Helene Isabel Onarheim Solheimsnes

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A comparative study of perceptions of the term *fake news*.

Master's thesis in Language Studies with Teacher Education
Supervisor: Anja Katrine Angelsen
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Abstract

This study investigates the various meanings and the perceived impact of the contentious buzzword fake news in three different demographics: Norwegians in Norway, Americans in the U.S. and Americans abroad. The term *fake news* is treated very differently by encyclopedias and research literature and seems to change meaning depending on the context in which it is used. Additionally, the English term is also used as an anglicism in several other languages, which makes it easy to assume that it means the same to everyone, regardless of cultural and linguistic differences. This thesis aims to discover what the term *fake news* means to people in different cultures and how different variables influence people's perceptions. The data in this study is based on two online surveys distributed to Norwegians and Americans using the snowball-method on Facebook. Analyses of the data show how Norwegians, Americans abroad and U.S. Americans have varying opinions about the meaning of *fake news* and the term presents itself as a multi-dimensional phenomenon. These perceptions sometimes appear as linear, with Americans abroad placing themselves somewhere in between the two other groups, showing that culture and language background influence the meaning of the term. Other, and sometimes associated, variables like political orientation and media trust also appear to be very influential to people's perceptions of *fake news*. Furthermore, the results also suggest that there might be a difference between the anglicism and the corresponding Norwegian term *falske nyheter* in the Norwegian context, which demonstrates the importance of being aware of how the meaning of words is sensitive to context and culture.

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1. Introduction

In recent years, western societies have moved into what some call a *post-truth* era, in which false information seems to flood the streets daily and cause continued havoc in its wake. In a time when anyone can get any information at any time through the internet and social media, the amount of false information in circulation naturally seems to increase as well. The term *fake news* has in recent years become the go-to description of such information, but the term appears to encapsulate a lot more than merely the spread of misleading information. At some point, these two small words became a hot media topic on their own, triggering strong emotions in people and sparking heated debates in various forums. "In record time, the phrase morphed from a description of a social media phenomenon into a journalistic cliche [sic] and an angry political slur", reads the top text of an article from BBC (Wendling, 2018). The phenomenon and the term on its own has been blamed for having a disruptive impact on elections, referenda and public debate in that fake news seems to fuel propaganda, violence and hate (McGonagle, 2017). One Sunday evening in 2016, a man opened fire at a pizza shop in Washington after reading a story online about an undercover child abuse ring led by presidential candidate Hillary Clinton in the basement of said pizza shop. *Pizzagate* is now a prime example of the terrifying power of fake news (Horton, 2020).

This study investigates the meaning of the term *fake news* and the possible impact its use and understanding may have on society. Fake news has become a highly contentious, hard-to-define, contemporary expression which seems to be layered with a whole range of different meanings depending on the context in which it is used. While some may use the term in relation to unintentionally wrongful information, others might refer to deliberate attempts to deceive others. Some may use the term in an attempt to discredit an institution, while others use it to address anything from satire, to advertisements, partisan news or propaganda. These are just examples of a major and presumably very impactful phenomenon which has received global significance. The English term *fake news* is now commonly used as an anglicism is several other languages. For that reason, it is easy to assume that it means the same to people regardless of cultural, linguistic and geographical differences. However, as this study will show, the meaning of the term is more complex.

The study of and definition of the meaning of words usually belong to the domain of semantics and lexicography. The approach in the present study, however, is interdisciplinary, drawing on research and methods from other fields of research: Cultural studies, communication and media

studies, and language studies. It investigates the various meanings of fake news by comparing public perceptions of fake news in three different groups, representing separate cultures: Norwegians in Norway, Americans in the US, and Americans abroad, presumed to be predominantly within a diaspora in Norway. This thesis investigates what the term *fake news* means to people in different cultures and how it can impact society, and discusses the following questions: How does culture and linguistic background influence perceptions of the term? How does media trust and political orientation influence perceptions? What is the status of the anglicism *fake news* in relation to the corresponding native expression *falske nyheter* in Norwegian culture?

Chapter 2 of this thesis provides a theoretical background for the study, looking into the term, its background, use and various encyclopedic and scholarly definitions, and presenting a brief overview of the different cultures surveyed. Chapter 3 discusses the chosen method for data collection and the presumed strengths and weaknesses of using questionnaires, and the snowball-method to distribute these. Following that, chapter 4 presents the results of the surveys conducted. These will be discussed in chapter 5, where I will look for potential patterns, important variables and a connection to the research literature, in order to explore all the ways in which the results can answer the research questions. The conclusion will summarize the findings of the study and possible topics for further research.

2. Theory and background

2.1 Words and meaning

Dictionaries fix the meaning of words and phrases, offering short and concise definitions. Meaning in language is generally viewed as stable and static, and changes in meaning are seen as slow, gradual and largely uniform across a population of language users (Ludlow, 2014, p. 2). Ludlow (2014, p. 3) focuses on how language is highly context-dependent and *dynamic*, in that people adjust or modulate words to each conversation they have. Furthermore, to Ludlow (2014, p. 5), meaning is inherently *underdetermined*, which means that the meanings of words are to some extent open and that there is no finite answer to what one word means. While we can narrow down the meaning, we may not be able to fully describe the meaning of a word. Not everyone agrees with this, as many believe that all terms have a core meaning which is the absolute sense of a word, even if we are 'pragmatically licensed' to use the term in less precise ways (Ludlow, 2014, p. 6).

The meaning of words that are culturally charged can be difficult to define. The Keywords Project (2016), building on Raymond Williams' *Keywords* from 1975, focused on words that are salient to a specific time and place. A *keyword* is defined as "a socially prominent word (e.g. art, industry, media or society) capable of bearing interlocking, yet sometimes contradictory and commonly contested contemporary meaning" (Keywords Project, 2016). Although not part of the project, this definition seems to encompass the term *fake news* accurately. Keywords are seen as complex words which may have different technical and everyday meanings which can cause confusion in both personal conversations and public debates. There are two main sources of confusion: Historical changes and polysemy. Historical changes involve more neutral words inheriting new values due to political or ideological use, causing a word to occur with a so-called derogatory implication (Keywords Project, 2016). The existence of multiple concurrent (polysemous) meanings of the word is linked to historical changes, but it is a distinct source of confusion as the existence of multiple meanings contemporaneously makes it difficult to determine what the intended meaning of a word or utterance is in a given context (Keywords Project, 2016). Therefore, to understand these culture-laden words, one has to consider not only what the word means on its own, but also its relation to other complex words and its various meanings in the different contexts it is used (Keywords Project, 2016).

A key criterion for keywords is that they are commonly used in both day-to-day discourse and in academic literature (Keywords Project, 2016). Furthermore, keywords tend to be vague or polysemous. Its meaning is thus "attributed in use by modulating – especially narrowing – a broad meaning so that the result appears focused and relevant to the surrounding discourse and context" (Keywords Project, 2016). Sometimes, especially when used in conversations with people who are of substantially different social or educational backgrounds or core beliefs, the various possible meanings of the word are activated simultaneously and this may lead to misunderstandings. A third defining characteristic is that keywords are categorical in that they are used to designate social and cultural concepts and practices – they are labels of (more abstract) social practices and beliefs. Furthermore, these words are actively contested and frequently heard in popular (and political) debates and disputes and they tend to be part of a cluster of interrelated words which typically co-occur (Keywords Project, 2016). The term *fake news* currently appears to meet all of the criteria above; it is used in everyday language and academic discourse, it appears to have a broad range, it defines a cultural phenomenon, and it is often used in relation to, or instead of, other terms, such as post-truth and alternative facts, or as a hyponym for various media sources or a meronym for the media industry. While fake news has not made it to the latest list of keywords, it is related to two other entries: Media and truth.

2.2 The context of fake news

People tend to see news as an output of journalism, a genre expected to provide people with the information they need, and to report the truth (Tandoc et al., 2018, p. 140). For that reason, journalism as a profession has built up a certain legitimacy and has generally been a relatively trustworthy source for information. Still, according to Tandoc et al. (2018), misinformation in the media has been with us since the earliest writing systems were developed, but it changes channels over time. A century ago, the leading channel for misinformation was the radio – exemplified by Orson Welles' *The War of the Worlds*; a radio drama show narrated like real news from which some people presumed they were receiving factual news (Tandoc et al., 2018). Historically, newspapers have also been a source of misinformation in the form of "bias, distortion, manipulation and outright fabrication" (Gelfert, 2018, p. 89). Love (2007, p. 33) claims that the early days of American journalism was filled with journalists intentionally searching for new and exciting hoaxes to put on their front pages, using the example of influential war-mongers, like William Randolph Hearst, who was apparently almost single-handedly to blame for the U.S. going to war against Spain in 1897 after the explosion of the USS Maine. A more recent example is related to the invasion of Iraq in 2003, when supposedly

"CNN and the New York Times were used by the U.S. military as unwitting co-conspirators in spreading false information, a tactic known as psychological operations" (Love, 2007, p. 34). Thus, it is clear that the act of *faking* a news story is no new concept, and new technological advances – from the invention of the telegraph to new social media algorithms – are only making fabrication and deception easier (Gelfert, 2018, p. 90).

Today social media is the new channel for misinformation (as well as information), and the traditional definitions of news are being challenged (Tandoc et al., 2018). Online platforms allow for non-journalists to engage in journalistic activities and produce pseudo-journalistic output – everything from blogging, to photos and videos, and eyewitness-accounts of newsworthy events. Meanwhile, alongside the non-journalists, real journalists have also increased their social media presence. Now, there is an online environment wherein the presentation of real and fake news stories looks fairly similar and distinguishing between real and fake might be problematic (Tandoc et al., 2018). Social media tends to blur the origins of information and navigating through a multitude of shared posts, links and sources can be challenging. People are more likely to trust information shared by sources that are socially closer to them and they rarely verify the information shared (Tandoc et al., 2018).

2.3 Definitions of *fake news* and *falske nyheter*

While there seems to be a consensus on the existence of *faking* in the news world, it is less clear where exactly the term *fake news* came from. According to Merriam Webster (2021), the term has been in use since the late 19th century. Several sources note a clear shift around the time of the 2016 presidential election. Horton (2020) explains that "disinformation certainly ramped up in unison with Donald Trump's rise to the Republican nomination and, eventually, the presidency", after which the collocation of the words *fake* and *news* seems to have gained new meaning. Macquarie Dictionary (2021) named fake news the word of the year in 2016, and subsequently the word of the decade in 2020. While acknowledging that the term has been around before Trump, they explain how it became emblematic of the 2016 presidential campaign and has continued as such (Macquarie Dictionary, 2021). In 2016, the dictionary added a second definition to the term, explaining how it is now "a term used to refer to information that is viewed as being opposed or detrimental to someone's own position – whether it is factual or not" (Macquarie Dictionary, 2021).

The Oxford English Dictionary (OED) added the term to their collection in 2019 (Moye, 2019), explained as "originally *U.S.* news that conveys or incorporates false, fabricated, or deliberately

misleading information, or that is characterized as or accused of doing so" ("Fake", n.d.), also adding how it came to prominence during the 2016 U.S. presidential election campaign. From then on it has been used "in two main ways: to refer to inaccurate stories circulated on social media and the internet, esp. ones which serve a particular political or ideological purpose; or to seek to discredit media reports regarded as partisan or untrustworthy" ("Fake", n.d.). According to the OED, while "the practice of 'faking' news stories was much discussed in the late 19th and early 20th century", they have not found any frequent use of this particular collocation previously ("Fake", n.d.).

The English Wikipedia defines fake news primarily as "false or misleading information presented as news. It often has the aim of damaging the reputation of a person or entity, or making money through advertising revenue" ("Fake news", 2021). The article further states that the term is very broad and has no fixed definition, having also been applied to "any type of false information, including unintentional and unconscious mechanisms, and also by high-profile individuals to apply to any news unfavorable to his/her personal perspectives" ("Fake news", 2021). This article for fake news appears to have been created in January 2017[1], while a Norwegian Bokmål article for 'falsk nyhet' (fake news, singular form) was created in October 2017[2]. The Norwegian article explains the 'original definition' of fake news as information which looks like news, but which entails untrue, missing or misleading information or a fake sender, intentionally created and spread through different news channels and social media ("Falsk nyhet", 2021). Both articles mention topics like post-truth, sensationalism, political propaganda, disinformation, financial gains, click-bait and a declining trust in established news media ("Fake news", 2021; "Falsk nyhet", 2021).

The Norwegian Wikipedia article includes the English term with quotation marks and the Norwegian phrase *falske nyheter*, which can be seen as a calque or loan translation. This article appears to make a distinction between the two, stating that some people explain *falske nyheter* as any "news which cannot be confirmed by facts" (even if unintentional), while *fake news* mainly revolves around the spread of news which the sender knows to be factually wrong, "especially as a part of authoritative states' attempt to disturb democratic processes in other countries" (own translation) – which is subsequently related to Donald Trump's use of the term ("Falsk nyhet", 2021). The article further states that "news one does not agree with, or which

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[1] The first update of the English Wikipedia article, as shown in the Wikipedia archives.
[2] The Nynorsk article 'falske nyhende' was created later, in 2019, and uses both the Norwegian and the English term in running text: https://nn.wikipedia.org/wiki/Falske_nyhende

contains unintentional factual errors, are not *falske nyheter*" (own translation) – even if people like Donald Trump use the term this way ("Falsk nyhet", 2021).

According to Store norske leksikon (SNL)[3], the Norwegian term *falske nyheter* is defined as information which looks like news, with the intention to mislead, making it an effective tool in different kinds of communication used to influence an audience (Orgeret & Dvergsdal, 2020). According to the article, *falske nyheter* has a long history that cannot necessarily be tied to any specific ideologies or technologies, even if information technology has made it more common (Orgeret & Dvergsdal, 2020). However, the article was not added to the lexicon until February 2017, suggesting that this is when the phrase gained currency. When referring to the use of the term, rather than the content, it is tied to Donald Trump and his tendency to accuse news media that are critical of him and his politics of being fake news (Orgeret & Dvergsdal, 2020).

The various dictionaries and encyclopedias examined clearly treat the terms *fake news* and *falske nyheter* differently, and there are several contrasting elements. Most include references to the 2016 US presidential election and agree that the term has several meanings, and all the reference works make some form of reference to either politicians in general or Donald Trump. However, while many claim that *fake news* is not new, the term has only recently been added to encyclopedias. Only the OED seems to point out that this collocation seems to be relatively new. Also, while several presents the term as contentious, ambiguous, difficult and/or as having no fixed definition ("Fake news", 2021; "Falsk nyhet", 2021), the popular online dictionary Merriam Webster (2021) has still not added the term to their collection because they consider it "a self-explanatory compound noun – a combination of two distinct words, both well known, which when used in combination yield an easily understood meaning. *Fake news* is, quite simply, *news* […] that is *fake* ("false, counterfeit")".

2.4 Research on *fake news*
2.4.1 Different usages

The main dilemma when it comes to research on fake news seems to be that researchers do not agree on how to, or if one even should, distinguish between the *phenomenon* and the use of the *term*. Most articles seem to focus on the former, using the term as a coinage of *fake* information of one sort or another. According to Tandoc et al. (2018), the term has been operationalized in six different ways over the last decade: Satire (The Daily Show), parody (The Onion),

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[3] SNL is the biggest Norwegian encyclopedia.

fabrication (by people with financial or political gains or news bots that create the illusion of widely circulated news), manipulation (of real photos and videos, or misappropriation), propaganda and advertising (such as VNRs[4] and other public relations attempts to sell products). Tandoc et al. (2018) demonstrate how definitions seem to vary in society and how the meaning has changed over the past years. While earlier studies saw the term as something referring to a certain type of content, such as news propaganda, news parodies and political satires, it appears to be a more versatile term now. Contemporary media seem to define fake news as something referring to viral posts on social media in which fake accounts are made to look like real news. Of those more focused on the use of the term, scholars like Gelfert (2018, p. 5) find that the term has become significant primarily as a result of the effects it has had in the real-world, both as a distinct set of misleading reports and as a rhetorical device used to shut down critical reporting by the media. Thus, fake news may refer to a whole range of different elements.

Scholars do not seem to focus on legitimate news media as a source of fake news. Lazer et al. (2018), for example, define fake news outlets as those which come across as legitimate news, but which "lack the news media's editorial norms and processes for ensuring the accuracy and credibility of information". Many studies emphasize social media as the main source for fake news – both for the content and the use of the term, and most relate this to the 2016 presidential election in some way or another. According to Grinberg et al. (2019), it was after the 2016 presidential election that the spread of fake news on social media became a public concern in the US. A study of how Americans engaged with fake news during the 2016 election season showed that the most popular fake news stories during the last three months of the presidential campaign created more buzz than the top real news stories (Grinberg et al., 2019). Still, the vast majority of political content people engaged with, regardless of political standing, came from non-fake news sources (i.e. legitimate news outlets), a point which Grinberg et al. (2019) call "reassuring" following a tirade of claims that social media function as "political echo chambers" and that fake news garnered more attention than real news during the election.

2.4.2 Ideological and financial motivations
Scholars' tendency to focus on social media as a source for fake news content often coincide with a reference to certain groups of people who may have a reason to share and engage with fake news on social media. Political actors and events in recent years that have spiked heated

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[4] Video news release; a video segment made to look like a news report, but created by PR firms.

political debate are often brought up – such as the aforementioned 2016 election and Brexit (Gelfert, 2018, p. 5). On a more individual level, others factor in more individual elements in the research, such as cognitive decline, digital media literacy, whether a group feels more strongly motivated, or cohort effects (Grinberg et al., 2019, p. 3). In relation to this, motive is also often brought up. According to Tandoc et al. (2018), there are mainly two motivations behind these: financial and ideological. The first because click baits and outrageous stories may produce advertising revenue, and the second because the fake news distributors likely want to promote specific ideas or people, more often than not by discrediting others (Tandoc et al., 2018). Zellers et al. (2019) explain fake news as what happens when "[m]alicious actors spread fallacious viral stories in order to gain advertising revenue, influence opinions, and even tip elections" (p. 1) and Gelfert (2018, p. 5) expresses that recent events have made the term fake news a key ingredient in shaping political contests. McGonagle (2017) calls the way politicians and public figures use the term to undermine the reputation and credibility of the media "sinister and cynical".

2.5.3 A two-dimensional phenomenon

Egelhofer and Lecheler (2019) call fake news a two-dimensional phenomenon and express a need for researchers to treat it as such. They refer to a series of academic work which give highly varying definitions of the term: Khaldarova and Pantti (2016) claim that fake news entails propagandistic messages from state-owned media; Bakir and McStay (2018) conclude that fake news comes from extreme partisan alternative media; Allcott and Gentzkow (2017) treat fake news as fabricated news from short-lived websites; Hanitzsch, Van Dalen and Steindl (2018) present fake news as a phrase used by political actors who weaponize it to undermine any information that contradicts their own political agenda. Exactly because there are so many different opinions about what fake news entails, Egelhofer and Lecheler (2019) argue that the term has two dimensions, encompassing both the *genre* fake news and the *label* fake news. When calling it a *genre*, Egelhofer and Lecheler (2019) refer to the deliberate creation of pseudojournalistic disinformation, while the *label* describes the political instrumentalization of the term to delegitimize news media.

Since *fake news* became a common term, politicians have started criticizing the media for being biased to an unprecedented extent (Egelhofer & Lecheler, 2019). It should also be observed that there is an important distinction between stating that news media or their coverage are ideologically biased or factually incorrect and calling them *fake* – a word which ultimately

contests journalistic authority (Egelhofer & Lecheler, 2019). Furthermore, contrary to the standards of democratic debates, usage of the fake news label is usually not accompanied by explanations of why the accused news media is inaccurate or biased. "Consequently, the fake news label is not applied to critically evaluate the coverage of a medium but rather to attack the outlet's legitimacy" (Egelhofer & Lecheler, 2019, p. 98). As a result, the public may find it hard to identify fact from fiction. There are very few studies on the effect of fake news, but those that exist indicate that many people struggle to identify *fake news* (Egelhofer & Lecheler, 2019). Fake news is now often understood as news one does not believe in – "thereby blurring the boundaries between facts and beliefs in a confusing digitalized world" (Egelhofer & Lecheler, 2019, p. 98).

2.4.4 Intent

A recurring element in many scholarly attempts at definitions (such as Zellers et al., 2019; Gelfert, 2018; McGonagle, 2017; Tandoc et al., 2018) is the presence of intent. If intent to deceive is a necessary criterion, this means that information which is spread without the sender knowing it to be false is not fake news. While some highlight the intention to mislead, others explain the word *fake* as a synonym to words such as copy, counterfeit or forgery (Tandoc et al., 2018). In relation to this, one can claim that there is an important distinction to be made between misinformation, which is classified as "the inadvertent sharing of false information", and disinformation, which is then "the deliberate creation and sharing of information known to be false" (Wardle, 2017, as cited in Tandoc et al., 2018, p. 140). It may be difficult to situate fake news within one of these definitions as the term is used in all kinds of discourse, from scholarly to daily conversations, and is "invoked not only in efforts to point out false information but also in efforts to demonize traditional news organizations" (Tandoc et al., 2018, p. 140). Some also point out that one must have a clear notion of *news* to accurately coin *fake news*, because if one assumes that *news* refers to an accurate account of a real event, that must make the term fake news an oxymoron (Tandoc et al., 2018).

2.5 Cultural, linguistic and political context.

2.5.1 Norway versus the USA

Compared to the USA, Norway is a small country, with a population the size of only 1/62 of the American population (Brady, 2016). Still, on a surface level, the countries are very similar. Both countries are considered to be some of the oldest democracies in the world and both have governments divided between the executive, legislative, and judicial branches (Brady, 2016).

However, while the USA is a constitutional republic with a president as head of state and government[5] and a bicameral Congress as legislature, Norway is a constitutional monarchy with a parliamentary system in which the king is the head of state and the prime minister is the head of government[6], while the legislature is the unicameral Stortinget (Brady, 2016).

Of the many differences in the political landscapes of these countries, the most apparent is the political party-situation; the US mainly has two major parties (Democrats and Republicans), while Norway has at least nine major parties (Brady, 2016). This means that while Americans tend to vote for a single personality to be their president, Norwegians vote for one of the parties. The orientation of these parties is not easily comparable to the American political landscape, as Norwegians are unlikely to identify with terms like *Democrat* or *Republican,* or even with the oppositional concept of *liberal/conservative*. In Norway, one rather talks about leftist, centrist or rightist parties based on their position in a political spectrum which is thus much less polarized than the American one (Brady, 2016). The Norwegian political spectrum has also been seen as much more moderate and some have claimed that the whole of Norwegian politics – even the populist right-wing party – would belong on left on the American spectrum, as Norwegian politics are clearly much more consensus-oriented (Dragnes, 2013; Schultheis, 2017).

2.5.2 A third demographic

This study highlights a third key demographic (in addition to US citizens and Norwegians); namely Americans abroad. The U.S. State Department has estimated that there are about 10 million Americans living outside of the US (Dorger, 2020). Americans abroad are rarely perceived or treated as immigrants, even by scholars and politicians, mostly due to their relative privilege and status in the global hierarchy – which means that they have rarely been seen as a distinct diaspora[7] (Croucher, 2012). However, Croucher (2012) argues that this group should be studied as a separate diaspora, primarily because this could give us a better understanding of potentially significant social and political phenomena, transnationalism and the concept of identity and belonging in a globalized world. The US already has a long history of initiating dispersion of people and playing host to large diasporas from a range of other countries, but less talked about is the current trend of Americans emigrating for political, cultural, and increasingly economic reasons (Croucher, 2012). Globalization has also lead to more people

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[5] Currently the Democrat Joe Biden.
[6] Currently Erna Solberg of Høyre.
[7] Diaspora is a term often associated with forced migration and hardship.

moving abroad for employment, love, marriage, or, as is very common with the Baby Boomer generation, retirement (Croucher, 2012).

Migration is encouraged by the development of communication and information technologies which facilitate the maintenance of economic, political and sociocultural ties with the homeland – especially social media (Croucher, 2012). Easy access to information and the ability to keep close ties with family, friends, politics and popular culture through the internet and global media have been emphasized as crucial to Americans' decision to move (Croucher, 2012). Like most migrants, Americans have historically been eager to found schools, organizations and clubs to ease their settlement abroad and to promote the ideals and culture of their native land, and thus to "defend their interests as citizens straddled between two lands" (Croucher, 2012, Americans Abroad, para. 5). According to Croucher (2012), studies done on Americans abroad clearly show that this group generally displays deep attachments to their native land, both culturally and otherwise, and sociologist Arnold Dashefsky is quoted as saying, "[a]pparantly, you can take an American out of America, but you cannot take America out of an American" (Croucher, 2012, para. 1).

2.5.3 National culture and trust in news media

People's trust in news media is important for both the media system and subsequently for the political system (Kalogeropoulos et al., 2019) There is a clear correlation between a higher level of trust and news media operating independently from political and economic interests in transparent and free democracies, because "[i]n countries where news media are (subjectively) perceived to be shaped by "undue" influences from political and business actors, trust is expected to be low" (Kalogeropoulos et al., 2019, p. 3673). In a list showing the average level of trust in news in 35 countries, Norway was ranked 12th while the US was ranked 32nd (Kalogeropoulos et al., 2019). According to studies conducted by Reporters Without Borders, Norway has one of the highest levels of freedom of press, which Kalogeropoulos et al. (2019) used to explain a higher level of trust. One possible driver of this is state ownership of television, which has been positively correlated with trust in media in democratic societies (Tsfati & Ariely, 2014). Meanwhile, many Americans believe that US news media have a political bias – often towards liberal Democrats – which makes them less trustworthy, despite several studies indicating that this is not necessarily true (Lee, 2010). A study conducted by Hassel et al. (2020) claims to show that American news media exhibits no bias against conservatives or liberals in what news they choose to cover and that ideological leanings have unexpectedly little effect on political news generation. Thus, it is arguable that political trust, ideology, and political

partisanship are all highly influential factors with regards to people's trust in news media (Lee, 2010).

There is a range of literature on the interrelatedness of trust and national culture, meaning that trust is dependent on the set of beliefs and behaviors shared by a group of people belonging to a specific culture (Doney et al., 1998; Hallikainen & Laukkanen, 2018). Furthermore, researchers have argued that trust is affected by changes in one's social environment (Hallikainen & Laukkanen, 2018). While scholars are reporting on rather stable levels of trust in other countries (Hanitzsch, Van Dalen & Steindl, 2018), trust in news media in the US has been declining since the 1970s. The "seismic shift" in how people use news and which sources are seen as reliable in recent years have also not improved this (Kalogeropoulos et al., 2019). Use of mainstream news sources (TV and newspapers) is related to higher levels of trust in news, while non-mainstream sources (talk radio, online campaign information, and now the Internet) is associated with lower levels of trust (Tsfati & Ariely, 2014). More people than ever now use nonmainstream sources for news, like social media and alternative online news media, which has led to a widespread discussion of misinformation on such platforms, especially in the aftermath of the 2016 US presidential election (Kalogeropoulos et al., 2019). This is worrisome, because scholars also highlight the importance trust in institutions has on democracy; voting turnout, broader political participation, attitudes toward policies and interpersonal trust (Levi & Stoker, 2000, as referenced in Kalogeropuolos et al., 2019). Trust in news has been a central topic in many discussions about democracy around the world recently, especially because attacks on the media have become common among many populist politicians, and most prominently, Donald Trump's use of the term *fake news* to "discredit news media that he does not like" (Kalogeropuolos et al., 2019, p. 3674).

Much of the research conducted on fake news seems to be based on American data and relate to American opinions and political attitudes. Egelhofer and Lecheler (2019) discuss a study which showed "Republicans and heavy Facebook users being more likely to believe that [fake news] is accurate compared to Democrats and those who rely more on other news sources" (p. 102). Grinberg et al. (2019) also conclude that the group which engages most with fake news sources is highly concentrated and largely consists of older conservatives who are very interested with political news. The most prominent user of the so called fake news *label* is former U.S. president Donald Trump, but it has also been applied by politicians in various countries, like "Austria, Bulgaria, Cambodia, Czech Republic, Egypt, France, Italy, Norway,

Russia, South Africa, Turkey, the UK and many more, highlighting its global significance" (Egelhofer and Lecheler, 2019, p. 105).

The significance of fake news in Norway became especially evident in a study conducted by the Norwegian Medietilsynet[8] (2017), where they found that as many as 40% of Norwegians are uncertain of whether they are capable of distinguishing between real and fake news. This study was similar to one conducted by the Pew Research Center, in which Americans seemed much more confident in their abilities to distinguish between the two; 39% felt very confident in their ability to detect fake news and 45% felt somewhat confident (Barthel et al., 2016). Still, 64% of Americans also believed that fake news has caused a great deal of confusion about the basic facts of current events (Barthel et al., 2016). With strikingly similar percentages in both demographics, 23% of both Norwegians and Americans say that they themselves have shared a made-up news story, with 15% of Norwegians and 14% of Americans saying that they shared a story they knew (or "suspected" in Medietilsynet's survey) to be fake (Barthel et a., 2016; Medietilsynet, 2017).

2.5.4 Global English and Anglo-American influence in Norway

The English language's role as a global lingua franca and the primary language of technology, science and diplomacy, has impacted the world in a range of different ways which have been hailed as both positive and negative (Weston, 2017, p. 88). Some people are concerned about the hegemonic status of English and the *linguistic imperialism* of Britain and America, which many relate to the way Anglo-American cultural influence has led to a widespread use of English borrowings, or *anglicisms*, in many other languages (Weston, 2017, p. 88). Anglo-American influence has led to concerns that the spread of the English language is causing local languages to disappear, and research has shown that Norwegian is continuously experiencing domain loss (Weston, 2017, p. 90). According to Busby (2020, p. 10), the language similarities between English and Norwegian often lead to confusion and the influence of the English language causes more borrowing in the form of calques (i.e. idiomatic English phrases are being directly translated into Norwegian). Still, Weston (2017, p. 111) claims that anglicisms allow for more nuanced and efficient communication among Norwegians, for example through code-switching, because without such anglicisms one may not be able to express subtle semantic nuances or cultural associations.

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[8] Norwegian Media Authority, a government agency handling various matters related to the media.

According to Weston (2017), Scandinavia is in "an ambivalent position with regard to the English language" (p. 89). Despite not having been colonized by English speaking countries and the fact that English has no formal role in these countries, Scandinavia appears to have embraced the English language more than any other region in the world, which is demonstrated in the citizens' very high proficiency levels (Weston, 2017, p. 89; Busby, 2020, p. 11). Scholars have attributed this to strong linguistic similarities between the Scandinavian languages and English, which is not too strange since these are all Germanic languages of Indo-European origin (Weston, 2017, p. 90). A strong cultural affinity between Norway and Britain and the USA has a long history, starting with the Viking era when much of Britain was colonized by Norsemen, but also related to the large waves of American migrations in the 19th and 20th century and the reliance on the Allied Powers in WWII. Interestingly, there are now almost the same number of Americans of Norwegian decent (about 4.5 million) as there are Norwegian citizens. Meanwhile, the cultural connection keeps being reinforced through a widespread consumption of Anglophone culture, such as movies and television, in Norway, which is most often transmitted in the original language (with only subtitles as mediation) – something which is less common in other countries with Germanic languages, where English television is often dubbed into their respective languages (Weston, 2017, p. 90).

Like Ludlow (2014) (section 2.1), Aixelá (1996) sees language as something dynamic, focusing more specifically on changes caused by the spread of Anglophone culture. American culture's *crushing supremacy* in most popular media channels has led to a clear one-way influence and a gradual acceptance of its values in other parts of the world (Aixelá, 1996, p. 54). This supremacy should be even more crushing today, with information spreading faster than ever through the internet and social media.[9] As a result, translations of culture specific items (meaning references which may not exist or which have different values in the target language) require less and less manipulation to seem acceptable in the target culture (Aixelá, 1996, p. 55). Thus, while an English term like *fake news* might have previously needed a clearer translation or a form of explanation when used in a text or newspaper article, it could now be acceptable to use the English term without any sort of typographical warning or signal of its English specificity in Norwegian texts.

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[9] This idea that social media usage propels the exposure to and use of English in Norway is also suggested in a recent news article on teacher's concerns about an increasing use of anglicisms in Norwegian: https://www.nrk.no/mr/xl/marta-aspehaug-snakkar-engelsk-med-norske-vener_-laerarar-er-bekymra-for-det-norske-spraket-1.15479901

3. Method

This is an exploratory study into perceptions of fake news in two different countries: Norway and the USA. The aim is to find out how this phrase is perceived and what factors influence its perception. A key question is whether this keyword is understood differently in the culture that gave rise to its current widespread usage, and in a culture more removed from the political controversies that gave rise to the increased frequency. The study is largely based on a quantitative approach focusing mainly on the results of two parallel surveys; one in Norwegian directed at a Norwegian audience and one in English directed at an American audience. However, because the surveys include some open questions, the study also contains qualitative data. This leads us more in the direction of a mixed-methods approach, and although the data was collected at the same time, the design may somewhat resemble a "sequential Quan → Qual design" wherein the qualitative data is used as follow-up data to "elaborate, explain, or confirm the initial quantitative results" (Plano Clark & Ivankova, 2016, p. 22). I will conduct an exploratory and comparative analysis of these results in an attempt to shed light on possible differences and/or similarities between Norway and the United States with regards to how people understand and use the term *fake news*. Furthermore, it would be interesting to see whether these perceptions differ from academic thoughts on the subject.

3.1 Survey

The choice of using surveys as the method for data collection was based on the need to gather structured information from a large amount of participants in order to properly discuss general perceptions within certain demographics (e.g. nationality, age, political orientation). Questionnaires are good for collecting exploratory data and acquiring large amounts of quantitative data could allow for some possible generalizations to be made about a larger population (Saldanha & O'Brien 2013, p. 152). For the comparative purposes of this thesis, I created two parallel questionnaires – one in Norwegian for Norwegians and one in English for Americans (see Appendices D and E). All questions are intended to be as similar as possible, with a few exceptions. In general, the Norwegian questionnaire mainly featured the anglicism *fake news* instead of the Norwegian term *falske nyheter* based on an assumption that this anglicism is firmly integrated into Norwegian usage, and one question addressed the meaning relation between the anglicism and the Norwegians phrase. There is a small risk that the use of *fake news* may have confused some respondents with regards to the context and nature of the

questions and that this makes it more different from the English-language survey[10]; however, this was not suggested by the pilot testers.[11]

Five Norwegian and five English-speaking pilots helped review the questionnaires. The point of piloting is to have an appropriate sample assessing various aspects, such as the time required to finish the questionnaires, their usability, their clarity and so on (Saldanha & O'Brien, 2013, p. 158). The Norwegian group constituted an appropriate sample, while the English-speaking groups included native English speakers from other countries. Several of the English pilots had experience with both academic research and surveys, and provided useful feedback on formulations, setup, possible sensitive issues and the English translations. I did the translations myself, and the aim was to produce two equivalent questionnaires, relying on feedback from the English-speaking pilots. Knowledge of the study and questionnaire design, as well as cultural and linguistic skills, is necessary to make translation judgments regarding the target language (Douglas & Craig, 2007, p. 33). In a way, this can be seen as what Douglas and Craig (2007, p. 34) call a collaborative approach to translation, where we worked in a so-called *expert team* which entailed individual work and virtual cooperation due to geographical distance. The process included the five basic stages of questionnaire translation: translation, review, adjudication, pretesting and documentation (Douglas & Craig, 2007, p. 34).

According to Saldanha and O'Brien (2013), "questionnaires should be as short as possible so as to avoid non-completion" (p. 154). The pilots of both surveys were therefore asked to report on the time spent. About five minutes was the intended goal and the final estimate, and this was included on the front page of the questionnaire. Not all questions were made mandatory, meaning participants could skip questions they did not feel were applicable to them. However, the general questions about nationality, age and political orientation were mandatory in order to define proper demographics.

The questionnaires needed to be completely anonymous to avoid ethical issues and no personal data was collected with the format used. For reasons relating to consent, only people of 18 years or older were asked to participate in the study; this was also an obligatory question in the surveys. I used Nettskjema, a survey platform developed by and hosted by the University of Oslo, which has the option for anonymous data collection, without logging IP addresses. A

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[10] The question about the relation between fake news and falske nyheter makes the Norwegian questionnaire slightly longer. There were also some questions in the Norwegian questionnaire which did not correspond to the English questionnaire. These are not discussed in this thesis.

[11] None of the Norwegian pilots commented on the use of the anglicism instead of the Norwegian term.

factor that further assured anonymity was the distribution of the surveys via social media and the size of both samples, although the latter could not be predicted before the survey ended. While one could argue that questions about political orientation can be sensitive, the anonymity provided with the survey platform and questionnaire design should dampen these issues. Due to the contentious topic of the surveys, one might see cases where participants "opt out, answer untruthfully, or even lodge a complaint" (Saldanha & O'Brien, 2013, p. 155), but this has not happened to any noticeable degree. Two pilots used for the English questionnaire did raise thoughts about including, and the phrasing of, questions about Donald Trump in particular, which they believed could cause some participants to opt out. A few adjustments were made to make these questions as neutral as possible.

Most of the questions were closed, multiple-choice questions. Some problems that can arise with questionnaires like these are often related to issues of ambiguity and leading questions (Saldanha & O'Brien, 2013, p. 156). Parts of the questionnaires involved examples in the form of multiple-choice answers where participants could choose which definitions were most applicable to their point of view, which could be perceived as leading questions. One of the Norwegian pilots also warned that they found some questions/alternatives ambiguous because they did not necessarily present opposing ideas and could relate to each other. This was ultimately deemed unproblematic since the main goal was to give the participants many, and varying, options, reflecting aspects of meaning presented in academic articles, reference works and more colloquial websites. In order to cover more points of views, the questionnaires featured open questions where participants could explain what *fake news* was to them in their own words. These results, along with the open question about the difference between the anglicism and the native Norwegian phrase make up the qualitative data, which have been coded and analyzed separately from the quantitative results.

3.2 The Snowball Method

Using internet-mediated questionnaires has its advantages and disadvantages. Creating distance between the researcher and the participants decreases the likelihood of any disadvantageous power relations, but at the same time it can cause a lack of responses (Saldanha & O'Brien, 2013, p. 164). The latter did not happen here, due to a successful use of the snowball method. The main appeal of this technique is the possibility to reach large amounts of people in other geographical locations, which would increase the representativeness of the study (Baltar & Brunet, 2012, p. 57). Distributing the surveys this way did garner results from many different groups in relatively little time. In a time when gathering data for any project would be difficult

(due to restrictions related to the pandemic), the snowball method through social media allowed me to reach *hard to reach* populations, which could now be said to be people in general during the pandemic, but in particular Americans living in the USA.

This method is a form of convenience sampling, meaning that the participants were selected mostly based on easy accessibility to the researcher (Saldanha & O'Brien, 2013, p. 164). This type of sampling could have its disadvantages, mainly related to difficulty in creating generalizable results. "[T]he Internet population constitutes a biased sample of the total population in terms of demographic characteristics" (Baltar & Brunet, 2012, p. 58), which leads to a possible sample bias. Internet-mediated methods tend to exclude certain groups, notably those who do not use or have daily access to the internet or social media. However, the effectiveness of such a method to study social and behavioral sciences cannot be denied, and it arguably provides more representative results (Baltar & Brunet, 2012, p. 58).

The two questionnaires were distributed through Facebook, with the link to the Norwegian version first being posted to my own *wall*, where friends could like, comment and share the post. Furthermore, it was shared in various group chats and friends and family were asked to share the link on their walls. For the American version, there was a need to go beyond the network I could reach via my profile. My supervisor and a family member of American descent shared the survey to American contacts via private messages, and the latter also tried to reach people through their wall, their family and some Facebook groups[12]. This was all fairly effective, but did not give the desired responses. The link was then shared in a couple of larger groups with people who might take a special interest in the topic; the American version in a group for Americans interested in Norway and the Norwegian version in a group where Norwegians could ask for help with social media questions. Soon after, the number of finished questionnaires increased significantly in size, with the American version eventually stopping at 260 participants and the Norwegian one at 461[13]. The questionnaires were online for about a month, intentionally overlapping with Christmas as people might have more time to visit Facebook and participate in surveys during vacations.

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[12] A Facebook function for people who share a common interest (e.g., school, religion, ethnicity, military affiliations, hobbies, etc.).

[13] According to estimates using the Survey Monkey sample size calculator, with standard range confidence intervals and error margins, the Norwegian sample size is sufficient for a representative sample, while the US sample is not (https://www.surveymonkey.com/mp/sample-size-calculator/).

3.3 Data

A majority of the American participants identified as left-leaning/liberals, which could mean a possible sample bias. Approximately 46% of the Americans who participated in the survey were "US citizen[s] living elsewhere". We may assume that many, if not most, of these were living in Norway, since the questionnaire was posted in a large Facebook group for Americans living in Norway. Keeping in mind that the political spectrum in Norway is very different from that of the US, with right-side parties being much more liberal than the Republican side in the US, a certain political bias could arise when choosing participants from a group of Americans with a connection to Norwegian culture. Furthermore, it is likely that the snowball method did not lead the surveys to more conservative populations, or that many of these chose to *opt out* of answering the questionnaire. The contentiousness of the topic, along with attitudes to social media, could also be a causal factor.

The results were exported to and coded in Excel, and subsequently coded and run through a statistical analysis software (IBM SPSS Statistics 27), where all tables and graphs of the quantitative results were created. The statistical analyses are limited to frequency measures, meaning that I mainly focused on descriptive statistics analyses of frequencies and comparative analyses of the frequencies of variables, using crosstabs to compare results across demographics. All the qualitative data were coded using a qualitative data analysis software (NVivo 20/1.3) to map recurring elements mentioned and see whether these results could back up the quantitative results. This could also show whether the closed questions were interpreted as ambiguous, hard to answer, or not corresponding with people's actual opinions on the matter. In NVivo, the free-text answers were split into three groups: Norwegians, US Americans and Americans abroad to uncover common words or topics in each category.

The target audiences were US citizens/residents for the English survey and Norwegian citizens for the Norwegian survey.[14] Respondents who did not meet the criteria, or were unwilling to answer this question, were thus excluded from the data set before analysis. Due to consent issues, respondents below 18 or who did not give their age were excluded. Lastly, those who did not want to answer questions about political orientation, which was essential to the project, were removed. A total of 11 responses were removed from the American data, leaving 249 valid participants, while 38 were removed from the Norwegian data, leaving 423 participants.

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[14] The groups that could have been included (e.g. Norwegian residents who were not citizens) were very small and would have made the data handling more difficult.

4. Results

The findings are presented in the following order: First the quantitative data from the two surveys which have been processed through SPSS, and then the qualitative data which have been coded using NVivo. The questionnaires were divided into mainly three parts and a selection of results from each part will be presented in relation to the research questions.

4.1 Quantitative data from surveys

4.1.1 Main demographics and political orientation

The two main demographics intended were residency (Norwegians and Americans) and age, and political orientation was seen as another key variable. However, survey results yielded three main groups in terms of number of responses: Norwegians, US Americans and Americans abroad (most of whom presumably reside in Norway) (see Table 1.1)[16] The initial plan was to

Citizenship and residency[15]	N	%
Americans living in the US.	130	52.2%
Americans living elsewhere.	119	47.8%
Americans in total.	249	100.0%
Norwegians living in Norway.	423	100.0%

Table 1.1: Citizenship and residency

compare Norwegian and US citizens, but with the close to even distribution of US citizens into US residents and US citizens living abroad, three groups of interest emerged. The presumption is that cultural differences between these three groups could provide differing results regarding the perception of fake news.

Some very interesting variables are the ones regarding political orientation. Figures A1-A2 show a color-coded representation of the participants' political orientation. This is a category where complete conceptual equivalence is hard to achieve, since the political landscapes of these two countries are so different. Norwegians would not likely define themselves as *liberal* or *conservative*, which is why the Norwegian questionnaire featured more neutral terms, such as "venstresiden" (here translated as left-leaning), "sentrum" (center) and "høyesiden" (right-leaning)[17]. "Sentrum" and *neutral* also do not necessarily correspond to each other, as Norway has many political parties, some of which are placed in the center of the political spectrum, while the USA mainly have the two larger parties on each side of the spectrum (see chapter

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[15] While this table features correct punctuation, the rest of the tables and figures show commas instead of full stops due to time-constraints and technical problems with SPSS. For the same reasons, figures sometimes show count instead of percentage.

[16] The number of respondents for the other alternatives (e.g. Norwegians living outside of Norway) were too low to be counted as separate groups.

[17] All translations of the Norwegian data shown in the graphs/tables are my own and were made after the original data was collected to illustrate the findings for English-speaking readers.

2.5.1). A clear majority of people place themselves more to the left on the political spectrum in both surveys. Figure A2 shows a slight liberal majority among US Americans, but there are also a lot of conservatives (20.9% versus 17.3% of the total). This group also features a significant number of people who see themselves as more neutral. Among Americans abroad there is a very low percentage of conservatives and neutrals; 6.4% and 7.2% respectively. Thus, Americans abroad in particular show a clear tendency toward the liberal side.
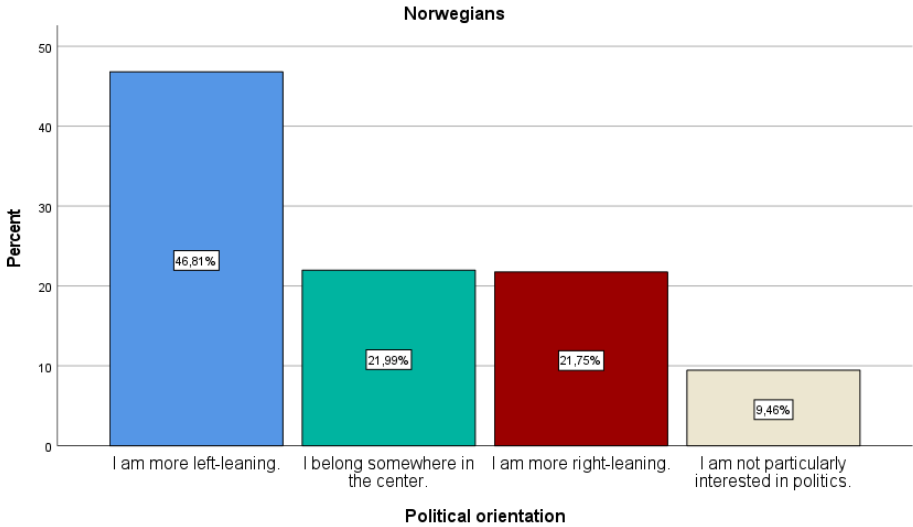
Figure A1: Political orientation – Norway.
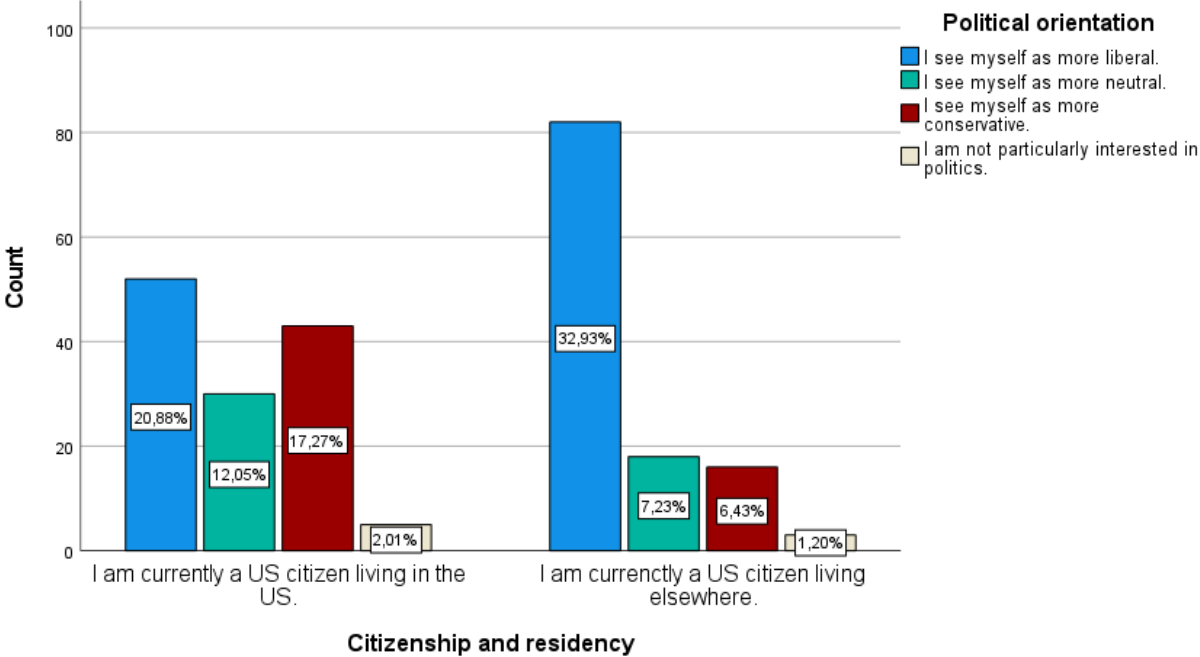
Figure A2: Political orientation – USA.

Figures B1-B2 show another demographic variable: The age span of the participants. There is a higher representation of Norwegians in the youngest age group; approximately 16% versus only 4.4% in total in the American survey. Meanwhile, a total of 26% of Americans belonged to the oldest age group, against only approximately 9.5% in the Norwegian survey. Especially among US Americans, there is a higher percentage of people aged 56 years or older. The two other age groups are fairly even in size.[18] A series of analyses were run with age as the defining variable, but interestingly, this did not appear to influence results in a major way.
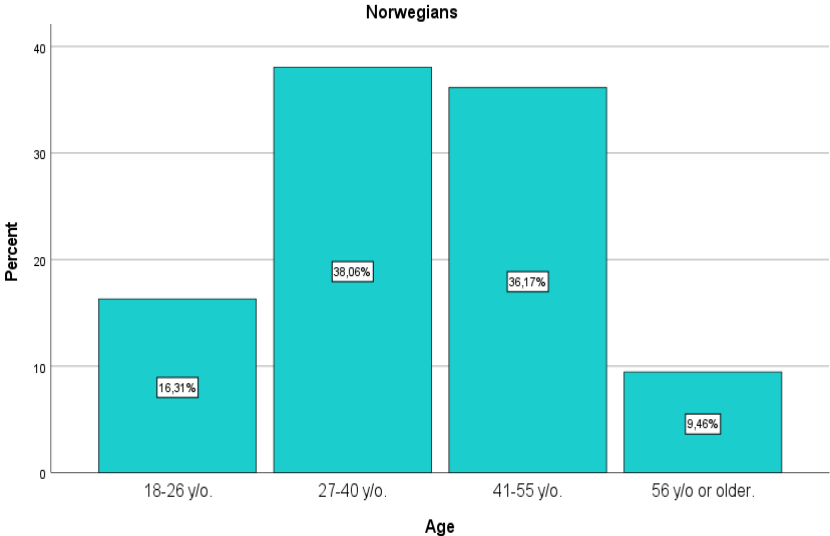
Figure B1: Age groups – Norway.
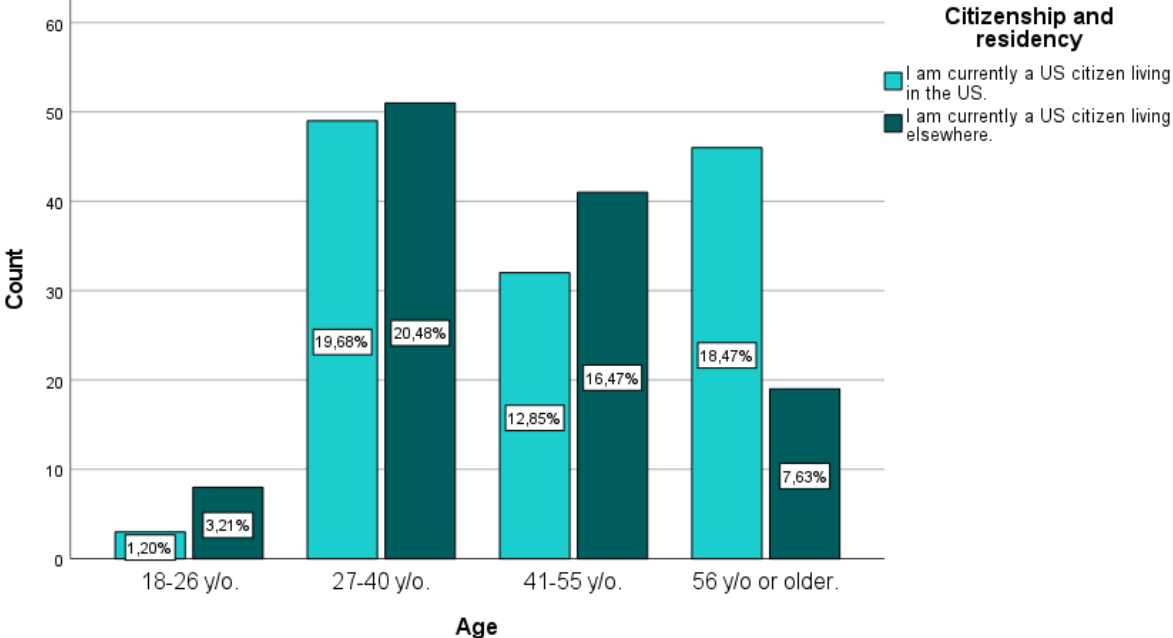
Figure B2: Age groups – USA.

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[18] The ages are grouped based on the typical American age cohorts (i.e. Generation Z, Millennials, Generation X and Baby Boomers).

4.1.2 Trust in various media sources

Tables 1.2 and 1.3 show which sources people believe have the most *fake news*. All three demographics have highlighted social media (Facebook, Twitter etc.) as the main channel for fake news, while a slight majority of both Norwegians and Americans abroad also highlight various forum-based social media (Reddit, 4chan etc.). Other than that, the two tables show some interesting variations, for example regarding news media with political affiliations, where a much higher percentage of Americans have stated that liberal or conservative news media spread fake news. There is also a significant difference between the three demographics' responses to whether mainstream media have the most fake news, with as many as 40.8% of US Americans believing this, while only 17.6% of Americans abroad and as little as 4.3% of Norwegians agreeing with this. At the same time, in contrast to Americans, Norwegians are much more skeptical of alternative or independent news media, with 63.6% of Norwegians believing this to be a main source of fake news against only 16.2% of US Americans and 28.6% of Americans abroad.[19] Additionally, few people from all three groups find that fake news comes from "sources from other countries, either news or political actors" (here called "foreign sources"), but an interesting addition to the Norwegian questionnaire about "sources from the US, either news or political actors" showed that 35.2% of Norwegians believed this to be the source of the most fake news.

		N	%
Norwegians	Frequency of fake news - social media	384	90,8%
	Frequency of fake news - various forums	232	54,8%
	Frequency of fake news - independent/alt. media	269	63,6%
	Frequency of fake news - state-owned news media	7	1,7%
	Frequency of fake news - native advertising/sponsored	146	34,5%
	Frequency of fake news - left-leaning news	40	9,5%
	Frequency of fake news - right-leaning news	90	21,3%
	Frequency of fake news - live	105	24,8%
	Frequency of fake news - mainstream media	18	4,3%
	Frequency of fake news - government info	4	0,9%
	Frequency of fake news - foreign sources	89	21,0%
	Frequency of fake news - news from US	149	35,2%
	Frequency of fake news - none of the above	2	0,5%

Table 1.2: Which media channels do you believe have the most 'fake news'? – Norway.

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[19] Whether alternative/independent media means the same to Norwegians and Americans could be another topic for discussion.

		N	%
I am currently a US citizen living in the US.	Frequency of fake news - social media	115	88,5%
	Frequency of fake news - various forums	49	37,7%
	Frequency of fake news - independent media	21	16,2%
	Frequency of fake news - state-owned news media	21	16,2%
	Frequency of fake news - native advertising	35	26,9%
	Frequency of fake news - liberal media	53	40,8%
	Frequency of fake news - conservative media	69	53,1%
	Frequency of fake news - live	40	30,8%
	Frequency of fake news - mainstream media	53	40,8%
	Frequency of fake news - government info	20	15,4%
	Frequency of fake news - foreign sources	15	11,5%
	Frequency of fake news - none of the above	1	0,8%
I am currently a US citizen living elsewhere.	Frequency of fake news - social media	112	94,1%
	Frequency of fake news - various forums	63	52,9%
	Frequency of fake news - independent media	34	28,6%
	Frequency of fake news - state-owned news media	13	10,9%
	Frequency of fake news - native advertising	45	37,8%
	Frequency of fake news - liberal media	33	27,7%
	Frequency of fake news - conservative media	74	62,2%
	Frequency of fake news - live	44	37,0%
	Frequency of fake news - mainstream media	21	17,6%
	Frequency of fake news - government info	11	9,2%
	Frequency of fake news - foreign sources	17	14,3%
	Frequency of fake news - none of the above	1	0,8%

Table 1.3: Which media channels do you believe have the most 'fake news'? – USA.

There are also large discrepancies between the different places of residency in the multiple response-question about which media sources people trusted the most, shown in Tables 1.4 and 1.5. Norwegians are generally very trusting of national news (73.5%), and the same holds for Americans abroad (65.5%), while US Americans trust these news sources far less (43.5%). Similar results are shown with regards to trusting information from official channels, where 58.9% of Norwegians, 44.5% of Americans abroad and only 26.2% of US Americans state that they trust this information. These tables also show the apparent lack of trust Norwegians have towards independent, left-leaning and right-leaning news. Table 1.5 shows very low percentages in these categories. The corresponding frequencies for Americans in Table 1.4 are also quite low, but still significantly higher than for Norwegians, indicating that Norwegians are generally not very trusting of news media with political affiliations, while this is more common among Americans. Despite small numbers, an interesting contrast is that a larger share of US Americans trust conservative news, while Americans abroad are more favorable of liberal news. Lastly, there is an important point to be made regarding state-owned news media. Although the US does not have any apparent state-owned news media, this alternative was

present in both surveys because one of the largest news channels in Norway is funded by the government, and as Table 1.2 shows, Norwegians are generally very trusting of state-owned news channels. It is not surprising that few Americans clicked this box, but it is interesting that the number increased from 5.4% in the US to 21% in the group of Americans abroad. This could indicate that Americans in Norway (or elsewhere) adopt local attitudes.

Citizenship and residency		N	%
I am currently a US citizen living in the US.	Media trust - nation-wide news channels	60	46,2%
	Media trust - local news	40	30,8%
	Media trust - independent media	38	29,2%
	Media trust - liberal media	12	9,2%
	Media trust - conservative media	18	13,8%
	Media trust - state-owned news media	7	5,4%
	Media trust - official channels	34	26,2%
	Media trust - foreign news media	37	28,5%
I am currently a US citizen living elsewhere.	Media trust - nation-wide news channels	78	65,5%
	Media trust - local news	35	29,4%
	Media trust - independent media	24	20,2%
	Media trust - liberal media	15	12,6%
	Media trust - conservative media	5	4,2%
	Media trust - state-owned news media	25	21,0%
	Media trust - official channels	53	44,5%
	Media trust - foreign news media	51	42,9%

Table 1.4: Trust in media sources – USA.

		N	%
Norwegians	Media trust - nation-wide news channels	311	73,5%
	Media trust - local news	184	43,5%
	Media trust - independent/alternative media	10	2,4%
	Media trust - left-leaning media	18	4,3%
	Media trust - right-leaning media	11	2,6%
	Media trust - state-owned news media	334	79,0%
	Media trust - official channels	249	58,9%
	Media trust - foreign news media	115	27,2%

Table 1.5: Trust in media sources – Norway.

Tables 1.6 and 1.7 indicate how people from the different cultures generally feel about the relation between fake news and news media in their own country. Norwegians once again display a higher level of trust in Norwegian news media, with only 7.6% saying that they believe Norwegian news media to be spreading fake news[20], even if a slight majority of 51.8% did choose the option "perhaps, but not so much". Meanwhile, as many as 53.4% of Americans

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[20] Notably without providing a definition of *fake news*.

believe that American news media tends to spread fake news. In this group there is a clear discrepancy with regards to political orientation, with 84.7% of conservatives believing this to be true. Liberals appear to be less sure, with 35.8% saying yes to this question and 43.3% choosing the option "perhaps, but not so much". This may indicate that liberals are more cautious than conservatives to relate news media and the term fake news, while Norwegians are even less inclined to do so.

		Yes.	Perhaps, but not so much.	No.	No opinion.
I see myself as more conservative.	%	84,7%	13,6%	1,7%	0,0%
I see myself as more neutral.	%	60,4%	33,3%	6,3%	0,0%
I see myself as more liberal.	%	35,8%	43,3%	13,4%	6,7%
I am not particularly interested in politics.	%	75,0%	0,0%	25,0%	0,0%
Total	%	53,4%	32,9%	9,6%	3,6%

Table 1.6: Do you believe that American news media often spread 'fake news'? – USA.

		Yes.	Perhaps, but not so much.	No.	No opinion.
I am more right-leaning.	%	13,0%	51,1%	32,6%	3,3%
I belong somewhere in the center.	%	4,3%	59,1%	36,6%	0,0%
I am more left-leaning.	%	5,6%	49,5%	41,4%	3,5%
I am not particularly interested in politics.	%	12,5%	47,5%	32,5%	7,5%
Total	%	7,6%	51,8%	37,6%	3,1%

Table 1.7: Do you believe that Norwegiaen news media often spread 'fake news'? – Norway.

4.1.3 Definitions of the term

The surveys featured a range of statements about, or attempts at definitions of, the term fake news. These statements were based on the varying definitions of the term found in the literature presented in the theory section. As Tables 1.8 and 1.9 show, there is no consensus on what this term means. While a clear majority of people from both countries agreed that fake news is a "genre which consists of deliberately created disinformation which is made to look like real

news"[21], 42.8% of Norwegians, 45.4% of US Americans and 59.7% of Americans abroad also believed it to be "a term mainly used by political actors who use it as a weapon to undermine any information that contradicts their own political agenda." 51.5% of Norwegians, 36.9% of US Americans and 46.2% of Americans abroad would also call it "a label which anyone could use to discredit sources of information that one does not agree with". A sizeable amount of people seem to have agreed with many of the statements and many would also agree that fake news is "fabricated news," "deliberate disinformation created by partisan media" or by "mainstream media." Regarding the latter, a clear difference is again shown between Norwegians and Americans, with only 12.3% of Norwegians agreeing that mainstream media is involved in the deliberate spread of fake news, against 32.8% of Americans abroad and 46.2% of US Americans. Another interesting finding is that only 28.1% of Norwegians agreed that fake news could be defined as "any misinformation which is being spread, whether it is deliberate or not," while as many as 45.4% of US Americans and 52.9% of Americans abroad agreed with this statement. This would mean that intent could be more important to Norwegians' understanding of the term.

Citizenship		N	%
I am currently a US citizen living in the US.	A label used to discredit others.	48	36,9%
	A term used as a political weapon.	59	45,4%
	Genre	84	64,6%
	Fabricated news	45	34,6%
	Deliberate disinformation by independent media	64	49,2%
	Deliberate disinformation by mainstream media	60	46,2%
	Any misinformation which is being spread	59	45,4%
	A term mainly used by Donald Trump and followers	40	30,8%
	A wide and general term	35	26,9%
I am currently a US citizen living elsewhere.	A label used to discredit others.	55	46,2%
	A term used as a political weapon.	71	59,7%
	Genre	78	65,5%
	Fabricated news	46	38,7%
	Deliberate disinformation by independent media	59	49,6%
	Deliberate disinformation by mainstream media	39	32,8%
	Any misinformation which is being spread	63	52,9%
	A term mainly used by Donald Trump and followers	45	37,8%
	A wide and general term	40	33,6%

Table 1.8: How would you describe 'fake news'? – USA.

Citizenship		N	%
Norwegians	A label used to discredit others.	218	51,5%
	A term used as a political weapon.	181	42,8%
	Genre	309	73,0%
	Propaganda from state-owned media	35	8,3%
	Fabricated news	197	46,6%
	Deliberate disinformation by independent media	239	56,5%
	Deliberate disinformation by mainstream media	52	12,3%
	Any misinformation which is being spread	119	28,1%
	A term mainly used by Donald Trump and followers	108	25,5%
	A wide and general term	88	20,8%

Table 1.9: How would you describe 'fake news'? – Norway.

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[21] All text in quotation marks refers to the formulations in the questionnaires in Appendices D and E.
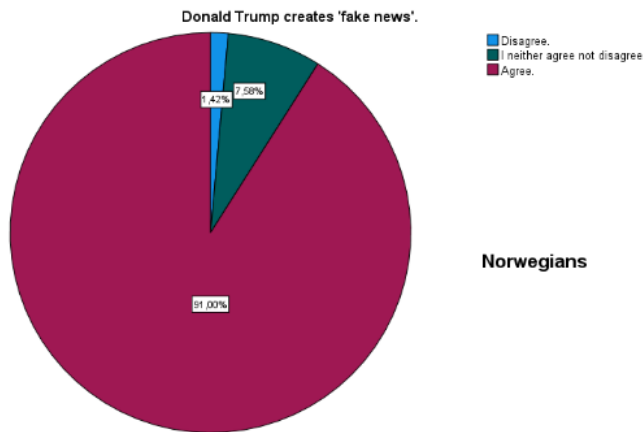
Figure C1: Donald Trump creates 'fake news' – Norway.
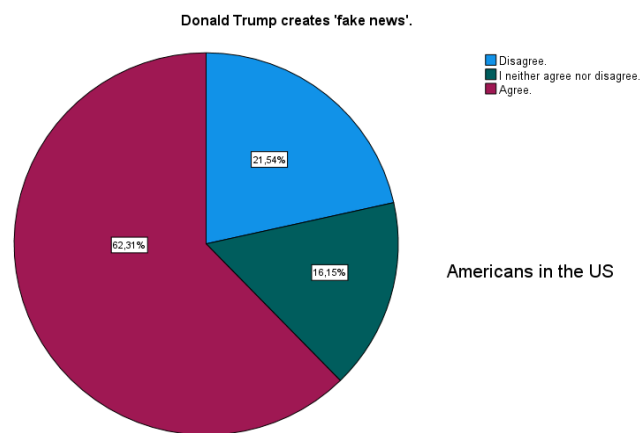
Figure C2: Donald Trump creates 'fake news' – USA1.
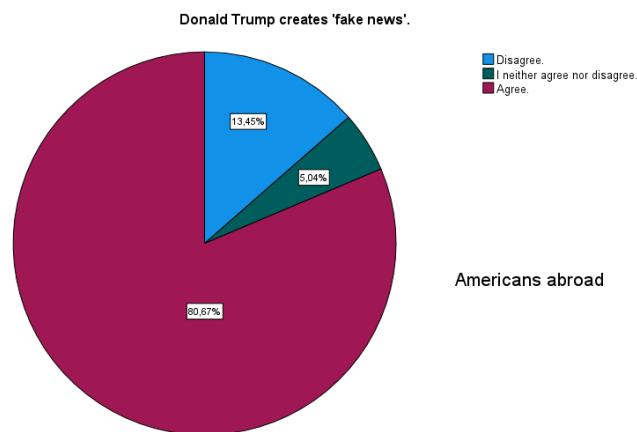
Figure C3: Donald Trump creates 'fake news' – USA2.

4.1.4 Relation to Donald Trump

As mentioned, one is hard pressed to find an article about fake news that does not mention Donald Trump. As Figures C1-C3 show, a majority of respondents in all three demographics agree that there is a correlation between Donald Trump and *fake news*, with Norwegians in particular almost unanimously agreeing that "Donald Trump creates 'fake news'" (91%). A relatively large number of Americans abroad agree with this (80.7%), while a smaller, but still clear majority of US Americans say the same (62.3%). The latter group also incorporates a significant amount of people who disagree (21.5%) or who neither agreed nor disagreed (16.2%). Table 1.10 shows the distribution of Figure C2 according to political orientation. Liberal Americans almost unanimously agree that Donald Trump creates fake news, while only 25.6% of conservatives agree with this. Those who identify as more neutral are more divided, but a majority of 60% of neutrals agree.

A very high and strikingly similar share in all three groups responded that they had "experienced an increase in the use of the term 'fake news' during the recent presidential campaign or election" (see Tables 1.11 and 1.12 in section 4.1.5), which can also be related to the aforementioned definition of fake news as "a term mainly used by political actors who use it as a weapon to undermine any information that contradicts their own political agenda", a statement to which a fair amount of people from all three demographics agreed (see Tables 1.8 and 1.9). While neither of these questions specifically

mentioned Trump, these responses indirectly involve him. Despite these results, however, Tables 1.8 and 1.9 also show that only 25.5% of Norwegians, 30.8% of US Americans and 37.8% of Americans abroad believed fake news to be "a term which is mainly used by Donald Trump and his followers", showing that while he is believed to create a lot of fake news, it seems that fewer people believe the phenomenon is connected only to Trump. Table 1.11 sees this question in relation to political orientation and once again demonstrates how conservatives are far less likely to relate the term to Donald Trump than liberals. Only 6.3% of conservatives abroad and 4.7% of conservatives in the US agreed that fake news is a term mainly used by Donald Trump and his followers.

		I see myself as more conservative.		I see myself as more liberal.		I see myself as more neutral.		I am not particularly interested in politics.		Total	
		N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Donald Trump creates 'fake news'.	Agree.	11	25,6%	49	94,2%	18	60%	3	60%	81	62,3%
	Disagree.	21	48,8%	3	5,8%	4	13%	0	0,0%	28	21,5%
	I neither agree nor disagree.	11	25,6%	0	0,0%	8	27%	2	40%	21	16,2%

Table 1.10: Americans in the US - Relation between political orientation and question about Donald Trump.

		I see myself as more liberal.		I see myself as more neutral.		I see myself as more conservative.		I am not particularly interested in politics.		Total	
Citizenship		N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
US citizens living in the US.	N/A	22	42,3%	22	73,3%	41	95,3%	5	100,0%	90	69,2%
	A term which is mainly used by Donald Trump and his followers.	30	57,7%	8	26,7%	2	4,7%	0	0,0%	40	30,8%
US citizens living elsewhere.	N/A	46	56,1%	11	61,1%	15	93,8%	2	66,7%	74	62,2%
	A term which is mainly used by Donald Trump and his followers.	36	43,9%	7	38,9%	1	6,3%	1	33,3%	45	37,8%

Table 1.11: "Fake news is a term mainly used by Donald Trump and his followers". Total percentage as shown in Table 1.8.

4.1.5 The impact of the term

The results regarding the societal impact of *fake news* in Tables 1.12 and 1.13 are very clear. Large majorities reported that they "experienced an increase in the use of the term during the recent presidential campaign or election [in the US]", an event which was widely covered by the media in Norway as well. The share of respondents who believed "that the use of the term has a negative impact on society" was also high. Similar results were found regarding its impact on democracy, even though the numbers were slightly lower among US Americans.

There was more variation in responses relating to trust. 84.7% of Norwegians, 70.2% of US Americans and only 55% of Americans abroad agreed to the statement "the term makes knowing what to trust more difficult". Only those who answered yes to these questions are included in Tables 1.12 and 1.13, because the percentages for the other options were generally very low. The exception was the question regarding an increase in use of the term after COVID-19, where especially Norwegians were more divided, with significant shares being uncertain or not noticing an increase (see Figure D).

Only those who answered yes to the following questions are included		N	%
I am currently a US citizen living in the US.	Increase in the term fake news post COVID-19?	60	49,6%
	Increase in the term fake news during presidential campaign?	95	78,5%
	Does the term have a negative impact on society?	92	76,0%
	Does the term have a negative impact on democracy?	84	69,4%
	Does the term make trust more difficult?	85	70,2%
I am currently a US citizen living elsewhere.	Increase in the term fake news post COVID-19?	39	35,1%
	Increase in the term fake news during presidential campaign?	85	76,6%
	Does the term have a negative impact on society?	92	82,9%
	Does the term have a negative impact on democracy?	92	82,9%
	Does the term make trust more difficult?	61	55,0%

Table 1.12: Perceived impact of the term 'fake news' – USA.

Figure D: Have you experienced an increase in the use of the term 'fake news' after COVID-19? – Norway.

Only those who answered yes to the following questions are included		N	%
The impact of 'fake news' in society - Norway	Increase in the term fake news after COVID-19?	155	38,2%
	Increase in the term fake news during presidential campaign?	319	78,6%
	Does the term have a negative impact on society?	307	75,6%
	Does the term have a negative impact on democracy?	306	75,4%
	Does the term make trust more difficult?	344	84,7%

Table 1.13: Perceived impact of the term 'fake news' – Norway.

One should be more skeptical of journalists today because of 'fake news'.

Disagree.
I neither agree nor disagree.
Agree.

Americans in the US

22,31%
16,15%
61,54%
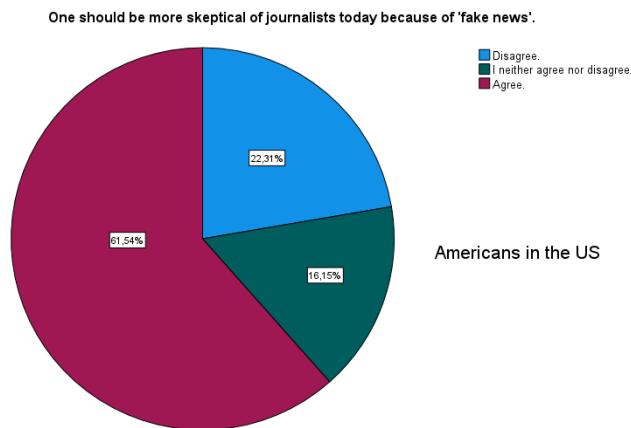
Figure E1: Skepticism towards journalists – USA1.

One should be more skeptical of journalists today because of 'fake news'.

Disagree.
I neither agree nor disagree.
Agree.

Americans abroad

38,66%
21,01%
40,34%
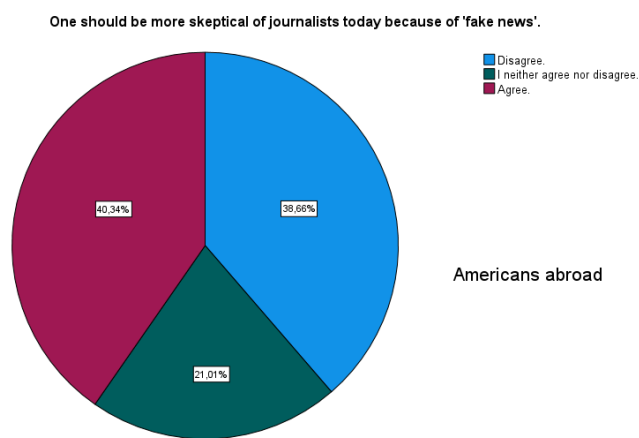
Figure E2: Skepticism towards journalists – USA2.

One should be more skeptical of journalists today because of 'fake news'.

Disagree
I neither agree not disagree.
Agree.

Norwegians

36,58%
23,04%
40,38%
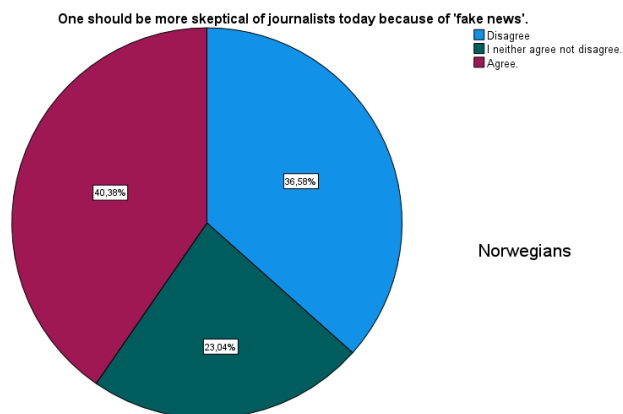
Figure E3: Skepticism towards journalists – Norway.

Another central way fake news seems to have impacted the world is as contributing towards a growing skepticism towards the journalistic profession. Figures E1, E2 and E3 show people's opinion regarding the statement "one should be more skeptical of journalists today because of the frequency of 'fake news'". The pie charts show a striking resemblance between the responses from Norwegians and Americans abroad, with 40.4% of Norwegians and 40.3% of Americans abroad agreeing with the statement. However, people are clearly divided on this issue, as an almost equal share disagreed (36.6% of Norwegians and 38.7% of Americans abroad). Meanwhile, a clear majority of 61.5% of US Americans agreed with the statement, indicating that Americans living in the US are more skeptical of news media in general as a result of fake news than the two other groups.

4.2 Qualitative data from surveys

4.2.1 *Fake news* vs. *falske nyheter*

Both the term *fake news* and the Norwegian term *falske nyheter* now seem to be used interchangeably in Norwegian news media[22], and a point of interest is whether people perceive the English and Norwegian term as equivalents in terms of meaning. While a clear majority (80.9%) stated that the English and Norwegian terms have the same meaning, several people also chose to comment on the possible difference in use between these two. 76 participants (18%) believed there to be a significant difference between these two terms and 62 of these volunteered their thoughts on the matter. Table 2.1 shows the common themes the participants discussed for both terms. Overall, there were four recurring themes distinguishing the English from the Norwegian term; *fake news* as a derogatory label and political tool, the existence of intent and the correlation with Donald Trump. This may suggest that the Norwegian term has a wider range and is more neutral (i.e. less stigmatized) and that it relates more to a genre consisting of news that are actually false, whether deliberate or not.

Table 2.1: Norwegians' thoughts on the difference between the English term and the Norwegian translation

Terms	Common themes	Quotes[23]
Fake news	Derogatory label	• "Fake new[s]" is to me a description of the institution «media» in general and that these are not to be trusted.
	Intent	• [I] perceive Fake News as a **conscious decision** to deliver false information to sway readers.
	Political tool	• The English term is **politicized** in a larger way. I relate it to polarization and distrust in the American (USA) society.
	Trump	• In a Norwegian context 'fake news' is a more informal term, possibly with a certain humorous undertone, with a clear reference to **Trump**.
Falske nyheter	Any misinformation	• […] While *falske nyheter* is simply news which are **incorrect**.
	More neutral	• *Falske nyheter* is not as established, and therefore it just means that the news are not true. **Not the same stigma** attached to the last term.

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[22] See Egeberg & Stavrum (2017) and Dahl (2020) for examples.

[23] All comments from Norwegians are my own translations of the original quotes.

4.2.2 Free-text definitions of *fake news*

The surveys featured an open and optional question in which the participants were asked to explain, in their own words, how they would describe their understanding of the term *fake news*. 119 Norwegians (ca. 28% of the Norwegian participants), 56 US Americans and 45 Americans abroad chose to answer this question (ca. 41% of all American participants). A significantly higher percentage of Americans than Norwegians were interested in sharing their definitions of the term, either suggesting that they felt their view on the matter had not been covered by the survey or that Americans are generally more interested in discussing fake news. The timing of the survey could also have been influential in making the topic more pressing for Americans, as the survey coincided with the 2020 US presidential election and the attack on the United States Capitol.

Table 2.3 provides an overview of the most frequently recurring themes in the three main demographics, accompanied by an example quote for each theme. Still, these categories are not necessarily mutually exclusive. While there were only a few clear recurring topics in the comments from US Americans, Norwegians and Americans abroad displayed a wider range. Because there were more Norwegian comments, there were also more cases to be coded and subsequently a higher number comments for each category. The most frequent topic among Norwegians were political and/or financial gain, and the separate but related category labelled personal gain also received a fair number of codes. The latter category was dominated by phrases such as "egen vinning" (personal gain) and "å nå egne mål" (to reach one's own goals), which was not as common in the comments by Americans. As these phrases do not specify what kind of gain (political, financial etc.) this entails, a separate category was created. *Political gain* was mentioned several times in the American comments, but significantly less so in the comments from Americans abroad. This category was here often associated with the word *propaganda*, which was frequently used, especially among US Americans.

From the Norwegian comments, both "disinformation" and "misinformation" were coded several times, with disinformation referring to intent/a deliberate action and misinformation essentially referring any piece of wrong information being spread. Misinformation was not coded a significant amount of times from US Americans and only ten times from Americans abroad. "Disinformation or [information] with an agenda" was coded several times in both American groups, with the word *agenda* added because of how frequently is was used (and for being more specific than *intent*). An equal amount of codes were made to the categories "derogatory label" and "Trumpism" (here meaning something to do with Donald Trump) from

the Norwegian comments. The former was not coded enough times from the comments from US Americans to be included, while the latter was coded fewer times, but still a fair amount when seen in relation to the total amount of comments. Both were present and coded more often from Americans abroad, with the latter being the second largest category – even if there was not much variation in the number of codes for each category.

Interestingly, Americans frequently used a set of phrases which was somewhat absent from the Norwegian comments; namely, "biased news, half-truths and click-bait". This category received the highest number of codes from Americans abroad and a significant number from US Americans. Finally, a count was also made of the times people referred to or *explained fake news* as either a genre or a label (cf. Egelhofer & Lecheler, 2019). Clear differences can be seen in Table 2.2. However, it should be mentioned that some comments from each group were coded to both categories, while others were excluded from the count due to ambiguousness or for not referring to either one. This means phrases which referred to the impact of fake news or simple, one-worded, non-conclusive phrases such as "lies" or "propaganda".

Table 2.2: Number of codes for two dimensions of *fake news*

Place of residence	Genre	Label
Norwegians	72	45
US Americans	35	14
Americans abroad	27	23

Table 2.3: Comments on the meaning of *fake news*.

Place of residence	Common themes (codes)	Quotes
Norwegians	Political/financial gain (35)	• Fake news is content which is provably wrong. It can be used by all political sides, foreign countries, enterprises etc.
	Personal gain (19)	• Misinformation created on purpose and spread for the purpose of personal gain.
	Disinformation (27)	• When one creates a case/news with the intention of damaging, creating distrust towards a specific case or person.
	Misinformation (20)	• Fairly wide [term], all untrue "information" spread in various ways.
	Derogatory label (17)	• Utterance used to discredit a news story.
	Trumpism (17)	• A tool created by D.T. for personal gain. Easier to label news one disagrees with as fake news rather than coming up with real and elaborate counter-arguments.
Americans in USA	Political gain and propaganda (20)	• Lies spread by mainstream media to promote their political agenda.
	Disinformation or with an agenda (20)	• A news story that deliberately selects facts or invents "facts" that are spun to support a specific agenda.
	Biased news, half-truths and click-bait (17)	• It becomes obvious when news anchors give their own personal feeling or spins the true nature of what they are presenting.
	Trumpism (11)	• When used by Trump, it seems to refer to "things that reflect poorly on Trump," whether true or not.
Americans abroad	Biased news, half-truths and click-bait (15)	• I prefer to use the term Fake News to discuss crafted articles that feed the readers bias or click bait style articles, blog posts, conspiracy theories.
	Trumpism (14)	• "Fake news" is a term created by Trump and his supporters to undermine anything they don't want anyone else to believe.
	Disinformation or with an agenda (13)	• Any false or half true information presented for the purposes of misleading the audience.
	Derogatory label (12)	• […] the term is primarily used today for any information with which you do not agree, and to create a general mistrust of journalists.
	Any misinformation (10)	• Misleading, false, and out of context information.
	Political gain (9)	• It was first a label used by leftist critics of right wing media. The right's response was not to defend themselves and the right wing media, but simply to point the finger back towards the left and repeat the very same criticism—you are fake news.

5. Discussion

This thesis addresses the highly current issue of fake news and investigates the term's meaning, and the possible impact its use and understanding may have on society. Fake news is a term of global significance used as an anglicism in many languages – often simultaneously with local expressions. For that reason, it is easy to assume that it means the same everywhere and in all contexts. This study investigates public perceptions in the US, among Americans abroad, and Norwegians, and the results show that the contemporary expression fake news means a range of different things, and that the meaning hinges on cultures and subcultures, media trust, an political affiliation. The discussion first addresses the meaning of fake news, including the relation between the anglicism and the native expression in Norway, and goes on to discuss how political issues and political affiliation affects the perception of the term. Further, media trust is an essential factor that varies across different cultures and subcultures, and the perception of fake news is also discussed through the lens of media trust. Finally, the possible societal impact of the term is discussed.

5.1 What is *fake news*?

The notion of *fake news* is now a global term and a commonly used anglicism in many countries (Egelhofer & Lecheler, 2019; see examples in Dahl, 2020 and Egeberg & Stavrum, 2017), but its meaning remains fuzzy. Ludlow (2014) claims that words are by nature dynamic and underdetermined, and thus, inherently open to change in meaning. In this light, all the different attempted definitions of the term fake news are just modulations created by speakers in a range of different conversations. Seeing fake news as a cultural keyword (cf. Keywords Project, 2016) also explains all the concurrent meanings of the term and the fact that these have seemed to change over time and in different contexts. Much like other keywords, fake news is a highly current term in both everyday conversations and academic literature and many of the participants in this study described the term as wide and difficult to pinpoint in their free-text answers. One American abroad wrote that "[the term has] become attached to so many things and used so broadly that it's not even a useful term anymore." Additionally, much like other keywords (Keywords Project, 2016), fake news is hard to define precisely because it is layered with so many different context-dependent elements and because it is used as part of a larger cluster of interrelated, hard-to-define words, such as disinformation, misinformation, propaganda, social media, media bias, truth, post-truth and alternative facts – all of which have been mentioned by participants in this study to varying degrees.

However, encyclopedic entries, research literature and the public perceptions in this study seem to agree that the meaning of the term has changed in recent times and that it may refer to a whole range different things, including propaganda, false stories on social media, and a label to discredit news channels. An important finding in this study is that places of residence may strongly influence perceptions of *fake news*, as seen in Tables 1.8-1.9, which show people's opinions about various pre-determined definitions of the term, and Table 2.3, presenting the free-text answers.

Egelhofer and Lecheler (2019) argue for a two-dimensional quality to the fake news phenomenon due to all the varying ways the term is used and described in research literature. By this, they mean that fake news is one phenomenon which encompasses both the *genre* (deliberate creation of pseudojournalistic disinformation) and the *label* (political instrumentalization of the term to delegitimize news media) (Egenhofer & Lecheler, 2019). The OED also mentioned a similar two-dimensional definition; *fake news* as something referring to inaccurate stories on social media/online, often with a political/ideological purpose (genre) and as a way to discredit media reports regarded as partisan/untrustworthy (label) ("Fake", n.d.). Macquarie Dictionary (2021) added a second definition in 2016, explaining fake news as "a term used to refer to information that is viewed as being opposed or detrimental to someone's own position – whether it is factual or not" (label). Some free-text answers from this study expressed this two-dimensionality as well, such as one Norwegian who said that the term "[h]as been split into two: the utterance "fake news!" (as Trump uses it), and the actual phenomenon which is now more common than before […]"[24] or another who specifically mentioned the introduction of a second dimension: "[It has] received a new dimension under Trumps government, where he calls media and news which were formerly perceived as objective and nuanced 'fake', and he has succeeded in undermining and provoking journalists […]"[25].

The most common description in both the quantitative and the qualitative data is of fake news as some sort of genre. 64.6% of US Americans, 65.5% of Americans abroad and 73% of Norwegians agreed that *fake news* is a genre consisting of "deliberately created disinformation which is made to look like real news" (Tables 1.8/1.9), which is the highest percentages of all the proposed definitions in that question. Approximately 60% of all three demographics also

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[24] Original quote: «Blitt delt inn i to: ytringen "fake news!" (som Trump bruker det), og det faktiske fenomenet som er mer vanlig nå enn før (men som igjen var enda mer vanlig før der igjen).»
[25] Original quote: «[…] Samtidig har det fått en ny dimensjon under Trumps regjering, der han kaller media og nyheter som tidligere ble oppfattet som objektiv og nyansert for fake, og han har lykkes med å undergrave og provosere journalistikken […].»

chose to explain *fake news* as some sort of genre in their free-text answers (Table 2.2). However, the comments coded as referring to a genre cover a wide range of different meanings beyond deliberately created disinformation. This indicates that the provided definition in the questionnaire may not have been specific enough for some people, or these people have very strong opinions. In the free-text answers, some define *fake news* (the genre) as any news from any outlet not backed up by facts; as only telling one side of the story to fit a specific narrative (half-truths); as information taken out of context; as rumors spread on social media; as lies spread by mainstream media (mostly Americans), or by independent media (mostly Norwegians); as a genre of pure political bias which makes it hard to find the truth in news; or as a synonym to disinformation or propaganda.

In very broad terms, Americans generally present fake news (the genre) as wrongful information, which is mostly produced with some form of negative intention to mislead – often in relation to an agenda or political bias. Americans abroad tend to give less specific explanations wherein intent is not necessarily mentioned explicitly. For example, several explained it as just misinformation, "[i]nformation that is presented as factual but is not" or "[i]nformation that is made up, no matter the source". Norwegian comments are more or less a mix of the two other groups with regards to the genre aspect, but also mention other topics and aspects. For example, one Norwegian explains it as "[i]ntentional disinformation, most often in cases many have opinions about. […] Typical topics are the environment, immigration [etc.]"[26]. Egelhofer and Lecheler (2019, p. 102) explain how fake news content is largely influenced by the domestic news agendas, which explains why fake news stories in the US (and UK) tend to focus on political actors, while they in other countries focus more on sensational content about, for example, refugees.

Table 2.2 shows the codes made to both aspects of Egelhofer and Lecheler's (2019) two-dimensional argument from the free-text responses. While a majority described the term more as a genre, a large number expressed fake news first and foremost as some sort of label: Approximately 38% of the comments from Norwegians, 25% of US Americans and 51% of Americans abroad. Americans abroad most evenly view fake news as both a genre (60%) and a label (51%)[27]. Fake news is often related to political events and actors, or others who for whatever reason may want to produce fake news (Gelfert, 2018; Tandoc et al., 2018), and this

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[26] Original quote: «Villet desinformasjon, oftest i saker som mange mener noe om. Presenteres oftest som enten/eller-saker. Typiske temaer er miljø, innvandring.»

[27] Percentages are uneven because several comments mentioned both aspects and were subsequently coded to both categories.

is particularly relevant for the label aspect. According to Tandoc et al. (2018) these reasons are most often ideological or financial. This again fits the notion of fake news as a keyword, as such words are actively contested and frequently heard in political debates (Keywords Project, 2016). A relation between the term fake news and ideological/financial motivations is suggested in all three groups, as 59.7% of Americans abroad, 45.4% of US Americans and 42.8% of Norwegians see it as "a term mainly used by political actors who use it as a weapon to undermine any information that contradicts their own political agenda" (Tables 1.8/1.9). Americans abroad is again the group most evenly divided between seeing fake news mainly as a genre of deliberately created disinformation (64.6%) and as a weaponized political term (59.7%) (the latter of which seems to correspond to Egelhofer and Lecheler's label description). Of course, these two are not mutually exclusive. While fewer Norwegians than Americans agreed that fake news is mainly a weaponized political term, Table 2.3 shows how a clear majority of Norwegians used phrases related to political and/or financial gain to describe the term – a number which increases a lot if one combines *political/financial gain* and *personal gain*, which was the second largest category for Norwegians.

The theme *political gain and propaganda* was also the largest one for US Americans in the free-text answers, and while it was not specifically mentioned as often among Americans abroad, one could argue that the category *biased news, half-truths and click-bait* incorporates both politics (political bias in news media) and financial gains (click-bait). This is in accordance with research findings. Egelhofer and Lecheler (2019) suggest that there has been an unprecedented increase in politicians criticizing the media for being biased since the introduction of the term, and Tandoc et al. (2018) highlight how click-bait and fake news stories can produce a lot of advertising revenue. This theme was more absent from the Norwegian comments, either indicating a lack of suitable vocabulary to express the concept of biased news and click-bait in Norwegian, or it could mean that there is a clear distinction in the perceived meaning of the term between the two countries.

The clear relation to politics makes the use of the term fake news a prime example of what Ludlow (2014) calls *lexical warfare*, wherein political discourse drives forth new and politicized meanings to words to fit political agendas by adding new aspects and connotations. In the case of fake news, one can argue that the aspects added to the term through political discourse are almost exclusively negative. According to Ludlow (2014), lexical warfare is "a device to marginalize individuals within their self-identified political affiliations" (p. 7-8) and it can have far-reaching consequences for social policy. Some (especially Norwegians)

expressed similar concerns in the free-text answers, such as one respondent who claimed that "[t]he term is used to undermine serious media's news coverage and to spread skepticism towards journalists. It is a means of power which, in the worst case, threatens our whole democracy"[28] (more on the societal impact in section 5.3).

5.1.1 *Fake news* versus *falske nyheter*

Political tool was also a common way to describe *fake news* when distinguishing between the use of the English and the Norwegian term in Norway (Table 2.1). The Norwegian questionnaire consistently featured the anglicism rather than the Norwegian term based on the assumption that using the Norwegian term might produce different results (see chapter 3), except for one question asking respondents to identify possible differences between the two terms. Second language English speakers may easily assume that popular anglicisms in their native language mean the same as in English, but like Ludlow (2014) asserts, the meaning of words is highly context-dependent and may have different layers of meaning depending on the cultural setting in which it is used. Although only 18% reported that there is a difference between *falske nyheter* and *fake news*, the number of clarifying comments indicate that this is something many feel strongly about. There may also be other reasons for not reporting a difference. The fact that the rest of the survey only focuses on the anglicism might lead people to think a certain way, or respondents might want to simply skip free-text alternatives. Varying English language competence is another issue. Even though Norwegians generally have a high proficiency level in English, people's conceptual and cultural understanding may not be sufficient to distinguish between two supposedly equivalent terms (cf. Busby, 2020).

The results from the free-text answers in Table 2.1 are especially interesting, because they indicate a fairly clear distinction between use of the anglicism and its Norwegian equivalent. As seen in the Norwegian Wikipedia article ("Falske nyheter", 2021) and the example articles from the newspapers VG and Aftenposten (Dahl, 2020; Egeberg & Stavrum, 2017), both terms are used somewhat similarly, and sometimes even as synonyms in the same texts. This shows the influence (Anglo-)American culture and language has on the Norwegian language (cf. Weston, 2017). Busby (2020) claims that this influence can cause confusion and a frequent use of calques from English among Norwegian speakers. *Falske nyheter* seems to be just this – a more or less directly translated term – but its origin is not entirely clear, since encyclopedias like SNL claim that *falske nyheter* has a long history and cannot be connected to any distinct

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[28] Original quote: «Begrepet blir brukt for å undergrave seriøse mediers nyhetsformidling og spre skepsis til journalister. Det er et maktmiddel som i verste fall truer hele vårt demokrati.»

ideologies or technologies (Orgeret & Dvergsdal, 2020). Some of the encyclopedias claimed that the English term had existed for a long time, even if the OED said that this collocation was hard to find in older archives ("Fake", n.d.). However, the fact that none of the encyclopedias discussed featured definitions of either term before 2017, suggests that the Norwegian term (or at least its current meaning) is rather new. Aixelá (1996) explains how translations of culture specific items continuously require less manipulation to seem acceptable in the new language – which would explain why Norwegians feel that both the anglicism *fake news* and the Norwegian *falske nyheter* are acceptable to use. Still, this study shows that opinions are divided with regards to whether the Norwegian term and the anglicism mean the same.

The Norwegian Wikipedia article seemed to indicate a difference between the English and Norwegian term (although not explicitly stated) ("falske nyheter", 2021), which is in accordance with those who agree that there is a contrast (see Table 2.1). *Falske nyheter* was explained as any news which cannot be explained by facts, while the English term was used in relation to an intentional spread of factually wrong news (most often with some political affiliation) ("falske nyheter", 2021). There seems to be a similar tendency in Norwegians' free-text answers. Where *fake news* was largely explained as something decidedly intentional, politically motivated (often in relation to Donald Trump) and often as a derogatory label rather than a genre, *falske nyheter* almost exclusively adhered to a separate genre precisely made up of news which are incorrect (or false). Several explained how they felt that the Norwegian term thus came with less stigma and underlying connotations, and intentionality was not commonly mentioned to explain the latter. These results indicate that *falske nyheter* might not be a conceptually equivalent translation of the English term, perhaps adhering more to *false news,* rather than *fake news*. One of the free-text answers from the open question about *fake news* also inadvertently refers to this: "[It is both] *falske nyheter* AND a term used when one disagrees with others (e.g. Donald trump about his opposition)[29]. Here, the respondent seems to refer to the genre as *falske nyheter* and to the label used to show disagreement with others as *fake news*. Consequently, the results in this study indicate that Egelhofer and Lecheler's (2019) call for treating fake news as a two-dimensional phenomenon is well-founded and likely a good basis to attempt a universal definition of the term, should this be a goal – even though one might also argue for the existence of even more dimensions. The fact that *falske nyheter* sometimes

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[29] Original quote: «Falske nyheter OG et begrep som brukes når noen er uenig med andre (feks Donald Trump om sine motstandere)»

functions more as a term for the genre aspect could mean that Norwegians have a more distinct understanding of the two-dimensionality of the term.

Generally, it seems that intent is a frequent element in scholarly definitions of fake news (Zellers et al., 2019; Gelfert, 2018; McGonagle, 2017; Tandoc et al., 2018), which should mean that inadvertent sharing of false news (i.e. misinformation) is not fake news. However, the topic of misinformation was not absent from this study. With regards to the statement presenting fake news as "any misinformation which is being spread", 45.4% of US Americans, 52.9% of Americans abroad and only 28.1% of Norwegians agreed. This alone suggests that intent is a stronger element in the general Norwegian perception of the term. Still, the free-text answers seem to contradict these results. While unintentional misinformation was rarely mentioned in US Americans' free-text answers, it was more present in those of Americans abroad and alluded to fairly often by Norwegians (Table 2.3), which suggests that there is a cultural difference in the perception of the term. This could also relate to the possible distinction between *fake news* and *falske nyheter*, as people have presented *falske nyheter* as misinformation and *fake news* as something more related to a deliberate act. Further on, the questionnaire featured the English term rather than the Norwegian one, which could attribute to confusion among Norwegians regarding the exact definition of the anglicism and as to whether the question referred to the English or Norwegian meaning of the phrase. This would explain why the percentages related to concise statements about *fake news* are decidedly more focused on intent, while the free-text answers are more divided.

5.1.2 Trumpism

The free-text responses from Norwegians regarding the difference between the English and the Norwegian term often mentioned a relation between the US and the term *fake news* (see Table 2.1). This can be related to the respondents' trust in media: Approximately 35% of Norwegians believed that news from the US had "the most 'fake news'" – a high number when compared to the 21% who said the same about foreign news in general (see Table 1.2). Almost all encyclopedic definitions mentioned either Donald Trump or the 2016 presidential campaign as some sort of turning point, or even as the beginning, of fake news (Macquarie Dictionary, 2021; "Fake", n.d.; "Fake news", 2021; "Falske nyheter", 2021; Orgeret & Dvergsdal, 2020). The OED also defined fake news specifically as "originally *U.S.* news that conveys or incorporates false […] information" ("Fake", n.d.), effectively coining the term an American phenomenon – at least in origin.

There seems to be a clear correlation between the term fake news and political actors and one is hard pressed to find research on fake news which does not mention Donald Trump. Norwegians almost unanimously agree that Donald Trump creates fake news (Figure C1). The same goes for liberal Americans, but a large number of conservatives in the US disagrees with this (Table 1.10). This was unsurprising, since fake news is a highly contested term which appears to be perceived differently by people with opposing political views in the US (see Table 1.6 about whether American news media spread fake news), much like other cultural keywords used in lexical warfare (cf. Keywords Project, 2016; Ludlow, 2014). This relates to the discussion in chapter 5.1, where a large number of people agreed that the term is mainly a weaponized political term, and Macquarie Dictionary's (2021) explanation of fake news as a term one uses when information (whether factual or not) does not fit one's own view.

While the perception that Trump creates *fake news* does not necessarily mean that he is perceived to have created the phenomenon, a largely equal majority in all three demographics (78.5% of US Americans, 76.6% of Americans abroad and 78.6% of Norwegians) did claim to have seen an increase in the use of term during the last presidential campaign and a substantial amount did attribute the term to him in the free-text answers (Table 2.3). The timing of the surveys is relevant to mention here as they were distributed in the aftermath of the 2020 US presidential election, during the chaotic transition from Trump to the new democratic president Joe Biden and the subsequent attack on the United States Capitol. This likely made the topic of the surveys even more controversial and could have swayed public opinion regarding Trump-related questions. However, only 25.5% of Norwegians, 30.8% of US Americans and 37.8% of Americans abroad believed fake news to be "a term which is mainly used by Donald Trump and his followers" (Tables 1.8 and 1.9). This means that while a very large number of the public think that Trump creates fake news, fewer people believe that the phenomenon is only connected to him. Among Norwegians in particular there is a clear distinction between these two questions: 91% believe Trump creates *fake news*, while only 25.5% believe the term is mainly used by Trump and his followers. Americans abroad makes an even stronger connection to Trump, which may be related to the high number of liberal Americans in this group (Figure B2) (see chapter 5.2). Almost no conservatives agreed with the latter statement, while almost 60% of liberals did (Table 1.11). While perhaps unsurprising, this clearly demonstrates how political orientation impacts people's perception of the relation between Donald Trump and fake news. Norwegians, as the group with the most distance to American politics, seem to have a wider understanding of fake news aspects, with a less strong link to the former US president.

5.2 Fake news, media trust and national culture

Research on fake news as a form of misleading information tend not to focus on legitimate news media as a source of fake news; instead, most of the attention is on social media and fabricated websites which are made to look like real news (Grinberg et al., 2019). The results from the surveys indicate that Norwegians largely agree that legitimate news media[30] are not frequent distributors of fake news and that Norwegians are generally very trusting of their national news media, with only 7.6% concluding that Norwegian news media often spread fake news (even if 51.8% did say that they were a bit uncertain – see Table 1.7). This is in accordance with the findings of Kalogeropoulos et al. (2019) who found that use of mainstream news sources is related to higher levels of trust in news and that Norway generally does exhibit high levels of trust.

Social media and alternative or independent media were deemed the most common sources by Norwegians, but the latter was not highlighted by Americans (Table 1.2). What Norwegians likely perceive to be independent/alternative media are often controversial news websites (e.g. *Resett*) driven by campaign journalism with specific political and often oppositional points of view, rarely seen in mainstream media (Brandtzæg, 2018). These websites are often looked upon with great skepticism by Norwegians but are at the same time increasingly setting the agendas in public debates with their articles frequently seen among the top 10 most shared on social media (Brandtzæg, 2018). Whether these can be called "fabricated websites" is debatable, but they could lack "editorial norms and processes for ensuring accuracy and credibility" (Lazer et al., 2018), and Tsfati and Ariely (2014) have claimed that such non-mainstream sources, especially those spread through the internet, generally correlate with lower levels on trust in news media.

The link between fake news and social media is less clear than what is suggested in previous research, which sees fake news as something directly related to social media (e.g. Egelhofer & Lecheler, 2019; Grinberg et al., 2019; Tandoc et al., 2018). While approximately 90% of all respondents agreed that social media is the main platform for fake news, social media is not one of the most frequently mentioned elements in the open questions and several other set definitions in the surveys received significantly higher ratings. In this light, it may be surprising that only approximately 26% of Americans agreed that fake news "is mainly a social media phenomenon" – which was one of the options to define fake news in the surveys (see

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[30] Mainstream media or state-owned media.

Appendices D and E). A higher, but still inconclusive 46% of Norwegians agreed with the same question. This contrast either suggests that views of social media platforms (or at least the relation between social media and fake news) differ in the two cultures, and that Americans may have greater trust in social media over other media outlets than Norwegians. It could also be related to different ranges in the perception of the term in the two groups. Social media was sporadically mentioned in all three groups' free-text answers, but not enough to be deemed one of the most common themes.

The trust in traditional news media does not appear to be as strong among Americans as it is among Norwegians, according to the present study. Approximately 41% of US Americans answered that mainstream media have the most fake news – a possible explanation for the country's low ranking with regards to trust in news media in Kalogeropoulos et al. (2019). While a clear majority of Americans also find social media to be the most common perpetrator for fake news, independent or alternative media are not seen as the most common distributors, especially among US Americans (only 16.2%). This can be related to Americans' general distrust of the larger news media companies, which likely makes independent media not owned by large corporations more appealing. Like Brandtzæg (2018) deducts, once the trust in traditional news media fails, it might be unsurprising that some groups increasingly seek out alternative sources for news. One can also draw parallels to people's political orientation here, since a stunning 84.7% of conservatives and 60.4% of those who see themselves as more neutral (both demographics included) believe that American news media often spread fake news (Table 1.6). The fact that only 35.8% of liberals answered yes to the same question shows that conservatives are much less trusting of American news media in general. This could relate to a general belief that American news media have a political bias toward liberal Democrats (see Lee, 2010 & Hassel et al., 2019). It certainly fits the claim that political leaning and ideology influence people's trust in news media (Lee, 2010). Still, studying fake news without considering legitimate news media as a possible source may lead to a definition of the term which does not fit the perception of a very large population of the American society.

A clear difference in the link between political orientation and perceptions of fake news in the US and Norway is shown in Table1.6/1.7. There is a great contrast between the two groups regarding views on national media, with very low numbers overall and almost no contrast between political affiliations in the Norwegian survey. A very low percentage in all political categories believed Norwegian news media to be spreading fake news and approximately 50% in all categories answered "perhaps, but not so much". This can be related to Norwegians'

generally low trust in news media with clear political affiliations (left-leaning or right-leaning media), and the relatively high trust in nation-wide and state-owned news channels (see Table 1.5). Norwegians generally do not seem to believe that their national news media have very clear political affiliations or that they spread fake news. This could also support the argument that Norwegians draw parallels between political affiliations/political gain and fake news.

The results of this study seem to show that national culture does indeed have a large impact on which news media people find trustworthy, as Doney et al. (1998) and Hallikainen and Laukkanen (2018) have argued. Figure A2 shows the distribution of American respondents according to political orientation. While there is a majority of liberals in both demographics, there is a clear tendency towards the liberal side among Americans abroad, perhaps indicating that this diaspora is generally comprised of more liberals or that Americans become more liberal as a result of emigrating. According to Croucher (2012), there is a current trend of Americans emigrating for political and cultural reasons. If the assumption is that most Americans abroad in this study reside in Norway – a country where even the conservative side is considered liberal by some people (Dragnes, 2013) – a higher concentration of liberals in this group makes sense. Several of the results in this study indirectly indicate that Americans in Norway may have adopted local attitudes, such as the recorded perceptions on which news media are trustworthy where Americans abroad displayed a higher trust than US Americans in nation-wide news (65.5% against 46.2%), state-owned news (21% against 5.4%) and official channels (44.5% against 26.2%) – all of which were deemed very trustworthy by Norwegians (Tables 1.4 and 1.5). This clearly relates to Hallikainen and Laukkanen's (2018) argument about how changes in one's social environment impacts trust. Table 1.4 also shows that Americans abroad find foreign news media much more reliable than US Americans (42.9% against 28.5%), which one could interpret to mean the news media of the country where they currently reside. Norwegians did not distinguish foreign news as particularly trustworthy, which suggests that they find Norwegian news media more reliable. Additionally, although the contrast is small, Americans abroad are less trusting of alternative/independent media than US Americans; a category only 2.4% of Norwegians found trustworthy and which has generally been associated with lower levels of trust in news media in general, according to Tsfati and Ariely (2014).

Generally, it seems that the perception of fake news among Americans abroad is closer to the general Norwegian perception than that of US Americans, even if the two American groups still produced the most similar responses. The quantitative results often show themselves as linear; from Norwegians to Americans abroad to US Americans. For example, when presented with

the statement that fake news is "deliberate disinformation spread by mainstream media", 12.3% of Norwegians, 32.8% of Americans abroad and 46.2% of US Americans agreed with this (Tables 1.8 and 1.9). The reverse also happened: 73.5% of Norwegians, 65.5% of Americans abroad and 46.2% of US Americans found nation-wide news channels the most trustworthy (Tables 1.4 and 1.5).

An interesting finding is that Americans moving away from the US exhibit more trust in state-owned news – a factor which was related to higher levels of trust in democratic societies in Tsfati & Ariely's (2014) study. With more research on the topic, one might be able to see whether this can also relate to the generally higher level of trust in news media exhibited by Americans abroad in this survey, and whether this higher level of trust in media correlates to more trust in institutions in general. The strikingly similar results between Norwegians and Americans abroad shown in Figures E1-E3, regarding whether one should be more skeptical of journalists today because of fake news, do suggest that these two groups have similar ideas about the notion of news media as an institution, in contrast to US Americans' expressed skepticism. The varying percentage from the question about trust and fake news in official channels could suggest that Americans moving to Norway also become more trusting of official/public information, and subsequently other public institutions. In accordance with Levi and Stoker, (2000, as referenced in Kalogeropoulos et al., 2019), trust in such institutions is very important for democracy. Further research on fake news and national trust in institutions could therefore provide interesting results.

5.3 Impact of the term

Gelfert (2018) claims that the term fake news has become significant primarily as a result of the effects it has had in the real-world. As seen in Tables 1.12 and 1.13, many people (almost 85% of Norwegians and 70% of US Americans) feel that the use of the term fake news in itself makes it harder to know what to trust. This suggests that the introduction of the term has had a very crucial effect on society by negatively affecting people's ability to rely on information they are provided with in their daily lives. It is interesting that the number of Americans abroad who answered yes to the same question was much lower (only 55%), which begs the question of whether this group feels greater trust in the information in their new country of residence, or whether they simply rely on a larger and more diverse collection of news sources. Perhaps they feel that they can more safely rely on their own critical sense and perspective. On the other hand, Americans abroad was the group which was most firmly convinced that the term fake news (here emphasizing the term rather than the genre) has a general negative effect on both

society and democracy – even though all three groups showed high percentages in these questions.

These findings on the negative effect of the term are especially interesting since these surveys were distributed not long after the 2020 US presidential election, which could indicate that people have seen a negative correlation between the use of the term fake news and recent democratic processes. Although the result of the election had just been published at the time the surveys were distributed, there was unrest and uncertainty about the change to a new administration (e.g. various riots and the storming of the Capitol on January 6th 2021). Further analyses of the effect of fake news on democratic elections would be very useful, since a very large portion of all three demographics answered that they had experienced an increase in the use of the term during the recent presidential campaign and election (Table 1.12/1.13).

Since most scholars and the larger dictionaries seem to agree that the term fake news rose to prominence during the 2016 presidential election campaign (Egelhofer & Lecheler, 2019; Gelfert, 2018; Grinberg et al., 2019; Kalogeropoulos et al., 2019; Tandoc et al., 2018), it is not unlikely that people experienced an increase during the 2020 election (which also featured Donald Trump). However, a significant share in all three groups also saw an increase in the use of the term after COVID-19, which also somewhat coincided with the campaign period. Interestingly, US Americans was the group which experienced this the most, which indicates that the term fake news is used more often in relation to the pandemic in the US than in Norway and that the treatment of the COVID-19 situation might be perceived as more politicized in the US. This seems to also relate to Ludlow's (2014) assertion that the meaning of words, and cultural keywords such as fake news (cf. Keywords Project, 2016), is connected to the cultural context in which it is used. This term might not be as conceptually relevant to discuss the pandemic situation in Norway, since this study has clearly shown Norwegians' tendency to relate *fake news* to a negative label used mainly by politicians (and more often those in the US or outside of Norway) rather than a genre of 'false news' (*falske nyheter*).

6. Conclusion

The term fake news, or at least its current meaning(s), is a relatively recent and contentious expression. Encyclopedic definitions vary greatly, much like research literature on the topic. It is thus no wonder that public perceptions are divided as well. While many seem to believe that they have a clear understanding of the term fake news, this study shows that people with different cultural and linguistic backgrounds perceive the term differently, and that one needs to be wary of the meaning of words, in this case anglicisms, that are used across different cultures and languages. The results of this study indicate that fake news is a multi-dimensional term which may encompass several aspects. Depending on the context, the term may be used in reference to a genre of disinformation or unintentional misinformation. However, many (especially Americans abroad) tend to mainly see the term as a (politically charged) label used to either delegitimize institutions or other people, or in reference to information which does not fit one's own agenda. This study also suggests that there is a relatively high level or awareness of the various dimensions of the phenomenon fake news among Norwegians. This became apparent through people's attempts at defining the anglicism and the corresponding Norwegian phrase, where *fake news* was often described as a derogatory, politicized term (more often a label than a genre), while the term *falske nyheter* was referred to as a more neutral expression, meaning inaccurate (or false) news.

Norwegians generally do not equate the term fake news to (at least their own) national news media, while US Americans are more likely to do so. This is likely related to how these different cultures have very differing opinions about the trustworthiness of various media sources. While all groups agree that social media is the main platform for fake news (Norwegians also highlight independent news), people (especially Americans) generally do not describe fake news as mainly a social media phenomenon. This could indicate a higher trust in social media, or a lower trust in other news media among Americans. Trust in the larger media companies appears to be largely related to political orientation among Americans (84.7% of conservatives versus 35.8% of liberals believe American news media spread fake news), but not among Norwegians. Political orientation is also more influential to Americans' perception of fake news than that of Norwegians, especially with regards to the relation between the term and Donald Trump, where liberals are more likely to relate these two. This study presents perceptions of fake news as somewhat linear, since Americans abroad often place themselves somewhere in between the two other groups, which demonstrates the influence culture and linguistic backgrounds have on perceptions of the term and trust in media. The contexts in which the term is used also seem to

differ in the two countries, as fake news was perceived to appear more often in relation to political actors and the pandemic situation in the US than in Norway/abroad.

Fake news is a complex matter of global and transnational importance which deserves to be studied, and there is a need for monitoring of the uses and effects of the phrase. As an example of a cultural keyword, the research on fake news also shows the importance of looking at cultural aspects when studying the meaning of words. Concise answers to what the term means have proved to be hard to find, which furthers the arguments that fake news is a cultural keyword which changes meaning from context to context. The data for this study proved to be very comprehensive, and time and space constrictions did not allow for all the material to be analyzed, which means that there are likely more interesting findings to be made in this data collection. The size of the samples also call for more advanced statistical analyses which were beyond the scope of this project. Further studies on the topic should also cover areas not covered by this thesis. For example, it is interesting that while political orientation appears to be highly influential to people's perception of fake news, age was not particularly decisive in any of the frequency tests run in this study, which led to age not being discussed. One reason for this could be that the questionnaires did not reach a large number of young people, especially in the American demographics. With further research on the relation between age and perceptions of fake news one might see different results. Future studies could also include gender and educational background, as these variables may also influence perceptions. In addition, there are some uncertainties with this study, such as the proposed American diaspora in Norway (which could have been more precisely expressed in the questionnaires). The use of quotation marks around the term fake news in the Norwegian questionnaire could also have led respondents in a certain direction or caused confusion.

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Appendix A: Relevance for teaching profession

The topic of this master thesis is highly relevant for the teaching profession in general and the ESL (English as a second language) classroom. As a result of this research I have gained more insight into cultural and linguistic differences, as well as more specific knowledge about a highly current issue. Fake news is, as discussed in the thesis, an English term and a global phenomenon which is perceived to have a large, and arguably predominantly negative, impact on both society and democracy – especially in relation to people's ability to trust information they are provided with in their daily lives. In a time when students can get any information through any forum at any time, how can they know whether the information they are exposed to is real if they do not have a critical understanding of *fake news*? Like one respondent from the Norwegian survey deducts: "[…]Our children are being exposed to wrong and/or false information every day, and they do not know enough about sources and how to be critical of them"[31]. The distinction between fake news and the truth is rarely black and white, which makes it imperative that students learn how to spot nuances in what they see and read and realize that there might be several sides to one story. Understanding the nature of *fake news* could therefore be crucial to how young minds understand the world and their general trust in news media. For that reason, students are now expected to actively practice their critical thinking at school.

Writing this thesis has given me a deeper insight into the world of fake news which I can use when teaching about the subject (which is now a natural topic in the ESL classroom), but also the notion of cultural keywords and the dynamic nature of language. The term *fake news* is now part of everyday vocabulary, which means that teachers as well as students are continuously exposed to this complex phrase, without being aware that its meaning is highly context-dependent, and may thus mean something different to the people with whom one surround themselves. For example, American politicians may use the term for very different purposes than, say, Norwegian reporters, a family member, or a next-door neighbor. One main finding in this thesis was that there may be a clear distinction to be made between the anglicism and the supposed Norwegian equivalent, even if a clear majority of Norwegians seem to believe that these two phrases mean exactly the same. This could be a source of great confusion for people in general and for students trying to learn English as a second language and juggling between English and anglicisms in their native tongue. This could be a great way to make students aware of subtle, conceptual and cultural differences between their mother tongue and their second language.

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[31] Original quote: «[…]Våre barn blir hver dag eksponert for feil og/eller falsk informasjon, og vet ikke nok om kilder og kildekritikk.»

Appendix B: Results of American survey

Frequency Tables (w/o excluded data) (15 pages).

Citizenship and residency

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	I am currently a US citizen living in the US.	130	52,2	52,2	52,2
	I am currenctly a US citizen living elsewhere.	119	47,8	47,8	100,0
	Total	249	100,0	100,0	

Age

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	18-26 y/o.	11	4,4	4,4	4,4
	27-40 y/o.	100	40,2	40,2	44,6
	41-55 y/o.	73	29,3	29,3	73,9
	56 y/o or older.	65	26,1	26,1	100,0
	Total	249	100,0	100,0	

Political orientation

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	I see myself as more conservative.	59	23,7	23,7	23,7
	I see myself as more liberal.	134	53,8	53,8	77,5
	I see myself as more neutral.	48	19,3	19,3	96,8
	I am not particularly interested in politics.	8	3,2	3,2	100,0
	Total	249	100,0	100,0	

Media habits - social media

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	N/A	18	7,2	7,3	7,3
	Social media (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram etc.)	228	91,6	92,7	100,0
	Total	246	98,8	100,0	
Missing	System	3	1,2		
Total		249	100,0		

Media habits - various forums

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	N/A	206	82,7	83,1	83,1
	Social media (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram etc.)	42	16,9	16,9	100,0
	Total	248	99,6	100,0	
Missing	System	1	,4		
Total		249	100,0		

Media habits - nation-wide news channels

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	N/A	48	19,3	19,3	19,3
	Social media (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram etc.)	201	80,7	80,7	100,0
	Total	249	100,0	100,0	

Media habits - local news

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	N/A	90	36,1	36,1	36,1
	Social media (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram etc.)	159	63,9	63,9	100,0
	Total	249	100,0	100,0	

Media habits - independent media

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	N/A	167	67,1	67,1	67,1
	Social media (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram etc.)	82	32,9	32,9	100,0
	Total	249	100,0	100,0	

Media habits - liberal media

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	N/A	161	64,7	64,7	64,7
	Social media (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram etc.)	88	35,3	35,3	100,0
	Total	249	100,0	100,0	

Media habits -conservative media

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	N/A	190	76,3	76,3	76,3
	Social media (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram etc.)	59	23,7	23,7	100,0
	Total	249	100,0	100,0	

Media habits - state-owned news media

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	N/A	191	76,7	76,7	76,7
	Social media (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram etc.)	58	23,3	23,3	100,0
	Total	249	100,0	100,0	

Media habits - offical channels

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	N/A	152	61,0	61,0	61,0
	Social media (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram etc.)	97	39,0	39,0	100,0
	Total	249	100,0	100,0	

Media habits - foreign news media

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	N/A	113	45,4	45,4	45,4
	Social media (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram etc.)	136	54,6	54,6	100,0
	Total	249	100,0	100,0	

Media habits - I prefer not to answer

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	N/A	249	100,0	100,0	100,0

Media trust - social media

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	N/A	245	98,4	98,4	98,4
	Social media (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram etc.)	4	1,6	1,6	100,0
	Total	249	100,0	100,0	

Media trust - various forums

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	N/A	244	98,0	98,0	98,0
	Social media (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram etc.)	5	2,0	2,0	100,0
	Total	249	100,0	100,0	

Media trust - nation-wide news channels

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	N/A	111	44,6	44,6	44,6
	Social media (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram etc.)	138	55,4	55,4	100,0
	Total	249	100,0	100,0	

Media trust - local news

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	N/A	174	69,9	69,9	69,9
	Social media (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram etc.)	75	30,1	30,1	100,0
	Total	249	100,0	100,0	

Media trust - independent media

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	N/A	187	75,1	75,1	75,1
	Social media (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram etc.)	62	24,9	24,9	100,0
	Total	249	100,0	100,0	

Media trust - liberal media

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	N/A	222	89,2	89,2	89,2
	Social media (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram etc.)	27	10,8	10,8	100,0
	Total	249	100,0	100,0	

Media trust - conservative media

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	N/A	226	90,8	90,8	90,8
	Social media (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram etc.)	23	9,2	9,2	100,0
	Total	249	100,0	100,0	

Media trust - state-owned news media

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	N/A	217	87,1	87,1	87,1
	Social media (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram etc.)	32	12,9	12,9	100,0
	Total	249	100,0	100,0	

Media trust - offical channels

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	N/A	162	65,1	65,1	65,1
	Social media (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram etc.)	87	34,9	34,9	100,0
	Total	249	100,0	100,0	

Media trust - foreign news media

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	N/A	161	64,7	64,7	64,7
	Social media (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram etc.)	88	35,3	35,3	100,0
	Total	249	100,0	100,0	

Media trust - I prefer not to answer

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	N/A	238	95,6	95,6	95,6
	Social media (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram etc.)	11	4,4	4,4	100,0
	Total	249	100,0	100,0	

Exposure

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	I prefer not to answer.	1	,4	,4	,4
	Never.	1	,4	,4	,8
	Rarely.	24	9,6	9,6	10,4
	Once a week or more.	62	24,9	24,9	35,3
	Every day.	108	43,4	43,4	78,7
	Several times a day.	53	21,3	21,3	100,0
	Total	249	100,0	100,0	

Frequency of fake news - social media

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	N/A	22	8,8	8,8	8,8
	Social media platforms (Facebook, Twitter, etc.)	227	91,2	91,2	100,0
	Total	249	100,0	100,0	

Frequency of fake news - various forums

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	N/A	137	55,0	55,0	55,0
	Forum-based social media (Reddit, 4chan etc.)	112	45,0	45,0	100,0
	Total	249	100,0	100,0	

Frequency of fake news - independent media

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	N/A	194	77,9	77,9	77,9
	Independent/alternative media.	55	22,1	22,1	100,0
	Total	249	100,0	100,0	

Frequency of fake news - state-owned news media

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	N/A	215	86,3	86,3	86,3
	State-owned news media.	34	13,7	13,7	100,0
	Total	249	100,0	100,0	

Frequency of fake news - native advertising

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	N/A	169	67,9	67,9	67,9
	Native advertising (i.e. sponsored news articles)	80	32,1	32,1	100,0
	Total	249	100,0	100,0	

Frequency of fake news - liberal media

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	N/A	163	65,5	65,5	65,5
	Liberal news media.	86	34,5	34,5	100,0
	Total	249	100,0	100,0	

Frequency of fake news - conservative media

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	N/A	106	42,6	42,6	42,6
	Conservative news media.	143	57,4	57,4	100,0
	Total	249	100,0	100,0	

Frequency of fake news - live

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	N/A	165	66,3	66,3	66,3
	Live, from family, friends or acquaintances.	84	33,7	33,7	100,0
	Total	249	100,0	100,0	

Frequency of fake news - mainstream media

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	N/A	175	70,3	70,3	70,3
	Mainstream news media.	74	29,7	29,7	100,0
	Total	249	100,0	100,0	

Frequency of fake news - government info

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	N/A	218	87,6	87,6	87,6
	Information from the government.	31	12,4	12,4	100,0
	Total	249	100,0	100,0	

Frequency of fake news - foreign sources

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	N/A	217	87,1	87,1	87,1
	Sources from other countries, either news or political actors.	32	12,9	12,9	100,0
	Total	249	100,0	100,0	

Frequency of fake news - none of the above

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	N/A	247	99,2	99,2	99,2
	None of the above.	2	,8	,8	100,0
	Total	249	100,0	100,0	

Fake news definition

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	I prefer not to answer.	4	1,6	1,6	1,6
	It is a phenomenon that is primarily found in the US, but it may have spread to other places.	56	22,5	22,5	24,1
	It is a universal phenomenon which is just as relevant outside the US.	189	75,9	75,9	100,0
	Total	249	100,0	100,0	

A label used to discredit others.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	N/A	146	58,6	58,6	58,6
	A label which anyone could use to discredit sources of informatio that one does not agree with.	103	41,4	41,4	100,0
	Total	249	100,0	100,0	

A term used as a political weapon.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	N/A	119	47,8	47,8	47,8
	A term mainly used by political actors who use it as a political weapon weapon	130	52,2	52,2	100,0
	Total	249	100,0	100,0	

Genre

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	N/A	87	34,9	34,9	34,9
	A genre which consists of deliberately created disinformation which is made to look like real news.	162	65,1	65,1	100,0
	Total	249	100,0	100,0	

Fabricated news

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	N/A	158	63,5	63,5	63,5
	Fabricated news from short-lived websites.	91	36,5	36,5	100,0
	Total	249	100,0	100,0	

Deliberate disinformation by independent media

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	N/A	126	50,6	50,6	50,6
	Deliberate disinformation created by partisan independent media.	123	49,4	49,4	100,0
	Total	249	100,0	100,0	

Deliberate disinformation by mainstream media

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	N/A	150	60,2	60,2	60,2
	Deliberate disinformation spread by the mainstream media.	99	39,8	39,8	100,0
	Total	249	100,0	100,0	

Any misinformation which is being spread

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	N/A	127	51,0	51,0	51,0
	Any misinformation which is being spread, whether it is deliberate or not.	122	49,0	49,0	100,0
	Total	249	100,0	100,0	

A term mainly used by Donald Trump and followers

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	N/A	164	65,9	65,9	65,9
	A term which is mainly used by Donald Trump and his followers.	85	34,1	34,1	100,0
	Total	249	100,0	100,0	

A wide and general term

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	N/A	174	69,9	69,9	69,9
	A wide and general term used for any and all of these things.	75	30,1	30,1	100,0
	Total	249	100,0	100,0	

None of the above

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	N/A	249	100,0	100,0	100,0

One should be more skeptical of journalists today because of the frequency of 'fake news'.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	I neither agree nor disagree.	46	18,5	18,5	18,5
	Agree.	128	51,4	51,4	69,9
	Disagree.	75	30,1	30,1	100,0
	Total	249	100,0	100,0	

Fake news is mainly a political term used for personal political gain.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	I neither agree nor disagree.	57	22,9	22,9	22,9
	Agree.	117	47,0	47,0	69,9
	Disagree.	75	30,1	30,1	100,0
	Total	249	100,0	100,0	

The term is mostly used by conservatives or Republicans.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	I neither agree nor disagree.	53	21,3	21,3	21,3
	Agree.	140	56,2	56,2	77,5
	Disagree.	56	22,5	22,5	100,0
	Total	249	100,0	100,0	

The term is mostly used by liberals or Democrats.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Blank	5	2,0	2,0	2,0
	I neither agree nor disagree.	68	27,3	27,3	29,3
	Agree.	5	2,0	2,0	31,3
	Disagree.	171	68,7	68,7	100,0
	Total	249	100,0	100,0	

The term is used by both sides of the political spectrum.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Blank	3	1,2	1,2	1,2
	I neither agree nor disagree.	38	15,3	15,3	16,5
	Agree.	121	48,6	48,6	65,1
	Disagree.	87	34,9	34,9	100,0
	Total	249	100,0	100,0	

Fake news is mainly a social media phenomenon.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Blank	1	,4	,4	,4
	I neither agree nor disagree.	47	18,9	18,9	19,3
	Agree.	64	25,7	25,7	45,0
	Disagree.	137	55,0	55,0	100,0
	Total	249	100,0	100,0	

Fake news is misleading information spread by hostile/enemy nations or governments.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Blank	1	,4	,4	,4
	I neither agree nor disagree.	76	30,5	30,5	30,9
	Agree.	117	47,0	47,0	77,9
	Disagree.	55	22,1	22,1	100,0
	Total	249	100,0	100,0	

Fake news is mainly an American phenomenon.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Blank	1	,4	,4	,4
	I neither agree nor disagree.	47	18,9	18,9	19,3
	Agree.	48	19,3	19,3	38,6
	Disagree.	153	61,4	61,4	100,0
	Total	249	100,0	100,0	

Fake news is a new concept.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Blank	1	,4	,4	,4
	I neither agree nor disagree.	33	13,3	13,3	13,7
	Agree.	51	20,5	20,5	34,1
	Disagree.	164	65,9	65,9	100,0
	Total	249	100,0	100,0	

Fake news has always existed, but the term is more recent.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	I neither agree nor disagree.	15	6,0	6,0	6,0
	Agree.	211	84,7	84,7	90,8
	Disagree.	23	9,2	9,2	100,0
	Total	249	100,0	100,0	

Donald Trump is unfairly accused of spreading 'fake news'.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Blank	3	1,2	1,2	1,2
	I neither agree nor disagree.	22	8,8	8,8	10,0
	Agree.	37	14,9	14,9	24,9
	Disagree.	187	75,1	75,1	100,0
	Total	249	100,0	100,0	

Donald Trump enlightens society about what 'fake news' is and how to find it.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Blank	2	,8	,8	,8
	I neither agree nor disagree.	35	14,1	14,1	14,9
	Agree.	39	15,7	15,7	30,5
	Disagree.	173	69,5	69,5	100,0
	Total	249	100,0	100,0	

Donald Trump creates 'fake news'.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	0	1	,4	,4	,4
	1	27	10,8	10,8	11,2
	2	177	71,1	71,1	82,3
	3	44	17,7	17,7	100,0
	Total	249	100,0	100,0	

Problems distinguishing between fake and real news

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Sometimes.	106	42,6	42,6	42,6
	Often.	117	47,0	47,0	89,6
	I never trust news agencies.	26	10,4	10,4	100,0
	Total	249	100,0	100,0	

Do American news media spread fake news?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Blanks	1	,4	,4	,4
	Yes.	133	53,4	53,4	53,8
	Perhaps, but not so much.	82	32,9	32,9	86,7
	No.	24	9,6	9,6	96,4
	No opinion.	9	3,6	3,6	100,0
	Total	249	100,0	100,0	

Increase in the term fake news post COVID-19?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes.	99	39,8	39,8	39,8
	Perhaps, but not so much.	65	26,1	26,1	65,9
	No.	80	32,1	32,1	98,0
	No opinion.	5	2,0	2,0	100,0
	Total	249	100,0	100,0	

Increase in the term fake news during presidential campaign?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Blanks	1	,4	,4	,4
	Yes.	180	72,3	72,3	72,7
	Perhaps, but not so much.	33	13,3	13,3	85,9
	No.	30	12,0	12,0	98,0
	No opinion.	5	2,0	2,0	100,0
	Total	249	100,0	100,0	

Does the term have a negative impact on society?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes.	184	73,9	73,9	73,9
	Perhaps, but not so much.	23	9,2	9,2	83,1
	No.	34	13,7	13,7	96,8
	No opinion.	8	3,2	3,2	100,0
	Total	249	100,0	100,0	

Does the term have a negative impact on democracy?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes.	176	70,7	70,7	70,7
	Perhaps, but not so much.	20	8,0	8,0	78,7
	No.	42	16,9	16,9	95,6
	No opinion.	11	4,4	4,4	100,0
	Total	249	100,0	100,0	

Does the term make trust more difficult?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes.	146	58,6	58,6	58,6
	Perhaps, but not so much.	44	17,7	17,7	76,3
	No.	55	22,1	22,1	98,4
	No opinion.	4	1,6	1,6	100,0
	Total	249	100,0	100,0	

Appendix C: Results from Norwegian survey

Frequency Tables (w/o excluded data) (16 pages)

Citizenship and residency

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	I am Norwegian and I live in Norway.	423	100,0	100,0	100,0

Age

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	18-26 years.	69	16,3	16,3	16,3
	27-40 years.	161	38,1	38,1	54,4
	41-55 years.	153	36,2	36,2	90,5
	56 years or older.	40	9,5	9,5	100,0
	Total	423	100,0	100,0	

Political orientation

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	I am not particularly interested in politics.	40	9,5	9,5	9,5
	I belong somewhere in the center.	93	22,0	22,0	31,4
	I am more left-leaning.	198	46,8	46,8	78,3
	I am more right-leaning.	92	21,7	21,7	100,0
	Total	423	100,0	100,0	

Media habits - social media

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	N/A	7	1,7	1,7	1,7
	Yes	416	98,3	98,3	100,0
	Total	423	100,0	100,0	

Media habits - various forums

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	N/A	370	87,5	87,5	87,5
	Yes	53	12,5	12,5	100,0
	Total	423	100,0	100,0	

Media habits - nation-wide news channels

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	N/A	52	12,3	12,3	12,3
	Yes	371	87,7	87,7	100,0
	Total	423	100,0	100,0	

Media habits - local news

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	N/A	88	20,8	20,8	20,8
	Yes	335	79,2	79,2	100,0
	Total	423	100,0	100,0	

Media habits - independent/alternative media

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	N/A	400	94,6	94,6	94,6
	Yes	23	5,4	5,4	100,0
	Total	423	100,0	100,0	

Media habits - left-leaning media

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	N/A	365	86,3	86,3	86,3
	Yes	58	13,7	13,7	100,0
	Total	423	100,0	100,0	

Media habits - right-leaning media

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	N/A	375	88,7	88,7	88,7
	Yes	48	11,3	11,3	100,0
	Total	423	100,0	100,0	

Media habits - state-owned news media

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	N/A	68	16,1	16,1	16,1
	Yes	355	83,9	83,9	100,0
	Total	423	100,0	100,0	

Media habits - official channels

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	N/A	174	41,1	41,1	41,1
	Yes	249	58,9	58,9	100,0
	Total	423	100,0	100,0	

Media habits - foreign news media

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	N/A	197	46,6	46,6	46,6
	Yes	226	53,4	53,4	100,0
	Total	423	100,0	100,0	

Media habits - I prefer not to answer

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	N/A	423	100,0	100,0	100,0

Media trust - social media

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	N/A	411	97,2	97,2	97,2
	Yes	12	2,8	2,8	100,0
	Total	423	100,0	100,0	

Media trust - various forums

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	N/A	418	98,8	98,8	98,8
	Yes	5	1,2	1,2	100,0
	Total	423	100,0	100,0	

Media trust - nation-wide news channels

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	N/A	112	26,5	26,5	26,5
	Yes	311	73,5	73,5	100,0
	Total	423	100,0	100,0	

Media trust - local news

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	N/A	239	56,5	56,5	56,5
	Yes	184	43,5	43,5	100,0
	Total	423	100,0	100,0	

Media trust - independent/alternative media

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	N/A	413	97,6	97,6	97,6
	Yes	10	2,4	2,4	100,0
	Total	423	100,0	100,0	

Media trust - left-leaning media

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	N/A	405	95,7	95,7	95,7
	Yes	18	4,3	4,3	100,0
	Total	423	100,0	100,0	

Media trust - right-leaning media

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	N/A	412	97,4	97,4	97,4
	Yes	11	2,6	2,6	100,0
	Total	423	100,0	100,0	

Media trust - state-owned news media

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	N/A	89	21,0	21,0	21,0
	Yes	334	79,0	79,0	100,0
	Total	423	100,0	100,0	

Media trust - official government info.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	N/A	179	42,3	42,3	42,3
	Yes	244	57,7	57,7	100,0
	Total	423	100,0	100,0	

Media trust - official channels

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	N/A	174	41,1	41,1	41,1
	Yes	249	58,9	58,9	100,0
	Total	423	100,0	100,0	

Media trust - foreign news media

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	N/A	308	72,8	72,8	72,8
	Yes	115	27,2	27,2	100,0
	Total	423	100,0	100,0	

Media trust - none of the above

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	N/A	417	98,6	98,6	98,6
	Yes	6	1,4	1,4	100,0
	Total	423	100,0	100,0	

Difference between Norwegian and English term

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	I prefer not to answer.	5	1,2	1,2	1,2
	These terms mean the same thing.	342	80,9	80,9	82,0
	There is a difference between 'fake news' and 'falske nyheter'.	76	18,0	18,0	100,0
	Total	423	100,0	100,0	

Exposure

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	I prefer not to answer.	3	,7	,7	,7
	Never.	5	1,2	1,2	1,9
	Rarely.	106	25,1	25,1	27,0
	Once a week or more.	152	35,9	35,9	62,9
	Every day.	119	28,1	28,1	91,0
	Several times a day.	38	9,0	9,0	100,0
	Total	423	100,0	100,0	

Frequency of fake news - social media

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	N/A	39	9,2	9,2	9,2
	Yes	384	90,8	90,8	100,0
	Total	423	100,0	100,0	

Frequency of fake news - various forums

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	N/A	191	45,2	45,2	45,2
	Yes	232	54,8	54,8	100,0
	Total	423	100,0	100,0	

Frequency of fake news - independent/alt. media

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	N/A	154	36,4	36,4	36,4
	Yes	269	63,6	63,6	100,0
	Total	423	100,0	100,0	

Frequency of fake news - state-owned news media

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	N/A	416	98,3	98,3	98,3
	Yes	7	1,7	1,7	100,0
	Total	423	100,0	100,0	

Frequency of fake news - government info

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	N/A	419	99,1	99,1	99,1
	Yes	4	,9	,9	100,0
	Total	423	100,0	100,0	

Frequency of fake news - native advertising/sponsored

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	N/A	277	65,5	65,5	65,5
	Yes	146	34,5	34,5	100,0
	Total	423	100,0	100,0	

Frequency of fake news - left-leaning news

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	N/A	383	90,5	90,5	90,5
	Yes	40	9,5	9,5	100,0
	Total	423	100,0	100,0	

Frequency of fake news - right-leaning news

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	N/A	333	78,7	78,7	78,7
	Yes	90	21,3	21,3	100,0
	Total	423	100,0	100,0	

Frequency of fake news - live

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	N/A	318	75,2	75,2	75,2
	Yes	105	24,8	24,8	100,0
	Total	423	100,0	100,0	

Frequency of fake news - mainstream media

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	N/A	405	95,7	95,7	95,7
	Yes	18	4,3	4,3	100,0
	Total	423	100,0	100,0	

Frequency of fake news - news from US

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	N/A	274	64,8	64,8	64,8
	Yes	149	35,2	35,2	100,0
	Total	423	100,0	100,0	

Frequency of fake news - foreign sources

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	N/A	334	79,0	79,0	79,0
	Yes	89	21,0	21,0	100,0
	Total	423	100,0	100,0	

Frequency of fake news - none of the above

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	N/A	421	99,5	99,5	99,5
	Yes	2	,5	,5	100,0
	Total	423	100,0	100,0	

Fake news definition

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	I prefer not to answer.	1	,2	,2	,2
	It is a universal phenomenon which is just as relevant outside of the US.	375	88,7	88,7	88,9
	It is an American phenomenon which does not have a large impact on the Norwegian society.	47	11,1	11,1	100,0
	Total	423	100,0	100,0	

A label used to discredit others.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	N/A	205	48,5	48,5	48,5
	Yes	218	51,5	51,5	100,0
	Total	423	100,0	100,0	

A term used as a political weapon.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	N/A	242	57,2	57,2	57,2
	Yes	181	42,8	42,8	100,0
	Total	423	100,0	100,0	

Genre

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	N/A	114	27,0	27,0	27,0
	Yes	309	73,0	73,0	100,0
	Total	423	100,0	100,0	

Propaganda from state-owned media

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	N/A	388	91,7	91,7	91,7
	Yes	35	8,3	8,3	100,0
	Total	423	100,0	100,0	

Fabricated news

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	N/A	226	53,4	53,4	53,4
	Yes	197	46,6	46,6	100,0
	Total	423	100,0	100,0	

Deliberate disinformation by independent media

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	N/A	184	43,5	43,5	43,5
	Yes	239	56,5	56,5	100,0
	Total	423	100,0	100,0	

Deliberate disinformation by mainstream media

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	N/A	371	87,7	87,7	87,7
	Yes	52	12,3	12,3	100,0
	Total	423	100,0	100,0	

Any misinformation which is being spread

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	N/A	304	71,9	71,9	71,9
	Yes	119	28,1	28,1	100,0
	Total	423	100,0	100,0	

A term mainly used by Donald Trump and followers

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	N/A	315	74,5	74,5	74,5
	Yes	108	25,5	25,5	100,0
	Total	423	100,0	100,0	

A wide and general term

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	N/A	335	79,2	79,2	79,2
	Yes	88	20,8	20,8	100,0
	Total	423	100,0	100,0	

None of the above

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	N/A	423	100,0	100,0	100,0

One should be more skeptical of journalists because of FN

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Disagree	154	36,4	36,6	36,6
	I neither agree not disagree.	97	22,9	23,0	59,6
	Agree.	170	40,2	40,4	100,0
	Total	421	99,5	100,0	
Missing	System	2	,5		
Total		423	100,0		

Fake news is mainly a political term used for personal political gain.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Disagree.	143	33,8	33,9	33,9
	I neither agree not disagree.	110	26,0	26,1	60,0
	Agree.	169	40,0	40,0	100,0
	Total	422	99,8	100,0	
Missing	System	1	,2		
Total		423	100,0		

The term is mostly used by the right side.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Disagree.	102	24,1	24,1	24,1
	I neither agree not disagree.	164	38,8	38,8	62,9
	Agree.	157	37,1	37,1	100,0
	Total	423	100,0	100,0	

The term is mostly used by the left side.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Disagree.	230	54,4	54,8	54,8
	I neither agree not disagree.	185	43,7	44,0	98,8
	Agree.	5	1,2	1,2	100,0
	Total	420	99,3	100,0	
Missing	System	3	,7		
Total		423	100,0		

The term is used by both sides of the political spectrum.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Disagree.	138	32,6	32,9	32,9
	I neither agree not disagree.	137	32,4	32,6	65,5
	Agree.	145	34,3	34,5	100,0
	Total	420	99,3	100,0	
Missing	System	3	,7		
Total		423	100,0		

Fake news is mainly a social media phenomenon.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Disagree.	139	32,9	32,9	32,9
	I neither agree not disagree.	85	20,1	20,1	53,1
	Agree.	198	46,8	46,9	100,0
	Total	422	99,8	100,0	
Missing	System	1	,2		
Total		423	100,0		

Fake news is misleading information spread by hostile/enemy nations or governments.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Disagree.	124	29,3	29,5	29,5
	I neither agree not disagree.	168	39,7	40,0	69,5
	Agree.	128	30,3	30,5	100,0
	Total	420	99,3	100,0	
Missing	System	3	,7		
Total		423	100,0		

Fake news is mainly an American phenomenon.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Disagree.	250	59,1	59,5	59,5
	I neither agree not disagree.	78	18,4	18,6	78,1
	Agree.	92	21,7	21,9	100,0
	Total	420	99,3	100,0	
Missing	System	3	,7		
Total		423	100,0		

Fake news is a new concept.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Disagree.	259	61,2	62,1	62,1
	I neither agree not disagree.	75	17,7	18,0	80,1
	Agree.	83	19,6	19,9	100,0
	Total	417	98,6	100,0	
Missing	System	6	1,4		
Total		423	100,0		

Fake news has always existed, but the term is more recent.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Disagree.	32	7,6	7,6	7,6
	I neither agree not disagree.	33	7,8	7,8	15,4
	Agree.	358	84,6	84,6	100,0
	Total	423	100,0	100,0	

Donald Trump is unfairly accused of spreading 'fake news'.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	0	6	1,4	1,4	1,4
	Disagree.	349	82,5	82,7	84,1
	I neither agree not disagree.	30	7,1	7,1	91,2
	Agree.	37	8,7	8,8	100,0
	Total	422	99,8	100,0	
Missing	System	1	,2		
Total		423	100,0		

Donald Trump enlightens society about what 'fake news' is and how to find it.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Disagree.	322	76,1	76,5	76,5
	I neither agree not disagree.	50	11,8	11,9	88,4
	Agree.	49	11,6	11,6	100,0
	Total	421	99,5	100,0	
Missing	System	2	,5		
Total		423	100,0		

Donald Trump creates 'fake news'.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Disagree.	6	1,4	1,4	1,4
	I neither agree not disagree.	32	7,6	7,6	9,0
	Agree.	384	90,8	91,0	100,0
	Total	422	99,8	100,0	
Missing	System	1	,2		
Total		423	100,0		

Problems distinguishing between fake and real news

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	I prefer not to answer.	3	,7	,7	,7
	Rarely.	200	47,3	47,3	48,0
	Sometimes.	177	41,8	41,8	89,8
	Often.	8	1,9	1,9	91,7
	I never trust news agencies.	35	8,3	8,3	100,0
	Total	423	100,0	100,0	

Do Norwegian news media spread fake news?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	No opinion.	13	3,1	3,1	3,1
	No.	159	37,6	37,6	40,7
	Perhaps, but not so much.	219	51,8	51,8	92,4
	Yes.	32	7,6	7,6	100,0
	Total	423	100,0	100,0	

Increase in the term fake news post COVID-19?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	No opinion.	41	9,7	9,7	9,7
	No.	97	22,9	22,9	32,6
	Perhaps, but not so much.	130	30,7	30,7	63,4
	Yes.	155	36,6	36,6	100,0
	Total	423	100,0	100,0	

Increase in the term fake news during presidential campaign?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	No opinion.	22	5,2	5,2	5,2
	No.	20	4,7	4,8	10,0
	Perhaps, but not so much.	60	14,2	14,3	24,2
	Yes.	319	75,4	75,8	100,0
	Total	421	99,5	100,0	
Missing	System	2	,5		
Total		423	100,0		

Does the term have a negative impact on society?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	No opinion.	27	6,4	6,4	6,4
	No.	36	8,5	8,5	14,9
	Perhaps, but not so much.	52	12,3	12,3	27,3
	Yes.	307	72,6	72,7	100,0
	Total	422	99,8	100,0	
Missing	System	1	,2		
Total		423	100,0		

Does the term have a negative impact on democracy?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	No opinion.	31	7,3	7,3	7,3
	No.	35	8,3	8,3	15,6
	Perhaps, but not so much.	51	12,1	12,1	27,7
	Yes.	306	72,3	72,3	100,0
	Total	423	100,0	100,0	

The term makes it harder for journalitsts to convey important info.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	No opinion.	9	2,1	2,1	2,1
	No.	46	10,9	10,9	13,0
	Perhaps, but not so much.	87	20,6	20,6	33,6
	Yes.	281	66,4	66,4	100,0
	Total	423	100,0	100,0	

Does the term make trust more difficult?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	No opinion.	3	,7	,7	,7
	No.	17	4,0	4,0	4,7
	Perhaps, but not so much.	59	13,9	13,9	18,7
	Yes.	344	81,3	81,3	100,0
	Total	423	100,0	100,0	

Appendix D: American survey

Survey of American perspectives on the term 'fake news'.

This is a survey created with the intention of charting Americans' experience with and thoughts about the term 'fake news'. It is imperative that only people who either come from, or live in, the United States answer the questions. I also ask that only people of 18 years or older answer the survey.

The survey is completely anonymous and has been created with the sole purpose of gathering data for my master thesis at the Norwegian University of Science and Technology. IP-addresses cannot be traced via the survey software.

The forcus of the project is the use of and people's perception of the term 'fake news' in the US and in Norway. A similar survey is distributed for residents of Norway.

It is estimated that the survey should take about 5-8 minutes to complete.

If you have questions regarding this study, please contact Helene Solheimsnes at hisolhei@ntnu.no.

Sideskift

Please answer these general questions first.

Are you an American citizen or resident? *

○ I am currently a US citizen living in the US.

○ I am currently a US citizen living elsewhere.

○ I am currently a US resident, but from another country.

○ I am not a US resident/citizen.

○ I prefer not to answer.

What is your age group? *

☐ 18-26 y/o.

☐ 27-40 y/o.

☐ 41-55 y/o.

☐ 56 y/o or older.

☐ I prefer not to answer.

How would you describe your own political orientation? *

○ I see myself as more conservative.

○ I see myself as more liberal.

○ I see myself as more neutral.

○ I am not particularly interested in politics.

○ I prefer not to answer.

What types of media do you use/engage with in your daily life? *

Select all that apply.

☐ Social media (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram etc.)

☐ Forum-based social media (Reddit, 4chan etc.)

☐ The larger, nation-wide news channels.

☐ Local news media.

☐ Independent/alternative media.

☐ Liberal news media.

☐ Conservative news media.

☐ State-owned news media.

☐ Public information from official channels.

☐ Foreign news media/other sources from other countries.

☐ I prefer not to answer.

Which of these same sources do you perceive as the most trustworthy? *

Select all that apply.

☐ Social media platforms (Facebook, Twitter etc.)

☐ Forum-based social media (Reddit, 4chan etc.)

☐ The larger, nation-wide news channels.

☐ Local news media.

☐ Independent/alternative media.

☐ Liberal news media.

☐ Conservative news media.

☐ State-owned news media.

☐ Public information from official channels.

☐ Foreign news media/other sources from other countries.

☐ I prefer not to answer.

Sideskift

How often and from where are you exposed to 'fake news'?

How often do you believe that you are exposed to 'fake news'? *

○ Never.

○ Rarely.

○ Once a week or more.

○ Every day.

○ Several times a day.

○ I prefer not to answer.

Which media channels do you believe have the most 'fake news'? *

Select all that apply.

☐ Social media platforms (Facebook, Twitter etc.)

☐ Forum-based social media (Reddit, 4chan etc.)

☐ Independent/alternative media.

☐ State-owned news media.

☐ Native advertising (i.e. sponsored news articles)

☐ Liberal news media.

☐ Conservative news media.

☐ Live, from family, friends or acquaintances.

☐ Mainstream news media.

☐ Information from the government.

☐ Sources from other countries, either news or political actors.

☐ None of the above.

Sideskift

Side 4

What is 'fake news' to you?

What do you believe 'fake news' is? *

○ It is a phenomenon that primarily is found in the US, but it may have spread to other places.

○ It is a universal phenomenon which is just as relevant outside the US.

○ I prefer not to answer.

How would you describe 'fake news'? *

Select all that apply.

☐ A label which anyone could use to discredit sources of information that one does not agree with.

☐ A term mainly used by political actors who use it as a weapon to undermine any information that contradicts their own political agenda.

☐ A genre which consists of deliberately created disinformation which is made to look like real news.

☐ Fabricated news from short-lived websites.

☐ Deliberate disinformation created by partisan independent media.

☐ Deliberate disinformation spread by the mainstream media.

☐ Any misinformation which is being spread, whether it is deliberate or not.

☐ A term which is mainly used by Donald Trump and his followers.

☐ A wide and general term used for any and all of these things.

☐ None of the above.

Please indicate whether you agree or disagree with the following statements.

One should be more skeptical of journalists today because of the frequency of 'fake news'.

○ Agree.

○ Disagree.

○ I neither agree nor disagree.

'Fake news' is mainly a political term used for personal political gain.

○ Agree.

○ Disagree.

○ I neither agree nor disagree.

The term is mostly used by conservatives or Republicans.

○ Agree.

○ Disagree.

○ I neither agree nor disagree.

The term is mostly used by liberals or Democrats.

○ Agree.

○ Disagree.

○ I neither agree nor disagree.

The term is commonly used by both sides of the political spectrum.

○ Agree.

○ Disagree.

○ I neither agree nor disagree.

'Fake news' is mainly a social media phenomenon.

○ Agree.

○ Disagree.

○ I neither agree nor disagree.

'Fake news' is misleading information spread by hostile/enemy nations or governments.

○ Agree.

○ Disagree.

○ I neither agree nor disagree.

'Fake news' is mainly an American phenomenon.

○ Agree.

○ Disagree.

○ I neither agree nor disagree.

'Fake news' is a new concept.

○ Agree.

○ Disagree.

○ I neither agree nor disagree.

'Fake news' has always existed, but the term is more recent.

○   Agree.

○   Disagree.

○   I neither agree nor disagree.

Donald Trump is unfairly accused of spreading 'fake news'.

○   Agree.

○   Disagree.

○   I neither agree nor disagree.

Donald Trump enlightens society about what 'fake news' is and how to find it.

○   Agree.

○   Disagree.

○   I neither agree nor disagree.

Donald Trump creates 'fake news'.

○   Agree.

○   Disagree.

○   I neither agree nor disagree.

(Optional) In your own words, how would you describe your understanding of the term 'fake news'?

Sideskift

Appendix E: Norwegian survey

Spørreundersøkelse om begrepet 'fake news'.

Denne spørreundersøkelsen har som mål å kartlegge nordmenns oppfatning og forståelse av begrepet 'fake news'. Det er derfor viktig at bare nordmenn eller mennesker som har oppholdt seg i Norge over lengre tid deltar. Det ønskes også at bare de som er over 18 år svarer på undersøkelsen.

Spørreundersøkelsen er helt anonym og har som eneste hensikt å samle data til en master-oppgave som gjennomføres ved NTNU. IP-adresser kan ikke lagres via dette formatet.

Temaet i masteroppgaven er begrepet 'fake news', hvordan det blir brukt, og hvorvidt begrepet har for-skjellig bruk og betydning i Norge i motsetning til i USA. Spørreundersøkelsen ligger derfor ute på både norsk og engelsk, men det ønskes at nordmenn bare svarer på den norske versjonen.

Det er beregnet at undersøkelsen tar ca. 5-8 minutter å gjennomføre.

Spørsmål angående undersøkelsen kan rettes til Helene Solheimsnes. Epost: hisolhei@ntnu.no.

Sideskift

Vennligst svar på disse generelle spørsmålene først.

Er du norsk eller har norsk statsborgerskap? *

○ Jeg er norsk og bor i Norge.

○ Jeg har norsk statsborgerskap, men bor i utlandet.

○ Jeg har bodd i Norge over lengre tid, men jeg er ikke norsk.

○ Jeg ønsker ikke å svare på dette spørsmålet.

Hvilken aldersgruppe hører du til? *

○ 18-26 år.

○ 27-40 år.

○ 41-55 år.

○ 56 år eller eldre.

○ Jeg ønsker ikke å svare på dette spørsmålet.

Hvordan vil du beskrive ditt politiske ståsted? *

○ Jeg befinner meg mer på høyresiden.

○ Jeg befinner meg mer på venstresiden.

○ Jeg befinner meg mer i sentrum.

○ Jeg er ikke spesielt opptatt av politikk.

○ Jeg ønsker ikke å svare på dette spørsmålet.

Hvilke medier bruker du i ditt daglige liv? *

Flere valg mulig.

☐ Sosiale medier (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram osv.)

☐ Forumbaserte sosiale medier (Reddit, 4chan osv.)

☐ Store, nasjonale nyhetsformidlere.

☐ Lokale nyheter.

☐ Alternative medier.

☐ Medier på den politiske venstresiden.

☐ Medier på den politiske høyresiden.

☐ Statlig eide medier (NRK).

☐ Offentlig informasjon fra offentlig sektor.

☐ Utenlandske nyhetsbyråer/medier.

☐ Ingen av disse kildene.

Hvilke av de samme kildene vil du si at du stoler mest på? *

Fra hvilke kilder/medier opplever du at du mottar korrekt og god informasjon?

- ☐ Sosiale medier (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram osv.)

- ☐ Forumbaserte sosiale medier (Reddit, 4chan osv.)

- ☐ Store, nasjonale nyhetsformidlere.

- ☐ Lokale nyheter.

- ☐ Alternative medier.

- ☐ Medier på den politiske venstresiden.

- ☐ Medier på den politiske høyresiden.

- ☐ Statlig eide medier (NRK).

- ☐ Informasjon fra regjeringen gjennom offisielle kanaler.

- ☐ Offentlig informasjon fra offentlig sektor.

- ☐ Utenlandske nyhetsbyråer/medier.

- ☐ Ingen av disse kildene.

Sideskift

Side 3

Hvordan oppfatter du begrepet 'fake news'?

Oppfatter du at det er forskjell på begrepene 'fake news' og 'falske nyheter'? *

- ○ Ja, det er forskjell på 'fake news' og 'falske nyheter'.

- ○ Nei, disse to begrepene betyr det samme.

- ○ Jeg ønsker ikke å svare på dette spørsmålet.

Hvis du svarte ja på spørsmålet over, gjerne beskriv hva du mener er forskjellen mellom de to begrepene.

ⓘ Dette elementet vises kun dersom alternativet «Ja, det er forskjell på 'fake news' og 'falske nyheter'» er valgt i spørsmålet «Oppfatter du at det er forskjell på begrepene 'fake news'; og 'falske nyheter'»

Hvor ofte mener du at du blir eksponert for 'fake news'? *

○ Aldri.

○ Sjeldent.

○ En gang i uken eller mer.

○ Hver dag.

○ Flere ganger daglig.

○ Jeg ønsker ikke å svare på dette spørsmålet.

Hvilke kilder har mest 'fake news' etter din oppfatning? *

Flere valg mulig.

☐ Sosiale medier (Facebook, Twitter osv.)

☐ Forumbaserte sosiale medier (Reddit, 4chan osv.)

☐ Alternative nyhetssider.

☐ Statlig-eide medier (NRK).

☐ Informasjon fra regjeringen.

☐ Sponsede nyhetsartikler.

☐ Medier på den politiske venstresiden.

☐ Medier på den politiske høyresiden.

☐ Direkte fra familie, venner eller bekjente.

☐ Etablerte medier (de store nyhetskanalene og avisene)

☐ Kilder fra USA, enten nyheter eller politiske aktører.

☐ Kilder fra andre land, enten nyheter eller politiske aktører.

☐ Ingen av de nevnte alternativene.

Sideskift

Side 4

Hva er 'fake news' for deg?

Hva mener du at 'fake news' er? *

○ Det er et amerikansk fenomen som ikke har så stor betydning i det norske samfunnet.

○ Det er et universalt fenomen som er like relevant andre steder enn USA.

○ Jeg ønsker ikke å svare på dette spørsmålet.

Hvilke av de følgende beskrivelsene mener du best beskriver begrepet 'fake news'? *

Flere valg mulig.

☐ En merkelapp som hvem som helst kan bruke til å skape mistro rundt informasjon eller informasjonskilder som de er uenige i/med.

☐ Et begrep som hovedsaklig blir brukt som et våpen av politiske aktører for å undergrave informasjon som motstrider deres politiske agenda.

☐ En sjanger som består av desinformasjon som med vilje er laget for å se ut som ekte nyheter.

☐ Propaganda spredt fra statlig-eide medier.

☐ Fabrikkerte nyhetsartikler fra midlertidige nettsider.

☐ Intensjonell misvisende informasjon skapt og spredt av ekstreme, partiske medier.

☐ Intensjonell misvisende informasjon skapt og spredt av de store, etablerte mediehusene.

☐ All feilinformasjon som blir spredt, uansett om det er med vilje eller ikke.

☐ Et begrep som hovedsaklig blir brukt av Donald Trump og hans følgere.

☐ Et vidt og generelt begrep som beskriver alle disse tingene.

☐ Ingen av de nevnte alternativene.

Er du enig eller uenig i de følgende påstandene?

En bør være mer skeptisk til journalister i dag på grunn av hyppigheten av 'fake news'.

○ Enig.

○ Uenig.

○ Jeg er hverken enig eller uenig.

'Fake news' er i hovedsak et politisk begrep som brukes til egen politisk vinning.

○ Enig.

○ Uenig.

○ Jeg er hverken enig eller uenig.

Begrepet 'fake news' blir mest brukt blant de på høyresiden.

   ◯   Enig.

   ◯   Uenig.

   ◯   Jeg er hverken enig eller uenig.

Begrepet 'fake news' blir mest brukt blant de på venstresiden.

   ◯   Enig.

   ◯   Uenig.

   ◯   Jeg er hverken enig eller uenig.

Begrepet 'fake news' er like vanlig å bruke i begge politiske leirer.

   ◯   Enig.

   ◯   Uenig.

   ◯   Jeg er hverken enig eller uenig.

'Fake news' er i hovedsak et fenomen en finner i sosiale medier.

   ◯   Enig.

   ◯   Uenig.

   ◯   Jeg er hverken enig eller uenig.

'Fake news' er misvisende informasjon spredt av fiendtlige land eller regjeringer.

   ◯   Enig.

   ◯   Uenig.

○ Jeg er hverken enig eller uenig.

'Fake news' er i hovedsak et amerikansk fenomen.

○ Enig.

○ Uenig.

○ Jeg er hverken enig eller uenig.

'Fake news' er et nytt konsept.

○ Enig.

○ Uenig.

○ Jeg er hverken enig eller uenig.

'Fake news' har alltid eksistert, men begrepet er nyere.

○ Enig.

○ Uenig.

○ Jeg er hverken enig eller uenig.

Donald Trump blir falskt anklaget for å spre 'fake news'.

○ Enig.

○ Uenig.

○ Jeg er hverken enig eller uenig.

Donald Trump opplyser samfunnet om hva som er 'fake news' og hvor en kan finne det.

○ Enig.

Helene I. O. Solheimsnes

The truth about fake news?

NTNU
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