

FAKE NEWS & MEDIA BIAS

TWO TYPES OF “FAKE NEWS”

Misinformation & Disinformation

* Misinformation = bad facts, poor investigation, poor journalism, poor research, careless research, biases, research errors, mistakes* Disinformation = propaganda, conspiracy theories

VERSUS FACTS AND OPINIONS

* Facts = well-researched, confirmed research, twice-tested, valid, truthful, scientifically-based, lawful, non-biased, non-opinionated, well-reasoned, mathematical* Opinions = personal beliefs, personal judgments, non-factual, perspectives, biased, hypotheses, assumptions, raw theses/claims

VERSUS EXPERT OPINION

* Expert Opinion may involve an expert’s opinion, which differs from the lay person in the sense an expert has studied and has researched their area of expertise.

HOW DOES FAKE NEWS HAPPEN?

A person/group/entity with established ethos (that is, they are perceived as truthful, honest, and generally use facts) reveals misinformation or disinformation, or states a non-expert opinion on a topic.

This “commentary” or “analysis” is taken by the audience as “fact” or “reliable information” rather than opinion or mis-/disinformation.

FAKE NEWS EXAMPLES

- * Hoaxes* Conspiracy Theories
- * Logical Fallacies
- * Propaganda
- * Satire (when it’s for the purpose of humor)

FAKE NEWS CHARACTERISTICS

- * half-truths* sensational
- * fabricated
- * clickbait-ish or spearfishing commentary/topics
- * highly entertaining to the intended audience
- * caters to the audiences assumptions or beliefs

FAKE NEWS OUTCOMES

- * damage to the ethos or credibility of an individual or group* increased/decreased readership
- * mislead publics
- * paranoia about the government, an organization, political figures, cultures, or groups

CONTEMPORARY RIGHT-WING FAKE NEWS CHARACTERISTICS

Fake News predominates the right-wing and alt-right culture of the United States.

This news is usually

- * Majority Culture/Status Quo-Oriented* Conservative
- * Religious
- * Patriarchal
- * Authoritarian
- * Militaristic
- * Polarizing/Black and White

EXPLOITS

- * Name Calling (e.g., Libtards, Snowflakes, etc.)* "Us" Versus "Them" Attitude

TWO CASE STUDIES

Case Study #1: MARTINLUTHERKING.ORG

- * Author: This site was owned by white supremacists* Audience: General
- * Medium: Website/Internet

Posed as a valid and factual resource for civil rights information... included a section called "Rap Lyrics" obviously catering to young black and urban populations.

Case Study #2: INFOWARS

- * Author: This website is owned by far-right conspiracy theorist, Alex Jones.* Purpose: Increase Readership through Sensationalism

- * Audience: Conservatives
- * Medium: Website/Internet/Social Media

Posed as a factual conservative news source, building off the readership of conservative news: Rush Limbaugh, Breitbart, Fox News, and other conservative media sources.

HOW TO SPOT FAKE NEWS

1. Ask: Who is the author?
2. Ask: What is the author's reputation/ethos?
3. Ask: Where does this information originate? Check for supporting sources.
4. Ask: Is there bias? Check for opinions dominating over facts.
5. Ask: Are their sources dated?
6. Examine the outcomes.
7. Examine the purposes of the stories.
8. Ask about unintended consequences of their findings/news/supposed facts.

HOW TO AVOID FAKE NEWS

1. Find original content.
2. Find newer content.
3. Find peer-reviewed content.
4. Find edited content.
5. Find "vetted" content (often cited or referenced by other reliable sources)