Confessions of a Fake News Scholar

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5 reasons to stay clear of "fake news" according to the literature, the notion of fake news is

1. Vague
2. Politically dangerous
3. Undistinguishable from past forms of misinformation
4. Charged with a simplistic idea of journalistic truth
5. Missing key features of it object


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<tr>
<th>Level of facticity</th>
<th>Author's immediate intention to deceive</th>
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<td>High</td>
<td>Native advertising</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Propaganda</td>
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<td>Manipulation</td>
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<td>Low</td>
<td>Fabrication</td>
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<td>News satire</td>
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<td>News parody</td>
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The term “fake news” has also begun to be appropriated by politicians around the world to describe news organisations whose coverage they find disagreeable. In this way, it’s becoming a mechanism by which the powerful can clamp down upon, restrict, undermine and circumvent the free press. It’s also worth noting that the term and its visual derivatives (e.g., the red ‘FAKE’ stamp) have been even more widely appropriated by websites, organisations and political figures identified as untrustworthy by fact-checkers to undermine opposing reporting and news organizations” (p.16)
4. Charged with a simplistic idea of journalistic truth

Social scientists who study the news speak a language that journalists mistrust and misunderstand. They speak of “constructing the news,” of “making news,” of the “social construction of reality.” “News is what newspapermen make it” (Goffman, 1964: 173). “News is the result of the methods news-workers employ” (Fishman, 1980: 14). News is manufactured by journalists (Cohen and Young, 1973: 97). Even journalists who are critical of the daily practices of their colleagues and their own organizations find this task offensive. I have been at several conferences of journalists and social scientists where such language promptly pushed the journalists into a fierce defence of their work, on the familiar ground that they just report the world as they see it, the facts, facts, and nothing but the facts, and yes, there’s occasional bias, occasional sensationalism, occasional inaccuracy, but a responsible journalist never, never, never fakes the news.

To say that a news report is a story, no more, but no less, is not to dismiss the news, not to accuse it of being fictional. Rather, it allows us to see that news, like all public documents, is a constructed reality possessing its own internal validity. (Tuchman, 1978: 97)

5. Missing key features of its object

While fact-checkers... would define fake news as false, misleading or else unverifiable information packaged as news, fake news might do entirely different work for users who share it on Facebook.

This might include:
- acting as monetisable clickbait for viral content pages,
- doing issue work for grassroots activist groups,
- grassroots campaigning work for political loyalists
- and providing humour for entertainment groups

What is “fake news” about if it is not about fakeness?

https://sputniknews.com/analysis/201702041050340451-macron-us-agent-dhuicq/
Harmful news bloom

“Macron is gay” hoax

The contradiction of “fake news” research

Data sprints and the Public Data Lab


publicdatalab.org

1. Investigating the functions performed by ‘fake stories’ on Facebook
2. Tracing how viral information circulates through crediting and discrediting actions
3. Looking at trackers employed by different news websites monetize their audience
4. Investigating how ‘fake stories’ are circulated as memetic images
5. Studying how ‘fake stories’ are used in the context of online trolling

A series of methodological recipes

1. Facebook discussion hotspots
1. Facebook discussion hotspots

2. News circulation

3. Attention trackers
3. Attention trackers

4. Memetic images
5. Trolling techniques

The amazing drosophila melanogaster

- Small dimension
- Simple and easy to identify morphological features
- Large geographical spread
- Short generation time
- High fecundity and elevated mutation rate

Fake news as the drosophila of media studies

- Small dimension
- Fake stories tend to be ‘flatter’ than ordinary news stories
- Simple and easy to identify morphology
- Fake news exaggeration makes it easier to follow them
- Large geographical spread
- Fake news examples can be found in most countries and sectors
- Short generation time
- Fake news rise and fall in weeks and often of in days
- High fecundity and elevated mutation rate
- Fake news do not only spread but also mutate rapidly

Thank you!

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