

INFORMATION LITERACY, FAKE NEWS, AND CIVIL DISCOURSE IN A DIGITAL ENVIRONMENT

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LITERACY

Information Literacy

Media Literacy

News Literacy

FAKE NEWS

Fake news is A
problem, but it's
not THE problem



PSYCHOLOGICAL FACTORS

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Cognitive Dissonance

The stress a person feels when confronted with new information that contradicts what they think they already know—their beliefs, ideas, and values

PSYCHOLOGICAL FACTORS

Dealing with dissonance

- Addressing
 - Examining beliefs
 - Reevaluating based on new info
- Avoiding
 - Ignoring
 - Disbelieving

PSYCHOLOGICAL FACTORS

Selective Exposure/Confirmation Bias

- Choosing to consume only specific sources
- Choosing to avoid specific sources
- Seeing/remembers only that evidence which supports
- Ignoring/overlooking everything that doesn't support



Topic

Overview

Question

Research

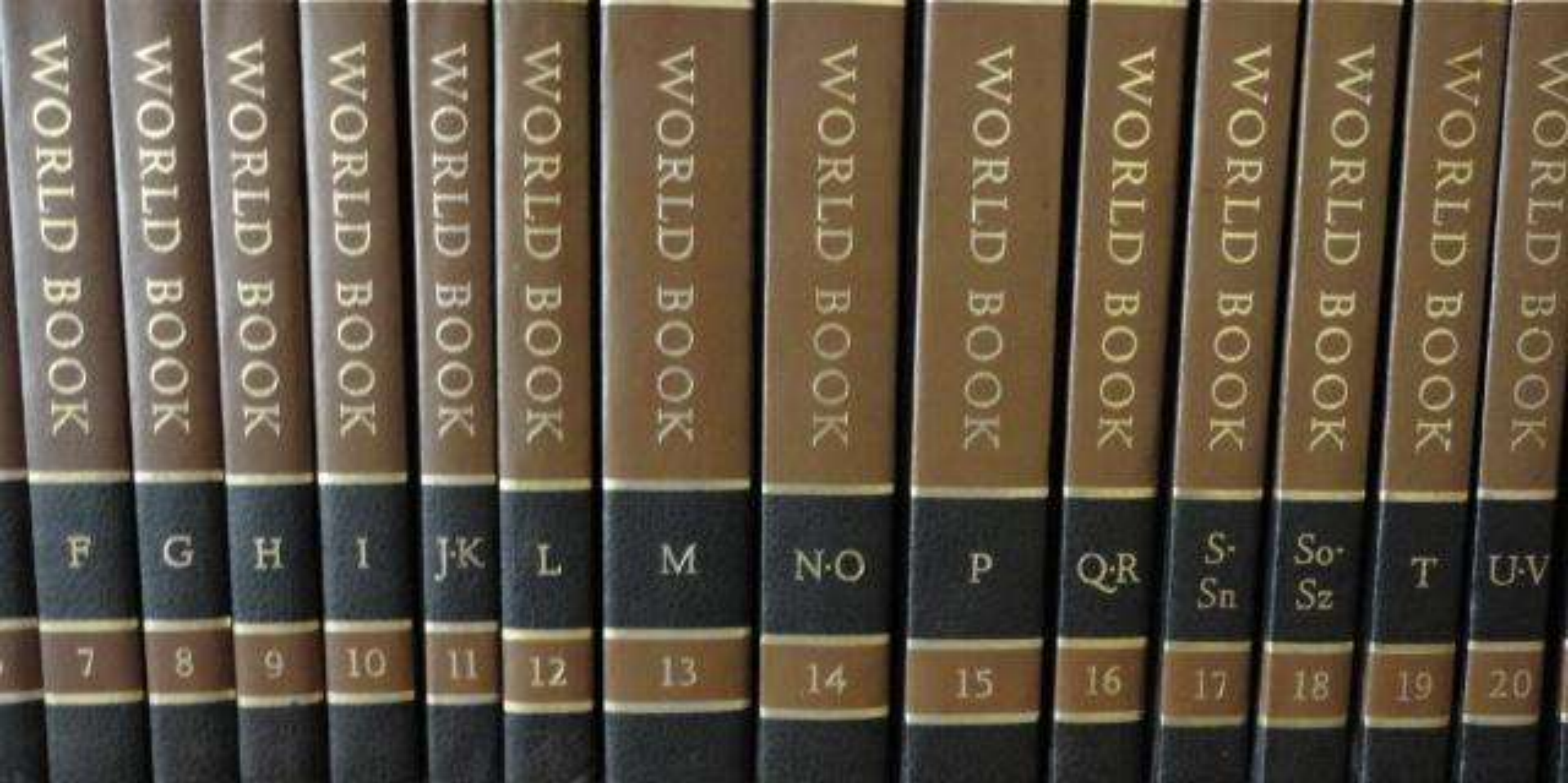
Thesis

PSYCHOLOGICAL FACTORS

Backfire Effect

When a person's beliefs are challenged, rather than reevaluating them in the context of the new information, the person digs in, and their beliefs become more entrenched

Nyhan & Reifler, 2009



IS THIS NEW?

No.

FRACTURING OF INFORMATION

Few major news networks

- Driven by money—advertising
- Centrist to appeal to most people
- Created a shared reality

Prior, 2007

FRACTURING OF INFORMATION

The best thing about the Internet is that anyone can publish.

The worst thing about the Internet is that anyone can publish.

FRACTURING OF REALITY

Internet

- Practically infinite amounts of info
- People are forced to make choices
- Generally choose the information that's most comfortable

FRACTURING OF INFORMATION

Internet

- Also driven by advertisers by courting a very specific audience for very targeted ads
- Appeal to their values and vanity
 - Intelligence
 - Specific language

Prior, 2007

TECHNOLOGICAL FACTORS



ALGORITHMS TAILOR SEARCH RESULTS TO SEARCH
HISTORY/PATTERNS

Filter Bubble
Eli Pariser

SEARCH LANGUAGE

Google does not answer questions

Google looks for words you've typed so that it can deliver documents with same language

IS GLOBAL WARMING A HOAX?

Global Warming + Hoax

IS GLOBAL WARMING REAL?

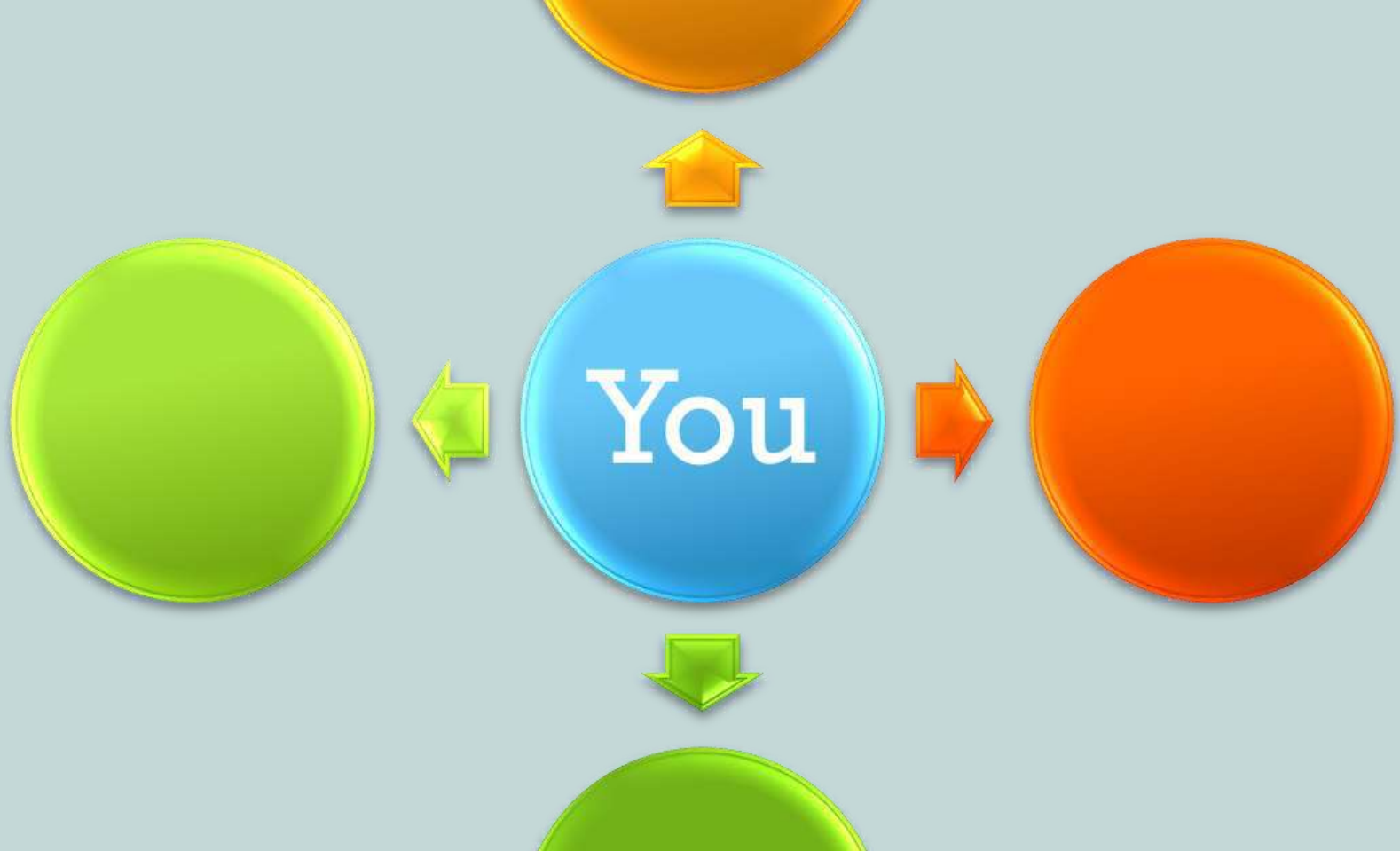
Global Warming + Real

ECHO CHAMBER

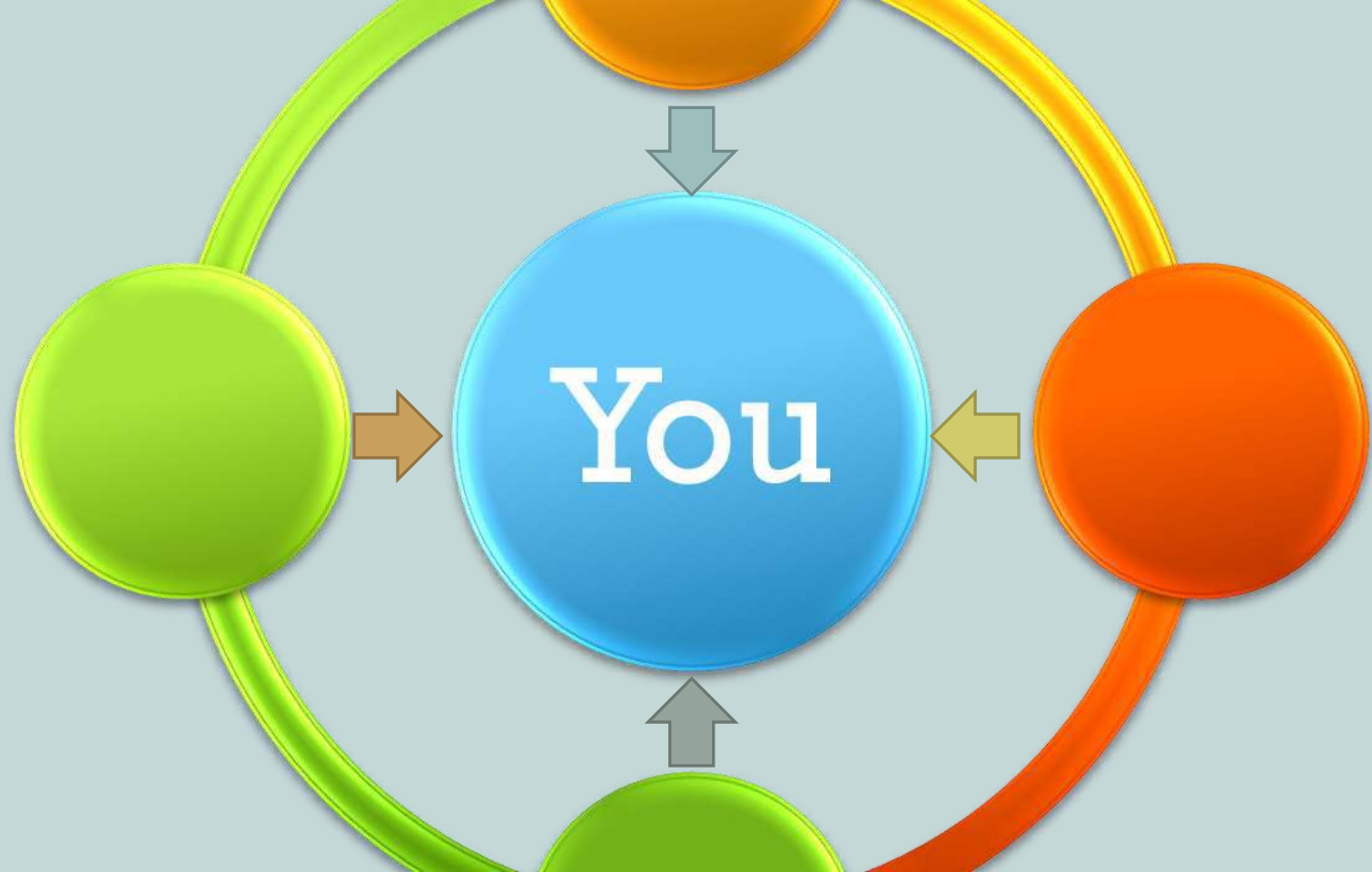
Hello

Hello

Hello



ACTIVE SEEKER



PASSIVE CONSUMER

SOCIAL MEDIA

More and more people getting their news online

People like to share stories that validate their beliefs

Which often leads to heaps more validation from online friends

TYPES OF INFORMATION

News

Op-Eds

Tabloids

Parody

Propaganda

Blogs

Advertising

Misinformation

Easier to identify in
print than online

Often true purpose is
intentionally obscured

HOW DO WE CHOOSE
WHAT TO CONSUME?

INFORMATION FORAGING

Based on hunter/gatherer

Implies information seeking
behavior is instinctual

Pirolli & Card, 1995

INFORMATION SCENT

Refers to the textual clues of an item as it appears in the results list; perceived usefulness based on these clues:

- Language
- Images

INFORMATION DIET

The information you consume

REINFORCED

Human Nature:

- Cognitive Dissonance
- Selective exposure/Confirmation Bias
- Backfire Effect

Technology

- Filter Bubbles
- Search Language
- Social Media
- Information Foraging

RESULTS

No shared reality

Extreme polarization

Breakdown of civil discourse

WHY DOES THIS MATTER?



Wash Post now

Arizona governor vetoes
controversial anti-gay bill

slide to view



WSJ now

Arizona governor vetoes religious-
freedom bill.



AP Associated Press AP - Tue Aug 30:11:31 AM ET

A young man walks through chest deep flood water after **looting** a grocery store in New Orleans on Tuesday, Aug. 30, 2005. Flood waters continue to rise in New Orleans after Hurricane Katrina did extensive damage when it

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Average (Loading)



RELATED

• Looting Takes Place in View of La. Police AP - Ti



AFP/Getty Images - Tue Aug 30,
3:47 AM ET

Two residents wade through chest-deep water after **finding** bread and soda from a local grocery store after Hurricane Katrina came through the area in New Orleans, Louisiana. (AFP/Getty Images/Chris Graythen)

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• Katrina's Effects, at a Glance AP - Wed Aug 31, 11:11 AM ET

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ADD SLIDESHOW TO MY YAHOO! OR RSS READER



(About My Yahoo! and RSS)

THE PROBLEM WITH “FAKE NEWS”

THE PROBLEM WITH “FAKE NEWS”

Technically the Onion and the Borowitz report are “fake news,” so the term is imprecise and essentially meaningless

THE PROBLEM WITH “FAKE NEWS”

Used by people to discredit
unfavorable or uncomfortable
news coverage or information

THE PROBLEM WITH FAKE NEWS

A meaningless, catchall term.

Call it what it is: Propaganda,
misinformation/disinformation,
lying...

WHAT CAN WE DO? | **Behaviors**

WITH ALL THIS IN MIND...

Just like with everything else, the Internet is both positive and negative.

Prompting the question:

Is the Internet a net positive or a net negative in our lives?

REFRAMING THE QUESTION

Author and vlogger, John Green, suggests that is a “question wrongly put.”



REFRAMING THE QUESTION

“How can I make the Internet a more positive force in my life and the lives of others?”

https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=49&v=EZsaA0w_0z0

BETTER INFORMATION

“Better information leads to better decision-making, which leads to a better world.”

WHAT CAN WE DO?

RECONCILING

Source evaluation is not the same as censorship.

WHAT CAN WE DO?

Reprogram brains to:

- Seek out information to learn and understand, not to validate
- Tackle cognitive dissonance by reevaluating our views/beliefs in the context of new information
- Develop these habits of mind

DEVELOP HEALTHY INFORMATION CONSUMPTION HABITS

Think critically about new information

Seek/consume information from various
sources

Actively explore different viewpoints

DIVERSIFY OUR INFORMATION CONSUMPTION

Look for information from as many different sources, all along the ideological spectrum

- Understand that issues are nuanced
- Exposure to different perspectives and language
- Learn to recognize bias
- Gain a better overall understanding of an issue

WHAT CAN WE DO? | Tools

WEBSITES

ProCon.org

Opposing Viewpoints in Context
(library database)

FactCheck.org

5 CORE CONCEPTS OF MEDIA LITERACY

All media messages are “constructed.”

All media messages are constructed using a creative language with its own rules.

Different people experience the same media messages differently.

Media have embedded values and points of view.

Most media messages are organized to gain profit and/or power.

5 KEY QUESTIONS OF MEDIA LITERACY

Who created this message?

What creative techniques are used to attract my attention?

How might different people understand this message differently from me?

What values, lifestyles, and points of view are represented in or omitted from this message?

Why is this message being sent?

NEWS LITERACY

	JOURNALISM	ENTERTAINMENT	PUBLICITY	PROPAGANDA	RAW INFORMATION
Goal	To Inform	To Amuse	To Promote	To Build Mass Support	To Bypass
Method	Verification Independence Accountability	Storytelling, performance, visually, music	Public Relations Activities	One-Sided Accounts or manipulation	Social Networks
Practitioners	Reporters, Videographers , Editors	Actors, Musicians, Producers	Publicists, Gov't Spokespersons	Political Operatives	Anyone with Internet
Outcome	Empowers Citizens through Education	Increased Sales	Heightened awareness	Group gains power	Outlet for self- expression

NEWS LITERACY

Did they
look in the
freezer?

The infographic is titled "IMVAIN" in large white letters on a blue background. Below the title, it says "METHOD FOR EVALUATING RELIABILITY OF NEWS" in black text on a white background. The acronym is broken down into five parts, each with a letter and a description: "I" for Independent sources, "M" for Multiple sources, "V" for Verify sources, "A/I" for Authoritative/Informed sources, and "N" for Named sources. Each part is in a colored box (blue or grey). At the bottom, there is a list of five steps to follow when evaluating news, and a final instruction "DONT. SHARE. IT." in all caps.

IMVAIN

METHOD FOR EVALUATING
RELIABILITY OF NEWS

- I** **INDEPENDENT** sources are better than self-interested sources
- M** **MULTIPLE** sources are better than one
- V** Sources that **VERIFY**: what is **THEIR** source?
- A/I** **AUTHORITATIVE/INFORMED** sources: is this source reputable?
- N** **NAMED** sources: who **IS** this person or company?

- Read the whole article before sharing.
- Reverse search images to find their source.
- Check the date to see when this story originated.
- If you aren't sure if it's true, don't share it.

DONT. SHARE. IT.

WHAT CAN WE DO

Ultimately, we need to change people's motivations for seeking information--

Building bridges, not walls

Building communities, not factions

Seeking understanding, not validation

Seeking learning & exploration, not ignorance and isolation

WHAT DO YOU THINK?

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