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Digital Manipulation on Social Media: How Deep Fakes Have Transformed the Cyber World into a Complex Breeding Ground of Disinformation

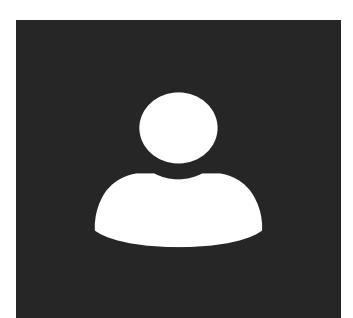Meghan Anderson
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Digital Manipulation on Social Media: How Deep Fakes Have Transformed the Cyber World Into a Complex Breeding Ground of Disinformation

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BACKGROUND

Deep fakes are digitally altered videos that are aimed at spreading disinformation. They make the subject appear as though they are doing something offensive or inappropriate, and they often look extremely realistic due to today's technology (Franks & Waldman, 2019). Deep fakes are harmful to the public because they can easily deceive an individual's auditory and visual receptors (Sylvester, 2021). The goal of creating deep fakes is to skew the perceptions of naive consumers, thus distorting their long-term views.

METHODS

1. Examined secondary sources pertaining to the history and context surrounding deep fakes.
2. Analyzed primary sources that documented first hand examples of deep fakes of famous political figures.
3. Researched tweets from naive consumers that viewed the deep fake without realizing it was false.

RESULTS

- Naive consumers were severely impacted by viewing the deep fake of the famous politicians
- Individuals either used it to support their views against each politician or to change their mind about who they supported

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The technology of deep fakes allows for **manipulated narratives** to reach **naive consumers** that can result in **severe misperceptions of** important political leaders.

AlbertaGirl
@AlbertaGrl

Is Nancy Pelosi drunk this early in the morning. She is literally slurring her words. 🤔 #ImpeachmentVOTE

10:17 AM · Jan 15, 2020 · Twitter for iPhone

2 Retweets **1** Quote Tweet **10** Likes

Example of Deep Fakes Skewing the Perceptions of the General Public.

Take a picture to download the full list of references.

EXAMPLE 1: DEEP FAKE OF NANCY PELOSI

Nancy Pelosi has been "deep faked" multiple times in recent years. One of the most prominent instances was when her voice was slowed down to make her appear as though she was intoxicated whilst giving a speech (Mervosh, 2019). Obviously, Pelosi was not under the influence, but this incorrect portrayal had major consequences. Millions naively believed she was drunk on stage, and still hold onto these false views to this day (Sylvester, 2021).

EXAMPLE 1: DEEP FAKE OF BARACK OBAMA

Barack Obama was famously deep faked in 2018, in which he was completely edited to say blatantly false statements, such as derogatory insults directed at other politicians (Mack, 2018). Although at the end the editor of the deep fake is revealed, many people initially believed these false statements without viewing the piece in full. Naive consumers were greatly impacted because it looked and sounded exactly like Obama, even though it was wholly false (Sylvester, 2021).

EVOLUTION OF DEEP FAKES

The creation of deep fakes has severely racist and misogynistic roots (Franks and Waldman, 2019). These altered videos were initially crafted to fabricate "revenge porn," in which perpetrators edit individuals, predominantly women and people of color, into false sexual and derogatory settings (Franks and Waldman, 2019). Over time, people shifted their focus to "deep faking" celebrities and famous politicians because of how massive their reach is, but deep fakes have been harming regular individuals for a long time (Franks and Waldman, 2019).