

# Getting Real about Fake News: First-Year Students and Media Evaluation



Cara Evanson &  
James Sponsel  
  
Davidson College  
  
FYE 2018: CR-46

News-media-standard by Wikimedia Commons is licensed under a [CC BY-SA 4.0](#)

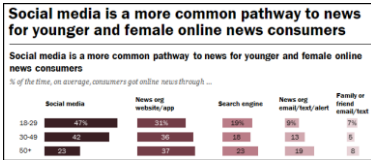
## Origin Story



Retrieved from <https://www.txtimes.com/2017/01/18/ok/fake-news-hillary-clinton-cameron-harris.html>

## National Data

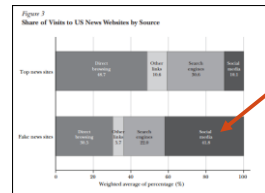
Pew Research Center (2017)



Retrieved from <http://www.journalism.org/2017/02/09/how-americans-encounter-recall-and-act-upon-digital-news/>

## National Data

Allcott, H. & Gentzkow, M. (2017). *Journal of Economic Perspectives*



Retrieved from <http://www.ijstor.org/stable/44235006>



## Collecting Data at Davidson

Davidson College—Chambers—17 by WHardcastle is licensed under a [CC BY-NC-SA 2.0](#)

## Consume & Evaluate



Newspaper by Silke Remmery is licensed under a [CC BY 2.0](#)

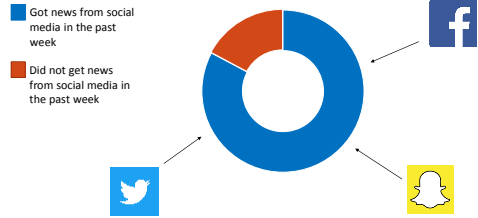
**523** first-year students



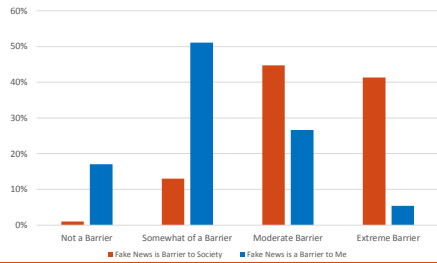
**98%**  
completed the  
survey and  
exercise

Photo credit: Atlantic 10 Conference. Used with permission.

Over 80% of Students Got News from Social Media



Students' Perception of Fake News as a Barrier to **Society** and **Self**



Creating  
the  
Exercise



Photo credit: ©Davidson College. Used with permission.

## Creating the Exercise

### EVALUATING INFORMATION: THE CORNERSTONE OF CIVIC ONLINE REASONING

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY  
STANFORD HISTORY EDUCATION GROUP  
PRODUCED WITH THE SUPPORT OF THE ROBERT R. MCCORMICK FOUNDATION



## External vs. Internal Evaluation

### EXTERNAL ELEMENTS

- ❖ Implicit or Invisible Elements
- ❖ Corroborating sources
- ❖ Life/Spread of the story
- ❖ Journalistic Practices

To evaluate you need to understand context beyond the source

### INTERNAL ELEMENTS

- ❖ Visible Elements
- ❖ Source/Publisher
- ❖ Headline/Byline
- ❖ Rhetoric

To evaluate you only need to read the source in front of you

## Creating the Exercise

ELDERLY WOMAN ACCUSED  
OF TRAINING HER 65 CATS  
TO STEAL FROM NEIGHBORS

- Real?
- Fake?



## Exercise Case Studies

Case Study A



Misleading "Study"

Case Study B



Syndicated Content

Case Study C



Fake News Tweet

### Case Study A: Misleading "Study"



<https://tinyurl.com/ya97mwrc>

### How Students Evaluated Case Study A

"Seeing that the study was based on [discount Website VoucherCodesPro](#), and they only received 1789 responses, I would say the claim is not reliable. At best, it can reflect a trend in vegetarians in the U.K. who browse the internet often or likely to submit replies to such surveys, but even that is a stretch given the [small sample size](#). To expand these results to all vegetarians everywhere is quite the jump."

### Over half had no confidence in the Washington Examiner piece



### Case Study B: Syndicated Content



<https://tinyurl.com/ybqrp3yq>

## How Students Evaluated Case Study B

"It's an **Associated Press story**....It's pretty darn credible."

"The story coming **from Breitbart makes me feel inclined not to trust** the article, but it also claims to have **gotten the story** [emphasis added] from **the Associated Press, a news source that I do trust.**"

## How Students Evaluated Case Study B

"**Breitbart**' in my experience has consistently provided **false information.**"

"The source is **clearly not very reliable**, as there are **strange ads all over the page**"

"**The author's name is AP**, which doesn't seem like a real name which might mean this article was **not written [by] a real journalist**"

## Confidence levels in the syndicated news story was mixed



## Case Study C: Tweet of Fake News Story



<https://tinyurl.com/yd9baysf>

## Over 1/3 of Students Thought the Source was NBC



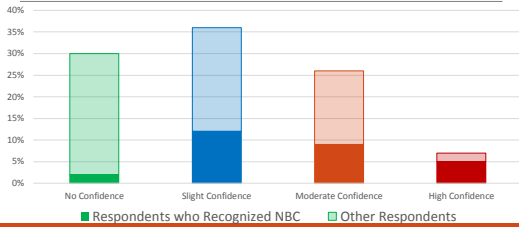
## How Students Evaluated Case Study C

"I'm generally **skeptical of news on twitter**, but she appears to be citing a **reputable source in NBC.**"

"I believe this claim **because it came from NBC** and **this type of thing is not unheard of.**"

"It is **not so absurd** that it is shocking or definitely false, and it also **comes from a credible news source**"

### Confidence Levels in Fake News Tweet



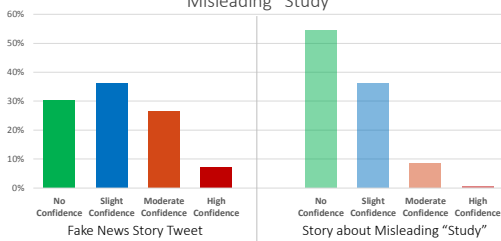
### External Evaluation of Case Study C

"I don't put full confidence in articles from social media or people on twitter so **I would definitely look at another source** before trusting this completely."

"I would have **to search for more information** and look for other stories and corroborating information from other cites [sic]"

"I would have to **read the actual NBC story** and then maybe **see if other sources can confirm** the story before being highly confident"

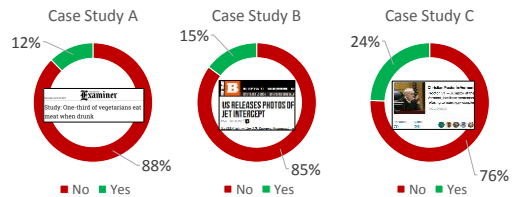
### Students were More Confident in Fake News Tweet than the Misleading "Study"

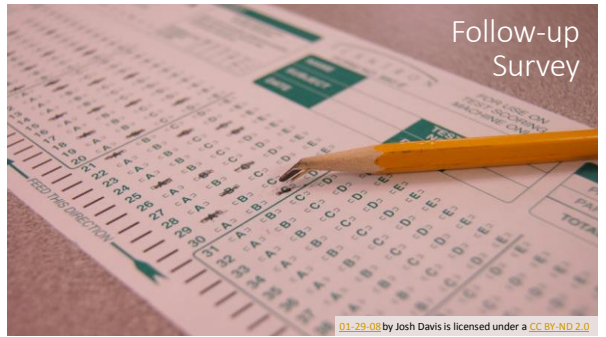


### Only 7% of Students Noticed the .Co Address

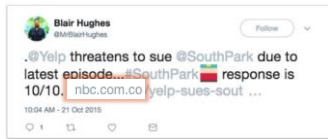


### Percentage of Social Media Shares by Case Study

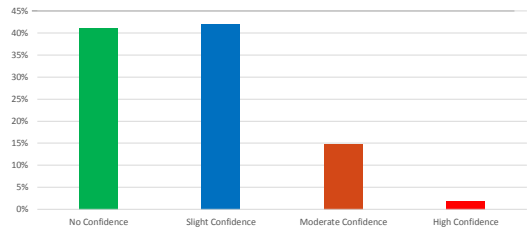




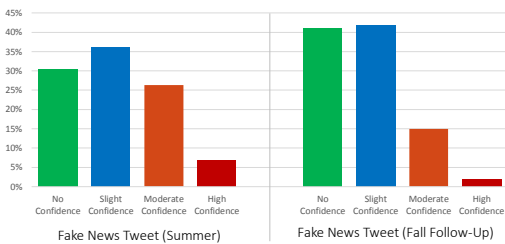
### Follow-up Survey – Fake News Tweet



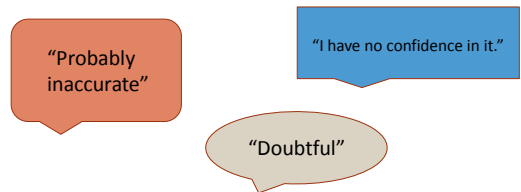
### Confidence Level in South Park Tweet



### Confidence Levels in Fake News Tweet Changed



### How would you evaluate the reliability of the claim made in the tweet?





## Lessons Learned & Takeaways

This photo is in the public domain

## External vs. Internal Evaluation

### EXTERNAL ELEMENTS

- ❖ Implicit or Invisible Elements
- ❖ Corroborating sources
- ❖ Life/Spread of the story
- ❖ Journalistic Practices

To evaluate you need to understand context beyond the source

### INTERNAL ELEMENTS

- ❖ Visible Elements
- ❖ Source/Publisher
- ❖ Headline/Byline
- ❖ Rhetoric

To evaluate you only need to read the source in front of you



## Questions?

by mafeien is licensed under a CC BY-SA-NC 2.0

## Works Cited

- Alcott, H. & Gentzkow, M. (2017). Social media and fake news in the 2016 Election. *Journal of Economic Perspectives*, 31, 211-235. Retrieved from <http://www.jstor.org/stable/44235006>
- Caulfield, M. (2017). *Web literacy for student fact-checkers*. Mountain View, CA: CC Creative Commons, Pressbooks.
- Factitious [Website]. Retrieved from <http://factitious.augamestudio.com/#/>
- Mitchell A., Gottfried, J., Shearer, E., & Lu, K. (2017, February 9). How Americans encounter, recall, and act upon digital news. *Pew Research Center*. Retrieved from <http://www.journalism.org/2017/02/09/how-americans-encounter-recall-and-act-upon-digital-news/>
- Shane, S. (2017, January 18). From headline to photograph, a fake news masterpiece. *The New York Times*. Retrieved from <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/01/18/us/fake-news-hillary-clinton-cameron-harris.html>
- Shearer, E. & Gottfried, J. (2017, September 7). News use across social media platforms 2017. *Pew Research Center*. Retrieved from <http://www.journalism.org/2017/09/07/news-use-across-social-media-platforms-2017/>
- Stanford History Education Group (2016). *Evaluating information: The cornerstone of civic online reasoning*. Palo Alto, California: Stanford University.