"Fake News" and Information Literacy

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LIES AND CONFUSION
THE PROBLEM EXPOSED!

"Fake News" and Detecting Falsehoods

It’s no secret that the amount of information available online is overwhelming. The Pew Research Center (Barthel, Mitchell, and Holcomb 2016) also reports that nearly a quarter (23%) of U.S. adults are aware that they have shared fake news (14% knew at the time, 16% later found out).

MULTIPLE sources confirm that both librarianship and sociology already have literacy frameworks that are relevant to solving the fake news problem. Anyone can see that these two frameworks are made for each other.

Sociologists, librarians, and the community at large are likely to benefit from collaborative wins when students are equipped with information literacy skills and the cultural capital to access and use libraries and effectively evaluate information. This is directly aligned with the goal of creating conscious citizens in society through sociological scholarship.

Information Credibility + Social Construction of Knowledge

Source evaluation skills are everyone’s favorite remedy to fake news. Operationalizing the determination of credibility is multifaceted and complex, despite fun tools like the CRAAP test (Meriam Library, California State University, Chico 2016), so it’s refreshing to see these two getting together. Considering that knowledge is socially constructed helps to explain the spread of fake news that feeds ideological beliefs and supports views that manage threats to social status. Your social position may influence the type of information that you believe (Dobrucki 2010).

Source Formats + Scientific Knowledge Creation

There are two spiced cocktails and discussing how sociological research methods are integral to empirical knowledge production, research outputs primarily published in scholarly journals. But scholarly journal articles are not typical reading material for the general public, so let’s hope we see more PDAs! News, social media, and other popular formats provide data sets for sociological analysis, through which we can reach wider audiences and policymakers. Watching the application of sociological knowledge to public policy debates will always be a thrilling experience (Bulcke and Roberts 2017).

Search Strategies + Algorithmic Cultures

Going beyond Google is key to developing literature research skills. This pairing boilts up the algorithmic culture of news. Algorithmic cultures are hitting primetime on Google for info-seeking and problematic. Look for them uncovering the algorithms in our daily (or at least revealing the existence of a black box) and the commercial motives that manage threats to social status (or at least revealing the existence of a black box).

Are You a Target for Fake News?

Do you surround yourself with people and information that reinforce your beliefs and ignore or reject information that interferes with your worldview? You probably don’t even realize it, thanks to selective exposure and confirmation bias. Fake news is also given a big assist by ideological fragmentation and postmodern relativism, maintaining divided opinions of reality and furthering fissures in social systems.

The best way to keep from falling prey to fake news is to develop critical information literacy skills. We all benefit from a collectively informed reality. Shared realities consume shared identities—essential for solitude within society, the very backbone of other Sociological Knowledge offers analysis through the examination and use of metacognition and recognition of the process of personal truths becoming enmeshed into the institutional fabric of society, illustrating the social construction of reality. As our current awareness reality remains dangerously isolated, sociologists and librarians have a stake in creating unification and educating people to address, tackle, and actively participate in the present day and the future.

When we look for examples, we often find interestingly tangled webs of libraries and sociology. The core of the issue is that librarians and sociologists are two sides of the same coin in this battle. For too long, librarians have been the gatekeepers for information on the web, and sociologists have been the ones gathering and analyzing that information, helping to create a deeper understanding of how and why people act in certain ways.

We exist because of each other. Sociology of knowledge offers solvency, through its examination and use of reality and furthering fissures in social systems.