



Episode 17 - News, Truth, and Propaganda - Reading & Discussion List

Dear Audience,

As we prepare each show, internally we develop a reading list so our producers and hosts can develop the questions and arc of conversation for the hour. We find this research fascinating - we are dealing with long term issues (the future of cities, the supply chain, news and democracy) that are being fundamentally affected by short term events. Many of the best minds on the planet have written thoughtfully on these topics, often over just the last few weeks!

We'd like to share these reading lists with our community so you can go deeper, see what we're reading, and share readings and topics with us for future shows. We also think that capturing this snapshot of global thinking about pandemic issues will serve as a time capsule (as does Quarantime!) for how the world reacted to the greatest torrent of fundamental change experienced in our lifetimes .

We're asking three overriding questions about misinformation:

1) Why do so many people want to believe in and are susceptible to conspiracy theories? This has to do with mass psychology and the mechanisms that both good and bad actors can use to change our beliefs. I'm finding a lot of people I know have so little trust in authority, the establishment, experts that they take to unscientific wacky stuff with less friction than I witnessed in 2016. This alarms me- the Manchurian virus seems to be pretty capable.

2) How are today's media technologies, platforms, algorithms, business models and personalization systems complicit in this. Despite all the Facebook 2016 wake up calls, are we any better off or are we worse as we spend months living alarmist exclusively virtually

3) Who is fomenting all this disinformation, and why? Is it organic, Anti-Vaxxers (and what motivates them?), Right Wing conspiracy groups/white nationalists? Russian and other foreign actors who look for fault lines in American society? Is this a key skirmish in the 2020 elections? Are we in a full on cyber war at this point?

How is this measured and what do we know about the disinformation? Can we pinpoint a few super creators that then send content through bots and networks to willing trolls? Is the public health community particularly susceptible to this v politicians who operate as adversaries all the time? How are facebook and youtube doing in trying to manage misinformation v. "truth?" I've watched them play whack-a-mole with the Plandemic video all week and it only seems to egg people on. Then the Lincoln Project video got removed and I thought, "How can we possibly expect a company to decide what we should see?"

Finally, for our conversation are there specific examples of disinformation we can cite? Plandemic, One America News, the whole Bill Gates/5G/Soros/Vaccine meme, etc?

Articles by Guest Yael Eisenstat

Wired: 2019 The Real Reason Tech Struggles With Algorithmic Bias

By Yael Eisenstat

https://www.wired.com/story/the-real-reason-tech-struggles-with-algorithmic-bias/?fbclid=IwAR3vAwuKUVbfs-iP6fGXaj0scmndscOtSLgslwOxl2pB8gb_0dWQxndImpQ

Washington Post: 2019 I worked on political ads at Facebook. They profit by manipulating us. The company can't avoid damaging democracy By Yael Eisenstat

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/outlook/2019/11/04/i-worked-political-ads-facebook-they-profit-by-manipulating-us/>

Web Freedom v. Accountability, Highlights from a 2020 SXSW panel about the Future of Tech Responsibility

<https://www.dli.tech.cornell.edu/post/section-230-revisited-web-freedom-vs-accountability>

CNN Podcast: She Spent 10+ Years at the CIA. It Didn't Prepare Her for Life at Facebook.

<https://podcasts.apple.com/us/podcast/she-spent-10-years-at-cia-it-didnt-prepare-her-for/id1487530250?i=1000465143137>

Framing Misinformation

Harvard Kennedy School Misinformation review: Why do people believe COVID-19 conspiracy theories?

These articles examine why we don't trust authority why we seek explanations, and how misinformation is ideologically aligned. Not so much on platform complicity mechanisms

<https://misinforeview.hks.harvard.edu/article/why-do-people-believe-covid-19-conspiracy-theories/>

HKS Misinformation: additional COVID 19 misinformation readings

<https://misinforeview.hks.harvard.edu>

Center For Humane Technology podcast: The Spin Doctors Are In. COVID and misinformation.

Tristan Harris speaks with Rene DiResta of the Stanford Internet Observatory about COVID misinformation

Audio:

<https://your-undivided-attention.simplecast.com/episodes/the-spin-doctors-are-in>

Transcript:

<http://humanetech.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/CHT-Undivided-Attention-Podcast-Ep.-17-The-Spin-Doctors-Are-In.pdf>

Examples of Misinformation

KGB Misinformation Instruction

Yael sent us this chilling 1985 interview with [KGB defector](#) Yuri Bezmenov telling us exactly what was coming. "Watch the 7 minutes and tell me if your mind isn't blown! 100% spells out exactly where we are today. The next time you hear anyone at Facebook say, "But nobody could have seen this coming..." force them to watch this..."

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MUQmaupl5Gk>

The Plandemic Video

Official website for video : <https://plandemicmovie.com/>

One America News: Deep State, China, Soros, Clintons, & Fauci try to control population via COVID

<https://www.mediamatters.org/one-america-news-network/oan-conspiracy-theory-links-covid-19-population-control-bill-gates-george>

great clip at 3:25 -3:58

CNN Reliable Sources on Conspiracy theories

on one America news:

<https://www.cnn.com/videos/business/2020/05/10/crazy-conspiracy-talk-on-one-of-trumps-favorite-channels.cnn/video/playlists/reliable-sources-highlights/>

on more COVID conspiracies

<https://www.cnn.com/videos/business/2020/05/10/why-are-people-drawn-to-covid-19-conspiracy-theories.cnn/video/playlists/reliable-sources-highlights/>

Conspiracy video: Conspiracy minded police officer blows whistle on agents arresting people for running business out of their home, cancelling constitution.

<https://www.facebook.com/jamie.velasquez.58/videos/3221267191231359/>

Axios on Covid conspiracy history

<https://www.axios.com/coronavirus-conspiracy-theories-220bab78-9024-4209-ab2d-6daeb97427be.html>

Axios: Americans don't like contact tracing – reasons to fuel various conspiracy approaches

<https://www.axios.com/axios-ipsos-coronavirus-week-9-contact-tracing-bd747eaa-8fa1-4822-89bc-4e214c44a44d.html>

Visualizing misinformation

Neil Johnson, a professor of physics at George Washington University, analyzes the spread of scientific misinformation about the coronavirus and its effects. He uses network analysis – how information spreads on facebook and twitter. He finds that the forces of misinformation (such as the antivaxxers) have been far more aggressive and proactive than the public health community in dominating social media. Effectively bad memes are winning over truth because they are winning the war of links across sites/followers and search engine optimization. Ironically the immunity and vaccine community has not mounted an immune defense against invaders.

Here is an NPR summary of the research

<https://www.npr.org/2020/05/13/855611088/a-new-study-explores-the-spread-of-misinformation-about-coronavirus-on-facebook>

And the in-depth scientific paper. Look at the visualizations and you can see this at work

<https://www.nature.com/articles/s41586-020-2281-1>

Mathematicians Jevin West and Carl Bergstrom are policing Twitter feeds, Medium posts, and other sources of bad data and misleading charts.

[1khttps://www.google.com/amp/s/www.wired.com/story/professors-call-bullshit-covid-19-misinformation/amp](https://www.google.com/amp/s/www.wired.com/story/professors-call-bullshit-covid-19-misinformation/amp)

MIT COVID Social network analysis

http://ide.mit.edu/sites/default/files/publications/Covid-19%20fake%20news%20ms_psyarxiv.pdf

Americans are fighting coronavirus misinformation on social media

<https://www.google.com/amp/s/www.washingtonpost.com/politics/2020/05/07/americans-are-fighting-coronavirus-misinformation-social-media/%3foutputType=amp>

Sheriff Clark.

<https://twitter.com/sheriffclarke?lang=en>

Washing Post: misinformation viewers get Covid 19 at a greater rate

<https://www.npr.org/local/309/2020/05/04/849109486/study-finds-more-c-o-v-i-d-19-cases-among-viewers-of-fox-news-host-who-downplayed-pandemic>

COVID-19 and the 5G Conspiracy Theory: Social Network Analysis of Twitter Data

<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7205032/>

The moral hazard of Facebook trying to patrol truth. The takedown of the Lincoln projects mourning in America ad

<https://lincolnproject.us/news/facebook-trump-collusion/?fbclid=IwAR32C26p0e0avv4Y1Ons1LsshWykNe6xmAHW3eiKiCPWwtndrjZ3aVUz3oo>

Local News: Covid Crisis and Opportunity

How McClatchy's 30 papers cover COVID 19 locally

<https://www.miamiherald.com/news/coronavirus/article241348411.html>

Local news is already suffering from a business model under siege. Covid (and the loss of local advertisers) makes the crisis worse.

<https://www.cnn.com/2020/04/09/media/mcclatchy-newspaper-furloughs-coronavirus/index.html>

McClatchy CEO Craig Forman on NPR on the media <https://www.wnycstudios.org/podcasts/otm/episodes/local-news-on-the-media>

NY Times : The Local News Crisis

<https://www.nytimes.com/2019/11/20/us/local-news-disappear-pen-america.html>

Brookings: Local journalism in crisis: Why America must revive its local newsrooms

<https://www.brookings.edu/research/local-journalism-in-crisis-why-america-must-revive-its-local-newsrooms/>