

Fact Check Flowchart V1.0

An educational tool for Journalism students

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WORK IN PROGRESS



Why a fact check flow chart?

- It's an educational tool
- Help students understand all the steps to be taken during the fact checking process
- Help students analyse the claim (what is claimed, by whom, ...)
- Lead students through the fact checking process
- Uniform procedure & methodology
- *Objective* rating

Principles & methodology

Three steps methodology

```
graph LR; A[Analyse claim] --> B[Analyse author / source]; B --> C[Fact check];
```

**Analyse
claim**

**Analyse
author /
source**

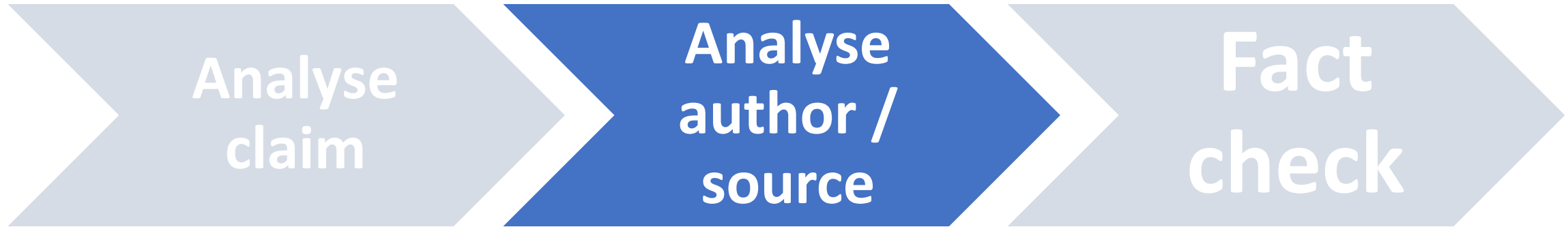
Fact check

Three steps methodology



- Prima facie analysis of the claim
- Understand checkability of the claim
- Understand all components, implications and any shortcomings of the claim

Three steps methodology



- Identify claim's author and claim's source
- Identify author's and source's capacity and affiliation

Three steps methodology



- Identify and find primary source's source material
- Check if it confirms claim or not
- Find and contact primary source
- Find and contact second (third, ...) experts
- Check if they confirm claim or not
- Rate the claim

Rating scale

- True
- Mostly True
- Mostly False
- False
- Uncheckable



Terminology

- **Warning lights and shaky claim**



- Warning lights are indicators of certain **shortcomings** in the claim: failures to meet standard of 100% objective and factual claim
- If a claim fails to meet standard of being 100% objective and factual, it is ***shaky***.
- Degree of shakiness depends on number of warning lights
- Important: even if some of the shakiness of the original claim is removed by further research and clarification, the degree of shakiness stays the same

Terminology

- **Claim author**
 - The person who is quoted as having stated the claim
- **Claim source (primary source)**
 - The person (organization, ...) whom the claim author refers to as the source of the claim. Claim author and claim source can be the same
- **Primary source's source material**
 - Source material on which the primary source bases its claim (research, survey, statistics,; often a combination)

Examples and group exercise

Dallas County Sheriff Lupe Valdez said that Texas Department of Public Safety numbers show only 1.6 percent of crimes are committed by unauthorized immigrants

Subject (about whom/what):

Claim:

Claim author:

Claim source (primary source):

Primary source's source material:

Dallas County Sheriff Lupe Valdez said that Texas Department of Public Safety numbers show only 1.6 percent of crimes are committed by unauthorized immigrants

Subject (about whom/what): Unauthorized immigrants

Claim: 1.6 percent of crimes are committed by unauthorized immigrants

Claim author: Sherriff Lupe Valdez

Claim source (primary source): Texas Department of Public Safety

Primary source's source material: not clear from this article – could be official statistics -> Find statistics

Gov. Dan Patrick claims states where people carry guns have less crime

“Everywhere that we have more citizens carrying guns, crime is less,” Patrick said Sunday. “There’s a study showing that where states have open carry or concealed carry, but particularly open carry, the crime is down 25 percent.

Subject (about whom/what):

Claim: Claim author:

Claim source (primary source):

Primary source’s source material:

Gov. Dan Patrick claims states where people carry guns have less crime

“Everywhere that we have more citizens carrying guns, crime is less,” Patrick said Sunday. “There’s a study showing that where states have open carry or concealed carry, but particularly open carry, the crime is down 25 percent.

Subject (about whom/what): US states

Claim: In states where people openly carry guns, the crime is down 25 percent.

Claim author: Gov. Dan Patrick

Claim source (primary source): “A study” -> Request primary source from author!

Primary source’s source material: Not clear from this article

Social media are harmful for young children

Saying young children are "simply not ready" for social media, health experts and children's advocates are urging Facebook to discontinue Messenger Kids, its new messaging app.

The app is aimed at younger than 13, which until now has been the minimum age of users of Facebook and other social networks.

"At a time when there is mounting concern about how social media use affects adolescents' well-being, it is particularly irresponsible to encourage children as young as preschoolers to start using a Facebook product," the letter says.

The letter, sent by 19 advocacy groups including Public Citizen, Parent Coalition for Student Privacy, Peace Educators Allied for Children Everywhere and dozens of doctors and health experts, cites a study released last week that showed a link between teen unhappiness and social media use, and other studies that show social media's harmful effects on children's perception of body image as well as their sleep habits.

Subject (about whom/what):

Claim:

Claim author:

Claim source (primary source):

Primary source's source material:

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Subject (about whom/what): Social media

Claim: social media are harmful for young children – More detailed, several claims: link between social media use and unhappiness; harmful effects on perception of body image; harmful effects on sleeping habits

Claim author: "19 advocacy groups"

Claim source (primary source): "19 advocacy groups" -> Find spokesperson

Primary source's source material: Several studies -> Find studies

1 in 12 New Dads May Suffer From Postpartum Depression

A new study suggests that at least eight percent of fathers face crippling depression, postpartum—and prior research suggests that figure may be as high as 27 percent.

Subject (about whom/what):

Claim:

Claim author:

Claim source (primary source):

Primary source's source material:

1 in 12 New Dads May Suffer From Postpartum Depression

A new study suggests that at least eight percent of fathers face crippling depression, postpartum—and prior research suggests that figure may be as high as 27 percent.

Subject (about whom/what): New dads

Claim: 1 in 12 suffer from postpartum depression

Claim author: “a new study” **AND** find author of the study (in article, online research or contact journalist)

Claim source (primary source): Same as author

Primary source’s source material: Material on which “new study” is based (eg survey, clinical research, ...)

Shaky claim

Phase	Warning lights	Implication of warning light	Action
Analyse claim	Subject not clearly defined	Shaky claim	Check with primary source
	Qualitative claim	Depends on primary source's and second expert's judgment	
	Factual, quantitative claim, but vague	Shaky claim	Check with primary source
	Percentage: 100% not (clearly) defined	Shaky claim	Check with primary source
	Geography not clear / not relevant	Shaky claim	Check with primary source
	Period not clear / not relevant	Shaky claim	Check with primary source
	Quantification / fact based on ...: not clear	Shaky claim	Check with primary source
	Survey methodology	Shaky claim	Check with primary source
	Analyse source	Primary source not identified	Shaky claim OR Uncheckable
Claim in original context is different		Shaky claim	Check with claim author
Fact check	Primary source's source material does NOT confirm claim	Shaky claim	Check with primary source

Warning lights + degree of shakiness

- Warning lights: Educational value
- Degree of shakiness: Differentiation

Fundamental questions

Fundamental questions

- **Non-unanimity:** What do we do if the second expert doesn't confirm the provisional rating of the primary source? Do we contact a third expert? But: in this case we will always have non-unanimity. Does non-unanimity automatically lead to an “uncheckable” rating?
- Must a fact checker (student) always check the primary source's source material?
- Do we have/build a list of claim author's or claim primary source's capacities that we decide to consider as absolutely reliable, i.e.: no double checking with additional experts needed? Examples: Eurostat, OECD, World Bank,