

FIRST DRAFT'S ESSENTIAL GUIDE TO

Responsible
Reporting
in an Age of
Information
Disorder

October 2019

FIRSTDRAFT

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Introduction	5
CHAPTER 1	The tipping point: Should I cover this story?	9
CHAPTER 2	Covering extremism	17
CHAPTER 3	Covering conspiracy theories	21
CHAPTER 4	Covering manipulated content	25
CHAPTER 5	Responsible headlines	33
CHAPTER 6	Linking and SEO	37
CHAPTER 7	Social media and amplification	43
CHAPTER 8	A note about empathy	47
	Conclusion	50
	Responsible reporting checklist	52

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Introduction

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WHAT DOES RESPONSIBLE REPORTING MEAN IN AN AGE OF INFORMATION DISORDER?

Many newsrooms rely on their editorial guidelines and code of ethics. Report the truth. Get the facts right. Be independent and impartial. Be transparent with your sources. Own up to your mistakes and issue prompt corrections.

These fundamentals are still the bedrock of journalism. But as audiences become hyper-networked, technological innovations have expanded the ways in which news can be gathered and distributed. In response, agents of disinformation have devised increasingly inventive methods for manipulating journalists, the social platforms and the subsequent media coverage. As a result, news organizations find themselves facing an array of new ethical challenges relating specifically to amplification.

Take, for example, a situation where:

- A reporter is gathering information for a story about a disinformation-spreading website that a prominent politician has been promoting online. The creator of the site has publicly stated that coverage from media outlets is part of their goal. How should the reporter approach writing this article?
- Searching on Twitter after a breaking news event, a journalist finds a tweet from an eyewitness. Conspiracy theories are starting to float around online, with a small but vocal community claiming

that the event was staged by the federal government. After verifying the eyewitness's post and their identity, what else should the journalist consider before retweeting or embedding?

- In the wake of a violent extremist attack, a reporter discovers that the accused assailant has posted extremist writings on an online message board. Should the reporter include a link to the text, screenshots, both or neither?
- An editor must craft a headline for an article about a manipulated video of a politician, which has been slowed down to make the politician appear ill or inebriated. How should the headline be worded so that it avoids amplifying the lie?

In all of these scenarios, there is no single “right” way to do things. The mere act of reporting always carries the risk of amplification and newsrooms must balance the public interest in the story against the potential consequences of coverage.

Responsible reporting in this day and age — when our information ecosystem has been so polluted with misleading and false content — means that journalists have an obligation to be aware of:

- The impact our work has on sources, subjects and readers.
- The consequences of what we say and share in digital spaces, which — even if it is not part of a published article — still has the potential for amplification.

- The role the media plays in the polluted information ecosystem.

This book is not designed to give you all the answers. What it will do, however, is provide you with questions you can ask as you navigate the tricky ethical terrain that comes with reporting in a world of information disorder.

Editorial guidelines and codes of ethics rarely include information about these new challenges. We recommend taking some of the questions laid out in this guide and using them to spark discussions in your newsroom about best practices for reporting on this type of content.

CHAPTER 1

The tipping point: Should I cover this story?

When confronted with mis- and disinformation, your first impulse may be to debunk: bring the falsehood into the light, tell the public what's going on and explain why it is untrue.

When coverage by news outlets is the end goal of many disinformation agents, however, sunlight may not always be the best disinfectant.¹

In this age of information disorder, timing is critical. Reporting on mis- or disinformation too early can actually be harmful. If the content you are considering covering is being discussed or circulated only in niche communities, writing about it may actually spread it to a much wider audience. A false accusation in a post which has been shared five times is less newsworthy than one which has been shared 5,000 times, no matter how outrageous the claim.

This can be especially counterproductive when disinformation agents actively attempt to manipulate the media into covering fabricated content (known as “manufactured amplification”).

As First Draft co-founder Claire Wardle has stated, such tactics “center around polluting the information ecosystem by seeding misleading or fabricated content, hoping to catch out journalists who now regularly turn to online sources to inform their newsgathering.”²

“Having their deliberate hoax or manufactured rumor featured and amplified by an influential news organization is considered a serious win, but so is finding their work the focus of a debunk. It all amounts to coverage.”

Claire Wardle, co-founder, First Draft

The illustration over the page — the ‘Trumpet of Amplification’ — is a visual reminder of the way false and conspiratorial content can make its way through the ecosystem, from anonymous message boards like 4chan through private messaging channels like Telegram, WhatsApp and direct message groups. It can move to niche communities in spaces like Reddit and YouTube, and then onto the most popular social media platforms. It can then get picked up by journalists who provide additional oxygen either by debunking or reporting the false information.



The Trumpet of Amplification shows how content moves from the anonymous web to the mainstream media. Source: First Draft.

In her 2018 [Data & Society report](#),³ “The Oxygen of Amplification: Better Practices for Reporting on Extremists, Antagonists, and Manipulators Online”, Syracuse University professor Whitney Phillips writes: “It is problematic enough when everyday citizens help spread false, malicious, or manipulative information across social media. It is infinitely more problematic when journalists, whose work can reach millions, do the same.”

Phillips cites the US media’s “nonstop coverage devoted to ‘alt-right’ antagonists” in the run-up to the 2016 Presidential election as an example of the dangers of amplification.

“However critically it might have been framed, however necessary it may have been to expose, coverage of these extremists and manipulators gifted participants with a level of visibility and legitimacy that even they could scarcely believe, as nationalist and supremacist ideology metastasized from culturally peripheral to culturally principal in just a few short months.”

Whitney Phillips, Syracuse University

On the other hand, reporting on mis- or disinformation too late is also harmful — at that point, the falsehood may have already spiraled out of control. Newsrooms, then, must identify a ‘tipping point’ at which mis- and disinformation becomes beneficial to address.

The tipping point will vary depending on the country and the particulars of the situation, but it is generally measured when content moves out of a niche community and crosses platforms — for example, when it jumps from 4chan to Twitter — or when it starts moving at velocity on one platform.

The tipping point differs by country but is measured when content moves out of a community and crosses platforms, or starts moving at velocity on one platform.

If misinformation hasn't reached the 'tipping point', reporting it may provide additional oxygen, which is often the aim of the creator.

After misinformation has passed the 'tipping point', it is important to push out debunks and fact-based narratives as widely and as quickly as possible.

The 'tipping point' helps us understand when it is worthwhile to debunk misinformation.
Source: First Draft.

In thinking about the tipping point — and how to write about mis- and disinformation once that point has been reached — here are some questions that journalists can ask themselves:

- Who is my audience? Is it likely that they have seen a particular piece of mis- or disinformation already? What are the consequences of bringing this content to their attention?
- How much traffic should a piece of mis- or disinformation have before we address it? How do we decide what measurements are helpful?
- For example, on Twitter, we can check to see whether a hashtag has made it into a country's

top trending topics. However, as Brian Feldman of New York Magazine has pointed out, the whole concept of “trending” on social media platforms is “eminently gameable”, both by teens promoting their favorite pop singer and by bad actors spreading [conspiracy theories](#).⁴ We saw this happen with [conspiracy theory-related hashtags](#) dominating the Twitter trending topics section in the US after the death of [Jeffrey Epstein](#).⁵ When it appears that a trend has been weaponized, does that make it more or less urgent for journalists to debunk the associated rumors?

- How do we think about the impact of mis- and disinformation? Do we care about how many people see the content, or do we care about who sees the content?
- To return to the example of Twitter: is it important because of the number of people who use it, or is it important because certain groups, such as new organizations and politicians, use it?
- Why do we report on attempts at manufactured amplification? Are we educating the public about disinformation campaigns so that they can be more vigilant? Are we trying to encourage technology companies and governments to take action? If we are simply documenting events, at what point is it in the public interest to actively cover disinformation?

- How should we write about attempts at manufactured amplification? What should the narrative be? Should we focus on debunking the content, or on the actors behind the content, or on the platforms that allow the content to spread? How can we write about the content without perpetuating the messages that they are boosting?

CHAPTER 2

Covering extremism

It has become common practice by now: when a mass shooting or other violent attack occurs and a perpetrator's name is released, we scour the web for traces of their digital life, looking for any posts or documents that might help us answer the question of “why?”

Extremists of all stripes have long used sites like Twitter, Facebook and YouTube to find like-minded communities in which to air their views. Lately, anonymous imageboard 8chan (which promised to take users to the “darkest reaches of the Internet”) has received wide publicity for being the platform of choice for white supremacists looking to spread their ideology. Telegram acquired a similar reputation for its use by Islamic terrorists.

Disturbingly, there are signs that the virulent ideologies and the “gamification of terror”, as *Bellingcat's* Robert Evans put it,⁶ have the potential to be contagious. In the wake of an August 2019 mass shooting at an El Paso, Texas, Walmart that left 20 people dead, a “manifesto” linked to the shooting emerged on 8chan, where the author cited as his inspiration the man behind the Christchurch, New Zealand, mosque attack. The Christchurch suspect, himself awaiting trial at the time of writing, is accused of posting a document railing against “white genocide” and a Facebook livestream link to 8chan shortly before the March 2019 shooting spree. The document stated that the author had been influenced by a Norwegian far-right extremist who murdered 77 people in 2011.

While it is possible that these white supremacists would have found each other's writings online, even without amplification from the media, newsrooms must grapple with the fact that coverage of these extremist writings can help push them from the fringes into the mainstream and expose the perpetrators' ideas to a much broader audience (which is often what they desire).⁷

It has never been so easy for terrorists to disseminate their ideology and recruit the disaffected to their ranks. Most journalists would agree that the motives behind extremist violence are newsworthy, but it is also worthwhile to consider how we can report on these motives and minimize the costs of amplification.

Here are some questions to think about when covering the online tactics of extremism:

- What language should we use when referring to documents and materials produced by the perpetrator and/or their supporters?
- Is it responsible for newsrooms to use a word like “manifesto”? How else could we refer to an inflammatory document that has been deliberately created for inclusion in media coverage in order to reach a wider audience? Is it better to use “screed”, “ramblings”, “writings” or just “documents”?
- What risks are attached to using the chosen language of extremist communities when referring to such a document or similar materials that they have produced?

- How much of the extremist materials should newsrooms make available to readers? Should newsrooms upload full versions to their sites, link back to the site where the materials originated, or use screenshots/excerpts?
- Could our mention of such materials and messaging encourage more people to seek out the original online?
- How should newsrooms handle videos or imagery that feature individuals promoting extremist ideology? Should symbols and apparently coded gestures be blurred?

A useful resource we recommend is “10 tips for covering white supremacy and far-right extremists” by *Journalist’s Resource*.⁸

CHAPTER 3

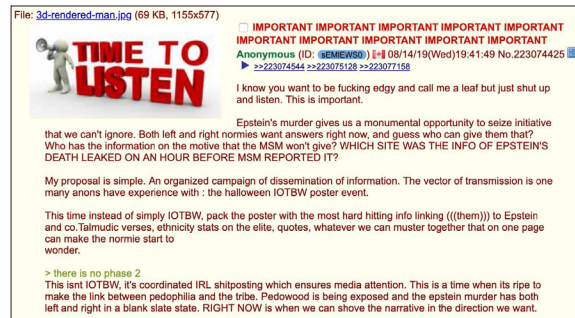
Covering conspiracy theories

As with covering online tactics of extremism, it is critical when reporting on a conspiracy theory to consider whether we are acting as bullhorns for bad actors who see coverage as legitimization.

Consider, for example, this August 2019 post (opposite) that appeared on 4chan, one day after *Buzzfeed News* reported that information surrounding Jeffrey Epstein's death had broken on the anonymous message board before it was announced by officials. While the media was busy figuring out how this had happened, the poster encouraged other 4chan users to use the death of Epstein as a "monumental opportunity" to "shove the narrative in the direction we want" and called for coordinated dissemination of information, which "ensures media attention".

Most conspiracy theories begin their lives in dark corners of the Internet, where they are easy to ignore. When they start crawling their way toward the mainstream, however, making the jump from closed or semi-closed networks to conspiracy communities to social media, journalists must decide:

- Has the conspiracy theory reached the tipping point where it has extended beyond the community it originated in?
- If it has in fact reached the tipping point, how can reporting place the conspiracy theory within the proper context?



A poster on anonymous imageboard 4chan encourages other users to take advantage of media attention to spread disinformation about Jeffrey Epstein's death. Retrieved 24 August 2019. Screenshot by author.

Try situating the narrative within a larger story about the falsehoods of the conspiracy theory, the communities where the conspiracy theory first took hold, the intentions of any disinformation campaigns or prominent people who amplified it, and the potential harms of the conspiracy theory's spread. Journalists should be careful not to undermine or make fun of those who believe conspiracy theories, as this can lead to a hardening of these beliefs.

CHAPTER 4

Covering manipulated content

“Manipulated content” is when an aspect of genuine content is altered, relating most often to photos or videos.

Visuals are an especially potent way of spreading mis- and disinformation, since people are more inclined to believe what they see.⁹ Manipulated images are also much harder to detect, compared to textual disinformation.¹⁰

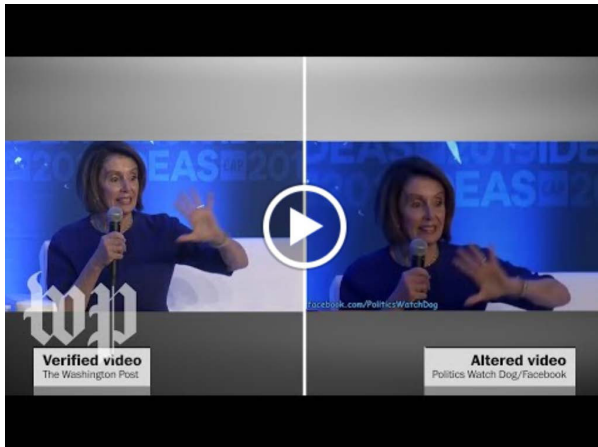
As an example, in March 2018, *Teen Vogue* published a video that showed Emma González, a Parkland High School shooting survivor, ripping a target in half.¹¹ Shortly after this video was released, a doctored version began circulating, edited to appear as though González was tearing up the United States Constitution.

The manipulated video quickly spread on Gab, 4chan and Twitter.



Twitter user Philip Picardi compares a frame from *Teen Vogue's* video of Parkland survivor Emma González tearing a target poster to a manipulated version that makes it look as though she is tearing up the US Constitution. Archived 6 Sept 2019. Screenshot by author.

In May 2019, a “shallowfake” (defined by First Draft as a low-quality video manipulation) which distorted footage of US Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi to make her appear inebriated or ill, racked up millions of views on social media. Below is a screenshot of *The Washington Post*’s comparison of the videos.



A video of US House of Representatives Speaker Nancy Pelosi was slowed down to make her appear drunk. This side-by-side video contrasting the verified video with the altered version was created by the Washington Post. Archived on September 6 2019. Screenshot by author.

While side-by-side visuals can be useful for informing audiences about popular disinformation, adding prominent graphics or a text overlay could increase a debunk’s effectiveness, clearly distinguishing between the original and the manipulation.

The bright colors and large text are more likely to stand out to readers as they quickly scroll through their social media feeds.



A side-by-side comparison of a genuine photo of Madrid’s City Hall with a banner that says “Refugees Welcome” and a doctored version that changed the banner to say “British Refugees Welcome.” Archived 7 Sept 2019. Screenshot by author



In July 2019, a manipulated video of Argentina's Security Minister Patricia Bullrich, slowed down to make her appear drunk, began circulating online. Bullrich contrasted the original video and the altered video in a tweet. Archived 7 Sept 2019. Screenshot by author.

Here are some things to keep in mind when we cover manipulated content:

- When deciding whether to cover manipulated content, have we considered how far and how quickly the content has already spread, and its predicted virality and impact?
- If we choose to feature a manipulated video in my reporting, have we thought about using selected clips or images instead of embedding or

linking to the original (while being mindful of any additional copyright considerations)?

- Can we overlay the manipulated content with graphics or text that clearly inform audiences of how the video has been manipulated?
- Have we thought about the language we are using to describe this type of disinformation? It may be useful to explain that the content is “altered,” “manipulated” or “distorted,” rather than to say that it is “fake”, which may be confusing to readers especially when the disinformation is based on genuine photos or videos.
- Where possible, have we led with the truth and avoided repeating or amplifying the intended outcome or accusatory language in the headline?
- Have we provided context and presented the existence of a piece of content within a bigger picture relating to intentions, motivations, threat and harm?
- Before referring to a falsehood, have we provided an explanation of why it is false and evidence to support verified conclusions?
- Have we taken care not to undermine or make fun of those who believe the manipulated content? Doing so can lead to a hardening of these beliefs.

CHAPTER 5

Responsible headlines

In a 2016 study, computer scientists at Columbia University and the Microsoft Research-Inria Joint Centre estimated that 59% of links mentioned on Twitter are not clicked at all,¹² confirming what many of us already assume anecdotally: people are sharing articles without reading them first.

This means headlines can often be the only text from an article that readers are exposed to. Newsrooms reporting on disinformation should craft headlines carefully to avoid amplifying the falsehood or accusatory language.

Even a well-intentioned headline that includes the falsehood in order to debunk it — for example, “‘Drunk’ Nancy Pelosi Video is Actually Edited Footage”, or, “NYC Chief Medical Examiner Finds No Evidence of Jeffrey Epstein Murder” — runs the risk of drawing a connection in readers’ minds between the words “drunk” and “Nancy Pelosi,” or “Jeffrey Epstein” and “murder”.

Rather, headlines should lead with the truth: “A Manipulated Video of Nancy Pelosi is Spreading on Social Media,” or “Autopsy Shows Epstein’s Cause of Death.”

A headline for a story about manipulated visual content should also avoid using the word “fake” or “false.” Psychological literature demonstrates that simply stating something as false can solidify that idea. People need alternative narratives to fill the voids that are left when they are told something is false.

Headline writers should consider explaining how a video was manipulated, using words such as “distorted”, “altered”, “slowed down” or “sped up.”

Considering using phrasing such as...	Rather than:
Distorted videos of Nancy Pelosi spread on social media in attempt to undermine the Speaker	Trump shares video of Pelosi speech, hints at mental health issues
Video of Nancy Pelosi speech is slowed down. Opponents reshare as excuse to attack credibility	“Pelosi stammers through news conference”, Trump tweets
The manipulated Pelosi video: Why we embrace fiction over fact	FAKE: Video of ‘drunk’ Pelosi slurring her words

CHAPTER 6

Linking and SEO

Say you are developing a story about a popular website which, you have concluded, spreads disinformation. You have determined that it's been shared and reported on widely enough that it is now past the tipping point, making it beneficial to inform the public.

Your story points out the falsehoods on the site, identifies its provenance and addresses both the creator's motivations and the potential harm that the site poses. You've spoken with your editors about the importance of using a responsible headline that leads with the truth.

Before the story goes live, however, you must decide whether your article will:

- Link to the site.
- Not include any links to the site.
- Include no-follow links to the site.

Linking out to sources is good practice for fostering transparency, but this routine procedure can become fraught in the context of covering disinformation. Including a link to the disinformation source can result in amplification by:

- Directing reader traffic to the site.
- Boosting it in search engine rankings.

On the other hand, choosing not to include a link could end up driving readers to look up the disinformation source themselves, which pushes the website higher up in online search results.

It's a damned-if-you-do and damned-if-you-don't situation — one in which *New York Times* reporter Matthew Rosenberg found himself as he reported on the origins of a popular parody site mocking former Vice President of the United States Joseph R. Biden, Jr.

News organizations first spotted the self-proclaimed parody in early May, not long after Biden announced his campaign to be the Democratic nominee for the 2020 US election. Reporting seemed to drive reader interest, with Google Trends showing a jump in searches for the parody Biden site over the official Biden 2020 website.

Rosenberg dug into the back story and soon located its creator: a 30-year-old man who runs a Republican consulting firm with his brother and creates digital content for President Trump's re-election campaign.

Having identified the site owner, Rosenberg decided that his article would not link to it. "Links from established media websites are weighted heavily by search engines," he explained in his [June 2019 piece](#).¹³

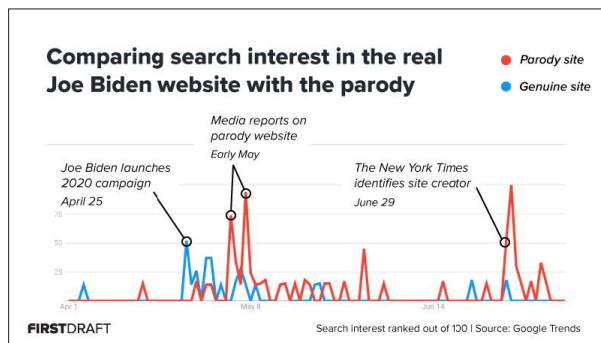
"The *New York Times* is not linking to Mr. Mauldin's websites to avoid further boosting them in search rankings."

Matthew Rosenberg, *New York Times*

Instead, Rosenberg and his editors chose to:

- Include screenshots of the website for readers who were curious but did not want to visit the site.
- Write out the website's URL, so that readers who did want to visit the site could copy and paste the URL directly into the address bar.

Still, the day after the *Times* published the article, Google searches for the “parody” website went through the roof, jumping even higher than in early May, during the initial wave of press.



Google search interest in a parody campaign site for Joe Biden spiked after the *New York Times* reported on it. Source: Google Trends/First Draft.

Given the drawbacks in both linking to sites and not, ‘no-follow’ links provide another option for navigating the complex relationship between coverage of disinformation and SEO.

No-follow links are useful for newsrooms that wish to direct readers to a site, whilst also preventing the site from climbing up the search results.

These links, which Aviv Ovadya wrote about for First Draft [in 2016](#),¹⁴ can be easily created by adding `rel="nofollow"` to a webpage's HTML.

In the published article, the no-follow link will look exactly the same as any other and take readers to the destination page. But behind the scenes, this attribute tells the search engines to ignore the link when evaluating the search ranking of the destination page.

A normal link to a website looks like this in HTML:

```
<a href="www.website.com">website</a>
```

To make a no-follow link, add `rel="nofollow"` so that it looks like:

```
<a href="www.badwebsite.com" rel="nofollow">bad website</a>
```

Instructions for creating a “no-follow” link. Source: Aviv Ovadya for First Draft.

No-follow links do not entirely solve the problem of amplification. From the perspective of the reader, no-follows still take them directly to the site in question, which means increased traffic and attention. However, no-follows avoid the additional complication of boosting the site's search rank.

As disinformation campaigns and media manipulation attempts proliferate, the reality is that any story published about disinformation has the potential to direct traffic and increase reader interest. Newsrooms must continue to make challenging decisions every day about how to best report such stories, balancing newsworthiness against the consequences of coverage.

CHAPTER 7

Social Media and Amplification

Opportunities for amplification abound in our polluted information ecosystem. The debate over whether silence or debunking is more effective in combating disinformation goes beyond the stories we write: increasingly, journalists are discovering that even everyday interactions on social media can give oxygen to mis- and disinformation.

Retweeting, quote-tweeting or replying to a malicious or misguided tweet increases the visibility of that tweet to an audience on Twitter, which can spread false information even if the intention was to debunk the original.

As editor and media consultant Heidi Moore recently said, “One of the ‘comes with the territory’ realities of Twitter is: if you have over 10K followers, you cannot fairly use your power to rebut trolls or liars, because your reach amplifies those lies. It’s frustrating and it allows a lot of freedom to creepy people. For journalists, especially, this is hard because we value truth and integrity so much.”¹⁵

We should be extremely careful about sharing rumors and speculative opinions on social media. Research has shown that false information can spread much faster and further online than the truth¹⁶ — and is difficult to correct¹⁷ — making it crucial for journalists to consider not just intention but also impact when speaking up online.

Some questions to think about when using social media:

- If I am thinking about replying to, retweeting or quote-tweeting someone, have I explained the context to my audience?
- How likely is it that my response will amplify mis- or disinformation?
- If I am sharing an opinion, how can I ensure that my followers understand that my post/tweet is an opinion and not fact?
- If I am sharing a rumor, have I disclosed the source and any related context to explain the relevance and reasoning for my post?
- What is my personal corrections policy for social media posts? Will I delete posts that are subsequently found to be misleading or inaccurate, or respond in a comment or thread? How can I make sure that my correction reaches as many of the original audience that saw the incorrect post as possible?

CHAPTER 8

A note about empathy

In addition to considering how our reporting and social media activity might amplify the intentions of the actors spreading false information, journalists have an ethical responsibility¹⁸ to think about our impact on the people we write about and whose content we refer to. Shining a spotlight on those at the center of our investigations may expose them to online abuse, reputational harm and other unwanted attention.

As Whitney Phillips writes in “The Oxygen of Amplification”, citing *The Verge*’s Adi Robertson, “Even when a story presents positive coverage of a person or group ... amplification ‘paints a target on people’s back.’”¹⁹

The following are questions we can ask ourselves:

- Have we considered the rights and vulnerabilities of all parties quoted, referenced or featured in our story?
- If we are reporting on a breaking news event and seeking to communicate with eyewitnesses, have we taken into consideration their physical and emotional welfare? Have we thought about whether the eyewitness has just seen or experienced a traumatic event?
- If we are requesting permission to use a person’s content in our story, have we been transparent about when and where the content might be used? Have we asked them if and how they would like to be credited, and have we explained the potential benefits and drawbacks of being identified?

- Have we considered the unintended consequences of using or embedding posts that the original user did not expect a larger audience to see? What might have been the intent of the original user, and where did they reasonably expect their content to appear? What kind of communities are likely to be interested in the original users’ content?
- Before publishing or reposting video or photos, have we thought about the potential impact of my coverage on any identifiable person in the video or photo?

Conclusion

Responsible reporting in an age of information disorder requires journalists to have an acute awareness of the polluted ecosystems in which we report, the manner in which this new world disorder complicates traditional modes of journalism, the multiple ways the media can inadvertently amplify bad actors, and the consequences of coverage on subjects, sources and readers.

Thoughtful consideration is necessary at every stage of the process, in selecting what stories to cover, deciding what words and images to use, determining an appropriate method of linking, choosing a headline, and interacting with readers on social media. They are essential questions for newsrooms hoping to evade media manipulation and fulfill the basic goal of journalism:²⁰ providing readers with accurate and informative stories about the world they live in.

RESPONSIBLE REPORTING CHECKLIST:

Before publishing an article, here are some questions to ask yourself:

- 1 Am I comfortable that my piece is both:
 - In the public interest?
 - Not unnecessarily amplifying an existing falsehood or conspiracy?
- 2 Did I link to all possible sources featured in the story?
 - Have I considered using no-follow links, or adding a screenshot instead of a link, for websites featuring mis- or disinformation and other concerning content?
- 3 Does my story feature an image or a video that can be easily manipulated, misinterpreted or taken out of context?

- 4 Have I added an image or video credit and a link to the original page where the image or video was featured? If so:
 - Have I sought permission to use the image or video, where necessary?
 - If the image or video shows manipulated content, have I considered adding text or graphic overlay that informs the audience of how it has been manipulated?
 - Have I considered the rights and vulnerabilities of all parties quoted, referenced or featured in the image or video?
 - Have I considered the unintended consequences of using posts that the original user did not expect a larger audience to see?
- 5 Am I confident that the headline, social media summaries and any related alerts or notifications accurately summarize the story, presenting the information in a way that will not cause confusion or amplify falsehoods?

ENDNOTES

- 1 This is a riff off of Louis Brandeis' well-known saying in the essay "What Publicity Can Do," from his book *Other People's Money and How the Bankers Use It* (1914). "Publicity is justly commended as a remedy for social and industrial diseases. Sunlight is said to be the best of disinfectants; electric light the most efficient policeman."
- 2 Wardle, C. (2018, December). 5 Lessons for Reporting in an Age of Disinformation. *First Draft*.
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- 7 In an article examining mass shooters' use of 8chan, Drew Harwell of *The Washington Post* cites Joan Donovan of Harvard University's Shorenstein Center as saying that posting to 8chan is a deliberate, "tactical" move geared toward amplification. "Mass shooters can control the public conversation about their motives, while at the same time provide the public with a clear explanation for their actions," Donovan explained to Harwell. Harwell, D (2019, August). Three mass shootings this year began with a hateful screed on 8chan. Its founder calls it a terrorist refuge in plain sight.
- 8 Ordway, D. (2019, July). 10 tips for covering white supremacy and far-right extremists. *Journalist's Resource*.
- 9 See Nightingale, S., Wade, K., & Watson, D. (2017). Can people identify original and manipulated photos of real-world scenes? *Cognitive Research: Principles and Implications 2*, Article number: 30.
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- 13 Rosenberg, M. (2019, June). Trump Consultant is Trolling Democrats With Biden Site That Isn't Biden's. *The New York Times*.
- 14 Ovadya, A. (2016, August). That debunk of a viral fake news story might help the hoaxers: Here's how to stop it. *First Draft and Meedan*.
- 15 Moore, H., @moorehn. (2019, July 30). "One of the 'comes with the territory' realities of Twitter is: If you have over 10K followers, you cannot fairly use your power to rebut trolls or liars, bc your reach amplifies those lies. It's frustrating + allows a lot of freedom to creepy people. For journalists, especially, this is hard because we value truth and integrity so much. It's not our tendency to let lies or bad actors slide. But Twitter's algorithm makes large-account maintenance extremely unwieldy." [Twitter Posts].
- 16 Vosoughi, S., Roy, D., & Aral, S. (2018). The Spread of True and False News Online. *Science*, 359(6380), 1146-1151. doi: 10.1126/science.aap9559
- 17 Jian, L., Shin, J., Bar, F., & Driscoll, K. (2016). Political rumoring on Twitter during the 2012 US presidential election: Rumor diffusion and correction. *New Media & Society*, 19(8), 1214-1235. doi: 10.1177/1461444816634054
- 18 Many organizations dedicated to supporting journalists have created resources that help guide newsrooms in considering the impact of their reporting on sources. For an example, please see Eyewitness Media Hub's Guiding Principles for Journalists (2015, September), which asks journalists to (amongst other things) think about the physical and emotional welfare of eyewitnesses when communicating with them during a news event, and to be transparent with eyewitnesses about when and where their content will be used. Another example is the *Online News Association's Social Newsgathering Ethics Code*, which encourages newsrooms to consider the inherent risk in asking a contributor to produce and deliver user-generated content.

- 19 Phillips, W. (2018). The Oxygen of Amplification: Better Practices for Reporting on Extremists, Antagonists, and Manipulators Online. *Data & Society Research Institute*.
- 20 See the *American Press Institute's* definition of journalism: "News is that part of communication that keeps us informed of the changing events, issues, and characters in the world outside. Though it may be interesting or even entertaining, the foremost value of news is as a utility to empower the informed. The purpose of journalism is thus to provide citizens with the information they need to make the best possible decisions about their lives, their communities, their societies, and their governments."

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