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ENGRD 380W

Misinformation Creation and Reflection

I. Component 1- Discussion and analysis incorporating a secondary source

Election based misinformation is extremely prevalent in today's society, especially due to the rise of social media. This type of misinformation comes primarily in the form of voter fraud allegations. Voter fraud is when voters attempt to cheat the election system by casting ballots, even though they are ineligible to vote. In this section, I will explain why claims of voter fraud tend to be pieces of misinformation, and I will elaborate on the different types of voter fraud misinformation. I will also discuss how this type of misinformation is spread and from where it comes. Finally, I will talk about the negative implications of this type of misinformation.

As explained in "The Truth About Voter Fraud" by Justin Levitt, voter fraud is controlled and is an unlikely occurrence, which is why claims about voter fraud tend to be misinformation. Levitt goes so far as to say that "it is more likely that an individual will be struck by lightning than that he will impersonate another voter at the polls" (Levitt, 4). Additionally, Levitt found that most reported incidents of voter fraud are not caused by voters, but rather occur due to such things as clerical errors or bad data matching practices. For example, what may appear to be a person attempting to vote under a different name can usually be traced back to a typing error.

There are many different types of voter fraud misinformation. One type of voter fraud information is allegations of double voting. However, according to Levitt, actual double voting is itself very rare.

Such claims are usually premised on matching lists of voters from one place to another; upon closer inspection, the match process shows error. Sometimes the

interpretation is flawed: two list entries under the same name — even the same name and birthdate — indicate different individuals. (Levitt, 12)

Furthermore, voter lists are sometimes incorrect, simply because of a mistake made by an overworked and under-trained election worker. Because of these errors, it may appear that someone has double voted, but in reality, their name has been accidentally put on the voting list twice. Another common type of voter fraud is allegations of dead voters casting votes. This misinformation tends to happen because of inaccurate matches of names from death records to the voter rolls. This type of voter fraud allegation may occur even when the match is accurate, but the voter died after casting their ballot in the election.

Voter fraud misinformation can appear in multiple places such as on social media and televised news, and is usually spread by a losing candidate and their supporters. Levitt explains that after a tight election, the “losing candidates are often quick to blame voter fraud for the results” (Levitt, 3). For example, following the 2020 election, many Conservative news reporters spread voter fraud misinformation to disprove the results. Tucker Carlson, a far-right reporter on Fox News, told his audience there were dead people that voted in the election because of absentee ballots. He used this misinformation to upset his audience and encourage them to fight for stricter voting laws.

The spread of voter fraud misinformation has negative implications on the public. One implication is that people may decide to stop voting to protest election procedures. Additionally, people will stop trusting any election result, despite how accurate it is. This will then cause people to have distrust in the government and its elected officials. Distrust in the government is detrimental to its success because if people do not trust their leaders, they may stop listening to them.

II. Component 2 – Designing and analyzing the process of creating misinformation

Hypothetically, I am a right-wing news reporter for Fox News and an avid supporter of Donald Trump. Following the 2020 election, I was extremely upset with the results and do not think Joe Biden fairly won the election. I believe that it was too easy for people to vote by mail during the election and it led to voter fraud, which skewed the election results in many battleground states such as Georgia. To prevent voter fraud, I think there should be stricter voter ID laws in Georgia and across the country. I support legislation that limits absentee voting drop boxes to early voting sites, requires additional identification materials for absentee voting and allows states to take over county elections. I encourage my viewers to contact their representatives and push them to keep fighting for legislation that will create stricter voting laws to help secure our elections.

I read an article on Fox News that said dead people still appear on many voter rolls which is voter fraud, so I decided to write a news story about this so that my base can see the severity of the situation and understand why stricter voting laws are essential to our democracy. The headline of my article, which is published on the Breitbart website is “30 Dead Voters Cast Ballots in Georgia for 2020 Election!” I appeal to logos by including various pieces of factual information from non-partisan sources that proves dead voters are on voter rolls. This also contributes to my ethos and credibility, because I have chosen to highlight the experts rather than display myself as an expert on the subject. Additionally, I appeal to pathos when I call out Democrats for causing voter fraud and not doing anything about it. This will attract the Conservatives who are angry and want to place blame on Democrats. Finally, I end my article with a call-to-action and persuade my audience to fight for the right to a fair election. I know that

my Conservative base will read this article and feel emotionally inclined to do something about this severe issue.

III. Component 3 – Concluding reflection

The inspiration for my creation of this piece of misinformation is from my Unit 1 assignment, in which I analyzed a piece written by Tucker Carlson for Fox News. In that piece, he discussed the idea of dead people casting ballots in the election, which has been proven to be false. I knew that by using a similar narrative and by creating an engaging headline, I would be able to draw in my specific audience of far-right Conservatives. Although I knew a lot about voter fraud prior to this assignment, simply because of my background in political science, I liked having the opportunity to put myself in the shoes of someone who was creating a piece of fake news about voter fraud. I learned about the importance of appealing to your specific audience in order to achieve your purpose. I made sure to include aspects that would draw in my audience, such as placing blame on Democrats and by using credible sources to back up my claims. I needed to ensure that I appealed to my audience's emotions, so they would feel angry about the situation and be motivated to take action.

In addition to creating and analyzing my own piece of misinformation, it was valuable to find a secondary source to further develop my understanding of voter fraud misinformation. I learned a lot from reading my additional source and felt that it contributed well to my analysis of this genre of misinformation.

Before this assignment, I had looked at voter fraud with my political science lens, in terms of Supreme Court cases and the words of the Constitution. However, in this assignment, I was able to analyze voter fraud misinformation with a different lens, focusing on how the

misinformation is developed, spread and the rhetorical strategies used by its creators. Overall, it was a very positive and insightful experience.

Works Cited

Levitt, Justin. "The Truth About Voter Fraud." SSRN Electronic Journal, 2007,
<https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.1647224>.