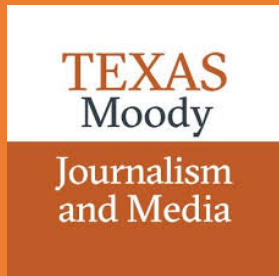


Computational Propaganda and Covid-19



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the
Reality
Game

How the Next
Wave of Technology Will
Break the Truth

-Today's Presentation-

-A story

-The next wave of propaganda

-Q & A



Fake News?

Misinformation?

Disinformation?

Conspiracy theory?

Propaganda?

DEMAND FOR DECEIT



How the Way
We Think Drives
Disinformation

Samuel Woolley and Katie Joseff



Passive vs. Active Demand

COGNITIVE DRIVERS OF CONSUMPTION, ACCEPTANCE, AND SHARING OF DISINFORMATION

PASSIVE DRIVERS

Belief Perseverance Effect: Continued influence of initial conclusions (sometimes based on false, novel information) on decision-making and individual beliefs.

Familiarity Effect: Information which is repeated or delivered in a manner consistent with past experience (for example, in a frequently-heard accent) is often deemed more credible.

Misinformation Effect: False information suggested to individuals after the fact can influence their perception, especially as time passes and the memory weakens.

Priming: Shaping an individual's perceptions and behavior through exposure to subconscious stimuli.

Repeat Exposure: Individuals may respond more positively to stimuli that they have seen frequently than to stimuli they have seen only a few times; persists even when exposure is subliminal and individuals are unaware that they have seen a stimulus.

Truth Bias: The default assumption that information is credible.

Virality and Heightened Emotion: Information which evokes fear, disgust, awe, anger, or anxiety may be much more likely to be spread by individuals over social media.

ACTIVE DRIVERS

Bandwagon Effect: The tendency of individuals to be more likely to adopt beliefs that they believe are common among others.

Confirmation Bias: Suggests that individuals seek out information that is in agreement with their preexisting beliefs.

Consensus Bias: The tendency to believe information that is perceived as consensus.

Disconfirmation Bias: Suggests that people actively reason against information which conflicts with preexisting beliefs.

Directionally Motivated Reasoning: The desire to reach a specific conclusion, and thus to lend more credibility to information favoring that conclusion.

In-group favoritism: The tendency to favor one's "in-group" (e.g. race, gender, sexual orientation, religious preference, partisan affiliation, geographic location, etc.) over one's out-group.

Preference Falsification: Occurs when individuals express preferences (e.g. favored politician or policy) in response to perceived societal pressures and do not communicate their true opinion.

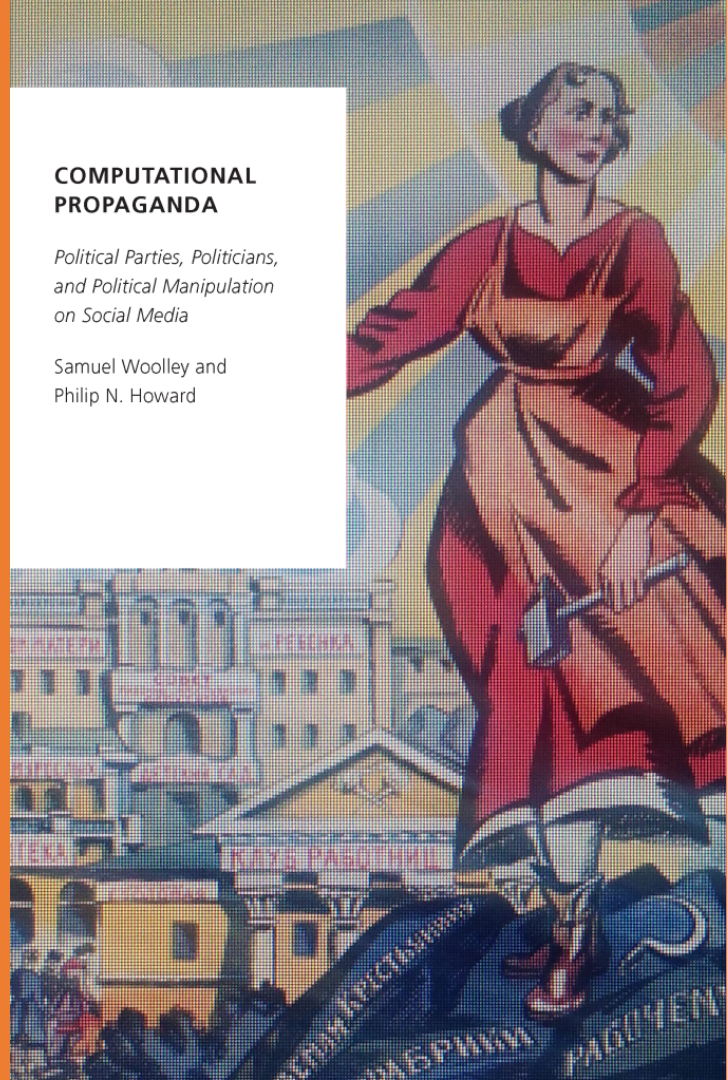
Prior Attitude Effect: Suggests that people regard information that supports their beliefs ("pro-attitudinal information") as more legitimate than counter-attitudinal information (sometimes called the prior attitude effect).

Computational Propaganda

COMPUTATIONAL PROPAGANDA

*Political Parties, Politicians,
and Political Manipulation
on Social Media*

Samuel Woolley and
Philip N. Howard



Encrypted-propaganda?

India

--

BJP,
IT Cells,
WhatsApp



TECH STREAM

Tomorrow's tech policy conversations today

About TechStream | Stay Informed

Encrypted messaging apps are the future of propaganda

May 1, 2020 | [Samuel Woolley](#)



The power of relational organizing,
partisan nano-influencers and 'pods'?

Data Point:

“We are building a campaign where we are actually recruiting front-line workers, who are content creators and social influencers, to tell their personal stories. And then we have subsets of micro-influencers who are sharing their personal interactions and experiences with those front-line workers. And think of those as concentric rings...but it shows you the specificity with which you can create powerful, emotional, personal, and often local narratives to respond to, or program ahead of, what you’re seeing on the horizon in terms of harmful narratives coming out of the white house and other places”.

–Kay, Digital Strategist, on
leveraging local influencer networks

Influencer Engagement Pods

Drop pods: have a specific 'drop' time where users share their content for others to like/comment/follow and there is a required level of engagement required for members

Rolling pods: a user has to engage with a certain number of posts before they can drop their own

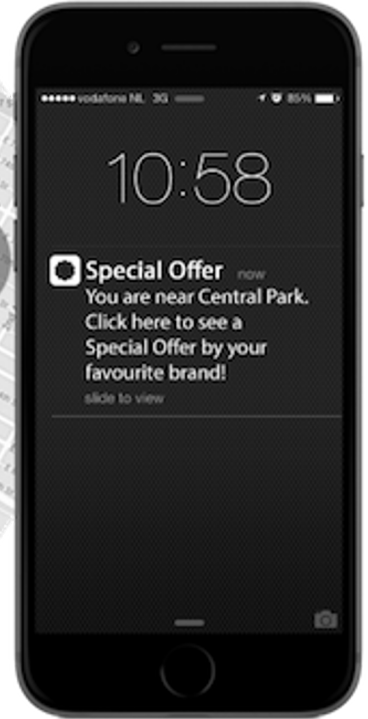
Group pods: looser requirements. No times or limits

Geo-propaganda?

USA



Geo-location Rallies Church





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COVID-19 Isn't the Only Threat to Privacy

In U.S. Politics, Surveillance Was the Norm Long Before the Pandemic

By [Katie Joseff and Samuel Woolley](#) May 22, 2020



Solutions

- Social versus technical.
- Tech versus govt.
- Short, medium, long term.
- Designing for democracy, human rights.

Resources

- UT's Center for Media Engagement
- First Draft News
- Harvard's Technology and Social Change Project
- Rand's Tools that Fight Disinformation Online.

Thank you!

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