Get Back! You Don’t Know Me Like That: The Social Mediation of Fact Checking Interventions in Twitter Conversations

Anika Hannak*  Drew Margolin  Brian Keegan  Ingmar Weber
Northeastern University  Cornell University  Qatar Computing Research Institute

Motivation

False rumor, misinformation are important issues of public concern. Fact information spread due to new communication technologies.

Interventions to correct misinformation does not change attitudes.
Nynan & Reifler, 2010; Garrett, 2011

Misinformation is "sticky" - consistency with attitudes, beliefs.
Ecker, Lewandowsky, & Tang, 2010

Fact checks from friends more likely to be worthy of consideration.
Garrett, Milet, & Lynch, 2013

Research Questions

Q1: Who snoops whom?
Do people respond to being snooped?
Does it eventually change their minds?
Q3: Where do snoops happen?
Do they occur within or between subcommunities?
What does the structural contexts of snooping reveal?

Data and Methods

Fact-checking tweets
Twitter archive from Jan 2012 – Aug 2013.
Contains links to Snopes.com, Politifact.com, FactCheck.org
Conversational: Snooper replies to snipee’s tweet.
Tweet: “1000 fact-checking interventions
Tweeting history
History of Snoops and Snoopees using public Twitter API.
Up to 5000 tweets per user.
Social Network
Followers: information of all Snoops and Snipees (up to 5000).
Post-hoc directed network intervention of snipees and snoopees.

Categorizing tweets
Use Crowdsourcing workers to label snooping tweets based on:
Intent: correcting facts, joke, supporting snipee’s view, etc.
On going discussion vs. out of the blue
Was the snipee mentioned before? fact-check?

Results

Fact checks by friends and strangers involve snoops and snopees with similar audience sizes.
Fact checks by followers are directed at "elite" users, but there are significant differences in the indirect audiences for those corrections.

Snooper friends trigger more replies from snipee than snooped by followers or snooped by strangers.

Most snoops from strangers are challenges, but fewer from friends are challenges.

Friends more likely (56.9%) to reply to friends than to strangers (45.7%).

Challenges

56.9%
73.5%
75.5%

Social Network

Snopees occur in highly polarized network context.
Strangers snoops occur between political camps “partisan snooping”
Friend snoops occur mostly within “celebrity cluster” “no policing of misinformation within affinity groups”

Example

Fact-checking intervention in an online conversation.

Terminology

- Fact-checked by "friend" 4 4 23%
- Fact-checked by follower 4 4 4% 3%
- Fact-checked by "stranger" 4 4 40%