

Group dynamics play a heavy hand in correctly identifying true online sources

September 21 2018, by Cailin Riley



Credit: Wikipedia

Your squad, or social group, can have a huge impact on how you view the world. Now, new research shows that the people you hang out or work with might also impact how well you can identify fact from fiction.

Many people have difficulty authenticating online information, and

today's personalized systems on social media are making it even harder to distinguish fact from fake news. In 2016, researchers at Stanford University found that 60 percent of [college students](#) were unable to correctly evaluate if a tweet was an accurate source of information or not. Now, researchers at the University of Missouri have found that social dynamics, or [group](#) behaviors and interactions, have a significant impact on evaluating online sources, even when groups have equal access to information.

Isa Jahnke, associate professor in the College of Education, and Michele Kroll, a doctoral candidate in information science and learning technologies, wanted to explore how students use online sources and how they work together to identify misleading information from factual information. In the study, graduate student groups were given scavenger hunt tasks that required using online sources and personal knowledge to answer questions correctly. Even though each group was given equal access to the internet, group performance was most heavily impacted by how individuals interacted with one another.

"We imagined that working in groups would actually help the students find the correct information, but that was not the case," Jahnke said. "In fact, group dynamics outweighed information access, and discussion and decision-making was more important than the facts."

For example, one group that performed poorly missed a question because two team members ignored the logic and [personal knowledge](#) of the third team member, who had the correct answer. The group that performed best chose to research the questions individually, before coming together to share their answers. Jahnke and Kroll say this strategy might have worked best because there was no discussion that might have influenced other members' thoughts on the correct answer.

Kroll says teachers who want to support cooperation among students

need to consider other factors beyond giving them equal access to factual information and sources, including educating them about the impact group dynamics can have on identifying correct information online.

"Students might need further instruction and guidelines on how to evaluate online information, especially on [social media](#)," Kroll said. "Teachers might also consider creating guidelines for how groups will work together in these situations so that every [student](#) has the opportunity to be heard."

"Exploring students' use of online sources in small groups with an augmented reality-based activity—group dynamics negatively affect identification of authentic online [information](#)," was published in *Heliyon*.

More information: Isa Jahnke et al. Exploring students' use of online sources in small groups with an augmented reality-based activity – group dynamics negatively affect identification of authentic online information, *Heliyon* (2018). [DOI: 10.1016/j.heliyon.2018.e00653](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.heliyon.2018.e00653)

Provided by University of Missouri-Columbia

Citation: Group dynamics play a heavy hand in correctly identifying true online sources (2018, September 21) retrieved 27 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2018-09-group-dynamics-heavy-correctly-true.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.