

Jacob G. Westerfeld

Professor Nevans Locke

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Essay 4- Compare/contrast with documentation

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The Virus

The world is amid an unprecedented pandemic with information changing faster than the masses can consume it. Our healthcare workers are overworked to keep up with the number of patients requiring treatment leaving many struggling with their own health. This is especially seen with their mental health as explored in the *Time* article “‘We carry the burden.’ Medical workers fighting COVID-19 are facing a mental health crisis.” (Law). The unfortunate souls that modern medicine cannot save are also continuing their ripple effect onto funeral workers who are also overwhelmed as detailed in the *Weekly Inquirer* article “Exhausted funeral home employee cremated by mistake while taking a nap.” (Ellsworth) Regrettably, only one of these items has the truth behind it, whereas the other is meant to simply prey upon society’s need for constant information to fit a narrative to incite fear. A comparison of the articles and their sources shows which one is not to be trusted. Both the *Time* and *Weekly Inquirer* articles deal with burnout from dealing with covid victims and the incidents caused by it, but differ in their credibility and accuracy.

Time published the article “‘We carry the burden.’ Medical workers fighting COVID-19 are facing a mental health crisis.” on April 10th, 2020. This article is about the medical workers in New York City, New York, who are fighting against the COVID epidemic on the front lines of our hospitals. These workers are contracting the disease and spreading it to their own families due to hospitals inability to provide them with the proper protective equipment they need. On top of the physical risk the health care workers have been facing, they have been dealing with the invisible demons known as mental distress. As cited in the article, the Jama network posted on March 23rd, 2020 the following stats for health care workers battling COVID: “Among 1,257 healthcare workers working with COVID-19 patients in China, 50.4% reported symptoms of depression, 44.6% symptoms of anxiety, 34% insomnia, and 71.5% reported distress.” (Lai) These men and women are not only subjecting their physical wellbeing, but their mental as well.

The website *Weekly Inquirer* put out an article on April 15th, 2020 titled “Exhausted funeral home employee cremated by mistake while taking a nap.” This article is about a man named Michael Jones who was a funeral home employee in Greenville, Alabama. Mr. Jones was apparently tired after working multiple sixteen-hour shifts. The work was busier than normal because of the rapid influx of bodies being brought in due to COVID. One day Mr. Jones was exhausted and decided to take a nap at work on an empty stretcher. While sleeping Mr. Jones was mistaken for a fifty-two-year-old man who died from respiratory issues. A new employee forgot to check for a toe tag, and he was then taken. The new employee then placed Mr. Jones in a crematory and activated the machine where he was then accidentally cremated while alive. By the time other employees figured out where the screaming was coming from, it was too late. Mr. Jones

had succumbed to his burns and died. The unnamed employee may be charged with criminal negligence.

While both articles address the ripple effects that COVID has had, the authority of the articles is vastly different. The first consideration of their authority lies with the publishers of the articles. *Time* is a well-respected accredited publication that has been in circulation since 1923 and has an established history of long-lasting credibility. They are world renown and have covered world breaking news since their inception. *Time* has had several Pulitzer Prize winning articles. Additionally, they are easy to get in contact with. While on their website, they give direct email and phone numbers to get a hold of them. Contrarily, the *Weekly Inquirer* does not even appear in a search for their name on Google. If readers find their way onto their website, they are inundated with ads and it has one “Contact us” link. When the link is clicked on, the readers are taken to a page that simply states” [contact-form-7 404 "Not Found"]”. Furthermore, the website is not user friendly and great effort is required to navigate it. When a look is taken at the authors of the articles to further assess the authority, there is a stark contrast as well. Tara Law is the author of the *Time* article. Mrs. Law has over 750 articles published with *Time*. She has been writing about COVID and COVID related events since it was picked up by the news cycle. When readers click on her name, they can see an immense list of articles she has worked on as well as a link to her twitter account. When a look is taken at the article from the *Weekly Inquirer*, it is credited to a Janice Ellsworth. Trying to find more articles written by her ends up on the same 404 “Not Found” error as the contact us endeavor.

The differences of the accuracy of the articles are rather apparent, as well making it easier for the readers to distinguish between real and fake news. In the *Time* article they reference studies performed by other reputable sources that strengthen the claims of the article. In their

articles they link readers to the sources of their information. This allows the readers to fact check themselves. Inversely, the *Weekly Inquirer* has no references to any source of information. As a matter of fact, one simple internet search for the words “funeral employee cremated alive” will show this article has been published multiple times as far back 2017. This exact article has almost word for word been published on the *Weekly Inquirer* website multiple times alone. The victim’s name may change, and the location will sometimes be Texas, New York, or Minnesota. The rest of the article, including the witness’s names, are almost always verbatim. It is also difficult to get an actual depiction of this Mr. Jones, because depending on which website that is looked at, his picture or description changes.

While both the articles deal with burnout from dealing with COVID victims and the incidents caused by it, the differences in their credibility and accuracy is apparent. After a comparison of the two articles and their sources there is no real questioning which one is fake or not. The *Weekly Inquirer* is ripe with untrustworthy fake articles. *Time* is not infallible and cannot be taken completely on their word, but with putting forth a little effort, readers can find out if their content holds water. Fake new can be rather sensational and is typically a fun read if nothing else. Some websites like the Onion know this and they are an intentionally fake news website that is not meant to be taken seriously. They exist to be a place to read intentionally absurd, bizarre, and satirical news. However, websites like the *Weekly Inquirer* are meant to be thought of as real. They want people to spread their false stories to draw others in. Whether to push an agenda or for monetary purposes, they are swaying people away from the truth. Therefore, it is so important to fact check before sharing an article.

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