

Searching for Alternative Facts | Data & Society

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This report is an ethnographic account of how two Republican groups search for truth in the contemporary news environment. Drawing from a conservative Christian worldview, these groups critically interrogate media messages in the same way they approach the Bible. This practice of scriptural inference bolsters their mistrust of mainstream media and supports their need to “fact check” the news. Since Google is seen as a neutral purveyor of information, it becomes a conduit for accessing “unbiased” information. And while this quest for truth may start in good faith, significant risks follow:

- First, searches meant to question political reality can reinforce existing ideological beliefs;
- Second, services like Google and YouTube can unintentionally expose individuals who consider themselves “mainline conservatives” to “far-right” and “alt-right” content through algorithmic recommendations; and
- Third, bad actors looking to exploit an audience disillusioned with mainstream media can take advantage of such intellectual exploration.

Source: [Searching for Alternative Facts | Data & Society](#)