Editorial:

Mis/Disinformation in/on Canada

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I feel privileged to be involved in guest editing this special issue on mis/disinformation in Canada since it is a very timely and important topic to explore in this post-truth age. In this issue, there are six peer reviewed papers and 4 books reviews. They say it takes a village to raise a child, and there is no exaggeration to mention that it required a village to produce this special journal issue because we have 17 (co)authors whose papers were double blind peer reviewed by 14 different scholars. In addition to the 7 published papers, there are 4 book review authors. In total, over 30 scholars were involved in making this issue happen without counting the kind and generous efforts of the journal's managing editor and to everyone who has contributed or assisted in producing this special issue.

There is no doubt that this area of study remains very under-researched for many reasons including the fact that the majority of previous studies focused on the US and/or EU context, often overlooking Canada. However, there is a growing body of evidence that clearly suggests that Canada is plagued by the spread of misinformation and online hate especially linked to far-right ideology, often exporting them to the outside world. For example, social media sites that are based in Canada like Rumble can spread a lot of misinformation and hate, while fringe Canadian news sites such as Rebel News and Global News can play major roles not only in misleading the public in Canada but also in relation to falsely covering international issues (Al-Rawi & Fakida, 2021). The social and political risks are clear, for misinformation and its related terms like fake news have been weaponized by different groups and politicians (Al-Rawi, 2019; Al-Rawi, 2021a), often with the assistance of social media bots (Al-Rawi, Groshek & Zhang, 2019). Sometimes, this leads to a decline in trust in democracy and an increase in political polarization which got much worsened during the 2022 convoy protest in Ottawa. Other misinformation-related challenges Canada faces today include foreign interference in Canadian politics (Al-Rawi, 2021b; Al-Rawi & Rahman, 2020). There are also issues of interest to the Canadian public like climate change debates (Al-Rawi et al. 2021), health-related topics like COVID-19 (Al-Rawi & Jamieson, 2022; Al-Rawi & Shukla, 2020), LGBTQ rights, immigration, vaping and tobacco products, the oil and gas industry…etc. In other words, misinformation affects so many facets of life in Canada, and much more research is needed to empirically explore them.

The papers of this special issue are written by junior scholars like MA and Ph.D. students as well as mid-career and senior scholars with different years of experience in academia who

based at different universities throughout the country. These papers covered a variety of geographical regions and topics such as the convoy protest, COVID-19 measures, conspiracy theories…. etc. and they empirically examined different social media sites like Facebook, Instagram, Telegram, BitChute, Twitter, and YouTube. There is also a variety of research methods employed like the use of survey, content analysis, discourse analysis, digital methods, and some qualitative and interpretive approaches.

The first paper by Scott DeJong, Saskia Kowalchuk, and Fenwick McKelvey is entitled "Who to Blame this Pandemic On: A qualitative study of the politicization of COVID-19 through political memes in Canada". The study offers an empirical analysis of Canadian memes by investigating 14 different online communities active on social media during the early stages of the pandemic. The authors explored the themes and worldviews of three distinct communities that include (1) established partisan, (2) negative partisan, and (3) emergent right-wing populism.

The second paper by Ahmed Al-Rawi, Carmen Celestini, Nicole Stewart, and Nathan Worku is entitled "Delegitimizing the legitimate: Dark social movements on Telegram". This is another empirical study in which the authors operationalized conspiracy theories and applied their conceptual categorization on a relatively large dataset collected from 21 public Telegram channels. The authors highlight how the Canadian far-right tends to delegitimize the legitimate by repeatedly discussing the need to mistrust authorities, while creating a dark social movement on Telegram to coordinate online operations and attack their opponents.

The third paper is entitled "Skeptical communities: The participatory dynamics of political fandom" which is authored by Michelle Stewart, Maxime Bérubé, and Sklaerenn Le Gallo. The authors used political fandom and participatory propaganda theories to explore Quebec's political microcelebrities' use of YouTube to spread misinformation about pandemic-related measures. The authors identify different discourses around community members being éveillés or "those who are awake to the truth" versus endormis or "those who are asleep or manipulated".

The fourth research paper by Zeinab Farokhi is entitled "Making Freedom Great Again: Conspiracy theories, affective nostalgia and alignment, and the right-wing base grammars of the #Freeedomconvoy". Using discourse analysis as the main method, the author investigates the Twitter hashtags #IStandWithTruckers and #TruckersForFreedom2022. Farokhi studies affective persuasion techniques that are used by some Twitter influentials and sympathizers to enhance political polarization and differences.

Ghadah Alrasheed, Brandon Rigato, and Nadia Hai's study "Viral but under the radar: Unmasking the convergence of far-right and pandemic articulations on BitChute" offers an interesting examination of BitChute, an alternative social media site that is still under-researched. Similar to the third paper in this special issue, this study focuses on pandemic-related misinformation by studying eight Canadian channels that are affiliated with the far-right. The authors identified 6 main discourses such as political conspiracies and war analogies.

In addition, Giuliana Cucinelli and Leelan Farhan's study that is entitled "Fact-checking practices by Canadian adults during an era of misinformation and disinformation" is unique because it involves the use of a relatively large-scale survey unlike the other studies that used the non-obtrusive measures such as content-based research. The authors surveyed 99 Canadian

adults (aged between 18-64) to understand how they apply fact-checking measures, and they identified 10 different approaches such as online cross-referencing and the examination of source credibility.

Similar to the above study, Alaa Al-Musalli's course impact study that is entitled "Disinformation Literacy: Undergraduate Students' Perspectives on Emergent Skills and Implications for Disinformation Pedagogy" offers another unique insight into the way Disinformation Literacy (DL) can be implemented in a classroom setting within the Canadian context. The author conducted two small scale surveys on her students who took the DL course, and the results show that students developed several competencies especially in relation to effectively using fact-checking tools.

As for the four book reviews, they include Carmen Celestini's review of Erbschloe's Extremist propaganda in social media: A threat to homeland security (2018), Karmvir Padda's assessment of Stephanie Carvin's Stand on guard: Reassessing threats to Canada's national security (2021), Abdelrahman Fakida's account on Barbara Perry and Ryan Scrivens' Right-Wing Extremism in Canada (2019), as well as Joseph Nicolai and Stephen Li's review of Fox's Trump, Trudeau, Tweets, Truth: A Conversation (2022).

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