

Bias Education: How a Certain Reading Lens Can Change

We live in a world where media engagement has hit its peak. In fact, the average user spends 151 minutes daily on social media—more than food consumption, reading, and quality time with family¹.

How can we make this time invested productive in a globalized era where democracy is falling apart? Why is media literacy faltering in progress, and what can be done to reverse this trend?

The primary cause behind the unraveling of media literacy is the inability to distinguish actual news occurrences from fake ones. A study from MIT explains how false news travels considerably faster than real news; in fact, fake news was able to breach up to 100,000 individuals on Twitter, with real news only hitting around 1,000 people².

With this threat in mind, it is important to develop programs for media literacy—designed for all ages—as soon as possible. We live in a world where 70% of young kids are on social media³, and nearly three in ten teens get news from social media⁴. Kids do not need to be any more “engaged” with the media: the average kid between 13 and 19 spends 4.8 hours on these very platforms⁵. The missing engagement stems from the “literacy” aspect, and it is simply due to the fact that adolescents are more likely to believe what they see on social media. The way individuals are taught to read stays with them forever. Why does society not make it their prerogative to explain *how* people read into different types of media matters too?

The solvency is simply the education of biases to solidify the ability of distinguishing actual instances from attention-grabbing propaganda. One of the most important educational means by which to discern real from fake is researching the biases behind any piece of literature. This strategy allows children to be aware of an author’s influence on the authenticity of a piece. Some states have already taken these steps to educate on bias in media literacy: New Jersey, Texas, and Delaware have made this learning mandatory in K–12. At South Brunswick High School in particular, students explained how anti-bias education helped them learn the importance of finding good sources⁶. The Stanford faculty, yielding an age group considerably older, has

¹ “How Much Time Do People Spend on Social Media in 2024?” *Techjury*, techjury.net/blog/time-spent-on-social-media/. Accessed 19 Feb. 2024.

² Vosoughi, Soroush. “The Spread of True and False News Online.” *Science*, www.science.org/doi/10.1126/science.aap9559. Accessed 19 Feb. 2024.

³ Searing, Linda. “One-Third of Children Ages 7 to 9 Use Social Media” *The Washington Post*, www.washingtonpost.com/health/social-media-young-kids/2021. Accessed 1 Feb. 2024.

⁴ Vogels, Emily A. “Teens and Social Media: Key Findings from Pew Research Center Surveys.” *Pew Research Center*, Pew Research Center, 24 Apr. 2023, www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2023/04/24/teens-and-social-media-key-findings-from-pew-research-center-surveys/.

⁵ Rothwell, Jonathan. “Teens Spend Average of 4.8 Hours on Social Media per Day.” *Gallup.Com*, Gallup, 9 Feb. 2024, news.gallup.com/poll/512576/teens-spend-average-hours-social-media-per-day.aspx.

⁶ “These High Schoolers Are Learning to Identify Media Bias.” *CNN*, Cable News Network, 14 Dec. 2023, www.cnn.com/videos/us/2023/12/14/media-literacy-bias-class-contd-no-orig.cnn.

implemented anti-bias training with productive results for their teachers⁷. These methodologies set up a framework for people to discern partiality from any readings for the rest of their lives.

Misinformation will never truly leave. In a world where there is a fine line between truth and lies, developing a truly democratic population starts by applying a critical lens to media literacy. Teaching biases and their impact will ultimately grow a new generation that is able to solidify the very line we are on the verge of blurring day by day.

Works Cited

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