Don’t Panic
Care, Trust, and Mutual Aid During an Infodemic

Hosted by
Dr. Joan Donovan (bio)
Research Director, Shorenstein Center and Director, Technology and Social Change Research Project

(webinar held on March 27, 2020)
About
The Technology and Social Change (TaSC) Research Project

+ The Technology and Social Change Research Project (located at the Shorenstein Center) aims to understand how media manipulation is a means to control public conversation, derail democracy, & disrupt society.

+ The Media Manipulation Case Book aims to contribute to public literacy about media manipulation, political polarization, and content moderation.

+ Learn more about the Technology and Social Change Research Project
Webinar speakers

+ Dr. Joan Donovan, Research Director, Shorenstein Center
+ Gabby Lim, Researcher, Technology and Social Change Research Project, Shorenstein Center
+ Brandi Collins-Dexter, Senior Campaign Director, Color of Change and Joan Shorenstein Fellow (Fall 2019)
+ Brian Friedberg, Senior Researcher, Technology and Social Change Research Project, Shorenstein Center
+ Dr. Rob Faris, Senior Researcher, Shorenstein Center
+ April Glaser, Investigative Tech Reporter, NBC News and Joan Shorenstein Fellow (Fall 2020)
Webinar overview

- Joan Donovan explained misinformation and tactics you can use to share the facts
- April Glaser discussed her recent reporting on mutual aid networks
- Brandi Collins-Dexter described the work of Color of Change and how civil society organizations are serving communities
- Joan Donovan reviewed recent case studies on COVID-19 media manipulation
- Brian Friedberg and Gabby Lim provided tips for improving cybersecurity at home
- Presentation was followed by a Q&A
Definitions

**Misinformation:** spreading false information (e.g. rumors, insults, and pranks)

**Disinformation:** the creation and distribution of intentionally false information, usually for political ends (e.g. scams, hoaxes, and forgeries)

**Infodemic:** the World Health Organization (WHO) defines an [infodemic](#) as “an overabundance of information—some accurate and some not—that makes it hard for people to find trustworthy sources and reliable guidance when they need it.”
How to Find Local, Relevant, and Timely Information

Watch local news for instructions and closures:
- Corroborate information with other sources
- Sign up for telephone alerts from your city or town

Begin from your local gov websites & social media:
- Do not believe the comments
- If officials are responding to rumors, avoid spreading the debunk unless it is clear and necessary

(image credit artist Kotryna Zukauskaite)
How to Find Local, Relevant, and Timely Information

Do not spread rumors:
✓ Sharing unconfirmed rumors contributes to fear, panic and isolation
✓ Avoid sharing images of empty shelves, hazmat suits, or people in distress

Follow and share recommendations of CDC and World Health Organization:
✓ Post these recommendations in places where friends and family can see them
✓ Explain new terms in many languages, “social distancing”

(image credit artist Kotryna Zukauskaite)
How to Find Local, Relevant, and Timely Information

Focus on facts:
✓ Misinformation is meant to trick you, be compassionate if you need to correct someone

Seek out #MutualAID networks:
✓ Community organizers are using social media (e.g. Nextdoor, Google Docs, and Instagram) to help deliver food and medical supplies
✓ Avoid sending money or donations to unknown entities

(image credit artist Kotryna Zukauskaite)
Mutual Aid: Journalism

April Glaser

#MutualAID

Communities rally around one another — and Google Docs — to bring coronavirus aid

So many groups have popped up in the past five days that there are now master spreadsheets circulating on Twitter, Nextdoor and Facebook.

(image credit artist Kotryna Zukauskaite)
Mutual Aid: Civil Society
Brandi Collins-Dexter
#SymptomsOfInjustice
Case: Martial Law Rumors

Tactic: Chain Reaction
Misinformation about COVID-19

**Case:** Immunity to Coronavirus

**Tactic:** Speculation
Disinformation about COVID-19

+ Media Manipulation Campaign Planning

**Case:** Biden has Coronavirus

**Tactic:** Leak Forgery

Joe Biden has Coronavirus and even though diarrhea isn't usually a symptom he's covered in it. I can't tell if it came out of his butt or if he was eating it but it's everywhere. He died and now I have to clean it up myself. Disgusting!
Maintain your credibility

can’t come to bed now, someone is wrong on the internet!
COVID-19 & Cybersecurity
Brian Friedberg
and Gabby Lim

(image credit artist Francesco Ciccolella)
COVID-19 and Cybersecurity

Cyber attacks on the rise

+ There has been an uptick in hacking attempts worldwide.
+ WHO and CISA report cyber attacks exploiting COVID-19.
+ Scammers are exploiting the infodemic and impersonating the CDC.
+ “Zoombombing” and other trolling campaigns are targeting public officials, educators and journalists.

Tips and resources

+ Protect your accounts with secure password management
+ Be alert for hacking, phishing and impersonation
+ Practice safe browsing
+ Check in on the cyberhealth of friends and family
Upcoming webinars

1) ‘Zoombombing’: Media Manipulation Under Quarantine
2) Democracy After COVID-19
3) Race, Xenophobia, and COVID-19
4) Policy Implications of Emergency Orders on Human Rights
5) Civil Society Responses to Infodemics

Sign up for Meme War Weekly and the Shorenstein Center email newsletter to be notified of the dates of these upcoming webinars
Thank you!

Sign up for Meme War Weekly
shorensteincenter.org/memewar

For more information contact
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Learn more about TaSC and the Media Manipulation Case Book here

(image credit artist: Ana Hill)
Additional resources

// Security Planner (by Citizen Lab)

// Tips for human rights defenders | Physical, emotional and digital protection while using home as office in times of COVID-19 (by Front Line Defenders)

// Covid-19 Mutual Aid Networks (by Massachusetts Jobs with Justice)