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Can You Trust the News?

Every day the internet is bombarded with fake news. A diligent reader must be aware of fake propaganda in order to educate themselves with accurate, worldly information. The real news article, “Why is Taylor Swift’s tweet about the Women’s March so controversial” and the satirical article, “Mike Pence Disappointed In The 200,000 Husbands And Fathers Who Permitted Women To Attend March?” are sources that can be thoroughly compared and analyzed using the Toulmin’s method.

The Onion news story, “Mike Pence Disappointed In The 200,000 Husbands And Fathers Who Permitted Women To Attend March” is evidently a fake source. According to Merriam-Webster Dictionary, satire “is a literary work holding up human vices and follies to ridicule or scorn” (“Satire”). The satirical source is ridiculing Mike Pence for the way he has talked about women in the past. It is known that he has rejected a bill for women’s equal pay multiple times. The quotes may seem like something Mike Pence would actually say because of the way people view him. He is a republican white man who has stood against women’s rights in the past. He is a target of a lot of criticism. To begin, the thesis or claim of the news article is blatantly what the title says. The article is about Mike Pence and the disappointment he has for men in the United States for not banning their wives and daughters from going to the Women’s

March. Wikipedia states that the Women's March is to “advocate legislation and policies regarding human rights and other issues, including women's rights, immigration reform, healthcare reform, the natural environment, LGBTQ rights, racial equality, freedom of religion, and workers' rights” (“2017 Women's March”). It would be quite controversial for Mike Pence to stand against a movement against human rights; however, people have low expectations of him. Since this is a fake news source from a satirical organization, the thesis is visibly lacking any form of real evidence or credibility. The majority of the article claims Mike Pence said outrageous things, but *The Onion* is completely unreliable. It is a website that intentionally posts satirical articles. The quotes are absurd, so the reader knows that he did not actually say these things. The news source does not indicate an author; however, this does not prove it is unreliable. The article can be written by anyone, especially a person who despises Mike Pence. Mike Pence would be the epitome of a credible source for this article; however, he did not actually say this to a notable news source, hence the satirical organization. In the text, Mike Pence says, “I can't tell you how let down I feel by the heads of these households who did not simply give their wives and daughters a firm, decisive ‘no’ when they asked to participate in today's demonstration” (“Mike Pence”). There is no evidence of Mike Pence saying these things other than from *The Onion*. In addition, the source has some “glittering generalities” which is talked about in Donna Woolfolk Cross's article, “How to not be Bamboozled.” Glittering Generalities stir up a reader's emotions which is an indication that it is fake propaganda (Woolfolk Cross). *The Onion* paints Mike Pence as sexist and patriarchal. This article on Mike Pence has the ability to make people outraged and upset. Furthermore, a warrant is an assumption that the reader has about the author's values. The warrant found in this article can be the word “patriarchy”. Nothing about

the article shows that Mike Pence supports the opposite sex. In this satirical article, Pence believes in the notion that men are in charge and women should submit. The article quotes him again saying, “There are a few men marching as well, so they must be the ones supervising the whole thing, and thank God for that” (*The Onion*). The author of the article is straightforward when getting Mike Pence’s cynical message about the Women’s March across.

Within the parts of the Toulmin’s analysis, there is also the possibility of a qualifier, backing, and rebuttal in the article; however, there are none present in the article, “Mike Pence Disappointed In The 200,000 Husbands And Fathers Who Permitted Women To Attend March”. A qualifier limits the thesis. For example, if the article said, “Mike Pence probably thinks women are inferior to men”, it would be a qualifier. “Probably” is a word of uncertainty. It makes it look like the author truly does not know if Mike Pence thinks badly about women. Next, there is backing, which supports the warrant. In the article, the warrant is “patriarchy.” The author could have said, “Mike Pence knows women do not deserve the same rights as men do”. This would be considered backing because the author is point-black implying that Mike Pence is sexist. In addition, there is also the rebuttal which is when the author is anticipating an argument by the reader and has support to back it up. The author could say, “People think Mike Pence supports the women’s movement, but in fact, he told his wife and daughter to not get involved in the march”. The author is expecting someone to think that Mike Pence actually does support the Women’s March, but the author is preventing those thoughts by saying he does not even support his own family going.

On the other hand, the news article, “Why is Taylor Swift’s tweet about the Women’s March so controversial?” is a credible source. The article is written by Emily Yahr in the

prominent newspaper publisher, *The Washington Post*. The article's main point or claim is that when celebrities talk about controversial topics, it is always risky for their image. Emily Yahr has strong evidence backing up her claim with tweets from Taylor Swift's verified twitter account, as well as tweets from her frustrated fans about the Women's March. Taylor tweeted, "So much love, pride, and respect for those who marched. I'm proud to be a women today, and every day. #Women'sMarch"(Yahr). Unlike *The Onion* article, *The Washington Post* author was quick to back up her article with more support. One fan said, "As a fan of yours, this is some bull. You do not get to pick and choose when feminism benefits you" (Yahr). Other fans noted that many other celebrities like Demi Lovato and Miley Cyrus were marching, so Taylor Swift should have been there as well (Yahr). The warrant of the article is controversy and criticism. Emily Yahr makes it clear with evidence that when celebrities delve into topics such as politics, many people will tend to react.

There are no qualifiers in the article. She is confident in her writing and does not use words like, "maybe" and "perhaps". Yahr does not say "fans possibly will criticize Taylor". Yahr strongly states that people will criticize Taylor Swift as a celebrity in the spotlight. Additionally, there is backing in the article. To show that there would be criticism and controversy with Swift's political views, the author mentions an interview Swift had with *Time Magazine*. In the 2012 interview, Taylor Swift talked about how she does not like talking about politics because she is not old enough to know a lot about it (Yahr). Fans who remember the interview now harshly criticize her for taking a stand in politics. In addition, the author has a rebuttal in her article. Yahr says that *Rolling Stones Magazine* said that despite her young days, she is now a true feminist. Taylor Swift has claimed to be open about it now. She is known for

having a group of powerful women in her music videos, as well as speaking out to women about using their voice (par. 5). Celebrities will get criticized for many things, but when it comes to politics, the media is harshly judgemental. Taylor Swift's image is not destroyed by the Women's March controversy, but she definitely took a beating.

Both fake and real news sources can be thoroughly analyzed and compared to each other. For the real news story, "Why is Taylor Swift's tweet about the Women's March so controversial?", there is more credible, evidence-based writing. "Mike Pence Disappointed In The 200,000 Husbands And Fathers Who Permitted Women To Attend March" can be analyzed so the reader can identify it as being fake and unreliable.

Works Cited

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