

Fact Sheet: DARPA's Social Media in Strategic Communication (SMISC) Program

With the spread of blogs, social networking sites and media-sharing technology, and the rapid propagation of ideas enabled by these advances, the conditions under which the nation's military forces conduct operations are changing nearly as fast as the speed of thought. DARPA has an interest in addressing this new dynamic and understanding how social network communication affects events on the ground as part of its mission of preventing strategic surprise.

The general goal of the Social Media in Strategic Communication (SMISC) program is to develop a new science of social networks built on an emerging technology base. Through the program, DARPA seeks to develop tools to help identify misinformation or deception campaigns and counter them with truthful information, reducing adversaries' ability to manipulate events.

Some facts about SMISC:

- 1) DARPA was not involved in the recently published Cornell University study of Facebook users.
- 2) DARPA-funded social media/Twitter research (including, as has been reported, a study that looked at Lady Gaga's Twitter following—a model of social media popularity) has focused on public Twitter streams visible and accessible to everybody.
- 3) DARPA does not support research programs that aim to deceive unwitting people to see how they react (as the controversial Facebook study did). DARPA funds research on how groups form and influence each other and related dynamics – similar to social science research that has been conducted for decades with other kinds of communication.
- 4) DARPA-funded studies that have involved sending potentially deceptive information to see how people react have been conducted with closed groups of enrolled individuals who have volunteered/consented to be in social media studies.
- 4) None of the social media data collected or analyzed by DARPA-funded academic scientists is collected or saved by DARPA or the Government. Further, DARPA-funded researchers must certify that no personally identifiable information (PII) is collected, stored or created in contravention to federal privacy laws, regulations or DoD policies, and SMISC researchers are not provided PII from any other government agency or outside source.
- 5) Research findings are published in the open, scientific literature, and DARPA posts a catalogue of those publications on its website in support of transparency and open government.