well, there was a woman that worked for Facebook that went in front of the Senate. She talked about how much information they have on users of Facebook, and it's like, really

West Virginia Participant 24 (White/Female/39), interviewed on March 24, 2022

disturbing. But yeah, I still use it all of the time because it's how I stay connected to people. And I have to have it for school and work.

Interviewer: Right. OK, so you answered the question. How do you decide what personal information you will provide to social media companies like Youtube or Google?

Participant: OK, well that's the scary part. You don't decide. You have to give all of this information to sign up or order something. I feel like they have so much information on me and a lot of it I would not voluntarily give. But, I'm clearly giving it because I'm using these websites, so they already have it. It's just very overreaching. I don't like it, I just don't really feel like I have a choice. I mean I would have a choice to not use it. I try to use DuckDuckGo though.

Interviewer: OK. How do you try to protect your personal information online?

Participant: So I use DuckDuckGo as a search engine. I don't use Google. I use Google at work, but that's work-related. I started using that, I don't know, like three years ago. Just reading online about like what I should do to protect myself. I rarely use my birthday. I don't answer those stupid quizzes. I don't use my real name on Instagram. And I can't really think of anything else.

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

Participant: Oh gosh. I mean I see everything on Facebook.

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

Participant: I think for me, it started when I worked at the DNA lab, because we had digital evidence. And, the IT guys over there they just had a list of stuff to be aware of. For example, not giving out your first pet's name or your maiden name because those are common security questions asked. I also change my password monthly. Mostly because I usually forget them. And then at Marshall we have to change them a lot because we get a ton of phishing emails, so I haven't had any for awhile.

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

Participant: OK, well I do clear out my search history a lot, because of the com bots or whatever but it basically tailors things to you. Like if I want to save a website I just save it.

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

West Virginia Participant 24 (White/Female/39), interviewed on March 24, 2022

Participant: Well, for example Aunt Sharon is just rabid about it. She absolutely takes a lot of precautions, way more than I do, let's just say that. Her and Grammy don't buy anything online. Get this, they don't do any banking online, they don't trust it. Which I mean, I can see.

Participant: She takes a lot of precautions, way more precautions than I do. I say that but she won't like current Grammy, they won't come, and she won't buy anything online. They don't do any banking online, they don't trust it. Which I mean I can see a point there.

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

Participant: They need to look at the source, be aware where they are getting news from. See if it is selected, fact based, not opinion based. Read like three or four different sources.

Interviewer: What do you think determines what I've seen online or how things spread and how does it work?

Participant: I think there's a lot of people out there that only look at certain websites for news like they only go like for example, they only go to Fox News. They only look at certain articles. So the more they look at just this certain type of articles, the more articles of that nature. Let's say they're in a swing state and which means like there's a lot of undecided voters. A political party you know to target. I think that they use these corporations that are being paid by political parties to send them heavily slanted articles to bring out an emotion of anger or whatever for them to vote certain way. It's scary and it's working very effectively. And I also think that it had. I think it's from people with an agenda of people who want to, you know, people to get elected. And I would say it's not just Republicans. I think it's probably Democrats, too. If we're talking about America for talking about, like, global.

Interviewer: How would you like schools or the news to talk about what controls the Internet and what is seen?

Participant: This is I mean I feel like there should be some kind of accountability for these news organizations or corporations or these hidden political parties there should be some kind of accountability for blatantly putting out lies, with no forethought.

Interviewer: In schools, in terms of school, how do you think they should introduce it to students?

Participant: I mean, they're going to learn about it because They are going to see it online. I think an open discussion about what they're seeing online about this stuff to see like where they are getting that information from to debunk it.

West Virginia Participant 24 (White/Female/39), interviewed on March 24, 2022

Interviewer: If you happen to see stories about stop the steel in 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 bullets for Trump? What does this mean for stories about voter fraud and voting rights? Where did you learn this and what does it mean to you?

Participant: I think the reason why there was a lot of tribal stuff going on with like the horns and all that, was attention grabbing. Especially since we had like a whole busload of people from this area going there. They had legitimate concerns. They really thought that the articles they were reading, the people they were listening to have a right to be upset. They really thought the election was stolen. I feel like that has been debunked since you know we've Republicans come out and say that it was legitimate that Trump did Lucille action, but they felt like they had a right to. They wanted to take over the government because they felt that the election was stolen. They had a legitimate concern about it. And I don't feel like I was handled very well. I don't feel like what happened. I was there two days before it happened. We went to that really sacred event. I felt like 4 servicemen that had spent his entire life in the Air Force and then two days later to see what happened to the Capitol was just disgraceful. And there are people that lost their lives, it was just utter chaos.

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 other seeing?

Participant: The only content I post online is my girls. And I have a small list of people on my Facebook, friends and people that I know personally.

Interviewer: What type of content do you try to hide from other seeing?

Participant: I don't play any content out there. I'm trying to hide.

Interviewer: Like what? What would that define though? Like what kind of content?

Participant: Like what I do on a daily basis?

Interviewer: So basically you try to hide like your private life, you would say.

Participant: Yeah. No one needs to know everything about me. It's just not relevant or needed. I feel like.

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

Participant: Yeah, I still do that.

West Virginia Participant 24 (White/Female/39), interviewed on March 24, 2022

Interviewer: OK, name an instance.

Participant: It is a very conscious decision. If I like something online that it is going to be traced back to me in some way or some form. So, it is an everyday thing. Today, I liked a post about the Museum of Art, and I ran it and I thought that it was well written. I think everything you should do is think out. And it is crazy, though I do not feel like I am as caught. It is sad to say I am not as conscious of it as I was, you know, ten years ago.

Interviewer: So just did you ever think of a time where like a specific element? Were you choosing to be careful about what you like online because of how others may see it or something?

Participant: I mean, I still do that so.

Interviewer: Like what? Why did you choose not to like?

Participant: Chris Brown's music. But I don't like, you know, the things he's done in his personal life. The domestic violence, so I don't feel like as a consumer, as a parent I should be supporting an artist that commits massive violence, so I will not like him online.

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: YouTube I like to watch true crime stuff.

Participant: So, I will search for it and then more true crimes have pops up when.

Interviewer: When you are unsatisfied with the Internet search results, how do you adjust your search is to change the results.

Participant: I will either add more language or sometimes you have to be more precise in what you're looking for.

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

Participant: Well, first I'll read the article, look at the author or whoever wrote it, the website and synopsis. I think is a good example of this. I was reading an article today about hydration and I noticed that it was founded or funded; this study was funded by Gatorade. So, Gatorade is like selling you hydration stuff. And then there are tracking studies promoting hydration, so, to me, that's not a credible source. I need somebody that's neutral.

Interviewer: So, if the publisher is profiting, you would consider that not very reliable?

West Virginia Participant 24 (White/Female/39), interviewed on March 24, 2022

Participant: Oh yeah, absolutely. I mean, it has to be.

Interviewer: That's all I needed to know. Can you tell me about a time when you double checked information online to verify if it was credible?

Participant: OK, I do this a lot for when I take a supplement. I'm taking supplements right now to lose weight. The best thing I do is look at studies that they have done with the supplement and see like the age range, how long ago it was and how many people they had in the study and that sort of thing. See if it's something I need because taking a supplement can be kind of risky sometimes to your health.

Interviewer: What made you suspicious?

Participant: Of what? When? I get suspicious every day.

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

Participant: Yes. Tell me a time. Let's see. As on the website?

Interviewer: I mean like a news article.

Participant: I did it today.

Interviewer: What was the information though?

Participant: About the Supreme Court nomination.

Interviewer: What made you suspicious? What made you think it was biased?

Participant: I mean, just the news source.

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

Participant: I went to the video of the actual thing to see the senator asking the questions because it was saying that Lindsey Graham stormed off. You know, like asking questions. And I was like, they're probably just over there making that dramatic. And then I saw the video.

Interviewer: OK, please tell me about a time that your friends or family distrusted a website or information on a website.

West Virginia Participant 24 (White/Female/39), interviewed on March 24, 2022

Participant: OK. Ardens Agricola. He likes to send me articles from Fox News, and he just trusts everything off CNN or other Journals or partners.

Interviewer: Did they double check the information from a different source to see if it was credible?

Participant: Yeah, they double check it from, like, Fox News and tell me.

Interviewer: So, it was only one source? They weren't getting it from anything else?

Participant: Yeah. And now whatever that website is that Trump uses he doesn't like his own. It's like an app or something that they all use.

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

Participant: Yeah, absolutely. I feel like Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, all these different platforms have a huge, huge part and debunking fake news.

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

Participant: I do think it's a scary term because it's used.

Interviewer: What do you think it is?

Participant: It's basically, you know sometimes very factual, well studied news black and white. Like there's video proof of it. And it's just used as like a political term to just right off someone's opinion. A write off facts you know and manipulate. It's manipulating people's views on things because you can.

Interviewer: OK, where is it at?

Participant: The fake news?

Interviewer: Yeah.

Participant: It's everywhere. It's on every website. I mean, there's all these this, it's everywhere.

Interviewer: OK. Who does it target?

Participant: I think it targets all of us, every single one of us. I think that we are watched and monitored. Our likes and dislikes are kind of categorized and used against us. And you know, we

West Virginia Participant 24 (White/Female/39), interviewed on March 24, 2022

all have our own biases. And I think those are used against us to. How they want us to think and manipulate us, and we need to make contact.

Interviewer: Who is vulnerable to it?

Participant: I think everyone is vulnerable to it. Young kids. OK, I think younger kids, teenagers. Probably more so because, you know, you're developing how you think and feel. Older generations that maybe aren't as aware of how things are tailored towards them. They just assume that everyone reading the same news, they're not realizing that, like certain stories are being like sent to them to read.

Interviewer: Right. OK. What it means for democracy, democracy like fake news.

Participant: I think it's destroying democracy. The last yeah, really five years. The Trump presidency and election have been really scary. To see the people pitting themselves against each other and you know, not being able to find common ground. And I never, never thought that would happen.

Interviewer: OK. Is it a real problem?

Participant: Absolutely.

Interviewer: OK. What are the politics of it all?

Participant: Well, I think there's this faction of an older generation that wants to maintain power and control and then there's the other side that once actual democracy of equality. Actually wants true democracy, and I think that they will never see eye to eye. So, I think there's always going to be this discourse, but I feel like things have been intensified with social, especially with the social media and Internet, it's just being used as a weapon.

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

Participant: That will be a law. I think it. I think there should be some. There should be a law against keeping all this information on people. I think you if use free websites = Google, Facebook, Instagram, all this stuff. I don't think they should be able to stockpile what you search for. I don't think that.

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, and what should be done about it?

Participant: Alright, I see a lot of fake news on Facebook, and it usually has a disclaimer on it. It's usually my cousins send it to me to change my opinion about something.

West Virginia Participant 24 (White/Female/39), interviewed on March 24, 2022

Interviewer: What can be done about it?

Participant: There's really nothing I can do about my cousins, but just ignore it. I'll read it.

Interviewer: What would you like to add to this? Is there anything else you would like to share?

Participant: No.

Interviewer: What is the date?

Participant: It is March 23rd, 2022.

Interviewer: Your state of residence?

Participant: West Virginia.

Interviewer: Your age?

Participant: 39.

Interviewer: Your gender?

Participant: I'm female.

Interviewer: Your highest level of education completed?

Participant: I have a bachelor's degree.

