

Title of the Project: Manufacturing protest through social media event pages during the 2016 U.S. Presidential Election
Principal Investigator: Dr. Sharon Strover, Technology and Information Policy Institute, UT-Austin
Study Sponsor: Good Systems—A Bridging Barriers Grand Challenge Initiative

Written Cover Letter for Participation in Research Study

Manufacturing protest through social media event pages during the 2016 U.S. Presidential Election

Invitation to be Part of a Research Study

You are invited to be part of a research study. This letter will help you in choosing whether or not to participate in the study. Feel free to ask if anything is not clear in this document.

What is the study about and why are we doing it?

The purpose of the study is to find out the impact and efficacy of Facebook events organized by the Russian Internet Research Agency (IRA). The study seeks to contribute to our understanding on disinformation, social media platforms, and contemporary journalism.

What will happen if you take part in this study?

If you agree to take part in this study, you will be asked to:

- Be interviewed individually and in-person or by phone/VoIP by researchers from UT-Austin.
- This study will take approximately 60 minutes.

You can withdraw your participation in this study at any point in time.

NOTE:

Your participation in interviews may be audio-recorded.

How long will this study take and how many people will be in the study?

Participation in this study will take 60 minutes and include approximately 150 participants in total.

What risks and discomforts might you experience from being in this study?

There are some risks you might experience from being in this study. They are the risks associated with the potential loss of confidentiality that always accompanies participation in any research. Otherwise, there are no risks to participating in this project beyond what is experienced in everyday life.

How could you benefit from this study?

You will receive no direct benefit from participating in this study; however, your information is critical and benefits wider knowledge on disinformation and its impacts on our democracy.

What data will we collect from you?

As part of this study we will collect

- Responses to closed and open-ended questions based on our interview guides
- Audio files for transcriptions from interviews.

How will we protect your information?

We will protect your information by not reporting names in transcriptions or any subsequent publications stemming from this research unless you give us your explicit consent. Any other information that can directly identify you will be stored separately from the data collected as part of the project. All data will be stored securely in a locked location in accordance with UT regulations.

Information about you may be given to the following organizations:

- The study sponsor and/or representative of the sponsor
- Representatives of UT Austin and the UT Austin Institutional Review Board

We will share your data with other researchers for future research studies that may be similar to this study or may be very different. The data shared with other researchers will not include information that can directly identify you.

We plan to publish the results of this study. To protect your privacy, we will not include any information that could directly identify you.

What will happen to the information we collect about you after the study is over?

We will keep your research data to use for future research but any identifying information will be deleted. Your name and other information that can directly identify you – if accidentally collected – will be deleted from the research data collected as part of the project.

How will we compensate you for being part of the study?

You will not receive any type of payment for your participation.

Your Participation in this Study is Voluntary

It is totally up to you to decide to be in this research study. Participating in this study is voluntary. Your decision to participate will not affect your relationship with The University of Texas at Austin, the School of Journalism and Media, or the Technology and Information Policy Institute. You will not lose any benefits or rights you already had if you decide not to participate. Even if you decide to be part of the study now, you may change your mind and stop at any time. You do not have to answer any questions you do not want to answer.

If you decide to withdraw before this study is completed, we will delete your data and will not use it for analyses going forward.

Contact Information for the Study Team and Questions about the Research

If you have any questions about this research, you may contact:

Dr. Sharon Strover
Phone: 512-471-6652

Contact Information for Questions about Your Rights as a Research Participant

If you have questions about your rights as a research participant, or wish to obtain information, ask questions, or discuss any concerns about this study with someone other than the researcher(s), please contact the following:

The University of Texas at Austin
Institutional Review Board
Phone: 512-232-1543
Email: irb@austin.utexas.edu

Please reference study number 2020-02-0007.

Your Consent

Before agreeing to be part of the research, please be sure that you understand what the study is about. We will give you a copy of this document for your records. If you have any questions about the study later, you can contact the study team using the information provided above.