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From Crisis Pregnancy Centers to Teenbreaks.com: Anti-abortion Activism's Use of Cloaked Websites

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The campaign to dissuade women from having abortions dates back many decades in the United States. Since the 1960s, some anti-abortion activists have used deceptive tactics to discourage and divert women who are seeking abortions, deny them service, and persuade them to carry their pregnancy to term. Primarily, these sorts of tactics have been deployed through facilities known as "Crisis Pregnancy Centers" (CPCs). More recently these brick-and-mortar facilities and the deceptive practices traditionally associated with them have been joined by online strategies that do not replace, but rather augment, the established methods. In this chapter, I examine the mutually reinforcing practices of online and offline deception used by anti-abortion activists as a way to explore central issues for cyberactivism. I argue that a key struggle for all activists in the digital era is one over "facts." Ultimately, such battles are about *epistemology*, or *how* we know what we say we know. In this political struggle over how we come to know and agree upon facts, those who create cloaked sites rely on the limitations of current, narrow formulations of Internet literacy that contribute the ability to persuade through deception. I conclude the chapter by pointing the way forward to a critically engaged praxis that combines Internet literacy with a critical consciousness of power.

Activism around the issue of abortion has been a flashpoint of the culture wars in post-civil rights era United States (Ginsberg 1998; Luker 1985). Whereas the popular discussion of abortion in the 19th century appeared uncontroversial as the emerging medical profession claimed specialized knowledge about gestation and termination, the late 20th- and early 21st-century struggle over abortion has been rancorous, violent, and sometimes deadly. It is commonplace for anti-abortion protesters to confront women with pictures of bloody fetuses as they try to access abortion services, and some radical anti-abortion activists have assassinated abortion providers, such as Dr. Tiller (Hopkins 2009). As Luker argues, this shift in the place that abortion occupies in the political landscape reflects the way it has become a proxy for the place and meaning of motherhood with women on either side clearly drawn from "two different views of motherhood [that] represent in turn two very different kinds of social worlds" (1985, 193).

The reality of the current popular Internet is that search engines, web addresses (URLs), and graphic user interfaces (GUIs) represent a new kind of battleground over ideas and politics. For example, a candidate running for office today may be the target of a "Google Bomb"—a clever way of using a search engine to undermine a carefully crafted public persona, as I discuss further below. Or, when a woman who is supposedly an average mom appears in a video spot (run simultaneously on cable television and YouTube) voicing her concern about "big government interfering with her grocery shopping," she may actually be a spokesperson for the beverage industry and part of a multimillion dollar "astroturf" campaign. Or, a site that appears to be a tribute to an African American civil rights leader may actually be a "cloaked site" hosted by a white supremacist organization, such as www.martinlutherking.org. Deception is certainly not a new practice, but it plays out in new ways within the context of Internet technologies like URLs, GUIs, and Google search algorithms.

Deception is not a new strategy, certainly, in the CPC movement. Before the rise of the popular Internet, many in the CPC movement used a range of deceptive tactics in print media, in face-to-face interactions, and over the telephone. I will take up these tactics in more detail below, but for now, it is to cloaked sites which I turn, as they are effective tools anti-abortion activists are using in their cyberactivist struggle.

CLOAKED SITES

Cloaked sites are easily encountered using popular search engines, such as Google (Daniels 2009a; 2009b). Cloaked websites are published by individuals or groups who conceal authorship in order to deliberately disguise a political agenda. The use of the term "cloaked" to refer to a website appeared the first time in Ray and Marsh's 2001 article in which the authors refer to www.martinlutherking.org as a "cloaked site" (Ray and Marsh 2001). Others have used the terms "counterfeit," "hoax," and "urban legend" to refer to some of these sites (e.g., Deutsch 2004). However, such terms lack a conceptual clarity because they miss the key element of a *hidden political agenda*.

Cloaked websites are similar to previous versions of print and electronic media propaganda in which the authorship, source, or intention of a publication or broadcast is obscured (Cull, Culbert, and Welch 2003; Jowett and O'Donnell 2006). In a study of revolutionary and counterrevolutionary electronic communication using radio, the authors (Soley and Nichols 1986) distinguish between these three types of propaganda: 1) "white" propaganda in which stations openly identify themselves (e.g., *Radio Free Europe*), 2) "grey" propaganda in which stations are purportedly operated by dissident groups within a country although actually they might be located in another nation (e.g., the supposedly anti-Castro "*La Voz del CID*" [Frederick 1986]), and 3) "black" propaganda stations that transmit broadcasts by one side

disguised as broadcasts by another (e.g., the "*Lord Haw-Haw*" broadcasts of the "English voice of Nazi Germany," [Doherty 1994]).[1] Websites like radio broadcasts or printed media can be used to advance the goals of propagandists;[2] and, as with "black" and "grey" propaganda, cloaked websites are rendered more effective precisely because they conceal their intention (Stauber, Rampton, and St. John 1996). There has been a good deal of attention to the use of the Internet to advance clearly declared political agendas by easily identifiable authors from marginalized subcultures (Kahn and Kellner 2003, 2004). Generally, scholars have seen this as a good thing because of the participatory aspect in the face of large, corporate monopolies controlling media (Kahn and Kellner 2003, 2004; Langman 2005; Jenkins et al. 2006); yet, relatively little has been written about websites that intentionally conceal, disguise, or obfuscate their authorship in order to advance a political agenda (Daniels 2009a; 2009b). Cloaked websites are not the exclusive purview of white supremacists; such sites disguise any number of political agendas. In order to expand on this point about the range of agendas that can be hidden through cloaked sites, in the section that follows, I explore a number of examples of cloaked websites representing a range of political perspectives.

Perhaps the most widely known example of a cloaked site is that of www. GWBush.com,[3] which was set up in the early days of Bush's first presidential campaign. The activist group behind this project, known collectively as ®™ark, in collaboration with two other activists known as The Yes Men, have views that would be considered far left-wing on the American political landscape. ®™ark is primarily interested in drawing attention to the system of corporate power and challenging the legal convention in the United States of corporate personhood; The Yes Men are anti-globalization activists (Meikle 2002, 114–115).[4] This cloaked www.GWBush.com site was very effective in getting attention and fooling web users, in part because of the clever use of a domain name similar to the official campaign's URL, which was www.GeorgeWBush.com, and in part because it used the same graphics as the official site. In the days after its initial launch, a number of reporters were taken in by the site and phoned the Bush campaign to ask for clarification on policy issues (Meikle 2002, 116). Bush and his campaign advisors strenuously objected to the site, going so far as to issue a cease-and-desist letter to its creators and file a complaint with the Federal Election Committee (Meikle 2002, 116–118). It was in response to this cloaked site that George W. Bush twice remarked "there ought to be limits to freedom" (Meikle 2002, 118). Whereas www.GWBush.com was referred to in mainstream press accounts as a "spoof" or "hoax" (and even by the creators as "parody"), I argue that these terms elide the pointed political message that motivated the creation of the site. For example, the www.GWBush.com site intentionally concealed the authorship at first, and it was very difficult for many, even quite skilled web users, to discern that ®™ark was behind the site. The political agenda of the site was also not clear at first. The apparent

disconnect between George Bush's well-known conservatism and the language on the cloaked site about "corporate responsibility" had reporters calling the official Bush campaign site for comment about their new policy positions (Meikle 2002, 118). In this instance, once the authorship of ®™*ark* was revealed, the political agenda of the cloaked site became clearer. This was a strategy by a left-leaning group, but there is a range of political agendas disguised by cloaked sites.

Far-right racist groups and individuals also design cloaked sites. Perhaps the most pernicious cloaked site is one that is intended to disguise a far-right, racist political agenda is the aforementioned www.martinlutherking.org site, hosted by the white supremacist portal Stormfront, which is run by Don Black (Daniels 2009a). This site was one of the earliest ones on the web, and has been maintained continuously since it first appeared in the late 1990s. And, in 2007, an anonymous and clever Internet user known as "Bleachboy" registered the domain name "cnnheadlienews.com." Even with the misspelled "lie" (rather than "line"), many people were taken in by the cloaked site, when it posted a deceptive looking article claiming, "*Radical Hispanic separatist organization MEChA (Movimiento Estudiantil Chicano de Aztlan) is taking responsibility for setting the wildfires in California, confirmed Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger.*" Although quickly discredited by journalists, the piece was repeated as true throughout the conservative, anti-immigration blogosphere.

The fact that people believe the misstatements, half-truths, and lies on cloaked sites highlights the unique epistemological challenge of activist websites in the digital era. Before the Internet, we relied on a system of gatekeepers such as editors, publishers, broadcasters, and librarians, all of whom mediated information for knowledge seekers. The rise of the popular Internet has not eliminated these gatekeepers, but it has opened a new venue for a kind of publishing that is not mediated by any sort of vetting process. Mostly, this opens new opportunities for a wider range of ideas to be shared by a broader array of groups and individuals; and, at the same time, it raises some disturbing questions about how we acquire and verify knowledge. In particular, the deceptive strategies of cloaked sites are even more disturbing when considered in light of cognitive research on how people remember (or misremember) facts. Researchers found that false claims, if repeated, are remembered as true (Skurnik, Yoon, Park, and Schwarz 2005). This is especially vexing in the case of cloaked sites that purport to offer scientific information about reproductive health.

DECEPTION AS ANTI-ABORTION CYBERACTIVIST STRATEGY

Cloaked websites can also conceal hidden political agendas connected to reproductive health and the volatile area of abortion politics, as does "Teen Breaks" (www.teenbreaks.com), which first appeared online in 2005.

The two main elements of cloaked sites, concealing authorship and a hidden political agenda, are both evident at this site.

Concealing Authorship

It is difficult to tell who is behind Teen Breaks, and that is intentional. Unlike most sites on the web, there is no "who we are" or "about us" page on Teen Breaks. At the very bottom of the main page, in small print, the publisher is noted as the "Rosetta Foundation," but there is no link to that Foundation, nor any text describing the supposed Foundation's goals. In fact, a separate Internet search reveals that Sandra Choate Faucher is the president of the Rosetta Foundation. According to several online sources, Faucher is a long-time pro-life activist (www.wrtl.org/events/bios/SandyFaucher.aspx). Not revealing Faucher's involvement with the site is another way to conceal authorship. In terms of the Rosetta Foundation, there is little evidence that it exists as an organization beyond obfuscating the authorship of the website.

Hidden Political Agenda

To all but the most astute political observer and experienced Internet veteran, the site appears to be a legitimate source of reproductive health information. In fact, it disguises an anti-abortion political agenda. On a page called "Complications for Girls," the site quotes literature from the conservative activist group *Focus on the Family* to support the notion that there are many (and exclusively) negative physical and emotional consequences of abortion that form an alleged "post-abortion syndrome" (www.teen breaks.com/abortion/complicationsgirls.cfm). This supposed "syndrome" is not a clinically recognized medical condition with a biological etiology (Robinson et al. 2009). However, some literature has begun to point to the social and cultural stigma around abortion as harmful to those who have the procedure (Kumar, Hessini, and Mitchell 2009). Neither the *American Psychiatric Association* nor the *American Psychological Association* recognizes "post-abortion syndrome" as a diagnosable disorder. In fact, the term "post-abortion syndrome" is an especially effective rhetorical strategy of the anti-abortion movement to advance its agenda by instilling fear in women about what will happen to them if they have the procedure (Hopkins and Reicher 1997; Kelly 2012).

The powerful combination of the concealed authorship and hidden political agenda is amplified by other digital elements of Teen Breaks. The site deploys a very sophisticated use of domain name. The web address, or URL (universal resource locator), teenbreaks.com does not signal the political intentions of the site, but rather the target audience. The professional-looking design of the site, with an animated graphic of young people playing video games and sharing glimpses of each other's mobile devices across the top, also helps convey a sense of legitimacy and distract from

questions of authorship. Further, the site does not employ extreme or overt movement rhetoric, either in words (e.g., "murder") or in images (e.g., bloody, aborted fetuses). This is striking given how prominent these are at so many anti-abortion actions. Instead, the tone of the language at the site is moderate and reasoned. The user interface, layout, and moderate sounding rhetoric along with the concealed authorship and hidden political agenda combine to make Teen Breaks a pernicious presence on the web.

The danger in a cloaked site of this type is that young girls or women might stumble upon the site through an Internet search for reliable reproductive health information. At the very least, the site may confuse people, or, it may persuade some that "post-abortion syndrome" is a reality. This was true of the young people (ages 15–19) that I interviewed as they searched for information about civil rights and inadvertently came upon cloaked sites; most were confused by the deceptive sites (Daniels 2009a; 2009b). And, the way that I originally learned of Teen Breaks was through an undergraduate student classroom presentation. At the end of a 15-week semester on finding and assessing health information online, I assigned students to make a presentation "about any health issue" and the way it was being addressed online. One student made her presentation on "post-abortion syndrome" and used Teen Breaks as her example. This student was not an ideologue or ardent anti-abortion advocate; she was simply completing the assigned task as she understood it. When she completed her presentation, I took her and the rest of the class through a learning exercise to see if we could find who was behind the Teen Breaks site. Part of what we discovered together is that the authorship on the site itself was concealed; there was nothing on the site that discussed who had created it beyond the small print mentioning "The Rosetta Foundation." From there, we worked together as a class to find the information (described elsewhere) about Sandra Choate Faucher, a pro-life activist who runs the site. There are consequences from this sort of misinformation beyond the confusion this student experienced.

In a worst-case scenario, cloaked sites such as Teen Breaks may actually succeed at their movement goals. That is, they may convince some girls or women that they must endure an unwanted pregnancy and childbirth rather than end a pregnancy for fear of the fictitious syndrome and misdirection away from abortion services. The cloaked site Teen Breaks is in many ways a digital version of the brick-and-mortar Crisis Pregnancy Centers designed to prevent women from accessing abortion services.

CRISIS PREGNANCY CENTERS BEFORE THE INTERNET

The Crisis Pregnancy Center movement is a subculture of the larger anti-abortion movement (Kelly 2013). It began in the late 1960s and, initially at least, was largely driven by one man. Robert Pearson opened the first Crisis Pregnancy Center (CPC) in Hawaii in 1967 and continued to work on

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expanding the movement throughout the next decades. Whereas crisis pregnancy centers (CPCs) are typically associated with Evangelical Christian charities, such as Care Net, Heartbeat International, and the National Institute of Family and Life Advocates (Kelly 2012, 2013), the early movement began with Pearson's connection to and networks among those affiliated with the Catholic Church. In 1984, Pearson authored a 93-page printed manual, *How to Start and Operate Your Own Pro-Life Outreach Crisis Pregnancy Center,* published by his own "Pearson Foundation," which circulated widely via regular mail among anti-abortion activists and served as a catalyst for the expansion of the centers. In the manual, Pearson outlines some of the deceptive tactics that would come to characterize the tactics of many CPCs, including:

> Do not indicate you are pro-life. If she is seeking an abortion and indicates she won't come in because she knows we are pro-life, assure her we can still help her by giving her all the information on abortion.

And, these notes about interior décor:

> Make sure your decor does not expose your purpose.
>   Keep a few baby items hidden away in your Center, so that you are not advertising your pro-life views. But sometimes the gift of a little baby outfit before she leaves, is the very thing that will clinch the mother's decision for life.

All the instructions in the manual are geared toward one goal "to find and assist those women who might be seeking an abortion to change their mind." Throughout the 1980s and 1990s, CPCs continued to grow and gain power through the support of organizations such as Focus on the Family, the Christian Action Council (now known as Care Net), and the National Institute of Family Life Advocates.

   The manual urges local operators to use "neutral advertising," to seek listings in the printed Yellow Pages telephone directory alongside abortion clinics and to adopt "dual names," one to "draw abortion-bound women" and one to attract donations from people against abortion (Gross 1987). CPCs would also use the alphabetical taxonomy of the Yellow Pages to their advantage. In the 1986 issue of the Nynex Yellow Pages, the category "Abortion Alternatives" appears before "Abortion Providers," thus positioning CPCs before abortion providers. So, for example, if a woman were to look for an abortion provider in the Manhattan yellow pages, she would first see an ad for "Pregnancy Help, Inc." Such an ad might read, "Pregnant? Need Help? Free Pregnancy Test." Although it appears that this group might perform abortions, it does not. Apart from the central misunderstanding about whether the centers perform abortions or make referrals, there are other inaccuracies. For instance, The Manhattan Pregnancy

Services (a CPC) advertisement says that it offers "accurate abortion information," yet materials presented at all the centers are filled with statistics about the dangers of abortion that have been disputed by the Centers for Disease Control (Gross 1987).

The Christian organizations that were originally behind CPCs, such as Pearson's Catholic network and the Evangelical Care Net, also funded roadside billboards. Accurate numbers about how many billboards and at what cost are difficult to come by, but these were a key strategy for the CPCs. The billboards would typically include a question in large letters, "Crisis Pregnancy?" and then a 1–800 telephone number, with a reassuring and vague, "We Can Help." The telephone number would connect callers to a 24-hour toll-free "hotline" staffed by volunteers who would direct women to a CPC in their geographic region.

As CPCs proliferated, some municipalities have tried to stop these deceptive practices by creating regulations that "Crisis Pregnancy Centers" had to clearly post their positions on abortion and contraception. The New York City Council, following in the footsteps of Baltimore and Austin, is the latest city government to take up legislation to at least force these clinics to fess up. However, such attempts at regulating these deceptive practices have been struck down by higher courts. In June 2012, the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Fourth Circuit ruled that the deceptive "Crisis Pregnancy Centers" are allowed to deceive women and that this is not against the law.

Ironically enough, as various governmental entities tried to take action against CPCs, they began to change tactics. For example, Care Net issued a statement formalizing their new commitment to the evangelical community, including "Our Commitment to Care" condemning deception (Kelly 2013). Meanwhile, the CPCs have grown well beyond their grassroots beginnings and are now thoroughly institutionalized within the political landscape in the United States. Between 2001 and 2005, CPCs received $30 million in federal funds through a variety of mechanisms (Murphy 2011). A thorough exploration of the success of the CPC movement is beyond the scope of this chapter, but the strategies and tactics of the movement before the Internet are what is most relevant here.

Before the rise of the popular Internet, the CPC movement used a variety of media strategies to deceive and misdirect "abortion seeking" women. These mostly print-based strategies included: Pearson's printed manual, the listings in the Yellow Pages and the manipulation of alphabetical taxonomy, that is, using "AA" before the names of CPCs so that they appear first in the alphabetical listings of the Yellow Pages, and billboards along busy highways, with images of a distressed woman and the words "Pregnant? In trouble? Call us, we can help." They combined these mechanisms with a 24-hour "hotline," or telephone number staffed by volunteers who would direct women to the nearest brick-and-mortar CPC, where they would be given more printed materials with "facts" that are disputed by reputable authorizes like the Centers for Disease Control. All of these are forms of

media that the CPC used in variously deceptive ways to misdirect women away from abortion services in the era of the popular Internet.

Of course, not all anti-abortion activists use deceptive practices, and the deceptive practices discussed here are some of the more radical examples. It might be useful to think of CPC deception as a continuum. At the most extreme end is Pearson, but there are more moderate subcultures of the movement, such as Care Net and HBI, that engage in less egregiously deceptive practices. For example, Peggy Hartshorn, founder and president of Heartbeat International (HBI), an anti-abortion organization, objects to the association with Pearson (Hartshorn 2006). Similarly, the group Care Net's counselor training manual disavows the kind of deception that Pearson advocates (Care Net 1995).[5] Still, the strategies in both online and brick-and-mortar CPCs do work in reciprocally strengthening ways across different levels of deception.

In the Internet era, the CPC buildings that house "clinics" exist simultaneously with cloaked sites such as Teen Breaks. These two instances of the anti-abortion movement subculture—one material (the CPC buildings) the other digital (the cloaked site)—offer mutually reinforcing practices of online and offline deception as forms of activism and cyberactivism. What both these sets of practices highlight are the ways that the struggle over "facts" is integral to political struggle in the digital era.

WAYS OF KNOWING: A SITE OF CYBERACTIVIST STRUGGLE

A key struggle for cyberactivists across a range of issues is the struggle over "facts" and what are agreed-upon truths. In the digital era, activists strategize about how to change people's minds about an issue as much as how to deploy state power in their favor. In his three-volume work, *The Network Society*, first published in 1996–1998, Manuel Castells offers an analysis of social movements in the digital era, or, in his terms the Information Age. Castells takes as his case studies the feminist, environmentalist, and white supremacist movements. He writes:

> Social movements in the Information Age are essentially mobilized around cultural values. The struggle to change the codes of meaning in the institutions and practice of the society is *the essential struggle in the process of social change in the new historical context, movements to seize the power of the minds, not state power*. (Castells 1997, emphasis added)

This insight about seizing the power of minds, rather than state power, is a crucial one for understanding cyberactivism. As I have written elsewhere about the contemporary focus of the white supremacist movement online, the focus of struggle now is around changing people's minds about the

history of slavery, about the civil rights movement, and about the place of racial equality in a democracy, rather than about approaching the State for a change in the legitimation of rights or a redistribution of resources.

Whereas the use of lies in political propaganda to achieve nefarious ends is neither new nor unique to digital media (Corn 2003; Conason 2003; George 1959), the emergence of cloaked websites does illustrate a central feature of the broader use of propaganda in the current political context; that is, the use of sometimes difficult-to-detect lies and baseless "facts" to further a political agenda. Indeed, a key feature of the mainstream right-wing movement's political success in the United States has been the challenge to "fact-based reality" by building a knowledge production network of counter intellectuals who produce a steady flow of manufactured "facts" that suit a conservative, faith-based agenda that includes pseudo-science like "intelligent design," "reparative therapy to cure homosexuality," and "abstinence-only" sex education. Ultimately, these are disputes about epistemology, or how we know what we say we know, and these battles are fought along the lines of political ideology rather than any notion of scientific validity.

Traditional epistemologies tied to enlightenment notions of reason and objectivity divorced from lived experience suggest that universal *Truth* is knowable. Scientists committed to such an epistemology follow strict methodological rules intended to distance themselves from the values, vested interests, and emotions generated by their race, class, gender, sexuality, or unique lived experience. Some feminists and postmodern theorists have argued that knowledge is always partial, situated, and embodied. Such an epistemology makes universal *Truth* as an impossibility because only a relational truth between *knower* and *known* is possible. Postmodern epistemologies also make claims for social justice problematic (if not impossible) because there can be no standard upon which to base such claims. There are many ways in which knowledge, distributed via the Internet, is the realization of postmodern epistemologies because of the way it opens publishing ideas without the gatekeepers of traditional publishing avenues and the ways it allows for the possibility of identity formation of "minds" without regard for identities rooted in geographically rooted selves. All ideas, and notions of expertise, are up for renegotiation in this new digital era. For social movement activists, this opens a whole new field of political struggle around meaning.

The tautological strategy of using conservative sources to substantiate conservative "facts" is a commonplace tactic of the right-wing propaganda machine in the United States. Indeed, a cottage industry of conservative think tanks, pundits, and writers churning out scientific distortions has emerged to conduct a "war on the Enlightenment" ideal of rationality (Goldberg 2006, 80–105). In an ironic twist, the mainstream right-wing has, under the guise of cultural tolerance for diverse views, engaged in a full assault on "fact-based reality" in which conservatives have created their own version of postmodern, radical deconstructionism where "truth" is no longer possible (Goldberg 2006, 102).

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Critical theorists associated with the Frankfurt School such as Adorno stressed the importance of critical thinking by arguing that it is a constitutive feature of the struggle for self-emancipation and social change (Giroux 2006, 8). Whereas there is certainly room for a critique of the ways that rationality contributes to systems of domination, the hidden political agendas of cloaked websites suggest the need for a renewal in the cultivation of rationality and critical thinking.

MULTIPLE CRITICAL/MEDIA LITERACIES

Cloaked sites, and other intentionally deceptive online practices, require a new set of skills. Rather than simply offer a critique of these deceptive practices, I want to signal a way forward to a critically engaged praxis that combines Internet literacy with a critical consciousness of power relations. The presence of difficult-to-detect propaganda on the Internet makes necessary a new set of skills for deciphering such deception, what one cultural critic refers to as "crap detection" skills for the digital era (Rheingold 2012). Fortunately, there is also a whole range of new tools specifically designed to help with deciphering "crap" on the Internet.

Digital tools change frequently, so it is important to learn *how to learn* new tools. Some of these new tools include: Alexa Web (www.alexa.com/), Snopes (www.snopes.com/), and SourceWatch (www.sourcewatch.org/).

Alexa Web (www.alexa.com/) is a strong resource for finding out more about a particular website, who visits it often, and what kinds of search queries lead people to the site. So, for example, if you were to go to the site and enter teenbreaks.com into the search field and then click on the tab "Contact Information," you would learn that Sandra Choate Faucher is the main contact person, along with her mailing address and her email (scfaucher@aol.com).

Snopes proclaims itself to be "the definitive Internet reference source for urban legends, folklore, myths, rumors, and misinformation" and can sometimes be useful for debunking persistent myths about reproductive health. For example, the page on "Impregnable Defenses" counters the notion that a woman (or, a "gal") cannot get pregnant the first time she has sex (www.snopes.com/pregnant/conceive.asp).

Source Watch (www.sourcewatch.org) is an excellent resource for deciphering cloaked sites that may be used as part of a front group. For instance, whereas you might think that something called *The Independent Women's Forum* is a pro-feminist lobby, it is actually an anti-feminist organization predominately funded by conservative U.S. foundations, including the Koch brothers' Claude R. Lambe Foundation—and Source Watch would be an excellent place to discover this (www.sourcewatch.org/index.php?title=Independent_Women%27s_Forum).

These tools are a necessary but not sufficient array of tools that may enable one to decipher cloaked sites and other forms of propaganda online.

Along with these, one needs a broader set of skills, or "literacies" in order to not be duped by cloaked sites. Kellner has written extensively about the need for new, and multiple, literacies for the digital era (Kellner 1998; 2000, 2004; Kahn and Kellner 2005; Kellner and Share 2005, 2007). He offers first a critique of the way that we have come to think of "computer literacy," tied as it is to the *A Nation at Risk* report of 1983 and up to the present call for integration of technology across the curriculum and the standards-based approach of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 and 2004's U.S. National Educational Technology Plan. Instead, Kellner wants to re-vision education related to technology in a way that foregrounds democracy in and through multiple literacies. It is this project that I want to build on here. Multiple critical media literacies, such as learning to check suspicious websites with the tools described above, must be joined with a critical understanding of power relations. It is both of these, a fluid understanding of technologies and a grasp of power relations, that are necessary to meet the challenge of parsing propaganda and facts in the digital era.

CONCLUSION

Anti-abortion activists have augmented the legacy of deceptive practices employed through Crisis Pregnancy Centers with cloaked sites. Teen Breaks brings together key elements of cloaked sites, concealing authorship and disguising a political agenda, and deftly combines this with a slick graphic design and layout, moderate rhetoric, and a URL that reveals little about the intent of the site. These deceptive online strategies echo those of the pre-Internet Crisis Pregnancy Centers that used the printed Yellow Pages, roadside billboards, and 24-hour "hotline" to dissuade women from obtaining abortions. In the current era, these two sets of strategies—one material and analog, the other digital—are mutually reinforcing and work together to shore up misinformation, such as the notion that there is a "post-abortion syndrome" that supposedly plagues women who have the procedure.

One of the many promises of digital media is that it opens up the possibility for multiple perspectives. Understanding multiple perspectives is an important corrective to the racism, sexism, and homophobia generated by corporate-owned media outlets; and, this is a vital contribution of participatory media (Jenkins et al. 2006). However, the downside of an open web is that individuals are left to decipher vast amounts of information from an unmediated and unvetted universe of people publishing their own words. If the wonder of the open Internet is that anyone can create and publish content online, it is also simultaneously the distress, as those who intend to deceive create and publish cloaked websites. The chief danger of sites like Teen Breaks is the same as the brick-and-mortar Crisis Pregnancy Centers: that women will be denied an important health service to which they have a constitutionally protected right. Beyond that significant threat is another.

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Deceptive cloaked sites like Teen Breaks also challenge what we know to be "fact" and, in so doing, undermine the epistemological foundation of social movements that would seek to guarantee a woman's right to access an abortion. And this is a very grave threat, indeed.

NOTES

1. While the crudely color-coded designations of "white" "grey" and "black" are problematic linguistic constructions for the way they reinscribe racial connotations, the distinctions drawn by these conceptualizations are useful for understanding cloaked websites.
2. "Propaganda is the deliberate, systematic attempt to shape perceptions, manipulate cognitions, and direct behavior to achieve a response that furthers the desired intent of the propagandist," Garth S. Jowett and Victoria O'Donnell, *Propaganda and Persuasion*, 4th edition (London: Sage Publications, 2006).
3. The site is no longer on the web, but the creators have a web page that chronicles the saga and offers screenshots of some earlier versions of the site, along with audio of Bush's "freedom ought to have limits" reaction. Available online at: www.rtmark.com/bush.html, last modified June 22, 2013.
4. "The Yes Men" chronicle their unique version of activism in the documentary film *The Yes Men*, (2003). Their involvement in the GWBush.com action is available online here: http://theyesmen.org/hijinks/gwbush.
5. I am indebted to Kimberly Kelly for her insights on the various subcultures of the CPC movement.

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