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The More Gender Equality, the Fewer Women in STEM

A new study explores a strange paradox: In countries that empower women, they are less likely to choose math and science professions.

Generated from a News Bureau Press Release: Countries with greater gender equality have lower percentage of female STEM graduates, MU study finds

By: Olga Khazan

Though their numbers are growing, only 27 percent of all students taking the AP Computer Science exam in the United States are female. The gender gap only grows worse from there: Just 18 percent of American computer-science college degrees go to women. This is in the United States, where many college men proudly describe themselves as “male feminists” and girls are taught they can be anything they want to be.

Meanwhile, in Algeria, 41 percent of college graduates in the fields of science, technology, engineering, and math—or “STEM,” as its known—are female. There, employment discrimination against women is rife and women are often pressured to make amends with their abusive husbands.

According to a report I covered a few years ago, Jordan, Qatar, and the United Arab Emirates were the only three countries in which boys are significantly less likely to feel comfortable working on math problems than girls are. In all of the other nations surveyed, girls were more likely to say they feel “helpless while performing a math problem.”

So what explains the tendency for nations that have traditionally less gender equality to have more women in science and technology than their gender-progressive counterparts do?

According to a new paper published in Psychological Science by the psychologists Gijsbert Stoet, at Leeds Beckett University, and David Geary, at the University of Missouri, it could have to do with the fact that women in countries with higher gender inequality are simply seeking the clearest possible path to financial freedom. And often, that path leads through STEM professions.
The issue doesn’t appear to be girls’ aptitude for STEM professions. In looking at test scores across 67 countries and regions, Stoet and Geary found that girls performed about as well or better than boys did on science in most countries, and in almost all countries, girls would have been capable of college-level science and math classes if they had enrolled in them.

But when it comes to their relative strengths, in almost all the countries—all except Romania and Lebanon—boys’ best subject was science, and girls’ was reading. (That is, even if an average girl was as good as an average boy at science, she was still likely to be even better at reading.) Across all countries, 24 percent of girls had science as their best subject, 25 percent of girls’ strength was math, and 51 percent excelled in reading. For boys, the percentages were 38 for science, 42 for math, and 20 for reading. And the more gender-equal the country, as measured by the World Economic Forum’s Global Gender Gap Index, the larger this gap between boys and girls in having science as their best subject. (The most gender-equal countries are the typical snowy utopias you hear about, like Sweden, Finland, and Iceland. Turkey and the United Arab Emirates rank among the least equal, according to the Global Gender Gap Index.)

The gap in reading “is related at least in part to girls’ advantages in basic language abilities and a generally greater interest in reading; they read more and thus practice more,” Geary told me.

What’s more, the countries that minted the most female college graduates in fields like science, engineering, or math were also some of the least gender-equal countries. They posit that this is because the countries that empower women also empower them, indirectly, to pick whatever career they’d enjoy most and be best at.

“Countries with the highest gender equality tend to be welfare states,” they write, “with a high level of social security.” Meanwhile, less gender-equal countries tend to also have less social support for people who, for example, find themselves unemployed. Thus, the authors suggest, girls in those countries might be more inclined to choose STEM professions, since they offer a more certain financial future than, say, painting or writing.

When the study authors looked at the “overall life satisfaction” rating of each country—a measure of economic opportunity and hardship—they found that gender-equal countries had more life satisfaction. The life-satisfaction ranking explained 35 percent of the variation between gender equality and women’s participation in STEM. That correlation echoes past research showing that the genders are actually more segregated by field of study in more economically developed places.

The upshot of this research is neither especially feminist nor especially sad: It’s not that gender equality discourages girls from pursuing science. It’s that it allows them not to if they’re not interested.

The findings will likely seem controversial, since the idea that men and women have different inherent abilities is often used as a reason, by some, to argue we should forget trying to recruit more women into the STEM fields. But, as the University of Wisconsin gender-studies professor Janet Shibley Hyde, who wasn’t involved with the study, put it to me, that’s not quite what’s happening here.
“Some would say that the gender STEM gap occurs not because girls can’t do science, but because they have other alternatives, based on their strengths in verbal skills,” she said. “In wealthy nations, they believe that they have the freedom to pursue those alternatives and not worry so much that they pay less.”

Instead, this line of research, if it’s replicated, might hold useful takeaways for people who do want to see more Western women entering STEM fields. In this study, the percentage of girls who did excel in science or math was still larger than the number of women who were graduating with STEM degrees. That means there’s something in even the most liberal societies that’s nudging women away from math and science, even when those are their best subjects. The women-in-STEM advocates could, for starters, focus their efforts on those would-be STEM stars.

Then again, it could just be that, feeling financially secure and on equal footing with men, some women will always choose to follow their passions, rather than whatever labor economists recommend. And those passions don’t always lie within science.

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**Russian bot amplified racial tensions at university of missouri in 2015, report says**

By: Taylor Swaak

**Before Russian bots meddled in the 2016 presidential election, they targeted the University of Missouri to further aggravate heightened racial tensions, a recent report found.**

Frustration with pervasive racism on Mizzou's campus came to a head in fall 2015 with student protests, a hunger strike, a football team strike, boycotts and other activism, which culminated in the resignation of university President Tim Wolfe on November 9, 2015.

Two days later, with #PrayForMizzou trending on Twitter, a tweet from user "@Fanfan1911" said the Ku Klux Klan was on campus.

“The cops are marching with the KKK! They beat up my little brother! Watch out!” the tweet said. It included a picture of a black child with a severely bruised face.

Reaction to the unconfirmed tweet was immediate. Student government President Payton Head posted on Facebook that "KKK members were confirmed on campus." National news networks halted coverage to revert to local camera feeds in search of violence, and news anchors read tweets that claimed there were shootings, stabbings and cross burnings.

It was fake, according to a *Strategic Studies Quarterly* article by Air Force Lieutenant Colonel Jarred Prier.
User @Fanfan1911, Prier said, was a Russian bot that utilized the #PrayForMizzou hashtag to evade Twitter algorithms meant to catch bots and to garner retweets from real users monitoring the hashtag. About 70 bots automatically retweeted the tweet, leading to thousands of related tweets within minutes, the report found.

"The image and the narrative were part of a larger plot to spread fear and distrust," Prier said. "Russians trolls were able to spread the information because of an underlying fear and an existing narrative that they were able to exploit."

Christian Basi, director of the news bureau at Mizzou, told Inside Higher Ed on Wednesday that this account "was consistent with what university officials believe happened."

"This certainly helped explain the origin of some of the 'news' that we were trying to combat," he said. The school saw a freshman enrollment drop of nearly 23 percent the following year. The same bot later began tweeting in German and spreading rumors about Syrian refugees, the report said. By spring 2016, it had morphed into an account touting messages from right-wing news organizations such as Breitbart. The account is now suspended on Twitter.

Russian bots also manipulated social media leading up to and during the 2016 presidential campaign. About 50,000 automated Russia-linked Twitter accounts sent more than 2 million election-related tweets—many praising then-candidate Donald Trump and villainizing Hillary Clinton—between September 1 and November 15, 2016.

Twitter notified 1.4 million people in January that they may have interacted with fake Russia-backed accounts. Interference also extended to platforms such as Facebook and Google.

Special counsel Robert Mueller is still investigating whether Trump and his team were knowledgeable about, or had a hand in, this interference.
Editorial: The disinformation factory threatening national security

By: David Von Drehle

David Von Drehle writes a twice-weekly column for The Post. He was previously an editor-at-large for Time Magazine, and is the author of four books, including "Rise to Greatness: Abraham Lincoln and America’s Most Perilous Year" and "Triangle: The Fire That Changed America."

“Falsehood flies, and the truth comes limping after it,” wrote Jonathan Swift more than 300 years ago. What would he have said in the age of Twitter?

A sobering paper published in the winter edition of Strategic Studies Quarterly — the strategy journal of the U.S. Air Force — explains how propagandists manipulate social media in their cyberwars against the United States. Hostile forces, employing automated bots, leverage the blind spots and biases of unwitting Americans to help them send falsehoods flying to spread division and demoralization.

Figuring out how to fight back, in a free society of open communication, is the most urgent national security challenge we face. Friday’s indictments by special counsel Robert S. Mueller III of a Russian trolling operation is a welcome sign that we are joining the battle. But so far, we are losing. And should we fail, the future will belong to authoritarian states that protect their virtual borders by controlling Internet access.
In his paper, “Commanding the Trend: Social Media as Information Warfare,” Lt. Col. Jarred Prier examines strategies and tactics used by both the Islamic State and the Russian government to seize command of trending topics on Twitter and, to a lesser degree, Facebook. By hijacking these algorithms, enemy agents and their armies of bots inflame tension and erode trust across American society.

A striking example, which Prier documents in detail, came during the November 2015 protests at the University of Missouri. A dispute over benefits for graduate teaching assistants had escalated into broad allegations of racism on campus. Spotting the trending hashtag #PrayforMizzou, a Russia-linked Twitter account, @Fanfan1911, tweeted a photo of a bruised African American youth that was lifted from an unrelated story. “The cops are marching with the KKK!” the tweet declared. “They beat up my little brother! Watch out!” This untrue message, signed “Jermaine,” was retweeted hundreds of times by Russian bots — enough to unleash it as a viral contagion among duped Americans, including Missouri’s student body president.

As other accounts in the orbit of @Fanfan1911 added fake details, Jermaine demanded the news media cover the nonexistent Klan rampage. Twitter-obsessed reporters ran in search of a story. Though the facts eventually came limping onto the scene, lasting damage was done. Morale and enrollment sagged at the university. Trust in media and police took another hit. The reputation and economy of Missouri absorbed a blow.

Not bad for a single shift at the disinformation factory.

Prier follows Jermaine as his display name morphs into FanFan to stoke false rumors of Muslim refugees raping German women in spring 2016. He transforms again into DeplorableLucy to support the Donald Trump campaign. In each incarnation, the agent employs the same tools: distorted or fabricated narratives, legions of retweeting bots, existing networks of unsuspecting partisans ready to believe the worst, allegations of elite corruption, and the viral engine of trending hashtags.
Director of National Intelligence Daniel Coats reported to Congress this last week that such efforts are designed “to exacerbate social and political fissures in the United States,” “to create wedges that reduce trust and confidence in democratic processes,” and “to encourage anti-U.S. political views.”

It’s working. That’s why this challenge is critical to our national security. We cannot tackle either threats or competition from China, North Korea, Russia or violent Islamist extremists without a common sense of purpose at home and supportive allies abroad.

Prier wraps up his paper by calling on social media companies, political leaders and journalists to come to the aid of the country. Twitter, he notes, faces a particular quandary because bot networks and the trending-topic feature — two key weapons in the enemy’s arsenal — are both integral to the company’s business model. Advertisers love Twitter bots, while the trending algorithm lends an air of urgency and authority that the platform would otherwise lack.

On the other hand, I see no good reason journalists can’t go straight to work curbing our “overreliance on social media for breaking news,” as Prier puts it. Reporters should treat every tweet with skepticism and demand real-world confirmation of tweeted “news” before sharing it.

What we need from politicians is sufficient leadership to raise the issue of cyberdefense above the muck of partisan advantage. Sparring over the Trump-Russia investigation is of passing importance compared with the survival of open societies.

Uncle Sam wants you, and your smartphone. It is up to this generation of Westerners — every woman, man and child — to show that self-government can survive the digital revolution. To educate ourselves in the use and abuse of personal tools of mass communication, and to employ these tools without stoking social division.

We are being tested. From Moscow to Tehran, Havana to Beijing, authorities are already taking the other path, protecting their rule by controlling digital access. The same will happen in the West, if we can’t control ourselves.
Editorial: Midterms, Mizzou, Parkland.
Russian trolls never sleep

By the Editorial Board

Moments after news broke Wednesday that a gunman had killed 17 people at a south Florida high school, tracking services noted a surge in social media activity linked to automated political propaganda sources called “bots” and Russia-linked Twitter accounts.

Russia doesn’t miss a trick when it comes to exploiting divisions in American society. Little wonder, then, that Special Counsel Robert Mueller on Friday indicted 13 Russian citizens and three companies for interfering with the 2016 elections. And little wonder that three top U.S. intelligence officials said last week that Russia is already meddling with the midterm U.S. elections.

It can hit very close to home. In the current edition of the journal Strategic Studies Quarterly, an Air Force colonel named Jarred Prier reports Russian trolls seized on racial unrest at the University of Missouri-Columbia in November 2015 for a “particularly effective Twitter hoax.” A false and inflammatory tweet was picked up and retweeted by at least 70 robot accounts.

To think that Russia wouldn’t attempt to exploit racial, economic, political and social divisions in the United States to benefit a preferred candidate or party — or simply to weaken the nation — is naive. It ignores the long history by the Russian and Soviet governments of using disinformation as a matter of state policy.

The internet, aided by a credulous and uninformed U.S. citizenry and disengaged social media platforms, has only made their job easier. A teenager in Omsk getting instructions and payments from a vast and compartmentalized intelligence operation can do more damage than any of John Le Carre’s spies.

But Vice President Mike Pence said last week that U.S. intelligence agencies had concluded that all this effort had nothing to do with his and President Donald Trump’s election.

This is simply not true. Intelligence officials have gone to great pains to say they can’t determine whether Russia flipped the election or not, though Russia certainly favored Trump over Democrat Hillary Clinton.

Former National Intelligence Director James Clapper took issue with Pence last week, telling NPR that “it stretches credulity, given the magnitude, scope and depth of the Russian efforts, that
they didn’t have impact on individual voter decisions. But again, the intelligence community did not and could not gauge the impact on individual voter decisions.”

Dan Coats, the director of National Intelligence, Christopher Wray, the FBI director and Mike Pompeo, the CIA director, were all appointed by Trump. They told the Senate Intelligence Committee last week that their agencies see no signs that Russia is stopping.

Said Coats: “There should be no doubt that Russia perceives its past efforts as successful and views the 2018 U.S. midterm elections as a potential target for Russian influence operations.”

If enough Russian trolls and bots get enough gullible people stirred up, anything can happen. It already did.

**COLUMBIA DAILY TRIBUNE**

**Air Force officer discusses report on Russian meddling at MU**

By Rudi Keller

During the Soviet era, Air Force Lt. Col. Jarred Prier wrote in his journal article “Commanding the Trend: Social Media as Information Warfare,” Russia used its propaganda tools to plant believable lies in foreign media, intending to sow discord among allies of the United States or weaken it in the eyes of other nations.

Now, as the indictments handed down Friday by Special Counsel Robert Mueller show, Russian disinformation campaigns manipulate opinion here. They have been so successful, Prier said in an interview, that his findings that the Russian cyber warfare team targeted the 2015 turmoil at the University of Missouri will not be believed by a large segment of the public.

“There are people who at face value don’t believe what you said because you said Russia did something,” Prier said. “On the opposite side, political left is so willing to believe anything that has to do with Russia right now.”

Prier is currently serving as director of operations for the 20th Bomb Squadron. He has studied the social media propaganda techniques of the Islamic State and Russia and found similar tactics used to serve different strategic goals. He spoke to the Tribune by telephone Wednesday.

Adopting the #PrayForMizzou hashtag in the hours after former UM System President Tim Wolfe resigned, Russian cyber trolls and their robotic repeaters stoked fear of a violent white
backlash, Prier found in his peer-reviewed research, published in November 2017 in Strategic Studies Quarterly.

Some of the fear was well-grounded. A threat from inside Missouri posted on Yik Yak led to the arrest of Hunter Park in Rolla. But much of it was baseless, fed by Russian Twitter accounts including one with the handle @FanFan1911 and a user name of “Jermaine,” whose avatar was a photo of a black man. @FanFan1911 tweeted falsely that the Ku Klux Klan was marching on the campus backed by police.

Prier, a 2003 MU graduate, traced the activities of @FanFan1911 and other Russian troll actors while doing master’s degree research at the Air University for the School of Advanced Air and Space Studies. He remembered @FanFan1911 specifically because he called the Twitter user a liar on Nov. 11, 2015.

He’s not 100 percent certain that @FanFan1911 was a Russian, he said. But the way the user’s targets changed – from Europe to the United States, back to Europe again during the Syrian refugee crisis and again to target the U.S. during the election – and the way robots were set up to retweet him, the account fits every measure he has available.

“The final discriminator was after Hillary Clinton used basket of deplorables in a speech, all the accounts I had been monitoring changed their names to deplorables-something or other,” Prier said. “It was bizarro world.”

Prier’s findings about how Russians inserted themselves into MU’s problems make up only a small portion of his article, which is a broader look at the social media tactics employed by the Islamic State and Russia to achieve their strategic goals and how U.S. policy makers should consider it a new field of competition.

The title of Prier’s article is an allusion to Giulio Duohet’s seminal 1921 work on air power, “Command of the Air.” After World War I, Duohet imagined massive fleets of bombers that would reduce cities to rubble, demoralizing inhabitants and forcing their leaders to surrender.

Duohet correctly imagined the extent of future air power but not the result. In his concluding paragraph, Prier puts defense in the social media field on par with protecting infrastructure and information subject to hacking.

“This was not the cyber war we were promised,” Prier wrote. “Predictions of a catastrophic cyberattack dominated policy discussion, but few realized that social media could be used as a weapon against the minds of the population.”

Prier’s work is now being read at the National Intelligence University, where agents are trained.

**HOW IT WORKED**

On May 21, 2016, about a dozen white supremacists gathered outside the Houston Da’wah Islamic Center, attracted by a Facebook post by a group calling itself Heart of Texas for a protest
event to “Stop the Islamization of Texas.” A counter-demonstration, also organized via Facebook by a group calling itself United Muslims of America, drew about 50 counterprotesters for an event to “Save Islamic Knowledge.”

Both events were organized by Russian agents who spent $200 to manipulate behavior on a local level in the United States, the Senate Intelligence Committee revealed Nov. 1, 2017.

“It is an interesting notion to have forces from outside come in and try to manipulate attitudes and public behaviors by inciting different groups to take action,” said Peverill Squire, professor of political science at MU. “It casts modern day politics in a different light.”

In the indictment, Mueller charged that Russia spent $1.25 million per month to influence the 2016 election. The activity began in 2014 and the indictment names the Internet Research Agency, identified by Prier as the likely home of the Twitter trolls he researched, first among 16 defendants.

The short-term result of the Russian’s focus on MU was to sow fear. The long-term damage to MU’s reputation was a false impression that the 2015 protests were violent. The episode served Russia’s strategic goal of reducing the U.S. presence on the world stage by focusing public attention on internal divisions, Prier said.

“They want to force the American public to go over into a corner and argue amongst themselves,” Prier said.

Prier’s analysis is “spot on,” said Cooper Drury, an MU professor of political science who researches foreign policy issues. The Russian long-term goal is not the victory of any political party but a weaker U.S., he said.

“If that is what your goal is, disruption, then the greater polarization you can get inside a democracy the more successful you will be,” Drury said.

The indictment states that Russia used its social media campaigns for the benefit of Donald Trump in the Republican Party and Sen. Bernie Sanders in the Democratic Party. The propaganda worked especially well because it created a false impression that there were vast numbers of people agitating a particular view, Prier said.

“At that time there was a kind of symbiotic relationship between legitimate American conservative thought and these Russian trolls,” he said. “These Russian trolls were driving clicks. Clicks are what keeps the business moving.”

It is the persuasion effect, said Mitchell McKinney, professor of communication at MU. Propaganda easily identified is likely to be discounted as false by most people, he said. Social media helps mask the source and volume creates believability, he said.
“So bombarded at every turn, they insert messages that may seem plausible or in the environment of uncertainty or environment of fear, insert message that might be accepted,” McKinney said.

The most successful are validated when they are reported by trusted news organizations, he said.

Prier’s findings that show the Russians used a network of human and robotic accounts to spread their messages fit what Mike Kearney, an assistant professor of journalism, found as he wrote his doctoral thesis on Twitter use in the 2016 election. He found hundreds of accounts that stopped tweeting as soon as the election was over, Kearney said.

“What doesn’t surprise me is that there is a lot of activity on Twitter that I don’t think is authentic in the way that we would think of it,” Kearney said.

DEFENSE MEASURES

In the fall of 2015, Prier was a major on a fellowship at Georgetown University’s Institute for the Study of Diplomacy, where he studied Islamic State social media. Part of his time was spent working at the State Department, he said.

The protests at MU exploded from a local news story to a major national and international story and a top topic for days on social media sites.

Prier didn’t take a screen grab of @FanFan1911’s tweet about the KKK, which included a picture of a black child with a bruised face and the fake accusation that he had been beaten on campus. He can’t be sure exactly when it was inserted into the stream but he remembers calling @FanFan1911 a liar and tweeting back the source of the photo, a story about a child beaten by police in 2013 in Ohio.

“I was livid because these were people saying things about my university and they were making me mad,” Prier said.

In 2015, the problem posed by ISIS social media was their successful recruiting, Prier said.

The accounts that targeted MU also sent messages amplifying ISIS propaganda, which seemed strange at the time. That is why he returned to them for study at the Air University. He spent hours researching accounts, creating spreadsheets where he identified accounts he believed live humans were generating the messages and those which were automatic repeater accounts.

“FanFan and about a dozen accounts I saw, they were mostly attack dogs, attacking journalists and trying to build a narrative,” he said.

Prier and the MU faculty interviewed for this article agreed that the best defense for individuals is a healthy skepticism of ideas spread on social media. Prier’s findings about how MU became enmeshed in the Russian social media were surprising but show how important it is to be careful of ideas from unknown sources, McKinney said.
“I was surprised just on the level of, this was such an immediate or personal issue for all of us at the university,” McKinney said. “Then to see what we had learned or were reading in terms of Russian involvement through social media in our national elections and at the national level, that that sort of targeting events in our country would even be down at the local level.”

The polarization of political life in the U.S. wasn’t created by Russian social media, Drury said. The traditional media, once trusted as a neutral provider of information, now has outlets that openly take sides, he said.

“Democrats don’t like to watch Fox news and Republicans don’t watch MSNBC, unless they want to get their blood pressure up,” Drury said.

Prier’s article seems pessimistic, Kearney said, as though there was no defense against being manipulated.

“But the corollary is that it makes it more easy to share and find information by ourselves,” Kearney said. “It is certainly direction in the progress of free information. It is easy for us to point to the bad, especially when it takes form or takes shape in ways that we didn’t expect.”

That was what he did when he called @FanFan1911 a liar, Prier said. But it was like spitting into a hurricane – it did not calm the tempest.

It is up to all providers of information – platforms like Twitter, outlets such as the Tribune and especially politicians – to be careful, Prier wrote. The platforms could ban robot accounts, which would eliminate trend creation but would hurt advertisers, he wrote.

“Journalists should do a better job of vetting sources rather than just retweeting something,” Prier said. “And the last piece of advice I give is that politicians got to quit using it.”

**COLUMBIA DAILY TRIBUNE**

**Mueller indicts Russian agency cited as origin of University of Missouri disruption effort**

By Rudi Keller

The first organization listed in the indictment Friday of Russians charged with meddling in the 2016 election was the same group a U.S. Air Force officer identified as the likely source of efforts to spread fear and disinformation during the University of Missouri protests in 2015.
Lt. Col. Jared Prier, author of “Commanding the Trend: Social Media as Information Warfare,” identified the Internet Research Agency, based in St. Petersburg, as the control organization for the Russian social media campaign. The organization, Prier wrote, is an “army of professional trolls” who sought to manipulate the public in the United States, Europe and elsewhere through social media.

The indictment from Special Counsel Robert Mueller accuses the Internet Research Agency, two other organizations and 13 individuals with breaking U.S. law with their activities. The activity began in 2014, the indictment charges.

“Defendants, posing as U.S. persons and creating false U.S. personas, operated social media pages and groups designed to attract U.S. audiences,” the indictment states. “These groups and pages, which addressed divisive U.S. political and social issues, falsely claimed to be controlled by U.S. activists when, in fact, they were controlled by defendants.”

Prier’s heavily documented research article, published in Strategic Studies Quarterly, identified several social media accounts that fed fears of a white backlash following the resignation of UM System President Tim Wolfe during the Concerned Student 1950 protests. The fear had a real component, with online threats that included a Yik-Yak post from a man living in Rolla, and fake reports from the Russian trolls.

The role of the Russian trolls and bots wasn’t to generate a controversy but to feed and amplify it in an attempt to fan discord, Prier said in an interview Wednesday.

“It is like when someone gets in a fight and there’s someone in the back of the room saying ‘yeah, punch him. He thinks you’re weak,’” Prier said.

Prier’s work discussed one troll in particular, with the user name Jermaine, a photo of a black man and the Twitter handle @FanFan1911, tweeted that the Ku Klux Klan was on campus, backed by the police, with a photo of a bruised child the tweeter claimed was their brother.

Prier’s master’s degree thesis tracks how @FanFan1911 changed avatars over time, from the photo of a black man during the MU disinformation campaign to a German Iron Cross while tweeting fake information about problems caused by Syrian refugees in Europe. He found a change that convinced him @FanFan1911 was Russian that occurred after Democratic presidential candidate Hillary Clinton said half of Donald Trump’s supporters could be put into a “basket of deplorables” because of their hateful views.

“Once again, FanFan’s name changed, this time to ‘Deplorable Lucy’ and the profile picture became a white middle-aged female with a Trump logo at the bottom of the picture,” Prier wrote. “The FanFan follower count went from just over 1,000 to 11,000 within a few days. His original network from the Mizzou and European campaigns changed as well: tracing his follower trail again led to the same groups of people in the same network, and they were all now defined by the ‘Deplorable’ brand.”

@FanFan1911’s account was suspended by Twitter sometime in 2016.

McCaskill blamed Trump, who was the beneficiary of much of the Russians’ efforts in 2016.

“Pure outrage,” McCaskill wrote on her Twitter account. “Please Mr President finally speak out against Russia and its clear plan to break the back of our democracy and every other democracy. Please. Now. Your silence is deafening.”

Hartzler did not mention the president in her statement about Prier’s findings, issued through her Washington, D.C., office.

“It was very concerning to me to hear of Russia’s meddling in protests at Mizzou in 2015 with the goal of inciting further unrest and spreading discord and fear,” Hartzler said. “The revelation points to the need to judge inflammatory posts with a wary eye. It also emphasizes the need to address Russia’s interference in our country’s affairs.”

The Russian efforts to sow disunity and distrust among Americans is continuing, Prier said. He said he expected researchers to find that Russian trolls worked their way into the online discussion of the Parkland, Fla., school shooting that killed 17 students and adults.

The hashtags #SecondAmendment and #GunControlNow were both receiving a lot of traffic in the hours after the shootings.

“I will guarantee the Russians are working both of those now,” Prier said.

Prier’s prediction proved true. On Friday, Wired reported that “troll and bot-tracking sites reported an immediate uptick in related tweets from political propaganda bots and Russia-linked Twitter accounts” in the hours after the shootings. The trending hashtags on the research website Hamilton 68, created by the Alliance for Securing Democracy to monitor Russian social media efforts, were dominated by shooting-related terms, Wired reported.

“Hamilton 68 is the project I would have run if I had the money and a lot of researchers working for me,” Prier said.
Special prosecutor Robert Mueller Friday to 13 Russian nationals behind the Internet Research Agency for interfering in the 2016 presidential election — the same group reported this week to have spread malicious, false rumors during the 2015 MU protests.

The indictment documents corroborate Air Force Lt. Col. Jarred Prier's report in a recent Strategic Studies Quarterly about the Russian social media disinformation campaign. This supports his argument that the Kremlin was its source at MU.

The goal of the group, operating since 2014, was for "specialists" to operate social media accounts pretending to be U.S. citizens and to incite "political intensity through supporting radical groups, users dissatisfied with (the) social and economic situation and opposition social movements," according to the indictment documents.

"I created all these pictures and posts, and the Americans believed that it was written by their people," defendant Irina Viktorovna Kaverzina said, according to the documents.

"I monitored a network that pushed a Kremlin narrative from issue to issue, and crisis to crisis, often in order to sow fear, doubt, anger, and distrust by hijacking Twitter trends the same way #PrayforMizzou was hijacked in November 2015," Prier wrote via Twitter direct message.

Only Twitter has access to information that could identify beyond all doubt who, or what country, is behind bot accounts, said Mike Kearney, an MU assistant professor of journalism knowledgeable about Twitter use in the 2016 presidential election, but the circumstantial evidence of the Kremlin as the source is very strong.
Mizzou security pins down safety tactics at state high school wrestling championship

By MEGAN SANCHEZ

COLUMBIA — People from across the state were in Columbia over the weekend watching high school wrestlers compete in state championships.

Mizzou Arena was packed with nearly 10,000 spectators Saturday night.

With an influx of visitors and out-of-towners, event staff surrounded the area. Security also patrolled the parking lots and venue.

Director of Event Management Tony Wirkus said it's important to discuss strategy before any big event and to adjust plans to fit the needs and demands of the situation. For events at Mizzou, Missouri University Police Department coordinates much of the strategy.

"We work with them on identifying if there's any reason why we need to change something we've been doing, ways to improve," Wirkus said.

He said that bag checks are part of their protocol. Security screens belongings before visitors enter the facility to make sure prohibited items are left outside of the building.

"Then we utilize police officers upfront and throughout the building as well," he said.

With about 900 high school wrestlers competing, the matches take up most of the day. At each match is a guaranteed crowd.

Wirkus said that he makes sure event staff is always present, and the venue always secured.
"Really it just comes down to what we do," he said. "We always try and think outside the box and make sure we're approaching everything from every angle we can so it's not just recycling the same thing and saying we always do it this way."

He said their strategy and creative thinking works for the agency.

"This is how we're going to keep doing it," the event manager said.

"Anytime there is an incident somewhere else, whether it's a high profile one or something that's more minor-- seeing is there something we can do better."

Columbia Morning with David Lile: Interview with Chancellor Alexander Cartwright, University of Missouri.

After 2016 Election, Campus Hate Crimes Seemed to Jump. Here’s What the Data Tell Us.

By Dan Bauman

In the charged weeks after the election of Donald J. Trump, analysts and advocacy groups noted a rise in reports of hate crimes. Colleges seemed to be seeing that rise as much as any public spaces.

Anecdotal evidence suggested that acts of campus harassment and violence were on the upswing. (The Chronicle collected much of that evidence in a running roundup.) There was a grim logic behind the anecdotes: As spaces often populated by the religious and ethnic minority groups Trump pilloried during his bruising campaign, college campuses were natural incubators for conflict. Many campus incidents, in fact, involved references to the president-elect.

But was there really a surge in hate-motivated episodes across public and private colleges and universities? That was hard to say until recently, when government data began to shed light on campus crime in 2016. According to new information from the U.S. Department of Education, the number of reported campus hate crimes increased by 25 percent from 2015 to 2016.

Meanwhile, additional college-specific data, collected by the Federal Bureau of Investigation, suggests the election itself played a role in the surge of reported cases.

Here’s a guide to that data.

Hate crimes were up in 2016.

The Education Department data consist of disclosures made under the Clery Act, the federal law that requires colleges to report crimes committed on their campuses. In 2016, the department found, colleges and universities reported a total of 1,250 hate crimes, defined as offenses motivated by biases of race, national origin, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, gender, or disability.

That was a clear increase from the status quo. Over the previous four years, colleges reported an average of 970 hate crimes annually, with little variation from year to year.

The campus-specific data match broad national trends. The FBI reported a 67-percent spike nationally in hate crimes against Muslims from 2014 to 2015. In 2016, the bureau reported, the number of hate crimes across the United States increased by 5 percent from the previous
Likewise, starting in September 2016, the Anti-Defamation League’s Center on Extremism and the Southern Poverty Law Center cited hundreds of campus incidents in 2016, before and after Election Day, related to the promotion of white supremacy and other bigoted views.

**Nearly all types of hate crimes were reported more often.**

The most commonly reported hate crimes in 2016, as in each of the previous four years, were offenses associated with racial bias. They accounted for 40 percent of all hate crimes reported by colleges. Nineteen percent of reported hate crimes were motivated by victims’ religious affiliation. Rises in both of those categories followed significant upswings in 2015.

Campus crimes in which gender identity was the motivating factor also rose in 2016, with 50 cases reported. (The Education Department added the reporting requirement for that class of hate crime, which is distinct from the department’s broader “gender” category, in 2015.)

More than 38 percent of hate crimes reported by colleges involved hate-motivated vandalism and destruction of property, an increase of 95 offenses from 2015. An additional 38 percent of offenses were classified as criminal acts of intimidation. Acts of physical assault, both simple and aggravated, represented 16 percent of overall reports — a nearly 50-percent increase from 2015.

**Was there a “Trump Effect”? At the very least, there seemed to be an election effect.**

More-granular data reported by law-enforcement agencies at public colleges and universities to the Federal Bureau of Investigation indicate that there was an extraordinary spike in college hate crimes in November 2016.

From 2012 to 2015, police departments at select public colleges, universities, and medical schools reported an average of 20 hate crimes in the month of November. In November 2016, however, the same group of departments reported 48 hate crimes to the FBI. Before that, the most hate-related incidents the group of colleges had reported in one month was 40, in February 2014.

This chart, displaying hate-crime reports from five years of FBI data, shows the general arc of campus incidents from month to month — and just how uncommon the November 2016 spike was.

CNN, using FBI data first reported by ProPublica, found a similar aberrant and upward trend in hate crimes nationally during the last three months of 2016. ProPublica also provided FBI data, with detail down to the campus level, to The Chronicle for its analysis of college-specific hate crimes.

There’s no simple way to identify precisely how much of a role the divisive campaign, and Trump’s election, played in the spike. Critics have accused President Trump, both during his campaign and presidency, of arousing and mainstreaming racism, xenophobia, and Islamophobia.
The president’s reactions to criticism of his rhetoric have varied. In a postelection interview with 60 Minutes, he said he was “so saddened” to learn of bigoted acts committed by his supporters, and he urged those supporters to “stop it.” But exactly one year ago, he berated a reporter for asking a question about how the government would respond to the uptick in anti-Semitic acts in the wake of bomb threats against Jewish centers.

As the election recedes into the past, anecdotal evidence suggests that divisions have not healed. This month the Anti-Defamation League reported a 258-percent increase in white-supremacist propaganda on campuses from the fall of 2016 to the fall of 2017, affecting 216 campuses across the country.

And on Tuesday a Wayne State University student allegedly pulled a knife on a group of student activists, telling them, “I think all immigrants should be deported or killed,” one of the activists recounted. Wayne State has since suspended the student.

Here’s an institution-by-institution breakdown of the hate-crime data analyzed by The Chronicle:

Charts based on Education Department data do not include hate crimes motivated by gender identity, a category colleges were first required to report in 2015. The full table of hate-crime data does include those offenses. Education Department data include hate crimes that occurred on a campus, at off-campus locations like fraternity houses and hostels, and on public property adjacent to and accessible from a campus.

In the table, institutional figures include hate crimes reported both at main and branch campuses. The table does not include institutions that reported no hate crimes in either 2015 or 2016.

Editor’s note: The information below is listed for University of Missouri System schools.

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<th>Institution</th>
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Body image expert finds that self-esteem is linked to health behaviors

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Moms Everyday is a cable news show that distributes content to 55 shows nationwide.
More than half of Missouri's children lack affordable access to child care

By: Rebecca Martin

Tami Hughes' Monday morning is harder than yours.

Or maybe not, if you have young children in Jefferson City.

A single parent and working student, Hughes' weekday routine — planned around a 7 a.m. nursing class — would be hard enough if her son and daughter were enrolled at the same child care center.

"Monday through Thursday, I leave my house at 6 and I drop my daughter off at her day care at 6:15, and then I go across town and drop my son off at 6:30," she said last fall. "I am literally, like, in the parking lot at 6:25, they unlock the door, I hand over my son and leave. I don't even walk in the building. And then I go all the way to Linn, and I still don't make it to class on time."

It wasn't always so complicated.

Hughes initially returned to her job at Kmart four weeks postpartum, with a place reserved for Brysen at the center where Shayla was enrolled. But after Kmart closed its Jefferson City store and Hughes kept her children at home for the three months she was between jobs, finding a similar situation wasn't so easy.

"There was one day care in town that had an infant opening, so I put both of my children in that day care. And then when my daughter started pre-K in August, there were no day cares that would transport to pre-K," she said. "So when I finally found one that would transport, I had to move her and keep him there because the new day care didn't have an infant opening. So now I have two kids in two separate day cares on different sides of town."

With limited child care options — especially for infants — it took Hughes a couple of stressful months to secure a slot for 8-month-old Brysen to join sister Shayla, 4, at one center. Brysen is 13 months old now, and Shayla attends pre-K part time at Southwest Early Childhood Center.

Licensed and known license-exempt child care facilities in Cole County offer capacity of 2,682 spots for 4,032 children under age 6 with working parents as of February 2018, according to data compiled by Child Care Aware of Missouri, a statewide resource and referral agency that contracts with the Department of Social Services.
That accounts for two-thirds of preschool-age children whose parents work, meaning working families find other arrangements for over 1,300 more children.

**With such a stark disparity, would you believe Cole County ranks No. 1 among Missouri counties for available licensed child care in University of Missouri Institute of Public Policy's most recent report to the Women's Foundation?**

Cole County certainly offers more options than neighboring counties like Callaway, Miller and Moniteau, whose licensed and known license-exempt capacity accounts for less than half their population of children under 6 with working parents.

All mirror a statewide pattern: Missouri's licensed child care capacity accounts for only 48 percent of the state's infant and preschool-age children whose parents work, according to a 2014 report from Child Care Aware.

The issue isn't just one of convenience.

"It's not only just about families who are trying to address their own needs, but this is a workforce issue," said Robin Phillips, chief executive officer of Child Care Aware of Missouri. "When parents feel at ease of where their child is at during a time that the child is not with them, then that family member is more productive, more attentive, less likely to call in sick, less likely to be absent — and having that employee there and present and productive has an impact on that company's bottom line."

*Story continues*

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**MISSOURIAN**

**Looking at the Greitens scandal in an era of fake news and #MeToo**

BY KAITLIN WASHBURN

JEFFERSON CITY — It wasn’t too long ago that the playbook for a married politician ensnared in a sex scandal was relatively straightforward.

Once it was clear there was no wiggling out of it, the politician would, more often than not, hold a news conference or appear on television, a spouse alongside. The politician would admit to having the affair and apologize but offer few or no details.
But now, with Missouri Gov. Eric Greitens caught in a sex scandal as the eras of fake news and #MeToo converge, longtime pros in public relations and crisis communications are wondering whether the old playbook applies anymore.

While Greitens stuck to the usual approach, his response has come under fire. It was awarded “the winning bimbo” in the most recent edition of the monthly newsletter, the Bimbo Memo, which highlights PR blunders made by prominent figures.

Alex Greenwood, the owner of Alexander G Public Relations based in Kansas City, said his usual advice for a politician involved in a sex scandal is rather simple.

“As a politician … You have three choices,” Greenwood said. “You can admit it and throw yourself at the mercy of public opinion. Secondly, you can say I’m going to move on, or third you can say, I’m not going anywhere, I have nothing more to say about it, come and get me.”

He also warns his clients against using “no comment” or not speaking with the public at all.

“You can’t manage a crisis by wishful thinking and hoping it will go away. When you say nothing, it’s a void. And when you continue to say nothing, people will start putting their own facts in,” Greenwood said. “They think, ‘They’re not talking; they must be guilty.’”

But, Greenwood said, politicians recently have become more inclined to embrace the method used by President Donald Trump: Admit nothing, allege “fake news,” blame others and move on.

“Even though the president does have a bigger megaphone and he’s gifted in this area, I do think other politicians are going to try to not only create their own facts, but then deny and just bulldoze forward,” Greenwood said.

The Missourian reached out to eight members of the General Assembly for comments about whether they believe the ways politicians handle scandals are changing. All declined to share their opinions.
Greitens’ case is the classic infidelity scandal, with a twist. The 43-year-old Republican is a former Navy SEAL officer and Rhodes scholar whose rise to political prominence was very much helped by the image he projected as a devoted family man with a wife and children.

That image took a hit when it was revealed he’d had an affair, and the woman’s ex-husband alleged he blackmailed her to stay quiet with pictures of her bound, blindfolded and partially nude. Greitens admitted to the affair, but he denied blackmailing his former hairdresser.

His response has drawn criticism both for violating old rules of scandal management and new rules for apologizing that have emerged in recent months as dozens of powerful men have been publicly outed for their inappropriate, and, in some cases, criminal sexual behavior.

Merrie Spaeth, a crisis communications specialist and the president of Spaeth Communications based in Dallas, said Greitens made the mistake of repeating and denying the negative accusations, rather than focusing on how he plans to move past them.

“When you repeat and deny a negative, the listener tends to overlook the denial, and hear the opposite of what the speaker is trying to say,” Spaeth said. “Never repeat and deny a negative. Never.”

Spaeth, the former director of media relations for President Ronald Reagan, explained that she advises her clients to have a plan in place before a crisis strikes so they can be better prepared when addressing the public.

“The best crisis response is preparation before,” Spaeth said. “It’s like insurance. When you need it, it’s real handy. But you can’t buy it at the last minute.”

Spaeth said Greitens would have been better off had he only focused on the way he and his wife, Sheena Greitens, handled the affair in private and were trying to move on.
“He’s going to be criticized because he ran on a family-values platform, and this hardly qualifies as family values,” Spaeth said. “All he should really say is, My wife and I have issued a statement, you gotta let us rest this out, I want to be remembered for X.’

“By repeating the negative, all he did was create another round of headlines.”

Spaeth’s company puts out the monthly Bimbo Memo, and Spaeth also recently wrote an op-ed on Greitens for the Wall Street Journal called “How not to answer an accusation.”

**Glen Cameron, a strategic communications professor at MU, said Greitens’ response can work, as long as it isn’t more than a consensual affair.**

“In Greitens’ case, I think apologizing and minimizing and trying to move on may actually work,” Cameron said. “We are not talking morally or ethically, but in terms of strategic communication.”

However, Cameron, an expert in crisis communication, said if the allegations of blackmail and violence are true, then Greitens’ approach might be thorny for the governor.

It might seem like a good idea to mention the bad things you didn’t do, Cameron said, as long as you didn’t do them.

“Don’t be cagey,” he said. “If you’re going to be authentic and do a mea culpa … When you’re out there doing the mea culpa, don’t say, well I’m not Hitler.”

As far as the after-effects of #MeToo, Cameron said previous methods of handling allegations of sexual misconduct will be more difficult for politicians to use.

“The #MeToo movement, like any good strategic communication campaign, has shifted our sensibilities and has forced politicians to face their misdeeds like never before,” Cameron said. “The rate of resignation reflects this accountability, when previously stonewalling and prevarication would have been the order of the day.”
Greenwood is unsure what #MeToo will do for the way politicians handle sex scandals, but he hopes it will at least make men more aware of their behavior and treatment of women.

“I think you’ll find that this whole movement has made a lot of men stop and evaluate their behavior,” Greenwood said. “Men, good-hearted people, will start thinking more about their behavior, what they say and how they act and treating women more respectfully in the workplace.”

Greenwood, who has been in the public relations business for nearly 28 years, said he is still seeking a good, professional strategy to deal with this.

“I’m still navigating the bizarre world we are in.”

MU Counseling Center hosts ‘Dating in the U.S.’ seminar to explain national dating customs

By Stephi Smith

The MU Counseling Center directed a “Dating in the U.S.” seminar on Feb. 14 in Memorial Union. The seminar was held for international students to get a better understanding of dating culture in the United States.

The seminar was hosted by Shraddha Niphadkar and Teresa DePratt, psychologists at the Counseling Center, and was the first of its kind at MU. Niphadkar said she initially set it up to explain to international students the distinctive customs that come with dating in the U.S.

Niphadkar said she wanted to increase students’ cultural exposure. There are a lot of misunderstandings that can come with dating in the U.S., and she explained how sometimes students who come from different cultures can feel that difference. For example, she said, in countries like India where arranged marriages are popular, there is essentially no dating.
“If you’re coming from somewhere where you wouldn’t date and you come here [to the U.S.] where it’s a part of social life and you want to engage in that, you need to kind of know what you’re getting into,” Niphadkar said.

DePratt said dating in college itself, no matter the country, can be difficult for people to manage.

“It’s popular and confusing,” she said. “It’s a lot more to balance with school and everything else, and it’s often when people want to start serious relationships.”

DePratt also said there is a lot to consider before going into a relationship. Something to think about, she said, is what both parties might want in a relationship. She said she knew a student who wanted a long-term relationship but would “run and leave after two dates.” In addition, she said it’s important to consider what “successful” dating looks like. For some, it results in a long-term relationship and for others, it might just mean another date scheduled.

The event went through different cultural norms in the U.S., including the unique vocabulary. DePratt explained certain words such as “ghosting,” when one romantic partner will suddenly cease communication with another for seemingly no reason. These words can seem like a completely new language to someone who might not hear them in their home country, Niphadkar said.

Technology also plays a crucial role in U.S. dating culture, Niphadkar and DePratt said. DePratt explained popular dating sites such as Match.com and eHarmony as well as dating apps like Tinder and Bumble. In college, a lot more students will use apps to meet new people as opposed to the more traditional websites, DePratt said.

Furthermore, there are also risks that can come with dating in a different culture, Niphadkar said. Because there are students who may not know the culture norms or laws, they could accidentally potentially jeopardize their future in the United States.

“If [an international student] wants to take that risk, just remember what it could mean,” she said. “They have their immigration status to think about.”

Niphadkar said it’s important for international students, as well as others, to know the age of consent. She said she advises international students to avoid dating people under the age of 18 because if they’re caught in legal trouble, they could risk being deported.

Niphadkar expanded on the terms of consent and said it’s good to be open and communicative with potential romantic partners about boundaries and expectations from one another.

DePratt said she knows students who might stop talking to another person because they felt they were being pressured to do things they weren’t ready for. However, she said the other party may
not have been aware that they were unintentionally pressuring someone. Therefore, it’s important to know what each person expects and wants out of the date, DePratt said.

Niphadkar and DePratt said the Counseling Center as well as MU’s Relationship and Sexual Violence Prevention Center are resources to help students with dating issues, such as questions or Title IX filings. According to the RSVP Center’s website, it provides “ongoing case management and advocacy as needed by professional staff.”

Edited by Morgan Smith | mosmith@themaneater.com

MU task force recommends inactivation, consolidation and investment for academic programs

By Lauren Clerc

The first stage of MU’s academic program review has ended, with the university releasing a final report on Jan. 25. This report details recommendations made by the Task Force on Academic Program Analysis, Enhancement, and Opportunities. Its review is part of an attempt to identify areas of inefficiency in MU’s programs and strategically plan ways to correct them.

“[During the review], there were three main goals,” said Matthew Martens, faculty fellow in the Office of the Provost and co-chair of the task force. “[These were] to make recommendations for programs to inactivate that we couldn’t support anymore as an institution, make recommendations for programs where there might be opportunities to combine or consolidate and then to think about various areas of investment for programs.”

The task force was established by former Provost Garnett Stokes. Fifteen members from different departments met over the span of 6 1/2 months to deliberate each program as an individual unit.

“These were hard recommendations to make,” Martens said. “There are people doing good work in all these programs that were recommended for inactivation. I think that going forward, it's a
way to help the university think about what should its strategic initiatives be going forward. Where are areas we can grow? Where are areas that we can potentially be very good at?”

These recommendations were not solely budget-based. Some factors included in the deliberations were time to degree, number of applicants, research productivity and number of graduates to faculty, said Cooper Drury, associate dean of the College of Arts and Science and co-chair of the task force.

The final report suggested that 12 doctoral programs, nine master’s programs, five graduate certificate programs and one doctoral emphasis area be deactivated due to low enrollment.

“At no point did we think the negative consequences outweigh the need to move forward,” Drury said. “This is what made it such a difficult task: We know there will be negative impacts from this. The task force felt these were outweighed by doing nothing.”

Other programs were recommended for further review on account of program limitations. Multiple departments were opted to combine with others to increase productivity as well. For example, the task force recommended combining the German and Russian Studies departments and Romance Languages department into a consolidated languages, literatures and cultures department.

Though this report spells change for the university, the recommendations are not final. The task force sent its recommendations to the provost in January.

“The chancellor has made it clear: This is just the first stage of this process,” Martens said. “Our group came up with its recommendations, but there’s much more work to be done in terms of thinking about what are the next steps — one, in terms of enacting decisions about these programs, and two, using some of this information to think about the next steps for the university in general.”

The second stage of this process will occur in the following months. Administrators and faculty will work together to review their academic programs, according to a press release from the MU News Bureau.

Factors such as administrative costs and undergraduate impact campus wide will be taken into account. Recommendations and decisions to deactivate during stage two will occur throughout the spring 2018 semester.
It's hard to not be intrigued by Lindsey Vonn: at only 33 years old, she's the most successful female skier in history, and, needless to say, she has had a tremendously successful career. Considering this might be her last year competing in the Olympic games, viewers and fans are ready to soak up as much Vonn action as they can get. But aside from being aware that she's an expert on the slopes, most people don't know that much about her, and many are curious to find out more. Like, where did she grow up? How did she become such an incredible skier? Where did Lindsey Vonn go to school? How does she make flying down a mountain look that easy?

Like most Olympic athletes, Vonn has spent her entire life training to become the best of the best in her field. She grew up in the Twin Cities metropolitan area in Burnsville, Minnesota. She started skiing pretty much as soon as she could walk — as in, she was on skis by age two. She started her training in downhill skiing at the renowned Buck Hill Ski Racing School with Erich Sailer, who has coached many famous skiers. Because her father and grandfather were competitive skiers, this wasn't strange for her family — in fact, it was expected.

Because training was such a huge part of her life, Vonn didn't have much time for traditional schooling. Though she did attend regular school, Vonn told Elle in 2017 that she didn't go much due to her training schedule — eventually, she was homeschooled for two years, and completed her academic education attending the University of Missouri High School, an online program that teaches grades K-12 and offers more than 150 courses.

The story continues