

THE AGE OF MISINFORMATION: HOW DOES EXPOSURE TO NEW INFORMATION AFFECT PREVIOUSLY HELD BELIEFS?

Respondents were exposed to one of two stimuli . . .

The New York Times

Opinion

Wealth Inequality in America

By J. Foster

December 30, 2018

This is the top one percent we've been hearing so much about so much. One percent of America has 40% of all the nation's wealth while the bottom 80% - 8 out of every 10 people or 80 out of these hundred - only has seven percent between them, and this has only gotten worse in the last 20 to 30 years while the richest 1% take home almost a quarter of the national income today in 1976. They took home only nine percent, meaning their share of income has nearly tripled in the last 30 years; the top 1% owns half the country's stocks bonds and mutual funds. The bottom 50% of Americans own only half a percent of these investments, which means they aren't investing. They're just barely scraping by.

I'm sure many of these wealthy people have worked very hard for their money. But do you really believe that the CEO is working 380 times harder than his average employee? And not necessarily as low as the janitor, but the average worker needs to work more than a month to earn what the CEO makes in one hour.

We certainly don't have to go all the way to socialism to find something that is fair for hardworking Americans.

We don't even have to achieve what most of us consider might be ideal.

All we need to do is wake up and realize that the reality in this country is not at all what we think it is.

J. Foster

Today 12:45 pm

This is the top one percent we've been hearing so much about so much. One percent of America has 40% of all the nation's wealth while the bottom 80% - 8 out of every 10 people or 80 out of these hundred - only has seven percent between them, and this has only gotten worse in the last 20 to 30 years while the richest 1% take home almost a quarter of the national income today in 1976. They took home only nine percent, meaning their share of income has nearly tripled in the last 30 years; the top 1% owns half the country's stocks bonds and mutual funds. The bottom 50% of Americans own only half a percent of these investments, which means they aren't investing. They're just barely scraping by.

I'm sure many of these wealthy people have worked very hard for their money. But do you really believe that the CEO is working 380 times harder than his average employee? And not necessarily as low as the janitor, but the average worker needs to work more than a month to earn what the CEO makes in one hour.

We certainly don't have to go all the way to socialism to find something that is fair for hardworking Americans.

We don't even have to achieve what most of us consider might be ideal.

All we need to do is wake up and realize that the reality in this country is not at all what we think it is.

. . . but they each contained the same information!
They were then asked the following . . .

1. The author states that the top 1% take home what fraction of the national income today?
2. Did your opinion on income inequity in the United States change after reading this article? If yes, how so, and if not, why?
3. The author points out that CEOs earn about 380 times more than their average employee. That rate would be even higher for lower ranked employees, such as janitors. Does this impact your opinion on whether CEOs and their employees are fairly paid?

THEORY

I expect that the social media is going to be less persuasive in its ability to convince people. Social media, I predict, will see lower levels of opinion change. The reason that I believe this will take place is due to the fact that many people tend to be more skeptical of posts on social media, whether it be from family or friends. People tend to be more apprehensive of and challenging towards information on Facebook or Twitter that are sharing political posts. We often hear of how people are “sick of” seeing political issue wars breaking out online and how their timelines are flooded with tons of news articles shared by others that they know. However, I do believe that much of the information will follow the prior findings by experts in the field. In this way, this thesis is merely an extension of their prior work and applying it to a new field – the intersection of social media and political science.

Did your opinion on income inequity in the United States change after reading this article? If yes, how so, and if not, why? (New York Times Article Responses)	
No change	310 (64%)
Change	55 (11%)
Somewhat change	1 (2%)
Cannot form opinion	27 (5.6%)
No response	90 (18.6%)

The author points out that CEOs earn about 380 times more than their average employee. That rate would be even higher for lower ranked employees, such as janitors. Does this impact your opinion on whether CEOs and their employees are fairly paid? (New York Times Article Responses)	
No change	188 (39.2%)
Change	292 (60.8%)

Did your opinion on income inequity in the United States change after reading this article? If yes, how so, and if not, why? (Social Media Post Responses)	
No change	331 (67%)
Change	58 (12%)
Somewhat change	3 (.6%)
Cannot form opinion	26 (5.3%)
No response	76 (15.38%)

The author points out that CEOs earn about 380 times more than their average employee. That rate would be even higher for lower ranked employees, such as janitors. Does this impact your opinion on whether CEOs and their employees are fairly paid? (Social Media Post Responses)	
No change	185 (37.68%)
Change	306 (62.32%)

MAJOR FINDINGS

- Two thirds of respondents did not undergo a change in opinion for both media forms overall
 - The New York Times was just as ineffective in swaying opinion as a Facebook post!
- However, when exposed to certain statistics, respondents were more likely to change their opinion
- One third of respondents underwent “confirmation bias”