

MAKING THE BEST OF BAD INFORMATION

Mallory Pillard & Ian Ruge

Today we hope you will learn...

01

What misinformation and disinformation look like.

02

What makes people more likely to believe misinformation?

03

Why has misinformation become more prevalent?

04

How can libraries respond to increasing misinformation?

Definitions

-Disinformation

False or inaccurate and intended to mislead

-Misinformation

False or inaccurate and might be intended to mislead

-Propaganda

Intended to sway public opinion

-Fake News

Recently coined, often politicized term

-Astroturfing

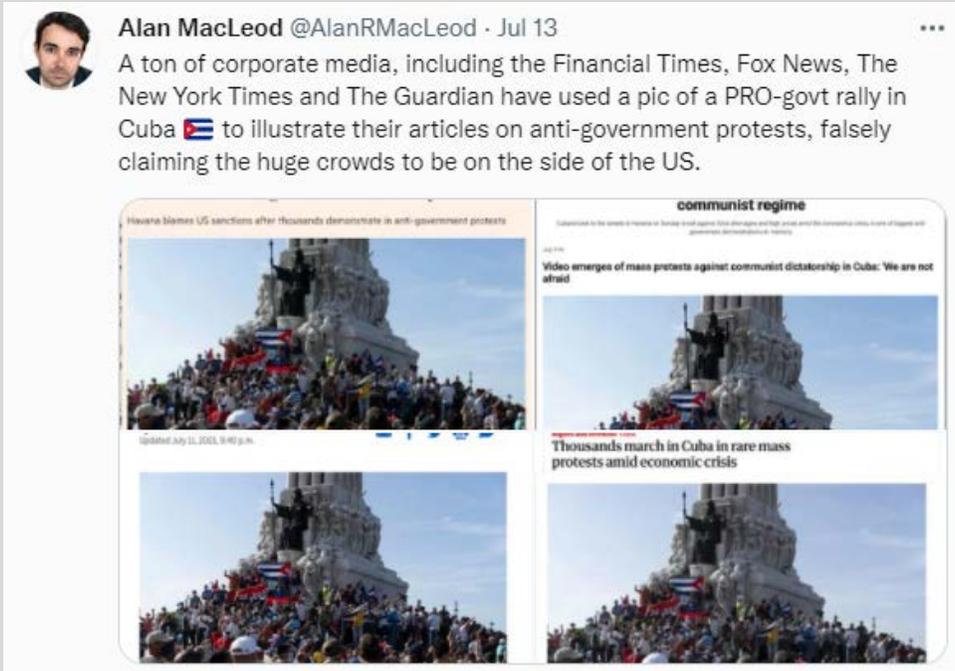
Masking the sponsors of a message to make it appear as though it originates from a grassroots movement

-Filter Bubble

Intellectual isolation aided by technology

How do you know if someone's intent is to spread incorrect information, or if they just got it wrong?

In most cases, there's no way to know if it is intentional.



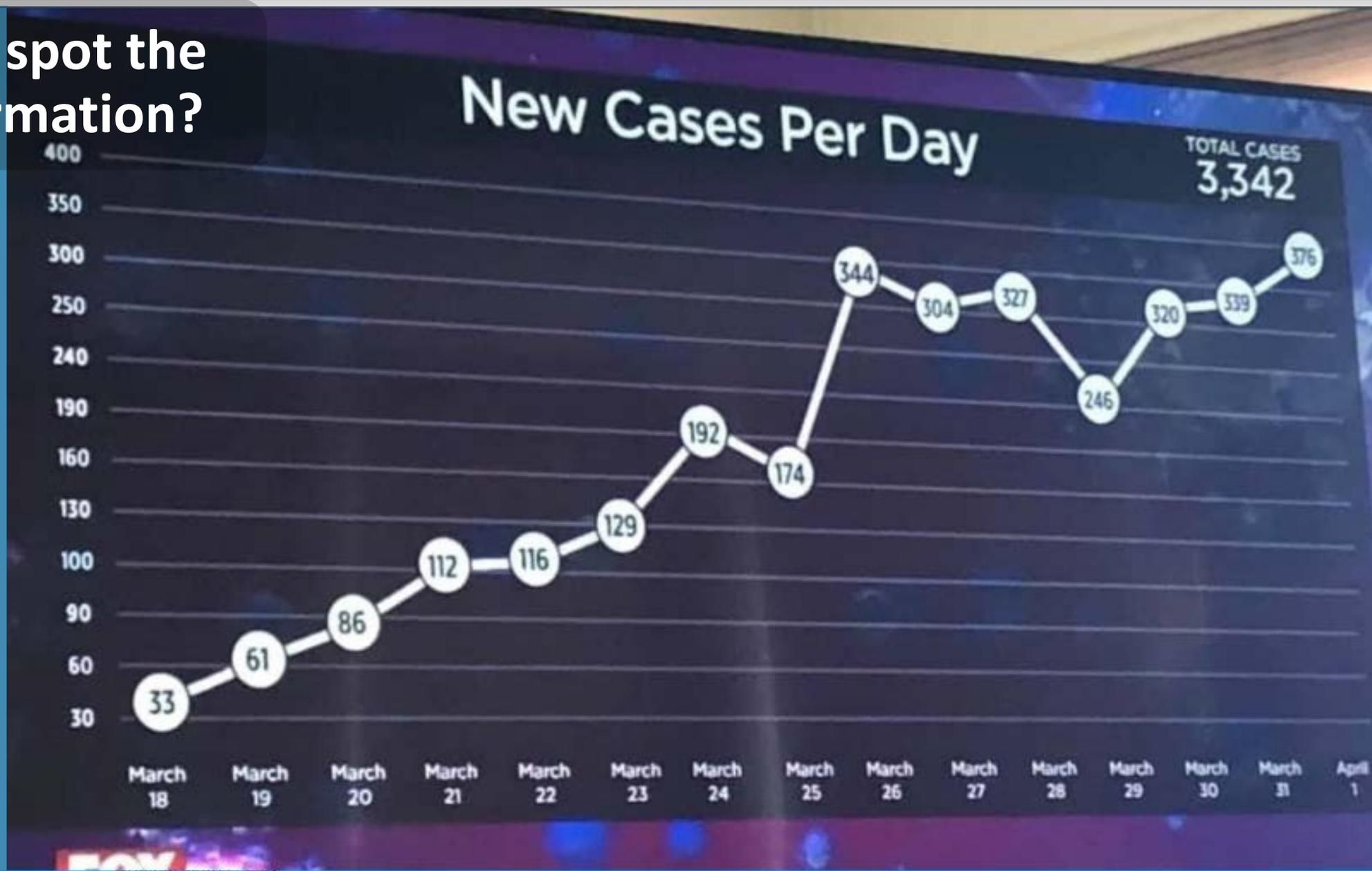
● This article was amended on 12 July 2021. The original agency caption on the image of people on the Máximo Gómez monument incorrectly described them as anti-government protesters. They were actually supporters of the government.

Retractions and corrections are important, but often, the damage is already done.



WHAT DOES
MISINFORMATION
LOOK LIKE?

Can you spot the
misinformation?



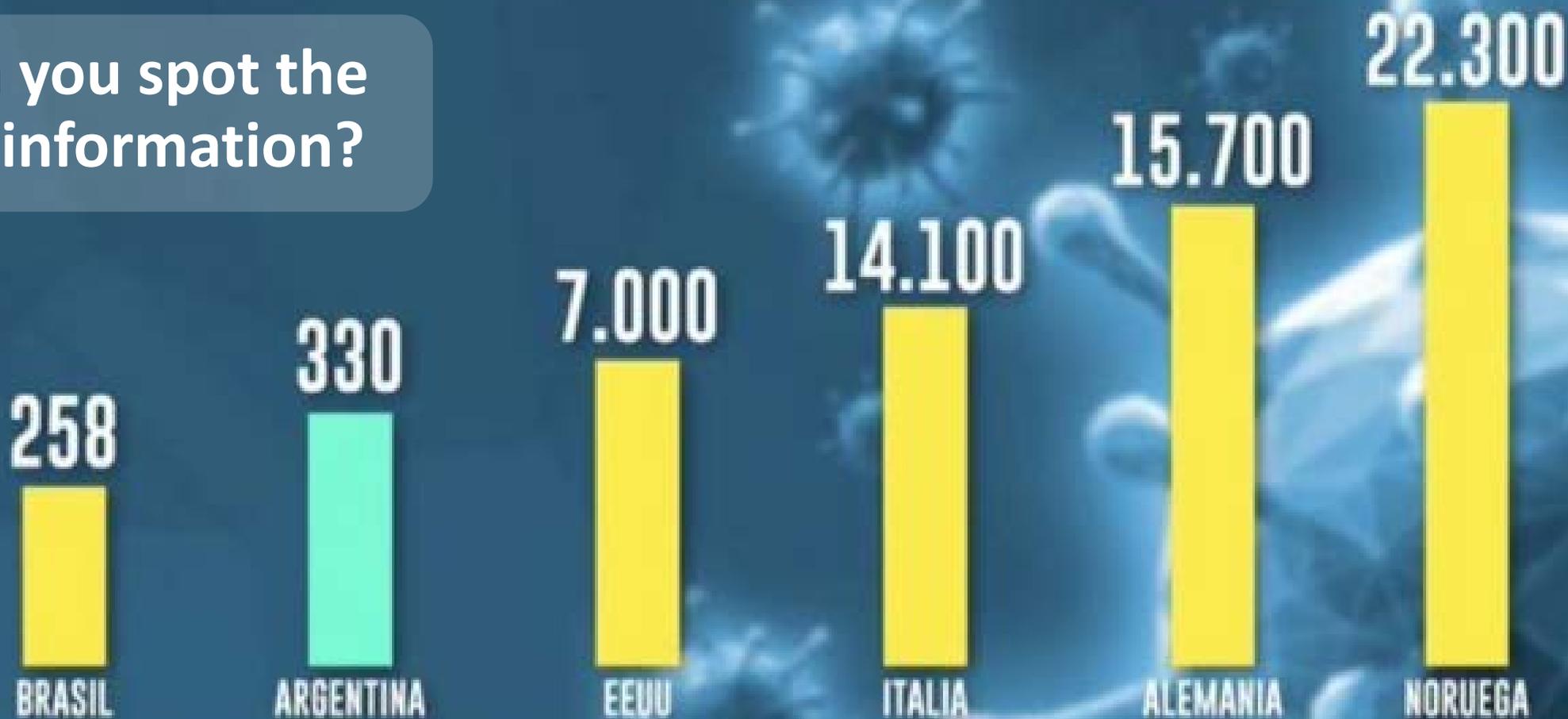
New Cases Per Day

Corrected Graph



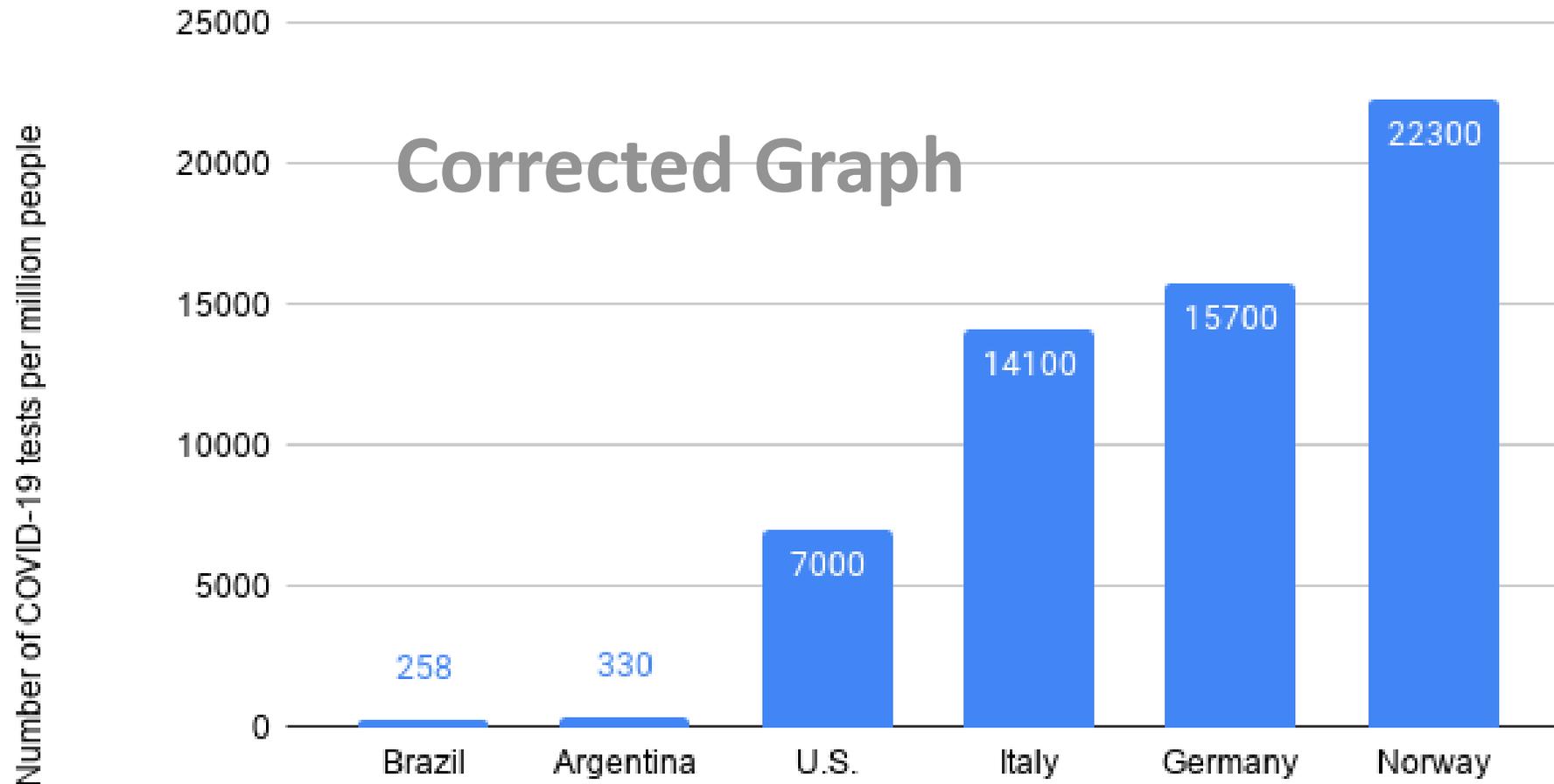
TESTEOS POR MILLÓN DE HABITANTES

Can you spot the misinformation?



ANTE LA PRESENCIA DE SÍNTOMAS LLAMAR AL 107 SAN LUIS

Number of COVID-19 tests per million of people





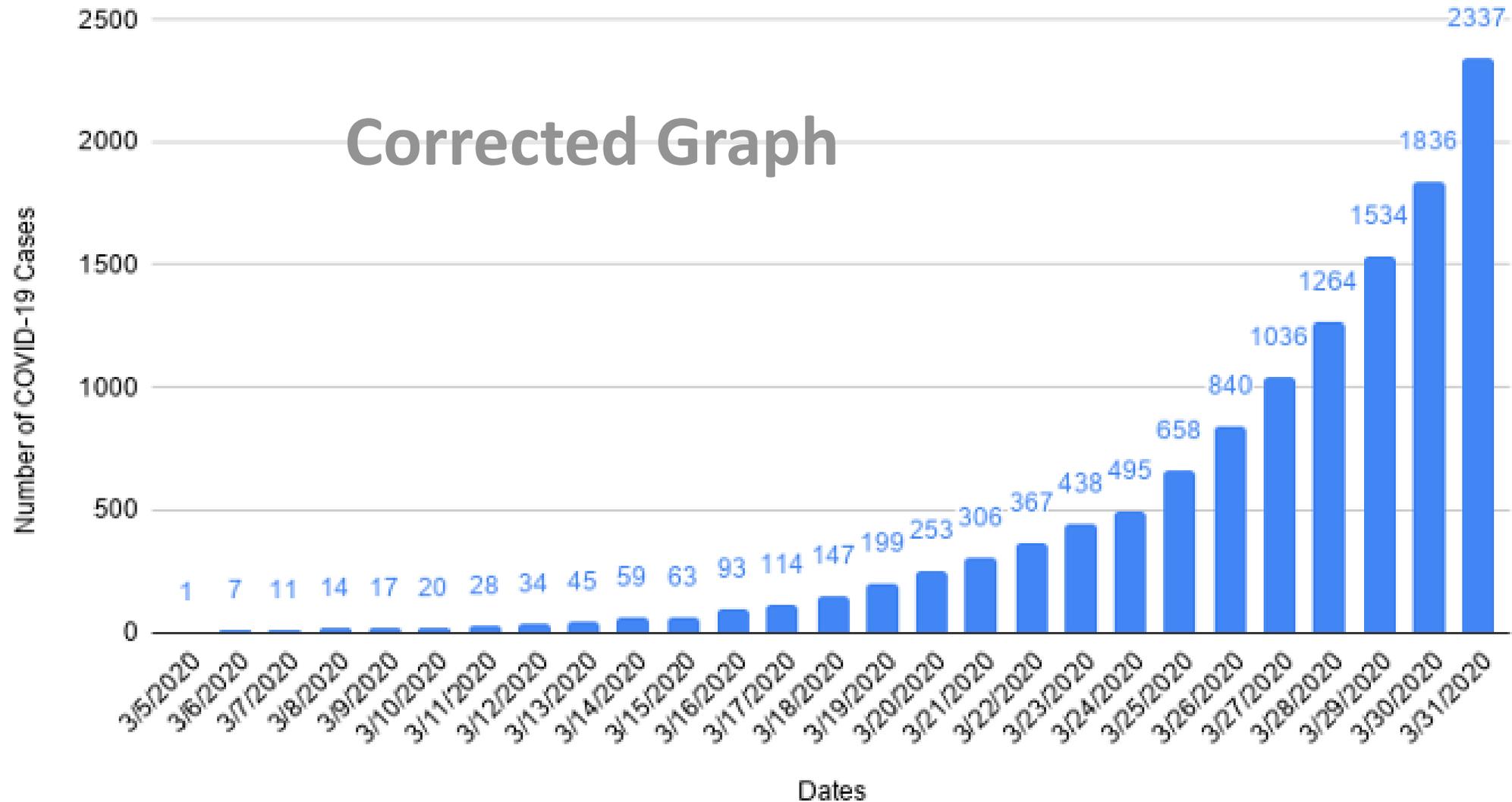
Число инфицированных COVID-19 в России

Общее
число
заболевших



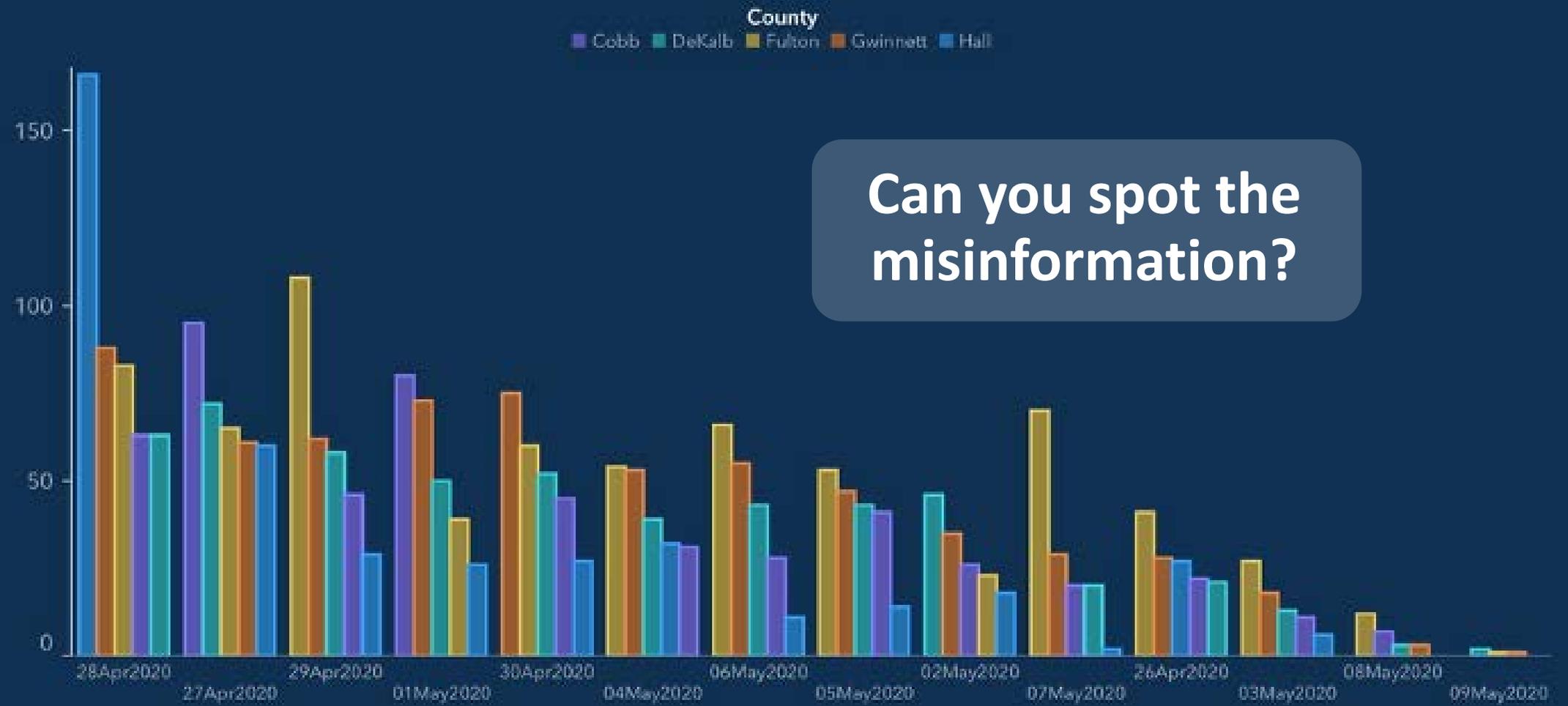
Number of COVID-19 Cases in Russia from March 5 to March 31

Corrected Graph



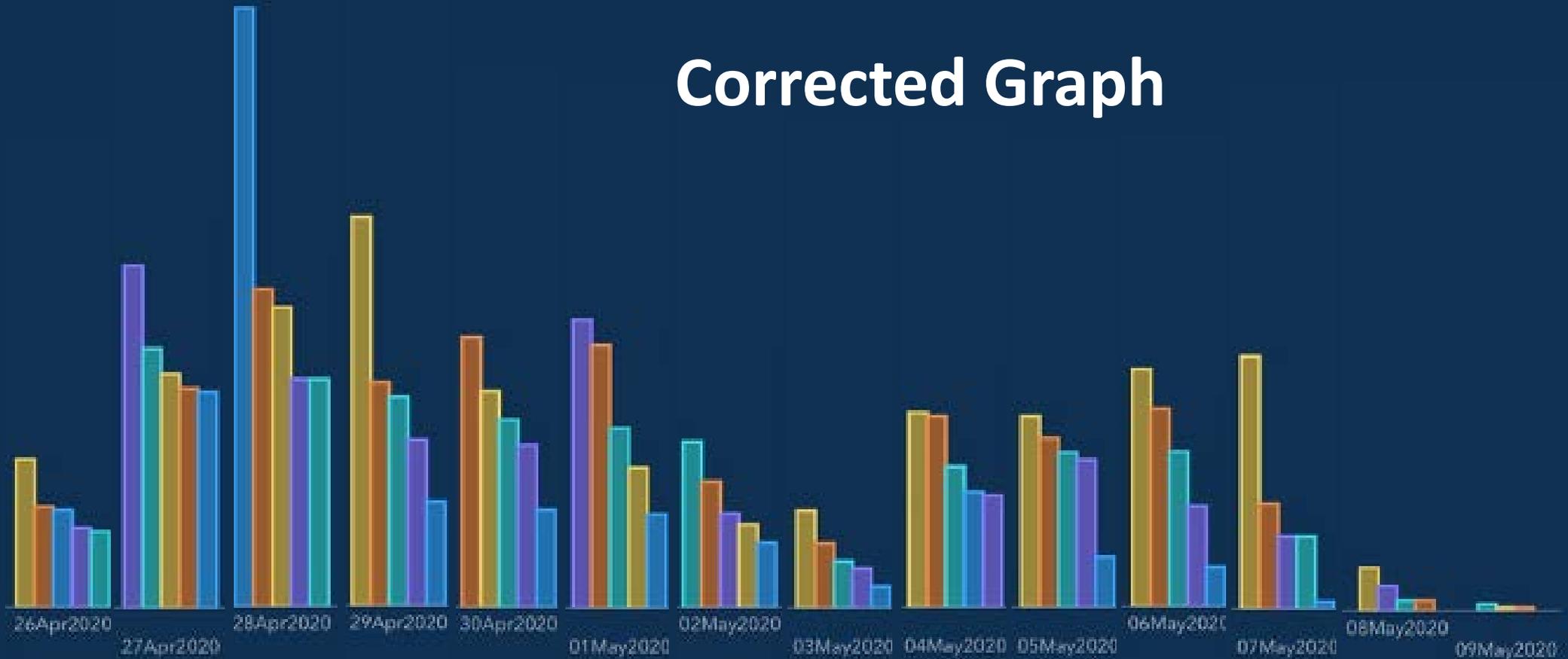
Top 5 Counties with the Greatest Number of Confirmed COVID-19 Cases

The chart below represents the most impacted counties over the past 15 days and the number of cases over time. The table below also represents the number of deaths and hospitalizations in each of those impacted counties.

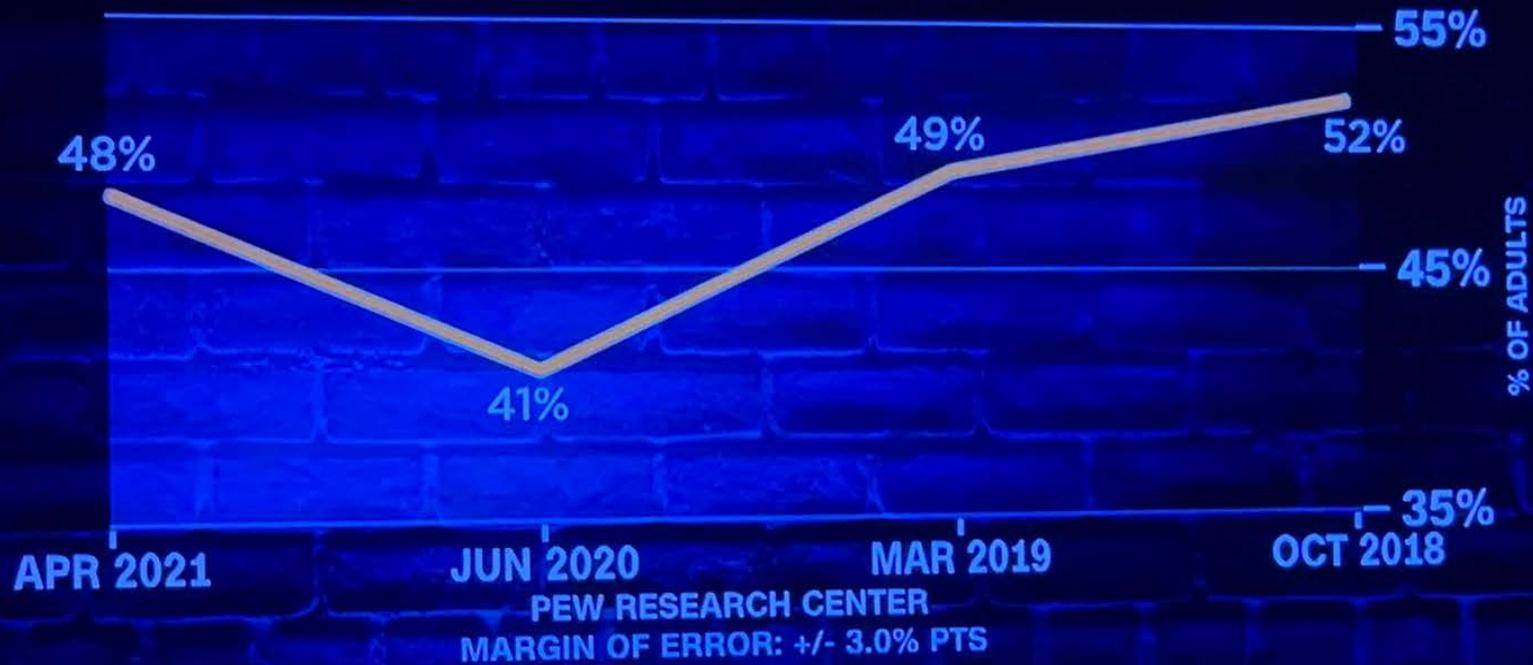


Can you spot the misinformation?

Corrected Graph



VIOLENT CRIME IS A VERY BIG PROBLEM ADULTS



THE WIZARD OF ODDS

WHITE HOUSE PREPARES TO ADDRESS SURGE IN VIOLENT CRIME

<https://twitter.com/everydayasoreng/status/1407528216659648513>

LIVE

CNN

6:32 PM PT

WHAT MAKES PEOPLE
MORE LIKELY TO BELIEVE
MISINFORMATION?

ALIENATION

POWERLESSNESS

COGNITIVE
DISSONANCE

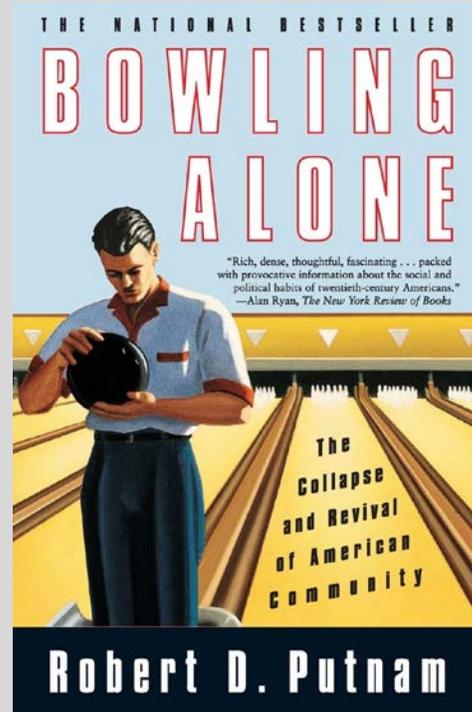
CONFIRMATION BIAS

DISTRUST OF AUTHORITY

Alienation and Powerlessness

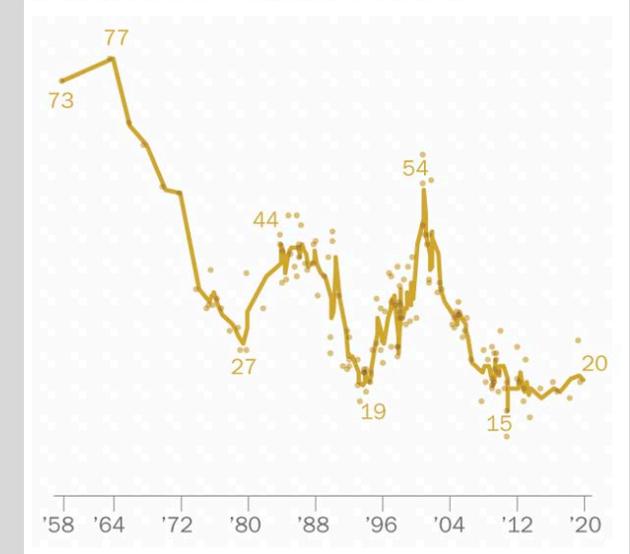
“People divorced from community, occupation, and association are first and foremost among the supporters of extremism.”

Robert D. Putnam, *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community*



Public trust in federal government near historic lows for more than a decade

% who say they trust the federal government to do what is right just about always/most of the time

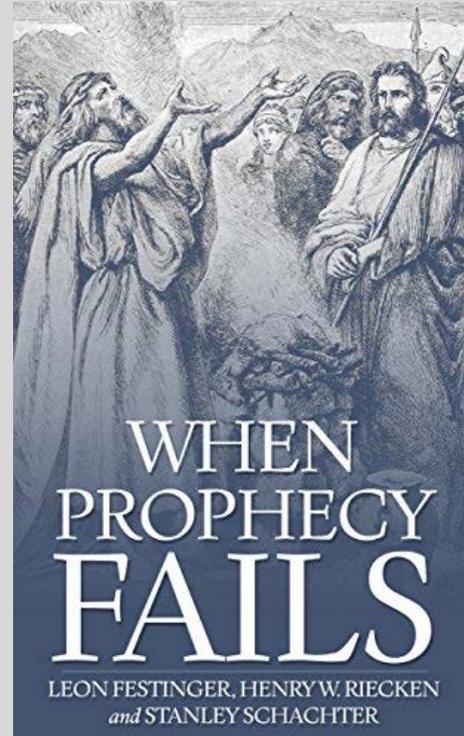


Think of how rumors spread in the workplace when staff feel alienated and powerless.

Cognitive Dissonance

-Cognitive Dissonance: "The mental discomfort that results from holding two conflicting beliefs, values or attitudes."

-Leon Festinger et al., When Prophecy Fails.

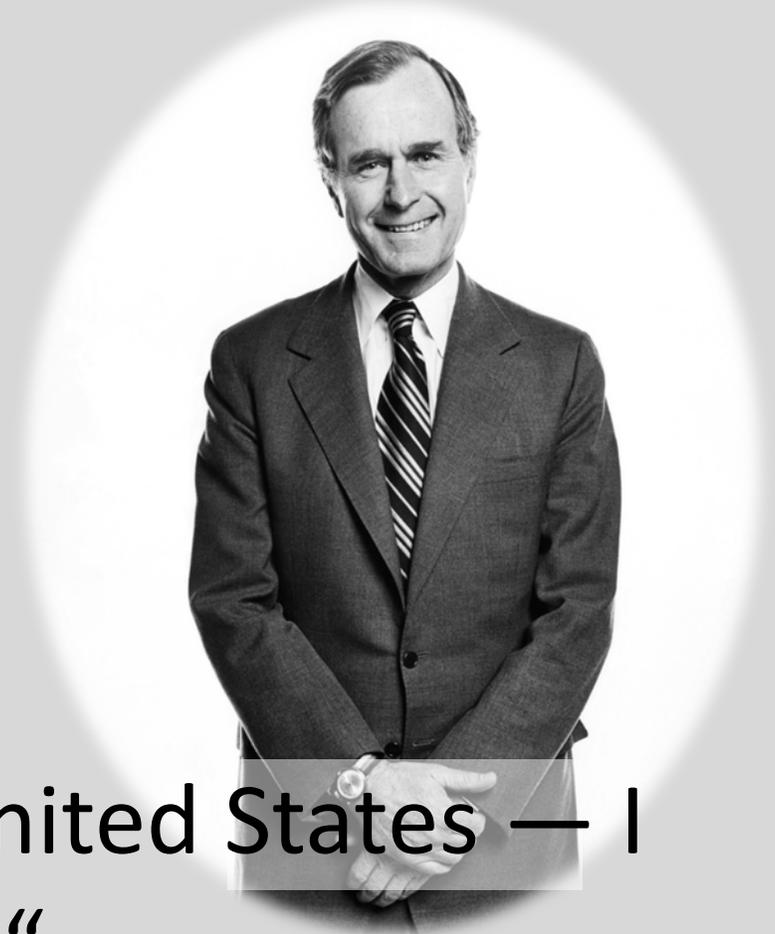
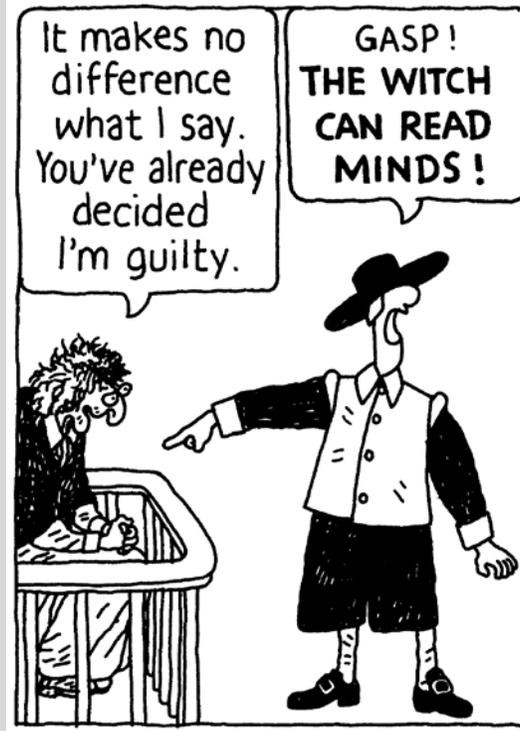


Think of times when your own cognitive dissonance kicks in. Do you recognize it?

Confirmation Bias

-The tendency to search for and interpret new evidence as confirmation of one's existing beliefs or theories.

- Oxford Dictionary



"I will never apologize for the United States — I don't care what the facts are." — George H.W. Bush

Distrust of Authority

Potential seeds of distrust:

- Hurricane Katrina Response
- Iraq War
- Flint Water Crisis
- Police brutality videos
- Voter suppression
- Whistleblowers Edward Snowden and Wikileaks

Scars from Flint's water crisis shake city's faith in Covid vaccine

"When you tell us that the water is safe but it really wasn't, that relationship between leadership and the community is still damaged," a Flint pastor said.



Think of a time when you felt like a leader wasn't being truthful. How did you feel?

WHY HAS
MISINFORMATION
BECOME MORE
PREVALENT?

MEDIA LANDSCAPE

TECHNOLOGY

ANONYMITY

POLITICAL POLARIZATION

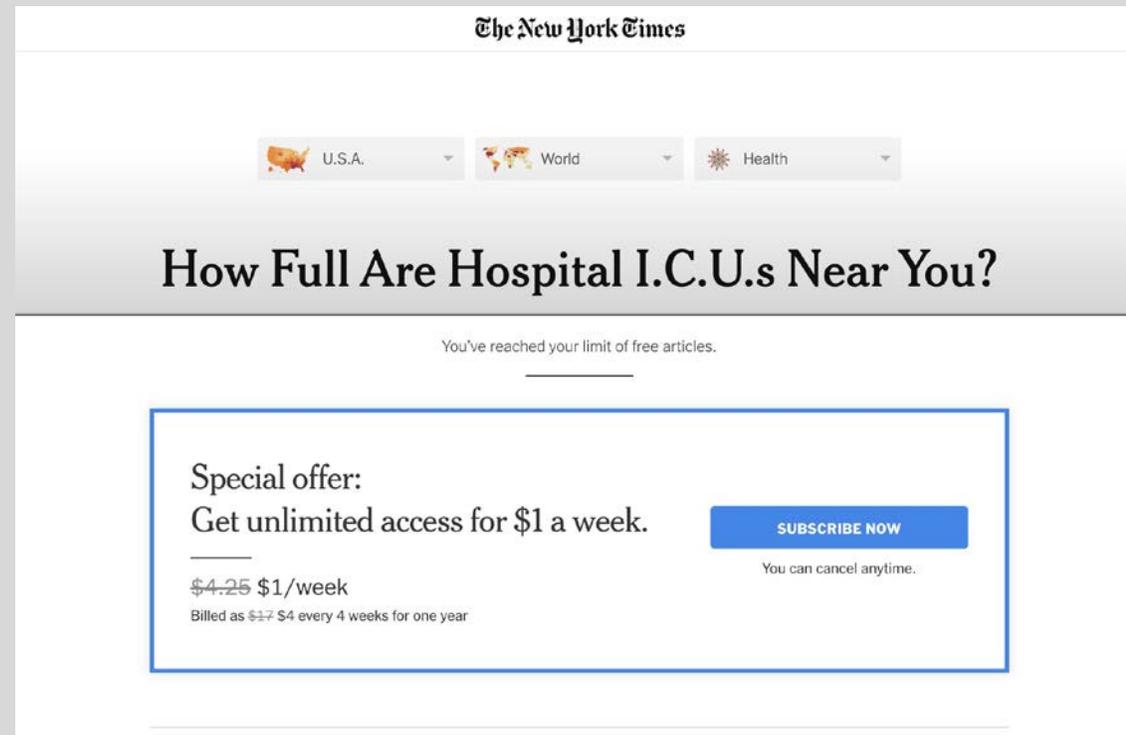
Changing Media Landscape

Old Media

- Consolidation
- Scarcity

New Media

- Lack of gatekeeping
 - Interactive
 - Gamification



The screenshot shows the top of the New York Times website. At the top, the logo "The New York Times" is visible. Below it are three navigation tabs: "U.S.A." with a map icon, "World" with a globe icon, and "Health" with a sun icon. The main headline reads "How Full Are Hospital I.C.U.s Near You?". Below the headline, a message states "You've reached your limit of free articles." A blue-bordered box contains a "Special offer:" section. The text inside the box says "Get unlimited access for \$1 a week." followed by a blue "SUBSCRIBE NOW" button. Below this, the price is shown as "\$4.25 ~~\$1~~/week" and "Billed as ~~\$17~~ \$4 every 4 weeks for one year". At the bottom of the box, it says "You can cancel anytime."

How has the way you get your news changed over the last 10 years?

Technology

Media Manipulation

- Changes in the economics of creation
- Deep fakes and machine learning
- Blurring the lines between parody and news



What was a time when you have been fooled by something online?

Anonymity

The ability to be anonymous is a feature of the internet

- A great deal of misinformation comes from anonymous sources
- Anonymity can encourage both good actors and bad actors.

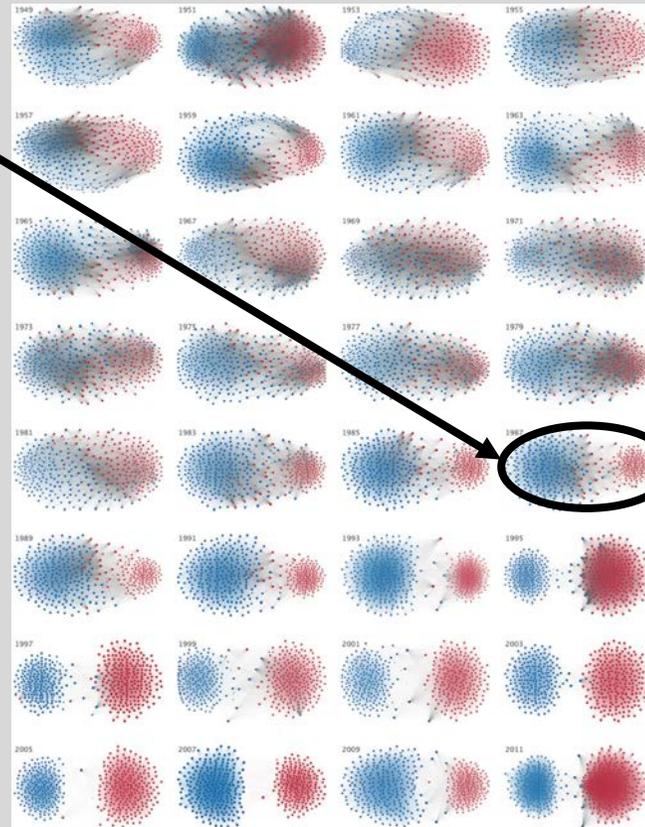


Have you ever posted something anonymously online that you might not say in real life?

Political Polarization

End of Fairness Doctrine

- Networks were previously required to present contrasting views.
- Political affiliation is a driver of both cognitive dissonance and confirmation bias.



Fox News will be 'loyal opposition' to Biden, Fox CEO says

Fox Corp. CEO Lachlan Murdoch said Thursday he expects the cable channel's ratings to recover after a post-election dip.



Lachlan Murdoch speaks at The New York Times' DealBook conference in New York on Nov. 1, 2018. Stephanie Keith / Getty Images file

March 4, 2021, 3:35 PM MST / Updated March 4, 2021, 3:37 PM MST

By Dylan Byers

Fox Corp. CEO Lachlan Murdoch said Thursday that it is the job of Fox News to serve as the opposition to the Biden administration, clearly stating the political biases of a network that until 2017 billed itself as "fair and balanced."

HOW DO WE
COMMUNICATE WITH
PATRONS?

6 DEGREES

PRE-BUNK

SKEPTICISM

EMPATHY

SCRIPT SUGGESTIONS

The 6 Degrees of Manipulation

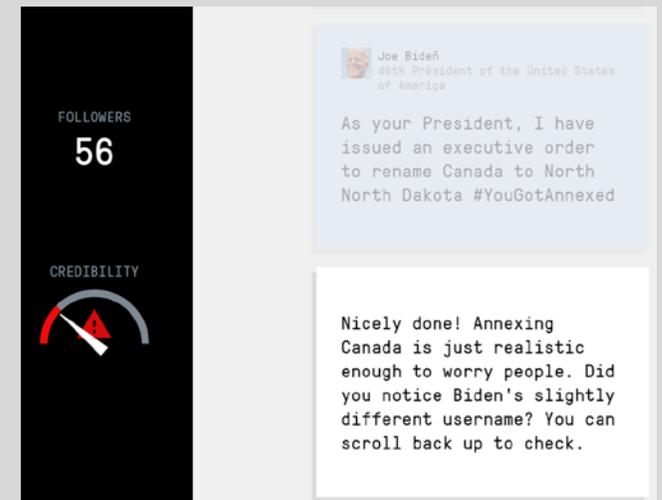
- “Six “degrees of manipulation” —**impersonation, conspiracy, emotion, polarization, discrediting, and trolling**—are used to spread misinformation and disinformation, according to Sander van der Linden, PhD, a professor of social psychology in society at the University of Cambridge in the United Kingdom. **For instance, a false news story may quote a fake expert, use emotional language, or propose a conspiracy theory in order to manipulate readers.”**

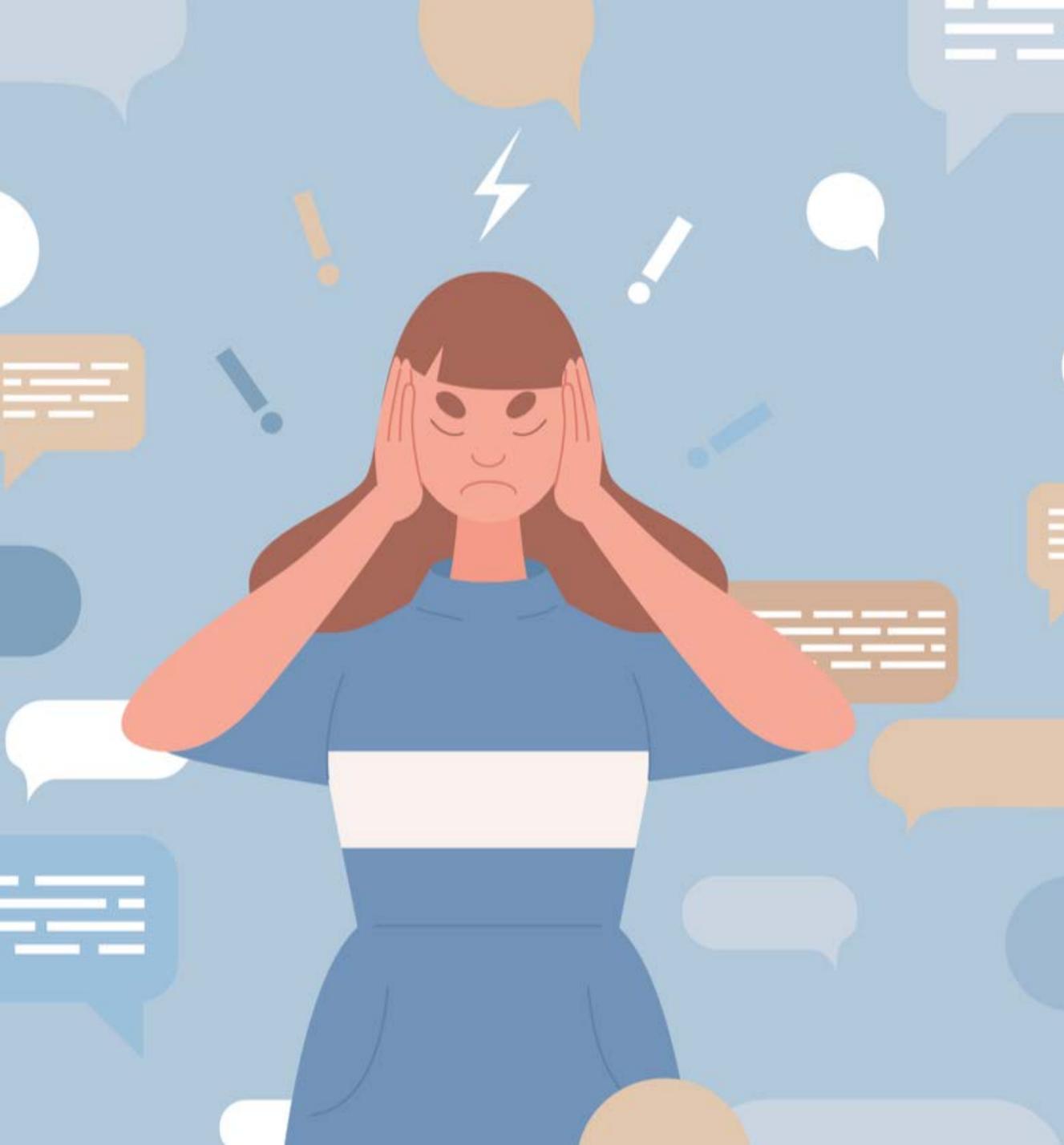
Play the game!

Manipulate your audience to gain followers and badges.

<https://www.getbadnews.com/#intro>

<https://www.goviralgame.com/en>





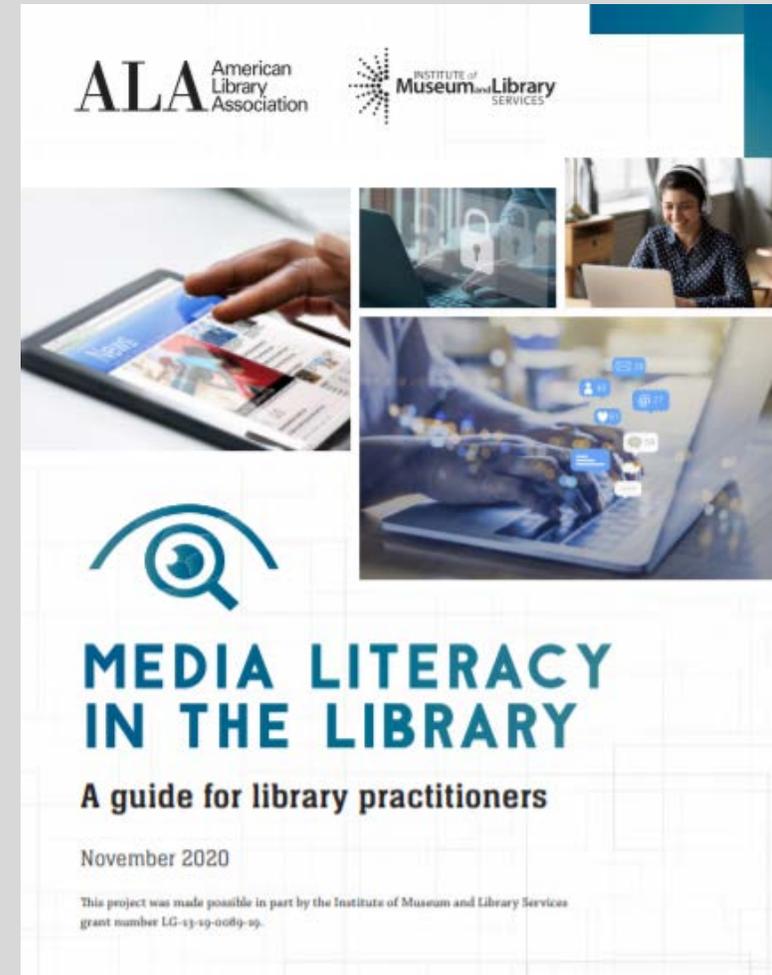
Pre-bunk, don't just debunk.

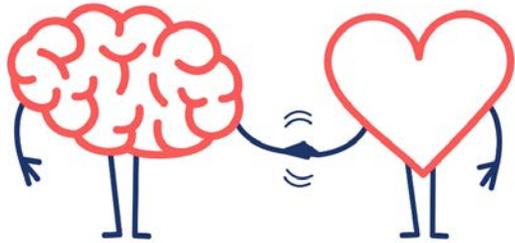
- “We revisited an early hypothesis that “active” inoculations—where people generate their own counter-arguments against impending persuasion attempts—are more effective than “passive” inoculations where counter-arguments were simply provided to people.”
- A vaccine against brainwash, prevention not a cure
- Libraries often do this work in programs or 1-1

<https://www.spsp.org/news-center/blog/roozenbeek-van-der-linden-resisting-digital-misinformation>

Skepticism and Critical Thinking

- “Do your own research...”
“Do better research...”
- Encourage curiosity and skepticism
- Simplify- people are more likely to understand
- Consider accuracy before sharing and encourage your patrons to do so as well





"People are capable of being thoughtful and rational, but our wishes, hopes, fears and motivations often tip the scales to make us more likely to accept something as true if it supports what we want to believe."

- Peter Ditto, PhD, University of California

Empathy

- Treat your patrons as intellectual equals
- Listen for "rumor cues"
- Understand that we all engage in a little bit of conspiratorial thinking
- Lower your defenses to seek understanding
- Patrons arrive at their research due to a variety of emotions.

Script Suggestions

"Where did you learn that? In my experience, _____ (resource) has been helpful."

"How could anyone possibly vote for (insert politician name, ballot initiative, bill, etc.)?"

"I've been hearing a lot of discussion about that topic. It seems like there are a lot of perspectives out there. Would you like me to help you find some information about it?"

"I can tell you feel very passionately about this! Have you found specific resources or outlets that have helped shape your opinions?"

"I don't think you should arrive at that conclusion."

"I agree that online censorship is a big topic." (racism, vaccinations, etc)

What other phrasing might you try?

What else can libraries do?

- Civic engagement programs- invite people in to have difficult conversations
- Local government involvement- encourage patrons to serve on a board, volunteer, run for city council
- Using COVID-19 as a starting point, compile a list of fake headlines, sources, and cures related to the pandemic. Then debunk them and provide alternative, credible information.

“We want people to understand that disinformation is fundamentally exploitative—that it tries to use our religion, our patriotism, and our desire for justice to outrage us and to dupe us into faulty reasoning...Much of that is a psychological phenomenon.”- Peter Adams, apa.org

What are you doing at your library to combat the spread of misinformation?

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Please reach out with comments, questions, suggestions!