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Kentucky Participant 2 (White/Male/18), interviewed on October 27, 2022

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"Kentucky Participant 2 (White/Male/18), interviewed on October 27, 2022" (2022). *0873: The Fake News and Information Literacy Project*. 50.


https://mds.marshall.edu/fake_news_information_lit/50

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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:	8/24/22
	Expires on:	9/15/23
	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/fake_news_information_lit/).

You will be asked a series of 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 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 (First Year Seminar) small group, the FYS graduate assistant and the professor. These people will use the recording to verify

Subject's Initials _____

consent and make a redacted transcript. Definitized transcripts will be uploaded to Marshall University's Digital Scholar website (https://mds.marshall.edu/fake_news_information_lit/).

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.

You will be given a signed and dated copy of this consent form.

SIGNATURES

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 _____

Kentucky Participant 2 (White/Male/18), interviewed on October 27, 2022

The participant agreed to the terms of consent.

Interviewer: So, 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: It's a big one. I guess I first started using social media around the 7th grade. Six or 7th grade, I think. I would say mostly, I didn't really have any news or anything on it back then, but then I started actually getting news into my feed, probably within the last three years.

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

Participant: Primarily for social media contact with friends and family, schoolwork assignments, things like that.

Interviewer: What type of websites do you visit?

Participant: Can range from anything from news articles to scholarly articles, to things for entertainment like a Browser. Forms a communication kind of like discord, anything like that, Facebook. Online stores when I'm shopping for things. Stuff like that.

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

Participant: Well, it would be primarily historical reenactment gear. That's been mostly online and then there's also a lot of searches for Khan Academy and my homework assignment website, as well as my universities website.

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

Participant: A lot of social media websites mostly. If I just got a few minutes, if I've got some time to actually sit down, things like streaming services like Netflix or Disney plus, where I can enjoy a movie or anything.

Interviewer: What do you do on those sites?

Participant: A lot of times when I'm online, I'm just trying to see what people are up to, keep in contact with my friends for the most part. Then if it's something like a streaming service, just watching a TV show or a movie. And then if I'm like online shopping or something, I'm online shopping.

Interviewer: And why do you visit those particular sites?

Participant: Uh, they have something that I want, I guess if I want to maintain contact with people, I'll go to social media or some sort of communication website. Or if I want

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entertainment, I go to an entertainment website, streaming service, something like that, Disney plus.

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 past time online?

Participant: Well, I know some of my family, for instance, just goes online to shop for the most part or watch videos and have fixed things. That's what my dad does most of the time. I know some people like my friends, they just go on there to see the news through their Twitter or of course, 9 times out of 10 being on a college campus is someone's on their phone, it's Snapchat.

Interviewer: What types of devices do you use to access the internet? Phones, tablets, laptops?
Participant: Mostly my phone, because that's the one that takes the least amount of effort to get to.

Interviewer: What do you use the most?

Participant: And then also on my laptop.

Interviewer: what do you use the least?

Participant: I use my laptop or I use my phone for most everything that's not schoolwork, so I use my laptop the least just because I only have to use it really to turn in assignments.

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 try to avoid in your reasons for avoiding them.

Participant: The most common soul social medias i use is Instagram and Snapchat and then the third one I have that I actually actively use is discord. I also have a Facebook account, use Snapchat and Instagram pretty much daily because that's where all my friends are online. Discord is also pretty often just because I've got some friends on there. I've got some international friends and that's my only way I really can talk to them because I don't have their phone numbers or anything. I try to avoid Twitter and Reddit for the most part. I avoid Twitter because it's just so there's so much controversy surrounding Twitter and everything, and I just don't want to have anything to do with that, I told myself I'd never get a Facebook account, but I changed my mind just because there were a couple people who I had to remain in contact with, who only had Facebook was my only way to really keep up with. The same goes for Reddit. I feel like there's just so much. There's a lot of problem areas on Reddit and I just don't want to be anywhere near that.

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

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Participant: Well, I know for a fact that some people I disagree with live primarily on Facebook so that's one of the reasons I avoid that. Also Snapchat, That's pretty common. Instagram is probably the least of most of them. I'm not sure why that is. Facebook, I think because it is just the big name in social media. So everyone's on Facebook and Twitter and stuff like that.

Interviewer: Describe for me what you would what you do when you want to find out something factual.

Participant: I'll hop online and search it up. I typically try to avoid Wikipedia if I can but if it's something quick and I know it doesn't really have a huge impact like, I just want to learn a quick fact. I usually rely on Wikipedia, but if it's something I actually need for a paper, I use academic databases regarding that information.

Interviewer: How do people around you find out something factual?

Participant: I would say most of the same. I think most people around me rely more on Wikipedia or their news feed for that, but largely the same.

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: Almost anything I come across that's politically charged in either direction so a big-name example would be any sort of commentary on the events surrounding the Black Lives Matter movement over the past couple summers. Anything surrounding that, no matter what it is, I would typically be doubting whichever side wrote it, because I know both sides are just going to always take the path of least resistance and agree with whatever makes them look the best.

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

Participant: I guess it would sort of be because we'd see it on all the different news channels that would pop up, that something else was destroyed or some other thing happened regarding the movement. So we would typically all be around each other when it happened, and we would all generally discuss it. We would sit down and talk about why we didn't agree necessarily with the writing aspect and that there's other ways to voice your disagreements than burning down a building.

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

Participant: One of the only things that appears on our TV's most frequent at home is the news so nine times out of 10, sitting around watching TV, it'll be on the on the news.

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Interviewer: if there are social media sites that you think are untrustworthy. What makes them untrustworthy?

Participant: Uh, I think it's the lack of, trying to think of a good word. Not necessarily moderation, but like the lack of verification, I think. I mean, you can see it on, and I guess it's kind of hard to stop because you can't really stop people from doing what they're going to do. But on almost any social media site, I'm hesitant to put out too much information if it's if it's publicly visible because I know that anyone can get on there and pretend to be anyone else and you'd almost be none the wiser. I think particularly the sites that promote more anonymous communication like discord and Reddit. Things that are generally less oriented towards sharing what you're actually doing and just oriented towards sharing what you think is interesting. Because there's no real verification method to make sure you are who you say you are. They just ask you for an e-mail and a username and a password pretty much.

Interviewer: Tell me about your experiences finding conspiracy theories.

Participant: I've never been a big buyer into conspiracy theories. So it's very rare that I actually find a conspiracy theory more than I just hear about it through my friends who want my own thoughts on it.

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

Participant: There was this security incident surrounding discord that I had heard about and so there were people talking about it and trying and trying to figure out what to do. So I shared what I thought was the solution which was that you could block a friend request from people who aren't associated with you, and I thought that was an actual feature, and then I was informed that that was never a feature, and that discord automatically does not allow people to send you a friend request if they don't actually know who you are. As in like they don't know your username or your number or something like that.

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

Participant: I tend to over exaggerate so on occasion when if I've been in an argument with someone about where I'm going to be or why I can't be somewhere, I will inform them that I'm too far away. Or if I don't, if I specifically don't want to do something, I have informed people that I've been too far away, or I've been busy at the moment and that was not necessarily true.

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

Participant: I've been looking for. Uh, so I was making a search for a new laptop recently and

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so I've noticed that now I'm getting ads on Google and stuff pops into the search bar when I'm typing in. Like if I'm typing in something just to fix something on my current computer, it'll suggest computer selling websites or different parts that I don't have, we don't need, but it's like, oh, you should probably look into this because you were looking for a new computer.

Interviewer: Describe a time when you notice the search result seems somehow tailored to you, if anywhere. Where on the news have you seen this discussed?

Participant: Sorry if I misunderstood the question, but that was pretty much what I just described, like it was telling me certain websites or items that I might want for a new computer even though I wasn't actively looking for one, but it's just knew that I have been searching for a new computer recently. Yeah, it was. It was that. Yeah, it was bringing up websites and things that I didn't know existed.

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

Participant: I typically operate on a universal basis, and that is I don't want to provide them with more than my e-mail and username and whatever information might be required to just establish an account.

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

Participant: I try not to share my actual name online if I don't have to. If it's, if it's something I can decide who sees my personal information. Then I'm more lenient on it, but if it's something like discord or something like that I don't put my actual name out there very often. I don't put actual pictures of me out there. And then I change my passwords pretty frequently and I run security checks by making sure that I don't have any out-of-date security features on my Google accounts, things like that.

Interviewer: What do you think others around you do?

Participant: I'd like to think that people do the same thing, but I know they don't because I know a lot of people just have open social media accounts. Anyone can follow them. Anyone can see what they're up to, what they're doing.

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

Participant: A lot of the stuff I just described is stuff that I see on the news and from friends and family. Change your passwords, don't share information. You don't have to share. Keep your accounts private. That's pretty much it.

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

Participant: Customize, I can't. I guess I kind of get it throughout to make money. I love that's just the way that it is. I don't really. I can't really have any thoughts about that. I will probably be doing the same thing. Control that's, that's where I started to have a problem. I don't think anyone should be censored completely. I think if you're putting something on a website that's supposed to be for true information, like Wikipedia, you don't have a right to put whatever you want on there. But that doesn't mean you don't have a right to put your opinions wherever they go. So I don't like it when companies. Like Instagram, where they were censoring people where for what they were deciding what was misinformation or not, and I'm not a big fan of that. Everyone has a right to share what they think is true. That's the only that's the only way new stuff gets verified.

Interviewer: What have you heard others discuss about this?

Participant: I've heard some of the similar and then I've heard some of the opposite opinion. I've got friends who are all for censorship and then I've got friends who really don't think anyone should have a voice if they're disagreeing with them.

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?

Participant: I would say always, always triple-check yourself. I operate under the assumption that if you can find it true in three separate places that are not affiliated with each other, then it's probably reliable information. So I would, I would always say, always triple-check yourself at the very least, double check if you find something on Wikipedia and you're using it for an assignment, go somewhere else. Britannica is the most common one. Go somewhere else that can verify that information before you take it as complete truth. And that's especially true if it comes to anything like the news or political comments if you should always double-check because they're always out to try and get people to be passionate about something.

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? What do you think controls information online or in our apps?

Participant: What is seen online and how things spread I know at this point is pretty much controlled by computer determination. It picks up what you've been looking at, what you had looked at in the past, and it just predicts what it thinks you're going to want to look at in the future. The people who benefit are the people who made it because they're the ones who make the money off it. Even if you don't click on them, they're still making the money off the ads. In terms of what controls information, I'd say that's also the computer. I know that the owner of Facebook or the owner of Twitter isn't actively sitting there thinking, I wonder what I'm going to do with this person's information today. They're telling a computer. They have their businesses

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tell the computer what to do and then the computer just runs it and then they send you agree to the terms and conditions notice.

Interviewer: The Internet is full of stories that divide people about things like the coronavirus, the capital riots, stop the steal, Antifa, Black Lives Matter, climate change, Qanon, gun violence, and abortion. 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 they should focus on, like I said earlier, just double-check whatever you see. Like I I'm not asking people to change their political opinion. I just want people if they see something that says like "BLM burns down a building," I just want people to go double-check and make sure that they actually verify that somewhere. I think schools in the news should advocate for that sort of thing. If they say, like surrounding January 6th, one news source would say, oh, conservative, stormed the capital building or they had a complete terrorist takeover and just double check whenever you find.

Interviewer: If you happen to see stories about the FBI retrieving documents from President Trump's Mar-A-Lago club, what do you make of why federal law enforcement searched his property? Where did you learn this and what does it mean to you?

Participant: My current understanding from what I've seen is that there were documents he was supposed to return and didn't or hadn't yet and so they went to investigate it. And then, of course, I've also heard the other thing in that it's just they're trying to dig up information on them illegally to prevent him from running in the election. I saw this on the news for the most part, and I honestly didn't look too much more into it because I've got other things to do. I think what it means to me is that it's just showing exactly to what lengths people are willing to go to prove what they want to be true. So people are taking this and spinning it into Watergate 2.0, or they're spinning this into some great deliverance of justice by federal law enforcement.

Interviewer: If you happen to see stories about "Stop the Steal" and the capital riot, what do you make of why the protesters were there?

Participant: There were a lot of people who I think were there because they act, they actively wanted answers for things that they were being told they just needed to stop worrying about. And I think a lot of people did believe that the election was stolen. And then there's some people who were there who were just there for crazy. Whatever reasons they were, they were there to entertain themselves because they were just adrenaline junkies and want to see chaos no matter what

Interviewer: So why do you think some dress in costumes like hunters and trappers or animal pelts? Or with Norse tattoos? Or as Roman soldiers, or in groups like Cowboys for Trump?

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Participant: I think it's because they were all, whether they actually believed it or not, trying to convey this message of freedom and liberty and complete will of the people deciding what the government is, which isn't necessarily a horrible thing. But it could definitely be handled better. I think they're sharing a lot of opinionated speech that they have a right to this information. I'm the citizen and I'm completely free. I can do what I want because you are *my* government kind of thing.

Interviewer: What does this mean for the stories about voting rights?

Participant: Well. I definitely don't think it was a great thing to do. In general. You shouldn't storm and break stuff of any building. They got the point across, but I don't think it really did them any favors because then everyone just spun it into terrorist actions that the capital building and then it all it did was get federal law enforcement on the scene and then they put barbed wire up everywhere, but I don't think it actually has a significant impact on voting rights. Are the stories about voting rights? Because, I mean, people are going to continue to say what they want no matter how that went down.

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

Participant: I saw all of this primarily through the news and I did some again at a certain point, I was just sick of hearing about it. But I did some reading into it further in there was all kinds of extra stuff in the news companies don't tell you things like that. To me, it primarily meant that we keep getting into more and more divided state and it's becoming a big problem. I definitely don't think storming the capital was a good idea, but I think at its core, the idea that the people have the right to certain information and answers to their questions is I think that's a good principle at heart.

Interviewer: 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?

Participant: I'm going to be completely honest. I don't know much about QAnon other than that that name got thrown around a bunch. I really, I really don't know much about it.

Interviewer: if you happen to be following this 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?

Participant: I've kind of come to the conclusion that a lot of the coronavirus stuff was politically charged. People were upset at Trump for apparently not doing enough, so then they all had to make a massive deal about it. I've kind of come to the conclusion that you can get vaccinated. You can wear a mask, but I don't think you should be forcing people to do these things when it doesn't 100% fix the problem. Yeah. I mean, even if you're vaccinated, you can still catch COVID. So, there's no reason to force people to get vaccinated, because at that point, you're just

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making them do something for the sake of making them do something. It doesn't stop you from getting your transmitting it. I don't think people should be forced to do either of those.

Interviewer: Why do you think we hear so many conflicting stories?

Participant: It's definitely a political move. There's liberal or I guess that's an OK word to use. There's definitely liberal and conservative doctors who want to see a certain side win out, and that's very unfortunate because they should be on the side of medicine. But, we get a lot of conflicting stories because there's people who proclaim themselves to be experts on this situation. And they're not. So then people tend to ignore the actual experts on situation. And then you get people who are supposed to be experts in this situation, and they're just doing this because their boss told them to and their boss might have a political agenda for.

Interviewer: What do you think causes the different opinions?

Participant: I would say politics plays a massive part in that as well. There are people who are 100% libertarian. I think the government shouldn't be able to make them do a single thing. And then there's people who are 100% on the liberal side of the spectrum, who think that the government should be able to say whatever it wants and they've all, it's all got our best interests at heart. I think the different opinions are almost entirely politically charged, but there's still definitely some medical research behind it.

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

Participant: I've heard all this from the news, my own reading and then my family and friends. I've got a lot of family and friends who are involved in the medical field so I'm learning from what they've been informing me, for example, one of my friends. His dad's a doctor. so I've been hearing it from people like that.

Interviewer: OK. If you happen to be following coverage on the House Select Committee to investigate the Capital Riot, what sense do you make of how Republicans and Democrats disagree over the scope and purpose of the committee?

Participant: This is something else I'm not. Scope and purpose of the committee isn't really something I'm super knowledgeable on as well. I only know that they've been like issuing subpoenas, trying to get people to testify in front of the Congress so I if I can, I'd like to skip this one because I don't really know much about that.

Interviewer: Yeah, you can, you can. If you happen to see stories about the Black Lives Matter protests and Antifa, what do you make of the protests after George Floyd was killed?

Participant: Uh people definitely had a right to protest it, and even if I disagree or agree with what they're protesting about they definitely have a right to protest.

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Interviewer: OK. Why do you think some burn buildings or other property?

Participant: I think people started burning buildings and property because they saw a chance to take advantage of the situation. Like I said, people have the right to protest, but when you start damaging property for no apparent reason, that starts to become a riot and just criminal activity at that point. I don't think there's any justifiable way to spin that into "It's reimbursement for the cost of lives). Violence doesn't cancel out violence, it just makes the situation worse.

Interviewer: Why did protesters denounce the police?

Participant: Protesters saw it as a police problem. And I mean, there's obviously bad police officers out there. There are racist people wherever you're going to go but I think there was a kind of just overall consensus that all of the police in America have this agreement to hate on the African American community and I don't think that's necessarily true.

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

Participant: Most of this I also heard through the news. And then I have friends who have very strong opinions on the matter but most of what I consider to be factual about this is, I learned from the news.

Interviewer: If you happened to see stories about recent mass shootings. Do you think it's a real problem?

Participant: Yeah, mass shootings are definitely an issue. I think there's just a different way to go about the solution other than banning all weapons.

Interviewer: If so, has it always been a problem?

Participant: I think so for sure. I mean, if you go back to the founding of the country, we have things we have literally what's called the Boston massacre and then the Harpers Ferry raid by John Brown. I mean, there have always been situations where people take the weapons available to them and use them to cause chaos.

Interviewer: Why is it a problem now?

Participant: I think it's easier to commit a mass shooting now with the use of an automatic weapon and it's also easier for news to spread. All of it happens in the incident occurs and then the information is broadcast all within an instant like the news will be covering it as it's going on. Whereas in the past it would it, the newspapers would still be catching up a week later.

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

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Participant: A lot of that is also from the news, but things in the historical sense, I've learned through secondary research online.

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

Participant: I typically check the author of it author or authors, or the publisher of the information and then I typically see if there's any obvious opinionated. I mean, sometimes you don't know if something's changed by an opinion or not, but I always check and see if there's something that's obviously got a bias into it, like someone telling a personal story about why they disagree with something and then proceed to make what they call a scholarly article about it.

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

Participant: Uh, yeah, just one second. So I can think of something. I know I've done it. I just can't remember off the top of my head. There was a specific incident recently where people were telling me that the moon landing was fake and they start citing these reasons why. So I started doing my search up on it.

Interviewer: OK, what made you suspicious?

Participant: Primarily the fact that they're not, and I guess I'm not either, which is why I wanted to find other sources other than my own, personal knowledge to verify this, but they're not experts on the matter, so they probably don't have all the information available. And neither did I. So that's why I wanted to go double-check of us both of our points of views.

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

Participant: I pretty much simply looked up if there was anything pertaining to their arguments like for example, they said the American flag is waving in the photos, and so I looked up why does the American flag appear to light wave in the moon landing and found out that the reason why is because there's a telescopic arm on the top, and so whichever way you touch the flag last, it's going to stick like that because there's no air.

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

Participant: I felt like I could. I could trust the source Because then I could double-check everything, like finding other pictures or other authors who were using and providing the same information. And who were able to confirm it through different methods.

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

Kentucky Participant 2 (White/Male/18), interviewed on October 27, 2022

Participant: Stuff surrounding the COVID pandemic. So there were certain problems with me being able to go places because I was not yet vaccinated, so I've voiced my concerns about getting vaccinated in my family. I did my own research and found that I wasn't a substantial risk of anything, so I went ahead and got vaccinated.

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

Participant: Uh, I'm not sure. I hope so, but I trusted my parents, to do their own research. I trusted their ability to verify information online.

Interviewer: How do you think the media should cover stories about fake news or disinformation?

Participant: I think they should cover it objectively. I think they should find what actually happened. Just share exactly what happened and don't get into opinions unless you're doing a program that's all about your opinions. Just give me the information.

Interviewer: Should the media do more to teach people how to verify the credibility of the information?

Participant: Yes, I think so 100% because every single media outlet says check back here for updates or anything like that. It doesn't say where you can go to make sure this is all true which just says oh trust us we're trustworthy and you have no proof of that.

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

Participant: Fake news is, I guess, my understanding. Is that fake news is the publishing of information that's so opinionated that it kind of ignores the actual facts. It just goes into what you think is true and what should be true.

Interviewer: Where is it at?

Participant: I think fake news is everywhere. I think even if it's not necessarily something to do with mainstream politics, I think fake news can happen anywhere like gossip in high school, I consider that to be fake news because people tell stories about their classmates and everything, and it's simply not true. But they're broadcasting it as such.

Interviewer: Who does it target?

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Participant: I think anyone can be a target. It primarily targets people who are controversial, though I believe. Anyone who's got an opinion that's outside of the current understanding or what they want to be true, I think that those are the primary targets.

Interviewer: Who is vulnerable to it?

Participant: I think anyone can be vulnerable to fake news. Like I said, it can go all the way from a high schooler to politicians being slandered because of something they said or misspoke or straight up. Sometimes people just lie about what politicians say.

Interviewer: What it means for democracy?

Participant: I think it can. It presents some threat to democracy because I think either way, straight up lying about a political situation or something that you're trying to use to get elected is wrong. I don't think there's any really justifiable excuse for that. You're deceiving the people you're supposed to be supporting and representing on a federal level.

Interviewer: Is it a real problem?

Participant: I think it is absolutely a real problem because it's so easily propagated, and people are so unwilling to double-check their information. They just believe the first thing they see.

Interviewer: What are the politics of it all?

Participant: It's primarily if you don't agree with me completely, you disagree with me completely. If you don't want to believe exactly what I say, so you disagree with me on every single facet of what I believe.

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

Participant: I think it's kind of like a controversial thing because they debate if it's already part of the if the amendments extend to that. But if there's going to be some. If there's going to be made to cover digital rights exclusively, I think it definitely needs to be something like do not censor everything you simply disagree with, I think everyone should have the right to share what they want. You got every right to ignore that if you want.

Interviewer: Please offer some examples of where you have seen fake news.

Participant: I've seen people. For example, shootings: people just publish the information about a shooting and say what they think is true. Fully automatic weapon used and this kind of ammunition. And they had this much. This many rounds and then the incident, you look into it, you realize, well, that's physically impossible for someone to carry. Other things are what people publish. There was a big thing about 10 years ago now, people were talking about how an

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asteroid was going to smack into the earth. Since that simply wasn't true, they just find an image of a certain star that looked inside here because it's expanding so far away and then they say, oh, this is coming right for us.

Interviewer: Who are the people who publish it?

Participant: The people who publish it can be from anywhere from people who are self-proclaimed experts and what they're talking about to mainstream media. Fox, CNN, all that stuff.

Interviewer: What are they trying to get from it?

Participant: Uh, definitely support. They're just trying to get publicity. They want more people to listen to them because that can only benefit them. More people are listening, the more of a chance they get taken seriously or they get attention. Some people just searching for attention.

Interviewer: What should be done about it?

Participant: I think there's pretty much very little to be done about it. Like I said, you've got the right to say whatever you want, but you've also got the right to deal with the consequences of saying whatever you want. I think we should pretty much just try to educate people to or, I guess, teach people to distrust what they see at a first glance and just double-check, make sure what you're seeing is true.

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

Participant: No, not particularly.

Interviewer: What is the date?

Participant: Today is October 27th, 2022.

Interviewer: Your state of residence.

Participant: Kentucky.

Interviewer: Your age.

Participant: 18.

Interviewer: Gender.

Participant: Male

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Interviewer: Race.

Participant: White.

Interviewer: Your highest level of education and completed.

Participant: High school.