American Psychological Association (APA) Spreads Misinformation with New Children's Book on Misinformation

By Matt Orfalea

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Region: USA
Theme: Intelligence, Media Disinformation

The American Psychological Association (APA), which infamously conspired with the CIA to justify torture during the Bush-era "war on terror", published a new children's book last month to "pre-bunk" children from conspiracy theories.

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The New York Times

American Psychological Association Bolstered C.I.A. Torture Program, Report Says

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The APA's new Magination Press kid's book titled *True or False? The Science of Perception, Misinformation, and Disinformation*, mis/disinforms its young readers on several topics, including racism, gender, and the COVID-19 pandemic.

Here Are 9 Dystopian Lessons Being Taught to Children in APA's New Book of "Science"

Lesson #1. Trust the Experts

"During the COVID-19 pandemic," the book says there was "**seemingly** conflicting information from scientists". This is a patently false message. Statements from the experts were not "seemingly conflicting" but completely contradictory, on several big issues, including masks, vaccines, and the virus's origin.

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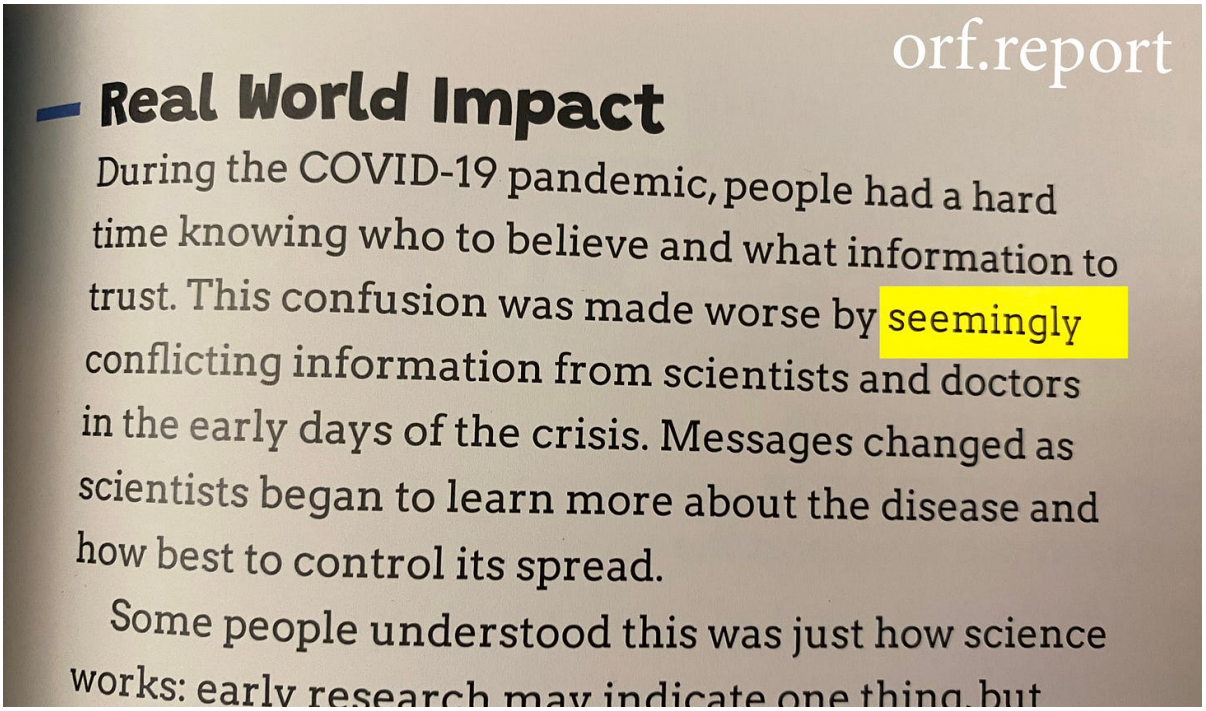

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Instead of teaching kids to exercise critical thinking, when it comes to COVID-19, the book tells kids the experts did nothing wrong: “[T]his was just how science works”! The book then blames the spreading of false information and death on “friends and family”.

> “Since people were very worried, they talked to friends and family about the virus a lot. This meant false information was spread quickly.”

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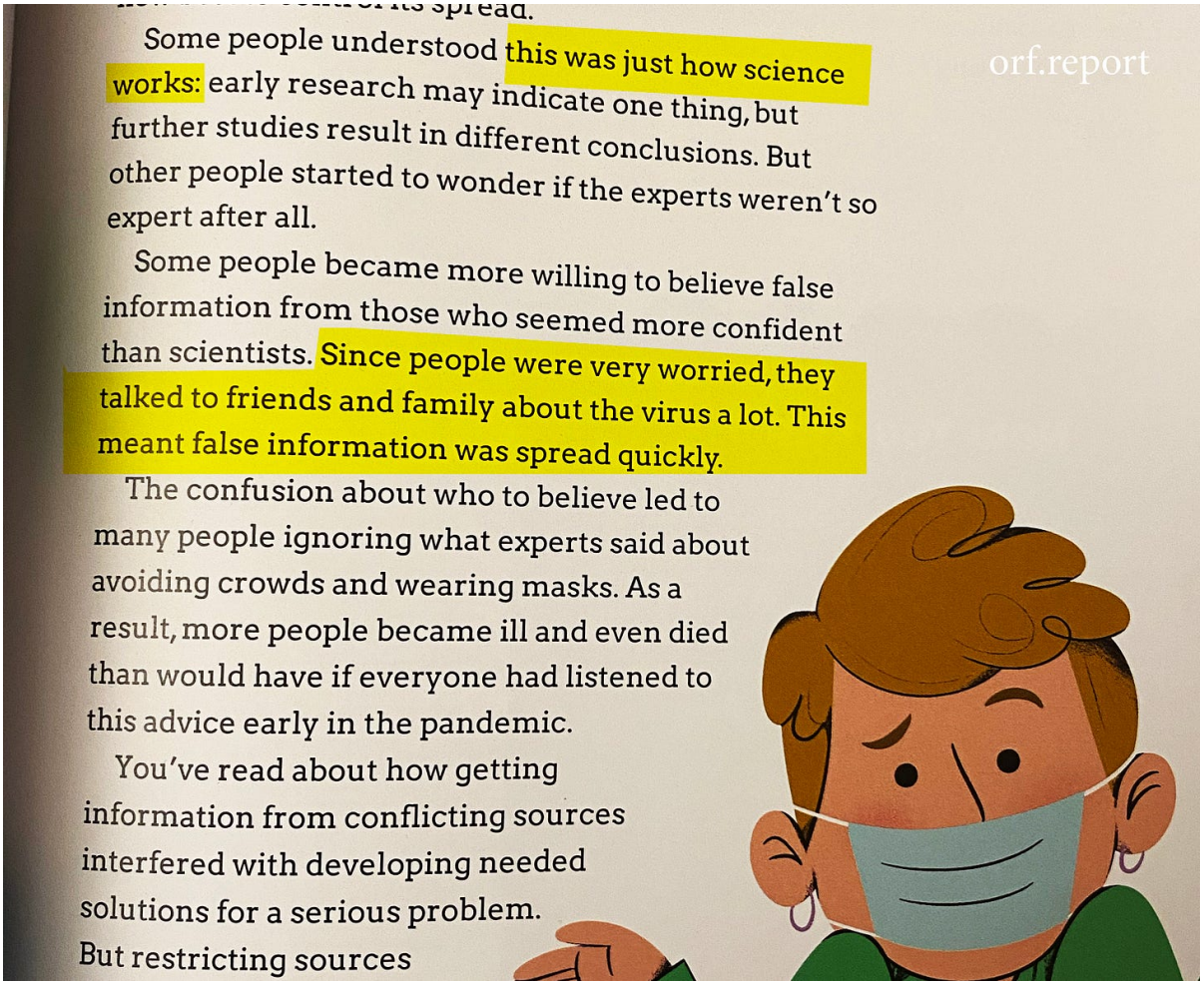

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Lesson #2. Don't Ask Questions

Asking a question is a crucial step in the scientific process. For example, Khan Academy, Museum of Natural History, and Encyclopedia Britannica, all include asking questions at the top of their flowcharts and summaries of the scientific method. However, the APA's science book doesn't include asking a question anywhere in its chart of the scientific method. Instead, the "science" book teaches kids to "beware" of questions.

> "[D]isinformation can be spread just by asking a question…Especially if the person asking…can't even answer their own question!"

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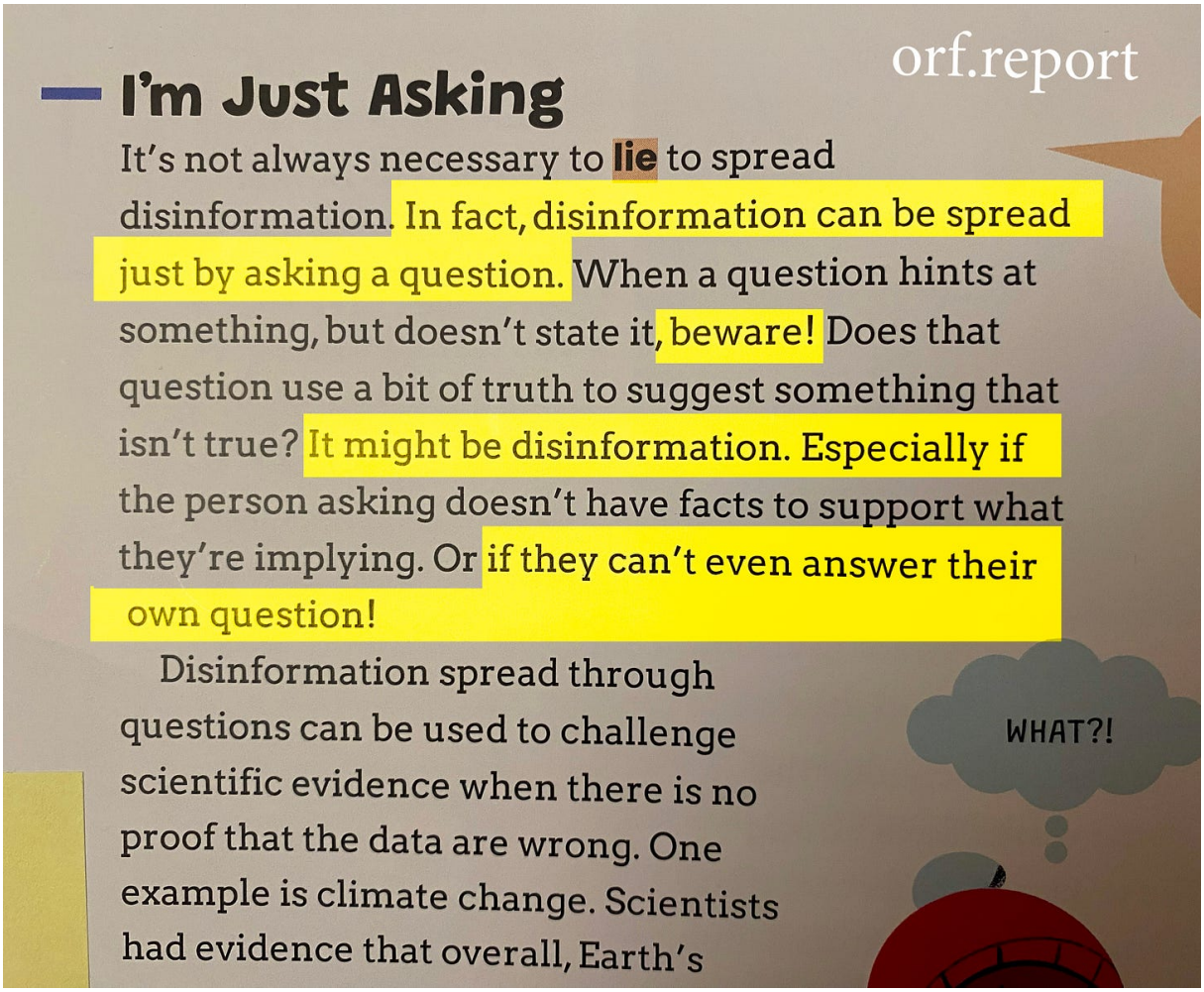

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The book's example of such "disinformation" is a girl humbly asking a logical question: "I'm not a scientist but why would we have all this snow if global warming was real?" The book draws another kid reacting to the girl as if it's crazy to ask basic questions, "WHAT?!"

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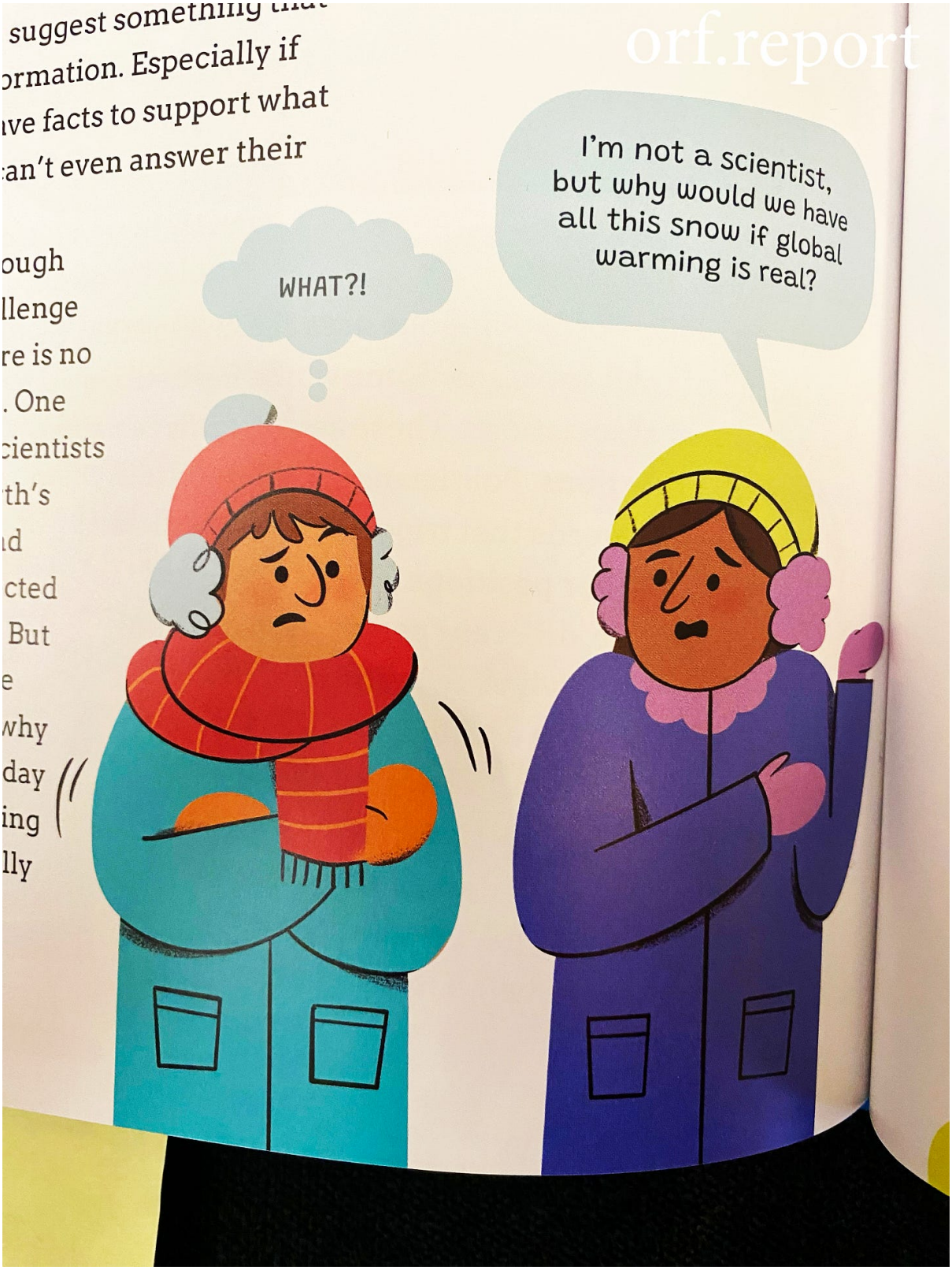

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Lesson #3. Corporate Media Is Good & Trusted!

Another lesson teaches kids that corporate media gatekeeping is good and "trusted". See the friendly gatekeeper man? Only true information passes through the media gatekeeper gates!

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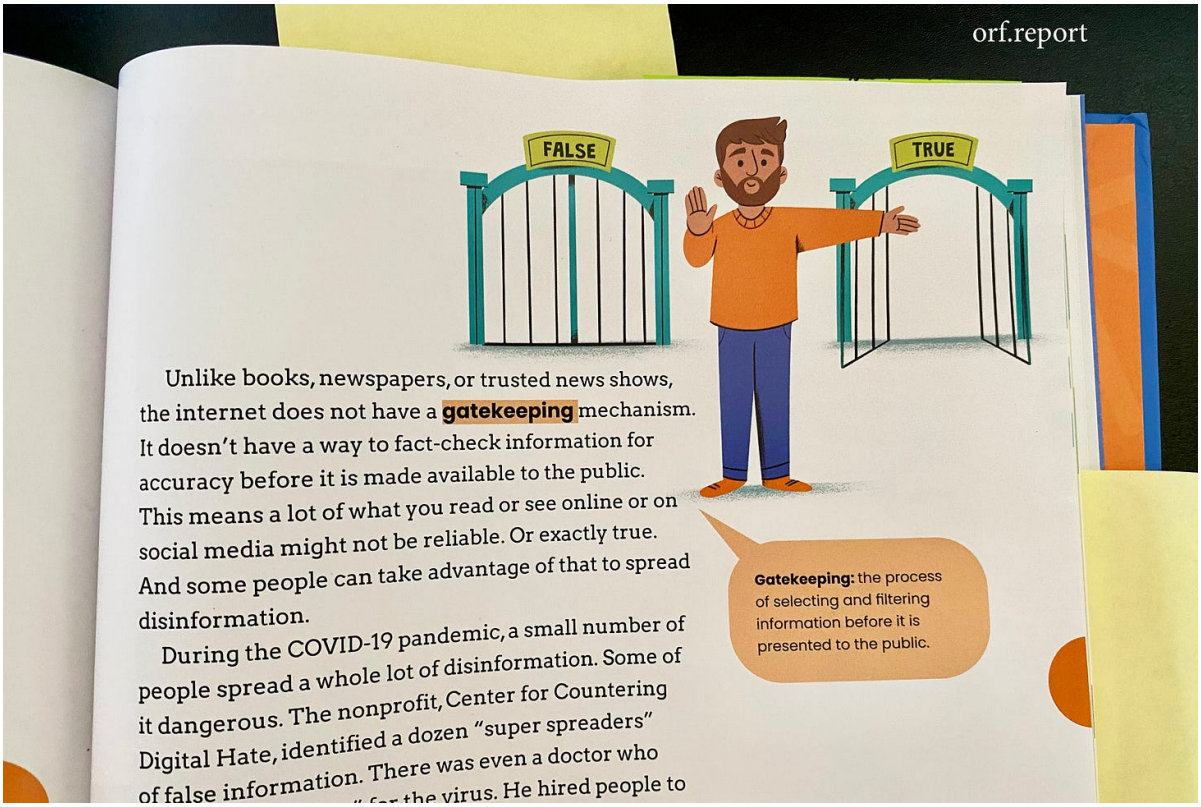

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> "Unlike books, newspapers, or trusted news shows, the internet does not have a gatekeeping mechanism. It doesn't have a way to fact-check information for accuracy before it is made available to the public. This means a lot of what you read or see online or on social media might not be reliable. Or exactly true. And some people can take advantage of that to spread disinformation."

Notice there's no mention of how people at the "newspapers and trusted news shows" can also take advantage of "gatekeeping" to spread disinformation.

Lesson #4 Only White People Can be Racist!

The book misleadingly suggests only "minority groups" and "people of color" can be negatively stereotyped and victims of racism, omitting the obvious fact that white people can be negatively stereotyped and victims of racism too.

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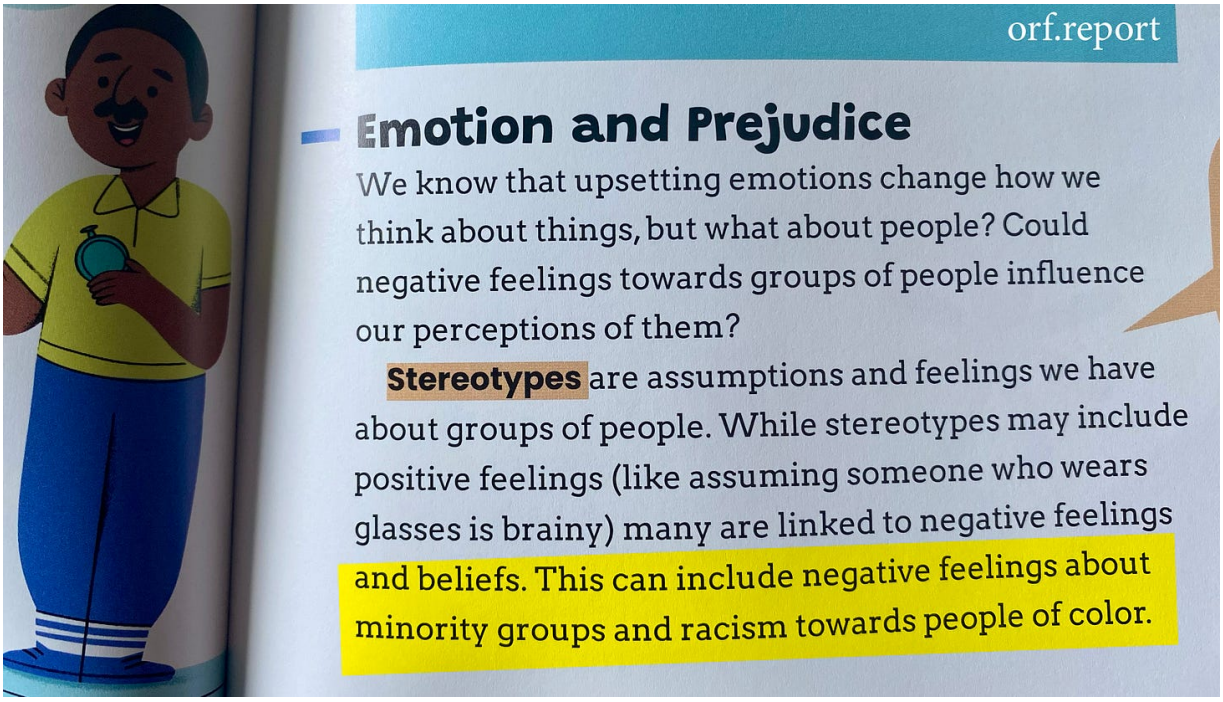

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Emotion and Prejudice

We know that upsetting emotions change how we think about things, but what about people? Could negative feelings towards groups of people influence our perceptions of them?

Stereotypes are assumptions and feelings we have about groups of people. While stereotypes may include positive feelings (like assuming someone who wears glasses is brainy) many are linked to negative feelings and beliefs. This can include negative feelings about minority groups and racism towards people of color.

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Lesson #5 “Some People Say” = Research

The book conflates “research” with “some people say”. Underneath the headline, “CHECK OUT THE RESEARCH,” the book shares no research but says Black lives are at risk in American workplaces because “Some Black people say…code-switching is necessary…simply to survive and keep safe…”

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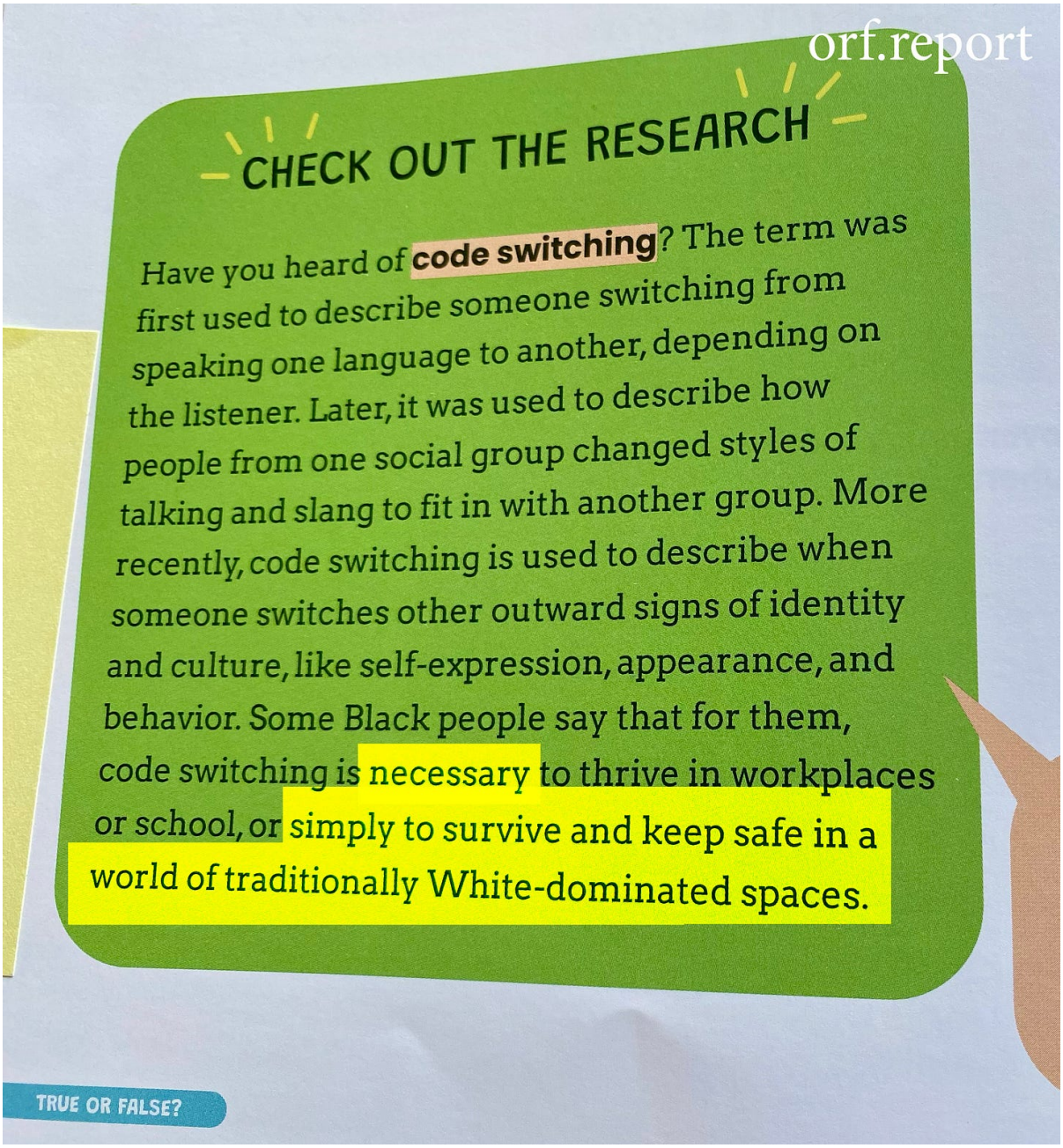

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Lesson #6. No Biological Difference Between Boys & Girls

The APA book's example of logical fallacy misleadingly suggests there's no athletic difference between boys and girls. Likewise, when asking young readers why boys might play more team sports than girls, the book only mentions cultural reasons, not biology, which according to the scientific literature (published by APA) also plays a strong factor.

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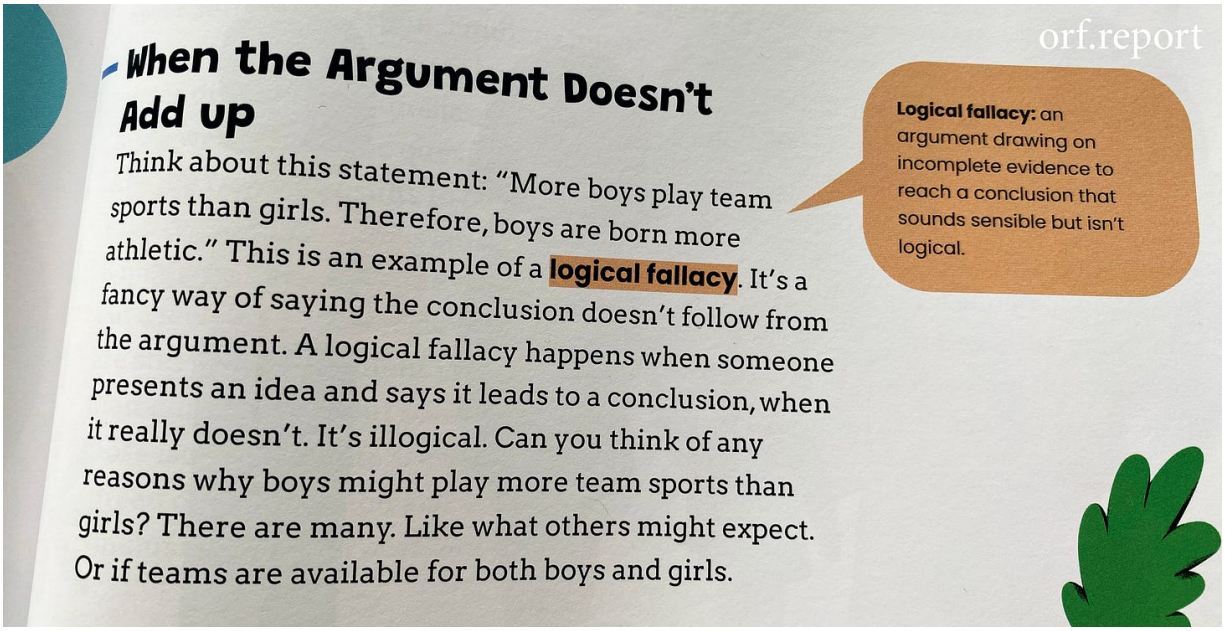

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Lesson #7. Russia Russia Russia!

The "science" book also touches on foreign and domestic politics. Russia is the only country mentioned to spread disinformation, which gives kids the false impression that Russia's the *only* country that spreads disinformation.

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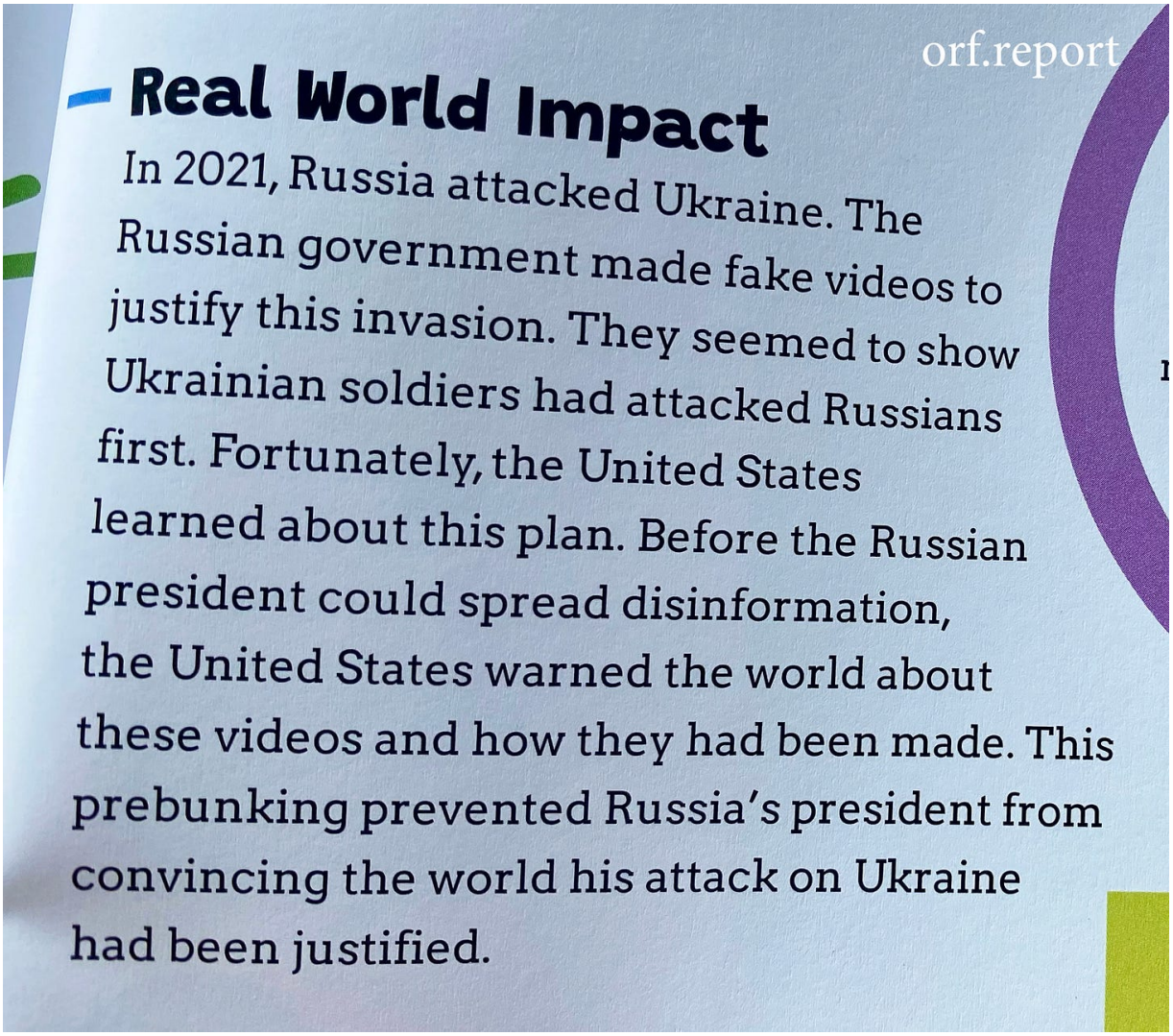

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Hillary Clinton, on the other hand, is presented as only a victim of disinformation, and never a purveyor of disinformation herself.

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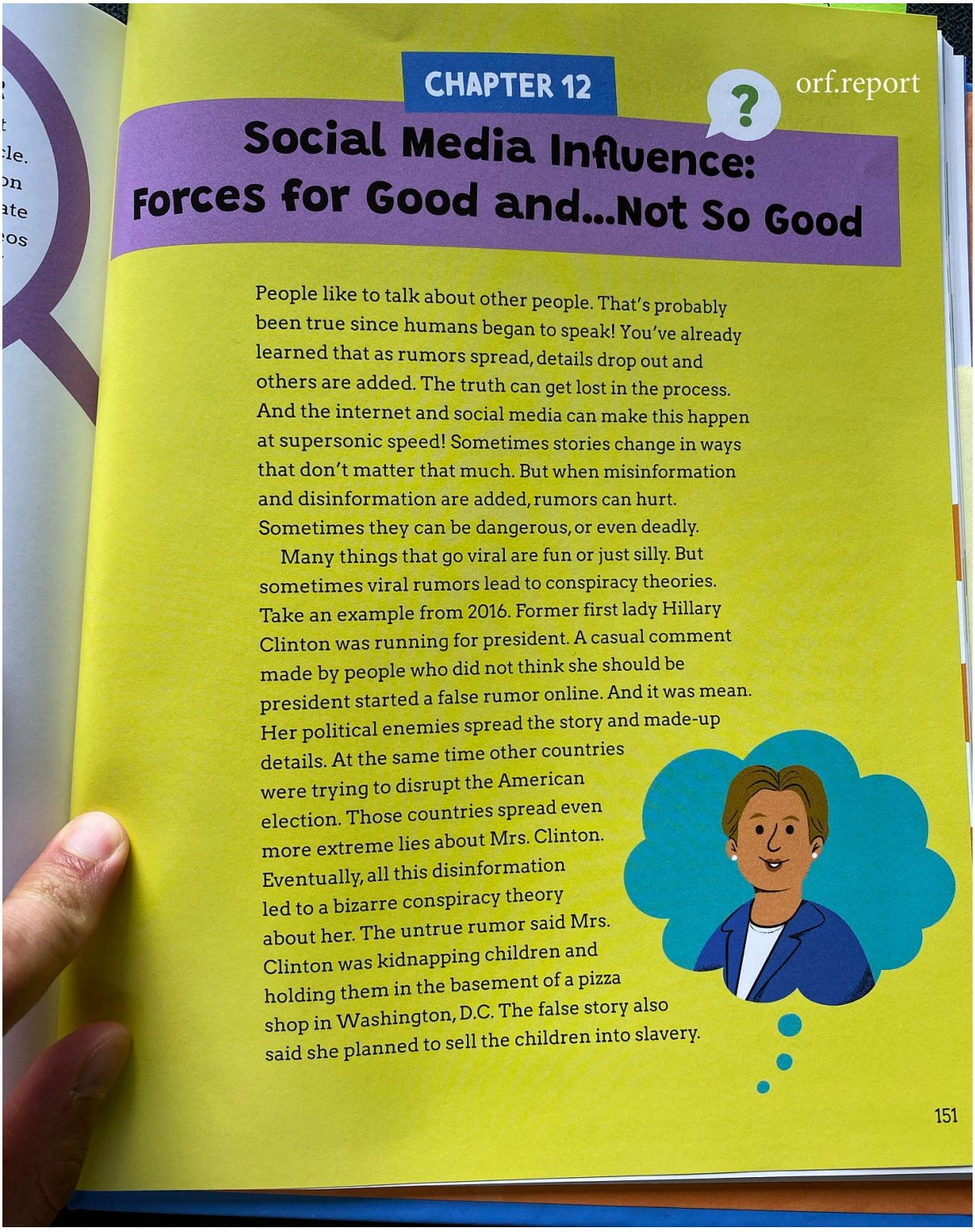

CHAPTER 12

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Social Media Influence: Forces for Good and...Not So Good

People like to talk about other people. That's probably been true since humans began to speak! You've already learned that as rumors spread, details drop out and others are added. The truth can get lost in the process. And the internet and social media can make this happen at supersonic speed! Sometimes stories change in ways that don't matter that much. But when misinformation and disinformation are added, rumors can hurt. Sometimes they can be dangerous, or even deadly.

Many things that go viral are fun or just silly. But sometimes viral rumors lead to conspiracy theories. Take an example from 2016. Former first lady Hillary Clinton was running for president. A casual comment made by people who did not think she should be president started a false rumor online. And it was mean. Her political enemies spread the story and made-up details. At the same time other countries were trying to disrupt the American election. Those countries spread even more extreme lies about Mrs. Clinton. Eventually, all this disinformation led to a bizarre conspiracy theory about her. The untrue rumor said Mrs. Clinton was kidnapping children and holding them in the basement of a pizza shop in Washington, D.C. The false story also said she planned to sell the children into slavery.

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In reality, Hillary Clinton spread disinformation about Trump/Russia collusion, falsely accusing her political opponent of both treason and "stealing" the 2016 election.

Lesson #8. Only Wackos Criticize Government

At the end, the book directs kids to a government-funded online game: *Bad News*. (Its creator *Tilt Studio* works with the US State Dept's Global Engagement Center (GEC), NATO, the EU, and the UK government.)

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According to the *Bad News* game, the first step to becoming a "disinformation and fake news tycoon" is making a public complaint about the government.

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Lesson #9 Conspiracies Aren't Real!

APA's book also directs children to the YouTube channel of John Cook, the creator of another "disinformation" game, *Cranky Uncle,* which like *Bad News,* is designed to dismiss anyone questioning the government as a crazy kook.

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Cook's 2nd most viewed video smears "conspiracy theorists" for believing COVID-19 originated in a lab—a belief now supported by "the experts" and an overwhelming amount of evidence.

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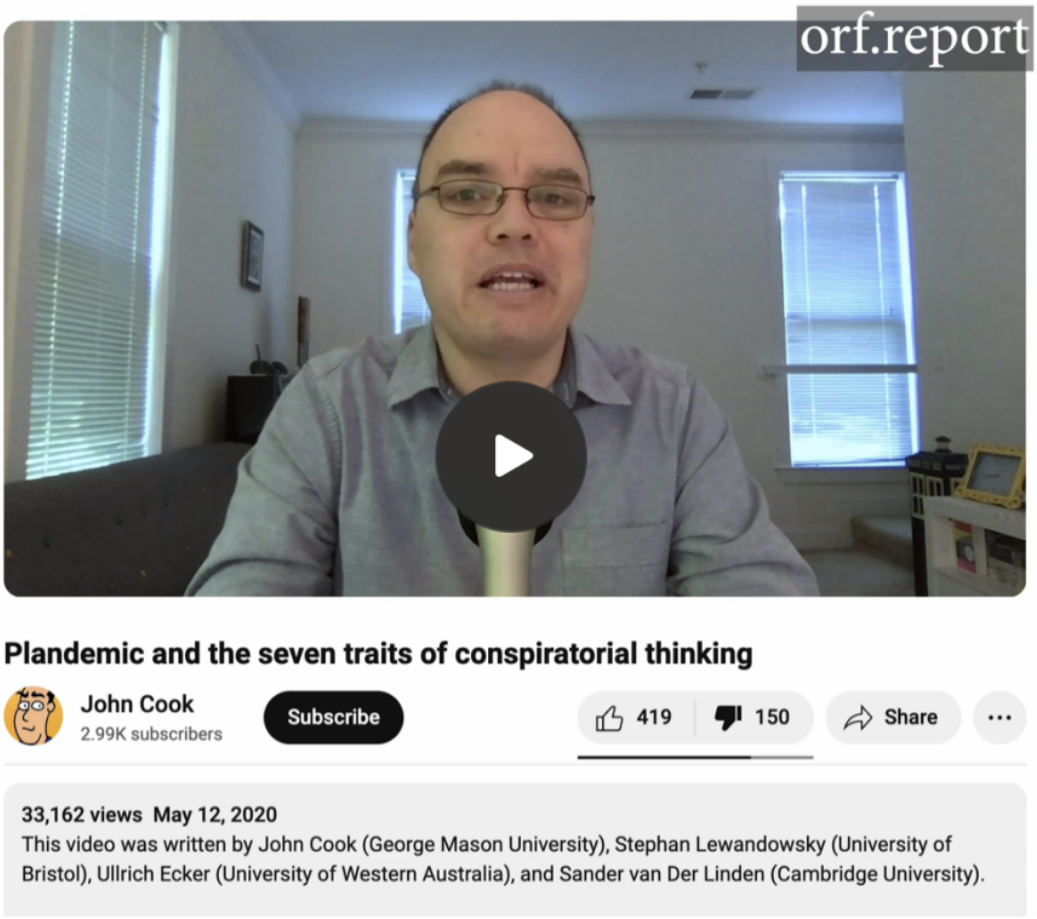

Click here to watch the video

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The APA's book dedicates five pages to villainizing "conspiracy theories" and suggests that merely learning about conspiracy theories "makes people think…that truth doesn't matter".

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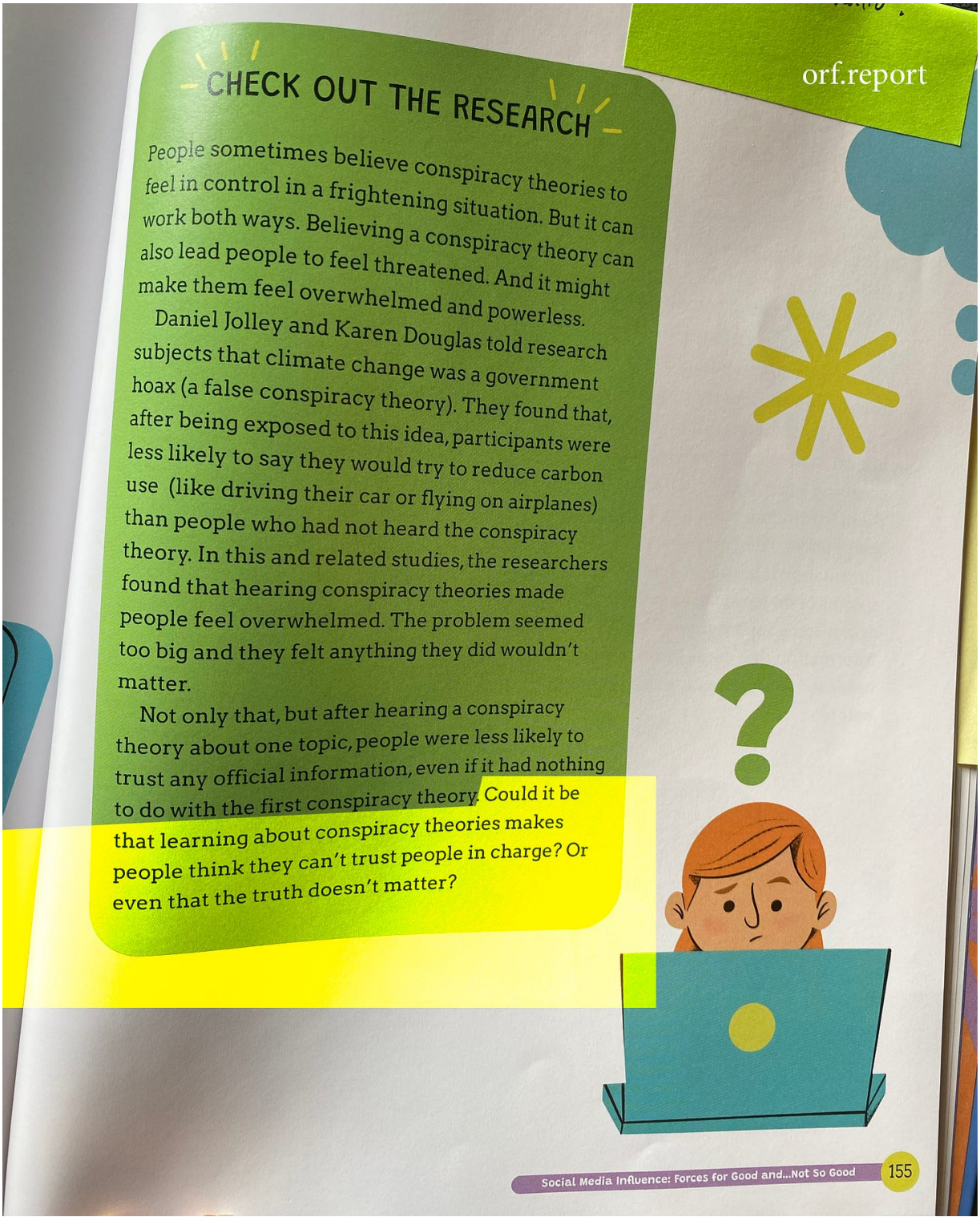

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But of course some conspiracy theories are true. For example, after many denials, APA later apologized for secretly collaborating with the CIA on torture.

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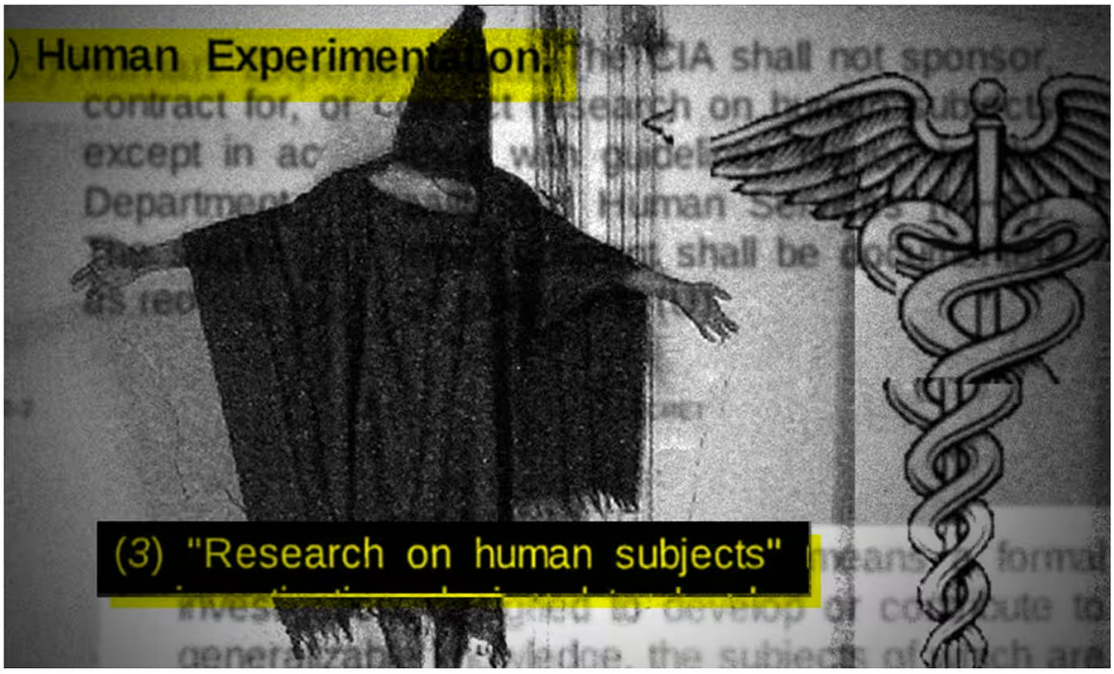
US torture doctors could face charges after report alleges post-9/11 'collusion'

Leading group of psychologists faces a reckoning following repeated denials that its members were complicit in Bush administration-era torture

- APA ethics independent review: medical professionals and torture



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Maybe if my new report is shared enough, APA will one day have to address all the misinformation it's spreading into the minds of children.

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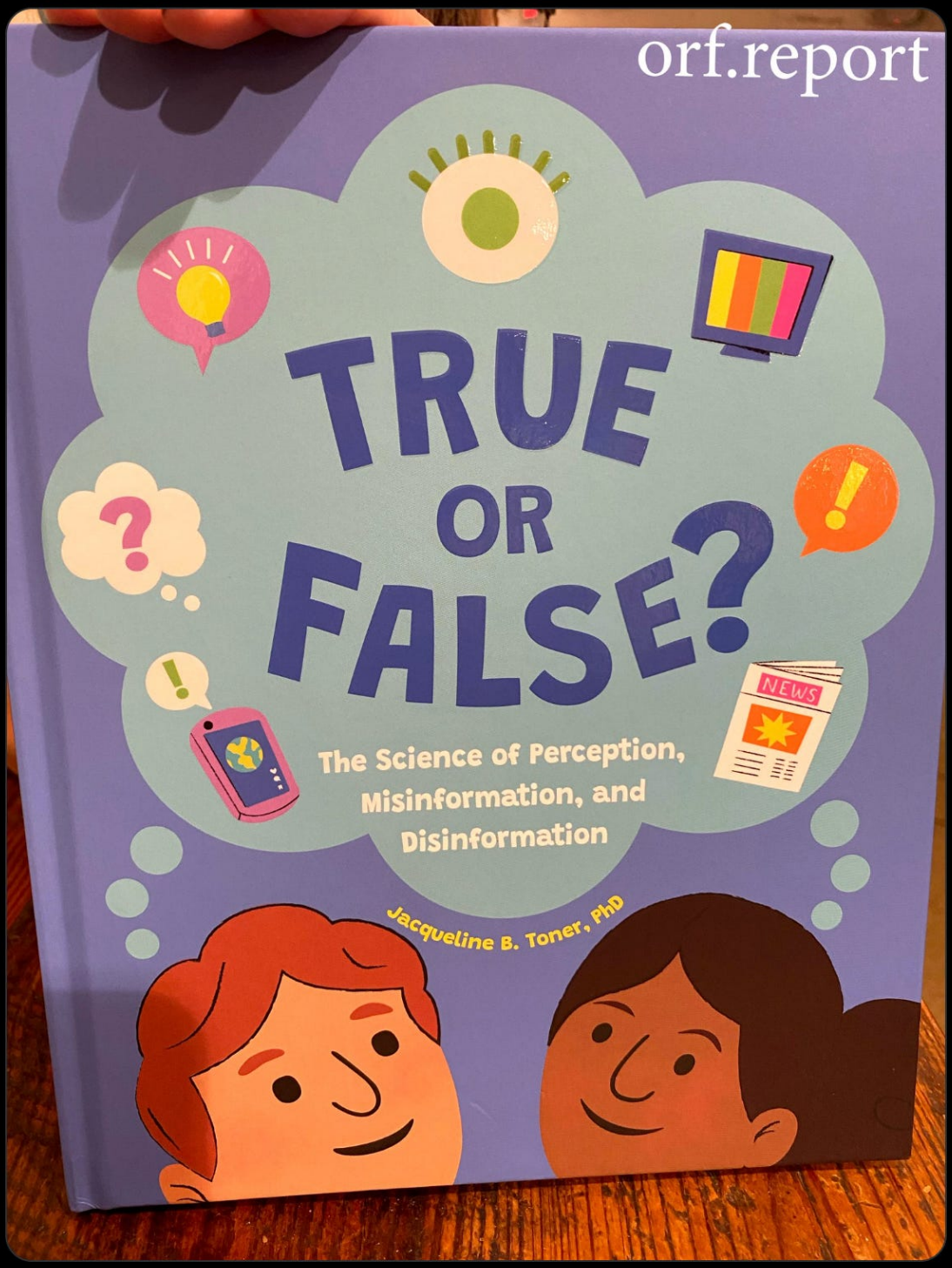
Matt Orfalea
@0rf

NEW: The American Psychological Association (APA) is mis/disinforming kids with its new kid's book, on mis/disinformation. 🧵 /1

True or False? The Science of Perception, Misinformation, and Disinformation



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