

Shooting Starlings: How the Masters Curate the Flocks

Analysis by [Dr. Joseph Mercola](#)

✓ Fact Checked

December 07, 2022

STORY AT-A-GLANCE

- › Human behavior on social media is similar to that of starlings in a murmuration. Masses of people react to a stimulus, such as a social media post, seemingly as a cohesive unit without a designated leader and, as a result, something goes “viral”
- › It appears to be a spontaneous event that no one can control, but it really isn't. Curated information, pushed ahead of other information on people's newsfeeds, can dramatically influence crowd behavior. It's a form of social engineering
- › This kind of social engineering has a drawback. Financial incentives have driven social media companies to promote any content with high engagement. Those who seek to censor certain types of information now struggle to determine how to get Big Tech to change their underlying design
- › The Department of Homeland Security's Cybersecurity Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA) is the key coordinator of illegal government censorship. Its original directive was to defend the U.S. against foreign cybersecurity threats. Now, CISA's primary focus is domestic threats, i.e., Americans who challenge the government narrative
- › CISA works with a collective called the Election Integrity Partnership (EIP), which does the actual censoring. The EIP consists of four social media monitoring groups: Stanford Internet Observatory, Washington University's Center for an Informed Public, the Atlantic Council's Digital Forensic Research Lab, and Graphika

In a recent essay,¹ Renee DiResta, who researches "pathological information systems"² and "the spread of malign narratives" at Stanford Internet Observatory,³ reviewed online

crowd behavior in response to curated information. The metaphor she uses is that of a flock of starlings, in which thousands of birds fly in what seems to be an impossibly coordinated dance known as murmuration. As explained by DiResta:⁴

"In a murmuration, each bird sees, on average, the seven birds nearest it and adjusts its own behavior in response. If its nearest neighbors move left, the bird usually moves left. If they move right, the bird usually moves right.

The bird does not know the flock's ultimate destination and can make no radical change to the whole. But each of these birds' small alterations, when occurring in rapid sequence, shift the course of the whole, creating mesmerizing patterns ...

It is a logic that emerges from – is an embodiment of – the network ... The stimulus – or information – passes from one organism to the next through this chain of connections ...

[C]omputational biologists and computer scientists who study them describe what is happening as 'the rapid transmission of local behavioral response to neighbors.' Each animal is a node in a system of influence, with the capacity to affect the behavior of its neighbors.

Scientists call this process, in which groups of disparate organisms move as a cohesive unit, collective behavior. The behavior is derived from the relationship of individual entities to each other, yet only by widening the aperture beyond individuals do we see the entirety of the dynamic."

Are You Responding to Curated Bait?

According to researchers such as DiResta, human behavior on social media is strikingly similar. Masses of people react to a stimulus, such as a social media post, seemingly as a cohesive unit without a designated leader and, as a result, something goes "viral."

It appears to be a spontaneous event that no one can control. But is it? As it turns out, curated information that is pushed ahead of other information on people's newsfeeds can dramatically influence crowd behavior.

DiResta refers to it as "nudges" or "bait." Curated information that gets pushed into our view ends up influencing what we think and do, thus influencing what goes viral and what doesn't. It's an incredibly subtle form of influence. At its core, it's social engineering at its finest.

There's a nudge (curated information pushed to the front of people's feeds), individuals react, and suddenly, en masse, large numbers of people move in aggregate, creating a trend. Basically, social engineering and behavior modification works by steering our attention toward a specific target.

Echo Chambers and Directed Trends

In her essay, DiResta also describes how online platforms expanded individuals' social networks using algorithms, connecting people with similar interests. Initially, this was done for commercial purposes, but in addition to matching advertisers to the appropriate markets, it has also had unintended consequences. Social networks have a tendency to become echo chambers, making "online murmurations" more likely. DiResta continues:⁵

"After the nudges to assemble into flocks come the nudges to engage ...

Twitter's Trending Topics, for example, will show a nascent 'trend' to someone inclined to be interested, sometimes even if the purported trend is, at the time, more of a trickle – fewer than, say, 2,000 tweets.

But that act, pushing something into the user's field of view, has consequences: the Trending Topics feature not only surfaces trends, it shapes them.

The provocation goes out to a small subset of people inclined to participate.

The user who receives the nudge clicks in, perhaps posts their own take –

increasing the post count, signaling to the algorithm that the bait was taken and raising the topic's profile for their followers.

Their post is now curated into their friends' feeds; they are one of the seven birds their followers see. Recurring frenzies take shape among particular flocks ... even as very few people outside of the community have any idea that anything has happened.

Marx is trending for you, #ReopenSchools for me, #transwomenaremen for the Libs Of TikTok set. The provocation is delivered, a few more birds react to what's suddenly in their field of view, and the flock follows ...

We often deploy the phrase 'it went viral' to describe our online murmurations. It's a deceptive phrase that eliminates the how and thus absolves the participants of all responsibility. A rumor does not simply spread – it spreads because we spread it, even if the system is designed to facilitate capturing attention and to encourage that spread."

Social Media Companies Are in a Catch-22

While having something go viral can be beneficial for a given cause, it can also be disastrous if and when people react to something they don't fully understand. The curating of likeminded individuals into networks also has the drawback of limiting opposing views, which might create a better balance, from entering into that network.

Many today insist that the answer to "misinformation" going viral is content curation, moderation and censorship. But that's putting the cart before the horse, since it's the design of the algorithms on social media that create these networks and online murmurings in the first place.

Social media companies profit by increasing engagement, thus they encourage expanding social networks with likeminded ideas and nudging networks into mass responses. High engagement means more exposure for advertisers, and hence greater ad revenue for the social media company.

According to DiResta, a better solution would be to "move beyond thinking of platform content moderation policies as 'the solution' and prioritize rethinking design."

"For example, Twitter might choose to eliminate its Trending feature entirely, or in certain geographies during sensitive moments like elections – it might, at a minimum, limit nudges to surfacing actual large-scale or regional trends, not simply small-scale ragebait.

Instagram might enact a maximum follower count ... These are substance-agnostic and not reactive ... We might re-evaluate how platforms connect their users or how factors that determine what platform recommends and curation algorithms push into field-of-view ...

*This could potentially have a far greater impact than battling over content moderation as a path toward constructing a healthier information ecosystem."*⁶

Who Is Renee DiResta?

Here, I'm going to change course a bit and ask you to consider DiResta's essay within the context of what she's really talking about, which is social engineering through better and more palatable forms of censorship. If you didn't catch that angle, it's in part because of the sections I chose to quote, but it's also because you probably don't know who DiResta is.

While her essay comes across as well-reasoned, readers would do well to consider whom she works for, who's in her network, and why she might be proposing what she's proposing.

According to DiResta, social media algorithms have created a landscape in which "misinformation" flourishes and spreads like wildfire. Worse, it's a landscape in which wrongthinkers end up forming lasting ties – and join together with other wrongthinkers to form much larger groups that support each other.

"The networks designed years ago – when amoral recommendation engines suggested, for example, that anti-vaccine activists might like to join QAnon communities – created real ties," she writes.⁷

In addition to the suggestions quoted above, she also suggests another option: "A mass exodus from the present ecosystem into something entirely new ... the metaverse, perhaps."

I've previously written about how the globalist cabal behind The Great Reset intends to drive us into digital identity, a social credit score, digital twins and an increasingly virtual reality. So, she actually tips her hand when suggesting a mass migration into the metaverse, because that's where the globalist cabal ultimately wants us.

A New World Order Propagandist

So, who is DiResta? She's the research manager for the Stanford Internet Observatory, founded in June 2019 to promote internet censorship policies and conduct real-time social media narrative monitoring. She's a Mozilla Fellow in Media, Misinformation and Trust, an adviser to Congress and the State Department, and a member of the Council on Foreign Relations (CFR).⁸

CFR is financed in part by the Gates,⁹ Rockefeller, Ford and Carnegie foundations,¹⁰ and has influenced U.S. foreign policy ever since its inception 95 years ago. Almost all U.S. secretaries of defense have been lifetime members, as have most CIA directors. This is of crucial importance, considering the CFR's goal, from the start, has been to bring about a totalitarian one world government, a New World Order (NWO) with global top-down rule.

“ [The CFR's goal is] submergence of U.S. sovereignty and national independence into an all-powerful one-world government ... This lust to surrender the sovereignty and independence of the United States is

pervasive throughout most of its membership ... In the entire CFR lexicon, there is no term of revulsion carrying a meaning so deep as 'America First.' ~ CFR member Admiral Chester Ward, 1975”

In 1950, the son of one of the CFR's founders, James Warburg, said to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee: "We shall have world government whether or not you like it — by conquest or consent."¹¹ Similarly, in 1975 CFR insider Admiral Chester Ward wrote that the goal of the CFR was "submergence of U.S. sovereignty and national independence into an all-powerful one-world government."¹²

According to Ward, the desire to "surrender the sovereignty and independence of the United States is pervasive throughout most of its membership," and "In the entire CFR lexicon, there is no term of revulsion carrying a meaning so deep as 'America First.'"

With Ward's last comment in mind, published in 1975, it's interesting to contemplate who has opposed President Trump's America First agenda, and why. Many Americans, even if they don't like or support Trump personally, agree that taking care of America and Americans' interests first is a rational decision for any leadership, and they've been hard-pressed to rationalize how an anti-America First policy can be good for the nation.

Well, Ward gives us the answer. Those who oppose America First policies do so because they're working on behalf of a network that seeks to eliminate nationalism in favor of a one-world government.

DiResta is a CFR member and a "misinformation specialist." As such, her essay becomes an interesting example of subtle NWO propaganda. While some of her suggestions seem like they would have beneficial effects, what's missing is a discussion of how a redesign of the algorithms on social media platforms can censor people and views even more efficiently.

You Are the Designated Enemy in World War III

What else do we know about DiResta? Well, we know she's part of The Lancet Commission on Vaccine Refusal, Acceptance and Demand. At the end of 2021, she co-authored an article¹³ in The Lancet, along with Chelsea Clinton and Dr. Peter Hotez, among others, in which they discuss the impact of vaccine misinformation on COVID jab uptake.

In doing so, they present what they call in The Lancet "a coordinated, evidence-based education, communication, and behavioral intervention strategy that is likely to improve the success of COVID-19 vaccine programs across the U.S."

She also has an integral role in the Department of Homeland Security's (DHS) move to establish a domestic censorship bureau. In November 2022, the Foundation for Freedom Online published an extensive article¹⁴ detailing this transition, and the key players involved. As explained by Foundation for Freedom Online:¹⁵

"This story has two main institutional sides: the government within DHS and the non-governmental side consisting of a web of like-minded private sector and civil society partners. Together, this network forms the DHS public-private censorship network ..."

On the government side, the Cybersecurity Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA), a sub-department of the DHS, is the key coordinator. When it was founded in 2018, its directive was to defend the U.S. against foreign cybersecurity threats like Russian hackers and foreign propaganda.

Since then, and especially in the last three years, CISA has morphed into a government entity focused almost solely on domestic threats, meaning Americans who challenge the government narrative — a narrative that, again, is in favor of a one-world government and firmly against American nationalism.

On the nongovernmental side, a collective called the Election Integrity Partnership (EIP) is the main hub. The EIP consists of four social media monitoring groups: Stanford Internet Observatory, Washington University's Center for an Informed Public, the Atlantic Council's Digital Forensic Research Lab, and Graphika.

DiResta is directly connected to CISA's censorship directorate through the Stanford Internet Observatory – where she's a top lieutenant and directs research on misinformation and malicious narratives – which is part of the EIP. She's also given a number of lectures at CISA disinformation summits.^{16,17} But there's more. Foundation for Freedom Online writes:¹⁸

"The prominent role Renee DiResta plays in EIP – a government-partnered Internet censorship consortium – is particularly worrisome and disturbing. Before DiResta became research manager at the Stanford disinfo lab, she was research director for a now-notorious, scandal-laden and disgraced political hatchet firm known as New Knowledge LLC.

In December 2018, the New York Times exposed that DiResta's Democrat donor-funded small cybersecurity firm, New Knowledge, had clandestinely created thousands of fake 'Russian bots' (user accounts generated with a virtual private network (VPN) to simulate a Russian IP address) on Twitter and Facebook then mass subscribed those fake 'Russian bots' to opposition Republican Senate candidate Roy Moore's campaign.

DiResta did this – or at least the small firm where she was a director did this – in the heat of the Nov. 2017 Alabama special election, which substantially decided the party control of the US Senate. It was a race in which Moore narrowly lost, and for whose loss New Knowledge – in its own report – took credit.

At the time, mainstream news genuinely thought Roy Moore was being backed by Russians. But it was just DiResta's professional disinformation firm interfering in the election."

Censoring to Secure a One World Government

Foundation for Freedom Online continues:¹⁹

"One common thread connecting these four entities is that each of their directors were involved in aggressively alleging (unsubstantiated) claims from January 2017 through early 2020 that Russian interference had helped Donald Trump win the 2016 election by using inauthentic bots and troll accounts on social media ...

Each of the four entities comprising EIP is also deeply connected to the US military and foreign policy establishment ... It is very helpful to understand EIP's network and operations in depth, because it was through EIP that DHS built the infrastructure for its current role as government coordinator of takedowns and throttling of US citizen speech online."

To get a better grasp on this censorship network, please refer to the original article, as I only have room to provide an overview summary here. In a nutshell, the EIP was created by the DHS/CISA as a way for government to circumvent the law and shield its illegal censoring of the American public behind the veneer of private corporations and nongovernmental organizations.

In an Atlantic Council interview, the leader of EIP, Alex Stamos (former security chief at Facebook), admits that the DHS-EIP partnership was set up to outsource censorship that the government could not do due to "lack of legal authorization."²⁰

They coordinate the take-down of undesirable content using a real-time chat app that the DHS, EIP and social media companies all share. Specific platforms, such as Facebook and Twitter, also have their own special portals where government officials can point to content they want removed.²¹

EIP Interferes in Elections and Controls COVID Narratives

The EIP first sprang into noticeable action to control the outcome of the 2020 presidential election, but controlling elections is far from its only focus. With the emergence of COVID-19, censorship quickly turned to all things COVID. Foundation for Freedom Online explains:²²

"... after the 2020 election, EIP changed its name and re-branded as an entity called the 'Virality Project' (VP). VP did the exact same government censorship job EIP did, except censoring COVID-19 instead of censoring elections ...

VP ended up censoring, with its government partners, 66 unique social media narratives going viral online concerning COVID during the 2021 calendar year. Not 66 posts. 66 entire narratives. That had the effect of impacting millions of posts and potentially altering the entire political trajectory of the American citizenry's response to the COVID pandemic."

Understanding the Information Battlefield

Based on what we know about DiResta, we can now begin to see how her startling essay is an exposition on a) the social engineering role of Big Tech in the past, b) the drawback of Big Tech's financial motivations when it comes to censoring NWO counternarratives, and c) how the NWO cabal wants Big Tech to shift methods in the future to limit the reach of undesirable content. It would behoove us to take note.

A great deal of the propaganda war involves people and organizations that say they're one thing but do the complete opposite. For example, DiResta is the head of policy for Data for Democracy,²³ while at the same time taking part in a plot to directly circumvent the democratic election process.

From her membership in CFR, we can glean the intent behind such anti-democratic behavior. She is working on behalf of those who seek to establish a one-world government. To that end, she also works with organizations specializing in censorship on behalf of the government.

Illegal government censorship is bad enough, but it doesn't end there. As discussed in "[Censorship Wasn't Enough, They Want to Destroy Us](#)," when censorship and deplatforming fails, the gloves come off and more destructive cyberwarfare tactics are deployed. Our government is literally waging war against the American public, and while

information control is the preferred measure, they don't shy away from more aggressive tactics.

The idea of government waging war on its own citizens seems completely irrational and inexplicable – until you realize that the CFR has controlled U.S. foreign relations for nearly a century, and its primary goal has always been to undermine U.S. sovereignty and abet the creation of a one-world government.

Today, there's a vast network of individuals and organizations that work together to achieve this aim, including a long list of government officials. Before anything can change, the public needs to understand the battlefield and what the battle is really about.

The battle, really, is about the surrender of the U.S. unto a one-world government and, in a circuitous way, DiResta's essay – with her background exposed – helps us understand how the war is being fought. They always have a goal, and a plan for getting there. Then, they fashion the narratives needed to implement that plan.

Now that the ultimate end goal is clear – the establishment of a one-world government – it becomes much easier to determine how a given narrative is being used to further that goal. As we move forward, as many as possible need to become adept at identifying how different narratives are being used to curate the flock and make people move in a desired direction.

Sources and References

- [1, 4, 5, 6, 7 Noema Magazine November 3, 2022](#)
- [2 Twitter Renee DiResta November 5, 2022](#)
- [3 CNAS Renee DiResta Bio](#)
- [8, 11, 12 Wakeup-World August 31, 2016](#)
- [9 Gates Foundation Grants to CFR](#)
- [10 CFR Funding](#)
- [13 The Lancet December 11, 2021; 398\(10317\): 2186-2192](#)
- [14, 15, 16, 18, 19, 20, 22 Foundation for Freedom Online November 9, 2022](#)
- [17 CISA.gov Cybersummit 2021](#)
- [21 Twitter Lee Fang October 31, 2022](#)

- ²³ PBS May 17, 2018