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Fake News — The Reflection of Changing Society

Fake news has been given a straightforward definition: fabricated news that are spreading to deliberately mislead readers, and making the websites profit through clickbait, with less significant influence on the society. However, during the dramatic presidential election, “the definition of fake news as used for such polemics became more vague.” (“Wikipedia”) The vagueness of the definition, based on my standard, offers the opportunity to explore fake news as something more profound—the reflection of the changing society. Two aspects of changes are reflected by fake news: the changing intensity of political partisanship, and the changing function of social network.

The partisanship nowadays is extremely severe. People are not only tending to treat others from their own party better but also taking partisanship as fundamental identities. This phenomenon is perfectly summarized by Sean Westwood: “Partisanship, for a long period of time... wasn’t core to our identity. But in the modern era we view party identity as ... the core traits that we use to describe ourselves to others.” (“The Real Story About Fake News Is Partisanship”) As a result, people, from arguing for only their political belief, are now fighting for their identities through the political arguments—fake news becomes one of the easiest method to attack another group while insisting on one’s

own correctness, and therefore some people spreads fake news when realizes the falsity. Moreover, people are psychologically more likely to positively evaluate others from their own group, and “more inclined to seek out and believe stories that justify their pre-existing partisan biases, whether or not they are true.” In sum, the intentional spreading and unintentional beliefs in fake news is reflecting the current upheaval in political partisanship.

Furthermore, the changing function of social network is also reflected by fake news. Social network was the place to contact people and make friends; however, because of the indirect way of direct communication offered by social network as the almost unlimited access of posts from each individual, social network has already been the battlefield of attacking the other political side. People with some credibility also creating fake news via social networks like news only makes fake news and social networks more inseparable: “A Time magazine reporter erroneously tweeted that a bust of civil rights icon Martin Luther King, Jr. was removed from display in the Oval Office by Donald Trump” (Emery) , which has been proven as fake by Snopes. com. In brief, the current overwhelming existence of fake news is reflecting the new role of social network.

In conclusion, fake news, which was merely tabloid journalism with instantaneous damage upon the society, is now the reflection of the socio-political changes of the modern society. People creating and spreading the fake news are doing their own favors through damaging the opposite side but making our society morbid as a whole.