

# How Fact Checking Is Controlled and Faked

Analysis by [Dr. Joseph Mercola](#) ✓ Fact Checked

## STORY AT-A-GLANCE

- › Fact-checking is one part of the campaign to control what you see online, and therefore what you think and how you perceive reality
- › Investigative journalist Sharyl Attkisson explains how virtually everything you see and hear online has been co-opted, or taken over to serve a greater agenda
- › Instead of real journalists and reporters, the media is infiltrated with propagandists who dictate what's "fake news" and what's not
- › The public is being manipulated to want their information censored by third-party "fact"-checkers, which were introduced as a tool to confuse and control the public further
- › "Conspiracy theory", "debunked", "quackery" and "antivaccine" are examples of terms that are being used as propaganda tools; if you hear them, it should make you dig deeper for the truth
- › Those who rely solely on the internet for their information are at serious risk of being controlled; you can fight back by doing your own research, trusting your cognitive dissonance and using your common sense

Prior to 2015 or 2016, you could still read what you wanted online without much interference. This has since changed, as propagandists have infiltrated the media and, along with other major players, like Big Tech and government, set out to control information. Fact-checking – a once-obscure term that's since gone mainstream – is

one part of the campaign to control what you see online, and therefore what you think and how you perceive reality – but it's all a ruse.

Speaking with Jan Jekielek, The Epoch Times senior editor and host of the show "American Thought Leaders," investigative journalist Sharyl Attkisson explains how virtually everything you see and hear online has been co-opted, or taken over to serve a greater agenda:<sup>1</sup>

*"One has to understand that nearly every mode of information has been co-opted, if it can be co-opted by some group. Fact checks are no different either, they've been coopted in many instances or created for the purpose of distributing narratives and propaganda.*

*And your common sense is accurate when it tells you that the way they chose this fact check and how they decided to word it so they could say this thing is not true when at its heart it really is true, but the message they're trying to send is that you shouldn't believe it, your common sense is right.*

*That's been created as part of a propaganda effort by somebody, somewhere, as part of a narrative to distribute to the public so virtually every piece of information that can be co-opted has been."*

## **The Information Landscape Is Being Controlled**

Attkisson calls out several common online sources that are heavily manipulated – Wikipedia, Snopes and most "fact" checkers to name a few, along with HealthFeedback.org, which is a fake science group used by Facebook and other Big Tech companies to debunk science that is actually true.

Fact checkers are often referred to as scientists, but this, too, is "part of a very well-funded, well-organized landscape that dictates and slants the information they want us to have." While there have always been efforts to shape the information being given out by the media, it used to be that news reporters would push back against organizations to ensure the public had the other side of the story.

Beginning in the early 2000s, Attkisson noted a shift from efforts to simply shape information to those that attempt to keep certain information from being reported at all. This was particularly true among the pharmaceutical companies she was covering at that time. Attkisson described “efforts by these large global PR firms that have been hired by the pharmaceutical industry, by government partners that work with the pharmaceutical industry, to keep the story from being reported at all.”<sup>2</sup>

Now, suppressing and censoring information that those in charge don’t want to be heard is really common. Attkisson believes the practice really took off in 2015 to 2016, “with Donald Trump proving to be a unique danger perceived by both Democrats and Republicans, and by that I mean by the interests that support and pay for them to be in office and make certain decisions.”<sup>3</sup>

With a wild card in office, a campaign was organized that exploited a media that was already conflicted and less apt to report what was actually going on. “This all dovetailed together to create this crazy information landscape we have today,” she said. Instead of journalists seeking to uncover the truth, we have “writers seeking to spread whatever establishment scientists or politicians want them to say, uncritically and at the expense, oftentimes, of accuracy.”

Now, instead of real journalists and reporters, the media is infiltrated with propagandists who dictate what’s “fake news” and what’s not. Many believe that fake news is a product of Trump, but Big Tech was brought into the campaign early on. A lobby campaign by behind-the-scenes propagandists met with Facebook and said you’ve got to start censoring and “fact” checking information, Attkisson said.

The term “fake news” was popularized after Trump was elected, but it actually got its start before that – it was an invention of political activist website First Draft News, which is partially funded by Google.<sup>4</sup>

## **Inviting Propagandists Into the Newsroom**

We're in the midst of an information war where it's difficult to tell truth from fiction or lies. Journalists are no longer the watchdogs; instead, they take information from obviously conflicted sources and then try to convince the public to believe that particular viewpoint. Other information that's in conflict is censored or "debunked."

It's an unusual time in history where efforts are even underway to manipulate the public to want their information censored and appreciate third-party "fact"-checkers, which were introduced as a tool to confuse and manipulate the public further.<sup>5</sup>

Yet, when you only hear one side of the story, and you can't access other information to the contrary, it's nearly impossible to uncover the truth – and that's precisely the point. Is this all just a matter of reporters not knowing how to think critically and ask the right questions, or believing that they're doing the right thing?

Attkisson states that it goes much deeper. A lot of propagandists have become part of the media, and while there used to be a firewall between reporters and the people they reported on, "that's long gone." She says:<sup>6</sup>

*"We've not just invited them to influence what we report, but we've hired them, not just as pundits and analysts but they are reporters. They are editorial presences within our newsrooms. Now we are one and the same.*

*It's hard to say that there's a distinctive difference in many instances between the people trying to get out a message and the messengers in the media who should be doing a more independent job of reporting accurately."*

## **The COVID Misinformation Campaign**

In early 2020, as the pandemic first started brewing, Attkisson talked to everyone she could, including scientists with the government and outside the government. "Pretty quickly, I could see that certain things that were being said publicly were bearing out as not true, and certain things that other scientists were telling me privately rang true, and in hindsight have actually been proven to be true."<sup>7</sup>

Early on, quite a few scientists she talked to were questioning the advice being given by government scientists, including Dr. Anthony Fauci, director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases and lead spokesperson for the president's COVID response. She asked them if they should say something and speak out about their concerns, but they all came back with the same response:<sup>8</sup>

*"They said they dared not speak out for fear of being controversialized and for fear of being called coronavirus deniers, because that phrase was starting to be used in the media. And secondly, they feared contradicting Dr. Fauci, who they said had been kind of lionized or canonized in the press for reasons that they couldn't understand, because they really didn't think that his guidance that he was giving publicly was the right guidance."*

Certainly, those scientists' opinions deserved to be heard, but the fear of speaking out silenced them. They feared losing their grants, as most grants for research are funded by the government. If the government doesn't like what you say or do, you can get fired or never get a grant again, ending your career and threatening your very livelihood.

"That started to strike me as, this is a really dangerous environment, when esteemed scientists who have valuable information and opinions are afraid to give them, and instead we're hearing a party line that many of them disagree with but won't say so," Attkisson said.<sup>9</sup>

She mentioned the controversial U.S. government funding of gain-of-function research in China, and the notion that SARS-CoV-2 could have come from a Chinese laboratory — both were glaring issues that no one would talk about.

"These are the kinds of things early on that were sort of a red flag to me that says somebody's trying to shape the information," she continued. "They're using reporters to do it. Public health figures are involved in some instances and that makes me want to know what's really behind it."<sup>10</sup>

**'Conspiracy Theory' Was Devised by the CIA**

The term “conspiracy theory” is now used to dismiss narratives that go against the grain. According to Attkisson, this is intentional, as the term itself was devised by the CIA as a response to theories about the assassination of JFK.

“It was shown in documents that there was a suggestion that agents go out and talk to reporters about these things as conspiracy theories – and again, common sense should tell you, as it does me, I’m married to a former law enforcement official who has said to me many times, you know the conspiracy theory phrase in its use doesn’t make sense. Nearly everything is a conspiracy.”<sup>11</sup>

Anything that involves two or more people is technically a conspiracy, but now when people hear the term, they’re conditioned to think it’s false. “That’s designed to pluck this little part of your brain that says, ‘well that thing’s not true.’” When Attkisson hears the term, however, she thinks that information may well be true. “If somebody’s trying to debunk it, it usually means a powerful interest is behind it and it makes me want to go search for more information on that thing.”

The term “conspiracy theory” has lost meaning now because it’s used so much. “Debunked”, “quackery” and “antivaccine” are all terms that are similarly being used as propaganda tools. “There’s a whole cast of propaganda phrases that I’ve outlined that are cues. When you hear them, they should make you think, ‘I need to find out more about it,’” Attkisson says.

## **Fact Checkers Pounce on Accurate BMJ Investigation**

In another example of the lengths that fact-checkers will go to discredit a story – even if it’s true – take an article published in the BMJ, titled, “COVID-19: Researchers blows the whistle on data integrity issues in Pfizer’s vaccine trial.”<sup>12</sup> Written by investigative journalist Paul D. Thacker, it details a series of problems with laboratory management and quality control checks by Pfizer subcontractor Ventavia Research Group, which was testing Pfizer’s COVID-19 vaccine.

According to a regional director formerly employed by Ventavia, she witnessed falsified data, unblinded patients, inadequately trained vaccinators and lack of proper follow-up on adverse events that were reported. After notifying Ventavia about her concerns, repeatedly, she made a complaint to the U.S. Food and Drug Administration — and was fired the same day.<sup>13</sup>

Soon after Thacker's investigative piece was published in BMJ, it was "fact checked" by a group called Lead Stories, which referred to the investigation as a "hoax alert" in the related URL. Along with "correcting" statements that Thacker did not make, Lead Stories disparaged the investigation for "missing context," but as investigative reporter Matt Taibbi explained, "'Missing context' has become a term to disparage reporting that is true but inconvenient."<sup>14</sup>

Lead Stories took further issue with the BMJ investigation because it was shared by people such as Dr. Robert Malone and Robert F. Kennedy, who themselves have been targeted by fake fact checkers. Taibbi added:<sup>15</sup>

*"The real issue with Thacker's piece is that it went viral and was retweeted by the wrong people. As Lead Stories noted with marked disapproval, some of those sharers included the likes of Dr. Robert Malone and Robert F. Kennedy. To them, this clearly showed that the article was bad somehow, but the problem was, there was nothing to say the story was untrue."*

Thacker also called the "fact check" against his BMJ investigation "insane," telling Taibbi:<sup>16</sup>

*"Here's what they do. They're not fact checking facts. What they're doing is checking narratives. They can't say that your facts are wrong, so it's like, 'Aha, there's no context.' Or, 'It's misleading.' But that's not a fact check. You just don't like the story."*

## **Reality Is Being Altered in Real Time**

As it stands, information is being changed in real time to meet the common agenda. This includes definitions in dictionaries and on official government websites. Examples of definitions that have been changed recently include those for pandemic, herd immunity, vaccines and anti-vaxxer. Attkisson reiterates:<sup>17</sup>

*“Virtually every form of information and sourcing that can be co-opted has been. That includes the dictionary definitions; that includes everything because these are important ways to influence thought. Language is very powerful. People don’t want to be affiliated with certain names and labels.*

*It reminds me of ‘1984,’ the George Orwell story about the futuristic society, under which history was being rewritten in real time to jive with the version that the government wanted or the party wanted it to be. Definitions now are being rewritten and changed in real time to fit with the vision that the establishment wants people to think.”*

For now, you can still use the Internet Archive, commonly known as Archive.org and IA, as a historical archive. In addition to digitally hosting more than 1.4 million books and other documents, Archive.org acts as a historical vault for the Internet, preserving cached versions of websites that are no longer accessible to the public.<sup>18</sup>

Archive.org’s Wayback machine preserves digital information that has been removed or deleted, whether intentionally or for other reasons, but it, too, could one day disappear. Attkisson says:<sup>19</sup>

*“It’s been a fascinating way to prove the effort to change our perception of how things are and the reality and what we thought we remembered from the other day, because all we really have now is the electronic record, by and large, and if that can be manipulated, there could be a time when – if they get rid of the Wayback machine, for example – that we can’t ever prove that anything was any different.”*

Attkisson is maintaining a running list of things the media or public policy got wrong during the pandemic, which can still be verified using the Wayback machine, but which

were not acknowledged for being wrong or corrected by the press. They include:<sup>20</sup>

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Claims that the lab theory about the release of coronavirus had been debunked, when it had not been debunked

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Public health officials saying masks don't work, and then saying masks do work

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Fauci testifying to congress that the death rate for coronavirus was 10 times worse than the flu, yet Attkisson found a published article by Fauci where he said the opposite, that "the overall clinical consequences of COVID-19 may ultimately be more akin to those of a severe seasonal influenza"<sup>21</sup>

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It was wrong to send infected people from hospitals to nursing homes

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It was wrong to isolate at home and close down parks and beaches; early data from New York City showed the vast majority of people hospitalized with coronavirus had been isolated at home, while people outside were not getting sick

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It was wrong to tell people to wash their groceries off to prevent COVID-19

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It was wrong to say COVID-19 shots prevented infection and transmission, and that the shots prevented 100% of hospitalizations and deaths

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It was wrong to not focus more on therapeutics prior to shots and also post-shots

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## **You Can Be Controlled if You Live Inside the Box**

Attkisson references a whole generation of people who live inside the box, meaning the internet. Those who rely solely on the internet for their information are at serious risk of being controlled. She explains:<sup>22</sup>

*"They didn't know a time when information was to be gathered elsewhere by looking around and seeing what you hear, and seeing what you saw, and talking*

*to people around you and looking at books and research and so on.*

*And the people that want to control the information understand that if they can only control really a few basic sources – we’re talking about Google, Twitter, Facebook and Wikipedia – they’ve got a lock on information, because we’ve all been funneled to those few sources, and that’s been the goal.*

*So if you think of it that way, there’s a whole lot of people that get pretty much everything they know through the internet. And the goal of the people trying to make the narrative is to make people live online and to think that’s reality.”*

The danger of this is that the internet paints a picture that’s different from reality. You may read something that doesn’t sound quite right, or that you don’t agree with, but the internet makes you feel like you’re in the minority – even if you’re really not.

“Understand that you may actually be in the majority,” Attkisson says, “... but the goal of what they do online is to make you think you’re an outlier when you’re not, to make you afraid to talk about your viewpoint or what you think, because you may actually be the majority opinion but they want to control that and make you think you’re the one who’s crazy.” The solution? Live outside the box:<sup>23</sup>

*“You can be made to believe that – if you live in the box. So, I’m constantly telling people live outside the box. Yes, you can get information there and do what you do online, but certainly trust your cognitive dissonance, talk to the people around you. If you travel, talk to the people in the places you go. You’ll get a whole different picture, as I do, of what’s really happening out here than if you look online.”*

## **The Truth Finds a Way To Be Told**

While there are powerful forces at play to control information, all is not lost. Attkisson is aware of three entities that are actively working on a solution, which include:

1. Investors who want to invest in independent news organizations

2. Technical people trying to invent platforms that can't be controlled and deplatformed by Big Tech
3. Journalists who want to work or contribute to these efforts

Outlets like Substack newsletters and the video platforms Rumble, Bitchute and Odysee, which don't censor videos for ideological reasons, are actively getting around the censorship of Big Tech, and Attkisson believes that these efforts will accelerate in the next couple of years.

Further, she says, "The propagandists may have overplayed their hand by being so heavy-handed and obvious about the control of information and the censorship. It's no longer deniable. Even people who want their information curated, they can't always be happy with the notion that they're not going to be able to get the full story, or that they're only getting one side of something."<sup>24</sup>

Ultimately, she adds, "I think the truth finds a way to be told ... it may take some time and there may be a lot of people that don't want the truth out, but we inherently as humans seek it."<sup>25</sup> On a personal level, you can go a long way toward finding the truth by following your own common sense and reason, and Attkisson agrees.

"I always say, do your own research, make up your own mind, think for yourself. Trust your cognitive dissonance, use your common sense. You're going to be right more often than you think, but open up your mind, read a lot, think a lot and don't buy into the prevailing narrative at face value."<sup>26</sup>

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- <sup>3</sup> [The Epoch Times, American Thought Leaders video, January 20, 2022, 6:23](#)
- <sup>4</sup> [First Draft News – About](#)
- <sup>5</sup> [The Epoch Times January 23, 2022](#)
- <sup>6</sup> [The Epoch Times, American Thought Leaders video, January 20, 2022, 15:28](#)
- <sup>7</sup> [The Epoch Times, American Thought Leaders video, January 20, 2022, 17:00](#)
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- <sup>24</sup> The Epoch Times, American Thought Leaders video, January 20, 2022, 53:50
- <sup>25</sup> The Epoch Times, American Thought Leaders video, January 20, 2022, 51:10
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