Teaching media in a post-truth era: challenges for media literacy education

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- Digital literacy is often use as a means of dealing with the problems apparently caused by mis/dis-information.
- Teaching critical digital literacy is challenging, but changing students' media consumption behaviours is even more challenging.
- False beliefs may derive from exposure to fake news, or be simply reconfirmed by it. But either way, it seems unlikely that they will be easily dispelled by a good dose of facts or the force of rational argument.

An example: The Challenge of Debunking Health Misinformation in Dynamic Social Media Conversations

- 500 US residents took part in an online experiment in October 2020. They reported on their attitudes and intentions toward wearing masks in public.
- They were then randomly assigned to one of four social media exposure conditions (1) misinformation only; (2) misinformation + correction; (3) misinformation + correction + rebuke; and (4) misinformation + correction + rebuke + second correction, and reported their attitudes and intentions for a second time.
- They also indicated whether they would consider sharing the thread if they were to see it on social media and answered questions on potential mediators and covariates.

Mourali, M., & Drake, C. (2022). The Challenge of Debunking Health Misinformation in Dynamic Social Media Conversations: Online Randomized Study of Public Masking During COVID-19. *Journal of Medical Internet Research*, 24(3), e34831–e34831. https://doi.org/10.2196/34831

# The Challenge of Debunking Health Misinformation in Dynamic Social Media Conversations

- Exposure to misinformation had a negative impact on attitudes and intentions toward masking ($\beta=-.35$, 95% CI $-.42$ to $-.29$; $P<.001$).
- initial debunking of a false claim generally improved attitudes and intentions toward masking ($\beta=.35$, 95% CI $.16$ to $.54$; $P<.001$)
- However, this improvement was washed out by further exposure to false claims and debunking attempts ($\beta=-.53$, 95% CI $-.72$ to $-.34$; $P<.001$).

The Challenge of Debunking Health Misinformation in Dynamic Social Media Conversations

– That is, extended exposure to false claims and debunking attempts appear to weaken the belief that there is an objectively correct answer to how people ought to behave in this situation, which in turn leads to less positive reactions toward masking as the prescribed behavior.

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– Drivers of false beliefs
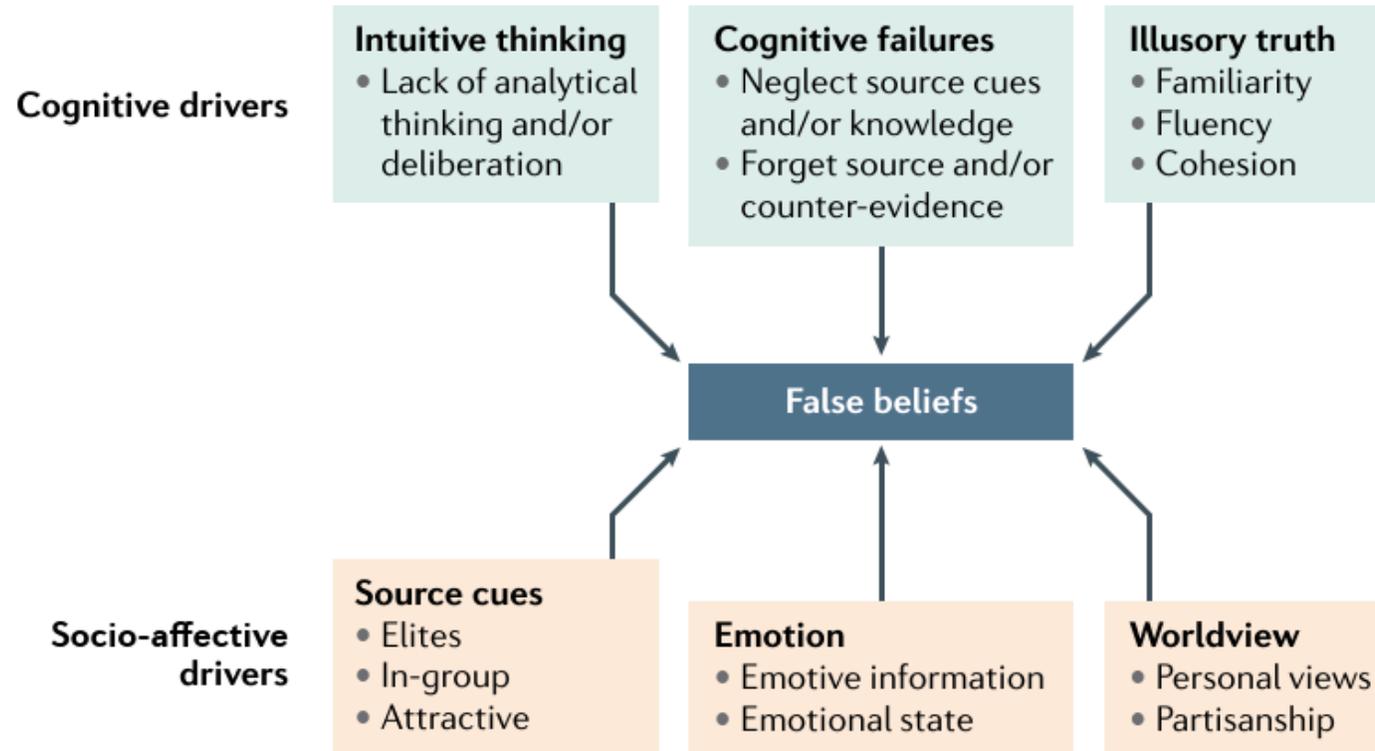
Ecker, U. K. H., Lewandowsky, S., Cook, J., Schmid, P., Fazio, L. K., Brashier, N., Kendeou, P., Vraga, E. K., & Amazeen, M. A. (2022). The psychological drivers of misinformation belief and its resistance to correction. *Nature Reviews Psychology*, *1*(1), 13–29. https://doi.org/10.1038/s44159-021-00006-y

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Table 1
Internal and mixed factors: cognitive, psychological, and sociological.

| Individual characteristics	Low education level
Cognitive factors	Confirmation bias
	Political partisanship
	Prior exposure and the illusory truth effect
	Repetition and familiarity
	Type of reasoning: intuitive thinking vs. analytic thinking
	Lack of critical thinking
	Little time spend on news
	Lack of crystallised intelligence
	To be "in the know"
	Low educational level
	Low science knowledge
	Trust in "elite" messages
Literacy	Low digital literacy
	Low health literacy
Psychological factors and personality	Novelty
	Emotionally evocative content
	High emotional state
	High arousal emotions
	Low emotional intelligence
	Impulsivity
	Anti-science attitude
Mixed internal and external sociological factors	Selective exposure
	Echo chambers
	False news fabrication and pressure groups
	Stressful environment

Beauvais, C. (2022). Fake news: Why do we believe it? Joint, Bone, Spine : Revue Du Rhumatisme, 89(4), 105371–105371. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbspin.2022.105371

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– Media literacy programme or curriculum should address students' needs in cognitive, psychological and social dimensions in relation to their media consumption.

– Technique-based inoculation against real-world misinformation: A game-based approach to media literacy education (Roozenbeek et al., 2022).

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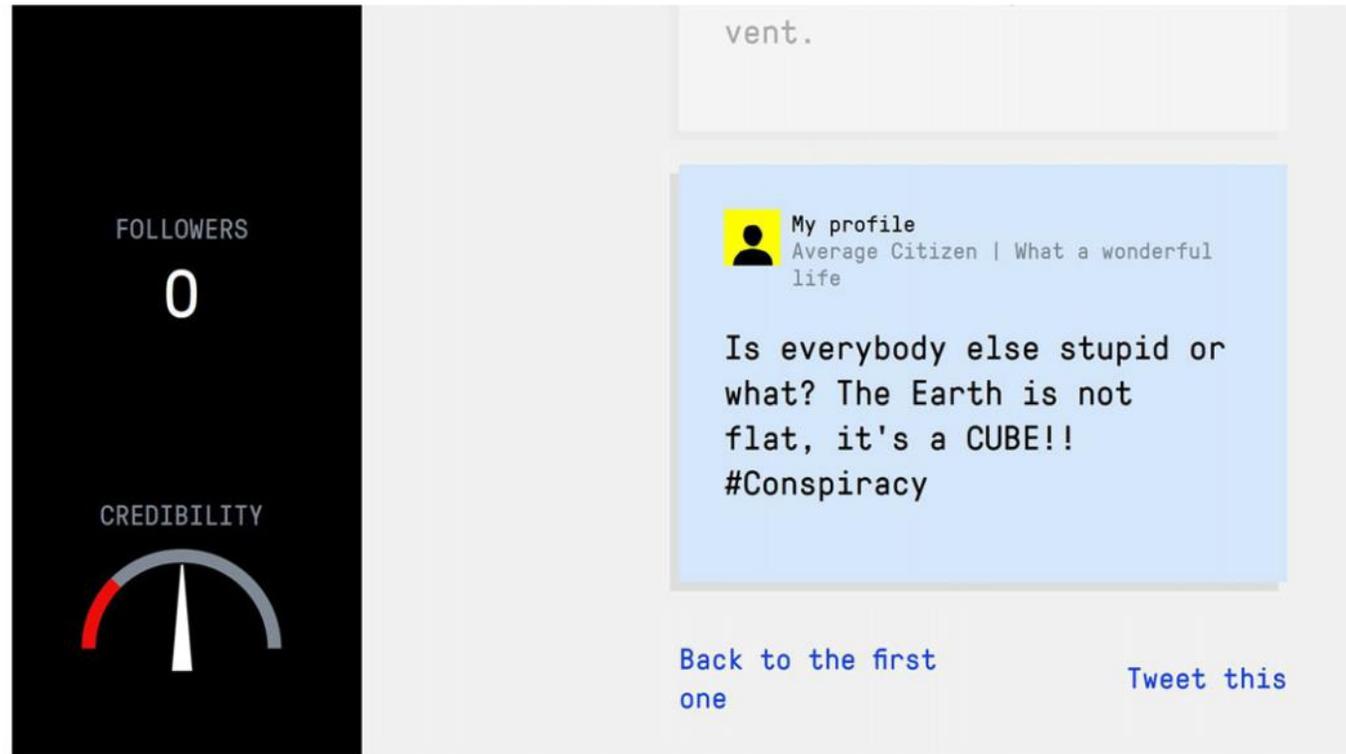
Figure 1. *Bad News* screenshot, with the 'Followers' and 'Credibility' meters on the left.

Roozenbeek, J., Traberg, C. S., & van der Linden, S. (2022). Technique-based inoculation against real-world misinformation. *Royal Society Open Science*, 9(5), 211719–211719. https://doi.org/10.1098/rsos.211719