TOUCH OF

FAKE

NEWS

Old Media had its Biases, but they did not promote Disinformation like Social Media Does

REED TURCOTTE

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Touch of Fake News

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E-Edition

PUBLISHED BY: BCP Publishing

Division of Boundary Creek Printing & Publishing Co. Ltd. (est.1896)

Website: www.touchoffakenews.ca

"The words that affect us most are the ones that inspire mankind to think for themseves"

Reed Turcotte (1991)

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Acknowledgements

A singular genuine shout-out goes to my immediate family for being my sounding board all these many decades. It has been a privilege to work in the newspaper and book business over the last forty-three years and able to be part of the prodigious print industry. It is an honor to publish this book in homage of all of you. As I have done in the past, an acknowledgement here would not be complete without a special 'thank-you' to all journalists, authors, academics, friends (and enemies) that I have quoted in this and past books, newspapers and magazines. Real journalism you see has not yet totally deceased but rather, in many cases it is just taking a rest, letting the farcical abnormalities, denunciation and rants of exploiting social media sink into the mud. At least, let us all hope quality journalism is just taking a breather, and all of us will see it rise from its death bed - for at least one more go-around.

Prologue

What is Fake News Anyways?

Fake news, also known as junk news, pseudo-news, alternative facts or hoax news, is a form of news consisting of deliberate disinformation or hoaxes spread via traditional news media (print and broadcast) or online social media. Digital news has brought back and increased the usage of fake news, or yellow journalism. The news is then often reverberated as misinformation in social media but occasionally finds its way to the mainstream media as well.

Fake news is written and published usually with the intent to mislead in order to damage an agency, entity, or person, and/or gain financially or politically, often using sensationalist, dishonest, or outright fabricated headlines to increase readership. Similarly, clickbait stories and headlines earn advertising revenue from this activity. The relevance of fake news has increased in post-truth politics. For media outlets, the ability to attract viewers to their websites is necessary to generate online advertising revenue. Publishing a story with false content that attracts user benefits advertisers and improves ratings.

Easy access to online advertisement revenue, increased political polarization and the popularity of social media, primarily the Facebook News Feed, have all been implicated in the spread of fake news, which competes with legitimate news stories. Hostile government actors have also been implicated in generating and propagating fake news, particularly during elections. Confirmation bias and social media algorithms like those used on Facebook and Twitter further advance the spread of fake news. Modern impact is felt for example in vaccine hesitancy. Fake news undermines serious media coverage and makes it more difficult for journalists to cover significant news stories. An analysis by BuzzFeed found that the top twenty fake news stories about the 2016 U.S. presidential election received more engagement on Facebook than the top twenty election stories from nineteen major media outlets. Anonymously-hosted fake news websites lacking known publishers have also been criticized, because they make it difficult to prosecute sources of fake news for libel. The term

"lying press" is at times used to cast doubt upon legitimate news from an opposing political standpoint.

During and after his 2016 presidential campaign and election (and again in 2020), President Donald Trump popularized the term "fake news" in this sense, regardless of the truthfulness of the news, when he used it to describe the negative press coverage of himself. In part, as a result of Trump's misuse, the term has come under increasing criticism, and in October 2018 the British government decided that it will no longer use the term because it is "a poorly-defined and misleading term that conflates a variety of false information, from genuine error through to foreign interference in democratic processes."

The sphere of 'fake news' is much more than simply putting out false news stories. Some of these stories may have a tidbit of truth, but they may lack factual details, they may not include any confirmable facts or sources. Certain accounts may include basic verifiable facts but are written - using language that is deliberately inflammatory, leaves out pertinent details or only presents one viewpoint. 'Fake news' exists within a larger ecosystem of mis- and disinformation. Misinformation is false or inaccurate information that is mistakenly or inadvertently created or spread - the intent is not to deceive. Disinformation is false information that is deliberately created and spread "in order to influence public opinion or obscure the truth".

Claire Wardle of FirstDraftNews.com has created a visual image to help one think about the ecosystem of mis- and disinformation. And as she points out, "it's complicated." How misinformation and disinformation is produced directly, relates to who the author(s) is and the different reasons why it is created.

Who are the authors? They may be: Someone wanting to make money, regardless of the content of the article (for example, Macedonian teenagers), satirists who want to either make a point or entertain you, or both. They could be poor or untrained journalists - the pressure of the twenty-four hour news cycle as well as the explosion of news sites may contribute to shoddy writing that doesn't follow professional journalistic standards or ethics. Partisans who want to influence political beliefs and policy makers. The technological ease of copy, paste, click and sharing

content online has helped these types of articles to proliferate. In some cases, the articles are designed to provoke an emotional response and they are placed on certain sites ("seeded) to entice readers into sharing these stories world-wide. In other cases, "fake news" articles may be generated and disseminated by "bots" - computer algorithms that are designed to act like people sharing information but can do so quickly and automatically.

What is more, human average attention spans have declined precipitously in the last thirteen years and are now shorter than that of a goldfish. The average attention span for the notoriously ill-focused goldfish is nine seconds, but according to a recent study from Microsoft Corporation, people now generally lose concentration after eight seconds. Finally, diagnoses of narcissistic personality disorder have risen sharply over the last decade and research suggests social media use may be a contributing factor. The average British user nowadays spends more than two hours a day on various social media and checks their smartphone every twelve minutes.

How should educators approach these substantial changes in our learning environment and the context within which learning takes place? As a professor at a leading European business school, I often ask myself this question. How do we help students cut through the noise, develop the acumen and judgment to identify fake news, and maintain a perspective grounded in reality? While these are complex, far-reaching questions deserving of equally deep and comprehensive answers, I would like to briefly highlight three points:

First, we should ask ourselves (and encourage others to ask themselves) about the underlying motivations for upholding or promoting specific positions, information, or beliefs. For instance, what is the background, financing, or objective of a given news source? Who is considered a credible expert in any given field by his or her respective community of scholars or practitioners? Moreover, is one pursuing further education out of love for knowledge, learning, excellence, contribution, and personal growth – or primarily out of fear of otherwise being perceived as not-good-enough, disrespected, outcompeted?

As an example, the summer of 2020 brought catastrophic fires and political unrest to Portland Oregon and this caused the term ‘fake news’ to be used over and over again. Many local Oregonians read on Twitter and Facebook that Antifa (anti-fascist and left-wing political movement in the United States) were going down the evacuated streets of towns looting. This was hundred per-cent not the case but the texts that were sent out still had some people staying home with their guns ready to defend their property. Law enforcement officials across the state were swamped with social-media misinformation. Every-day thousands of untrue (fake news) stories is unleashed throughout the world.

Sources include the University of Michigan, Dimo Ringov of Esade Business & Law School, Forbes and Dan Barry

Introduction

News Has Been Dying for a Long Time

'Fake news' has been with us for a long time, for instance in 1939, the Nazi regime in Germany used lies disguised as news as a pretense to invade Poland. This book however is not just about 'fake news' it also looks at the under-belly of journalism including the bias of big media like Fox and CBC News. While technically their brand of left-or-right wing journalism is not 'fake news, it is damn close. During this authors print tutelage (mostly during the last ten years) newspapers (the media he knows best) have been under incredible stress, they are in gigantic financial trouble, the industry is literally hanging on by its fingertips and every day more close their doors for good and this is bad as generally speaking newspapers do not print 'fake news'.

A story in the New York Times in July 2020 summed up what has happened to newspapers over the past decade. The story begins not with 'fake news' but with an essential worker driving his cluttered Toyota Corolla through the early spring emptiness, past a sign outside a closed parochial school asking people to pray - time to bear witness in a pandemic. He pulled up to the closed Lower Pottsgrove Elementary School, where masked employees were distributing bags and boxes of food. Dozens of cars waited in line for curbside pickup, many with children eager to spot their teachers. In the global context of the coronavirus, the moment was small. But to those who live around a Pennsylvania place called Pottstown, the scene reflected both the dependence on subsidized school meals and the yearning to connect in an unsettling time of isolation. It was a story.

Evan Brandt, proud reporter for a once-proud newspaper — The Mercury — emerged from his Toyota with press identification dangling from his neck, the photo old

enough to be of someone else. The newspaper's last staff photographer left years ago, and Mr. Brandt, grayer and heavier at fifty-five, had not updated his image. After snapping smartphone photos with a forefinger protruding from a cut in his latex glove, he interviewed several people, including a counselor dressed as a kid-friendly Tyrannosaurus. Dinosaur to dinosaur.

Forget dashing foreign correspondents and "All the President's Men" daily journalism often comes down to local reporters like Mr. Brandt. Overworked, underpaid and unlikely to appear as cable-news pundits, they report the day's events, hold officials accountable and capture those moments — a school honor, a retirement celebration — suitable for framing.

But they are an endangered species being nudged toward extinction by the most important news story in decades - coronavirus. The economic paralysis caused by the pandemic has clobbered a newspaper industry already on the mat. With revenues plummeting, substantial layoffs, furloughs and pay reductions have followed in newsrooms across North America.

Meanwhile, the hedge funds and private equity firms that own many newspapers often siphon away profits rather than reinvest in local journalism. Frequently associated with this business model is the Alden Global Capital hedge fund, which controls The Mercury, Mr. Brandt's employer for twenty-three years. Most of his colleagues who did not quit have been laid off or bought out, effectively making him the last reporter covering Pottstown. His newspaper's distinctive building was abruptly emptied and later sold, so he works in his attic, surrounded by a display of thirty-six journalism awards, many for public service. "To remind me that the work is important," Mr. Brandt said. He keeps another memento as well: a photograph of the time he paid an unannounced visit to the Long Island mansion of the president of Alden Global Capital. Basically, his boss's boss— who knows how many bosses?

He had a question he needed to ask. If Thornton Wilder's "Our Town" were set in Pottstown, Evan Brandt would be the omniscient Stage Manager, eyeglasses kept on a

string, reporter's notebook waving from his back pocket. People stop him to say hello or make some "fake news" joke or just ask "what's the latest". He usually knows.

Pottstown, a town of 23,000 about forty miles northwest of Philadelphia, is like many American places: between acts. The iron and steel industries are all but gone, leaving the town's former prosperity to linger in the worn storefront grandeur along High Street. The trains trundling through carry only freight - there has not been passenger service in forty years. Mr. Brandt demonstrated his command of all things Pottstown during nickel tours of its five square miles in his 2014 Corolla, the interior is coffee stain casual.

Here was the former site of the Mrs. Smith's Pies factory; the tins are still made in Pottstown. Here, the old Bethlehem Steel plant; its steel supports the Golden Gate Bridge. And here, in this old bank building is the Blue Elephant, one of several new restaurants in town. Brandt also drove past Pottstown places that might not be there if not for The Mercury — if not for him. See this handsome brick building? Nearly twenty years ago, he and a photographer exposed a chemical company's risky storage of hazardous materials, leading to the warehouse's closure. Now it is part of Montgomery County Community College.

And see that small Y.M.C.A. building? A lot of disadvantaged families depend on it. Coverage by The Mercury and Brandt helped to salvage the Y's presence in town after the organization had announced plans to close its Pottstown location. "Evan is the voice of the voiceless," said Johnny Corson, the president of the local chapter of the N.A.A.C.P. "He speaks for the little people. If we lose him, we're in trouble."

Brandt's meandering excursion finally came to a blond-brick building at the corner of North Hanover and King Streets. A vertical marquee identified this empty local landmark: Named after the messenger of the gods. Dedicated to being "frank and fearless in all matters." The smallest newspaper to win two Pulitzer Prizes. Brandt never forgot the example set by staff photographers who would race to every fire and crime scene as though traffic laws did not apply on deadline:

“If you came back to the newsroom and you didn’t smell like smoke, you hadn’t done your job.” Life and the news continued, as did the decline of a newspaper industry hobbled by changing reading habits and vanishing advertising sales. Many newspapers, caught off guard by the explosion of the internet, exacerbated this failure with a sluggish embrace of digital journalism and marketing.

The Journal Register Company teetered, and the ensuing cutbacks brought an unnerving quiet to its newspapers, including The Mercury. “It just got smaller and smaller,” Ms. Faust recalled. A sorrowful ritual developed: the pillaging of a vacated desk for a computer mouse, a keyboard, any office necessity in short supply. “I took the chair of the guy behind me,” Brandt said. Business deals consummated far from Pottstown were not only affecting livelihoods, but also the concept of an informed electorate. Its staff diminished, The Mercury could no longer produce the once-standard profiles of candidates for the Borough Council, the Board of Commissioners, the State Legislature.

Meanwhile, many newspaper owners were struggling to convince readers to pay for the journalism that the papers had been freely providing online. The Business 101 concept of consumer demand had been fractured. “I blame the public a little bit,” said Ms. March, who retired as the Mercury’s editor in 2016. “People do not recognize — do not champion — what we do. I walk around my community and they thank me, but they do not want to support it - they don’t want to pay for it.”

In 2011, the Mercury’s owner, the Journal Register Company, was bought by Alden Global Capital. The hedge fund’s publicity-shy owners, Randall D. Smith and Heath Freeman, were often referred to as vulture capitalists, having made their fortunes by buying and monetizing distressed properties. ‘To make a huge profit in the newspaper business, you have to cut, cut, cut, and be willing to see the product get worse year by year.’ Their MNG Enterprises — also known as MediaNews Group — controls about two hundred publications, including The Denver Post and The Boston Herald. It also has a thirty-two percent stake in the Tribune Publishing Company, which owns several major

newspapers, including The Chicago Tribune, and has recently indicated interest in buying the McClatchy chain of newspapers.

Newspaper acquisitions may not seem to make much business sense, given that readership and advertising have been declining for decades. But vultures feast on remnants. First, there is the real estate that can be sold off, such as the 25,000-square-foot Mercury building. Then there is the profit realized by shrinking expenses — including the staff and news coverage — while still collecting the advertising and subscription revenue.

"The truth is, to make a huge profit in the newspaper business, you have to cut, cut, cut, and be willing to see the product get worse year by year, they'll have a number, and they will cut whatever they have to — to meet that number." Alden has systematically contracted its newsrooms, perhaps most famously at The Denver Post in 2018, after which the staff revolted by publishing articles demanding, unsuccessfully, that the newspaper be sold to a concern that appreciates local journalism. "They're extracting significant profits and they're not investing, when they can no longer extract a profit — or enough of a profit — they'll turn out the lights in Pottstown."

But here is the rub - would the fate of The Mercury (or hundreds of other newspapers in Canada and the US) have been any different if Alden Global Capital had not bought it? The Mercury isn't in the Berkshires, for example, where local investors bought The Berkshire Eagle from an Alden subsidiary in 2016 and promptly announced a radical business plan in direct opposition to that of the previous owners: to increase readership and revenue "by improving the quality and quantity of the content." The Mercury is in Pottstown, which is like so many other communities around the country, where the local Herald or Journal or Sentinel is operating on fumes and the idealism of its own Evan Brandt.

Alden declined to answer questions about business practices frequently derided as rapacious. In March, the senators of Illinois, Dick Durbin and Tammy Duckworth, expressed alarm over the potential Alden takeover of The Chicago Tribune, and called

on the hedge fund to “reverse course and put an end to policies that have hollowed out local newspapers and their staff across the country.”

In a response first reported by The Seattle Times, Mr. Freeman — the president of Alden Global Capital — framed his hedge fund’s media operations as a noble rescue mission: saving newspapers from bankruptcy or liquidation and operating them in a sustainable, responsible way. He said it had never closed a daily newspaper, though many have been gutted, and he complained about “erroneous” coverage without providing specifics. The corporate consolidation of news operations has pushed The Mercury to a much earlier six p.m. deadline, eliminating any chance that news from a night meeting will appear in the next day’s paper. Mr. Brandt live-tweeted the meeting; wrote a quick article for his blog that he then shared on Facebook and Twitter and, in the morning, updated the article for Friday’s editions. Like hundreds of other newspapers in North America, the Mercury ceased to exist, a product of greedy corporations, social media and ‘fake news’ outlets.

Four books (years) ago this author wrote the following in his book, “When Canadian Newspaper Publishers Were King” and although not totally fresh, it still resonates today. Turcotte stated, newspaper publishers were the ‘king’ of their town from the late 1800s until the 1920’s, as long as the paper was independently owned the publisher was revered and this continued up until the late 1990s.

As more and more newspapers came under the umbrella of newspaper chains, the magic that was prevalent up then started to wane. With the invention of social media, the wheels fell off the print industry and newspapers are the casualty, and they may be gone, at least in paper form, as early as 2024. While Twitter often bears the brunt of criticism about online toxicity, this kind of behaviour is all too common elsewhere as well. YouTube, Reddit threads, Facebook, Snapchat and even to a smaller extent, Wikipedia are all designs that can promote meaningful engagement but, in many cases, perpetuates a culture of anger, confusion and fear with people lashing out at

each other. Even newspaper comments are now ripe with this negative nelly form of harassment.

The latest “nail in the coffin” of newspapers may be one of the things that save them. This is what is referred to as ‘fake news’, which is simply putting untruths on the internet (mostly through social media) and watching it take off and get read by tens of thousands of young to middle-age people who believe in every word they read online. As an example, a couple of twenty- year old unemployed men decided to take a few off base stories that they found in yellow journalism rags in the fall of 2016 and they then kicked it up a notch. During the American presidential election these men (sic) and others like them (including hackers) put together an anti-Hillary Clinton tabloid internet paper that promoted the biggest lies they could think of. Many Americans read the fake news that was being electronically generated by anyone and everyone who wished to interfere with the election and believed it was one-hundred percent true.

Fake news is the breakfast of choice for the younger generation and these millennials through various social medias have completely changed todays journalism landscape. These millennials and other citizens think newspapers have gone the way of the horse and buggy, the steam engine and the typewriter, and they are right. Today, papers are morphing from newsprint to digital, which is a good thing. Newspapers may survive (readers may tire of ‘fake news’) but not in paper form that one can hold in one’s hands, but rather they will be read on the publishing company’s web sites from a screen. Perhaps former President Donald Trump is right and old media (in its past form) is not needed anymore, “the king (4th estate) is dead, long live the king (5th estate).”

This author cannot help it - he misses the old cut and paste days, when the newspaper publishers were really ‘king of their domains’. The “community newspaper” is no more as there is no real local publisher at the helm steering the ship, their positions have been mostly illuminated due to corporate cost cutting. Instead, what some of today’s papers have at the helm are a bunch of yesterday men who are desperately trying to escape the guillotine before it gets them, their shareholders and

eventually their business. Publishers that worked and lived in their community used to spend a lot of their time with the local merchants and Chamber of Commerce, they felt the euphoria when a new business opened-up and felt their pain when they closed. Today CEOs sit in their ivory towers and are not even close to hands-on with their newspaper's (and other media) business community.

Newspapers (especially dailies) used to be rivers of gold, now in many cases they are not even worth the paper they are printed on. Some, if not most of the media barons of the last forty years have used their newspapers as their very own personal cash cows or at the very least, they have profited nicely. They did not obtain this massive wealth solely because they owned many community papers. Much of their money came through the back door, they literally had their hands on the lever that pumped dollars from the newspaper to the press and eventually into their hands. It does seem strange that a few of them now want government (taxpayers) to help out their cause. Should these wealthy CEOs (publishers) not put back a small amount of their own finances into their media companies? After all, was it not their news papers-that made them wealthy in the first place? A level playing field is one thing (yes, tax the US internet giants) but Canadian (or US) tax-payer's dollars should not be part of a government bailout.

There could be light at the end of the tunnel, as big media and their newspapers are disappearing into a kind of fog. They will likely come out of this fog in smaller pieces (single or reduced groups of papers) that publish not just newsprint editions but internet ones as well. Some of the bigger ones will morph into these print and online newspapers like the Suburban has. The Suburban is Quebec's largest English language newspaper that a few years ago had a print circulation of 145,000 copies. Suburban's editor-in-chief might be the last old-fashioned tough newsman left in Canada and it shows as his paper is top notch. Then and only then will sanity prevail, all-be-it there will be a lot less money to be made as the golden goose has long fled the stable.

Sourced through the New York Times and When Canadian Newspaper Publishers were King

Chapter One

The Truth & Nothing but the Truth on Fake News

Falsehood flies and the Truth comes limping after it," Jonathan Swift once wrote. It was hyperbole three centuries ago. But it is a factual description of social media, according to an ambitious and first-of-its-kind study published in Science.

A massive study analyzed every major contested news story in English across the span of Twitter's existence—some 126,000 stories (at that time), tweeted by three million users, over more than ten years—and finds that the truth simply cannot compete with hoax and rumor. By every common metric, falsehood consistently dominates the truth on Twitter, the study finds: Fake news and false rumors reach more people, penetrate deeper into the social network, and spread much faster than accurate stories.

"It seems to be pretty clear [from the study] that false information outperforms true information," said Soroush Vosoughi, a data scientist at MIT who has studied fake news since 2013 and who led this study. "And that is not just because of bots. It might have something to do with human nature." The study has already prompted alarm from social scientists. "We must redesign our information ecosystem in the 21st century," write a group of sixteen political scientists and legal scholars in an essay published. They call for a new drive of interdisciplinary research "to reduce the spread of fake news and to address the underlying pathologies it has revealed." "How can we create a news ecosystem ... that values and promotes truth?" they ask.

The new study suggests that it will not be easy. Though Vosoughi and his colleagues only focus on Twitter—the study was conducted using exclusive data that the company made available to MIT—their work has implications for Facebook, YouTube,

and every major social network. Any platform that regularly amplifies engaging or provocative content runs the risk of amplifying fake news along with it.

Though the study is written in the clinical language of statistics, it offers a methodical indictment of the accuracy of information that spreads on these platforms. A false story is much more likely to go viral than a real story, the authors find. A false story reaches 1,500 people six times quicker, on average, than a true story does. And while false stories outperform the truth on every subject—including business, terrorism and war, science and technology, and entertainment—fake news about politics regularly does best.

Twitter users seem almost to prefer sharing falsehoods. Even when the researchers controlled for every difference between the accounts originating rumors—like whether that person had more followers or was verified—falsehoods were still seventy percent more likely to get retweeted than accurate news. And blame for this problem cannot be laid with our robotic brethren. From 2006 to 2016, Twitter bots amplified true stories as much as they amplified false ones, the study found. Fake news prospers, the authors write, “because humans, not robots, are more likely to spread it.”

Political scientists and social-media researchers largely praised the study, saying it gave the broadest and most rigorous look so far into the scale of the fake-news problem on social networks, though some disputed its findings about bots and questioned its definition of news. This is a really interesting and impressive study, and the results around how demonstrably untrue assertions spread faster and wider than demonstrable true ones do, within the sample, seem very robust, consistent, and well supported,” said Rasmus Kleis Nielsen, a professor of political communication at the University of Oxford, in an Falsehoods almost always beat out the truth on Twitter, penetrating further, faster, and deeper into the social network than accurate information. The new study suggests that it will not be easy. Though Vosoughi and his colleagues only focus on Twitter—the study was conducted using exclusive data that the company made available to MIT—their work has implications for Facebook, YouTube,

and every major social network. Any platform that regularly amplifies engaging or provocative content runs the risk of amplifying fake news along with it. Though the study is written in the clinical language of statistics, it offers a methodical indictment of the accuracy of information that spreads on these platforms. A false story is much more likely to go viral than a real story, the authors find. A false story reaches 1,500 people six times quicker, on average, than a true story does. And while false stories outperform the truth on every subject—including business, terrorism and war, science and technology, and entertainment—fake news about politics regularly does best.

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"I think it's very careful, important work," Brendan Nyhan, a professor of government at Dartmouth College, told me. "It's excellent research of the sort that we need more of." "In short, I don't think there's any reason to doubt the study's results," said Rebekah Tromble, a professor of political science at Leiden University in the Netherlands, in an email.

What makes this study different? In the past, researchers have looked into the problem of falsehoods spreading online. They've often focused on rumors around singular events, like the speculation that preceded the discovery of the Higgs boson in 2012 or the rumors that followed the Haiti earthquake in 2010.

This new paper takes a far grander scale, looking at nearly the entire lifespan of Twitter: every piece of controversial news that propagated on the service from September 2006 to December 2016. But to do that, Vosoughi and his colleagues had to answer a more preliminary question first: What is truth? And how do we know?

It's a question that can have life-or-death consequences. "[Fake news] has become a white-hot political and, really, cultural topic, but the trigger for us was personal events that hit Boston five years ago," said Deb Roy, a media scientist at MIT and one of the authors of the new study. The two men—and Sinan Aral, a professor of management at MIT—turned to examining how falsehoods move across Twitter as a whole. But they were back not only at the "what is truth?" question, but its more pertinent twin: How does the computer know what truth is?

They opted to turn to the ultimate arbiter of fact online: the third-party fact-checking sites. By scraping and analyzing six different fact-checking sites—including Snopes, Politifact, and FactCheck.org—they generated a list of tens of thousands of online rumors that had spread between 2006 and 2016 on Twitter. Then they searched Twitter for these rumors, using a proprietary search engine owned by the social network called Gnip. Ultimately, they found about 126,000 tweets, which, together, had been retweeted more than 4.5 million times. Some linked to "fake" stories hosted on other websites. Some started rumors themselves, either in the text of a tweet or in an attached image. (The team used a special program that could search for words contained within static tweet images.) And some contained true information or linked to it elsewhere.

Then they ran a series of analyses, comparing the popularity of the fake rumors with the popularity of the real news. What they found astounded them.

Speaking from MIT in 2020, Vosoughi gave an example: There are lots of ways for a tweet to get 10,000 retweets, he said. If a celebrity sends Tweet A, and they have a couple million followers, maybe 10,000 people will see Tweet A in their timeline and decide to retweet it. Tweet A was broadcast, creating a big but shallow pattern. Meanwhile, someone without many followers sends Tweet B. It goes out to their twenty followers—but one of those people sees it, and retweets it, and then one of their followers sees it and retweets it too, on and on until tens of thousands of people have seen and shared Tweet B.

Tweet A and Tweet B both have the same size audience, but Tweet B has more "depth," to use Vosoughi's term. It chained together retweets, going viral in a way that Tweet A never did. "It could reach 1,000 retweets, but it has a very different shape," he said. Fake news dominates according to both metrics. It consistently reaches a larger audience, and it tunnels much deeper into social networks than real news does. The authors found that accurate news wasn't able to chain together more than ten retweets. Fake news could put together a retweet chain nineteen links long—and do it ten times as fast as accurate news put together its measly ten retweets.

These results proved robust even when they were checked by humans, not bots. Separate from the main inquiry, a group of undergraduate students' fact-checked a random selection of roughly 13,000 English-language tweets from the same period. They found that false information outperformed true information in ways "nearly identical" to the main data set, according to the study. What does this look like in real life? Take two examples from the last presidential election. In August 2015, a rumor circulated on social media that Donald Trump had let a sick child use his plane to get urgent medical care. Snopes confirmed almost all of the tale as true. But according to the team's estimates, only about 1,300 people shared or retweeted the story.

First, fake news seems to be more "novel" than real news. Falsehoods are often notably different from the all the tweets that have appeared in a user's timeline sixty days prior to their retweeting them, the team found.

Second, ‘fake news’ evokes much more emotion than the average tweet. The researchers created a database of the words that Twitter users used to reply to the 126,000 contested tweets, then analyzed it with a state-of-the-art sentiment-analysis tool. Fake tweets tended to elicit words associated with surprise and disgust, while accurate tweets summoned words associated with sadness and trust, they found.

The team wanted to answer one more question: Were Twitter bots helping to spread misinformation? After using two different bot-detection algorithms on their sample of three million Twitter users, they found that the automated bots were spreading false news—but they were retweeting it at the same rate that they retweeted accurate information. “The massive differences in how true and false news spreads on Twitter cannot be explained by the presence of bots,” Aral told me.

But some political scientists cautioned that this should not be used to disprove the role of Russian bots in seeding disinformation recently. An “army” of Russian-associated bots helped amplify divisive rhetoric after the school shooting in Parkland, Florida, The New York Times has reported. “It can both be the case that (1) over the whole ten year data set, bots don’t favor false propaganda and (2) in a recent subset of cases, botnets have been strategically deployed to spread the reach of false propaganda claims,” said Dave Karpf, a political scientist at George Washington University, in an email.

Some political scientists also questioned the study’s definition of news. By turning to the fact-checking sites, the study blurs together a wide range of false information, outright lies, urban legends, hoaxes, spoofs, falsehoods, and ‘fake news’ It does not just look at fake news by itself—that is, articles or videos that look like news content, and which appear to have gone through a journalistic process, but which are actually - made up.

A new global survey suggests distrust of the internet is being fuelled by growing skepticism of social-media services such as Facebook and Twitter. One in four people who took part in the survey said they did not trust the internet, a view increasingly

being driven by lack of confidence in social media, government and search engines. The opinion research involved more than 25,000 internet users in twenty-five countries in North America, Latin America, Europe, the Middle East and the Asia-Pacific region.

It was conducted by pollster Ipsos on behalf of the Centre for International Governance Innovation in Waterloo, Ont., in partnership with the Internet Society and the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development. The survey report says growing distrust with the internet prompted people to disclose less information in cyberspace, use the internet more selectively and buy fewer things online. The results come amid widespread concern about fake news online and the duplicitous use of social media to influence democratic processes, including elections.

Three in four respondents were at least somewhat concerned about their online privacy. Overall, more than half of those surveyed were more concerned about their privacy compared to a year ago. “They still trust the internet, in the majority, but I think there’s some storm clouds on the horizon,” said Eric Jardine, an assistant professor of political science at Virginia Tech and a fellow at CIGI.

Among those who distrust the internet, eighty-one per cent cited cybercriminals as a reason. Seventy-five per cent pointed to social-media platforms, sixty-six per cent mentioned foreign governments and government generally and sixty-five per cent blamed search engines such as Google for the erosion of trust. We need to develop the technologies to take down the offensive material and, as much as possible, prevent it from going up in the first place.

In Canada, social media was the leading source of internet distrust, cited by eighty-nine per cent of people. Almost nine in ten surveyed said they had been fooled by fake news at least once. Facebook was commonly noted source of phoney news, followed by Twitter. Ten per cent of Twitter users and nine per cent of Facebook users told the researchers they had closed their accounts in the last year as a direct result of ‘fake news’.

A majority of internet users expressed support for actions that governments and companies could take to fight fake news, from social media and video-sharing platforms taking down bogus posts, videos and accounts to adoption of automated content removal and even government censorship of content, the researchers say.

The federal government has repeatedly voiced concerns about the behaviour of social-media services, particularly their role in hosting dangerous content related to violent extremism and child exploitation. Last year ninety per cent of Canadians say they have fallen for fake news online, with many listing Facebook as the most common source of misleading reports, according to a new international public opinion poll.

The poll of 25,229 internet users, conducted by Ipsos Public Affairs for Canada's Centre for International Governance Innovation (CIGI), found that only ten per cent of Canadian respondents said they had never fallen for fake news, which the poll defined as wholly or partly false information. Another fifty-two per cent said that while they have fallen for fake news, they do it seldom; thirty-three per cent said it happened "sometimes" while five per cent said it happened "frequently."

The poll found that Canadians reported falling for ‘fake news’ at a rate slightly higher than the international rate of eighty-six per cent and the North American average of eighty-seven per cent. The highest rate reported in the poll came from Egypt, where ninety-three per cent of respondents admitted to having fallen for fake news. The lowest reported rate was in Pakistan, where only seventy-two per cent said they had ever fallen for ‘fake news’.

In fact, the poll found there are more Canadians now saying they distrust social media companies (eighty-nine per cent) than there are Canadians saying they distrust cybercriminals (eighty-five per cent) — despite the fact that those who are charged with protecting Canadians online often cite cybercrime as their biggest concern. "Currently, social media has a big image problem," said Fen Osler Hampson, CIGI's director of global security and politics. "I think they know that. "What we're seeing is very high levels of

distrust and it is going to empower governments to regulate them if they don't take stronger measures themselves to clean up their act."

Asked to identify sources of ‘fake news’, sixty-eight per cent of Canadian respondents pointed at Facebook; sixty-five per cent blamed social media in general, sixty-two per cent blamed "the internet" and forty-nine per cited YouTube. Television was cited by forty-five per cent of Canadian respondents, followed closely by the "mainstream media" at forty-three per cent and print media at thirty-five per cent. Even with all the troubles facing the newspaper industry it still seems that the population as a whole - trusts them the most not to print ‘fake news.’

Sources include – The Atlantic --Robinson Meyer, HUFFPOST – Jim Bronskill, CBC-E. Thompson

Chapter Two

Even the ‘Big Boys’ use Fake News

It is not just a bunch of tweebs out of Russia, China or any other country that prevail on-line, putting out their toxic, malicious and venomous diatribe against everything they hate. ‘Big media’ also dabbles in a form of ‘fake news’ – usually under the guise of political correctness but in fact it is just their bias showing through. In Canada, the CBC is often criticized for their liberal-left wing views. In the United States FOX gets blamed for their right wing – Republican only opinions.

A article published by Ahmed Al-Rawi an Assistant Professor, Social Media, News and Public Communication at Simon Fraser University in late 2019 stated that there are many concerns, discussions and news reports on the possible dissemination of fake news in Canada as the country headed towards the Oct. 21 election, often referenced with the Twitter hashtag #elxn43.

In his research on fake news and the Canadian election, he found a concerning indication that Canadian mainstream media is sometimes unjustifiably being associated with fake news. Some of these unfounded accusations can lead to a diminishing level of trust in the news media. Another worrying sign I found is in the way online echo chambers or tightly knit online communities are formed, often attacking each other with the use of fake news accusations.

Al-Rawi is an academic who analyzes social media commentary about fake news and Canadian politics. This research offers insight into the public’s political affiliations and their level of scrutiny. Because some news stories and political statements are often tagged by the public as fake news, it is relevant to know what is being tagged, who is mostly targeted and possibly why — especially during the election. Using Twitter, I

extracted 10,698 tweets that contain “fake news” and “fake news” from a larger dataset of 2,496,738 tweets that referenced Canadian politics using the hashtag #CDNpoli. These tweets were posted by 206,273 unique users and were collected between May 23 to Sept. 25, 2019.

The highest number of messages were retweeted on Sept. 5, mostly attacking Conservative Leader Andrew Scheer for tweeting about the British government’s alleged decision to send a child murderer to Canada, which turned out to be a false story. Tweets critical of Scheer’s claim were retweeted a few hundred times that day. Retweets often indicate what people online are mostly focusing on, and so Al-Rawi conducted a closer examination of the data set by investigating the most retweeted posts. Here, he found two main features. First, there are systematic and targeted attacks accusing Canadian mainstream media outlets of a liberal bias. The most mentioned outlet was CBC (1,243), followed by Global News (301) and CTV News (105) in terms of stories that were often flagged as possibly fake.

The words most frequently associated with fake news were CBC, CBC News and Global News. Though not all the references were negative, many of the tweets targeted those specific outlets and their journalists to express dissatisfaction with their reporting.

In a previous study on fake news discourses, mostly focusing on the 2016 presidential election in the United States, the Assistant Professor highlighted how online users can spam others and create what’s known as a networked flak activity, which he defined as “a collective negative response to (the mainstream media) in order to discipline it, change its tone and editorial stance, or undermine the public’s trust. It’s a technique used by some political leaders, like former U.S. President Donald Trump, to achieve some of those goals.

In Canada, attacks against mainstream media seem to be systematic and continuous, even when the news coverage sounds objective and neutral. Another worrying observation is that there is an ongoing, highly polarized discussion of fake news, which is often used to discredit political opponents and weaken their positions.

The top ten re-tweeted posts that he found during his research were highly polarized and illustrated the political rivalry between the Liberals and Conservatives. Tweets about, interviews with and statements by Canadian politicians and officials like Scheer, Justin Trudeau, Adam Vaughan (a Liberal candidate in Toronto) and Karina Gould (another Liberal candidate) were carefully scrutinized by the public, which is a healthy sign of critical political debates. Some general political messages or campaigning videos are increasingly tagged by some audiences as fake news as an attempt to discredit the credibility of those politicians and cast doubt about their future political programs.

Discussions about election fake news on social media provide important insight into what the public critically perceives to be fake news. This can be useful when there are misleading political statements or mistakes in news reporting. What's concerning is that the "fake news" tag is sometimes employed as a tool to wage personal attacks against politicians that ultimately enhances political polarization and echo chambers, while Canadian mainstream media is sometimes unjustifiably attacked with fake news accusations. Civilization needs the news media to accurately inform and possibly engage citizens in a deliberative democracy, so attacking mainstream media and other politicians without evidence will not serve the Canadian or US public any good.

Across the border the bias seems even worse among the 'big media' organizations. According to an interesting story in the Atlantic in 2019 by David A. Graham talked about a study on 'fake news'. The rise of fake news in the American popular consciousness is one of the remarkable growth stories in recent years—a dizzying climb to make any Silicon Valley unicorn jealous. Just a few years ago, the phrase was meaningless. Today, according to a new Pew Research Center study, Americans rate it as a larger problem than racism, climate change, or terrorists.

But remarkable though that may seem, it is not actually what is most interesting about the study. Pew finds that Americans have deeply divergent views about fake news and different responses to it, which suggest that the emphasis on misinformation might

actually run the risk of making people, especially conservatives, less well informed. More than making people believe false things, the rise of fake news is making it harder for people to see the truth.

Pew does not define what it calls “made-up news,” which is a reasonable choice in the context of a poll but matters a great deal in interpreting it. The term has come to mean different things to different people. It was coined to describe deliberately false articles created by Potemkin news sites and spread on social media. But in a deliberate effort to muddy the waters, then President Donald Trump began labeling news coverage that was unfavorable to him ‘fake news.’ (Indeed, Pew finds that Americans blame politicians and their aides, more than the press, activist groups, or foreign actors, for the problem of made-up news.) Now when Trump’s supporters refer to ‘fake news,’ they often seem to mean mainstream news they dislike, whereas when others do so, they mean bogus information spread by fringe actors.

If Pew’s data are taken to mean that people find this latter category more dangerous than climate change, that is almost certainly an overreaction. As the political scientist Brendan Nyhan wrote in February, summarizing the state of research in the field: Relatively few people consumed this form of content directly during the 2016 campaign, and even fewer did so before the 2018 election. Fake news consumption is concentrated among a narrow subset of Americans with the most conservative news diets. And, most notably, no credible evidence exists that exposure to fake news changed the outcome of the 2016 or 2020 elections.

Pew finds a significant gap between Democrats’ and Republicans’ views on the seriousness of the problem with made-up news, though: This looks a lot like a split over the definition of fake news, rather than the actual problem. Put differently, Republicans may well be responding not to out-and-out fakery, but to bias—real or perceived—in news coverage. It would make sense that conservatives would be primed to accept the idea of widespread bias in the press after a decades-long campaign against the credibility of the mainstream press. Indeed, Republicans are about three times more

likely than Democrats (fifty-eight percent versus twenty percent) to say that journalists create a lot of fake news, though they still assign more blame to both politicians and activist groups.

How do people respond when they sense fake news? Here again, the partisan splits are notable: It is a positive sign that people are trying to fact-check stories themselves, though it is an open question whether they're any good at it.(Respondents thought little of their peers' ability to find bad information, but believe that they, like the children in Lake Wobegon, are all above average: "Survey respondents also put a good deal more faith in their own ability to recognize potentially inaccurate or misleading information than they do in the broader public's ability to discern it."

Some of the other choices are more troubling. One of the biggest risks often imputed to the current media environment, in which audiences can pick and choose news outlets that agree with them, is that people will become more and more siloed, cutting themselves off from information that they don't like or that contradicts their prior assumptions. The Pew study suggests that fake-news panic, rather than driving people to abandon ideological outlets and the fringe, may actually be accelerating the process of polarization: It's driving consumers to drop some outlets, to simply consume less information overall, and even to cut out social relationships.

If people stop reading a website, because it's peddling conspiracy theories, that's good news. If they stop consuming any coverage from mainstream outlets like CNN or The Washington Post, because they believe a story is biased, or because the president has labeled it fake news, that is less positive. While nearly six in ten Democrats have dropped an outlet over perceived fake news, a full seventy percent of Republicans have. A much larger portion of Republicans has also reduced their overall consumption of news. The less politically aware are also twenty percent more likely to have reduced their overall consumption of news than the more politically aware - meaning that people who were already acquiring the least information are now acquiring even less.

Fully half of respondents said they had avoided talking with someone, because they thought that person might bring made-up news and information into the conversation. The numbers are roughly equivalent across parties, forty-eight percent of Republicans, fifty-one percent of Democrats. It is another example of an action that might seem rational under certain circumstances; no one should feel obliged to listen to an Alex Jones–listening relative's Sandy Hook truth-ism or a neighbor's Louise Mensch–derived Trump conspiracy theories. But given the relatively small actual prevalence of true fake news, this figure is probably just another sign of people soiling themselves from information that challenges their assumptions.

Nor does Pew's study offer much reason for optimism that these problems will fade anytime soon. The public's solutions are fraught with contradictions. More than half of respondents said that journalists bear the most responsibility for fixing the problem (fifty-three percent, versus twenty percent for the public, twelve percent for the government, and nine percent for tech companies), and yet eight in ten say limitations on made-up news and information—restrictions on free speech, in other words—are needed. Moreover, almost two-thirds of people said that political divisions are a big challenge to addressing made-up news. Yet the steps that they report taking themselves seem likely to only exacerbate those political divisions.

Towards the end of 2020 a magnificent story appeared in the Globe and Mail newspaper that tells how misinformation (fake news) spread so quickly on social media. It was written by Ella Hollowood, Ray Serrato and Chris Newell.

Six months ago, Erin Mercola at Health Nut News shared a Facebook post saying it was "Pretty incredible how China is building hospitals, and 5G base stations for them, at breakneck speed to fight the coronavirus." This was not an expression of admiration. Her followers would have seen her previous posts encouraging them to watch an anti-5G film Take back your power, or to spend one-hundred and nineteen dollars to attend an international summit that promised to "show you how 5G wireless is an invasive technological platform that can damage our health and privacy." They may even have

read her husband's article which she posted on her website titled the 5G War. At this stage, she didn't need to echo the early online rumblings about how or why 5G and coronavirus might be linked – planting this small seed to her followers was enough to suggest there must be some connection.

She didn't post about 5G and coronavirus again until early March this year, when she filmed her husband, the alternative medicine advocate Joseph Mercola, promoting an immune-boosting "arsenal kit" (available on Erin's Amazon store). The kit promised to protect against coronavirus, EMF (electromagnetic fields) and 5G. Over the course of the month, public Facebook posts linking 5G to coronavirus garnered half a million likes, clicks, comments and shares. Among those joining the trend for scare stories were the alternative medicine doctor, Rashid Buttar, Instagram scientologist Rizza Islam and Robert F Kennedy Jr. At the time, these four individuals had a combined Facebook following of over 750,000.

The news organization Tortoise has been examining the torrent of fake news about the pandemic. Despite the efforts of Facebook and fact-checkers, data shows that public posts mentioning 5G and coronavirus have gone on to receive a further four million likes, clicks, comments and shares – and that huge measure of the flow of misinformation is calculated after removing the most significant "false positive" accounts – i.e., posts that were actually debunking misinformation, such as The Daily show and BBC news.

Those numbers are just a fragment of the whole: They are only for Facebook, not other platforms like Twitter, or private groups like WhatsApp, and they are only the publicly available posts. But what this example demonstrates is the vital role that a handful of accounts can play in getting a fake news story off the ground. Tortoise gathered a sample of 145,000 Facebook and Instagram posts published since January 2020, of potential medical misinformation. The misinformation includes: purported health risks of 5G exposure; supposedly harmful ingredients found in vaccines; and conspiracies around the origins and beneficiaries of the coronavirus pandemic, most

notably the conspiracy that Bill Gates planned the pandemic in order to plant microchips in us all.

In their search for the individuals who bear the most responsibility for spreading medical misinformation during a global public health crisis, Tortoise reporters have been able to identify a small but influential cluster. In the sample of misinformation, less than seven per-cent of the accounts gained eighty per-cent of the social interactions, measured by the number of likes, shares, comment and clicks that each post generates. Within this small group, Tortoise further identified one-hundred and fifty-six "super-spreaders" – the accounts that don't concentrate on one medical falsehood or conspiracy but deal in many and to great effect, accumulating more than 10,000 interactions in total. It is only a partial picture – the sample looks at public groups and verified profiles only – but the results are revealing.

On Facebook the majority super-spreader accounts are groups centred on a particular conspiracy (such as Pizzagate) or fandom (such as fan clubs of the republican activist, Candace Owens). Six of the super-spreaders identified explicitly support QAnon, a conspiracy theory classified by the FBI as a domestic terrorism threat in the United States. Tortoise also found over a thousand posts containing hashtags denoting QAnon membership, such as #qanon, #wwg1wga (it stands for Where We Go One-We Go All) and #wake-up. But on both Facebook and Instagram the accounts most successful at spreading medical misinformation are named individuals. In the sample, most successful of all is Robert F. Kennedy, Jr., the nephew of President John F. Kennedy and son of Bobby Kennedy. But he is not alone.

Super spreaders operate in overlapping communities, using collaboration as a tactic to boost their reach and following. It is a mutually beneficial system, albeit one that Kennedy appears to benefit the most from. Among all the medical misinformation posts gathered from Instagram since January, his account receives the highest number of mentions – ninety-five in total, more than former President Donald Trump. Kennedy explicitly acknowledges and celebrates this ecosystem of mutual support. In

an Instagram post from late April, he cites “the solidarity that is critical to our success,” praising “our community’s most prominent and effective leaders, including Del Bigtree, Polly & Bella Tommey, Mark Blaxill, Dr Rashid Buttar, Samoan-Australian activist Taylor Winterstein, and Massachusetts health freedom leader [Candice] Edwards.” Three of those individuals appear in the data set of super-spreaders.

It’s not clear why super-spreaders are determined to sow distrust in public health during a pandemic and it is likely the reasons vary. There is undoubtedly a profit motive for some; Eric Nepute, a chiropractor described on YouTube as a “real doctor telling it like it is” has already received a warning from the Federal Trade Commission for unlawfully advertising products and services that promise to treat or prevent COVID-19. For others, spreading misinformation may stem from a desire for attention – the list includes a few retired celebrities.

But what does seem to unite, strengthen and in many ways define super-spreaders is a shared “conspiracy mindset” that is just as capable of welcoming environmentalists and anti-capitalists on the left, as libertarians defending freedom of choice on the right. Fundamental to this conspiracy mindset is the idea of “censorship,” a term that was mentioned in more than nine hundred posts in the Tortoise sample. It provides the ultimate defence. When one of Kennedy’s Instagram posts was marked as partly false by fact-checkers in May, a follower responded: “Who do they think they are to tell us what is false and what not? If the truth does not fit into their narrative, they call it false and take it down. We shall not be silenced!”

And it is a response that will not be going away any time soon. Following Twitter’s announcement in July of a crackdown on QAnon content, Erin the Health Nut posted on Facebook: “I guess you can’t even post about Q anon any more on Twitter. Anyway- I’m open to any- and- all opinions and what I loved about the viral thread that I had is there were so many different opinions.” Apart from Robert Kennedy, Jr., none of the individual super-spreaders have responded to detailed questions. A Tortoise reporter interviewed Robert Kennedy, Jr. as part of this series and he answered some

questions, but he did not wish to engage in writing with a detailed set of questions about his activities.

Doctor Conrad Winn in an article printed in Policy Options claimed that CBC television is biased in favour of the left. He stated that it is imperative that we discuss this alleged bias because the media, and CBC in particular play an increasingly important role in the Canadian political debate. The claim was based on the results of a recent COMPAS survey (see www.compas.ca for the complete report). Among other issues, the study investigated the relationship between the probability of viewing a given network (e.g., CBC, CTV) and self-described political affiliation: left-wingers, right- wingers, and in the middle of the political spectrum. Regarding CBC, it was found that the left-wingers were 1.3 times as likely as self-labelled right-wingers to choose CBC television: forty-four percent verses thirty-four percent. At first approximation, this result seems to confirm the biased left-wing nature of CBC.

A lot of CBC news is biased however they do not see it that way. Here is what CBC editor Brodie Fenton had to say. " I have heard more than a few times that CBC's board of directors consists of political appointees who direct our coverage (they don't) in favour of (choose one) the Liberals, the Conservatives, the NDP, the Green Party. I have been alarmed to hear otherwise smart people suggest in conspiratorial terms that we aired a particular story in order to distract the public from a different story damaging to a given political party.

Some of this stuff can be shrugged off as silly partisan antics. Some of it is serious and seriously believed. Some of it is quite vicious, often directed at our political journalists, many of whom endure repeated personal attacks for doing their jobs. What, exactly, is the job of our journalists? It is to hold politicians, political parties and governments of any stripe to account, without fear or favour. It is about news reporting that is accurate and fair, balanced and impartial. Everything we produce is subject to a rigorous complaints process and public scrutiny via the CBC Ombudsman. Yes, we make

mistakes. When we do, we answer for them." What this author says about Mr. Fenton's comments, "does anyone anywhere believe this propaganda"?

Let us end this chapter by giving the final word(s) to James Harding founder of the Tortois (tortoisemedia.com). "Today, we are again meeting new problems with old ideas. As we keep moving faster forwards, our politics keeps reaching backwards: nationalism divides us, at home and abroad; socialism overpromises and under-delivers; populism has one-liners, but none of the answers; and liberalism is complicit in the inequality, disruption and neglect. Our argument is with socialism and nationalism, conservatism and liberalism, alike.

If socialism came unstuck in 1989, liberalism ran aground in 2016. This is not for the obvious reasons of complacency; it is not simply because the media and the progressive middle ground should be written off as an out-of-touch elite. (Where that is true, it is fixable.) The more testing question is why are liberal ideas which have improved life expectancy and literacy per capita income for billions of people, being rejected at the ballot box? It is because the liberal prescription is not up to the challenges we face.

Liberalism is not going to deal with technology, because it shies from interventions that might inhibit free expression and dent wealth creation. Liberalism will wait for the market to answer the problems of an ageing society, but we need colossal government-led innovation in education, health care and housing. Liberalism has championed globalisation but, from climate change to immigration, failed to establish rules to manage an interdependent planet. Liberalism has been captured by free market economics, which, in turn, has been distorted by finance. And liberalism muddles through in the culture wars, unclear how to strike a balance between institutions and the individual, between society and identity. The battle for freedom and fairness is not won. But nor is it sufficient. As much as we reboot the old ideas – liberalism 2.0 etc. they are not going to help us live well in our age of rapidly advancing change.

But we have also knocked about long enough to know that journalism is not neutral. Every newsroom is motivated by what it's against: Injustice and violence, cruelty ad indifference. The good ones know what they are for: free trade, say, or public service, hip-hop or class politics. They are a lens on the world, reflected in their choices and voices.

We start at a time when plenty of people say journalism is broken. Many people ask whether newsrooms could have done more to foresee the four biggest stories of the past decade: the financial crisis, Silicon Valley's disruption of everything, COVID-19 and the rise of populism. Of course, we are reporters, not astrologers. Prediction is not our business. But the news media, like everyone else, has been hollowed out by the internet. We produce more news than ever before, faster and faster - junk news - it's become noise. Precisely when we need to hear more, we often want to switch off. And so, in the battle for attention, the news media has sought refuge in telling people things they want to know. Instead of connecting with new audiences, news organisations have been bonding with their bases.

A newspaper, as the saying goes, is an argument on the way to a deadline. By that definition, a newsroom is the place where that argument happens. And the leader conference is, if you like, the meeting when the argument is refereed, where the judgement is made. The discussion is wide-ranging, sometimes deliberately contrary, often very funny. It is a forum for civilised disagreement. It is illuminated by principles and facts – and, frequently, it exposes not just what you know, but what you don't. It prompts reporting, often the best investigations. And when the discussion is done, the editor's job is to pull the points together. Sometimes the opinion is consensual, other times it is not. But the argument that emerged from it should be concise and clear.

Sources include, The Conversation, David A. Graham-Atlantic, Globe and Mail, James Harding

Chapter Three

This is as Good a Time to Confess

Before this author confesses his sins regarding his use of 'fake news' lets see who invented the term. Surprise, former President Trump takes credit for inventing the term 'fake news'. "I don't even use fake anymore," he said. "I call the 'fake news' now corrupt news because fake isn't tough enough. And I am the one that came up with the term—I'm very proud of it, but I think I'm going switch it to corrupt news."

That's a good term for news that isn't real, BuzzFeed News media editor Craig Silverman was in fact the person who popularized the term 'fake news' before Trump got his paws on it. Silverman first started using it in 2014 while he was running a research project at Columbia University's Tow Center for Digital Journalism and later made it a big part of his beat when he moved to BuzzFeed in 2015. I (the author of this part of this chapter) connected with Silverman, my former co-worker at the Poynter Institute, while he was on a flight Wednesday. We spoke via Twitter direct message. This conversation has been lightly edited to make both of us, but mostly me, look smarter.

Yes, I first started using it in the fall of 2014 while I was running a research project that tracked unverified claims and rumors spreading online. I just pulled up my research proposal and it does not use the term 'fake news.' I began using that terms once the work got underway and I came across sites like National Report that were designed to look like real news websites, published articles written in the news style, but everything on the site was false. So I called it a 'fake news' site.

I don't recall ever sitting down as saying "I'm going to label this stuff 'fake news.' It just seemed like a natural description for what I was seeing. Obviously, people have used the phrase 'fake news' in the past. But I kept using it in my research and reporting from that point on. I also saw sites like the Verge use it when writing about my research.

Things have gotten very weird. I used the term a lot in reporting I did in 2016, whether it was about Canadian teens making money with fake stories about Justin Trudeau, or about those now-famous Macedonian teens and young men making bank by spreading false pro-Trump stories on Facebook. Then, in January of 2017, Trump did a press conference and called CNN "fake news," and us at BuzzFeed News a "failing pile of garbage." From that moment forward, any attempt to be specific about what 'fake news' is went out the window. It became weaponized and popularized at the same moment, and in the end, Trump has really taken a certain level of ownership.

For a while I kept trying to be clear about my definition of 'fake news' which is completely false content, created to deceive, and with an economic motive. But then reality sets in and it's just like, I gotta try and avoid it. I still do use it at times but have moved more towards talking about mis- or disinformation or hoaxes or media manipulation. I kind of hate hearing the term at this point. I want to give it a nice funeral and push it out to sea.

At first it was nice to see everyone talking about this issue. There had been a relatively small number of researchers and reporters banging the drum about it and all of a sudden everyone cared. But then it starts unfolding like a slow-moving train crash, because you see it being co-opted to serve different interests, and suddenly everything is being labeled fake news, and lots of low quality research, commentary, and articles get rushed out to capitalize on it. At the same time, Trump is using it as a cudgel to beat the media, and to undermine legit reporting. At that point I am like Donald Glover returning to the room with pizza.

As was mentioned earlier, 'fake news' was also a part of Reed Turcotte's media fabric. It started with this author's first newspaper (in 1974) named the Quesnel Shopper. The paper was competing against another Quesnel paper and they had a wealthy owner, so, in order to stay competitive, Turcotte had to come up with outlandish promotions that would grab people's attention without offending them. It was the early stages of what would end up been a long career in publishing for Turcotte

and he thought that if he gave readers a great front page and a controversial editorial page, than all else would take care of itself. This template is one Turcotte would use for the rest of his print days. The other newspaper was a paid publication, but his was free and it was full of wild stories and crazy pictures. Some readers thought the paper was over the top but most laughed and many thought it was fantastic. Yes, the little upstart newspaper was a success due to 'fake news', all-be-it in a non-aggressive way.

The first front page picture that was cooked up to create a sensation was a big hit. It was supposed to be a serpent, but in reality, it was three black garbage bags filled with air floating in the water of Dragon Lake (located just south of Quesnel) on a very foggy early morning. This started what would become an occasional ritual on Turcotte's newspapers front page. When an issue needed some punch or Turcotte wanted it talked about, he pushed the sensational 'fake news' button (much more on this in another chapter). The people of Quesnel enjoyed their little paper and they eagerly lined up Tuesday mornings to get their hands on a copy.

In yet another 'fake news' picture that this author pulled off was when he was running the B.C. Sport Salmon News magazine. He wanted to increase circulation on this new magazine, so he got a rather large well-endowed model, put her in a bikini with a fisherman's jacket (undone of course) holding a large salmon in each hand. He took the picture and put it as his front cover in the next issue suggesting it was just caught by the model. The move worked – the publication took off. What no one knew however, was the salmon were not caught at Horseshoe Bay near Vancouver (where the photo shoot was taken) but had been cleaned (gutted) - so they were light to hold and were from the local restaurant at Sewell's Marina. Many, many times Turcotte went to this fake form of news to increase his publications' circulation and every time it worked.

Other tricks ('fake news') that the author of this book cooked up include a woman in a bikini with an opened snow jacket again and a large ruler standing in snow showing how deep it was. A picture of a young lady in a tank-top and cut-offs leaning against a car that his Greenwood newspaper sponsored for a smash-up derby was

placed on the front page and this also moved a lot of papers. Although these latter two were not ‘fake news’ per-say, they were both ‘faked’ up to a point. A person dressed up in a rented gorilla suit and out early in the morning among trees in fog (to make the pic difficult to make out) in Squamish was another good ‘fake news’ picture. The paper stated it was proof of a Sasquatch – and the pic went Coast to Coast in Canada via the Associated Press (or like) in the late 1970s.

One of the best gimmicks Turcotte came up with was burying three hundred dollars in gold. Gold was supposedly buried in the ground on public land and each week a clue was printed on the front page until the treasure was found. The ‘fake’ part was that the little trunk was not buried until the fourth week. Turcotte did not want anyone to find the treasure too early so he picked out a spot and did not place the box in the ground until after the third issue came out. He wanted to get four or five weeks out of the promotion. The kicker was that there was no gold, just a note signed by the publisher advising the finder to bring the trunk and note to the office to obtain their money. Turcotte used this treasure promotion many times and it worked incredibly well each-and-every time.

The most profitable ‘fake news’ story this author published ran for around six months and even though Turcotte was convinced that the subject involved was ‘fake’ he forgot to mention that in any of his stories which ran in every issue. A man showed up in Greenwood who would deposit almost as much money in town as the production of the film Snow Falling on Cedars had recently done. His name was Thomas (Tom) Manning the Third. He and his companion, Donny were from Seattle and for the next thirteen months, he and his company would be front and center in the pages of the Boundary Creek Times. Greenwood was a mining town at the end of the 1800s and after extracting some silver, gold and a lot of copper, what was left was a black glassy hard substance called slag. Greenwood had a large mountain of it. The product sat on property owned by a local Rock Creek pioneer family, the Falkowskis and was worthless or so everyone thought except Manning.

He arrived in town, took up residence in a condo and at the local bar, the Greenwood Saloon, and started showering the town with money and an incredible outlandish story. He told Turcotte's paper, that his new formed company was going to load up the slag into large trucks, transport the product down to the Coast of Vancouver, take it to an offshore Georgia Strait island and then load it on barges where it would end up in Poland to be turned into Polish crystal or something similar. He held town meetings and told everyone present that many benefits including jobs would result from this project. This helped bring the mayor, council and Turcotte's paper onside as they all wanted to believe in this gift to the town from the heavens above.

He told all that would listen, that the money for this project would come from Manning's Russian investors who would be putting up millions of dollars. As the weeks turned into months, his promises were actually taking place. He obtained semi-rights to the slag and hired local truck and bulldozer operators. Dollars were being thrown everywhere around town, especially at Turcotte's newspaper and the Greenwood Saloon across the street. He had large advertisements in almost every issue where he promoted the slag, himself and his dog. Yes, even his dog was front and centre in one of Manning's full-page advertisements. Turcotte published it and put it on Manning's charge card and the newspaper was in effect, paid immediately.

The paper had a major story, an eccentric celebrity and a major advertiser, all rolled into one, so Turcotte milked it for all it was worth even though he knew the whole thing was some sort of con. Manning loved his booze, so in the afternoons he moved to the bar across the street from Turcotte's newspaper building where he then set up shop and paid for a most of the liquor. He had Kevin Thorlakson, the proprietor of the Greenwood Saloon, who was also a good friend of the newspaper bring in expensive bottles of Scotch, Vodka and Champagne which he had no trouble sharing with Turcotte and others.

At least once, Manning invited a lot of the town's populace for a wing ding featuring fresh lobster from the Atlantic Coast. He flew in hundreds of pounds of lobster

and had a town party at the Saloon with the Mayor and Council invited as well. It was partly surreal and partly a gong show, but product (slag) was getting to the Coast and people were being paid, so for now the town and its newspaper publisher just soaked in the good times.

Manning even brought his family and lawyer up from Seattle for a month as well as hiring some of the local down and outs that he called “his lieutenants”. About every ten days or so, he and one or two of these lieutenants would head to Osoyoos British Columbia, cross the border and come back from the town of Oroville with tens of thousands of dollars in cash from the bank. Well at least this is what Manning told Turcotte’s paper. Some of the cronies confirmed this, and they stated that Manning had them stuff the cash inside their shirts so they could get the money safely back across the border and into Canada. This may of course have been (‘fake news’).

By now, major media outlets were dropping into the newspaper office to get Turcotte’s interpretation of what was happening in little Greenwood, a town of about only nine hundred citizens. The newspaper was thick in ads and life in general was never better. The slag had now formed a small hill on Texada Island just off the Coast of British Columbia and Manning was getting it ready to be shipped onto Poland. One day Ms. Ayotte (this author’s wife) said that Tom Manning’s credit card was declined for the last advertisement booked. When Turcotte approached Manning on this, he immediately paid in cash, but this author had a feeling that maybe the “party” was coming to an end.

It was around this time that people started hearing the workers were late getting paid for work that they had recently performed. Manning poo-pooed this and said he was off to Russia to meet with his investors and then onto Poland to oversee the slag being turned into crystal. When Thomas Manning III left, independent tests paid for by a few locals, confirmed that the slag was indeed worthless and could not be turned into crystal or anything else profitable. The project then came to a sudden halt and some people never did get all the money that was owed to them. To this day, Turcotte does

not know what the deal was really about and what was fake and what was not. What he does know is that the slag that was transported in ships did indeed make it to a Poland port where it sat and sat near a container dock. Manning did come back from Russia and was not killed as was the rumour and the king of slag now lives back in the United States. Although the slag story may have been some sort of 'fake news', hundreds of thousands of dollars flowed through Greenwood and area for about a year, and it was one heck of a party and great copy for this newspaper publisher, even if it was a "touch of fake news".

A few years later this author was involved in another media circus that centered around another form of 'fake news'. At that time, he was negotiating the sale of his Morris Mirror newspaper (located in Manitoba) with the Winnipeg Free Press. The publisher, who Turcotte found to be a semi-trustworthy man though Turcotte thought his Winnipeg paper was too closely associated with the left leaning Winnipeg CBC office. Of the Free Press publisher, Turcotte said "at least he resides in the city his newspaper publishes out of and the paper he produces is (was) a quality product. The sale of the Mirror never realized, and this started what would hasten an end to this author's newspaper career.

A few months later (early 2013) the Turcottes planned to move back to B.C. in the Okanagan area and that their April 1st issue would be their last. They would go out in a blaze of glory by printing a sensational (fake) front-page story that would really be an April 1st joke, but they would not tell anyone that the story was in fact - fake (more on this authors involvement in 'fake news' in a later chapter). It did not happen that way though, as one small paragraph in this Turcotte's next paper changed everything. It was January 14th and two sentences published in that issue caused Turcotte and his wife to leave for British Columbia forty-five days earlier than they planned. In a 'Thumbs down, Thumbs up' editorial, near the middle of the page was printed, "Thumbs Down to Canada's native community and those Manitobans who are demanding unrealistic expectations of their government, and who in some cases, are acting like terrorists in

their own country. Indians (natives) want it all, but corruption and laziness prevents some of them from working for it." This was written at the height of the "Idle No More" movement and Turcotte printed those words just after Indigenous people had used what many people thought were illegal means to block major railroads and highways in eastern and central Canada. Those two paragraphs were insensitive for sure, but at that moment in time it could be considered at the very least, slightly correct - at least that is what thousands of emails, phone calls, Tweets and Facebook followers through social media thought. Turcotte told the truth in the minds of the white, right wing Canadians.

Certain religious people of Morris and especially Native Americans in Manitoba and Ontario did not agree. In Conrad Black's book, "Rise to Greatness", he states that "they (Indians) were a Stone Age culture and economy that had not (even) discovered the wheel," controversial for sure but also correct. Black did not publish this sentence during those times of turmoil so he did not get the wave of disgust that Turcotte received, and so he should not have. In his author's case it could also be considered both bad timing along with poor judgement.

One problem child at the time was James Sinclair who was with the Department of Native Studies at the University of Manitoba. He tried to hold an open meeting with Turcotte at his Morris office. Sinclair is an Anishinaabe, originally from St. Peters (Little Peguis) Indian reserve. Turcotte smelled a rat and told him he would not meet with him at this time. Sinclair showed up anyway with a few natives and Winnipeg left-wing-media-types in tow. The Morris publisher got the last laugh, as a little bird told him the gang was on their way, so he closed his office doors and let the rabble rousers stand outside waiting for him to re-open in minus thirty-degree weather for over two hours.

Sinclair now writes his slightly left leaning diatribe for the Winnipeg Free Press and occasionally shows up on CBC as part of their power panel. The paragraph this author printed in his Morris Mirror and the fact that he would not meet with Sinclair then went viral, led by CBC and the Toronto Star who showed their bias by promoting this as a major story, presenting only one side of the story. In other words, 'fake news'.

You will find more on this author's provocative and innovative ways in another chapter that starts on page ninety-three.

Sources include When Canadian Newspaper Publishers Were King

Chapter Four

What is ‘Fake News’ Anyways

There are two kinds of ‘fake news’: Stories that are not true - these are entirely invented stories designed to make people believe something false, to buy a certain product, or to visit a certain website. Stories that have some truth but are not one-hundred percent accurate. For example, a journalist quotes only part of what a politician says, giving a false impression of their meaning. Again, this can be deliberate, to convince readers of a certain viewpoint, or it can be the result of an innocent mistake. Either way, it quickly attracts an audience and can become entrenched as an "urban myth."

‘Fake news’ is nothing new. What is new is how easy it has become to share information – both true and false – on a massive scale. Social media platforms allow almost anyone to publish their thoughts or share stories to the world. The trouble is, most people do not check the source of the material that they view online before they share it, which can lead to fake news spreading quickly or even "going viral." At the same time, it has become harder to identify the original source of news stories, which can make it difficult to assess their accuracy.

This has led to a flood of ‘fake news’. In fact, one study found that more than twenty-five percent of Americans visited a fake news website in a six-week period during the 2016 U.S. presidential election and even more in 2020. Not all fake news stories are to be found online, however. Co-workers who gossip by the water cooler or while browsing print publications that fail to check their facts, for example, are also guilty of spreading misinformation, even if inadvertently. Research shows that fifty-nine percent of people are concerned about the effect that ‘fake news’ has in the workplace,

and with good reason! For example, some people might start to believe that they no longer need evidence to back up their arguments. Others start to mistrust information all together. They stop listening to industry reports, and disengage from official workplace communication, slowing their professional growth and development. Ultimately, this can damage an organization's learning culture.

‘Fake news’ can affect behavior, too. It encourages people to invent excuses, to dismiss others' ideas, to exaggerate the truth, and to spread rumors. This can create divided, anxious workplaces where people are cynical and unsure of who to trust. They might even begin to mistrust you if they believe that authority figures have lied to them, or that the information that they are working with is suspect. This can sap people of the curiosity, enthusiasm and ambition that they need to collaborate and to be successful. Misinformation and fake news can also harm your business. Invented reviews of your products or inaccurate financial updates, for example, can do serious reputational damage .

Separating fact from fiction accurately can seem daunting. But getting to the truth is always worth the effort – even if it's not what you want to hear! Use these six steps to weed out the truth from the lies. One of the main reasons fake news is such a big issue is that it is often believable, so it's easy to get caught out. Much fake news is also written to create "shock value," that is, a strong instinctive reaction such as fear or anger.

This means it is essential that you keep your emotional response to such stories in check. Instead, approach what you see and hear rationally and critically . Ask yourself, "Why has this story been written? Is it to persuade me of a certain viewpoint? Is it selling me a particular product? Or is it trying to get me to click through to another website? Am I being triggered? If you come across a story from a source that you have never heard of before, do some digging! Check the web address for the page you're reading. Spelling errors in company names, or strange-sounding extensions like infonet and offer, rather than .com may mean that the source is suspect.

Whether or not the author or publisher is familiar, stop to consider their reputation and professional experience. Are they known for their expertise on the matter? Or do they tend to exaggerate? Be aware that people who spread fake news and "alternative facts" sometimes create web pages, newspaper mock-ups, or "doctored" images that look official, but aren't. So, if you see a suspicious post that looks like it's from the World Health Organization (WHO), for example, check the WHO's own site to verify that it's really there. Remember, even if you got the story from your best friend, this gives it no extra authority – they likely did not follow these steps themselves before forwarding!

Has anyone else picked up on the story? What do other sources say about it? Avoid leaping to the conclusion that all main-stream media (MSM) output is fake. This can be as unwise as following every rumor or conspiracy theory. Professional global news agencies such as Reuters, CNN and the BBC have rigorous editorial guidelines and extensive networks of highly trained reporters so are a good place to start. But no one is unbiased, and anyone can make a mistake, so keep looking.

While the debate continues as to how journalists and social media platforms like Facebook and Twitter will respond to online misinformation, media consumers play an important role in the fake news drama. Some high schools are teaching media literacy courses focused on helping students spot fake news, and media outlets and libraries are sharing resources to help readers develop critical media skills. Deceptive sites often use sensational headlines to hook readers and generate clicks. Before sharing a story, do your due diligence and read it in full. Most legitimate news outlets will include attribution and quotes from trustworthy sources as a way to add varying viewpoints to the story and enhance credibility. Chances are if you are reading a story with no sources, you are either reading an opinion piece or some form of ‘fake news’.

Media creators and consumers are responsible for fighting ‘fake news’. If you see fake news, or questionable content, reach out to the person who shared it and start a

conversation about why the content doesn't look credible. Sharing what you know can help others avoid falling into the 'fake news' trap.

Anyone who urges universities to live up to their mission of promoting knowledge, truth, and reason is bound to be confronted with the objection that these aspirations are just so 20th century. Aren't we living in a post-truth era? Haven't cognitive psychologists shown that humans are fundamentally irrational? Mustn't we acknowledge that the pursuit of disinterested reason and objective truth are Enlightenment anachronisms? The answer to all of these questions is "no."

First, we are not living in a post-truth era. Why not? Consider the statement "We are living in a post-truth era." Is it true? If so, it cannot be true. Likewise, it is not the case that humans are irrational. Consider the statement, "Humans are irrational." Is that statement rational? If it is, it cannot be true—at least, if it is uttered and understood by humans. (It would be another thing if it were an observation exchanged among an advanced race of space aliens.) If humans were truly irrational, who specified the benchmark of rationality against which humans don't measure up? How did they conduct the comparison? Why should we believe them? Indeed, how could we understand them?

In his book The Last Word, the philosopher Thomas Nagel showed that truth, objectivity, and reason are not negotiable. As soon as you start making a case against them, you are making a case, which means you are implicitly committed to reason. Nagel calls this argument Cartesian, after Descartes' famous argument that just as the very fact that one is pondering one's existence shows that one must exist, the very fact that one is examining the validity of reason shows that one is committed to reason. A corollary is that we do not defend or justify or believe in reason, and we certainly do not, as it is sometimes claimed, have faith in reason. As Nagel puts it, each of these is "one thought too many." We don't believe in reason; we use reason.

This may sound like logic-chopping, but it is built into the way we make everyday arguments. As long as you're not bribing or threatening your listeners to mouth agreement with you, but trying to persuade them that you're right—that they should believe you, that you're not lying, or full of crap— then you have conceded the primacy of reason. As soon as you try to argue that we should believe things by any route other than reason, you've lost the argument, because you've appealed to reason. That is why a defense of reason is unnecessary, perhaps even impossible.

As for the "post-truth era," journalists should retire this cliché unless they can keep up a tone of scathing irony. It comes from the observation that some politicians—one in particular—lies a lot. But politicians have always lied. They say that in war, truth is the first casualty, and that can be true of political war as well. (The expression "credibility gap" had its heyday during the administration of Lyndon Johnson in the 1960s.) And the bending or inverting of truth by people in power has long been consequential, leading, for example, to the Spanish-American war, the First World War, the Vietnam War, and the Iraq War, right up to the near miss in the Persian Gulf in 2019.

Another inspiration for the post-truth cliché is the recent prominence of 'fake news.' But this, too, is not a new development. The title of the James Cortada and William Aspray's forthcoming Fake News Nation: The Long History of Lies and Misinterpretations in America, is self-explanatory, though the long history is by no means confined to America. The Protocols of the Elders of Zion, the hoaxed proceedings of a secret meeting of Jews plotting global domination, was advanced as fact by a number of prominent people in subsequent decades, including the industrialist Henry Ford. Countless pogroms, lynching's, and deadly ethnic riots have been sparked by rumors of the alleged perfidy of some minority group.

And the belief that fake news is displacing the truth itself needs to be examined for its truth. In their analysis of 'fake news' in the 2016 American presidential election, Andrew Guess, Brendan Nyhan, and Jason Reifler found that it took up a minuscule

proportion of the online communications (far less than one percent) and was mainly directed at partisans who were impervious to persuasion. This is hardly surprising: unless you were already marinated in a right wing fever swamp, if you came across a social media post claiming that Hillary Clinton was running a child sex ring out of a Washington DC pizzeria, you would treat it as exactly what it is.

But the main reason we should retire the post-truth cliché is that it's corrosive, perhaps self-fulfilling. The implication is we may as well give up on reason and truth and just fight the bad guys' lies and intimidation with lies and intimidation of our own. We can aim higher.

Sources for this chapter include When factlab, National Observer, Steven Pinker-Skeptic

Chapter Five

Are they the king of Fake News?

According to a 2020 story for Pew Research Center Fox News, the influential cable network launched by Rupert Murdoch in 1996, holds a unique place in the American media landscape, particularly for those on the ideological right. While Democrats in the United States turn to and place their trust in a variety of media outlets for political news, no other source comes close to matching the appeal of Fox News for Republicans.

Below are five facts about Fox News and how Americans feel about it. All findings are based on recent surveys from Pew Research Center's Election News Pathways project, which focuses on what Americans hear, perceive and know about the 2020 presidential election and how these attitudes relate to how and where they get news.

Around four-in-ten Americans trust Fox News. Nearly the same share distrust it. Among all U.S. adults, 43% say they trust Fox News for political and election news – similar to the shares who say they trust CBS News (45%) and PBS (42%), according to a November 2019 survey. At the same time, 40% of adults say they distrust Fox News – the highest share out of the 30 media outlets asked about in the survey, ahead of CNN (32%) and the Rush Limbaugh radio show (29%).

The vast majority of adults (94%) have heard of Fox News. And as of last November, 39% said they had gotten political news there in the past week – tied with CNN among the outlets asked about. Republicans trust Fox News more than any other outlet. Democrats distrust it more than any other outlet. Around two-thirds of Republicans and Republican-leaning independents (65%) say they trust Fox News for

political and election news. No more than a third of Republicans say they trust any of the other news organizations asked about in the survey, including network sources such as ABC News (33%), CBS News (30%) and NBC News (30%). Conservative Republicans are especially likely to say they trust Fox News: Three-quarters say this, compared with around half of moderate or liberal Republicans (51%). As of November, six-in-ten Republicans said they had gotten political news from Fox News within the past week. This, too, was far higher than the share of Republicans who said they had recently gotten political news from other sources.

Among Democrats and Democratic-leaning independents, 61% say they distrust Fox News for political news. That's considerably higher than the shares of Democrats who distrust other outlets, including the Rush Limbaugh and Sean Hannity radio shows (43% and 38%, respectively) and Breitbart News (36%) – though this also reflects the fact that Fox News is more well-known to the public than these other outlets. Liberal Democrats are far more likely than conservative or moderate Democrats to say they distrust Fox news (77% vs. 48%).

While most Democrats distrust Fox News, that doesn't mean they universally tune it out. Around a quarter of Democrats (23%), including 29% of conservative or moderate Democrats and 15% of liberals, said in November that they had gotten political news from Fox News in the past week.

On an ideological scale, the average Fox News consumer is to the right of the average U.S. adult, but not as far to the right as the audiences of some other outlets. As part of the November survey, the Center grouped the audiences of thirty news outlets on a scale based on the self-described ideology and partisanship of those who said they had gotten political news from each outlet in the past week. (You can read more about this classification system in this Q&A.) Based on this scale, the average audience member for Fox News is more likely than the average U.S. adult to be conservative and Republican. But the average audiences for four other outlets in the study – the Daily

Caller, Breitbart News, and the Sean Hannity and Rush Limbaugh radio shows – are to the right of the average Fox News viewer.

People who cite Fox News as their main source of political news are older and more likely to be white than U.S. adults overall. Americans ages sixty-five and older account for around four-in-ten of those who say their main source is Fox News (37%), compared with 21% of all adults, according to the November survey. And around nine-in-ten who turn to Fox News (87%) identify their race and ethnicity as non-Hispanic white, compared with 65% of all adults.

Those who name Fox News as their main source of political news stand out in their views on key issues and people, including President Donald Trump. Fox News consumers tend to have an especially positive view of the president, which may not be a surprise given that 93% of those who name the network as their main source of political news identify as Republican or lean to the party.

One striking example is in perceptions of Trump's handling of the coronavirus outbreak. In a March 2020 survey, 63% of those whose main source of political and election news is Fox News said Trump is doing an excellent job responding to the outbreak. No more than a quarter of those who cited other news outlets as their main source of political news said this. Fox News regulars were considerably more likely than Republicans overall to describe Trump's handling of the outbreak as excellent (63% vs. 47%).

In the November 2019 survey, 71% of those who cited Fox News as their main source of political news gave Trump a very warm rating on a "feeling thermometer" ranging from zero to one-hundred, where zero represents the coldest, most negative rating and 100 represents the warmest, most positive. Among all U.S. adults, just a quarter gave Trump a very warm rating (between 76 and 100).

Fox News viewers also had a notably negative view of House Speaker Nancy Pelosi. More than eight-in-ten of those who named Fox News as their main source of political news (85%) gave Pelosi a very cold rating on the thermometer – between zero

and twenty-four. That was more than double the share of all U.S. adults who gave Pelosi a very cold rating (41%).

A article in the Washington Post by Jennifer Rubin says, Pew Research finds: The group who names MSNBC as their main news source is far more likely than the Fox News group to answer correctly that the coronavirus originated in nature rather than a laboratory and that it will take a year or more for a vaccine to become available. On both questions, the portion in the CNN group to answer correctly falls between the MSNBC and Fox News numbers.

The extent of the partisan information gap is quite striking. “Those who call MSNBC their main political news source (ninety-two percent) are far more likely to say the media covered the [novel coronavirus] outbreak somewhat or very well than the Fox News group (fifty-eight percent)," Pew finds. "And they are much less likely than those who name Fox News as their main source to say the media exaggerated the risks posed by the pandemic (thirty-five percent of the MSNBC group vs. seventy-nine percent of the Fox News group.”

Let’s be blunt: The virus did not originate in a lab; we will not have a vaccine soon and the media did not exaggerate the threat of a pandemic that may claim roughly one-quarter of a million lives. The people who listen to Fox News got not merely biased information but wrong information — information that might have induced them to expose themselves unnecessarily to deadly risks (e.g., ignore social-distancing). As one would expect, the Fox New pandemic of disinformation afflicts Republicans disproportionately. “About three-quarters (seventy-six percent) of those who name Fox News as their main source are conservative Republicans and Republican leaners, while fifty-seven percent who name MSNBC are liberal Democrats and Democratic leaners." CNN falls somewhere in between. Fully thirty-eight percent of those who name CNN as their main source are liberal Democrats, while forty percent are moderate or conservative Democrats.

In short, Fox News — its anchors, its contributors, its panelists and its guests (e.g., Republican elected officials) — have spread provably wrong information to its viewers on arguably the most important story in our lifetimes. A large percentage of Americans who form the Trump cult and absorb his misleading information (It is like the flu! Plenty of tests!) get their misinformation reinforced by an outlet that seeks as its main goal to support the president.

While it is highly unlikely (given that they are making money from bamboozling the public) the Murdoch's, the Fox Corp. board (which includes former House speaker Paul Ryan), Fox executives and Fox News advertisers might want to reflect on a business model that depends on misinforming millions of Americans about a life-threatening pandemic. (As Ben Smith reported, the Murdoch's were protecting themselves by social distancing at a time their network was misinforming the public.)

Fox News has hidden behind two canards for years: First, it is a counterweight to "liberal bias." Second, there is a division between straight news during the daytime and evening opinion shows. Neither rationalization holds up. Facts are neither liberal nor conservative — at least they did not used to be. One does not combat bias (real or exaggerated) by presenting false narratives, ignoring factual material that contradicts one's ideological preferences or attacking outlets that are presenting accurate information (i.e., the mainstream media). The Pew survey demonstrates that Fox News is not merely counteracting supposed bias against Trump but conveying false, and in this case, dangerous, information.

Likewise, the dividing line between straight news and opinion programming on Fox was obliterated long ago. In its choice of story lines (Benghazi! Immigrant caravans! Virus threats exaggerated!) Fox's daytime programming is every bit as misleading and inaccurate as its nighttime fare. Its interviews are generally embarrassing softball affairs that allow misinformation to go unrebutted (e.g., its recent White House town hall). Moreover, at least in traditional journalism, slapping "opinion" on your lies is no excuse. The underlying facts be they in opinion or in daytime shows, for every other outlet must

be accurate, must be fact-checked and must be corrected if wrong. At Fox News, the entire schedule has tolerated — even promoted —false accounts in-order to reinforce its audience's partisan preferences.

The bottom line is that Fox New is not performing the most basic journalistic function, namely, to inform the public. It blasts out propaganda and misinformation. That is morally obnoxious in normal times. In the era of covid-19, however, it may have deadly consequences. In a story in the New York Times, the chief executive of Fox News, Suzanne Scott, reacted swiftly to the threat of the coronavirus in late February of 2020: She ordered the bright, open new offices disinfected, installed hand sanitizer stations around the office and boldly canceled the company's major ad sales event.

But her influence did not extend to the most important part of Fox News: its programming in prime time. There, for two crucial weeks in late February and early March, powerful Fox hosts talked about the "real" story of the coronavirus: It was a Democratic- and media-led plot against President Donald J. Trump. Hosts and guests, speaking to Fox's predominantly elderly audience, repeatedly played down the threat of what would soon become a deadly pandemic.

The person who could have stopped the flow of misinformation was Scott's boss, Lachlan Murdoch, the chief executive of the Fox Corp. But he was not paying much attention. The forty-eight-year-old heir to his family's media fortune was focused instead on buying a streaming company called Tubi for $440 million, a person who has spoken to him said. The acquisition would drive "long-term growth," he proudly announced in a news release on March 17. That same day, the number of coronavirus cases in the United States surpassed 5,600.

Critics sometimes compare Fox, in its loyalty to Trump, to "state TV," but that description is off. State TV implies command and control. The most-watched news channel in America has become, since the fall of its powerful founder, Roger Ailes, much more like the Trump White House: a family business where it is not entirely clear who is

in charge. Coronavirus has tested leaders across governments, communities and businesses. Some have risen to the challenge, others have disappointed.

Fox failed its viewers and the broader public in ways both revealing and potentially lethal. In particular-Lachlan Murdoch failed to pry its most important voices away from their embrace of the president's early line: that the virus was not a big threat in the United States. Murdoch is likable and handsome. But even his allies told me they no longer think he has the political savvy or the operational skills his job demands. His father has urged him to develop a politically astute kitchen cabinet that he can rely on, and remains concerned that he hasn't, according to two people who have spoken to the elder Murdoch. Lachlan has delegated much of the running of the company to Viet Dinh, a high-powered Republican lawyer without much experience in the media business, people who work with them said. Dinh earned more than twenty-four million dollars in salary and stock last year as the company's chief legal officer.

People close to Lachlan Murdoch describe him as a laid-back executive who doesn't spend his days watching Fox and is sometimes surprised to learn of a controversy it has generated. "People act like Fox is a virus — beyond our control," said Bill Kristol, who worked for the Murdoch's for fifteen years and appeared on Fox until 2012. "There are people who run it, who have responsibility for it, and they could be held accountable." Through a spokesman, Steven Rubenstein, Lachlan Murdoch declined to comment on any aspect of his performance.

The Murdoch's have always been hands-off leaders, and the peculiar challenge for generations of their public relations employees has been deciding whether to portray them as culpable or out-of-touch for various on-air debacles. But since the powerful Ailes was ousted amid a sexual harassment scandal in 2016, the network seems more and more like an asylum in the firm control of its inmates.

Soon after Lachlan Murdoch won an internal family struggle to take charge in 2018, he appointed a women, who'd risen through the ranks, as chief executive of Fox News. It was good public relations: She was the first woman to run the company, which

was reeling from the Ailes scandal. And she was a safe insider whom the Murdoch's liked, even if she lacked a powerful profile inside and outside Fox.

The job, at that point didn't matter all that much. Trump had given the network's prime-time hosts, Sean Hannity, Tucker Carlson, and others, unusual access and political relevance — not to mention huge ratings. The hosts, in turn, were far more responsive to him than to their nominal bosses, providing a platform for the president and his supporters to air their grievances about the rest of the media. Scott, in turn, could focus on cleaning up a toxic workplace, managing the less-watched daytime programming and take credit for the ratings. The arrangement seemed a happy one. But then, the coronavirus happened.

By January, Lachlan Murdoch knew the virus was coming. He'd been getting regular updates from the family's political allies and journalists in his native Australia, an Australian News Corp. staff member told me. The Fox host he is closest to, Carlson, had been a rare voice on the network urging Trump to act more urgently. Even Hannity had hosted Dr. Anthony Fauci, the director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, early on his show and warned of the risks.

But as the crisis took hold, there were more than two weeks of statements like Laura Ingraham's assertion on Feb. 27 that Democratic criticism was "more unsettling" than the virus and Hannity's allegation on March 9 that political opponents were trying to "bludgeon Trump with this new hoax." Finally, after an obscure Fox Business host, Trish Regan, ranted that the coronavirus issue was "another attempt to impeach the president," the network pivoted.

The damage Fox did, appeared likely to extend beyond the typical media hits and misses. I asked Ashish Jha, the director of the Harvard Global Public Health Institute, who appeared on Fox News recently, whether he believes people will die because of Fox's coverage. "Yes," he said. "Some commentators in the right-wing media spread a very specific type of misinformation that I think has been very harmful."

The communications chief at Fox News, Irena Briganti, said, “The cherry picking of clips from our opinion programs is the definition of politicizing this serious threat, as is irresponsibly attacking Fox News in the middle of a pandemic that has evolved considerably over the last few weeks.” She added, “Suzanne Scott’s exceptional leadership of Fox News Media throughout this crisis is unprecedented, and she is committed to both protecting our employees while keeping the audience informed 24/7 on all our platforms and providing an important public service.”

There are a lot of theories about what went wrong at Fox: that the network’s dug-in hostility toward climate science spilled over to medicine, or that its executives cared about ratings above all else. But interviews with twenty current and former Fox staff members and Murdoch family associates in recent days paint a different picture: The network is in thrall to the president and largely beyond the control of the family that owns it.

When Lachlan Murdoch started to hear complaints about the coronavirus coverage on Fox, a person who has spoken to him said, he mistook it for the usual partisan noise. “Everyone saw it as part of the normal rough and tumble for all things Trump — everyone but Fox goes after him, Fox defends him,” this person said. Now, Fox is consumed by internal finger-pointing. Network executives are blaming Trump, their own powerful hosts or Meade Cooper, the executive vice president who theoretically runs prime time programming, people familiar with their conversations said. Scott’s internal critics say it is telling that only the little-known Regan lost her show — while the stars remain untouchable. And Scott has been furiously, belatedly, trying to get hold of the programming, insisting that Fox & Friends — the show on which Jerry Falwell Jr. suggested that the North Koreans were to blame for the virus — now always have a doctor involved in the show.

The finger-pointing extends to the very top. Lachlan Murdoch never called Hannity, whom he had just signed to a new contract, about his coverage. The closest Fox executives have come to taking decisive action appears to be boasting, off the record of

course, that they have taken decisive action. Their explanations collide almost comically. A person who spoke to Rupert Murdoch says that the then eighty-nine, year-old chairman reached out to Hannity to tell him to take the virus “seriously.” But other executives said they had no knowledge of the call, and Hannity said in a statement that “this is absolutely false and never happened.”

One level down, Briganti has complained that Carlson is casting himself to reporters as a heroic truth-teller in contrast with other hosts, according to two people who heard directly of the conversations. But little seems to have changed in the Fox ethos. Fox’s shift to more serious coverage of coronavirus followed Trump’s own, and the hosts are now embracing his new strategy for rallying their shared base. Along with trying to persuade their audience to be safe (particularly in the less-watched daytime programming), they’re sharing unproven positive health news and they’re recapturing partisan momentum by picking a fight about race and political correctness, emphasizing the Chinese origins of the virus, with no apparent concern for inciting bias against Asians.

On Saturday night, another memo was sent to the company’s now rattled staff: The fourth case of coronavirus had been reported in Fox News headquarters on Sixth Avenue in Manhattan. “We are continuing to take every necessary precaution and to follow every protocol which includes deep cleaning all surfaces these employees were in contact with, in addition to the daily sanitizing and disinfecting that has been performed multiple times a day throughout all areas of the building.”

Employees on Sunday were exchanging panicked texts about whether they should go to work on Monday. But one person who surely was not exposed inside Sixth Avenue was Lachlan Murdoch. He had not been seen in the company’s New York headquarters for weeks.

Sources include the Washington Post and the Pew Research Center-John Gramlich, N.Y. Times

Chapter Six

Death of the Editorial Page and old Media

In order too discuss the death of the newspaper editorial page (due in part to 'fake news') one should first know what the editorial page is (or was). What is the difference between the news and the opinion side of a news organization? It is a theory of North American journalism that reporters working for the news sections of newspapers remain entirely independent of the opinion sections. But the divide between news and opinion is not as clear to many readers as journalists believe that it is. And because news consumers have become accustomed to the ideal of objectivity in news, the idea that opinions bleed into the news report potentially leads readers to suspect that reporters have a political agenda, which damages their credibility, and that of their news organizations.

Long before newspapers became institutions for collecting and distributing news, they were instruments for the personal expression of individuals – their owners. There was little thought given to whether or-not opinion and fact were intermingled. In the early 19th century, newspapers were often nakedly partisan, since many of them were funded by political parties.

Over the course of the 19th century, though, newspapers began to seek a popular audience. As they grew in circulation, some began to emphasize their independence from faction. Coupled with the rise of journalism schools and press organizations, this independence enshrined "fact" and "truth" as what scholar Barbie Zelizer calls "God-terms" of journalism by the early 20th century. Newspaper owners never wanted to give up their influence on public opinion, however. As news became

the main product of the newspaper, publishers established editorial pages, where they could continue to endorse their favorite politicians or push for pet causes.

These pages are typically run by editorial boards, which are staffs of writers, often with individual areas of expertise (economics or foreign policy or, in smaller papers, state politics), who draft editorial essays. They are then voted on by the board, which usually includes the publisher. They are then published, usually with no author attribution, as the official opinions of the newspaper. There are variations on this process: Often the editorial board will decide on topics and the paper's opinion before these writers get to work on their drafts. James Bennet, The New York Times opinion editor who resigned, acknowledged in an article on the paper's website that was published in January 2020, months before the Cotton essay, that "the role of the editorial board can be confusing, particularly to readers who don't know The Times well."

Through most the twentieth century, newspapers reassured their readers and their reporters that there was a "wall" between the news and opinion sides of their operations. Publishers relied on this idea of separation to insist that their news reporting was fair and independent, and they believed that readers understood that separation. This is a particularly American way of operating. Readers in other countries usually expect their newspapers to have a point of view, representing a particular party or ideology.

One way that newspapers found to allow a greater range of opinion in its pages was to create an op-ed page, which publishes opinions by individuals, not those of the editorial board. As journalism historian Michael Socolow recounts, John Oakes, the editorial page editor of The New York Times in 1970, created the first op-ed page because, he felt, "a newspaper most effectively fulfills its social and civic responsibilities by challenging authority, acting independently, and inviting dissent."

"Op-ed" is short for "opposite the editorial page," not "opinion and editorial" or opinions that are opposite from those of the editorial page. Literally, the name comes

from the fact that it was located across from – opposite – the editorial page in the print newspaper. The op-ed page of a print newspaper typically includes the newspaper's opinion columnists. These are employees of the paper who write regularly. The paper also usually publishes a selection of opinion pieces from outside writers. Newspapers around the country emulated the Times after the op-ed page debuted.

With the expansion of opinion pages online, the Times was publishing one hundred and twenty opinion pieces a week at the time of James Bennet's resignation. While the move online allows The New York Times op-ed page to vastly increase its output, it also creates a problem: Opinion stories no longer look clearly different from news stories. With many readers coming to news sites from social media links, they may not pay attention to the subtle clues that mark a story published by the opinion staff. Add to this the fact that even readers who go to a paper's homepage are met with news and opinion stories displayed graphically at the same level, connoting the same level of importance. And reporters share analysis and opinion on Twitter, further confusing readers.

The news sections of the paper also increasingly run stories that contain a level of news analysis that casual readers might not be able to distinguish from what The New York Times designates as opinion. In 1970, when the op-ed page debuted in The New York Times, daily newspaper circulation was equivalent to ninety-eight percent of U.S. households. By 2010, that number had dropped below forty percent and has continued to dip since then. Even if readers in 1970 could clearly differentiate between news and opinion, they likely do not have the same level of critical engagement when news exists online and in almost unmanageable volume.

If news organizations such as The New York Times (and all other papers) continue to maintain that a robust opinion section, separate from their news reports, serves to further the public conversation, then those institutions will need to do a better job of explaining to news consumers where – or if – the "wall" between news and opinion exists.

For North American daily newspapers, the story of the last decade-plus hasn't been about mass closures — it's been about mass shrinkage. J. Benton of Nieman Lab writes the pace at which newspapers are shutting down isn't much different from what it was in the late 20th century. Instead, just about every daily paper has gotten smaller — smaller newsroom, smaller budgets, smaller print runs, smaller page counts — year after year after year. It's death by a thousand paper cuts.

But shrinking can only go so far. In the second quarter of 2018, McClatchy's print advertising revenue dropped 26.4 percent year over year; Gannett was down 19.1 percent, Tronc eighteen percent. They are not making new daily print newspaper subscribers anymore, and existing ones either move to digital or shuffle off this mortal coil daily. There's no Zeno's Paradox to prevent newspapers from eventually deciding on one of two courses of action: going online-only or shutting down entirely. Even the most pro-print publishers will tell you that, someday, the "cost of print" and "revenue from print" lines will intersect on an accountant's projection and it'll be time to stop the presses for good. The only question is when: Two years? Five? Ten? Thirty?

So, one of the questions I'm most interested in for the near- to medium-term future is what will actually happen when print newspapers start to disappear in large numbers, whenever that may be. Will those print readers just become digital readers? Will they spend as much time, consuming local journalism on their phones as they do at their breakfast tables? Or will their attention wander as readers' competitive set widens to, well, everything else the Internet can offer? So I (the author of this piece) was happy to see some new research by Neil Thurman and Richard Fletcher that offers some insight into those questions. And — while there are a few key caveats — the news is generally not that great. Shutting down print does not drive those readers to print-like consumption habits on digital devices. Instead, they become a lot like other digital readers — easily distracted, flitting from link to link, and a little allergic to depth.

When it shut off the presses, The Independent only had about a paid print circulation of forty thousand— versus fifty-eight million monthly uniques in digital. Fifty-

eight million sure seems a lot bigger than forty thousand! But Thurman and Fletcher found that those few print readers were responsible for about eighty-one percent of all time spent consuming Independent content. All its digital platforms made up only nineteen percent. Or to put it another way: In an average month, a single print subscription to The Independent generated on average, about 6,100 times the actual content consumption as one monthly unique on its website or app. It's not a perfect comparison — monthly unique aim to measure people while circulation measures copies. But the point is crystal clear: Print readers are just far, far, far, far better news consumers than digital ones. This is something journalists often have a hard time understanding — mainly because they consume a ton of digital news all day and night. In the print days, a reporter's news consumption and an average citizen were not all that far apart — mainly because there just wasn't that much news available to consume. Today, a reporter getting a dozen morning newsletters, listening to a news podcast on the morning commute, getting news alerts on their phone and monitoring Twitter for the latest all day is engaging in very extreme behavior.

Even with those points of difference, though, the overarching lesson holds. Leaving print is the ultimate cost-cutting; a huge share of a newspaper's cost structure is tied up in building-sized printing presses and Canadian forests and ink by the barrel. But when that day comes — even if it helps a newspaper's bottom line — its audience isn't likely to follow along. And that means accepting a dramatic decline in reach, influence, and impact.

Thad McIlroy wrote an interesting scenario last year that mirrors the above article, he said that the newspaper industry leads the charge to provide compelling proof that the Internet really is destroying traditional ink-on-paper publishing. The data has been troubling for a long time and gets more convincing each day. A lot of analyses gloss over the data which demonstrates that the decline in newspaper readership and circulation easily predates the Internet. The story of the decline of the daily newspaper goes beyond the web. Furthermore the U.S. (and Canadian)

trends are not fully mirrored worldwide – is that because of lagging indicators or fundamentally different forces at work?

The enduring strength of newspapers is their local coverage, from community news to financial to entertainment. The reality is that city newspapers have more "feet on the ground" than any of the competing city web sites. The smartest newspaper managers are translating their community strength onto the web. Community newspapers and other weekly newspapers seem to be largely avoiding the fate of their daily brethren. The future of the traditional newspaper industry, first in North America, and spreading rapidly to all developed countries, is very negative. My hopes and expectations of a renaissance for the industry, just as determined. On the surface, newspaper publishing in North America appears to be in big trouble; but then, the newspaper industry been in ever-increasing trouble for a long time. An article from late 2006 in the American Journalism Review takes the newspaper circulation data a step further in pointing out that "in 1950 there were 1,772 dailies with a total circulation of 53.8 million and 549 Sunday papers with 46.6 million. But since 1980, the number and circulation of dailies has declined fairly steadily, slipping to 1,452 last year, with circulation down to 53.3 million – below where it was fifty-five years ago, despite nearly a doubling in the size of the national population."

Clearly this is a troubled medium. Equally clear is that the problem in newspaper circulation pre-dates the Internet by some years. Theories abound. Radio and television must surely shoulder some of the blame; just as likely is that changing lifestyles impacted newspaper readership regardless of competing media.

A few years ago, the Philadelphia Inquirer's Will Bunch saw the possibility of the end of newspaper editorials. He wrote, I have been thinking a lot about something that most people aren't thinking about much at all these days: Newspaper editorials. They've pretty much been around since Gutenberg invented the printing press, and, especially in smaller cities and towns where up through the end of the twentieth Century a

newspaper was a near-monopoly source of news -- they've been known to actually wield influence.

At their occasional worst, newspaper editorials can be tools of a bullying millionaire (or billionaire) publisher, but at their best these screeds can force public officials to deal with society's problems or to look at hard facts they might wish to ignore. Well, that was once true, anyway. The reality is that artful newspaper editorials are supposed to take a step back and bring two things to the complex issues of the day: Knowledge and reason, which are the lingua franca of an educated elite. In other words, exactly the kind of thing that America's angry and feeling-betrayed middle class wants nothing to do with these days.

If 2016 (US election) has taught us anything definitive about journalism, it's the impotency of the modern newspaper editorial, at least in the arena of national politics. It is not 1968 anymore. A president won't be so moved -- as some claim that LBJ was influenced by an editorial commentary on CBS -- to declare that "if I've lost Walter Cronkite, I've lost Middle America" and then change his Vietnam policies and withdraw from the presidential race. News orgs don't wield that kind of monopoly power and Trump has shown the world that a president-elect no longer has to give a flying you-know-what about what the major news orgs think. Increasingly, this apathy over editorial opinion is working its way down to the state or local level.

The newspaper editorial is dying -- and yet it can be saved with a fairly simple operation. In fact, much of it is already in good health. The core functions of calling out public officials who don't call the truth, and offering readers the basic facts -- how the Affordable Care Act actually works and who is actually covered, for example -- will be more essential in 2017 than ever before. The failing organ here is the demand for action. It is time for elite editorial writers to stop pretending they're in a conversation with elite politicians who aren't giving them the time of day.

Instead of hectoring politicians, it's time for newspaper editorial writers to think long and hard about how to empower the people, the only real force for positive social

change that we have left. Consider climate change, for example. Trump has made it clear with his rogues gallery of Big Oil execs and climate-change deniers that he won't do a damn thing, but citizens and local communities can do quite a lot, from installing solar panels to better recycling to driving fuel efficient cars. And on the big-ticket items like the Affordable Care Act, no Republican senator is going to listen to a newspaper, but they might listen to thousands of empowered constituents, and the media can play a role in making those connections happen. Or getting busloads of folks to the Jan. 21 Women's March on Washington, which has a much better chance of defending reproductive rights than the best-crafted seven hundred word opinion piece ever will.

That might require some folks in journalism to think outside their normal comfort zone -- but the normal comfort zone has already been blown up. If the 2016 election showed anything, its that everyday citizens want somebody to fight for them. It could be an authoritarian strongman. Or it could be your hometown newspaper. I would vote for the latter.

We will leave the last words in this chapter with Chrysalis L. Wright who published this in Psychology Today .It seems that each day there is a new fake news story circulating on social media. This is problematic considering that sixty-eight percent of American adult's report that they at least occasionally get their news from social media.

Reddit, Twitter, Facebook, and YouTube are the top social media platforms from which consumers obtain news information. At the time of this writing, examining the Hot 50 from snopes.com shows that almost twenty percent of the top rumors being checked on snopes.com are based on bias, stereotypes, and prejudice. The remaining rumors, or false news reports, are related to either COVID-19 or politics. Even so, as with many fake news stories, the line between political posts, COVID-19 related posts, and prejudicial posts is rather thin. This may be related to the political shift between the two major parties that has slowly occurred over the years.

There are specific consumer characteristics and sociodemographic factors that may make consumers more susceptible to believing fake news. These include coming from a lower social class background or having a lower SES, having a conservative ideology, having higher levels of right-wing authoritarianism, and being White, male, and old. It appears as though believing fake news amplifies higher levels of right-wing authoritarianism and xenophobia that these consumers already have increasing the likelihood that exposure to fake news would have an impact on consumer attitudes and behaviors. These are the same consumer characteristics and sociodemographic factors that are associated with holding negative and intolerant attitudes toward minority groups that have been identified in numerous research studies.

Prejudiced 'fake news' has the intent of validating and encouraging discriminatory and racist opinions toward out-group members. This type of fake news is not only sensational, for shock value, but also provides stereotypical, biased, and prejudicial falsehoods. Exposure to prejudiced fake news has been related to a lower likelihood of viewing immigration as a benefit and an increased likelihood of viewing it as a threat as well as holding intolerant attitudes toward immigrants and foreigners. Prejudiced 'fake news' has also been associated with consumers reporting increased levels of Islamophobia. More recently, with fake news related to COVID-19, consumers have reported higher levels of xenophobia and prejudicial attitudes toward Asian Americans.

Dylann Roof is a not-so-distant example of how exposure to 'fake news' can impact the actual behavior of consumers, highlighting how attitudes can lead to engaging in real-life behaviors. What happened with Dylann Roof demonstrates the dangerous nature of today's fake news and the deadly consequences it can have. Dylann Roof engulfed himself with online racist 'fake news', amplifying his already existing prejudiced world views. This left him in an echo chamber surrounded by false information and conspiracy theories that led to confirmation bias and a

drastic polarization of his views. This ended with him entering a church and murdering nine innocent people.

Today's racist fake news is just as bad, if not worse. From false claims that members of the Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement doused two white men with gasoline to false claims that members of BLM are assaulting bystanders and false claims of a BLM flyer labeling white people as the enemy, the list just goes on and on. At this point, it seems endless. In addition to fake news posts on social media, there are several U.S. based websites that are spreading racist fake news. The stories on these websites are similar to the fake news posts often found on social media. Some claim that BLM is an "anti-police hate group," a money-laundering tool for the Democratic National Committee, and even strongly advise consumers to purchase firearms and "plenty of ammo" to protect themselves against BLM. These racist fake news stories are more than false. They are dangerous and could very well, in today's uneasy and stressful climate riffed by politics and COVID-19, lead to more Dylann Roofs.

Sources include The Conversation, Joshua Benton, Thad McIlroy, Will Bunch & C. Wright

Chapter Seven

Covid-19 Leads the Way with Fake News

According to an article in The Guardian by Roy Greenslade - it is the bleakest of ironies - the biggest news story in a lifetime is killing off the very industry that exists to report it. Coronavirus is destroying newsprint newspapers across Britain (and every-where else), delivering the coup de grace to businesses that were already in the process of dying.

Local and regional newspaper publishers have found it economically unsustainable to go on producing papers. In response, they have suspended the publication of scores of titles and placed hundreds of journalists on paid leave. “Furloughs” have become part of the new pandemic lexicon.

At national level, print runs have been drastically reduced because of distribution problems, most obviously resulting from the widespread closure of retail stores. Edition sizes have also been cut back due to the drop-off in advertisers. Similarly, many magazines are also forsaking print in favour of digital-only publication. Though formal announcements by publisher’s stress that their dramatic Covid-19 measures will be temporary, there is reason to believe some may be permanent. Newsprint, the transmission of news by ink on paper, might not recover from the contagion in what could eventually be seen as a transformational moment for the 380-year British newspaper history.

There will not be a post-pandemic “old media” recovery because it seems inconceivable that publishers, already struggling to fund journalism, will return to the previous status quo. That is because the status quo was, itself, one of perpetual fragility in which publishers were engaged in the delicate task of managing newsprint decline while, in parallel, seeking to create a digital journalism business model.

As is well known, their central problem has been the failure to find any viable alternative to advertising as newspapers' major source of revenue. Throughout the past twenty years, papers have defied forecasters who predicted that advertising income was on the verge of disappearing. Instead, it has lasted well enough to sustain newspapers, even though its decrease has necessitated severe cuts to editorial budgets and a consequent diminution in the quality and quantity of content.

Advertising's surprising durability has been important because it enabled publishers to play circus performers – riding two horses at the same time to provide funds for both newsprint and digital platforms. But sensible newspaper owners, managers and editors have long realised that there would come a time when advertising would dry up, newsprint's ever-decreasing audience would vanish, and they would need to find a way to fund digital journalism without ad support.

That there is a hunger for online news is undeniable. For the past month, every major publisher has been reporting record numbers of website visits. Page views each day have been off the chart. Dwell time, one of the key metrics to show the depth of reader engagement with individual articles, has increased, too. One result, according to some national publishers that impose charges for online access, has been a rise in subscriptions.

To put this in an even more positive perspective for newspapers, the expansion of interest in their content has occurred despite record viewing figures for TV and radio news and current affairs broadcasts. This interest is obviously due to coronavirus being, as everyone emphasises on a daily basis an unprecedented event. What is not emphasised, however, is the certainty that its aftermath will also be unprecedented. Economic activity will surely be slower to revive than optimists, such as government ministers, would like us to believe. Indeed, it wasn't in a healthy state prior to the shock of Covid-19. By the time the lockdown ends – and that light appears to be a long way down the tunnel – many companies may not be in a state to recover. It is true that some could seek to revive their businesses through advertising; but financial constraints on

potential consumers, because of depleted income during the emergency, will make the outcome of such initiatives uncertain.

Post-lockdown, publishers will be reassessing the state of their businesses. Aside from the difficulties they face in winning back advertisers, they will need to make rational decisions about their bottom lines. Did the closure of this or that title really matter? How much money did we save by publishing fewer newsprint issues? Do we need expensive offices when our papers have been so effectively produced by journalists operating remotely?

In mid-March, that wise historian, Peter Hennessy, conveyed the epoch-making significance of the pandemic during a BBC Radio 4 interview. Future historians, he said, will divide our age into BC and AC: “Before corona and after corona.” I am convinced media analysts will make the same division. AC will likely mark the final stage in newsprint’s long decline.

The coronavirus crisis has weighed heavily on print newspapers already battling for survival around the world, with the number of copies sold tumbling while less profitable digital readerships surge. Simply delivering printed papers to the shops -- or having customers come in to buy them -- has become a challenge, worsening a years-long decline in sales and advertising revenue. "Consumption of printed newspapers has fallen as lockdowns undermine physical distribution, almost certainly accelerating the shift to an all-digital future," the Reuters Institute's 2020 annual report said.

Major dailies in Brazil, Mexico and Canada have already switched to online-only or dropped some days' editions, while in the Philippines ten of the seventy newspapers in the PPI association have shuttered. "Times are hard. There are no advertisers, no-one is reading us," PPI executive director Ariel Sebellino told AFP. The archipelago nation's small local newspapers were hardest hit during lockdown as street sales tumbled. "The industry is under siege and we've all taken bruises," Sebellino said.

Far from affecting only journalists, the disappearance of print papers deals out pain all up the production chain, taking in printers, paper makers and delivery people. Major British media brands could boast of 6.6 million new online readers in the first quarter in what their industry association said was a new record. But most have not seen the same bounce in print sales. The coronavirus has become "the greatest threat to the global news industry since the 2008 economic crash" wrote industry publication Press Gazette -- which itself moved online-only in 2013.

Between 2005 and 2018, some 250 local papers closed across Britain, while today one in three journalists' jobs are believed to be under threat. The picture is similar in the US and Canada, where dozens of papers have closed or merged with local competitors since the crisis. Between 2008 and 2019, half of all workers in American newspapers lost their jobs, according to a Pew institute count. Around the world, audiences have melted away for the free sheets once handed out in busy urban centres.

Unable to count on funding from advertisers, some have paused publication, including Metro or Destak in Brazil or France's Twenty Minutes. With its ageing population used to holding a paper in their hands, Germany's newspaper publishers "were all making money before the coronavirus crisis, even if circulation figures kept falling," said Frank Ueberall, president of the DJV journalists' federation. "Things are different now," but "text journalism still has good days ahead," Ueberall said. "Old people in particular are far from adopting digital technologies en masse."

"Printing is expensive, but it's swings and roundabouts," said Gilles Dechamps, head of a printing company in northern Paris, arguing that "it's important for readers and for advertisers to have the landmark" of a printed paper". Despite efforts like cutting their size to save paper or investing in the web over the past thirty years, few papers have found the winning formula to make money from 21st-Century journalism. "Even in the smallest markets, Facebook and Google syphon three-quarters of the digital

revenue," said Penelope Abernathy, a former Wall Street Journal and New York Times vice-president who now teaches media economics at the University of North Carolina. "That leaves all other legacy media fighting for the digital scraps."

Strong brands like the NYT may survive the transition, with the Grey Lady's digital revenues outstripping paper for the first time in the second quarter this year. But the smaller fish may have to continue reducing their output and hiking prices to survive, with successful new magazine launches in recent years mostly targeting a niche audience. "Print will survive in some form," Abernathy predicted, although likely more in weekly and monthly options than daily. "The era of the print daily will be remembered fondly. The whole notion was capturing the history of the last twenty-four hours," she said.

From its ostensible origins in Wuhan, China, in late 2019, COVID-19 has spread across the globe said 'The Conversation' in 2020. There are now a staggering 11.5 million cases worldwide, resulting in over half a million deaths. March saw the pandemic's beginnings in Canada and the United States, followed by widespread lockdowns meant to slow the progression of the virus. Twitter provides an online record of political leaders' policies and personal sentiments. Both Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau and U.S. President Donald Trump often tweet to large numbers of followers. The @realDonaldTrump Twitter account had 82.7 million followers with more than 20,000 tweets during Trump's presidency. The account @JustinTrudeau had five million followers and has tweeted 18,000 times since Trudeau became prime minister.

There is a significant difference in how the two leaders have talked about this virus on Twitter. One has focused more on politics, while the other has focused on policy and public health. We conducted a quantitative analysis of themes emerging in Trudeau's and Trump's tweets during the COVID-19 pandemic. Our study used network science, which considers systems and their interactions. We formed what are called "co-occurrence networks" based on keywords taken from tweets, with two keywords linked

if they appear in the same tweet. For example, if the keywords “covid19” and “pandemic” appear in the same tweet, then they were linked. The monthly top one hundred keywords from @JustinTrudeau and @realDonaldTrump were extracted based on their frequency. To simplify the networks, they removed retweets and common stop words such as “the” and “at.” We created visualizations of the networks to group the keywords into thematically related clusters or communities. We find a higher proportion of links inside communities and a sparser set of links between them.

The algorithm extracted the communities in the keywords. Keywords and links were scaled up or down in size depending on their frequency. Communities of keywords were assigned colours such as blue, green and orange, and more correlated keywords were located closer together in the network. Looking back at the first two months of 2020, Trudeau’s and Trump’s tweets were unrelated to COVID-19. Trudeau focused on the shooting down of the passenger plane in Iran that had fifty-seven Canadian citizens on board, followed by protests for the Wet’suwet’en First Nation. Trump focused on his impeachment trial and endorsing candidates in Republican congressional primaries.

In March, the federal government’s response to COVID-19 dominated Trudeau’s Twitter keywords. In contrast, other topics competed for prevalence in Trump’s tweets. These included tweets about fake news (closely situated to “coronavirus” in the keyword network) and perceived unfairness from the Democrats. Claims of fake news coverage of the severity of the pandemic dominated Trump’s April tweets. Trudeau’s tweets centred on topics such as wage subsidies and appreciation for front-line workers. In May and June, keywords from Trump’s tweets revolved around Obama-gate, Republican endorsements and transit funding. Trudeau’s keyword networks for both months were in stark contrast to Trump’s, with keywords related to the virus remaining prevalent.

The keyword networks from March to June point to divergent messaging on the pandemic by the two leaders, as reflected in their tweets. While both leaders focused

on COVID-19 in their March tweets, Trump did increasingly less so over the coming months. His reference to the virus was often through a political lens, with keywords related to the media or Democratic rivals. For each month we considered, the keywords fell into a small collection of communities, ranging from three to five. These observations are consistent with an earlier analysis of Trump's tweets around his election.

Trump famously made comments downplaying the pandemic in its early days, and made subsequent statements referencing progress controlling the pandemic, despite a record number of new cases. The early reopening of U.S. states may have been a possible cause for increased cases. In contrast, Trudeau has stayed consistent in his daily briefings and tweets since lockdowns began in March, highlighting economic recovery programs and providing public health-care information. Interestingly, Trudeau's minority government has been enjoying a surge in popularity, while polls suggest rising disapproval of the Trump administration's handling of the pandemic.

As the COVID-19 becomes part of the new normal, there is greater public awareness of the effectiveness of lockdowns and actions needed to curb the spread of the virus such as social distancing, handwashing, and wearing masks. However, not everyone is willing to comply. The Conversation network analysis suggests that consistent social media messaging by federal leadership may play a role in influencing views of the pandemic and efforts to contain it. They hope that political leaders with large platforms will use them to amplify the advice of medical professionals and help slow the spread of the virus. It is not just newspapers that COVID-19 has decimated, its 'fake news' and the impact it is having on consumers. In the past several weeks, Chrysalis l, Wright has had various people reach out to ask me about the impact of fake news on social media related to COVID-19 on consumers. Anyone with a social media account has no doubt seen at least one example of this. From the meaning of COVID-19 to it being predicted by Nostradamus or The Simpsons, fake news about COVID-19 is

spreading almost as fast as the virus itself. While fake news is nothing new, the consequences of such news related to COVID-19 demonstrates we have another epidemic moving alongside the current global pandemic.

As can be expected based on previous research on 'fake news' and stereotypes, prejudice, and discrimination, we were warned about an increase in hate crimes targeting Asian Americans by the FBI in March. We have since witnessed a stark increase in hate crimes targeting Asian Americans, such as when a fifty-one year-old Asian American woman was attacked while taking a city bus in the Bronx. In addition to instances such as this, fake news related to COVID-19 can negatively impact measures people are taking to try and prevent the spread of the virus, their own physical health, as well as their mental health.

If people believe that sipping water every fifteen minutes can cure or prevent the virus, then people may stop taking measures recommended by the CDC that are aimed at reducing the spread of the virus. These include hand washing, social distancing, wearing masks in public, covering our own coughs or sneezes, and cleaning and disinfecting our homes. At a more extreme consequence, believing that a chemical is a treatment for the virus, when it is not scientifically proven, led a couple in Arizona to take chloroquine phosphate, leading to hospitalization and death. Additionally, believing that COVID-19 is a hoax can lead to people behaving as such, taking minimal to no measures to prevent the spread of the virus as well as sharing that belief online, leading not only to contracting the illness but also dying from it.

Believing 'fake news' related to COVID-19 can lead to increases in anxiety, stress, and even depression as people navigate through the societal changes taking place to "flatten the curve." These include stay-at-home orders, curfews, and nonessential businesses closing. With this comes many families now unemployed, furloughed, or trying to work from home while now assisting with the homebound public education of their children. Bills are due, and while many companies and businesses are working with those financially impacted by the coronavirus, some are not. Families need to purchase

groceries and other needed items for their households, but once they arrive in their full armor for the coronavirus, they find store shelves bare, with needed items completely gone, such as toilet paper and disinfectant wipes. They search the aisles getting what they can find for their family but it likely is not enough to last a full week. This new life that we are experiencing is stressful enough and anxiety is clearly on the rise. Adding beliefs such as Harvard Professor Charles Lieber sold the coronavirus to China or that the seasonal cold you had last year was COVID-19 can lead to confusion over what information is true or false. These beliefs can also lead to an increase in government skepticism as well as skepticism over hard news sources. Those beliefs also compile on top of the current anxiety and stress and can amplify those mental health struggles as you not only have to go out prepared for battle to go to the grocery store but also in your own mind when you are exposed to the never-ending information presented to consumers about COVID-19.

But it is not just the obvious (or not-so-obvious) 'fake news' that is problematic. There are plenty of hard news sources that clearly report information based on specific political agendas or other forms of bias. There are also numerous instances of hard news sources using staging in their news coverage, such as the use of mannequins as coronavirus patients. Staging news in any way only leads to distrust in the news source. Additionally, when governmental agencies change their tune on effective preventative measures related to COVID-19, such as when the CDC first stated that the public did not need to wear a mask to now recommending that everyone wear a mask in public, skepticism of the government, of science, and of hard news increases. If people begin to view hard news as fake because of staging scenes, slanted or biased reporting, or contradictory recommendations, then, to them, what is fake news must now be real news.

While research has demonstrated that there are specific consumer characteristics that may make them a little more susceptible to believing fake news, including being White, male, and identifying as evangelical Christian and conservative. The main way we

can combat fake news is by educating ourselves about what fake news is and isn't, and doing our own fact-checking when we are presented with information from any source, including hard news sources, government agencies, social media, friends, and family. Snopes is a great source for fact-checking fake news but the best place to get accurate information related to COVID-19 is the CDC. There are also several available listings of fake news sources and websites for consumers to look out for. And while some social media platforms, such as Facebook and Twitter, are now taking measures to remove fake news and misinformation from their platforms, it is ultimately up to us, as consumers, to make sure that the information we are feeding ourselves is accurate, factual, non-biased, reliable, and true.

Courtesy of AFP, The Conversation, Psychology Today

Chapter Eight

Has Social Media Normalized Hate?

Online hate speech takes place generally in social media or the internet, with the purpose of attacking a person or a group on the basis of characteristics such as race, religion, ethnic origin, sexual orientation, disability, or gender.

Hate speech online is situated at the intersection of multiple tensions, it is the expression of conflicts between different groups within and across societies; it is a vivid example of how technologies with a transformative potential such as the Internet bring with them both opportunities and challenges; and it implies complex balancing between fundamental rights and principles, including freedom of expression and the defense of human dignity.

Hate speech is a broad and contested term. Multilateral treaties such as the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) have sought to define its contours. Multi-stake holders process (e.g. the Rabat Plan of Action) have been initiated to bring greater clarity and suggest mechanisms to identify hateful messages. And yet, hate speech continues largely to be used in everyday discourse as a generic term, mixing concrete threats to individuals' and groups' security with cases in which people may be simply venting their anger against authority. Internet intermediaries—organizations that mediate online communication such as Facebook, Twitter, and Google—have advanced their own definitions of hate speech that bind users to a set of rules and allow companies to limit certain forms of expression. National and regional bodies have sought to promote understandings of the term that are more rooted in local traditions.

The Internet's speed and reach makes it difficult for governments to enforce national legislation in the virtual world. Issues around hate speech online bring into clear relief the emergence of private spaces for expression that serve a public function (e.g.

Facebook, Twitter), and the challenges that these spaces pose for regulators. Some of the companies owning these spaces have become more responsive towards tackling the problem of hate speech online.

The character of hate speech online and its relation to offline speech and action are widely talked about—by politicians, activists and academics—but the debates tend to be removed from systematic empirical evidence. The character of perceived hate speech and its possible consequences has led to placing much emphasis on the solutions to the problem and on how they should be grounded in international human rights norms. Yet this very focus has also limited deeper attempts to understand the causes underlying the phenomenon and the dynamics through which certain types of content emerge, diffuse and lead—or not—to actual discrimination, hostility or violence.

In a paper published by North Carolina State University, the authors said; "fundamentally, we wanted to examine how online platforms can normalize hatred and contribute to dehumanization," says co-author Jessica Jameson, a professor of communication at North Carolina State University. "And we found that an established model of the role identity plays in intractable conflicts seems to explain a great deal of this behavior."

For this study, the researchers assessed discourse on a Facebook page that was noteworthy in Israel for propagating right-wing hate speech. Specifically, the researchers examined comments on the page that were related to other Israeli Jews who commenters felt were not politically right wing.

"We found that the language used in these Facebook interactions hewed very closely to three stages we see in Terrell Northrup's theory of intractable conflict," says Jameson. "One stage is the threat—meaning that the people in one group perceive another group as a threat to their identity. For example, one representative comment we found was that 'The leftists are our devil, because of their existence the country is being destroyed and the army weakened,'" she says.

“A second stage is distortion. This basically means that the first group will not engage with new information regarding the other group, instead distorting it or dismissing it as irrelevant for some reason. For example, ‘I don’t know if I really want to know the answer to the question of whether the thinking of the left is due to infinite stupidity or infinite naivete.’

“A third stage is rigidification—where people become locked into their positions, making it difficult or impossible to change their views of the other group,” Jameson says. “This is where dehumanization occurs, and we see people referring to the political left as ‘cockroaches,’ ‘vermin,’ or ‘stinking dogs.’ And when people stop seeing members of a group as human—that is dangerous,” she says. “Look, when social media tools are used for community-building, or to provide social support, or to engage people who have otherwise remained silent, they are very valuable,” Jameson says. “The concern that is raised by our work here is that when one identity group uses these platforms to dehumanize another group, there is no possibility for conversation with those who have different views. And things may potentially become dangerous,” she says.

“I don’t think having social media companies police their own sites is the answer. But I do think this work highlights the need for more efforts aimed at fostering healthy communication between groups.”

Catherine O’Regan and Stefan Theil of the Bonavero Institute of Human Rights in the Faculty of Law at the University of Oxford investigated initiatives to regulate hate speech online. They highlight the difficulties of finding a widely agreed definition of hate speech and assess the legislative initiatives in four major jurisdictions to inform those engaged in the policy debate concerning the regulation of online speech around the world.

The Internet has allowed people across the world to connect instantaneously and has revolutionised the way we communicate and share information with one another. More than four billion people were Internet users in 2018, more than half of the global population. In many ways, the Internet has had a positive influence on society. For

example, it helps us to communicate easily and to share knowledge on all kinds of important topics efficiently: from the treatment of disease to disaster relief. But the Internet has also broadened the potential for harm. Being able to communicate with a mass audience has meant that the way we engage with politics, public affairs and each other has also changed. Hateful messages and incitements to violence are distributed and amplified on social media in ways that were not previously possible.

Through social media platforms (such as Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Instagram and Snapchat), 3.19 billion users converse and interact with each other by generating and sharing content. The business model of most social media companies is built on drawing attention, and given that offensive speech often attracts attention, it can become more audible on social media than it might on traditional mass media. Given the growing problem of offensive and harmful speech online, many countries are asking themselves the challenging question whether they should regulate speech online and if so, how they should legislate to curb these excesses.

The regulation of harmful speech in online spaces requires drawing a line between legitimate freedom of speech and hate speech. Freedom of speech is protected in the constitutions of most countries around the world, and in the major international human rights treaties. Of course, we know that despite this widespread protection, many countries do not provide effective protection for freedom of speech. One of the dangers of regulating hate speech online is that it will become a pretext for repressive regimes to further limit the rights.

In countries committed to freedom of speech, it is necessary to develop a shared understanding of why freedom of speech is important. O'Regan and Theil suggest that there are three main reasons why we value freedom of speech: because we think being able to speak our minds is part of what makes us free and autonomous human beings, for democratic reasons, because we need to be able to talk about politics and policy freely to enable us to decide as equals how to vote and to hold those in power to account and for truth-related reasons, to enable us

to refute false claims. Just as we need to understand why we value freedom of speech - we also need to understand why we should prohibit hate speech. There are two main reasons for outlawing hate speech: the first and most widely accepted reason is that hate speech is likely to result in actual harm to those who are being targeted ("the incitement to harm" principle): so speech that incites violence against, for instance, people of a particular race, sexual orientation or gender identity is outlawed in most countries, including the USA. Many countries also agree that hate speech that is degrading of groups of people should also be prohibited ("the degrading of groups" principle), because it undermines their status as free and equal members of society. Again, many countries (including Canada) but notably not the USA, prohibit such forms of hate speech as well. Both freedom of speech and hate speech are concepts that give rise to disagreement, both about their meaning and about how they should be applied.

The age of digital media has allowed online speech and content to be shared anonymously and often without a second thought for the consequences. While the act of publishing online is instantaneous, mechanisms designed to regulate speech are often cumbersome and slow.

Moreover, in traditional forms of media, there is editorial oversight from a person other than the author prior to publishing. Historically, this has often provided an effective restraint on hate speech, a mechanism that plainly does not work on self-published social media platforms. The speed and sheer amount of content, as well as the lack of editorial oversight make social media platforms a particular challenge for regulators. Increasingly, policymakers are suggesting that social media platforms should bear the brunt of the regulatory burden: for instance, through obligations to provide effective complaint mechanisms and remove unlawful speech. The risk with this approach is that lawful speech may be removed in error, or that the general environment will inhibit individuals from expressing themselves online.

The United States differs from other jurisdictions being assessed in some important respects. 'The First Amendment of the US Constitution prohibits the restriction of free speech by government and public authorities. There are narrow exceptions for hate speech, understood as speech that is likely to incite imminent violence.' The First Amendment however does not prevent private actors, like social media platforms, from imposing their own restrictions on speech. Social media platforms are further protected from private litigation because they are not considered publishers of the content posted to their sites in terms of section 230 of the Communications Decency Act 1996. The United Kingdom imposes a range of criminal prohibitions on hate speech, both online and in print. The Crime and Disorder Act, Public Order Act, Malicious Communications Act 1998 and Communications Act 2003 prohibit speech that is derogatory on grounds of race, ethnic origin and religious and sexual orientation. A recent White Paper contains sweeping proposals to regulate online media by imposing a duty of care upon social media platforms and establishing a regulator to ensure that the duty of care is observed. The broad range of companies, plus, open-ended list of online harms identified for regulation in the White Paper are a particular concern: it risks overburdening the regulator and leading to highly selective enforcement.

The European Union has adopted the e-Commerce Directive which prevents monitoring of content on websites before it is published, a provision which shapes and impacts the development of regulatory initiatives in Europe. The EU is exploring further options in regulating social media. So far, it has issued a Communication on Tackling Illegal Content Online – Towards Greater Responsibility of Social Media Platforms and has entered into a Code of Conduct on Countering Illegal Content Online with Facebook, Twitter, You tube, Instagram, Microsoft, Snapchat, Google and Daily Motion. In terms of the Code of Conduct, these companies have agreed to take down any illegal content within twenty-four hours.

The German Network Enforcement Law introduced just over three years ago imposes obligations on social media platforms to establish complaints management mechanisms which must work quickly, transparently and effectively. Where unlawful content (as defined by the German Criminal Code) is identified it must be removed or blocked within a specified deadline. The specific deadline depends on whether content is manifestly illegal, or simply illegal, and whether the social media platform cooperates with a recognised body of industry self-regulation. Fines of up to fifty million Euros can be issued for systemic failings in the complaints management system, including not consistently meeting the required deletion deadlines, and ignoring reporting and transparency requirements.

Regulating hate speech online is a major policy challenge. Policymakers must ensure that any regulation of social media platforms does not unduly impair freedom of speech. Given the complexity of the problem, close monitoring of new legislative initiatives around the world is necessary to assess whether a good balance has been struck between the protection of freedom of speech and the prohibition of hate speech. In-order for this monitoring to take place, social media companies need to be transparent about the content that they are removing and make their data available to researchers and the wider public for scrutiny.

In Canada, various laws at the federal, provincial and territorial levels impose restrictions on the freedom of expression guaranteed by section 2(b) of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. For instance, under the Criminal Code, such actions as defamatory libel, counselling suicide, perjury and fraud are prohibited. In 1990, then Justice of the Supreme Court of Canada Antonio Lamer described offences that address forms of speech or expression as falling under the following categories: offences against the public order, offences related to falsehood, offences against the person and reputation, offences against the administration of law and justice, and offences related to public morals and disorderly conduct.

Among the laws that have restricted freedom of expression are those referred to as anti-hate laws, for their purpose is to restrict the publication and public expression of messages intended to incite hatred towards members of particular groups. In other words, they prohibit hate propaganda. The two main provisions addressing hate in Canada, sections 318 and 319 of the Criminal Code, impose criminal sanctions against anyone who wilfully promotes genocide or incites hatred in public. Until 2013, when section 13 of the Canadian Human Rights Act was repealed, restrictions against communicating in a manner that could expose a person to hatred were included in that Act. Such restrictions are also found in some of Canada's provincial human rights laws.

Most Canadian human rights laws prohibit publishing or displaying material that expresses an intention to discriminate, implies discrimination, or intends to incite others to discriminate. The Supreme Court has recognized that eliminating the spread of hatred is part of the broader goal of addressing discrimination. In its review of the Saskatchewan Human Rights Code in Saskatchewan, Human Rights Commission v. Whatcott, the Court stated that "prohibiting representations that are objectively seen to expose protected groups to 'hatred' is rationally connected to the objective of eliminating discrimination and the other harmful effects of hatred."

Although it has found a number of Canada's anti-hate propaganda laws to be infringements of the right to free expression, the Supreme Court has determined that they are largely justifiable under the Charter and the reasonable limitations it permits on rights in Canada's free and democratic society. The Court has found that the harm caused by hate propaganda is not in keeping with the aspirations to freedom of expression or the values of equality and multiculturalism contained in sections 15 and 27 of the Charter.

This paper explores the different types of restrictions that have been used in Canada to address the promotion of hatred and other related and potentially harmful forms of expression, such as the glorification of terrorism or the display of an intent to discriminate. It includes information on other ways in which crimes motivated by hatred

are addressed in the criminal sentencing process and are tracked by law enforcement agencies. It also reviews some aspects of the debate surrounding ways to address hate propaganda.

With the inclusion of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms in the Constitution Act, 1982, certain human rights and fundamental freedoms have an enhanced legal status. All laws in Canada must comply with the Charter and are interpreted by Canadian courts in a manner that is consistent with the supremacy of the Constitution. The freedoms of thought, belief, opinion and expression are protected as a fundamental constitutional guarantee in section 2(b) of the Charter. This section adds that these rights include "freedom of the press and other media of communication." Some who promote the right to freedom of expression have argued that this right plays an important role as an "instrument of democratic government," an "instrument of truth," or an "instrument of personal fulfilment."

Freedom of speech is also declared to be a human right and fundamental freedom in the Canadian Bill of Rights. This federal law sets out various rights, including freedom of religion and freedom of the press. Passed in 1960, it remains in force. Though it does not form part of Canada's Constitution, it has been described by the Supreme Court as quasi-constitutional, and therefore other laws must be interpreted in ways that are consistent with it.

The Supreme Court of Canada has recognized that the Charter's guarantee of freedom of expression is not absolute. It has upheld restrictions on forms of expression that it has deemed to run contrary to the spirit of the Charter, such as hate speech, given that the purpose of such expression is to prevent the free exercise of another group's rights. Certain limitations may be placed on Charter guarantees. Section 1 of the Charter provides that all rights and freedoms guaranteed by the Charter are subject to "such reasonable limits prescribed by law as can be demonstrably justified in a free and democratic society." This means that once an infringement of a Charter right has been established, the courts must decide whether the violation by the government or

other institution to which the Charter applies can be considered justified. To do this, the courts must use a balancing test to weigh the objectives and actions of the government or other institution against the interests of an individual claiming that a Charter right has been violated. Under section 52 of the Constitution Act, 1982, a law, or a part of it, may be found to be unconstitutional and struck down, or the law may be found to be constitutional, and a person's Charter right may therefore be justifiably limited by it.

Various Canadian laws have accordingly placed restrictions on freedom of expression, whether as part of the law's intended purpose or as an indirect consequence. Perjury, counselling suicide, and creating child pornography are all forms of expression, but they have been limited through designation in the federal Criminal Code as criminal offences. Publishing election surveys on a federal general election day while polling stations are still open is prohibited. This limits the freedom of the press in Canada but is intended to prevent voters from being unduly influenced by last-minute polls of voters' intentions.

The provincial and federal laws in Canada pertaining to defamation are another example of a limitation on free speech; these laws have been created to protect the reputations of individuals. In addition, as discussed below, the Criminal Code and provincial human rights laws contain prohibitions against the publication of messages that promote hatred. These examples demonstrate that freedom of expression in Canada can be limited to promote other values or goals that are considered to be of greater social importance.

Hate propaganda provisions were first added to the Criminal Code in 1970 in response to the recommendation of the Special Committee on Hate Propaganda in Canada that a law be established to prohibit advocating genocide and inciting hatred of particular groups, where these activities are likely to occasion breach of the peace. This special parliamentary committee, known as the "Cohen Committee," after its chairperson, Maxwell Cohen, was created following a series of events in the 1960s, when certain white supremacist and neo-Nazi groups, largely based in the United States,

were active in Canada. These groups and individuals engaged mainly in anti-Semitic and anti-Black propagandizing. The committee emphasized the high esteem that should be placed on free expression in Canada, which it said in most cases should take precedence over any legal limitations that could be imposed on it. However, the committee explained that such limitations are necessary when "liberty becomes licence and colours the quality of liberty itself with an unacceptable stain."

The hate promotion offences and related provisions can be found in sections 318 to 320.1 of the Criminal Code (these provisions are reproduced in the appendix to this paper). Prosecutions of the offences contained in these sections have been few, and there is consequently very little jurisprudence. Nevertheless, the relevant court decisions include some of the key judicial interpretations of section 2(b) of the Charter.

Under section 318(1), everyone who advocates or promotes genocide is guilty of an offence punishable by up to five years' imprisonment. The term "genocide" is defined in section 318(2) to mean killing members of an identifiable group or deliberately inflicting on an identifiable group conditions of life calculated to bring about the group's physical destruction. An intent to directly prompt or provoke another person to commit genocide is enough to establish the men's or criminal intent, component of the offence.

Section 318(4) of the Criminal Code defines an "identifiable group" as any section of the public distinguished by colour, race, religion, national or ethnic origin, age, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, or mental or physical disability. No prosecution under section 318 can be undertaken without the consent of the relevant Attorney General (which is intended to, among other things, provide some control of the charges that may proceed in particularly sensitive or controversial areas of criminal law).

Under section 319(1), everyone who, by communicating statements in a public place, incites hatred against any identifiable group where such incitement is likely to

lead to a breach of the peace is guilty of an indictable offence punishable by up to two years' imprisonment, or of a summary conviction offence.

Section 319(2) makes it an offence to communicate, except in private conversation, statements that wilfully promote hatred against an "identifiable group" (which has the same meaning as in section 318). As with offences under section 318, no prosecution under section 319(2) can be instituted without the consent of the Attorney General.

Section 319(7) defines "communicating" to include communicating by telephone, broadcasting or other audible or visible means. "Public place" is defined to include any place to which the public has access by right or by invitation, express or implied. "Statements" include words spoken or written or recorded electronically, electromagnetically or otherwise and also include gestures, signs or other visible representations.

Some of the terms used in these provisions have been further defined by Canadian courts. In a 1990 decision, the Supreme Court said that "'hatred' connotes emotion of an intense and extreme nature that is clearly associated with vilification and detestation." It added: hatred is predicated on destruction, and hatred against identifiable groups therefore thrives on insensitivity, bigotry and destruction of both the target group and of the values of our society. Hatred in this sense is a most extreme emotion that belies reason; an emotion that, if exercised against members of an identifiable group, implies that those individuals are to be despised, scorned, denied respect and made subject to ill-treatment on the basis of group affiliation. The Ontario Court of Appeal has noted that the term "wilfully" does not include recklessness but may include wilful blindness. In other words, accused persons must either have known that their actions would have the effect of promoting hatred, or at least have known or "strongly suspected" that inquiry on their part respecting the consequences of their acts would result in the "actual knowledge" required to satisfy the men's requirement for the offence.

Any person charged under section 319(2) of the Criminal Code has available four special defences set out in section 319(3). These defences are that: the communicated statements are true; an opinion or argument was expressed in good faith and either concerned a religious subject or was based on a belief in a religious text; the statements were relevant to a subject of public interest and were on reasonable grounds believed to be true; and the statements were meant to point out matters that produce feelings of hatred toward an identifiable group and were made in good faith for the purpose of their removal.

The reverse onus on the accused persons to prove that their statements were true was found to be a justifiable limitation on the right to be presumed innocent under section 11(d) of the Charter. These special defences are not available to those charged under sections 318 and 319(1) of the Criminal Code.

Sections 320 and 320.1 of the Criminal Code provide that a judge may, on reasonable grounds, issue an order for the confiscation of hate propaganda in any form, including data on a computer system. Hate propaganda is defined in section 320(8) as any writing, sign or visible representation advocating or promoting genocide, or the communication of which would be an offence under section 319. By implication, this material has too target identifiable groups. To be seized, material must simply be shown to be hate propaganda – it need not be shown to be dangerous. The consent of the Attorney General is required before these seizure and confiscation provisions can be used.

In 2015, with the passage of Bill C-51 (Anti-terrorism Act, 2015), a section was added to the Criminal Code to create a new offence of advocating or promoting the commission of terrorism offences, otherwise referred to as the glorification of terrorism. While distinct from the Code's hate propaganda provisions, the new offence uses similar language regarding wilful or reckless communications that seek to inspire certain negative behaviour in others.

New section 83.221 of the Criminal Code prohibits any person from communicating statements or knowingly advocating or promoting the commission of terrorism offences in general when that person has knowledge that any of those offences will be committed – or is reckless as to whether the offences will be committed – as a result of their communication. The consent of the Attorney General is not required to prosecute an offence under this section.

Section 83.221 creates an exception that appears to protect a person who advocates or promotes only the offence of advocating or promoting the commission of terrorism offences. While the wording of this exception leaves open some debate about its meaning, it is possible that it could protect the free speech of those who may wish to challenge the law or any aspect of it.

New section 83.222 covers matters pertaining to the seizure and forfeiture of terrorist propaganda. As with the seizure of hate propaganda, consent of the Attorney General is required before any seizure proceedings under this section can be started. Another key provision in the Criminal Code that addresses crimes motivated by hatred is found in section 718.2(a), which sets out various principles of sentencing. The section allows for increased penalties when an offender is sentenced for any criminal offence if there is evidence that the offence was motivated by bias, prejudice or hate based on race, national or ethnic origin, language, colour, religion, sex, age, mental or physical disability, sexual orientation, or gender identity or expression, or on any other similar factor. In other words, judges have the ability to impose higher sentences where a crime was motivated by hatred.

Statistics Canada collects information concerning police-reported criminal incidents that were confirmed or strongly suspected to be motivated by hate based on the factors listed in section 718.2(a), information concerning criminal incidents involving gender identity and expression was not reported on prior to 2018, because these factors were added to the Code in 2017. As the information is compiled by police departments, the data does not reflect findings in the court system of guilt for crimes motivated by

hate. The data is presented annually, allowing for a public monitoring of trends in hate crimes across Canadian metropolitan areas. For instance, in 2016, “police reported 1,409 criminal incidents in Canada that were motivated by hate, an increase of three percent or forty-seven more incidents than reported the previous year.”

Police-reported hate crimes include a broader range of offences than those outlined in sections 318 and 319 of the Code. They include violent crimes motivated by hate, such as common assault, aggravated assault, assault with a weapon or causing bodily harm, and uttering threats. From 2015 to 2016, the number of violent hate crimes rose from 487 to 563 (an increase of sixteen percent). In 2016, the various assault offences accounted for twenty percent of all hate crimes, and uttering threats accounted for thirteen percent. Mischief, which includes vandalism and graffiti, accounted for thirty-nine percent of hate crimes.

Another offence tracked by Statistics Canada is set out in section 430(4.1) of the Criminal Code, which prohibits mischief in relation to religious property and property that is used for educational purposes, for administrative, social, cultural or sports activities or events (such as a school or a community centre) or as a residence for seniors, where the mischief is motivated by bias, prejudice or hate based on colour, race, religion, national or ethnic origin, age, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, or mental or physical disability. More generally, the offence of mischief is the act of wilfully destroying, damaging, rendering dangerous, useless, inoperative or ineffective, or obstructing the lawful use or enjoyment of property.

Different forms of hate speech are prohibited in a number of federal enactments. For instance, section 8 of the Broadcasting Distribution Regulations prohibits the broadcasting of any abusive comment or abusive pictorial representation that, when taken in context, tends to or is likely to expose an individual or group or class of individuals to hatred or contempt on the basis of race, national or ethnic origin, colour, religion, sex, sexual orientation, age or mental or physical disability.

Similar provisions are contained in other regulations made under the Broadcasting Act. Also, the Customs Tariff prohibits the importation of hate propaganda. Human rights laws, with their broad goal of eliminating discrimination against identifiable groups, can serve to address expressions of hatred and contempt and any expression that displays an intention to discriminate or to incite others to discriminate. Whether these laws should include prohibitions on hate speech and hate propaganda has been a matter of debate for some time, and Canadian jurisdictions have responded with different approaches in their laws.

As “human rights” are not listed under the enumerated heads of power in sections 91 and 92 of the Constitution Act, 1867 (which set out the division of powers between the federal and provincial governments), laws that address human rights concerns have been passed at the federal, provincial and territorial levels to respond to various matters within those jurisdictions. Although there is some diversity among human rights laws in Canada, the principles, the complaint mechanisms, and the tribunals created to hear complaints and order remedies (where appropriate) are similar. Each statute prohibits discrimination on specified grounds, such as race, sex, age or religion, and in the context of employment, accommodation and publicly available services.

Every legislature in Canada has passed a human rights law to prohibit or limit discriminatory activities. The Canadian Human Rights Act (CHRA) is the principal human rights statute in the federal sector. It applies generally to federal government departments and agencies, Crown corporations and federally regulated businesses. It prohibits an employer or service provider under federal jurisdiction from carrying out discriminatory practices based on certain prohibited grounds: race, national or ethnic origin, colour, religion, age, sex (including pregnancy and childbirth), sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, marital status, family status, genetic characteristics, disability (including previous or present drug or alcohol dependence), and pardoned conviction.

With the exception of Yukon's Human Rights Act, every human rights law in Canada contains a provision that prohibits in some form the public display, broadcast or publication of messages that announce an intention to discriminate, or that incite others to discriminate, based on certain prohibited grounds. Section 12 of the CHRA contains such a provision. The original purpose of these provisions was to prohibit the types of signs that had been used in Canada by some stores and businesses indicating that the members of certain racial or ethnic groups would not be served. The Ontario Human Rights Commission notes that these provisions allow human rights agencies to use enforcement powers to deal with the publication of intent to deny housing, employment or services such as access to a restaurant or retail store because of an individual's race, religion or other enumerated ground. While these provisions place limits on freedom of expression, they have received little attention by commentators or in Canadian courts.

Human rights legislation in British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan and the Northwest Territories contains some form of prohibition against the promotion of hatred or contempt. These prohibitions are broad, covering a range of message types, displays, publications and broadcasts. In the Alberta, Saskatchewan, Ontario, New Brunswick, Prince Edward Island and Newfoundland and Labrador human rights laws, there are sections that explicitly state that there is "nothing" in them that should interfere with or restrict the right to free expression. Some of these sections pertain to anti-hate promotion provisions, while others pertain to those provisions that prohibit forms of communications that announce an intention to discriminate. Courts have emphasized that such references to freedom of expression in the Alberta and Saskatchewan human rights laws require that a balancing act be performed between the objective of eradicating discrimination and the need to protect free expression.

The existing court and human rights tribunal interpretations of Canada's anti-discrimination and anti-hate promotion provisions reveal that the provisions in different jurisdictions largely achieve similar purposes, despite using different

language. Though the facts of every case differ, an emphasis on examining the context of a message and the importance of freedom of expression has been well established in the jurisprudence. Where the laws – and the interpretations of them – differ is in the types of messages and discriminatory practices that are affected, whether the laws address hatred and contempt, and whether the laws require that consideration be given to the intent of the message's author.

Sources include Wikipedia, research OUTREACH, Library of Parliament-J. Walker, J. Jameson

Chapter Nine

A Provocative Newspaper Publisher

Some of this chapter has been reproduced from this author's first book, Reed All About It …Memoirs of a Controversial Publisher

This authors media career began in 1974, when at the age of twenty-four, he arrived in Quesnel B.C. in February with his Labrador retriever. At that time, he was in retail and was to train at a Quesnel department store and become manager of a new store that was opening in another town in spring. It was bitterly cold with snow about three feet deep, so the next morning, he drove into town, looked at the outside of the department store that he was to start the next day, and headed over to a coffee shop to warm up. Turcotte was worried about whether he could handle the cold.

Upon entering the coffee shop, he saw an attractive young woman, sitting in a booth by herself. He sat down in the booth behind her and as he did, he heard a faint moaning coming from her. When Turcotte's coffee arrived, he turned around and said to her "I thought there was no one more miserable than me, why do you seem so sad?" She motioned for him to sit with her and introduced herself as Paulette Ernst. She told him that her father owned a lumber mill at the edge of town and that he had recently purchased the local weekly newspaper, the Quesnel Observer for her and her sister Cheryl to run.

She went on to tell Turcotte that her sales manager had just quit, and she was worried what her father would say, as the sisters were having trouble keeping staff. She requested this author's name and wanted to know why he was in Quesnel. Turcotte mentioned that he was here for a few months to learn the system at the MacLeod's department store. She asked how much they were paying me. I told her and she immediately inquired if I would like to become her new sales manager. Ms. Ernst said she would match the salary that MacLeods was going to pay me plus add an additional

five percent of all sales that I would take in.

I was briefly dumbfounded - I had only just met her and she had no idea of my background but I thought to myself, Quesnel is far away from the Lower Mainland (Vancouver) and McKenzie (where I eventually was heading to) would be even farther and colder still, so I said yes. The next morning was the beginning of what would end up being thirty-nine years in the print media business. This career change would bring me much happiness, pain and suffering or in other words; the good, the bad and the ugly.

The first few weeks were a huge success. I was a natural at selling advertising as my merchant mindset helped me deal with the customers on their own level - I knew what they wanted. I added a lot more pages to the Quesnel Observer by bringing in a lot more advertising and at the same time, I spent time looking over the editorial department's shoulders. When it came to journalistic content, I did not like what I was reading, and this bothered me.

As the weeks turned into months, I kept thinking that I could produce a better paper than what the Observer was producing. Many Quesnel merchants would tell me that they disliked the anti-business content, as they saw it, of the Observer and I somewhat agreed. By now, my ego, figuratively speaking, was getting huge and I started to seriously think of having my own paper and my own business. This was something that ran through my entire being. At that time, I was living in a mobile home, with my wife and two small children, just a few kilometres south of town on five acres which I had recently purchased.

I made the decision to leave The Observer and go on my own, but the only problem was I only had one hundred dollars cash in the bank. Discussing my plight with three big merchants in town who trusted me, they agreed to run a major ad in each issue and that I would collect for it immediately after the publication came out rather then the normal wait of thirty to sixty days. Once I made my mind up to go it alone, I moved fast.

I leased an upstairs office complex, formerly a dentist office just a few doors down the street from the Observer newspaper. I had a big two-sided sign made up to hang from the outside of the building, some desks, chairs and office equipment; all on credit of course. What happened next was part brilliant and part shenanigans – yet another form of 'fake news'.

I needed an editor/reporter and a part time photojournalist, the Observer newspaper had both and of course I knew them well. I went to them in confidence and told them what I was doing. I offered them jobs with my newspaper and a bit more money than what they were getting from the Observer. I was a good salesman, but I knew that I did not have any cash to pay them come payday, remember, I only had one hundred dollars to my name, but the snow job worked, and they came onboard. I called the first few issues "The Quesnel Shopper" and it had about seventy percent advertising, although soon after, the name was changed to the "Quesnel Tuesday News". The paper was published on a press in Williams Lake, a town about forty minutes away and it would go to press on Mondays and come out on Tuesdays.

Keep in mind that this author (as mentioned in a previous chapter) had almost no writing or reporting experience and zero production skills. The first two issues were weak story wise, and the paper itself lacked quality but it was heavy in ads. Even though Turcotte's print media experience was almost non-existent, the paper looked as it might make it as the merchants loved it and Turcotte worked twelve hours a day, six days a week to learn the trade as quickly as possible.

This author was competing against a long- time weekly newspaper with deep pockets, so to stay competitive he had to come up with outlandish promotions and they would have to grab people's attention without offending them. One of these promotions was a picture of an outhouse printed on Turcotte's newspaper front page and the second was a pic showing a tree planted on a local bridge. At this early stage in Turcotte's career he thought that if he gave his readers a great front page and a controversial editorial page, then all else would take care of itself. Again, this was a

template that the author would use over and over for the rest of his print days – 'fake news' yes, but in a humorous way.

The outhouse picture was both funny and disgusting at the same time. Turcotte found an old beat up out-door potty with the door hanging on by a thread. He took a copy of his competition, the Observer newspaper and rolled it up loosely with the front page and the masthead hanging down, so all could see. He placed it around the toilet paper holder and had a picture taken - the cutline of the front-page picture went basically like this "This is all The Observer is good for."

The Observer was a paid publication, but Turcotte's paper was free and when it landed in the stores and on their stands, the shit (sic) hit the fan, so to speak. Some thought the Tuesday News was vulgar but most laughed and many of the local merchants loved it - it was a success. These made up pictures and cutlines ('fake news') were a hit, and this started, what would become an occasional ritual in most of Turcotte's publications to come. The next made up ('fake news') front page picture was of a tree planted in a hole leading to a bridge over the Fraser River that local mill workers used every day. This author had received complaints about the big pothole on the road, so before the afternoon shift change at the mill, Turcotte hired a back-hoe to dig up a twenty-foot pine tree located on the side of the road and drop it in the hole which effectively blocked access to the bridge. This did not allow workers in or out of the mill and caused a backup of vehicles, which were mostly trucks. A picture was taken and Turcotte had the backhoe quickly remove the tree. Needless to say - the hole was paved over the very next day after the Tuesday News hit the stands and Turcotte's paper took the credit for it.

The people of Quesnel loved the little paper including this author's column "Reed All About It" and they lined up outside Turcotte's office first thing Tuesday mornings to get their copy. The commotion and noise were heard in Williams Lake and right down to Vancouver - shortly after, a knock came on the office door which would change everything in Turcotte's life, for the good perhaps but also a little bit of the bad. A man

put out his hand and said “Hi, I am Allan Black, owner of the Williams Lake Tribune.” Allan Black worked out of Vancouver and was the father of now media mogul David Black, who was just coming into the picture to run his father’s Williams Lake paper after a stint out east. Allan Black was after the Quesnel Observer and as one would find out later, he surmised that if he helped the little paper take even more ads away from the Observer, than the Ernst’s would give up the ghost and sell him the Observer at a low price.

Within minutes of meeting and talking, Black offered to buy into the Tuesday News but wanted fifty percent of it. After a bit of haggling, Turcotte agreed to sell him (Cariboo Press) forty-nine percent for $5000.00 and get the use of some of Cariboo Press employees. To this author, this was the best of two worlds. Five thousand dollars was a fair bit of money back then and Black and his company’s expertise would help take Turcotte’s paper over the top, or so he thought.

In the beginning of the relationship things were good but Turcotte wondered why Allan Black’s son David (who just arrived), kept telling him to increase his circulation. The Black’s Williams Lake Tribune was printing the paper and Turcotte’s press bills were mounting but no pressure was being exerted by the Blacks to pay up. Approximately seven months later, this author would find out why. But for the next seven months, Turcotte was learning a lot from the gang at Cariboo Press in relation to newspaper production. Ad sales were increasing, and the little paper was championing the merchant’s causes. Turcotte was salesman, editor and publisher.

One time, after chastising a judge’s decision about a break-in of a leading grocery store (Super Valu) on the editorial page, this author found himself in jail for about an hour. Two aboriginals had broken through the roof of the Super Valu to steal cigarettes and it wasn’t the first time they had done this. The judge in his wisdom decided to just let them off with just a warning and Turcotte thought that this was a miscarriage of justice and said so on the editorial page in the next issue. Today an hour in jail, with no charges laid, could result in the judge being turfed.

However, these comments cemented the paper's relationship with the grocery store owner which meant even more ads. During this time, Turcotte sold his property south of town and moved into a brand-new home on the west side of Quesnel with his wife and children. A civic election was approaching, and his newspaper did not support the mayor who had been in power for many terms. About a month prior to the actual voting date, the paper had received a tip that the mayor was storing underground City pipes around the side of his home. Turcotte's photographer took a picture, and it was held in the docket until the issue closest to the election. Turcotte then put it on the front page and inferred that the mayor was stealing. Naturally he lost the election. Was this 'fake news' - probably.

Just before that election, this author met the infamous crusty Ma Murray, publisher of a small Lillooet newspaper. She was one tough lady who left a lasting impression on him by the way that she would take politicians to task for their wrong doings, and Turcotte thought he would steal a page from her- thus the pic.

Life was good, or so Turcotte thought. He could not see or perhaps did not want to see, the storm clouds brewing ahead. It happened quickly. David Black, who by now was running his dad's full operation, came to this author and said that he owed his Cariboo Press many thousands of dollars in back press bills. At that time his company still owned forty-nine percent of his newspaper and Black stated that unless the bill was paid in the next few weeks, he would have no choice but to take over full operation of Turcotte's newspaper.

This author did not have that much cash; he had just moved into his new home and had very little equity in it. He moved his house at a small loss and turned the paper over to David Black, which he then shut down. Turcotte and his family then left Quesnel with their furniture in a small U-Haul truck and their vehicle. They had no future, or so they thought at the time, but on that day Turcotte promised himself that he would never be so gullible again and that in the future he would try and control the press and publishing of any newspaper that might be part of his future. The Blacks got what they

were truly after - the Quesnel Observer but only after this author brought the Journal to its knees. Turcotte came away with a new career and a ton of newspaper experience and he did it all with only one hundred dollars in his pocket – so to this author it seems Turcotte and Black both won in the end.

Any sadness experienced did not last long. Turcotte had many dealings with the publisher of the 100 Mile House Free Press, Fred Trapp. Trapp also had his paper printed in Williams Lake at David Black's press. This author knew that he also published a small paper called the Cache Creek/Clinton Pioneer and might be persuaded to unload it. As Turcotte pondered this, he knew he had about four thousand dollars in the bank and no home and the Pioneer newspaper had no office in the towns they served. Fred and his partners really wanted out, so he sold it to Turcotte for a slightly higher price than it was worth, but he took a low-down payment – two thousand dollars. Turcotte also had Trapp throw in a couple of large 100 Mile House advertisers for a full year; one was Safeway who took a half page ad each and every week.

So now Turcotte had a newspaper again, but no office, no home and no staff. Within forty-eight hours though, he had it all again. At Hungry Herbies Hamburger joint on the main highway in Cache Creek was an outside door into a good size room that was being used for storage. The owner was approached, and a deal was worked out. It was the perfect location, the rent was right and the owner of the 'burger joint' was happy to have the Pioneer located in his town, let alone in his building.

A visit to the local bank resulted in a deal of two thousand dollars down for a home in Ashcroft (a few kilometers away) that was for-sale and had been sitting empty for a while. It had a great backyard overlooking the town below. Now he owned a home, a newspaper and had an office. The only thing left was to locate an editor – he found one named George Whitely. He was a bit slow in general but could crank out lots of little stories and he was a very nice and reliable man.

Ashcroft had its own newspaper the Journal, which was owned by an elderly couple. Since this author was now living in Ashcroft and had his office in Cache Creek, it

wasn't long before he was controlling most of the local advertising and the Pioneer became a huge hit and was now the number one paper in the area. Paid circulation went way up as did advertising revenue. Life was good once again and this time Turcotte totally controlled the number of pages that he ran. He had the advertising at a solid seventy percent, so he had no problems paying the press bill in Kamloops. At that time the Kamloops paper nor their press were owned by the Black's organization.

This author enjoyed the dry desert climate, the merchants and would have been happy to spend his entire life in the area but once again storm clouds would appear. This time it was not business that was problematic but rather Turcotte's personal life. They had married very young and from her point of view the marriage was growing stale. She was now pushing to move back to the Lower Mainland. She missed her parents and her friends. Much against this author's better judgement, and to save his marriage, he agreed to his wife's wishes and sold (at a good profit) his beloved Pioneer newspaper to his editor – George and unloaded his house.

The Pioneer was a normal newspaper as far as print media went, not sensational like the Quesnel Tuesday News. It did not have to be that way as the paper was profitable without the extra hype. Unfortunately, George could not handle the publisher and sales duties and in August 1982, the Pioneer was no more. David Black then came in and took the Journal over. At the time Turcotte thought, what a leach but he came out okay and, in some ways, was happy to be back, close to his family and friends. He also knew Ashcroft and area would be in good hands, as at that time a Black paper tended to be a worthy paper.

They moved again and this time to Squamish, located just outside of North Vancouver, where the Turcotte's both came from. In Squamish, this author decided to go work for Claudsley Hoodspith III, a colourful character who owned the Squamish Times, a small Whistler paper and the Lions Gate Times out of North Vancouver. Hoodspith promised Turcotte part ownership and although he increased sales dramatically during that time, it never happened. At this point, he and his family were

building a new home on a creek in Eagles View, near Brackendale, just outside of Squamish. The marriage while rocky was still intact.

Turcotte then took a flyer and left the Times and put out a small bi-monthly Whistler entertainment magazine and the Howe Sound and District Advertiser newspaper and called this company, Howe Sound Publications Ltd. The publications were okay but not as successful as he wished so in April 1981, he also took a job on with the Columbia Publishing company out of New Westminster, B.C.

Turcotte ran their new BC Sports Salmon Fishing magazine which came out spring, summer and fall. He needed something to do in the winter, so he invented Ski B.C. Magazine for the Columbian and also for himself. Turcotte opened an office on the ocean in Horseshoe Bay and commuted by car or sometimes even by boat. The owner, Rick D. Taylor, paid him well - his business and personal world was successful again. During this time, Rick Taylor, Martin Lewis and the Columbia's National advertising manager - Laurie Graham and this author took advertisers out on fishing trips, mostly to Painter's Lodge and April Point Lodge in Campbell River. They spent copious amounts of the Columbia's money on booze, fun times, chartered boats, guides, restaurants and the like. Turcotte was very ecstatic - he ran the two magazines like they were his own, except he did not have to pay any of the bills.

On a personal front, Turcotte and his wife were visiting the local disco (1979) at least two times a week, was coaching his son's soccer team and putting out dollars for his daughter's new pony, that morphed into a horse. He had no idea that, yet another round of bad news was about to strike and that this time the fall-out would hit himself and his family hard especially since he did not see it coming and was not prepared at all. Turcotte knew that the Columbian's banker was getting more and more involved in the Columbia newspaper affairs, but he thought the weekly papers they owned were very profitable and would carry the money loosing daily paper. So, when he got the call in early 1983 that the Columbia Publishing Company was bankrupt and that he was out of a job, he was crushed.

Turcotte had racked up a credit card on a recent Vancouver Island business trip. Normally, he would simply hand the receipts over to head office and get refunded within a week or two - not this time, however – the company was no more. Now he had no job and no income – once again, and he had a new home with a high mortgage and this strain was causing his marriage to break-down. This time he thought that this may be too big a hole to climb out of, although once again he was proven wrong. He climbed out of this potential cess pool in two steps. Firstly, this author took on a job at B.C.I. T. (British Columbia Institute of Technology) where he ran the print shop and helped students publish their weekly newspaper and two magazines. The pay was good, but he had to commute over an hour from his house in Squamish to the campus in Burnaby. Secondly, he turned over his just finished gorgeous home in Squamish, back to the builder and took on one of the builders' new condos close to the house - this cut his mortgage payments and taxes in half.

This author had little to do at B.C.I.T., as print media was a course option with no marks attached to it, so he spent a lot of his time playing basketball and planning a move to starting yet another print media company. Turcotte did not like this job (he considered himself a doer – not a teacher) and around this time his wife and he separated for a few months. Towards the end of this first year at B.C.I.T., he reconciled with his wife and they both agreed another fresh start was in order. They always liked the Fraser Valley, so they purchased a brand-new home that was just completed, in the quaint town of Aldergrove. When June hit, Turcotte was finished with B.C.I.T. and within weeks he was back in the game with a weekly newspaper, two small magazines and a monthly cross-border paper. These were plans that he had put together while working at B.C.I.T.

The Cloverdale Shopper which eventually became the Cloverdale News, Horticulture West and Real Estate West Trade News, the latter two being wholesale type magazines, and a Sumas Shopper were all run from an office located inside

Turcotte's new home. These publications also ran under the banner of Howe Sound Publications Ltd.

During this time, he purchased property across the USA at Mt. Baker. He cleared the property and put a small trailer on it and was on the hill most weekends from where he launched the bi-weekly 'Sumas Cross Border Shopper'. This was the accumulation of everything he had learned in the print industry and was on fire creatively with a lot of energy to burn. He was just about at the top of his game, and would soon be, when Turcotte added an entertainment paper to his stable of publications.

To help with all these publications, Turcotte would bring in his son and his best friend Andrew Blair, which he met at Mt. Baker and who had worked for the Toronto Star a few years earlier. As well, he hired a host of older newspaper rejects. To get the product out, Turcotte used homeless men to deliver the Cloverdale News to the local house. Many copies somehow found their way into the deep ditches of Cloverdale and never got into the consumer's hands. That was changed however as soon as he found out what was happening to some of the papers.

Turcotte's marriage unfortunately was going farther and farther down the drain and one fateful night after around twenty years together, it fell apart for good. He was still about a month away from launching yet another publication, the Valley Voice entertainment newspaper. As he was producing the other publications from an office in his home, he now found himself without a residence as he had given the house to his wife. There was nowhere to cut and paste the paper, which is what we all did in those days of old, so the rest of that week's issue was produced from the back of his station wagon. Turcotte needed an office quickly and he found a nice bright corner upper unit in Cloverdale - he set up shop, brought Rick, Andrew and the motley crew, mentioned earlier, launched the Valley Voice and basically "went to war". This term would be used by him more than once over the next twenty years, more than he really wanted. Turcotte moved to a condo in Chilliwack as it was cheaper than condos in Cloverdale

and closer to his Mt. Baker weekend retreat where he had now put up a larger and newer trailer and purchased the lot next door.

He was selling tons of ads and producing very decent papers and magazines and making a lot of money but missed his wife and family and was not yet dating so he was throwing everything he had into his work and it was paying off in his bank account. Turcotte's brother Brent came on board to help him deliver the Valley Voice to clubs, pubs and colleges from New Westminster to Chilliwack (Lower-Mainland of Vancouver). Delivering to such a large area was a daunting and tiring experience, but it was worth it. Turcotte and his gang would party and work on the Valley Voice at the office in the evenings after the Coverdale paper was put to bed. Andrew, Rick and this author did some of their most memorable interviews (can you say Tina Turner, Loverboy, Prism, Trooper, Wynonna Judd and many more) both in the office and in the night clubs. Many times, they were, sort of, let's say – liquored up - bedtime was late. Randy Bachman was someone who came to the office one evening for an interview – he did not drink but come the next morning, Turcotte woke up on the office floor. He could barely read his notes (the interview) or remember much – oh, the good old days (not).

It was at this time that Blair and Turcotte took a trip up country to the Kettle Valley, in the Interior of B.C. They came to Greenwood to look at a hemorrhaging little paper and building that was for sale. Little did either of them know that change would once again take place and Turcotte's life would shortly explode - this time with real fulfillment. He was about to be re-energized and re-invented for the umpteenth time, but he still had a few personal rough spots to sort out including unloading a pile of publications before he could start what would become the Greenwood stage of his life. When Turcotte and Blair drove down the mountain into the Kettle Valley and saw the Kettle River for the first time, Turcotte instantly fell in love with the river and area.

As soon as Blair and this author got to Greenwood, approximately forty-five minutes from Osoyoos, they met with the owner of the Boundary Creek Times which was first established in 1896. Turcotte was ready to make a deal immediately to

purchase the paper and the building, for around $68,000 -and offered them a five-hundred-dollar deposit right then and there. However, he saw a pile of bills on the publisher's desk nearby and when the owner was not looking, he put them in his pocket. Andrew and Turcotte went across the street to the local pub to discuss the price and look over the bills. The invoices showed the newspaper was behind in their hydro, phone, press and much more. The agreed upon price was $68,000 but with these bills Turcotte figured that they might take less, and he was right. The paper at the time was doing about $88,000 in advertising sales nevertheless Turcotte decided this was not the best time to purchase the paper in Greenwood as his head was just not on right, so he backed out.

Turcotte was now living full time in a brand-new home on his second property in Mt. Baker (commuting Monday to Thursday to Cloverdale) but his mind kept drifting back to the Kettle Valley and the fabulous clear and clean Kettle River. After five months of living on the mountain, Andrew and Turcotte took another drive to this area. Sitting in the local coffee shop in Rock Creek, they saw an old dilapidated building across the highway, located right on the Kettle River next to the local pub. It had a 'For Sale' sign on the roof - it was in foreclosure and Turcotte immediately purchased it for $53,000. On the last day of April 1995, he moved to a building that had the foundation crumbling, the water lines broken, and the building was basically in a non-living condition, but still it was a spectacular waterfront property and Turcotte saw the potential to turn it into a beautiful home. After unloading and shutting down some of his publications this author had little income coming in except for rent from his cabin at Mt. Baker. He was living in a hobble - but yet - he had a dream and was content.

Turcotte was now fully out of the print business on the Coast and during the next twelve months he spent his time renovating his Rock Creek home, taking a real estate course and truly enjoying his life. Turcotte had put a classified ad (remember those) in a Penticton daily newspaper, about an hour away from Rock Creek, seeking a lady friend who liked to renovate. Many replies came in and were being re-routed to his mother's

address in White Rock as he had not taken out a local box number yet. His mother told him that she had a lot of mail from the Penticton newspaper - he told her to throw them all away except for one that his mother said was in a pink envelope. She then forwarded it to him in Rock Creek along with other mail (bills). Another long-time friend, Brent Wood, who was temporarily living with Turcotte in Rock Creek, was reading the letter in question out-loud, (it had just arrived, and they were driving in Turcotte's pickup truck) and they were laughing about it - but at the same time Turcotte was keenly interested in what this person had to say. She wrote that her name was Lorraine Ayotte and that she loved to renovate. She was divorced with a sixteen-year-old son. Turcotte found out later that she had her own home in Oliver, B.C. and had a great job working for the federal government.

On Monday of the May long weekend, they met in Rock Creek at Turcotte's still dilapidated home, but at least all-of the main services were fixed and working. As soon as Turcotte saw her and those legs - he was toast. During the rest of that year, he dated Lorraine, worked on the house, spent quality time at the pub next door and studied real estate. He passed the exam and joined a firm in Osoyoos selling real estate out of his home in Rock Creek and did well right off the bat and was making good money. Life was excellent, but he very much missed the newspaper business and wanted back in; remember he had ink in his veins. Turcotte approached the now new owners of the Greenwood paper and said that if they ever wanted to sell the paper to make sure they approached him.

On the Grey Cup day of 1997, once again good fate would knock on Turcotte's door - these new owners of the Greenwood newspaper wanted out (they were from Toronto, Ontario and did not like the country life) and within days, Ayotte and Turcotte had worked out a deal that was great for them. They were now living together in the home at Rock Creek that was rapidly turning into a fabulous residence. The parties shook on $75,000 for the building, the paper and all office equipment as well as their accounts receivables which amounted to about $12,000 at the time. The owners were

desperate to leave the newspaper business and head back east (home) - they would work all day and most nights and were burnt out. Ayotte's expertise in payroll and taxes with the federal government and Turcotte's real estate training, allowed them to make a great business deal – a deal of a lifetime really.

On December 1st, 1997, Turcotte and Ayotte took possession of The Boundary Creek Printing & Publishing Co. Ltd (est. 1896), which has been with them since, and in fact is the publisher of this book. Ayotte was still working for the government but would come into the office often and do the banking and take care of the financial end of the business in her spare time. Turcotte was once again back with a newspaper and he also owned the building that housed the paper. The newspaper at that time was doing $110,000 per year. Turcotte immediately cut staff, shut down the expensive TV Guide and cartoon page and upped the advertising content to seventy percent and of course, sold much more advertising then the previous owners did. This added about an extra three thousand dollars a month to the companies bottom line.

A trick Turcotte used gave him a ready source of income in every issue. He simply put together a two-page business directory with small two inch by two-inch ads. He sent the issue with the directory out to the businesses along with a no charge invoice and a note that stated, "with our compliments". He then would run the same directory ad in the next two consecutive papers and this time he would bill the merchants with most of the businesses staying in for a considerable period-of- time. He used this ploy in many of his publications which generated consistent revenue for his company.

When the Rock Creek couple took the newspaper over, a movie called "Snow Falling on Cedars" had just started filming, in and around Greenwood. The movie starred Ethan Hawke and a large part of the action took place next door to Turcotte's newspaper office, that building next door, was actually made into the film's newspaper office (ironic). The Greenwood Inn which was right across the street from Turcotte's office – was also featured in many scenes.

The Town was abuzz with excitement and money was flowing from the movie company into the wee town of Greenwood. What a great time to have taken over the paper - when finished, the movie was a minor hit. Business was so good Turcotte decided to expand so he launched another newspaper, the Big White Mountaineer. He also brought in a large state-of-the-art, color press to print everything in-house. To this author, the Mountaineer was a natural as Big White was in the Kootenay Boundary Regional District, the same area as Turcotte's Greenwood paper and the Regional District Director for the whole area was Bill Baird, a very good friend of his.

During these 'heady days' the Greenwood newspaper building was completely refurbished inside and out. A brand-new façade was put on the front of the newspaper office giving it a 1900s feel along with three different colors of paint that this author saw in a picture of a building in downtown San Francisco circa 1908. A back door was added to the rear of the building and down the road a bedroom and shower became part of the back end. On the floor an old, stained carpet was pulled out and replaced by locally produced spruce planks. New computers, desks and software were added and for the very first time the paper had a real morgue built (where old newspapers are kept). The Boundary Creek Times newspaper was then operating out of a building that was now a tourist attraction in little Greenwood. Tourists would stop their vehicle and hop out and take pictures of the turn of the century historical buildings in town which now included Turcotte's.

The Big White paper was a tough sell as the owners of the ski hills and their spokesman stated that Big White tended, at that time, to control everything and everyone on the mountain. Despite this negativity, Turcotte and his wife opened an office on the hill anyways and decided to have some fun with this publication. They made lots of money from the legal ads booked through the Regional District along with national and local advertisements. They then hired a 'crazy employee' on the hill to cover stories.

One early evening Turcotte got a call at his home in Rock Creek that his office at Big White (which was glass on three sides) had a blown up naked female doll hanging from the ceiling and the whole place reeked of marijuana smoke. That was the type of atmosphere that was going on in the office without Turcotte's consent. It was 'party-city' although the publisher soon put a stop to using the office for such nonsense.

Turcotte and his wife decided to launch a new magazine called 'Snowbirds and RV Travelers'. The Greenwood office was producing these two new publications, along with the Boundary Creek Times. The RV industry was vibrant, and they felt there was a niche for such a magazine. It began when they were reading a Province newspaper out of Vancouver during Christmas of 2002. In one issue was a story regarding the RV industry and how it was taking off. Turcotte and his wife came up with the name of the magazine (Snowbirds & RV Travelers) during that holiday period while they were watching a cooking show on the Food Network that was named the Thirsty Traveler.

Although things were better than okay - a few problems would now and then pop up. Midway is a small hamlet next door to Greenwood and a Jewish man living there did not like Turcotte's editorial chastising Israel about bombing children in Palestine and he called a few of Boundary Creek Times advertisers to get them to cancel. The publisher did not know that this would be a forerunner to what would happen to him again in another small town called Morris, a few years later. However, in the Greenwood paper's case, there was only one advertiser who cancelled.

After about seven plus years Turcotte felt the time was right to leave the print business for good as he had a bad feeling about the long term viability of newspapers due to the rapid expansion of the internet, so the paper and building was put up for sale. He sold it for an excellent profit to Chuck Bennett who then sold it to David Black's organization - Black Press. Shortly after, Turcotte then put their Snowbirds and RV Travelers magazine up for sale and sold it to two individuals. One was from Kelowna and one from Williams Lake where he was one of Black Press's executive at the Tribune Newspaper. They were publishing a boating magazine and they thought that an RV

magazine would make a nice fit for them and rightfully so. Turcotte just had a small casino publication left and he sold that to a Canadian couple living in Arizona. Turcotte and Ayotte were now out of the print business – retirement was calling – or so they thought.

Ayotte's elderly parents resided in Manitoba and so was one of her sons, along with her grandson and many of her siblings. Ayotte took early retirement from Revenue Canada and the now retired couple (after a mini personal tragedy) decided to head out to Manitoba for a few months. They drove to Ayotte's hometown where her parents resided at the end of March 2010 and rented a condo for a few months. Flush in money (after unloading everything) it wasn't long before they purchased three pieces of property in and around the little prairie town. One of the properties was located in downtown Morris and it became their permanent residence after they had a new home built on it.

Morris had lost its community newspaper a year or two before and was being serviced by other publications from nearby towns. Turcotte saw an opening, he purchased two colored press-copiers, rented a small office downtown and launched the Morris Mirror newspaper. The couple printed a thousand copies of the newspaper along with a full e-edition. They only worked Monday to Thursday as they had so much media experience and Turcotte could put out a paper in his sleep and by now, so could Ayotte, and this was just a "little" paper.

They published every other Monday except when they had national ads, then they would publish weekly. The paper was healthy and was doing well, however there were signs right from the beginning of potential problems and this had to do with a church and its pastor who had just become the new Mayor of Morris. The mayor never once set foot in the Mirror's office during their almost three years of publication and rarely wanted to advertise in it. In Neil Young's book, Waging Heavy Peace, Young says, and I agree, that "religion is not one of my high points. I really don't subscribe to the stories surrounding each one, because they are just stories, remembered by men. I do

feel the Great Spirit in all that is around me, and I am humbled. I do pray with others if that is what they do. I do not judge them for that. That is their way. I join them. Then I move on."

The first issue of the Morris Mirror was published on September 22nd of 2010 and Turcotte and his wife were also moving into their new home, landscaping the yard and building decks and doing all of this at the age of sixty and fifty-five respectively. At the beginning, Turcotte as publisher, had to meet with merchants and town dignitaries in order to get the little paper off the ground, and having so much print experience, he did it rather easy - although he often had to take a dram or two of "single malt" on council evenings to get him through all the nonsense (as Turcotte saw it) that was taking place at the time with the local politicians.

During the first week of February 2013, Turcotte's newspaper career came to an abrupt but not unexpected end and he became one of the most sought-after media personalities and googled person in Canada for a week or two. The Morris Mirror lasted from September 22nd, 2010 to the end of March of 2013. It was effectively dead by the end of February 2013, but they held on for another four weeks only because they had a lot of insertion orders for provincial advertising that were to run in late February and March.

Around the fall of 2012, this author came to realize that a certain religious element of the Morris population did not really want the paper or it's owners around. Maybe it had something to do with the type of stories they ran. An example would be the double truck (two pages) that was published on all the churches in Morris showing their income and expenses and what went to charity and what went to wages of the pastors. This was legally obtained by the paper from the CCRA website. At this time, they also published a front-page story about Council adding taxes to the local churches except one - the mayor's church. He rented space for his church from the Morris Convention Centre (controlled by the Town of Morris) which meant the mayor had substantial control over the situation and Turcotte considered it a conflict of interest.

A break-in at their office around this time was rather strange, as the main thing stolen was Turcotte's personal laptop computer, it was almost like someone was looking for something that would incriminate him. By now he had stopped covering the Morris council meetings as it appeared to Turcotte that the Mayor and Council wished to hide things from him and after covering hundreds of council meetings over thirty-eight years, he just didn't have the stomach for it anymore. Politicians in general were making him sick as did some of Morris's non-secular merchants due to their closed-shop and heavily religious attitudes. He was also worried about the influence Rosenort, a Mennonite community near Morris was having on this little town called Morris.

Early in the spring of 2012, FP Publications, publishers of the Winnipeg Free Press were in negotiations for their community newspaper company Canstar to purchase the Morris Mirror. Abruptly, they ended discussions, stating that the Mirror did not have enough meat on its bones. Turcotte was sure it was just a coincidence that six months later, the Free Press, through one of their mean-spirited journalists did their best to put the Morris Mirror out of business – which is exactly what happened but not because of that incident.

During the Christmas and New Year holiday period of 2012, this author and his wife flew to the Okanagan in British Columbia and onto Vancouver to visit their families and to look for a home to retire to. When Turcotte and his wife moved to Morris and started the Mirror, they made an agreement with each other that they would stay in Manitoba for three years and review the situation then. They decided to put their Morris home up for sale in the spring of 2013 and retire back to B.C. as they wanted to reside close to their new granddaughter, who was now four and a half months old, and Ayotte's son and his wife who were living in West Kelowna. Turcotte's mother, sister, her husband and his son still all lived in the Fraser Valley as did his daughter and her new husband and he was uncomfortable being so far away from them. They were eager to return to B.C. as they disliked the Manitoba winters, the summer humidity, the time

difference and by now the left-wing media and politics of Winnipeg that was prevalent at that time.

When they came back to Manitoba from their trip out West, they only had a few days to produce the next issue of the Mirror - slated for January 14th, 2013. On the editorial page, this author decided to put in a few “thumbs up - thumbs down” points, it was something he did regularly when he had nothing to vent about or time was of the essence. Never would he have thought that a simple ‘thumbs down’ paragraph he wrote and that he thought very few readers would ever see, would cause such a commotion and help quicken the end of his long, illustrious, though some would say, infamous print career.

During that December trip to Kelowna, Turcotte and his wife had already decided that they would shut the business down in July after publishing a salute to the fiftieth anniversary of the Morris Stampede. They sold their house (and properties) quicker than planned so they then moved their last issue to April 1st which would be one hundred percent ‘fake news’. However, the little ‘thumbs down’ editorial that was directed at “the idle no more” movement (quoted in an earlier chapter) and the uproar it caused, moved them into closing things down just a little quicker.

Around this time ‘The Black Rod” out of Winnipeg printed this story - it more or less puts things in perspective. “Well, well, well, Progressive Conservative MLA Mavis Taillieu has picked up her pitchfork and torch and joined the mob trying to silence the editor of the Morris Mirror. Taillieu, who is usually invisible on every other issue under the sun, wants to be sure to be seen to be in the front ranks of those eager to stifle a journalist's right to fair comment on a controversial issue in the community. Free speech? Freedom of expression? Freedom of belief? What fool thinks that crap up - certainly not the caucus whip of the P.C. Party of Manitoba. She has pulled her political advertising from the newspaper because Mirror editor Reed Turcotte has refused to kowtow to the intimidation tactics of the Idle No More crowd. You know, the people who are loudly demanding their, er, constitutional rights. What did Turcotte do to stir

up the mob? He offered his honest opinion on the extremists in their bunch and printed the inconvenient truth of their "movement." Horrors. The CBC, which has become the propaganda arm of the Idle movement just as the Winnipeg Free Press is the propaganda arm of the Canadian Museum for Human Rights, never misses an opportunity to call the comment "racist." Then the CBC and the rest of the local mainstream media never seem to find the space or time to examine Turcotte's comment for accuracy. Take the claim of "acting like terrorists". That's got the Idle people excited and upset. Let's look at the facts:

Jan.6, 2013 - Reporters covering a blockade by aboriginals of a rail line east of Belleville, Ontario, spot someone tampering with crossing signals. "They were observed going to the crossing signals, tampering with them," said CN spokesman Jim Feeny. "The crossing signals were then activated and then subsequently a fire was lit - first on the tracks, but then moved to the side of the tracks."
"It's a serious issue for us because tampering with signals of any kind is illegal and poses a great threat to the public," he said. We have to have absolute confidence that our signals are working perfectly in order to be able to operate.

Jan. 10, 2013 - "We have had enough. Our young people have had enough. Our women have had enough. We have nothing left to lose," said Grand Chief Derek Nepinak of the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs. "The Idle No More movement has the people - it has the people and the numbers - that can bring the Canadian economy to its knees," Nepinak said to reporters in Ottawa. "We have the warriors that are standing up now, that are willing to go that far. So, we're not here to make requests, we're here to demand attention," he said.

Jan. 16, 2013 - Terry Nelson, the former Chief of the Roseau River Indian Reserve, leads a blockade of a CN line near Portage la Prairie. Three months earlier he had been in Iran where he denounced Canada on Iranian television. In 2007 when threatening another rail blockade, Nelson said "There are two ways to deal with the white man. You either pick up a gun or you stand between him and his money." One of his associates at

the Jan. 16 protest was caught on camera shouting "White man, go home." CBC failed, or refused, to report on the racist taunts of the Idle No More protester, or to highlight the words of Nepinak and Nelson, the rhetorical terror twins.

As they say on Yertle the Turtle Island, if it looks like a duck, walks like a duck, and quacks like a duck, it's probably a duck. As for the reference to corruption and laziness, maybe the MSM "journalists" were too busy marching to remember the shocking audit of Idle hero Theresa Spence's reserve Attawapiskat where millions of dollars were spent without a trace of where, for what or to whom the money was given. Spence reacted by showing her contempt for the constitutional rights of the press by refusing access to the reserve to any reporters who weren't "friends" and couldn't be counted on to spin positive stories.

Niigaan Sinclair, at that time a lecturer with the University of Manitoba's native studies department, went to Morris to meet with Mr. Turcotte to discuss the Idle No More movement with him in person. The CBC dutifully reported he was "snubbed" and given the "cold shoulder" by the paper's editor. They did say that Turcotte had replied to an email from Sinclair saying he wasn't ready to discuss the matter until things cooled down. Sinclair refused to take the hint and showed up at the newspaper office anyway, with the CBC spinning the story to make the editor look as if he was refusing to engage in dialog with an aboriginal. They could have pointed out that there's a funny term in legal circles for imposing yourself on people who have made it clear they don't want to talk to you -- stalking.

And stalking leads to something called intimidation. Maybe Sinclair should have called up Mavis Taillieu to come with him. She thinks being the Whip means she can order people around. What a perfect fit for a movement based on mob tactics". (Authors note): Turcotte found Ms. Taillieu to be an honest and more than capable politician.

During the attack on this author and his newspaper hundreds of people came to Turcotte's side – one such letter appeared in the Winnipeg Free Press by Brian Ransom,

a minister in Sterling Lyon's Conservative government and a consultant to First Nations. Lindor Reynolds column "Poison in a small town" " (authors note: this was a hatchet job printed in a previous issue of the Winnipeg newspaper) is an unwarranted attack on Reed Turcotte, the editor of the Morris Mirror, his supporters and the town of Morris. Reynolds states: "Morris is a dot on the map where the editor of a small paper used his pulpit to promote hatred against aboriginal people." "This was a small town like any other before hatred oozed out." "Unless Morris wants to join Selma, Ala., in the annals of shame, it's time to stand up and be counted."

These are powerful accusations of hate mongering and racism that in my opinion are not justifiable on the basis of what has been written. Look at Turcotte's statement: "Thumbs down to Canada's native community and those of Manitoba who are demanding unrealistic expectations of the government and who in some cases are acting like terrorists in their own country. Indians/natives want it all, but corruption and laziness prevent some of them from working for it."

Thumbs down means disapproval, nothing more. Turcotte disapproves of native communities making what he considers to be unrealistic demands on the government. Although the demands of First Nations are not spelled out here I can think of some that I would say are unrealistic, such as demanding resource revenue from the federal government when provincial governments control most resources or insisting that the Governor General take a role in setting policy. To disapprove of such demands does not mean that one is promoting hatred or inciting action against those making the demands, nor is it an effort to deprive them of their rights.

Turcotte evidently believes that the people making what he considers to be unrealistic demands are in some cases acting like terrorists in their own country. There is justification in the Criminal Code for thinking such a thing. Consider the following statement from a Department of Justice website: "In Canada, section 83.01 of the Criminal Code defines terrorism as an act committed 'in whole or in part for a political, religious or ideological purpose, objective or cause with the intention of intimidating the

public' with regard to its security, including its economic security, or compelling a person, a government or a domestic or an international organization to do or to refrain from doing any act."

When the people of Morris see TV coverage of blockades across Canada and hear threats to bring the economy to its knees unless demands are met, it would be rational for them to feel that efforts are being made to intimidate the public. In their particular case, they perhaps put these actions in the context of having some years earlier heard a neighbouring chief say that the only two ways to deal with the white man is to pick up a gun or stand between him and his money. All things considered it is understandable that they might feel intimidated.

Now consider Turcotte's second sentence: "Indians/natives want it all but corruption and laziness prevent some of them from working for it." That is an insensitive statement, but insensitivity does not mean that the statement is intended to promote hatred or to deprive native people of their rights. I take Mr. Turcotte's statement to mean that aboriginal people want the same general level of economic well-being as other Canadians enjoy but that corruption and laziness are preventing some of them from working for it. Anyone with an interest in government-First Nations relationships knows that allegations of corruption are frequently made by First Nations members.

In cases where financial accounting is inadequate, it is impossible to know if these allegations are true or false, but it is not unreasonable to give credence to what these members allege. Corruption in a First Nations government can stifle economic opportunity as it does when it occurs in non-native governments."

When this author was thirteen years of age, his father took him to the movie, 'The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance' and his favourite character was Dutton Peabody (Edmond O'Brien), a gruff, hard drinking man, who was the editor-publisher of the Shinbone newspaper; he was a one man show. Little did this author know then that eleven years later, he would start his own metamorphous - becoming a Mr. Peabody

himself; yet after forty-six years, this author would not change much (if any) of his publishing career - he is more than fine in his own skin.

Maybe this author is (was) the last of the semi-honest old-fashioned print hounds left standing. Many of today's journalists are a bunch of wimps who are afraid of their own shadow due in part to concentrated print ownership who CEOs do not want anything overly controversial in their corporate domain. Social media ('fake news') has taken over from old media as the new purveyors of tough news but unfortunately with little or no controls, social media has become the genie that cannot be put back in the bottle. Say or print something that is not politically correct, insensitive and overnight, one's career can be over, as social media have no conscience. About ten years ago, it happened to a long time White House correspondent Helen Thomas over her Israel-Palestine comments and a few years ago to celebrity chef Paula Dean, as the Twitter and Facebook took her to task about her African American statement. Today, social media destroys peoples lives on a regular basis.

It seems to this author that the days of the bulldog-type journalist, or the controversial tell-it-like-it-is newshound is long over (it is). Less freedom of the press correlates to the truth being trampled by bullies who really do not believe in freedom of speech but hide behind their computers spewing out 'fake news' like perverts in the dark.

Much of this chapter was taken from this author's first book, Reed-All-About-It

My good friend Andrew Blair sent me this drawing when "all hell was breaking loose" at the Morris Mirror office. I did not use it in the paper at the time as I thought it would inflame the situation even more– but what the hell.

Chapter Ten

Generations & How They Spread the Baloney

Maclean's magazine once referred to Gen Z's as "comparatively square and money-minded." Compare that with Gen Ys who are stereotyped as cause-joiners and complainers who demand "toke breaks" for recreational pot use or whose life goal is working part-time at a yoga retreat in Costa Rica. Kids born between the mid-1990s and mid-2000s who are now roughly fifteen to twenty-five comprise the most skeptical, savvy and fiscally prudent generation we've seen since the Second World War and most likely to spot 'fake news' according to research. Researchers at Princeton University and New York University have said that baby boomers in their fifty's to seventy's are by far the worst culprits when it comes to disseminating disinformation on the web.

This is confirmed by VOA News (a student union paper) who say members of so-called Generation Z are less – not more – likely to fall for the spread of misinformation and 'fake news', according to recent studies and polls published by news outlet Axios. Yet another recent study published in Science Advances found that North Americans older than sixty-five also known as baby boomers – are more likely to share fake news links on Facebook than younger Generation Z Americans born after 1996.

Survey data from 2016 showed that boomers shared nearly seven times as many 'fake news' articles on Facebook than younger North Americans between the ages of eighteen and twenty-nine. "Our most robust and consistent finding is that older Americans (and Canadians) were more likely to share articles from 'fake news' domains," stated the study. "This relationship holds even when we condition on other factors, such as education, party affiliation, ideological self-placement, and overall posting activity."

Among Gen Z college students, a staggering eighty-three percent receive most of their news from online news sites and social media, Axios reported from a College Reaction poll of 868 students. Social media and online content play a huge role as Gen Z's source of information. According to a 2018 Pew Research Center survey focused on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram, "ninety-five percent of thirteen to seventeen year-olds have access to a smartphone, and a similar share (ninety-seven percent) use at least one of seven major online platforms."

However only seven of Gen Z college students found social media to be the most trustworthy news source. Instead, more than fifty percent of Gen Z students said they believe online newspapers and news sites to be the most trustworthy. The gap between the sharing of false information among age groups could be because of Gen Z and younger Americans' better understanding of social media and the distribution of online content. Gen Z's online experience with social media could be what makes them more likely to spot the difference between credible sources and 'fake news'.

Katie Bishop in The Guardian newspaper wrote: for many young people, clicking on to Instagram to get the latest news is now as second nature as picking up a daily newspaper once was to generations before. For a site that has traditionally been a platform for sharing lifestyle content rather than hard news, this is a shift in millennials and Gen Z, at a time when news updates seem more important than ever.

Recently published data exploring how people accessed news and information about the coronavirus pandemic found, confirmed that in the US and Canada, eighteen to twenty-four year-olds, (the age group most likely to use social media as a source), that over a quarter of the respondents used Instagram to access news content within the last week, while nineteen used Snapchat and six percent turned to TikTok. In comparison, only seventeen percent used newspapers to access information. Globally, figures reached even higher levels – in Germany, thirty-eight percent of eighteen to twenty-four-year old's used Instagram alone to access the news, and in Argentina, this reached as high as forty-nine percent.

This trend isn't necessarily harmless. "The challenge with Instagram is that it's a highly visual space," Jennifer Grygiel, who teaches communications at Syracuse University, said, "so people share memes that are more about influencing than informing and people need to exercise caution and be aware of who they're engaging with."

The use of social media as a news source is complicated by the ability for anyone to act as a reporter, sparking concerns about factchecking, and an oft-cited claim that social media tilts influence towards those with the largest followers, regardless of their credentials. There's also a concern that social media leads to political polarization. A recent poll suggests that just forty-one percent of Americans trust traditional media to report the news "fully, accurately, and fairly". Gallup, who conducted the study, have pointed to political rhetoric disparaging news organizations as a potential problem, with Republican voters significantly less likely to trust traditional media as a source.

For disenfranchised individuals, social media may offer an alternative to media outlets that they have begun to doubt. Yet the very nature of social media leaves users exposed primarily to others with similar views, which research suggests can create vast echo chambers – spaces where our own opinions and biases are reinforced by the voices which are filtered into our social media feed.

Amelia Gibson is an assistant professor and director of the Community Equity Data and Information Lab at the University of North Carolina. She sees the events of recent months as highlighting the ways many young people use social media as a news source. The Covid-19 crisis, combined with renewed interest in the Black Lives Matter movement, increased the desire for instant, first-hand information. Mistrust of mainstream media meant that many young people turned to their social media news feeds for information about protests, police actions and stay-at-home orders. But with a web of algorithms serving up content from news organizations, political groups or even influencers aligned to their own political beliefs and social circles, this also provoked a deepening of already-divided views and cultural rifts.

Our social media environments are still so segmented that some people really do live in different information worlds. “Social media offers, on the one hand, a medium for filling what feels like a vacuum of trustworthy information sources,” Amelia Gibson explains. “But on the other hand, our social media environments are still so segmented that some people really do live in different information worlds. In one information ecosystem, people might read this moment [and current social justice movements] as a hopeful international awakening related to anti-racism, others read it as a time of deep existential threat. We see these different worlds clashing when people meet in real life.”

For Gibson, the solution lies in a convergence of interests – as social media brings attention to previously overlooked stories and rebalances the power to share news, traditional media still has a part to play. “People have always shared the news that mattered to them and their communities,” she explains. “I think that the difference in this moment is that news corporations are paying attention and are amplifying a moment of shared struggle … I think that social media has done a lot to push social justice movements forward in the last decade, but that traditional media still has a lot of power to command national and international attention.”

For Grygiel, who, as a college professor, sees up close how young people are acting as both content creators and consumers, the relationship between traditional media and social sharing has reached a pivotal point. Content-creation-for-all has democratized news, but it remains an imperfect system dogged with accusations of biases, fake news and increasingly polarized viewpoints.

Although sites such as Instagram currently hold significant sway when it comes to distributing content to an internet-savvy youth, Grygiel hopes that this will push news publications to build better websites, attract advertisers and strive for independence rather than relying on social media shares. In the meantime, the need to exercise caution is of utmost importance. “It’s hard to fully realize the benefits of social media because there’s so much harmful content out there,” they explain. “Social media platforms have not always acted as good corporate citizens – they’ve paid a lack of

attention to political advertisements that are harmful and fail to monitor hate speech. It's important to be critical of them, but also aware that without them we wouldn't have seen the kind of documentation that we have of societal harms and transparency around injustices … there's still a lot of opportunity to deliver content without social media, and if social media platforms aren't acting as good corporate citizens then we need to find new and better ways of distributing news."

Unethical journalistic practices existed in printed media for hundreds of years before the advent of the Internet. Yellow journalism, reporting from a standard which is devoid of morals and professional ethics, was pervasive during the time period in history known as the Gilded Age, and unethical journalists would engage in fraud by fabricating stories, interviews, and made-up names for scholars. "Sensationalism always sold well. By the early 19th century, modern newspapers came on the scene, touting scoops and exposés, but also fake stories to increase circulation. The New York Sun's "Great Moon Hoax" of 1835 claimed that there was an alien civilization on the moon, and established the Sun as a leading, profitable newspaper." False and distorted news material isn't exactly a new thing. It's been a part of media history long before social media since the invention of the printing press. It's what sells tabloids. On the internet, headline forms called clickbait entice people to click to read more, by trying to shock and amaze us. What's more outrageous to read about, than fake things that didn't happen.

There's lots of examples of false news (aka 'fake news') throughout history. It was used by Nazi propaganda machines to build anti-Semitic fervor. It played a role in catalyzing the Enlightenment when the Catholic Church's false explanation of the 1755 Lisbon earthquake prompted Voltaire to speak out against religious dominance. In the 1800s in the US, racist sentiment led to the publication of false stories about African Americans' supposed deficiencies and crimes. During the 1890s, the spread of this unethical news sparked violence and conflicts. Both Joseph Pulitzer and William Randolph Hearst fomented yellow journalism in order to increase profits, which helped lead to misunderstandings which became partially responsible for the outset of

the Spanish–American War in 1898. J.B. Montgomery wrote a column harshly critical of ‘fake news’ in 1898, saying that what characterized ‘fake news’ was sensationalism and “the publication of articles absolutely false, which tend to mislead an ignorant or unsuspecting public.”

At the beginning of this book this author referred to a radio broadcast from Gleiwitz on the German-Polish border. It was by a German soldier named Karl Homack who pretended to be a Polish invader who had captured the station. This was taken at face value by other stations, in Germany and abroad, fueling Adolf Hitler's declaration of war on Poland the next day. According to USA Today, newspapers which have a history of commonly publishing ‘fake news’ have included Globe, Weekly World News, and The National Enquirer

Courtesy Stef W. Kight-AXIOS, CITS

Chapter Eleven

Who Are the Bad Guys?

There are numerous countries (bad guys) that disseminate news, turning out ‘fake’ stories. For the past six years, an obscure disinformation campaign by Russian operatives has flooded the Internet with false stories in seven languages and across three-hundred social media platforms virtually undetected, according to new report published by social media researchers. The operation, named "Secondary Infection" by researchers, has sought to spread pro-Russian propaganda around the globe by sharing fake tweets from U.S. elected officials and conspiracy theories about the coronavirus. And it attempted to interfere in the 2016 presidential election - and likely tried to spread falsehoods tied to the November 2020 election, (more on this later in this chapter).

Ben Nimmo, director of investigations at Graphika, the research firm that conducted the study, said in an interview that the specific culprit within Russia remains elusive. "We don't know whether it was run by the government, or associated with the government, or a group who wanted to support the government," Nimmo said. "But the overall tone and context makes it clear that this was an operation which was trying to support the Russian government and attack and undermine its critics."

Security officials at Facebook first identified the campaign last May, and since then, the tech giant and other platforms have been working to block the campaign. But it is so decentralized that it is still operating, though researchers say since it was exposed, the group's activity has slowed. It is the latest contribution in a growing body of research about how disinformation is created and spreads online, as social media platforms debate how best to control potentially damaging and harmful false content

aimed at exploiting divisions and causing chaos around national crisis or elections. Nimmo said one thing stands out about the Secondary Infection campaign: It almost never worked. Researchers, working with security teams at Facebook, Twitter and other tech companies, identified more than 2,500 pieces of disinformation tied to the same Russian actors. Just about every fake story it tried to spread fizzled fast, indicating that the group was likely driven more by a quota than by online impact.

"Which is an important reminder: Yes, there is disinformation on the Internet, but just because it's false, doesn't mean it's going to go viral," Nimmo said. There is one exception, however. Somehow, in October 2019, the hackers got hold of leaked trade documents between the U.S. and Britain and the disclosure dominated the U.K. news cycle for days, yet Nimmo says that is the only example of the disinformation campaign ever gaining any traction.

"Everything else they posted pretty well flopped," he said. "But it shows that all it takes is for one thing to come through, and they could actually have a big impact." The research also showcases new tactics for disinformation, Nimmo said. Instead of focusing on a handful of popular platforms and building up a large following, Secondary Infection took the opposite tack: creating so-called burner accounts, spreading one piece of false information on Twitter, Facebook, Reddit or some other social media network and then completely abandoning the accounts and never returning to them.

"We've never seen an operation that used burner accounts so consistently," Nimmo said. "That means for the operation, it was always going to be hard to build an audience." The content focused mostly on discrediting Ukraine and bolstering Russia. Some posts attempted to link Hillary Clinton to murder or tried to disparage German Chancellor Angela Merkel as an alcoholic. The campaign also worked to spread other baseless rumors, like that the U.S. was attempting to stoke a revolution in Azerbaijan. The accounts also created forged documents purporting to be written by congressional committees and fake Twitter messages, including a fabricated tweet that appears as if

U.S. Sen. Marco Rubio has accused British authorities of spying on former President Trump.

"Sometimes they wouldn't even spell the politician's name right," Nimmo said. "They didn't seem to be very good at creating viral content." The researchers dubbed the operation "Secondary Infection," a nod to the Soviet era "Operation Infection" that accused the U.S. of creating the virus that causes AIDS. Nimmo said Secondary Infection appears to have paid tribute to the past by falsely accusing the U.S. of creating a wide range of deadly diseases, including the bogus theory that the novel coronavirus was manufactured in a Kazakhstan lab by American authorities.

While attention often focuses on the tactics of major disinformation campaigns by the Kremlin-backed Internet Research Agency and the Russian military intelligence agency, Nimmo said Tuesday's study demonstrates that it is but one slice of the false and distorted content coming out of Russia. "As we look ahead to the election, our report shows there's all sorts of malicious activity we need to look out for, including burner accounts and forged documents that tries to interfere with peoples' thinking," he said.

Much of the ‘fake news’ during the 2016 U.S. presidential election season was traced to adolescents in Macedonia, now known as North Macedonia, specifically Veles. It is a town of 50,000 in the middle of the country, with high unemployment, where the average wage is $4,800. The income from fake news was characterized by NBC News as a gold rush. Adults supported this income, saying they were happy the youths were working. The mayor of Veles, Slavcho Chadiev, said he was not bothered by their actions, as they were not against Macedonian law and their finances were taxable. Chadiev said he was happy if deception from Veles influenced the results of the 2016 U.S. election in favor of Trump.

Beginning in fall 2014, The New Yorker writer Adrian Chen performed a six-month investigation into Russian propaganda dissemination online by the Internet Research Agency (IRA). Yevgeny Prigozhin (Evgeny Prigozhin), a close associate of Vladimir Putin,

was behind the operation which hired hundreds of individuals to work in Saint Petersburg. The organization became regarded as a "troll farm", a term used to refer to propaganda efforts controlling many accounts online with the aim of artificially providing a semblance of a grassroots organization.

Chen reported that Internet trolling was used by the Russian government as a tactic largely after observing the social media organization of the 2011 protests against Putin. In 2015, the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe released an analysis critical of disinformation campaigns by Russia masked as news. This was intended to interfere with Ukraine relations with Europe after the removal of former Ukraine president Viktor Yanukovych. According to Deutsche Welle, similar tactics were used in the 2016 U.S. elections. The European Union created a taskforce to deal with Russian disinformation. The taskforce, East StratCom Team, had eleven people including Russian speakers.

In November 2016, the EU voted to increase the group's funding. In November 2016, the European Parliament Committee on Foreign Affairs passed a resolution warning of the use by Russia of tools including: "pseudo-news agencies ... social media and internet trolls" as disinformation to weaken democratic values. The resolution requested EU analysts investigate, explaining member nations needed to be wary of disinformation. The resolution condemned Russian sources for publicizing absolutely ‘fake news’ reports. The tally on 23 November 2016 passed by a margin of 304 votes to 179.

The U.S. State Department planned to use a unit called the Counter-Disinformation Team, formed with the intention of combating disinformation from the Russian government, and that it was disbanded in September 2015 after department heads missed the scope of propaganda before the 2016 U.S. election. The U.S. State Department put eight months into developing the unit before scrapping it. It would have been a reboot of the Active Measures Working Group set up by Reagan

Administration. The Counter-Disinformation Team was set up under the Bureau of International Information Programs.

Work began in 2014, with the intention to combat propaganda from Russian sources such as the RT network (formerly known as Russia Today). U.S. Intelligence officials explained to former National Security Agency analyst and counterintelligence officer John R. Schindler that the Obama administration decided to cancel the unit as they were afraid of antagonizing Russia. U.S. Undersecretary of State for Public Diplomacy Richard Stengel was point person for the unit before it was canceled.

'Fake news' online was brought to the attention of Canadian politicians in November 2016, as they debated helping assist local newspapers. Member of Parliament for Vancouver Centre Hedy Fry, specifically discussed 'fake news' as an example of ways in which publishers on the Internet are less accountable than print media. Discussion in parliament contrasted increase of fake news online with downsizing of Canadian newspapers and the impact for democracy in Canada. Representatives from Facebook Canada attended the meeting and told members of Parliament they felt it was their duty to assist individuals gather data online.

BuzzFeed News and The Guardian separately investigated and found teenagers in Veles created over one-hundred sites spreading 'fake news' stories supportive of Donald Trump. The teenagers experimented with left slanted fake stories about Bernie Sanders, but found that pro-Trump fictions were more popular. Prior to the 2016 election the teenagers gained revenues from fake medical advice sites. One youth named Alex stated, in an August 2016 interview with The Guardian, that this fraud would remain profitable regardless of who won the election. Alex explained he plagiarized material for articles by copying and pasting from other websites. This could net them thousands of dollars daily, but they averaged only a few thousand per month. The Associated Press (AP) interviewed an eighteen-year-old in Veles about his tactics. A Google

Analytics analysis of his traffic showed more than 650,000 views in one week. He plagiarized pro-Trump stories from a right-wing site called The Political Insider. He said he did not care about politics, so published fake news to gain money and experience. The AP used DomainTools to confirm the teenager was behind fake sites and determined there were about two hundred websites tracked to Veles focused on U.S. news, many of which mostly contained plagiarized legitimate news to create an appearance of credibility.

NBC News also interviewed an eighteen-year-old there. Dmitri (a pseudonym) was one of the most profitable fake news operators in town and said about three-hundred people in Veles wrote for fake sites. Dmitri said he gained over $60,000 during the six months prior through doing this, more than both his parent's earnings. Dmitri said his main dupes were supporters of Trump. He said after the 2016 U.S. election he continued to earn significant amounts. The 2020 U.S. election was to be their next project. However, the misinformation ('fake news') started with a tweet from an American conservative media personality, accompanied by photos, claiming that more than one-thousand mail-in ballots had been discovered in a dumpster in Sonoma county in California. Within hours on the morning of 25 September, a popular far-right news website ran the photos with an "exclusive" story suggesting thousands of uncounted ballots had been dumped by the county and workers had tried to cover it up.

In fact, according to Sonoma county officials, the photos showed empty envelopes from the 2018 election that had been gathered for recycling. Ballots for this year's general election had not yet been mailed. Even so, within a single day, more than 25,000 Twitter users had shared a version of the false ballot-dumping story, including Donald Trump Jr., who has 5.7 million followers. And this was just the beginning of 'fake news' that surrounded the US 2020 election.

"Ending the Fed", a popular purveyor of fraudulent reports, was run by a twenty-four year-old named Ovidiu Drobota out of Oradea, Romania, who boasted to Inc. magazine about being more popular than mainstream media. Established in March

2016, "Ending the Fed" was responsible for a false story in August 2016 that incorrectly stated Fox News had fired journalist Megyn Kelly—the story was briefly prominent on Facebook on its "Trending News" section. "Ending the Fed" held four out of the ten most popular fake articles on Facebook related to the 2016 U.S. election in the prior three months before the election itself.

The Facebook page for the website, called "End the Feed", had 350,000 "likes" in November 2016. After being contacted by Inc. magazine, Drobota stated he was proud of the impact he had on the 2016 U.S. election in favor of his preferred candidate Donald Trump. According to Alexa Internet, "Ending the Fed" garnered approximately 3.4 million views over a thirty day-period in November 2016. Drobota stated the majority of incoming traffic is from Facebook. He said his normal line of work before starting "Ending the Fed" included web development and search engine optimization.

False statements and information now threaten the security and sovereignty of states – including in the Middle East, and especially during the global COVID-19 pandemic – with hundreds of millions of dollars being allocated to counter the phenomenon, experts say. In the summer of 2020, the Iraqi Defense Ministry ordered the suspension of all social media accounts belonging to security forces due to inaccurate information published by certain army officers, a spokesman for the military chief of staff said. Fadel Abu Raghef, an Iraqi analyst and security expert, told The Media Line that the decision came directly from the defense minister and obligates all of the country's provinces, particularly the Baghdad Governorate, to redouble their efforts to prevent the existence of unofficial news outlets.

"It's the right decision and came about in order to control the authenticity of news and block the dissemination of false information, in addition to unifying security discourse, which is, of course, dangerous and [could be] a double-edged sword," Raghef said. He explained that the social media pages of some officers had been hacked and used to spread fake news. "This has created a need to have only one window for presenting official security information, which is the Defense Ministry," he stated.

Raghef stated, that as the threat from ISIS was once more growing, security was a top priority, with the need to combat the Islamists not only on behalf of Iraq, but also neighboring states. “Iraq is fighting against this threat on behalf of all of the region’s countries,” he explained. “Therefore, the security situation and stability are of utmost importance.” Since the coronavirus pandemic began, several Arab countries have stepped up their fight against fake news, with Saudi Arabia, Egypt and Morocco, as well as the Palestinian Authority, going so far as to detain purveyors of false information about the number of COVID-19 infections. Oraib Rintawi, a Jordanian analyst and writer, stated that fake news has become a national security issue in many countries, with social media having a major role in its spread.

Three characteristics of social media’s presentation of news make people more likely to fall for ‘fake news’. First, social media act as news aggregators that are "source-agnostic." That is, they collect and present news stories from a wide variety of outlets, regardless of the quality, reliability, or political leanings of the original source. Without a sense of the reputation of the original publisher being clear, it’s easy for fly-by-night provocateurs and manipulators to get their fake stories to approach the prominence of the traditional media outlets. If readers can’t readily identify who wrote or provided information for a story, it’s hard to judge its honesty without elaborate fact-checking, which most people don’t do.

Second, many news stories get conveyed to people on social media via their friends or people they follow, along with their implicit or explicit endorsement of the story such as a share, like, or retweet. These tacit recommendations make people more accepting of the messages they get. On social media apps, “Many messages are shared in groups, and when they are forwarded, there is no indication of their origin. (False stories) have often appeared to come from family and friends.”

Third, relatedly, social media platforms automatically tag articles with indications of their popularity (the number of views or likes they’ve gotten, which is further complicated by online robots that can systematically inflate popularity indicators), which also makes people more likely to tune in to a story when those counts are high.

So, while history offers some important lessons, this isn't your grandparents' fake news - any more – rather, it is a sophisticated online version that spews hate and disinformation.

Sources for this chapter include npr, Wikipedia, themedialine-D. Abumaria

Chapter Twelve

Old Media – is it - dead in the Water?

By the year 2000, only three hundred and fifty of the fifteen hundred daily newspapers left in the United States were independently owned. And only one out of every hundred American cities that had a daily newspaper was anything other than a one-paper town (this percentage also applies to the Canadian newspaper industry).

In a story printed by The New Yorker, . . . then came the fall, when papers all over the country, shackled to mammoth corporations and a lumbering, century-old business model, found themselves unable to compete with the upstarts—online news aggregators like the Huffington Post (est. 2005) and Breitbart News (est. 2007), which were, to readers, free. News aggregators also drew display advertisers away from print. Facebook and Google swallowed advertising accounts whole. Big papers found ways to adapt; smaller papers mainly folded.

In the past half century, and especially in the past two decades, journalism itself—the way news is covered, reported, written, and edited—has changed, including in ways that have made possible the rise of fake news, and not only because of mergers and acquisitions, and corporate ownership, and job losses, and Google Search, and Facebook and BuzzFeed. There's no shortage of amazing journalists at work, clear-eyed and courageous, broad-minded and brilliant, and no end of fascinating innovation in matters of form, especially in visual storytelling. Still, journalism, as a field, is as addled as an addict, gaunt, wasted, and twitchy, its pockets as empty as its nights are sleepless. It's faster than it used to be, so fast. It's also edgier, and needier, and angrier. It wants and it wants. But what does it need?

The daily newspaper is the taproot of modern journalism. Dailies mainly date to the eighteen-thirties, the decade in which the word "journalism" was coined, meaning

daily reporting, the jour in journalism. Early dailies depended on subscribers to pay the bills. The press was partisan, readers were voters, and the news was meant to persuade (and voter turnout was high). But by 1900 advertising made up more than two-thirds of the revenue at most of the nation's eighteen thousand newspapers, and readers were consumers (and voter turnout began its long fall). "The newspaper is not a missionary or a charitable institution, but a business that collects and publishes news which the people want and are willing to buy," one Missouri editor said in 1892. Newspapers stopped rousing the rabble so much because businesses wanted readers, no matter their politics. There is a sentiment gaining ground to the effect that the public wants its politics straight -a journalist wrote the following year. Reporters pledged themselves to "facts, facts, and more facts," and, as the press got less partisan and more ad-based, newspapers sorted themselves out not by their readers' political leanings but by their incomes. If you had a lot of money to spend, you read the St. Paul Pioneer Press; if you didn't have very much, you read the St. Paul Dispatch. Unsurprisingly, critics soon began writing big books, usually indictments, about the relationship between business and journalism. "When you read your daily paper, are you reading facts or propaganda?" Upton Sinclair asked on the jacket of "The Brass Check," in 1919.

A 1996 business plan for the Guardian concluded that the priority was print, and the London Times editor Simon Jenkins predicted, "The Internet will strut an hour upon the stage, and then take its place in the ranks of the lesser media." In 2005, the Post lost a chance at a ten-per-cent investment in Facebook, whose returns, as Abramson points out, would have floated the newspaper for decades. The C.E.O. of the Washington Post Company, Don Graham, and Mark Zuckerberg shook hands over the deal, making a verbal contract, but, when Zuckerberg weaseled out of it to take a better offer, Graham, out of kindness to a young fella just starting out, simply let him walk away. The next year, the Post shrugged off a proposal from two of its star political reporters to start a spinoff Web site; they went on to found Politico. The Times, Abramson writes, declined an early chance to invest in Google, and was left to throw the kitchen sink at its failing business model, including adding a Thursday Style section to attract more high-end

advertising revenue. Bill Keller, then the newspaper's editor, said, "If luxury porn is what saves the Baghdad bureau, so be it."

More alarming than what the Times and the Post failed to do was how so much of what they did do was determined less by their own editors than by executives at Facebook and BuzzFeed. If journalism has been reinvented during the past two decades, it has, in the main, been reinvented not by reporters and editors but by tech companies, in a sequence of events that, in Abramson's harrowing telling, resemble a series of puerile stunts more than acts of public service.

BuzzFeed surpassed the Times Web site in reader traffic in 2013. BuzzFeed News is subsidized by BuzzFeed, which, like many Web sites—including, at this point, those of most major news organizations—makes money by way of "native advertising," ads that look like articles. In some publications, these fake stories are easy to spot; in others, they're not. At BuzzFeed, they're in the same font as every other story. BuzzFeed's native-advertising bounty meant that BuzzFeed News had money to pay reporters and editors, and it began producing some very good and very serious reporting, real news having become something of a luxury good.

By 2014, BuzzFeed employed a hundred and fifty journalists, including many foreign correspondents. It was obsessed with Donald Trump's rumored Presidential bid and followed him on what it called the "fake campaign trail" as early as January 2014. "It used to be the New York Times, now it's BuzzFeed," Trump said, wistfully. "The world has changed." At the time, Steve Bannon was stumping for Trump on Breitbart. Left or right, a Trump Presidency was just the sort of story that could rack up the LOLs, OMGs, and WTFs. It still is.

Dan Kennedy, a professor of journalism wrote this article for NiemanLab . . . what's happened to local news in our medium-size city north of Boston is a story that could be told in hundreds of communities across the country. The first time we lived here, in the early 1980s, we were served by a vibrant, locally owned daily newspaper. When we returned nearly thirty years later, the daily, a shell of its former self, would

soon go out of business, leaving the field to a weekly owned by Gate House Media, now merged with Gannett. Since last fall, the paper hasn't employed a single full-time staff reporter. And with the Covid-19 pandemic prompting more cuts, that's not likely to change any time soon — if ever.

This depressing scenario is the subject of Margaret Sullivan's new book, Ghosting the News: Local Journalism and the Crisis of American Democracy. The book is part of the Columbia Global Reports series of "novella-length" paperbacks and e-books. At a brisk one-hundred and thirty-two pages, Sullivan lays out the crisis in community and regional journalism and suggests some possible solutions. "The decline of local news is every bit as troubling as the spread of disinformation on the internet," Sullivan writes, adding: "Some of the most trusted sources of news — local sources, particularly local newspapers — are slipping away, never to return. The cost to democracy is great. It takes a toll on civic engagement — even on citizens' ability to have a common sense of reality and facts, the very basis of self-governance."

Ghosting the News is a useful introduction to the decline of local, and Sullivan is an ideal guide. Currently the media columnist for The Washington Post, she previously worked as the penultimate public editor of The New York Times and — of relevance to the matter at hand — as editor and vice president of The Buffalo News, until recently owned by the billionaire investor Warren Buffett.

Buffett proved to be a disappointment. Despite being a self-confessed newspaper junkie who was at one time a trusted adviser to the legendary Post publisher Katharine Graham, he showed little interest in efforts aimed at reinvigorating the shrinking newspaper business. Instead, he was content to manage their decline, cutting staff and taking out what profits remained before selling his chain of thirty-one papers to Lee Enterprises earlier this year.

As Sullivan describes it, the News at one time ran up margins of some thirty percent while making few investments in technology. She takes credit for improving the

diversity of the staff and expanding the paper's investigative efforts. But with the Great Recession of 2008 came the beginning of an endless downward spiral.

Sullivan doesn't ignore the role of greed-crazed hedge-fund owners and corporate chains such as Alden Global Capital and Gannett, which are squeezing the life out of hundreds of local and regional newspapers. But she sidesteps it a bit by focusing on the death of The Vindicator, a family-owned newspaper in economically depressed Youngstown, Ohio, that went under (sort of) in 2018. It's a wise choice on her part, since the owners of The Vindicator clearly wanted to stay in business; their fate shows that there's more to the story than capitalism run amok. They gave up only after losing money for twenty of the previous twenty-two years.

Yet, as Sullivan acknowledges, the media ecosystem quickly expanded to fill at least part of the gap. The Tribune Chronicle of nearby Warren began publishing a Youngstown edition called (you guessed it) The Vindicator. The non-profit investigative news organization ProPublica assigned a reporter to Youngstown. The McClatchy chain (now struggling to emerge from bankruptcy) launched a digital regional news site, Mahoning Matters, with some funding from Google. What has happened in Youngstown parallels what I've seen in my own reporting on local news. In places like New Haven, Connecticut, and Burlington, Vermont, entrepreneurial journalists have launched for-profit and non-profit news projects in response to the market failure of their legacy daily newspapers. In rural Mendocino County, California, where Alden has laid waste to its four papers, the founders of a small website called The Mendocino Voice have ambitious plans to convert to cooperative ownership and expand their reporting staff.

Such projects don't fully make up for what has been lost. But they provide a compelling counter-narrative to the prevailing pessimism. Yes, as Penelope Muse Abernathy of the University of North Carolina has documented, we've lost more than 2,100 newspapers over the past fifteen years. In some places, though, new ventures have arisen to take their place — a trend that we can expect will continue. Sullivan highlights a number of these projects, from East Lansing, Michigan, where volunteers

report for a website called the East Lansing Info, to Pflugerville, Texas, where a new chain of free print newspapers is thriving. She also takes a look at the Arkansas Democrat-Gazette, home to an unusual experiment by which readers are being given free iPads to replace their print newspaper.

Among the solutions Sullivan suggests are an expansion of the non-profit model; more funding from the digital advertising giants Google and Facebook, which depend on local news organizations for at least some of their content; more local coverage by public broadcasting outlets and commercial television; and possibly even direct subsidies from the government, seen as anathema until recently but now the subject of books such as Victor Pickard's Democracy without Journalism?

In the absence of a comprehensive news source, residents of our city have taken to Facebook, NextDoor, Patch and email lists. Rather than "here is what's happening," we ask each other what's happening. We rely on the mayor's Facebook posts, on the police department's text updates and on reports by citizens who have the time and inclination to sit through city council meetings on Zoom and write them up. There's a widespread narrative these days that this is what we want — that social media has taken the place of local newspapers, case closed, the end. That's not what I see. If a real source of reliable news and information came along, I think my fellow residents would support it — if only it were available." The newspaper ties a region together," Sullivan writes, "helps it make sense of itself, fosters a sense of community, serves as a village square whose boundaries transcend Facebook's filter bubble."

But as Clay Shirky, whom Sullivan quotes in her conclusion, has said, "Society doesn't need newspapers. What it needs is journalism." If you want to know what happened to local newspapers during the past quarter-century, Ghosting the News does a good job of laying it out. If you want to know what will take their place — well, check back a year or two after we have a vaccine.

In an yet another piece on the vital importance of (good) journalism Victor Greto gave a speech at a Press Association banquet. Towards the end of his talk he said "what

then is the duty of a free press? It demands governmental and corporate—all institutional—accountability; it demands a passion for the Fourth Estate's independent history; it demands a profound understanding of its First Amendment role to inform citizens about what is happening locally, nationally and internationally; it demands an understanding that our readers or viewers constitute an entire community.

I believe this, the community, is journalism's true ace in the hole. Our loyalty is to the community as a whole - however relatively small as it may seem, from the world, the country and the state, to the county, city, small town, and college campus. Each community, no matter how small, is inevitably filled with many stakeholders, both group and individual. Within this fact lies the key to journalism's power to search for a social truth that applies to all. Yes, I am talking about investigative journalism and the nitty-gritty of covering city council meetings. But I am also talking about complex—and clearly written—features about our world, and profiles of those who have influence over us. You, the student, you, the journalist, you, the multimedia communicator, can and must be a part of the evolution of this two-hundred and fifty-year history. It is not an easy task. It is not a popular task. It is not for the faint of heart.

But it is imperative and necessary for those of us who understand that democracy, accountability and independent information, not bound to any one stakeholder or point of view, need skilled journalists: those of us who write and produce concisely and well; those of us experienced in the art and craft of interviewing; those of us who have honed the ability to sift through sources and distinguish facts from half-truths or outright lies; and those of us who want to help others and ourselves understand the nature of our social problems and issues.

It's not about you or your brand, your social status, likes, shares or hits. It's about your city, your county, your state, your children, the people you love, and the country and world in which you are a citizen. It's not about you. But it is up to you.

Courtesy Jill Lepore-New Yorker, Victor Greto

Chapter Thirteen

Real Journalism Has Ethics – Not Fake News

Journalistic ethics and standards comprise principles of ethics and good practice applicable to journalists. This subset of media ethics is known as journalism's professional "code of ethics" and the "canons of journalism". The basic codes and canons commonly appear in statements by professional journalism associations and individual print, broadcast, and online news organizations. While various codes may have some differences, most share common elements including the principles of truthfulness, accuracy, objectivity, impartiality, fairness, and public accountability, as these apply to the acquisition of newsworthy information and its subsequent dissemination to the public.

Like many broader ethical systems, the ethics of journalism include the principle of "limitation of harm." This may involve the withholding of certain details from reports, such as the names of minor children, crime victims' names, or information not materially related to the news report where the release of such information might, for example, harm someone's reputation. Some journalistic codes of ethics, notably some European codes, also include a concern with discriminatory references in news based on race, religion, sexual orientation and physical - mental disabilities. The Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe approved (in 1993) Resolution 1003 on the Ethics of Journalism, which recommends that journalists respect the presumption of innocence, in particular in cases that are still sub judice . . . Wikipedia

"The purpose of journalism," wrote Bill Kovach and Tom Rosenstiel in The Elements of Journalism, "is not defined by technology, nor by journalists or the

techniques they employ." Rather, "the principles and purpose of journalism are defined by something more basic: the function news plays in the lives of people."

News is that part of communication that keeps us informed of the changing events, issues, and characters in the world outside. Though it may be interesting or even entertaining, the foremost value of news is as a utility to empower the informed. The purpose of journalism is thus to provide citizens with the information they need to make the best possible decisions about their lives, their communities, their societies, and their governments. Good decision-making depends on people having reliable, accurate facts put in a meaningful context. Journalism does not pursue truth in an absolute or philosophical sense, but in a capacity that is more down to earth.

"All truths – even the laws of science – are subject to revision, but we operate by them in the meantime because they are necessary and they work," Kovach and Rosenstiel write in the book. Journalism, they continue, thus seeks "a practical and functional form of truth." It is not the truth in the absolute or philosophical or scientific sense but rather a pursuit of "the truths by which we can operate on a day-to-day basis." This "journalistic truth" is a process that begins with the professional discipline of assembling and verifying facts. Then journalists try to convey a fair and reliable account of their meaning, subject to further investigation.

Journalists should be as transparent as possible about sources and methods so audiences can make their own assessment of the information. Even in a world of expanding voices, "getting it right" is the foundation upon which everything else is built – context, interpretation, comment, criticism, analysis and debate. The larger truth, over time, emerges from this forum. As citizens encounter an ever-greater flow of data, they have more need – not less – for suppliers of information dedicated to finding and verifying the news and putting it in context.

The publisher of journalism – whether a media corporation answering to advertisers and shareholders or a blogger with his own personal beliefs and priorities — must show an ultimate allegiance to citizens. They must strive to put the public interest

– and the truth – above their own self-interest or assumptions. A commitment to citizens is an implied covenant with the audience and a foundation of the journalistic business model – journalism provided "without fear or favor" is perceived to be more valuable than content from other information sources. Commitment to citizens also means journalism should seek to present a representative picture of constituent groups in society. Ignoring certain citizens has the effect of disenfranchising them.

The theory underlying the modern news industry has been the belief that credibility builds a broad and loyal audience, and that economic success follows in turn. In that regard, people in a news organization also must nurture, not exploit – their allegiance to the audience ahead of other considerations. Technology may change but trust – when earned and nurtured – will endure. Journalists rely on a professional discipline for verifying information. While there is no standardized code as such, every journalist uses certain methods to assess and test information to "get it right."

Being impartial or neutral is not a core principle of journalism. Because the journalist must make decisions, he or she is not and cannot be objective. But journalistic methods are objective. When the concept of objectivity originally evolved, it did not imply that journalists were free of bias. It called, rather, for a consistent method of testing information – a transparent approach to evidence – precisely so that personal and cultural biases would not undermine the accuracy of the work. The method is objective, not the journalist.

Seeking out multiple witnesses, disclosing as much as possible about sources, or asking various sides for comment, all signal such standards. This discipline of verification is what separates journalism from other forms of communication such as propaganda, advertising, fiction, or entertainment. On one level, it means not becoming seduced by sources, intimidated by power, or compromised by self-interest. On a deeper level it speaks to an independence of spirit and an open-mindedness and intellectual curiosity that helps the journalist see beyond his or her own class or economic status, race, ethnicity, religion, gender or ego.

Journalistic independence, write Kovach and Rosenstiel, is not neutrality. While editorialists and commentators are not neutral, the source of their credibility is still their accuracy, intellectual fairness and ability to inform – not their devotion to a certain group or outcome. In our independence, however, journalists must avoid straying into arrogance, elitism, isolation or nihilism.

Journalism has an unusual capacity to serve as watchdog over those whose power and position most affect citizens. It may also offer voice to the voiceless. Being an independent monitor of power means "watching over the powerful few in society on behalf of the many to guard against tyranny," Kovach and Rosenstiel write. The watchdog role is often misunderstood, even by journalists, to mean "afflict the comfortable." While upsetting the applecart may certainly be a result of watchdog journalism, the concept as introduced in the mid-1600s was far less combative. Rather, it sought to redefine the role of the journalist from a passive stenographer to more a curious observer who would "search out and discover the news."

The watchdog role also means more than simply monitoring government. "The earliest journalists," write Kovach and Rosenstiel, "firmly established as a core principle their responsibility to examine unseen corners of society. The world they chronicled captured the imagination of a largely uninformed society, creating an immediate and enthusiastic popular following." Finally, the purpose of the watchdog extends beyond simply making the management and execution of power transparent, to making known and understood the effects of that power. This includes reporting on successes as well as failures.

Journalists have an obligation to protect this watchdog freedom by not demeaning it in frivolous use or exploiting it for commercial gain. The news media are common carriers of public discussion, and this responsibility forms a basis for special privileges that news and information providers receive from democratic societies. These privileges can involve subsidies for distribution or research and development (lower postal rates for print, use of public spectrum by broadcasters, development and

management of the Internet) to laws protecting content and free speech (copyright, libel, and shield laws).

These privileges, however, are not pre-ordained or perpetual. Rather, they are conferred because of the need for an abundant supply of information. They are predicated on the assumption that journalism – because of its principles and practices – will supply a steady stream of higher quality content that citizens *and* government will use to make better decisions.

Traditionally, this covenant has been between news organizations and government. The new forms of digital media, however, place a responsibility on everyone who "publishes" content – whether for profit or for personal satisfaction – in the public domain. The raw material cast into the marketplace of ideas sustains civic dialogue and serves society best when it consists of verified information rather than just prejudice and supposition.

Journalism should also attempt to fairly represent varied viewpoints and interests in society and to place them in context rather than highlight only the conflicting fringes of debate. Accuracy and truthfulness also require that the public discussion not neglect points of common ground or instances where problems are not just identified but also solved. Journalism, then, is more than providing an outlet for discussion or adding one's voice to the conversation. Journalism carries with it a responsibility to improve the quality of debate by providing verified information and intellectual rigor. A forum without regard for facts fails to inform and degrades rather than improves the quality and effectiveness of citizen decision-making.

Journalism is storytelling with a purpose. It should do more than gather an audience or catalogue the important. It must balance what readers know they want with what they cannot anticipate but need. Writing coaches Roy Peter Clark and Chip Scanlan describe effective newswriting as the intersection of civic clarity, the information citizens need to function, and literary grace, which is the reporter's storytelling skill set. In other words, part of the journalist's responsibility is providing

information in such a way people will be inclined to listen. Journalists must thus strive to make the significant interesting and relevant.

Quality is measured both by how much a work engages its audience and enlightens it. This means journalists must continually ask what information has the most value to citizens and in what form people are most likely to assimilate it. While journalism should reach beyond such topics as government and public safety, journalism overwhelmed by trivia and false significance trivializes civic dialogue and ultimately public policy. Journalism is our modern cartography. It creates a map for citizens to navigate society.

As with any map, its value depends on a completeness and proportionality in which the significant is given greater visibility than the trivial. Keeping news in proportion is a cornerstone of truthfulness. Inflating events for sensation, neglecting others, stereotyping, or being disproportionately negative all make a less reliable map. The most comprehensive maps include all affected communities, not just those with attractive demographics. The most complete stories consider diverse backgrounds and perspectives.

Though proportion and comprehensiveness are subjective, their ambiguity does not lesson their significance. Doing journalism, whether as a professional writing for a news organization or as an online contributor in the public space, involves one's moral compass and demands a personal sense of ethics and responsibility. Because "news" is important, those who provide news have a responsibility to voice their personal conscience out loud and allow others to do so as well. They must be willing to question their own work and to differ with the work of others if fairness and accuracy demand they do so.

News organizations do well to nurture this independence by encouraging individuals to speak their minds. Conversation and debate stimulate the intellectual diversity of minds and voices necessary to understand and accurately cover an increasingly diverse society. Having a diverse newsroom does little if those different

voices are not spoken or heard. It's also a matter of self-interest. Employees encouraged to raise their hands may "save the boss from himself" or protect the news organization's reputation by pointing out errors, flagging important omissions, questioning misguided assumptions, or even revealing wrongdoing.

Having a sense of ethics is perhaps most important for the individual journalist or online contributor. Increasingly, those who produce "the news" work in isolation, whether from a newsroom cubicle, the scene of a story, or their home office. They may file directly to the public without the safety net of editing, a second set of eyes, or the collaboration of others. While crowdsourcing by the audience may catch and correct errors or misinformation, the reputation of the author and the quality of public dialogue are nevertheless damaged. The average person now, more than ever, works like a journalist.

Writing a blog entry, commenting on a social media site, sending a tweet, or "liking" a picture or post, likely involves a shorthand version of the journalistic process. One comes across information, decides whether or not it's believable, assesses its strength and weaknesses, determines if it has value to others, decides what to ignore and what to pass on, chooses the best way to share it, and then hits the "send" button. Though this process may take only a few moments, its essentially what reporters do.

Two things separate this journalistic-like process from an end-product that *is* "journalism." The first is motive and intent. The purpose of journalism is to give people the information they need to make better decisions about their lives and society. The second difference is that journalism involves the conscious, systematic application of a discipline of verification to produce a "functional truth," as opposed to something that is merely interesting or informative. Yet while the process is critical, it's the end-product - the "story" – by which journalism is ultimately judged.

Today, when the world is awash in information and news is available any time everywhere, a new relationship is being formed between the suppliers of journalism and the people who consume it. The new journalist is no longer a gatekeeper who decides

what the public should and should not know. The individual is now his or her own circulation manager and editor. To be relevant, journalists must now verify information the consumer already has or is likely to find and then help them make sense of what it means and how they might use it.

Thus, write Kovach and Rosenstiel, “The first task of the new journalist/sense maker is to verify what information is reliable and then order it so people can grasp it efficiently.” A part of this new journalistic responsibility is “to provide citizens with the tools they need to extract knowledge for themselves from the undifferentiated flood or rumor, propaganda, gossip, fact, assertion, and allegation the communications system now produces.”

A article published by Katy Steinmetz stated that Stanford University psychologist Sam Wineburg’s team found that Americans of all ages, from digitally savvy tweens to high-IQ academics, fail to ask important questions about content they encounter on a browser, adding to research on our online gullibility. Other studies have shown that people retweet links without clicking on them and rely too much on search engines. A 2016 Pew poll found that nearly a quarter of Americans said they had shared a made-up news story. In his experiments, MIT cognitive scientist David Rand has found that, on average, people are inclined to believe false news at least twenty percent of the time. “We are all driving cars, but none of us have licenses,” Wineburg says of consuming information online.

Our inability to parse truth from fiction on the Internet is, of course, more than an academic matter. The scourge of ‘fake new’ and its many cousins–from clickbait to “deep fakes” (realistic-looking videos showing events that never happened)–have experts fearful for the future of democracy. Politicians and technologists have warned that meddlers are trying to manipulate elections around the globe by spreading disinformation. That’s what Russian agents did in 2016, according to U.S. intelligence agencies. And on July 31, Facebook revealed that it had found evidence of a political-influence campaign on the platform

ahead of the 2018 midterm elections. The authors of one now defunct page got thousands of people to express interest in attending a made-up protest that apparently aimed to put white nationalists and left-wingers on the same streets.

But the stakes are even bigger than elections. Our ability to vet information matters every time a mother asks Google whether her child should be vaccinated and every time a kid encounters a Holocaust denial on Twitter. In India, false rumors about child kidnappings that spread on WhatsApp have prompted mobs to beat innocent people to death. “It’s the equivalent of a public-health crisis,” says Alan Miller, founder of the nonpartisan News Literacy Project.

There is no quick fix, though tech companies are under increasing pressure to come up with solutions. Facebook lost more than $120 billion in stock value in a single day in July as the company dealt with a range of issues limiting its growth, including criticism about how conspiracy theories spread on the platform. But engineers can’t teach machines to decide what is true or false in a world where humans often don’t agree.

In a country founded on free speech, debates over who adjudicates truth and lies online are contentious. Many welcomed the decision by major tech companies in early August to remove content from florid conspiracy theorist Alex Jones, who has alleged that passenger-jet contrails are damaging people’s brains and spread claims that families of Sandy Hook massacre victims are actors in an elaborate hoax. But others cried censorship. And even if law enforcement and intelligence agencies could ferret out every bad actor with a keyboard, it seems unwise to put the government in charge of scrubbing the Internet of misleading statements.

What is clear, however, is that there is another responsible party. The problem is not just malicious bots or chaos-loving trolls or Macedonian teenagers pushing phony stories for profit. The problem is also us, the susceptible readers.

And experts like Wineburg believe that the better we understand the way we think in the digital world, the better chance we have, to be part of the solution.

We don't fall for false news just because we're dumb. Often, it's a matter of letting the wrong impulses take over. In an era when the average American spends twenty-four hours each week online–when we're always juggling inboxes and feeds and alerts–it's easy to feel like we don't have time to read anything but headlines. We are social animals, and the desire for likes can supersede a latent feeling that a story seems dicey. Political convictions lead us to lazy thinking. But there's an even more fundamental impulse at play: our innate desire for an easy answer.

Humans like to think of themselves as rational creatures, but much of the time we are guided by emotional and irrational thinking. Psychologists have shown this through the study of cognitive shortcuts known as heuristics. It's hard to imagine getting through so much as a trip to the grocery store without these helpful time-savers. "You don't and can't take the time and energy to examine and compare every brand of yogurt," says Wray Herbert, author of On Second Thought: Outsmarting Your Mind's Hard-Wired Habits. So, we might instead rely on what is known as the familiarity heuristic, our tendency to assume that if something is familiar, it must be good and safe.

These habits of mind surely helped our ancestors survive. The problem is that relying on them too much can also lead people astray, particularly in an online environment. In one of his experiments, MIT's Rand illustrated the dark side of the fluency heuristic, our tendency to believe things we've been exposed to in the past. The study presented subjects with headlines–some false, some true–in a format identical to what users see on Facebook. Rand found that simply being exposed to fake news (like an article that claimed President Trump was going to bring back the draft) made people more likely to rate those stories as

accurate later on in the experiment. If you've seen something before, "your brain subconsciously uses that as an indication that it's true," Rand says.

This is a tendency that propagandists have been aware of forever. The difference is that it has never been easier to get eyeballs on the message, nor to get enemies of the message to help spread it. The researchers who conducted the Pew poll noted that one reason people knowingly share made-up news is to "call out" the stories as fake. That might make a post popular among like-minded peers on social media, but it can also help false claims sink into the collective consciousness.

Academics are only beginning to grasp all the ways our brains are shaped by the Internet, a key reason that stopping the spread of misinformation is so tricky. One attempt by Facebook shows how introducing new signals into this busy domain can backfire. With hopes of curtailing junk news, the company started attaching warnings to posts that contained claims that fact-checkers had rated as false. But a study found that this can make users more likely to believe any unflagged post. Tessa Lyons-Laing, a product manager who works on Facebook's News Feed, says the company toyed with the idea of alerting users to hoaxes that were traveling around the web each day before realizing that an "immunization approach" might be counterproductive. "We're really trying to understand the problem and to be thoughtful about the research and therefore, in some cases, to move slower," she says.

Part of the issue is that people are still relying on outdated shortcuts, the kind we were taught to use in a library. Take the professor in Wineburg's study. A list of citations means one thing when it appears in a book that has been vetted by a publisher, a fact-checker and a librarian. It means quite another on the Internet, where everyone has access to a personal printing press. Newspapers used to physically separate hard news and commentary, so our minds could easily grasp what was what. But today two-thirds of Americans get news from social

media, where posts from publishers get the same packaging as birthday greetings and rants. Content that warrants an emotional response is mixed with things that require deeper consideration. “It all looks identical,” says Harvard researcher Claire Wardle, “so our brain has to work harder to make sense of those different types of information.”

Instead of working harder, we often try to outsource the job. Studies have shown that people assume that the higher something appears in Google search results, the more reliable it is. But Google’s algorithms are surfacing content based on keywords, not truth. If you ask about using apricot seeds to cure cancer, the tool will dutifully find pages asserting that they work. “A search engine is a search engine,” says Richard Gingras, vice president of news at Google. “I don’t think anyone really wants Google to be the arbiter of what is or is not acceptable expression.”

That’s just one example of how we need to retrain our brains. We’re also inclined to trust visuals, says Wardle. But some photos are doctored, and other legitimate ones are put in false contexts. On Twitter, people use the size of others’ followings as a proxy for reliability, yet millions of followers have been paid for (and an estimated ten percent of “users” may be bots). In his studies, Wineburg found that people of all ages were inclined to evaluate sources based on features like the site’s URL and graphic design, things that are easy to manipulate.

It makes sense that humans would glom on to just about anything when they’re so worn out by the news. But when we resist snap judgments, we are harder to fool. “You just have to stop and think,” Rand says of the experiments he has run on the subject. “All of the data we have collected suggests that’s the real problem. It’s not that people are being super-biased and using their reasoning ability to trick themselves into believing crazy stuff. It’s just that people aren’t stopping. They’re rolling on.”

That is, of course, the way social-media platforms have been designed. The endless feeds and intermittent rewards are engineered to keep you reading. And there are other environmental factors at play, like people's ability to easily seek out information that confirms their beliefs. But Rand is not the only academic who believes that we can take a big bite out of errors if we slow down. researchers asked subjects to assess the website MinimumWage.com. In a few minutes' time, one hundred percent of fact-checkers figured out that the site is backed by a PR firm that also represents the restaurant industry, a sector that generally opposes raising hourly pay. Only sixty percent of historians and forty percent of Stanford students made the same discovery, often requiring a second prompt to find out who was behind the site.

Another tactic fact-checkers used that others didn't is what Wineburg calls "click restraint." They would scan a whole page of search results–maybe even two–before choosing a path forward. "It's the ability to stand back and get a sense of the overall territory in which you've landed," he says, "rather than promiscuously clicking on the first thing." This is important, because people or organizations with an agenda can game search results by packing their sites with keywords, so that those sites rise to the top and more objective assessments get buried.

The lessons they've developed include such techniques and teach kids to always start with the same question: Who is behind the information? Although it is still experimenting, a pilot that Wineburg's team conducted at a college in California this past spring showed that such tiny behavioral changes can yield significant results. Another technique he champions, is simpler still: just read it.

One study found that six in ten links get retweeted without users' reading anything besides someone else's summation of it. Another found that false stories travel six times as fast as true ones on Twitter, apparently because lies do a better job of stimulating feelings of surprise and disgust. But taking a beat can help us

avoid knee-jerk reactions, so that we don't blindly add garbage to the vast flotillas already clogging up the web. "What makes the false or hyper partisan claims do really well is they're a bit outlandish," Rand says. "That same thing that makes them successful in spreading online is the same thing that, on reflection, would make you realize it wasn't true."

You also need a society that cares about that distinction. Schools make sense as an answer, but it will take money and political will to get new curricula into classrooms. Teachers must master new material and train students to be skeptical without making them cynical. "Once you start getting kids to question information," says Stanford's Sarah McGrew, "they can fall into this attitude where nothing is reliable anymore." Advocates want to teach kids other defensive skills, like how to reverse-search an image (to make sure a photo is really portraying what someone says it is) and how to type a neutral query into the search bar. But even if the perfect lessons are dispersed for free online, anyone who has already graduated will need to opt in. They will have to take initiative and be willing to question their prejudices, to second-guess information they might like to believe.

That is why many advocates are suggesting that we reach for another powerful tool: shame. Wardle says we need to make sharing misinformation as shameful as drunk driving. Wineburg invokes the environmental movement, saying we need to cultivate an awareness of "digital pollution" on the Internet. "We have to get people to think that they are littering," Wineburg says, "by forwarding stuff that isn't true." The idea is to make people see the aggregate effect of little actions, that one by one, ill-advised clicks contribute to the web's being a toxic place. Having a well-informed citizenry may be, in the big picture, as important to survival as having clean air and water. "If we can't come together as a society around this issue," Wineburg says, "it is our doom."

Courtesy of AMERICANPRESS institute, Katy Steinmetz-time.com

Chapter Fourteen

Trump had FOX – Trudeau has CBC

Former President Donald Trump and his Republican Party used Fox News for their bluster (although, now that he has lost, Trump isn't as friendly with them) while Prime Minister Justin Trudeau has the CBC gushing over his every word and movement. This is an example of politicians using their favourite biased media to push their right-wing and or left-wing views, making this just another type of 'fake news'.

Thusly, false information is all around us, it is to be found everywhere. Just before the last federal election in Canada the National Observer newspapers Emma McIntosh wrote: an unsubstantiated rumour that Prime Minister Justin Trudeau left a former teaching job due to a sex scandal has, for the past week or so, spread like wildfire across the internet. The false information snowballed, passing from a gossip rag to Twitter to the darkest corners of Reddit to Facebook.

A website known for false Canadian news stories published an article dubiously claiming the rumours were correct, which quickly spread to nearly twenty-five million people and counting, according to the social media monitoring tool CrowdTangle. But because the fake story appears to originate inside Canada rather than from a foreign power, the federal government's anti-election-meddling panel — which hasn't spoken publicly about the rumour — is unlikely to tackle it, experts consulted by National Observer said.

It's a case study for a crucial gap in Canada's defences against disinformation on the campaign trail. "Misinformation is probably going to be spread by domestic actors rather than foreign actors, said Fenwick McKelvey, a communications professor at Concordia University who studies disinformation. "We don't have a good counter-

mechanism." Canadian voters will head to the polls for the federal election on Oct. 21. For weeks amid the chaos of the campaign trail, unfounded rumours about Trudeau have circulated around his departure from West Point Grey Academy, the elite private school in Vancouver where the Liberal leader taught for a few years before leaving in 2001. (A now-infamous photo of Trudeau in brownface originated from a West Point Grey yearbook.)

Gossip rag Frank magazine — rarely a reputable source — published an unsourced story claiming Trudeau may have had an affair with the mother of a West Point Grey student. Then, on Friday, a former Liberal operative hinted on Twitter that news about Trudeau from the Globe and Mail was incoming, and a freelance writer named claimed without evidence that media outlets were "sitting on" a story about Trudeau having slept with a teenager (the writer has since said he regrets spreading the rumour). No such story was ever published and there's no evidence one was ever in the works.

The same day, a right-wing upstart media outlet called The Post Millennial wrote an article about the gossip, prompted by a Globe and Mail reporter questioning Trudeau in a press conference about why he left the job. In response to that question, Trudeau said he had "moved on" with his life. The former headmaster of West Point Grey at the time, Clive Austin, put out a statement saying there was "no truth" in any speculation Trudeau had been dismissed, but this did nothing to halt the rumour mill. It likely stuck, McKelvey said, because it plays on a frequent trope in right-wing memes displaying Trudeau as "creepy." That, in turn, dates back to 2018 allegations the prime minister groped a female reporter nearly two decades earlier.

Each new voice on the West Point Grey rumour added another dimension to the gossip and touched off a fresh groundswell of speculation — even, bizarrely, a rumour that a court injunction from the Liberals had blocked the fictional Globe story. This election, Canada has new measures designed to guard against such disinformation, which has the potential to sway elections. In September 2018, the current Liberal

government introduced an election-integrity task force of officials from the RCMP, Global Affairs Canada and Canada's two intelligence agencies.

The government also created the Critical Election Incident Public Protocol — a panel of bureaucrats tasked with investigating threats to Canadian elections, activated as soon as the election is called. But the panel is mainly focused on foreign meddling, and all members must sign off before it can notify the public of important incidents. In response to questions about whether the panel was investigating the false stories circulating about Trudeau, a government spokesperson reiterated that information about threats to the election would be communicated to senior government officials.

"The decision to speak publicly will rest with the panel... should they be of the view any incident or series of incidents threatens the integrity of the election," the statement read. The disinformation about Trudeau is widespread and worrying, but it's difficult for governments to intervene when it's being spread by domestic actors, said Katie Gibbs, executive director of Evidence for Democracy, a non-partisan not-for-profit that advocates for science-based policy.

"I think we can all agree that foreign interference is something we don't want in our elections, especially when it's misinformation," she said. "I think people's thoughts on what to do about it are fuzzier when it's domestic."

In some ways, McKelvey said, the question of how to handle Canadians who spread incorrect information is "where it gets into ethics" — especially when political groups participate. It's difficult to regulate those issues without wading into free-speech issues and accusations of partisanship, he added. "It's always been kind of a grey area."

In a statement sent to media, after this story was initially published, the Liberal Party said it wouldn't comment on "any story from an outlet with a history of spreading disinformation and complete falsehoods." Just before the Conservative party put out a press release questioning why Trudeau left West Point Grey, driving another spike in attention to the gossip. That evening, the Buffalo Chronicle, an American website known for publishing false stories about Canadian politics mixed with wire copy, upped the

ante in an unsourced article published with no byline. It claimed without evidence Trudeau was trying to pay off a former student, and that quickly spread through Reddit, Facebook and Twitter to a network of more than 24.6 million people, according to CrowdTangle.

In an email to National Observer, Buffalo Chronicle publisher Matthew Ricchiazzi said he left the reporters' bylines off the story to protect the identity of their sources, but two journalists had consulted "nearly a dozen" people working in Canadian politics. "In identifying the journalists involved, we would be, in effect, exposing their sources, given the existence of extensive digital footprints linking them," Ricchiazzi said. McKelvey said it was clear the rumours weren't a true story. The Conservative party didn't answer specific questions from National Observer about the intent of the press release, and whether it was concerned it may have fanned the flames of an unsubstantiated rumour. Instead, spokesman Simon Jefferies pointed to contrasting reports about why Trudeau left West Point Grey.

In one story Trudeau disputed at the time, the Ottawa Citizen reported he had left to pursue speaking gigs (in fact, Trudeau took a job at a public school). Trudeau's 2014 biography said he'd had a values dispute with school administration over an article in the school newspaper about dress codes, and that he took a public-school job shortly afterward. A 2015 Vancouver Sun article and 2019 book later repeated the same sentiment. "We were simply asking why Justin Trudeau's story keeps changing," Jefferies said in a statement. All political parties spin information and raise suspicion about the morals of opposing candidates, McKelvey said: "This one is nuanced and slightly problematic because it's leaning into this conspiracy that's circulating online."

Speaking generally, Gibbs said political parties sharing incorrect information has been a "concerning" issue in the current election. "We've seen in this election candidates and even leaders and parties sharing misinformation and information that they should and probably do know is false," she said.

Politics are a hot-spot of 'fake news,' and we are not just talking phony websites – the parties themselves spill out disinformation guised as news. The danger of courting noxious supporters is a long-standing worry for right-of-centre politicians. Preston Manning, the former Reform party leader who has attained éminence grise status among Prairie populists, has argued that it is the "Achilles heel" of the conservative movement. "Is not its greatest weakness," Manning asked in a 2013 speech, "intemperate and ill-considered remarks by those who in fits of carelessness or zealousness, say things that discredit the family as a whole, in particular conservative governments, parties and campaigns?"

Defending against candidates and operatives who blurt out hateful comments requires organizational diligence. In the age of social media, that means laboriously combing through thousands of past Twitter missives and Facebook posts from would-be Conservative candidates. "I've got two full-time people at party headquarters doing nothing but that," Marshall said, then corrected himself: "Two and a half—we just hired a part-timer as well." the Liberals have signalled that they are also worried about appearing soft on migrants.

Since stories of asylum-seekers crossing into Canada from the U.S. broke in 2017, about 40,000 have made their way into Canada between official border checkpoints. In a measure tucked into its 2019 budget omnibus bill, the Trudeau government tightened the rules so that migrants who had previously filed a refugee claim in the U.S. wouldn't be allowed to apply again in Canada. The move stunned many Canadian immigration lawyers. But Hussen defended the measure. He said the UN rates the U.S. refugee determination system highly. "As long as that's the case, I can rest assured that a person who claimed asylum in the United States is getting a fair shake," he said. "We clearly said that if you don't need protection from our asylum system, don't clog it, don't use it."

Conservatives protest, with credibility, that if they had spoken of refugees needlessly clogging the Canadian system, or accused them, in the phrase used by Border

Security Minister Bill Blair, of “asylum shopping,” Liberals would have denounced them for demonizing migrants. “Justin Trudeau has created this environment in Canada where we can’t talk about public policy related to immigration anymore because of all of his accusations of racism for political gain,” said Conservative MP Michelle Rempel, who was Scheer’s immigration critic.

When it comes to the former President of the United States Donald Trump, many think he probably will go down in history as the greatest liar of all time. Dan P. McAdams of the Los Angeles Times wrote a revealing story in the summer of 2020 – it said. Abraham Lincoln once said, “No man has a good enough memory to be a successful liar.” To be a good liar you must keep track of all the lies you’ve told, and to whom in-order to keep the truth hidden. But Honest Abe never knew former President Trump, or perhaps anybody like him.

Donald Trump is a successful liar because he refuses to remember. Not only that; he refuses to anticipate that he will remember the current moment in the future. If you live mainly in the current moment, then the future consequences of your lies will not matter to you. And if you have lived your entire life this way, and to great acclaim and success, why would you ever want to change? The president was recently annoyed when Dr. Anthony Fauci stole the spotlight by throwing out the first pitch for Major League Baseball’s opening game. In response, he falsely claimed that the Yankees invited him to throw out the first pitch for Aug. 15. His assertion was roundly refuted a short time later. The incident recalls Trump’s false boast that the crowd attending his 2017 inaugural address was the largest in history. Objective photographic evidence decisively refuted that claim.

And yet Trump never pulled back on blatantly false statements — lies that are so obvious that they often defy the laws of physics, chemistry and common sense. Defying biology, even in the face of soaring coronavirus cases and mounting deaths, Trump claimed that the virus at some point is “going to sort of just disappear.” Of the economic crisis that has thrown tens of millions of Americans out of work, he said in March, “This

is just a temporary moment of time." The key to Trump's psychology is that he moves through life as what is called "the episodic man." For Trump, each day is indeed "a temporary moment of time." Psychological research shows that nearly all adults develop stories in their minds about their own lives. These stories — what psychologists call "narrative identities" — reconstruct the past and imagine the future to give people a sense that lives have meaning and coherence over time. As you make daily decisions, you implicitly remember how you have come to be who you are, and you anticipate where your life may be going. You live within narrative time.

But the episodic man does not live that way. Instead, he immerses himself in the angry, combative moment, striving desperately to win the moment. Like a boxer in the ring, he brings everything he has to the immediate episode, fighting furiously to come out on top. But the episodes do not add up. They do not form a narrative arc. In Trump's case, it is as if he wakes up each morning nearly oblivious to what happened the day before. What he said and did yesterday, in-order to win yesterday, no longer matters to him. And what he will do today in-order to win today, will not matter for tomorrow.

What is truth for the episodic man? Truth is whatever works to win the moment. The boxer faces an imminent threat to his survival. If he takes his eyes off the immediate aim of winning, he may get knocked out. Boxing his way through life, moment by discrete moment, Trump does not have the psychological luxury to consider whether his tactics comport with the conventional criteria for truth — such as consistency over time or concordance with the objective reality of the outside world. Every day is a war. All is fair. Nearly forty years ago, Donald Trump conveyed his philosophy of life to an interviewer: "Man is the most vicious of all animals, and life is a series of battles ending in victory or defeat." Before he was sworn into office, Trump told his advisors to think about each presidential day as an episode in a television show in which he vanquishes rivals.

The show is not, however, a long-running drama that builds over time to a conclusion. Each day, instead, is like an episode of "Seinfeld," self-contained with its

own beginning and ending, or like the opening-night game between the Yankees and the Nationals. Somebody will win (in Trump's mind, it is always him) and then we start all over again tomorrow. For most people, and every other president in the history of the United States, an episodic life would be unsustainable in the long run. But for Trump, it has always been a winning life strategy. His admirers appreciate his total engagement of the moment. He brings it all to the battle today. There was (and is) a primal authenticity in Trump. He tells you exactly what he feels in the moment. He lies straight to your face, without shame, without any concern for future consequences. It is the stark audacity of untruth. Trudeau is not in the same league as the former US president, but he couches the truth just the same and the socialist journalists at CBC keep pushing his left wing hidden agenda.

Sources for this chapter include – E. McIntosh, J. Geddes and J. Markusoff – Macleans, L.A. Times

Chapter Fifteen

The Big Three & the Coronavirus

When it comes to the coronavirus, three world leaders stand out as purveyors of ‘fake news’, especially concerning the coronavirus – Vladimir Putin, Donald Trump and yes even Canadas Justin Trudeau, are all guilty of spreading propaganda.

Daniel Dale of CNN authored these words . . . former President Donald Trump was asked directly on why he lied to the American people about the coronavirus pandemic. The beginning of Trump's response: "I didn't lie." That itself is a lie.

Trump admitted to journalist Bob Woodward in a March (2020) interview, for Woodward's new book "Rage," that he had played down the severity of the situation to try to avoid a public panic. And he told Woodward in a February interview that the coronavirus was deadlier than even "strenuous flus" -- then went out weeks later and falsely told the public that the coronavirus "is a flu" and "like a flu."

Trump said again that he had just wanted to keep Americans "calm." Regardless of how benign or malign his intentions were, however, deliberately giving people inaccurate information is a lie. Trump's February (2020) comments about the flu were, of course, not his only false claims about the extent of the crisis. Into March and then again in late July, Trump was still claiming, against all evidence, that the pandemic was under "control."

Trump issued his denial during a White House event that was billed as a "news conference" but that began with a lengthy campaign speech devoted in large part to an attack on his election opponent, former Vice President Joe Biden. Trump said: "I got a report this morning that there's been nobody killed in Afghanistan since early February. A long time. Been no deaths, no problems." Facts First: Trump would have been correct if he had said no US soldiers had been killed "in combat" or "by the enemy" since

February, but he was incorrect that there have been "no deaths" at all. Two US soldiers died in non-combat incidents in July. Another died in a non-combat incident in May.

Spc. Vincent Sebastian Ibarria, 21, died in a vehicle rollover in July, according to the Pentagon. 1st Lt. Joseph Trent Allbaugh, 24, died in another non-combat incident in July. 1st Lt. Trevarius Ravon Bowman, 25, died in a non-combat incident in May.

This is not to mention the Afghan civilians and members of the Afghan security forces who have been killed in violent incidents since the start of 2020. Trump accused Biden of having "launched a public campaign against the vaccine." He then suggested that Biden's comments were something like "being an anti-vaxxer." Facts First: This is at least an exaggeration. Biden has not expressed any general anti-vaccine sentiment or expressed opposition to a coronavirus vaccine. Rather, on Monday, he emphasized that he wants to listen to scientists about a coronavirus vaccine, and receive "full transparency," rather than simply take the word of the Trump administration.

He added, "But pray God we have it. If I could get a vaccine tomorrow, I'd do it. If it cost me the election, I'd do it. We need a vaccine - and we need it now ... we have to listen to the scientists." Vice presidential candidate Sen. Kamala Harris told CNN that she would have to hear from "a credible source of information that talks about the efficacy and the reliability of whatever he's talking about," saying she would "not trust Donald Trump." Trump accused Biden of having a "strategy" to "shut down the entire country," then accused Democrats of pursuing a "very unscientific blanket lockdown." Trump then acknowledged that "they did say it would be based on the recommendation of the experts." Facts First: It's not true that Biden has a "strategy" to shut down the country or that the Democratic Party more broadly is seeking such an approach. Rather, Biden said in an August interview that he would follow the advice of scientists if they advised him to shut down the country if the combination of the coronavirus and the flu created a severe crisis in 2021.

Biden then said in early September 2020 that he thinks there will be "no need" to "shut down the whole economy." Trump did concede by the end of the event that Biden

was talking about listening to experts. But that didn't come until minutes after he falsely suggested Biden was himself proposing a shutdown. Again, touting his response to the coronavirus, Trump repeated his frequent claim that he inherited "no ventilators." Facts First: This is just wrong. A spokesperson for the Department of Health and Human Services confirmed to CNN in late June that there had been about 19,000 ventilators in the national stockpile for "many years," including 16,660 ventilators that were ready for immediate use in March 2020; the spokesperson confirmed that none of those 16,660 were purchased by the Trump administration. Trump repeated his regular claims that he had put a "ban" on travel from China and from Europe because of the coronavirus. Facts First: Trump was exaggerating. Both his travel restrictions on China and his travel restrictions on Europe exempted citizens, permanent residents, and many family members of both groups. Also, the restrictions on Europe exempted some entire European countries.

David Corn in his story on coronavirus stated, it can be easy to lose sight of this big picture, as headlines explode every hour within a political media world cursed by tribalized partisan divisions. There already exists more than enough information to support such an extreme-sounding verdict. But evidence piles up each day—perhaps coming so fast as to overwhelm. The latest revelation (as I write) regarding Trump and the coronavirus crisis is that he told reporter Bob Woodward in March, “I wanted to always play it down.” Here is confirmation of what Americans had repeatedly seen with their own eyes for months: Trump lied about the dangers posed by this killer virus. And those lies, mostly unchallenged by his Republican allies and largely echoed by conservative media propagandists, shaped the ineffectual federal response and influenced how millions of Americans viewed the risks posed by the pandemic. One example: sticking with this big lie, Trump, who in early February 2020 privately told Woodward that the virus was airborne, refused to encourage mask-wearing. It’s likely that thousands—or tens of thousands—have died due to this.

In Canada the Canadian prime minister is sometimes described as the most powerful political executive in the world. Just last year, The Globe and Mail's Doug Saunders wrote, "The Prime Minister and his staff are not just an important part of the government; for all intents and purposes, they are the government." The executive branch cannot always be trusted to exercise its huge power honestly and wisely. For example, the 2015 Liberal Party campaign platform said, "We are committed to ensuring that 2015 will be the last federal election conducted under the first-past-the-post voting system." At the beginning of 2017, shortly after an all-party Commons committee proposed a proportional system of representation, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau decided his heartfelt promise of reform was politically inconvenient and abandoned it. In the 2015 election campaign, Mr. Trudeau specifically rejected the use of omnibus legislation, vast bills often with controversial measures buried deep inside to deflect debate and controversy. And yet, once in power, omnibus legislation became an accepted Liberal technique. Bill C-74 in 2018, for example, was described by the government as a "routine" budget implementation bill, but buried in its more than 500 pages were controversial carbon-pricing provisions and an amendment to the Criminal Code providing for deferred prosecution agreements (does anyone remember the SNC-Lavalin affair?). An egregious recent example of devil-may-care exercise of executive power was the attempt in COVID-19 emergency legislation (Bill C-13), without any discussion or publicity, to give the cabinet the ability until December, 2021, to raise taxes and spend money without Parliament's approval. This proposal was withdrawn when opposition politicians and journalists cottoned on to it.

The punch of executive power in Canada is magnified by the deference to authority of the Canadian people. Canadians, unlike many Americans and Europeans, have not lost trust in experts, technocrats and bureaucrats. The Canadian core identity includes allegiance and submissiveness to institutions. Politeness and courtesy are considered important Canadian attributes. There is a deep-seated reluctance to challenge authority and a desire to avoid conflict. These are qualities that can promote social and political stability and they have earned the gratifying respect and even

admiration of some around the world. But in our current circumstances, excessive deference is dangerous. It makes us too pliant and quiescent about what is done in our name. It encourages us to look the other way as we are systematically deprived of our liberty.

In the time that follows the pandemic we will face choices that seem irrelevant in the fever of emergency. Should we be able to travel internationally as we wish? Can the police turn us back at provincial borders? Are we free to move, as the spirit takes us, within our cities? Can the government order us to stay at home? Can the government limit the right of assembly? Can businesses be closed by fiat? Can the government control price's and requisition goods? Do we need a larger military with a bigger role? Do we have to tell a policeman on demand who we are, where we are going and why? (As I walked through a familiar, now deserted, public plaza in downtown Toronto a few days ago I came across a new sign that said, "Have personal identification ready.") Should the whereabouts of citizens be tracked by dramatically enhanced and mandatory surveillance technology? Should the government have the power to decide who lives and who dies through the allocation of limited medical resources?

In the liberal democracies, as the COVID-19 juggernaut flattens everything in its path, it is suddenly the time of the Strong Man, the political leader who juts out his jaw and proclaims to frightened and grateful followers that he will do what has to be done and whatever it takes. He tells us that big government and a state-run economy will save and protect us all, now and for the indefinite future. If we have-to forget freedom, so be it. It's worth it to stay alive with a roof over our head and a full belly.

Politicians seldom give up extreme executive power once they have it. They seldom leave the throne and go back to their cottage in the country to live in obscurity and cultivate their garden. Cincinnatus, the Roman dictator, is said to have relinquished absolute power and returned to working the plow at his small farm after beating back a foreign invasion, but that was two-and-a-half thousand years ago and the famous story is probably apocryphal. And even if a leader retreats – say, to the town of Crawford in

the state of Texas – he generally leaves much unpleasantness behind. Draconian provisions to meet an emergency situation seldom have a sunset clause and strangely stay in place long after the emergency has passed. The Twin Towers were destroyed in 2001, but the Patriot Act and the Department of Homeland Security, and the fears and beliefs that fuelled them, are with the United States still. Income tax was introduced in Canada in 1917 as a temporary measure to help finance the First World War. “I have placed no time limit upon this measure … a year or two after the war is over, the measure should be reviewed,” said Sir Thomas White, then-Minister of Finance.

Surely modern Canada is different. Ours is a gentle, democratic land, a land of rights and freedoms, a country not given to overreaction or excess. Many of us easily assume our freedom is not in jeopardy. We are not Viktor Orban’s Hungary, or Recep Tayyip Erdogan’s Turkey, lurching toward dictatorship, or even Donald Trump’s turbulent and angry United States. Here at home, things will settle down. They will go back to the way they were. Well, maybe not quite the way they were, but something similar. We will stay a free society.

But this confidence is misplaced. It ignores dangers that lie all around us. Some of these dangers are not new. The structure of Canadian government has long permitted an excess of executive power and the country’s habit of deference to authority encourages its use. Some of these dangers are new, created by the catastrophic moment. There is a desire, born of fear and apprehension, to grant government new powers, to centralize authority in the federal government, to do away with confusing and contradictory provincial standards, to further empower the bureaucracy, to downplay the role of the legislative branch (a branch of government that to some seems increasingly a luxury), to ensure that civil liberties do not get in the way of decisive action. Will we see dramatically increased use of the notwithstanding clause in the Charter of Rights and Freedoms? What will happen to freedom of peaceful assembly, mobility rights, and our right not to be arbitrarily detained or imprisoned?

John Robson in an article under the heading of Justin Trudeau's factory of little lies wrote in the National Post – Justin Trudeau's constant emoting is annoying at the best of times. But when politicians smirk that they're deeply saddened, they are saying the thing that is not and daring us to object. OK. Let's have a "Care If Politicians Are Lying Day." Heck, have it last all year. On Rosh Hashanah, Trudeau pseudo-said, "This year, we may not be able to celebrate in person, but we'll continue to dip apples in honey and pray for a sweet and healthy new year for our friends and family, and for all Canadians." As I tweeted at the time, "Does anyone actually think Trudeau will dip an apple in honey today? If not, why say it?"

Perhaps you consider such drivel vaguely helpful in fending off anti-Semitism. But when you tell a lie, you are lying, and good does not come of evil. "We" will not continue to dip apples in honey if "we" are not Jewish. And I doubt half my Jewish friends dipped an apple in honey in their lives. I mean sure, a century ago candy was a rare treat. But nowadays it's Timbits morning noon and night. An apple? No thanks.

A big as spreader of disinformation as Trump is Russian leader Vladimir Putin. Vladimir Putin has boasted of Russia's success in handling the coronavirus pandemic and attacked America's response - despite his country having the third-largest outbreak in the world. Putin said in an interview with state TV: 'We are exiting the coronavirus situation steadily with minimal losses, God willing, in the States it isn't happening that way.' The Russian president savaged the US for putting 'party interests higher than the interests of the people' and accused Donald Trump of a lack of leadership.

Russia has 528,964 virus cases but only 6,948 deaths (in mid 2020), while the US has piled up more than two million infections and more than 100,000 deaths. However, there are doubts about the accuracy of Russia's figures and fears that the true death toll could be far higher. Russia's death rate is only 1.3 fatalities per one-hundred confirmed cases, a far lower rate than in the US, UK or Italy. Putin's government has now begun giving fuller information on deaths, including cases where Covid-19 was never confirmed by tests.

Under this new method, Russia said 2,712 people had died from coronavirus in April - - more than double the 1,056 deaths which were announced during the month. Russia's daily numbers have fallen from their peak, but the country is still regularly adding more than 8,000 new infections per day. The current total of 528,964 infections is second only to the United States and Brazil, which has more than 850,000 cases. Russia powered through with developing a coronavirus vaccine to give people hope and not because of political pressure, the nation's top virologist told CNN in a rare interview.

All other work at the Gamaleya Institute was suspended and scientists and researchers were tasked with developing an effective vaccine, said the institute's director, Alexander Gintsburg. Promising results led to the vaccine being approved even before widespread human testing, Gintsburg insisted. That's testing that experts say is required before any vaccine is widely used. "It gave people a choice to either protect themselves or play roulette with a pathogen -- will you get infected or not, will you die or not?" he said.

Critics across the globe say the breakneck speed of the vaccine development points to political pressure from the Kremlin, which is keen to portray Russia as a global scientific force. It was President Vladimir Putin himself who announced the approval of the vaccine amid much fanfare on Russian state television. And its name -- Sputnik V -- harks back to the Soviet Union's successful launch of the first space satellite decades ago.

But Gintsburg told CNN the Kremlin did not give instructions to Gamaleya. "We do not have direct communication with the Kremlin, it does not give any orders to us," Gintsburg said. "The only link to the Kremlin [we have] is Putin Vladimir Vladimirovich's portrait in my cabinet," Gintsburg chuckled, referring to a picture of a younger Vladimir Putin adorning his office -- a birthday gift he received fourteen years ago from friends, he said. "Our task is to isolate this pathogen and to defeat it, which is exactly what we

are doing now. And, as we all very well know, it can only be defeated with the help of vaccination."

The Moscow-based Gamaleya institute is one of Russia's oldest, most accomplished vaccine research laboratories. But in the rush to create Sputnik V, it has bypassed normal scientific practices. As well as skipping large-scale human tests before approval, Russian soldiers were used as "volunteers" in early trials and, the Institute's director even injected himself and his staff with the experimental vaccine, CNN learned, as early as April.

"We vaccinated ourselves and our staff. Primarily, the staff that participate in developing this vaccine product. I don't have that many staffers, so I value every employee very much," Gintsburg told CNN. "An illness of any members of the staff would be a hard blow not just to me personally but also for our workflow. I couldn't allow this to happen, to lose any of our staffers, as a result of being infected by Covid-19."

Russia has had the fourth greatest number of coronavirus cases across the world, behind the US, India and Brazil, according to Johns Hopkins University. It ranks 12th for overall deaths, the JHU data shows. Results from the first human tests of Sputnik V were published in The Lancet last month. Importantly, just 76 people were involved in the trials. Experts say that's too small to determine if the Russian vaccine was safe and effective. But, Lancet reported the peer-reviewed clinical data was mostly positive with only mild adverse effects reported and it did trigger an immune response in trial participants.

The fast-tracking of the vaccine approval by Russia before the phase three human trials had begun and at a time when the whole world is looking for a vaccine, generated criticism outside Russia. But Gintsburg, who describes the pandemic as a "war" and an "emergency," said he has no qualms. "Maybe we should ask the relatives of those who died if they would have preferred to vaccinate their loved ones with a vaccine that demonstrated brilliant early results and no side effects, or to wait until the end of the

trials for these results to be confirmed, I believe the answer to this question is obvious," he added.

Sources used in this chapter courtesy of Philip Slayton-Globe and Mail, John Robson-National Post, Ian Birrell-Daily Mail, Zahra Ullah & Matthew Chance-CNN

Chapter Sixteen

Is it Time to End Free Speech?

This book has used someone else's work for most of this chapter. Full credit for this incredible piece of journalism is given at the end of this chapter

This summer (2020), a bipartisan group of about a hundred academics, journalists, pollsters, former government officials and former campaign staff members convened for an initiative called the Transition Integrity Project. By video conference, they met to game out hypothetical threats to the November election and a peaceful transfer of power if the Democratic candidate, former Vice President Joe Biden, were to win (which he did). Dividing into Team Trump and Team Biden, the group ran various scenarios about counting ballots and the litigation and protests and violence that could follow a contested election result. The idea was to test the machinery of American democracy.

Describing the results in a Sept. 3 essay in The Washington Post, one of the project's organizers, Rosa Brooks, a Georgetown law professor and Pentagon official during the Obama administration, mentioned a situation in which Biden won the popular vote but lost in the Electoral College. In that hypothetical case, "desperate Democrats" on Team Biden considered encouraging California and the Pacific Northwest to threaten secession to pressure Republicans to expand the size of the Senate.

The next day, Michael Anton, a former national security adviser to former President Trump, published an article about the Transition Integrity Project called "The Coming Coup?" Democrats were "laying the groundwork for revolution," Anton wrote without evidence in The American Mind, a publication of the Claremont Institute. He warned that ballots harvested "lawfully or not" could tip close states to Biden. By mid-September, Anton's article was one of the most-shared links in extremist online

communities, according to a newsletter published by the Institute for Strategic Dialogue, a think tank based in London. Dan Bongino, a podcaster and Trump supporter, covered Anton's essay and the imagined coup in several videos, with one tagged, "They are telling you what they are going to do!" Just two of the videos pulled in at least six million views.

On Sept. 9, a post appeared on Revolver News, a new right-wing website. It claimed without evidence that one participant in the Transition Integrity Project, Norm Eisen, who served as a counsel for the Democrats on the House Judiciary Committee during the impeachment proceedings, was a "central operative" in a "color revolution" against Trump, a term for uprisings that have toppled governments in countries like Georgia and Ukraine. Trump tweeted in praise of Revolver News a few days later.

On Sept. 15, the Fox News host Tucker Carlson had on his show Darren Beattie, a former Trump speechwriter who was fired after reports surfaced that he had attended a gathering of white nationalists in 2016 and who warned about Eisen and a color revolution. Two days later, Trump tweeted that "the Nov 3rd Election result may NEVER BE ACCURATELY DETERMINED, which is what some want," generating tens of thousands of interactions on Twitter and a round of news coverage about one of the fears that the Transition Integrity Project sought to address — that Trump could refuse to accept the results of the election.

All told, in September 2020 the coup fabrication was shared more than 100,000 times from public Facebook pages, generating many millions of interactions and video views, according to the data source CrowdTangle. Alongside Bongino and Fox News, there were small drivers of traffic like Long Islanders for Trump, the Silent Majority Group and a county Republican organization in Oregon, as well as private groups with thousands of members that CrowdTangle doesn't capture. By the end of the month, the fraction of Republicans who were not "confident" that the election "will be conducted in a fair and equal way" hit sixty-five percent, higher than it was for independents or Democrats, in an NBC News/SurveyMonkey tracking poll. At the end of 2020, Trump

retweeted a response to a Republican member of Congress, Mark Green, who suggested that Speaker Nancy Pelosi could stage a coup.

The United States is in the middle of a catastrophic public-health crisis caused by the spread of the coronavirus. But it is also, in the midst of an information crisis caused by the spread of viral disinformation, defined as falsehoods aimed at achieving a political goal. ("Misinformation" refers more generally to falsehoods.) Seven months into the pandemic in America, with Trump leading the way, coronavirus skeptics continue to mock masks and incorrectly equate the virus with the flu. Throughout the campaign season, Trump and other Republicans have promoted a false narrative of widespread voter fraud, which Attorney General William Barr, as the country's top law-enforcement official, furthered in a September interview on CNN when he said someone in Texas was indicted for filling out 1,700 ballots for other people, which never happened. As fires tore through California and the Pacific Northwest last month, the president cast doubt on the science behind global warming, and people in Oregon defied evacuation orders because of false rumors that antifa, a loose term for left-wing activists, was setting the blazes and looting empty homes.

The conspiracy theories, the lies, the distortions, the overwhelming amount of information, the anger encoded in it — these all serve to create chaos and confusion and make people, even non-partisans, exhausted, skeptical and cynical about politics. The spewing of falsehoods isn't meant to win any battle of ideas. Its goal is to prevent the actual battle from being fought, by causing us to simply give up. And the problem isn't just the internet. A working paper from the Berkman Klein Center for Internet and Society at Harvard released early this month found that effective disinformation campaigns are often an "elite-driven, mass-media led process" in which "social media played only a secondary and supportive role." Trump's election put him in the position to operate directly through Fox News and other conservative media outlets, like Rush Limbaugh's talk-radio show, which have come to function "in effect as a party press," the Harvard researchers found.

The false story about Democrats plotting a coup spread through a typical feedback loop. Links from Fox News hosts and other right-wing figures aligned with Trump, like Bongino, often dominate the top links in Facebook's News Feed for likes, comments and shares in the United States. Though Fox News is far smaller than Facebook, the social media platform has helped Fox attain the highest weekly reach, offline and online combined, of any single news source in the United States, according to a 2020 report by the Reuters Institute.

It's an article of faith in the United States (although not in Canada) that more speech is better and that the government should regulate it as little as possible. But increasingly, scholars of constitutional law, as well as social scientists, are beginning to question the way we have come to think about the First Amendment's guarantee of free speech. They think our formulations are simplistic — and especially inadequate for our era. Censorship of external critics by the government remains a serious threat under authoritarian regimes. But in the United States and other democracies, there is a different kind of threat, which may be doing more damage to the discourse about politics, news and science. It encompasses the mass distortion of truth and overwhelming waves of speech from extremists that smear and distract.

This concern spans the ideological spectrum. Along with disinformation campaigns, there is the separate problem of "troll armies" — a flood of commenters, often propelled by bots — that "aim to discredit or to destroy the reputation of disfavored speakers and to discourage them from speaking again," Jack Goldsmith, a conservative law professor at Harvard, writes in an essay in "The Perilous Public Square," a book edited by David E. Pozen that was published this year. This tactic, too, may be directed by those in power. Either way, it's often grimly effective at muting critical voices. And yet as Tim Wu, a progressive law professor at Columbia, points out in the same book, the "use of speech as a tool to suppress speech is, by its nature, something very challenging for the First Amendment to deal with."

These scholars argue something that may seem unsettling to Americans: that perhaps our way of thinking about free speech is not the best way. At the very least, we should understand that it isn't the only way. Other democracies, in Europe and elsewhere, have taken a different approach. Despite more regulations on speech, these countries remain democratic; in fact, they have created better conditions for their citizenry to sort what's true from what's not and to make informed decisions about what they want their societies to be. Here in the United States, meanwhile, we're drowning in lies.

Facts and transparency are the intended pillars of the modern First Amendment. Since the nation's founding, the Constitution has guaranteed that the government "shall make no law" abridging "the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble." For more than a century, however, these limits on the state's power were worth little. From 1798 to 1801, more than two dozen people, including several newspaper editors, were prosecuted by the administration of President John Adams under the Alien and Sedition Acts, which made "malicious writing" a crime. Protesters were also jailed for criticizing the government during World War I.

In 1919, Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes Jr. invoked the First Amendment to dispute the legality of prosecuting five anarchists for distributing leaflets that called for workers to strike at munitions factories. "The ultimate good desired is better reached by free trade in ideas," Holmes wrote. One of Holmes's chief influences was the British philosopher John Stuart Mill, who argued in his foundational 1859 treatise "On Liberty" that it is wrong to censor ideas, because knowledge arises from the "the clearer perception and livelier impression of truth, produced by its collision with error." In the process, the capacity of citizens to weigh policy questions is strengthened. The government should not censor false or harmful speech because its judgment might be wrong.

Based on Mill's conception of free speech, the political theorist Alexander Meiklejohn argued for elevating the right above other rights, as the foundation of democracy, in his 1948 book "Free Speech and its Relation to Self-Government." Mill and Meiklejohn stand for the proposition that unfettered debate — Holmes's "free trade in ideas," or the "marketplace of ideas," coined by Justice William O. Douglas in 1953 — furthers the bedrock values of the pursuit of truth, individual autonomy and democratic self-governance.

In the 1960s, based on these principles, Supreme Court majorities laid the cornerstones of modern American free-speech protections. In the case Brandenburg v. Ohio, the justices struck down an Ohio law used to arrest a Ku Klux Klan leader for speaking at a rally, barring the government from punishing speech unless it encouraged and was likely to cause "imminent lawless action," like a riot. In the foundational case New York Times v. Sullivan, the court made it difficult for a public figure to sue a newspaper for libel that included false statements. Errors were "inevitable in free debate," the court said, and "must be protected if the freedoms of expression are to have the 'breathing space' that they 'need,'" quoting a previous ruling.

It's a fundamentally optimistic vision: Good ideas win. The better argument will prove persuasive. There's a countertradition, however. It's alert to the ways in which demagogic leaders or movements can use propaganda, an older term that can be synonymous with disinformation. A crude authoritarian censor's free speech. A clever one invokes it to play a trick, twisting facts to turn a mob on a subordinated group and, in the end, silence as well as endanger its members. Looking back at the rise of fascism and the Holocaust in her 1951 book "The Origins of Totalitarianism," the political philosopher Hannah Arendt focused on the use of propaganda to "make people believe the most fantastic statements one day, and trust that if the next day they were given irrefutable proof of their falsehood, they would take refuge in cynicism." In other words, good ideas do *not* necessarily triumph in the marketplace of ideas. "Free speech threatens democracy as much as it also provides for its flourishing," the philosopher

Jason Stanley and the linguist David Beaver argue in their forthcoming book, “The Politics of Language.”

Concerns about the harm of unfettered speech have flared on the left in the United States since the 1970s. In that decade, some feminists, led by the legal scholar Catharine A. MacKinnon and the activist Andrea Dworkin, fought to limit access to pornography, which they viewed as a form of subordination and a violation of women’s civil rights. In the 1980s and ’90s, scholars developing critical race theory, which examines the role of law in maintaining race-based divisions of power, called for a reading of the First Amendment that recognized racist hate speech as an injury that courts could redress.

But the Supreme Court has strongly protected hate speech. In 1992, the Supreme Court unanimously said that the City of St. Paul could not specially punish, as a hate crime, the public burning of a cross or the display of a swastika. In 2011, in an 8-to-1 vote, the court said the government could not stop members of the Westboro Baptist Church in Kansas from picketing military funerals across the nation to protest what they perceived to be the government’s tolerance of homosexuality by holding signs like “Thank God for Dead Soldiers.” Speech can “inflict great pain,” Chief Justice John G. Roberts Jr. wrote for the majority. “On the facts before us, we cannot react to that pain by punishing the speaker. As a Nation we have chosen a different course — to protect even hurtful speech on public issues to ensure that we do not stifle public debate.”

In 2012, by a 6-to-3 vote in United States v. Alvarez, the court provided some constitutional protection for an individual’s intentional lies, at least as long as they don’t cause serious harm. The majority said that the “mere potential” for government censorship casts “a chill the First Amendment cannot permit if free speech, thought and discourse are to remain a foundation of our freedom.”

The Supreme Court has also taken the First Amendment in another direction that had nothing to do with individual rights, moving from preserving a person’s freedom to dissent to entrenching the power of wealthy interests. In the 1970s, the court started

protecting corporate campaign spending alongside individual donations. Legally speaking, corporate spending on speech that was related to elections was akin to the shouting of protesters. This was a “radical break with the history and traditions of U.S. law,” the Harvard law professor John Coates wrote in a 2015 article published by the University of Minnesota Law School. Over time, the shift helped to fundamentally alter the world of politics. In the 2010 Citizens United decision, the court’s conservative majority opened the door to allowing corporations (and unions) to spend unlimited amounts on political advocacy, as long as they donated to interest groups and political-action committees rather than to campaigns.

By requiring the state to treat alike categories of speakers — corporations and individuals — the Supreme Court began to go far beyond preventing discrimination based on viewpoint or the identity of an individual speaker. “Once a defense of the powerless, the First Amendment over the last hundred years has mainly become a weapon of the powerful,” MacKinnon, now a law professor at the University of Michigan, wrote in “The Free Speech Century,” a 2018 essay collection. Instead of “radicals, artists and activists, socialists and pacifists, the excluded and the dispossessed,” she wrote, the First Amendment now serves “authoritarians, racists and misogynists, Nazis and Klansmen, pornographers and corporations buying elections.” In the same year, Justice Elena Kagan warned that the court’s conservative majority was “weaponizing the First Amendment” in the service of corporate interests, in a dissent to a ruling against labor unions.

If Trump’s deeply conservative third Supreme Court nominee, Amy Coney Barrett, is confirmed (she was), the court will most likely become more committed to its path of using the First Amendment to empower corporations. Somewhere along the way, the conservative majority has lost sight of an essential point: The purpose of free speech is to further democratic participation. “The crucial function of protecting speech is to give persons the sense that the government is theirs, which we might call democratic legitimation,” says the Yale law professor Robert Post. “Campbell Soup

Company can't experience democratic legitimation. But a person can. If we lose one election, we can win the next one. We can continue to identify with the democratic process so long as we're given the opportunity to shape public opinion. That's why we have the First Amendment."

Fox News posted an article that drew on a report from the local Fox station in Washington, laying out a conspiracy theory about the death of Seth Rich, a staff member at the Democratic National Committee who was apparently the victim of an attempted street robbery. The story falsely implicated Rich in the Russian hacking of committee emails, which were released by WikiLeaks during the 2016 presidential campaign. Sean Hannity amplified the lies about Rich on his Fox News show that night and the former House speaker Newt Gingrich repeated them on "Fox & Friends" a few days later. The falsehoods spread to conspiracy websites and social media. Fox News retracted its false report online a week later, but "Fox & Friends" did not; Hannity said on his radio show, "I retracted nothing." An ABC affiliate owned by the Sinclair Broadcast Group, a conservative owner of local TV stations, then aired another report on the Rich conspiracy theory, which the local Fox station covered, giving it life for another news cycle.

In a 2018 book, "Network Propaganda," Yochai Benkler, a director of the Berkman Klein Center at Harvard, and two researchers there, Robert Faris and Hal Roberts, mapped the spread of political disinformation in the United States from 2015 to 2018. Analyzing the hyperlinks of four million news articles, the three authors found that the conservative media did not counter lies and distortions, but rather recycled them from one outlet to the next, on TV and radio and through like-minded websites.

The dearth of competition for factual accuracy among conservative outlets leaves their audiences vulnerable to disinformation even if the mainstream news media combats it. People are more likely to believe fact-checking from a source that speaks against its apparent political interest, research shows. In the eyes of many

conservatives, news outlets like The Washington Post, The New York Times and CNN do not fill that role when they challenge a story that Trump and Fox News promote.

Mainstream publications also make mistakes or run with a hyped narrative. The repeated front-page coverage that The New York Times gave to Hillary Clinton's use of a private email server, after breaking the story, shadowed her defeat in 2016. It was also skewered by press critics — an example of how competing outlets challenge and correct one another (even if the system sometimes fails in real time). This "reality-check dynamic" in the mainstream and left-leaning media, Benkler, Faris and Roberts write, "still leaves plenty of room for partisanship." But the standards of journalism, however flawed, appear to "significantly constrain disinformation."

In the past, ensuring a vibrant free press made up of competing outlets was an express aim of federal policy. From the founding until the early 20th century, Congress lowered the cost of starting and running a newspaper or magazine by setting low postage rates for mailed copies. The advent of radio raised questions about how to foster competition and public access. "Lawmakers of both parties recognized the danger that an information chokehold poses to democratic self-government," says Ellen P. Goodman, a law professor at Rutgers University. "So, policymakers adopted structures to ensure diversity of ownership, local control of media and public broadcasting."

In 1927, when Congress created the licensing system for exclusive rights to the broadcast spectrum, so that radio broadcasters could secure a place on the dial, lawmakers told broadcasters to act "as if people of a community should own a station." The 1934 Communications Act similarly required anyone with a broadcast license to operate in the "public interest" and allocated spectrum based on ensuring that local communities had their own stations. In 1949, the Federal Communications Commission established the fairness doctrine, which interpreted operating in the public interest to require broadcasters to cover major public-policy debates and present multiple points of view. And in 1967, Congress created and funded the Corporation for Public

Broadcasting, whose mission is to “promote an educated and informed civil society,” and reserved broadcast spectrum for local NPR and PBS stations.

During these decades, broadcasters were held to a standard of public trusteeship, in which the right to use the airwaves came with a mandate to provide for democratic discourse. Broadcasters made money — lots of it — but profit wasn’t their only reason for existing. “The networks had a public-service obligation, and when they went to get their licenses renewed, the news divisions fulfilled that,” says Matthew Gentzkow, an economist at Stanford who studies trust in information. The model coincided with a rare period, in American history, of relatively high levels of trust in media and low levels of political polarization.

But public trusteeship for broadcast and diverse ownership began to unravel with the libertarian shift of the Reagan era. In the mid-1980s, the administration waived the F.C.C. rule that barred a single entity from owning a TV station and a daily newspaper in the same local market to allow Rupert Murdoch to continue to own The New York Post and The Boston Herald after he bought his first broadcast TV stations in New York and Boston. The F.C.C. repealed the fairness doctrine, which had required broadcasters to include multiple points of view, in 1987. “When that went, that was the beginning of the complete triumph, in media, of the libertarian view of the First Amendment,” the Rutgers law professor Goodman says.

Murdoch and Roger Ailes, a former Nixon campaign adviser, started Fox News as the first TV network to cultivate a conservative audience in 1996. A decade later, studies showed what has become known as the Fox News Effect: After a local cable system adds Fox News to the lineup, voters in the vicinity tend to shift toward Republican candidates. As Trump’s ally and frequent platform, Fox News can help shift its audience’s behavior toward his views even when they may risk public health. In a study this year, a team of economists, controlling for other factors, found that communities with higher numbers of Fox News viewers were less likely to comply with stay-at-home orders to fight coronavirus.

In the early ’90s, David D. Smith, a conservative who inherited the Sinclair Broadcast Group from his father, bought a second local TV station in Pittsburgh, despite a federal regulation barring the ownership of more than one station in a local market. In Baltimore, Sinclair got around the same rule by creating another company, Glencairn, controlled by Smith’s mother and an employee. Sinclair is growing as local journalism is hollowing out: About 1,800 metro and community newspapers have closed or merged since 2004. Sinclair is now the largest station owner in swing states.

More than three-quarters of Americans say they trust local TV news, according to a recent survey by the Poynter Institute. Sinclair owns local affiliates of CBS, ABC, NBC and the CW, as well as Fox, so its partisan leanings aren’t immediately apparent. But they’re there. “We are here to deliver your message — period.” Smith reportedly told Trump during the 2016 campaign. In early 2018, dozens of Sinclair newscasters across the country echoed Trump’s diatribes against the press by reading from the same script warning of “fake stories” from “some members” of the media. (Deadspin captured the repetition of the script in an eerie video montage.) In July, Sinclair released online an interview with Judy Mikovits, a conspiracy theorist who has accused Dr. Anthony Fauci of manufacturing the coronavirus. When the segment drew criticism, the company canceled the planned on-air broadcast but called itself “a supporter of free speech and a marketplace of ideas and viewpoints, even if incredibly controversial.”

The founding ethos of the internet was to treat sources of information equally. Cut loose from traditional gatekeepers — the publishing industry and the government — the web would provide the world’s first neutral delivery of content. But in short order, the libertarian principles that weakened media regulation allowed a few American tech companies to become the new gatekeepers. The United States gave platforms like Google, Facebook and Twitter free rein to grow. Google bought YouTube. Facebook bought Instagram and WhatsApp. The business model for the dominant platforms depends on keeping users engaged online. Content that prompts hot emotion tends to succeed at generating clicks and shares, and that’s what the platforms’

algorithms tend to promote. Lies go viral more quickly than true statements, research shows.

In many ways, social media sites today function as the public square. But legally speaking, internet platforms can restrict free speech far more than the government can. They're like malls, where private owners police conduct. Facebook, YouTube and Twitter have guidelines that moderate content that could drive away users, including spam and pornography, also certain forms of harassment, hate speech, fake engagement or misrepresentation and violent extremism. But for years, the companies enforced these rules subjectively and unevenly — allowing for explosions of anti-Semitic memes and targeted harassment of women, for example.

Mark Zuckerberg of Facebook and Jack Dorsey of Twitter have each said that their sites cannot be "arbiters of truth" and make important exceptions to their guidelines. Facebook leaves up content, including hate speech, that breaks the rules when it decides it's newsworthy, because it's a post from a politician or a public figure. "In the same way that news outlets will report what a politician says," Zuckerberg said in a Facebook post in June, "we think people should generally be able to see it for themselves on our platforms."

Social media sites have leaned on First Amendment principles to keep secret the identities of people who appear to abuse their services. Following the right-wing news coverage of the conspiracy theory about Seth Rich, his brother subpoenaed Twitter, in a defamation suit against media companies, to uncover the name of the person behind the Twitter account @whysprtech, alleging that person sent to Fox News a forged F.B.I. document about Rich's case. Twitter fought back in court, saying that unmasking @whysprtech would chill speech by violating what the platform's lawyers called a constitutional right to be anonymous. This month, a judge ordered Twitter to reveal information that could unmask the person or people behind @whysprtech.

Over the past months, as Trump attacked mail-in voting and the validity of the November election results, Facebook, YouTube and Twitter said they would impose a

few more controls on speech about voting. The platforms expanded or reaffirmed their policies for removing a narrow category of content that misleads people about how to vote — for example, by saying you can fill out a ballot online.

In September 2020, Facebook and YouTube joined Twitter in adding labels to content that a fact check has noted could undermine the results of the election or mislead about the results. (Facebook contracts with an independent fact-checking network, which includes both The Associated Press and Check Your Fact, a subsidiary of the right-wing outlet The Daily Caller. Twitter does fact-checking internally. YouTube relies on a network of news organizations, including PolitiFact and The Washington Post Fact Checker.)

Fact-checking and labeling are First Amendment-friendly responses. They counter false speech with more speech, at the initiative of a private company, not the direction of the government. Today the research consensus among social scientists is that some fact-checking methods significantly reduce the prevalence of false beliefs. In print or on TV, journalists can use headlines or chyrons to provide context and debunking in real time — though they sometimes fail to do so.

Until very recently, Facebook and Twitter used mild labeling language. On Sept. 28, 2020, Trump tweeted: “The Ballots being returned to States cannot be accurately counted. Many things are already going very wrong!” In small blue-print at the bottom of the post, Twitter added a warning symbol — a small exclamation point in a circle — along with the text “Learn how voting by mail is safe and secure.” Facebook labeled the same post, suggesting that voters visit its “Voting Information Center” without including a warning symbol.

Kate Starbird, a professor of human-computer interaction at the University of Washington who tracks social media disinformation, called Facebook’s label “worse than nothing.” Adding a weak label to a Trump post mostly has the effect of “giving it an attention bump by creating a second news cycle about Republican charges of bias in

content moderation," says Nathaniel Persily, a Stanford law professor and co-director of the university's Program on Democracy and the Internet.

Facebook has since updated its labels, based on tests and feedback, including from civil rights leaders. "The labels we have now, we have far more than we used to," says Monika Bickert, Facebook's vice president for content policy. "They've gotten stronger. But I would expect we'll continue to refine them as we keep seeing what's working." Facebook updated the label on Trump's Sept. 28 tweet to "Both voting in person and voting by mail have a long history of trustworthiness in the US and the same is predicted this year. Source: Bipartisan Policy Center." On an Oct. 6 Trump post with more falsehoods about voting, Facebook added an additional sentence to that label: "Voter fraud is extremely rare across voting methods." (Other labels, though, remain mild, and plenty of misleading content related to voting remains unlabeled.)

Angelo Carusone, the president of Media Matters for America, a non-profit media watchdog group, finds the changes useful but frustratingly late. "We went from them refusing to touch any of the content, an entire ocean of disinformation on voting and election integrity, and dismissal of any efforts to address that — to this. They let it metastasize, and now they start doing the thing they could have done all along." Carusone also points out that independent researchers don't have access to data that would allow them to study key questions about the companies' claims of addressing disinformation. How prevalent are disinformation and hate speech on the platforms? Are people who see Facebook, Twitter and YouTube's information labels less likely to share false and misleading content? Which type of warning has the greatest impact?

Twitter and Facebook reduce the spread of some false posts, but during this election season, Starbird has watched false content shared or retweeted tens of thousands of times or more before companies make any visible effort to address it. "Currently, we are watching disinformation go viral & trying desperately to refute it," she tweeted in September. "By the time we do — even in cases where platforms end up taking action — the false info/narrative has already done its damage."

Facebook came under intense criticism for the role it played in the last (2016) presidential race. During the campaign, Facebook later reported, Russian operatives spent about $100,000 to buy some 3,000 ads meant to benefit Trump largely by sowing racial division. By choosing Facebook, a small investment had an outsize payoff as the site's users circulated the planted ads to their followers. "Facebook's scale means we've concentrated our risk," says Brendan Nyhan, a political scientist at Dartmouth College. "When they're wrong, they're wrong on a national or global scale."

Facebook and YouTube have treated political ads as protected speech, allowing them to include false and misleading information. Online ads — like direct mail and robocalls — can make setting the record straight very difficult. Online advertisers can use microtargeting to pinpoint the segments of users they want to reach. "Misleading TV ads can be countered and fact-checked," while a misleading message in a microtargeted ad "remains hidden from challenge by the other campaign or the media," Zeynep Tufekci, a sociologist at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and the author of the 2017 book "Twitter and Tear Gas," wrote in a prescient 2012 Op-Ed in The New York Times.

In this election season, domestic groups are adopting similar tactics. This summer, the Trump-aligned group FreedomWorks, which was seeded by the billionaire Koch brothers, promoted one-hundred and fifty Facebook ads directing people to a page with a picture of LeBron James. The image was accompanied by a quote, in which James denounced poll closures as racist, that was repurposed to deceive people into thinking he was discouraging voting by mail. After The Washington Post reported on it, Facebook removed the page for violating its voter-interference policy, but only after the ads were seen hundreds of thousands of times.

Coordinated fake accounts posting about the election have also shown up on Twitter. In August, NBC News reported on a series of viral tweets that appeared to be from Black men who said they were lifelong Democrats and planned to leave the party. The accounts were fake; one used a stock photo of a Black man, and the other used a

photo of a Dutch model. Twitter eventually took them down. The company recently said that as of Oct. 20, it is making more changes to protect the election, including temporarily warning users if they try to share content that the platform has flagged as false.

Another reason political advertisements are controversial online is that campaigns or groups that pay for them don't have to disclose their identities, as they're required to do on TV and radio and in print. "The First Amendment value of individual autonomy means we should know who is speaking to us and why," the Rutgers law professor Goodman argues. But online, neither the Supreme Court nor Congress has stepped in to require disclosure.

Twitter banned political ads a year ago. This month, Facebook said it would temporarily ban political ads after the polls close on Nov. 3. Last month, the company took another step to protect the U.S. election. It restricted its Messenger app by preventing mass forwarding of private messages, which has done terrible damage in other countries. For several years, falsehoods that were forwarded from person to person, and from group to group, in private encrypted messages on WhatsApp sparked riots and fatal beatings against religious and ethnic minorities in countries including Bangladesh, India, Myanmar and Sri Lanka. In 2018, Facebook started limiting the forwarding of any post on WhatsApp to 20 people; now the limit is five for WhatsApp and Messenger.

As social media companies have tried to address the spread of disinformation and other toxic speech, conservatives including Trump have hurled a series of accusations that the companies are showing bias against them. In May, after Twitter first added labels that read "Get the facts about mail-in ballots" to two Trump tweets predicting mass ballot fraud, the president signed a largely symbolic executive order directed at social media sites, calling the platforms' labels "selective censorship that is harming our national discourse."

In February, The Washington Post reported on an internal effort by Facebook (called Project P, for propaganda) after the 2016 election to take down pages that spread Russian disinformation. The project foundered after Joel Kaplan, Facebook's vice president for global public policy, reportedly said at a high-level meeting, "We can't remove all of it because it will disproportionately affect conservatives," according to a source at Facebook who spoke to The Post anonymously. In an email this month, a Facebook representative said Kaplan's point about Project P was that the company "needed a clear basis for the removal because the impact would be felt more on the right than the left, and we would face criticism."

Kaplan has deep Republican ties. He was present at the so-called Brooks Brothers Riot in Florida shortly after the contested presidential election in 2000, when a group of Republicans in suits succeeded in stopping a recount of ballots to the benefit of their candidate, George W. Bush. In 2018, he sat behind his close friend Brett Kavanaugh during Kavanaugh's confirmation hearing for the Supreme Court. (Kaplan apologized after some of his employees objected that his appearance seemed like a Facebook endorsement of Kavanaugh.)

Facebook employees have also raised questions about whether Facebook's misinformation policy is enforced even handily. According to the policy, publications and individual users will receive a "misinformation strike" for a post that a fact checker determines is false or misleading. A publication with multiple misinformation strikes in 90 days is supposed to lose its eligibility to be in Facebook News, a curated section that generates traffic for publications. (The New York Times is in Facebook News.) In August, Buzzfeed reported that at an all-hands meeting the previous month, Facebook employees asked Zuckerberg how Breitbart News remained a news partner after sharing the video in which doctors called hydroxychloroquine "a cure for Covid" and said "you don't need a mask." Through Breitbart's page, the video racked up more than twenty million views in several hours before Facebook removed it. Zuckerberg said Breitbart didn't have a second strike within the ninety-day period.

But in an internal message group, employees wrote that misinformation strikes against Breitbart had been “cleared without explanation,” and gathered evidence of “preferential treatment” to help conservative accounts in these situations, according to Buzzfeed. One of the employees was later fired; Facebook said it was because “he broke the rules.” When I spoke to Bickert, she said Breitbart was cleared by her team because of “glitches” in Facebook’s system, such as not accurately notifying the publisher. This has happened “to publishers on the left and the right,” Bickert said.

In the last two years, employees have left Facebook sounding an alarm. In 2019, Yael Eisenstat resigned from her role as Facebook’s head of elections integrity after failing to persuade the company to combat misinformation in political ads. In a November op-ed in The Washington Post, she called on the company to stop profiting “from providing politicians with potent information-warfare tools.” Resigning from Facebook this summer, two software engineers, Max Wang and Ashok Chandwaney, separately accused the company of “profiting from hatred.” Sophie Zhang, a data scientist who was fired from Facebook in September, wrote a 6,600-word memo with details about disinformation campaigns she found to influence elections in countries including Ecuador, Honduras and Ukraine. “I have blood on my hands,” she wrote.

John Stuart Mill wrote a century and a half ago that “All silencing of discussion is an assumption of infallibility.” There is still plenty of reason to believe that moving away from the American free-speech tradition could make us too quick to dismiss apparently false ideas that turn out to have merit — and that airing them is the only way to find out. At Howard University’s commencement in 2016, President Barack Obama warned students against pushing colleges to disinvite speakers, “no matter how ridiculous or offensive you might find the things that come out of their mouths.” Instead, he told them, “beat them on the battlefield of ideas.”

In the last several years, however, some liberals have lost patience with rehashing debates about ideas they find toxic. The American Civil Liberties Union celebrated its decision in 1977 to defend the free speech rights of Nazis to march in

Skokie, Ill. Forty years later, some lawyers and board members for the A.C.L.U. objected when the group defended the neo-Nazis who demonstrated in Charlottesville, Va.

Cancel culture — subjecting people to professional or social penalties for their views — has unsettled universities and workplaces. Liberal students have shouted down conservative speakers including Charles Murray and Christina Hoff Sommers. Conservatives have also condemned speakers and academics, for example, for supporting Palestinian rights. The New York Times's decision this summer to publish an Op-Ed in which Senator Tom Cotton called for sending in federal troops to crack down on protests against the police roiled the paper's staff. Citing a "significant breakdown in our editing processes," the publisher, A.G. Sulzberger, announced the resignation of the editorial-page editor, James Bennet.

The First Amendment doesn't have a formal role in these situations — newspapers and universities can decide which views they want to promote — but the principle that it's paramount to protect dissident speech makes them difficult to untangle. If people have the right to peacefully protest against the police, don't neo-Nazis have the same right to peacefully demonstrate? Why is Tom Cotton's Op-Ed beyond the pale but not an October Op-Ed by Regina Ip, a legislator in Hong Kong, who defended police officers' filling the streets and arresting hundreds of pro-democracy demonstrators?

The principle of free speech has a different shape and meaning in Europe. For the European Union, as well as democracies like Canada and New Zealand, free speech is not an absolute right from which all other freedoms flow. The European high courts have allowed states to punish incitements of racial hatred or denial of the Holocaust, for example. Germany and France have laws that are designed to prevent the widespread dissemination of hate speech and election-related disinformation. "Much of the recent authoritarian experience in Europe arose out of democracy itself," explains Miguel Poiares Maduro, board chairman of the European Digital Media Observatory, a project

on online disinformation at the European University Institute. “The Nazis and others were originally elected. In Europe, there is historically an understanding that democracy needs to protect itself from anti-democratic ideas. It’s because of the different democratic ethos of Europe that Europe has accepted more restrictions on speech.”

After World War II, European countries also promoted free speech, and the flow of reliable information, by making large investments in public broadcasting. Today France TV, the BBC, ARD in Germany and similar broadcasters in the Netherlands and Scandinavia continue to score high in public trust and audience share. Researchers in Germany and France who have mapped the spread of political lies and conspiracy theories there say they have found pockets online, especially on YouTube, but nothing like the large-scale feedback loops in the United States that include major media outlets and even the president.

The difference between the political-speech traditions of the United States and Europe was acutely apparent in the American and French presidential elections of 2016 and 2017. When Russian operatives hacked into the computers of the Democratic National Committee, they gave their stolen trove of D.N.C. emails to WikiLeaks, which released the emails in batches to do maximum damage to Clinton and her party in the months before the election. The news media covered the stolen emails extensively, providing information so the public could weigh it, even if a foreign adversary had planted it.

The French press responded otherwise to a Russian hack in May 2017. Two days before a national election, the Russians posted online thousands of emails from En Marche, the party of Emmanuel Macron, who was running for president. France, like several other democracies, has a blackout law that bars news coverage of a campaign for the 24 hours before an election and on Election Day. But the emails were available several hours before the blackout began. They were fair game. Yet the French media did not cover them. Le Monde, a major French newspaper, explained that the hack had “the obvious purpose of undermining the integrity of the ballot.”

Marine Le Pen, Macron's far-right opponent, accused the news media of a partisan cover-up. But she had no sympathetic outlet to turn to, because there is no equivalent of Fox News or Breitbart in France. "The division in the French media isn't between left and right," said Dominique Cardon, director of the Media Lab at the university Sciences Po. "It's between top and bottom, between professional outlets and some websites linked to very small organizations, or individuals on Facebook or Twitter or YouTube who share a lot of disinformation." The faint impact of the Macron hack "is a good illustration of how it's impossible to succeed at manipulation of the news just on social media," said Arnaud Mercier, a professor of information and political communication at the University Paris 2 Panthéon-Assas. "The hackers needed the sustainment of the traditional media." The challenge of informing the public accurately about the coronavirus has also played out differently in the U.S. and Europe. In March, the World Health Organization appealed for help with what it called an "info-demic." Facebook, YouTube, Twitter and others pledged to elevate "authoritative content" and combat misinformation about the virus around the world.

But in August, the global activist group Avaaz released a report showing that conspiracies and falsehoods about the coronavirus and other health issues circulated on Facebook through at least May, far more frequently than posts by authoritative sources like W.H.O. and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Avaaz included web traffic from Britain, France, Germany and Italy, along with the United States, and found that the U.S. accounted for eighty-nine percent of the comments, likes and shares of false and misleading health information. "A lot of U.S.-based entities are actually targeting other countries with misinformation in Italian or Spanish or Portuguese," said Fadi Quran, the campaign director for Avaaz. "In our sample, the U.S. is by far the worst actor."

America's information crisis was not inevitable. Nor is it insoluble. Whatever the Supreme Court does, there's no legal barrier to increasing the delivery of reliable information. The government, federal or state, could invest in efforts to do exactly that.

It could stop the decline of local reporting by funding non-profit journalism. It could create new publicly funded TV or radio to create more alternatives for media that appeals across the ideological spectrum. The only obstacles to such cures for America's disinformation ills are political.

In spring of 2020, when Twitter started labeling Trump's misleading and false tweets about voting fraud, he called for revoking Section 230 of the 1996 Communications Decency Act, which Congress wrote in an early stage of the internet to help it grow. Section 230 effectively makes internet platforms, unlike other publishers, immune from libel and other civil suits for the content they carry. Biden also called for revoking Section 230 in January, citing Facebook for "propagating falsehoods they know to be false."

Taking away the platforms' immunity, however, seems like a bad fit for the problems at hand. The threat of being sued for libel could encourage platforms to avoid litigation costs by pre-emptively taking down content once someone challenges it. Some of that content would be disinformation and hate speech, but other material might be offensive but true — a risk of over censorship.

But there's another idea with bipartisan support: Make the platforms earn their immunity from lawsuits. The Rutgers law professor Goodman and others have proposed using Section 230 as leverage to push the platforms to be more transparent, for example, by disclosing how their algorithms order people's news feeds and recommendations and how much disinformation and hate speech they circulate. A quid pro quo could go further, requiring the companies to change their algorithms or identify super-spreaders of disinformation and slow the virality of their posts. To make sure new media sites can enter the market, the government could exempt small start-ups but impose conditions on platforms with tens of millions of users.

Congress, as well as the Justice Department, can also promote competition through antitrust enforcement. In early October, the House Judiciary's Committee's Democratic leadership released a 449-page report, based on an extensive investigation,

that said Facebook, Google, Amazon and Apple have monopoly power in their markets like that of the “oil barons and railroad tycoons” of the early 20th century. “Because there is not meaningful competition, dominant firms face little financial consequence when misinformation and propaganda are promoted online,” the report stated.

There are plenty of ideas, and bills, floating around Washington that seek to improve the online speech environment — like the giant step of using antitrust law to break up the big tech companies, or medium-size steps like banning microtargeted political ads, requiring disclosure of the ad buyers, making the platforms file reports detailing when they remove content or reduce its spread. But the United States may miss the chance to lead. To fend off regulation and antitrust enforcement, the internet platforms spend millions of dollars on lobbying in Washington. They align their self-interest with a nationalist pitch, warning that curbing America’s homegrown tech companies would serve the interests of Chinese competitors like TikTok.

Europe, however, doesn’t have a stake in the dominance of American tech companies. Policymakers talk about the importance of maintaining the health of their democracies. “We see how the money of advertisers for extreme speech is shifting from the traditional media to digital media,” Věra Jourová, the vice president for values and transparency at the European Commission, told me this summer. “Google and Facebook are the big suckers of this money.” Among other things, Jourová mentioned regulating the platforms’ algorithms. “These issues here are not driven by big money like they are in the U.S., or by regressive ideas as in a state like China,” she said. Maduro of the European Digital Media Observatory has proposed treating the platforms like essential facilities, the European version of public utilities, and subjecting them to more regulation. Senator Elizabeth Warren, the Massachusetts Democrat, has outlined a similar idea in the U.S. It would be a huge shift.

As we hurtle toward the November election with a president who has trapped the country in a web of lies, with the sole purpose, it seems, of remaining in office, it’s time to ask whether the American way of protecting free speech is actually keeping us

free. Hannah Arendt finished her classic work on totalitarianism in the early 1950s, after barely escaping Germany with her life, leaving friends and homeland behind. She was a Jewish intellectual who saw the Nazis rise to power by demonizing and blaming Jews and other groups with mockery and scorn. The ideal subject of fascist ideology was the person “for whom the distinction between fact and fiction (i.e. the reality of experience),” Arendt wrote, “and the distinction between true and false (i.e. the standards of thought) no longer exist.” An information war may seem to simply be about speech. But Arendt understood that what was at stake was far more.

This chapter was taken (published) in ‘whole’ from a New York Times article published in mid-October 2020. It was written by Emily Bazelon who is a staff writer for the magazine and the Truman Capote fellow for creative writing and law at Yale Law School. Her book “Charged” won the Los Angeles Times Book Prize in the current-interest category and the Silver Gavel book award from the American Bar Association.

Chapter Seventeen

Can Newspapers Change Disinformation?

Newspapers cannot even save themselves – but in 2021 they still are better than most of the so called 'social media' …. Reed Turcotte

How can newspapers save todays public from disinformation ('fake news')? In 2018, Farhad Manjoo of The New York Times decided to turn off all his digital news notifications, unplug from social networks, and subscribe to three print newspapers and a weekly magazine. Manjoo was "…. trying to slow-jam the news… [he] still wanted to be informed but was looking to formats that prized depth and accuracy over speed." His experiment to rely mostly on print for news rather than social media taught him several lessons.

First of all, he realized how much of what he had been getting online was not quite news, but "more like a never-ending stream of commentary, one that does more to distort your understanding of the world than illuminate it." And the commentary tends to precede the facts. Relying on social media for the news may mean that what you read is "what other people are saying about the news, rather than the news itself [and] that makes us susceptible to misinformation." Manjoo also realized that it takes time to sort fact from fiction. Time that newspapers tend to take before they report on an event and digital media does not. "Smartphones and social networks are giving us facts about the news much faster than we can make sense of them, letting speculation and misinformation fill the gap…. This was the surprise blessing of the newspaper. I was getting news a day old, but in the delay between when the news happened and when it

showed up on my front door, hundreds of experienced professionals had done the hard work for me."

The third and most important thing Manjoo learned was that "Just about every problem we battle in understanding the news… is exacerbated by plugging into the social-media herd. The built-in incentives on Twitter and Facebook reward speed over depth, hot takes over facts and seasoned propagandists over well-meaning analyzers of news." Manjoo's claim is supported by a new study published in Science by MIT researchers, who tracked thousands of news stories spread on Twitter, which were then tweeted millions of times between 2006 to 2017. They found that false news spreads more rapidly than real news — and by a substantial margin. The study showed that the spread of false information on Twitter was not due to bots programmed to disseminate inaccurate stories but to people retweeting inaccurate news items. In fact, false news stories were seventy percent more likely to be retweeted than true stories and it took true stories about six times longer than false stories to reach 1500 people.

The researchers suggest the reason why this happens is linked to human psychology. "False news is more novel, and people are more likely to share novel information… And on social networks, people can gain attention by being the first to share previously unknown (but possibly false) information. "

Among its ongoing woes, Facebook is also concerned about misinformation spreading through its platform and it recently turned to print newspapers to communicate with the people. In advance of the presidential election in Mexico, Facebook took out full-page ads in prominent Mexican newspapers with the title "Tips to Detect Fake News." Ten tips are offered such as "Doubt the headline," "Check the source" and "Carefully observe the URL." At the bottom of the page, a banner reads, in Spanish, "Together, we can limit the diffusion of fake news."

As Manjoo sums up "You don't have to read a print newspaper to get a better relationship with the news. But, for goodness' sake, please stop getting your news

mainly from Twitter and Facebook. In the long run, you and everyone else will be better off."

Across the pond (Europe), newspapers are also been hyped (by newspapers) as a purveyor against 'fake news.' A case in point, is James Mitchinson, editor of the Yorkshire Post. Mitchinson's email to a reader who would not believe a (true) story about a sick child left to wait on the floor of a Leeds hospital is a model of both public service journalism and how to debunk a lie. "Whatever you do, do not believe a stranger on social media who disappears into the night." The email was an open letter to all readers and one can read it on The Yorkshire Post's website.

If you do visit the page, you will find Mitchinson's measured words about how his journalists check stories and how the fabric of the lie spread initially on Facebook came apart under scrutiny. If you scroll further, you will also come to components of the page which contain both other legitimate stories from the Post and headlines from an automated advertising service called Taboola. The Taboola headlines are not giving readers useful information, but rather startling prompts such as: Angelina Jolie's Daughter Used to Be Adorable, But Now She Looks Insane. Scroll further and you will come to the reader comments on the piece which are hosted by Facebook itself. Within the comments there are dozens of readers who talk straight past Mitchinson's reason with their own conspiracy theories. "I don't know who is telling the truth here," starts the very first comment on the thread. "But I do know if my child was so ill, taking a picture of it and sending it to a newspaper would be the last thing on my mind."

This page on The Post's website is an example of why there is currently a crisis of credibility in news and information. For a dwindling number of journalists to be paid to dispel the social media "dust cloud of nonsense", as Barack Obama once called it, their publications have to rely on the services of companies such as Facebook and Taboola, who make money from having disgracefully low or non-existent editorial standards themselves. Careful lessons on how to parse disinformation are themselves sitting on a dung heap of dubious advertising and problematic content which is – unlike the

journalism – highly profitable for third-party companies. If you look further, you can read about what this asymmetry in the commercial market for information has done to local news in general. The Yorkshire Post's owner, JPIMedia, is the ghost of Johnston Press, the 252-year-old company that went into administration in 2018. The Post and its local newspaper stablemates were in the process of being sold which is a worldwide trend: the shrinkage of local newsrooms as the result of advertising revenues flowing instead to advertising companies such as Facebook and Google.

After the shock result of the 2016 US presidential election, journalists and researchers spent time peeling back the lid on a can of disinformation worms. One social media researcher, Leon Yin, who at the time was working at New York University studying the effects of social media and politics, noticed that a Russian troll farm, the Internet Research Agency, had shared lots of links through its networks during the 2016 election. But only a very few, Yin says, were links to 'fake news' sites. "What I noticed was a majority of the stories being shared were local," Yin told a conference on disinformation and elections at Columbia University in New York last week. Local news is a vulnerability. In the 2020 election cycle, we were already seeing a rise in hundreds of phantom local news sites, set up by political operatives to churn out automated stories that fit particular-talking points. The resources at a local level to counter these operations are shrinking. Two of America's largest news chains, Gannett and Gate House Media are merging with the declared intention of cutting half a billion dollars from their bottom line. McClatchy, another titan of local news, is battling to stay afloat.

Washington Post columnist Margaret Sullivan notes that in the index of trusted news sources, local reporting can often rank higher than national news. Preserving these local outlets may be our best hope of repairing some consensus around facts. "They still are one of the ways that many communities maintain a sense of unity and shared facts," Sullivan says. "Losing that should be unthinkable. But as of this moment, it isn't."

Since the 2016 election in the US revealed how easy it is to manipulate social media platforms, there have been dozens if not hundreds of initiatives to "fight disinformation" as it represents a "crisis for democracy". Last week alone, I attended one conference on disinformation and the press, organised another, and failed to attend a further three. The incredibly gloomy consensus among everyone I listened to or spoke with was that not enough progress has been made in the past three years to effectively deal with the consequences of a polluted news and information environment. Journalists themselves have not been quick enough to understand the levers of disinformation and how they both amplify or recirculate material which is false or intentionally distracting.

American academic Whitney Phillips, who studies disinformation, describes our current approach to the problem as being akin to an environmental movement which tries to clean up a few yards of beach rather than tackle the systemic problem of pollution. The tech platforms have enthusiastically advanced the binary fixes of fact checking, and more moderation, which, in Phillips's adept analogy is very much like cleaning a stretch of beach whilst a broken oil pipe spews into the ocean.

At the end of a UK election the ruling party changed its own social media account to "fact check uk" specifically to mislead readers. A study by First Draft of nearly 7,000 Conservative ads on Facebook found eighty-eight percent of them were "misleading", and where stories like the boy on the hospital floor continued to be debated despite clear confirmation, it seems that we are further away than ever from establishing a shared interest in valuing the truth.

This is not an accident. Although it would be tempting to put the Conservative party's economy with the facts down to accident or incompetence, it is part of a deliberate and consistent strategy to keep populations in a perpetual state of doubt about what truth is. Invert the truth, discredit the press. This has traditionally been the playbook of dictators, but it is also adopted by politicians in democracies as an effective tactic to advance their own agendas. The lack of adequate regulations or advertising

policies to curb the slipperiness is astonishing, yet for politicians to either boost investment into public service journalism or to introduce more stringent advertising regulations would be like the proverbial turkeys passing the Christmas Dinner bill.

Writing in the Observer, Alan Rusbridger argues that we need more good journalism as a key defence against the rising tide of noxious content – and who could disagree? But we also need regulation and legislation – and we need a totally reformed business model for platforms and tech companies. We need journalists and media organisations to realise that they too are too often part of the problem. And we need money, lots of it, taken from one set of people – advertising companies and advertisers themselves – and redirected into real public infrastructure, be it schools, news organisations or even public spaces, to rebuild what we need from the ground up.

Kathy Kiely is the Lee Hills Chair in Free Press Studies at the Missouri School of Journalism and a former political reporter for USA TODAY and she says - call it a guilty pleasure if you must, but one of the great traditions of democratic societies is tabloid journalism. Those in highbrow circles do not approve, at least not publicly. And with good reason. People in highbrow circles tend to have a special relationship towards power: they have it or aspire to having it. Tabloid journalists, on the other hand, exist to take it down.

Not for them the careful nuance, the deference towards authority, the careful cultivation of access that characterizes much of the rest of the Fourth Estate (whose very nickname suggests its symbiotic relationship with power). Tabs engage in intellectual shortcuts — heuristics, in high-brow that can sometimes raise ethical eyebrows but always make for great, cut-to-the-chase headlines. Think “Ford to City: Drop Dead,” the New York Daily News summary of a speech by then-President Gerald Ford rejecting financial aid for the Big Apple. Or the Daily News’ immortal “Cry Baby” cover, featuring a caricature of diaper-wearing, tantrum-throwing Newt Gingrich after the then-speaker of the House indicated he was less-than satisfied by his seat on Air Force One.

No room for a Christmas miracle - Donald Trump canceling the White House party for the press. Romney saying Trump is wrong to vilify the press. It's not the enemy, it's critical to democracy. Craig Newmark and Craigslist didn't destroy newspapers, they outsmarted them. Tabs also can commit some great journalism: It was the often-dissed National Enquirer that exposed the pietistic hypocrisy of former Democratic presidential contender John Edwards.

Which is why it's such a disappointment to learn how the Enquirer let old media down. The paper, which is known for its practice of paying for scoops, admitted in court filings to plunking down $150,000 so it could suppress the story of a woman's alleged affair with Donald Trump. Seems that David Pecker, the CEO of the Enquirer's corporate parent, let proximity to power go to his head. Instead of doing the celebrity watchdogging that won his paper so many readers, he did a favor for his buddy instead.

The greatest moral outrage over this betrayal has emanated from, of all places, The New York Times. It's really - not so ironic, Times media columnist Jim Rutenberg is, like the author of this piece, a tabloid alum. (The writer of this article also worked for the New York Daily News.) Citing the Enquirer's ubiquity — its headlines scream at you from every supermarket checkout counter, and we all have to eat — Rutenberg speculates provocatively about whether the tab proved to be, in the words of the headline, "more powerful than a Russian troll army" in influencing the election.

Online, those kinds of distinctions get lost. Most of the students I teach now get their news through links shared by friends on Facebook or Snapchat. They're not alone: According to a Pew Research Institute study, more American adults now get their news from social media than from printed newspapers. That means they are getting news from sources that are not always easy to trace and, as we are now learning, sometimes are actively trying to undermine faith in democratic institutions, including the free press. That's what could make an army of Russian trolls more powerful than even the National Enquirer and that is what old media has to guard against.

In an era when anyone with an internet connection can be a publisher, readers need to learn to be reporters. In an era without news filters, we need to be our own — verifying, double-checking and evaluating sources. Only then will you be able to determine what belongs in the newsstand, what belongs on the supermarket checkout rack and what belongs in the trash.

As blockchain's hype cycle continues to befuddle many about its potential beyond cryptocurrencies, businesses and governments are moving ahead with projects involving everything from digital identities to voting and supply chain tracking.

According to a L. Mearian – senior reporter of Computerworld – Blockchain (an explorer service, as well as a cryptocurrency wallet) has slipped into the "Trough of Disillusionment" (see Gartner Hype Cycle), because it got ahead of its technical and operational maturity. As a result, interest has waned as most experiments and implementations failed to provide expected results. In most cases, the distributed ledger technology (DLT) has not lived up to expectations that it would drive new societal and business models. And with exception of a few shipping-related projects, most enterprise efforts remain stuck in experimentation mode.

The technology, however, is far from a failure; its promise to deliver a single version of data truth over a secure, distributed and immutable ledger remains compelling and as it matures, many see it becoming a ubiquitous platform for financial services, ecommerce and other markets. By 2023, blockchain is expected to climb out of the hype cycle. And over the next five years industry experts and analysts agree it will expand into a number of cases in payment processing, data sharing, equity trading and contract/document keeping and tracking.

One of the more unique future uses for blockchain may be thwarting fake news, according to a recent report from Gartner. By 2023, up to thirty percent of world news and video content will be authenticated as real by blockchain ledgers, countering "Deep Fake technology," according to Avivah Litan, a Gartner vice president of research and co-author of the "Predicts 2020: Blockchain Technology" report. Fueled by social media

news feeds such as Facebook and Google News, fake news is increasingly used by hostile governments to manipulate elections.

Articles and other content based on false information often attracts more viewers than factual news – a benefit to advertisers and ratings, but a problem for public discourse. For example, the top twenty 'fake news' stories about the 2016 U.S. presidential election received more engagement on Facebook than the top 20 election stories from nineteen major media outlets, according to one study. Websites that spread fake news using bot-controlled accounts are usually hosted anonymously, making it extremely difficult to prosecute the perpetrator's. "AI models that support text writing and video production can be used to rapidly disseminate customized and highly believable fake content that serves as the new breed of cyber weapons," Litan said in the study. "Tracking assets and proving provenance are two key successful use cases for permissioned blockchain and can be readily applied to tracking the provenance of news content."

In August 2020, the U.S. Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA) began developing software that can discover fake news hidden among more than 500,000 stories, photos, video and audio clips. And in September, Facebook initiated the Deep fake Detection Challenge to develop deep fake detection tools. The challenge is jointly organized by the Partnership on AI, Microsoft, Amazon, as well as academics from Oxford, MIT, Cornell Tech, UC Berkeley and other schools.

If successful, the efforts by DARPA, Facebook and others will "blacklist" fake content to block it from reaching target victims and create an algorithm that authenticates and tracks content movement to "whitelists," ensuring its provenance. "Blockchain technology is proven to excel at supporting this use case as it enables a 'shared single version of truth' across multiple entities based on immutable data and audit trails," Litan wrote.

The New York Times is one of the first major news publications to test blockchain to authenticate news photographs and video content, according to Gartner. The

newspaper's Research and Development team and IBM have partnered on the News Provenance Project, which uses Hyperledger Fabric's permissioned blockchain to store "contextual metadata." That metadata includes when and where a photo or video was shot, who took it and how and when it was edited and published.

Blockchain, the newspaper explained, will act as a "database that is not housed on one set of servers owned and operated by one entity, but by many entities and servers that are kept updated simultaneously" making the records of each change traceable. "Files are not so much changed as built upon," former Times editor and independent consultant Sasha Koren said in a blog.

It truly is sad – old media has become more like new media as younger readers today want lists, luxury porn and people to hate, and in order to stay in-touch, once ideologically driven newspapers have now taken on attention to the sensational, exceptional and negative. In other words – newspapers in paper form are pretty much dead.

Sources for this chapter include – The Two Sides Team, Emily Bell-The Guardian, Kathy Kiely-USA Today, Lucas Mearian-Computerworld

Chapter Eighteen

QAnon & Russia spread Disinformation

QAnon is a far-right conspiracy theory. It alleges that a cabal of Satan-worshiping pedophiles is running a global child sex-trafficking ring and plotting against former US President Donald Trump, who is battling against the cabal. The theory also commonly asserts that Trump is planning a day of reckoning known as "The Storm" when thousands of members of the cabal will be arrested. No part of the theory is based on fact. QAnon has accused many liberal Hollywood actors, Democratic politicians, and high-ranking officials of being members of the cabal. It also claimed that Trump feigned conspiracy with Russians to enlist Robert Mueller to join him in exposing the sex-trafficking ring and preventing a coup d'état by Barack Obama, Hillary Clinton, and George Soros.

Although preceded by similar viral conspiracy theories such as Pizzagate, the theory proper began with an October 2017 post on the anonymous imageboard 4chan by "Q", who was presumably a single American individual. It is now likely Q has become a group of people. Q claimed to be a high-level government official with Q clearance who has access to classified information involving the Trump administration and its opponents in the United States. The number of QAnon adherents is unclear as of October 2020, but the group maintains a large online following. In June 2020, Q exhorted followers to take a "digital soldier's oath", and many did, using the Twitter hashtag #TakeTheOath. In July 2020, Twitter banned thousands of QAnon-affiliated accounts and changed its algorithms to reduce the theory's spread. A Facebook internal analysis reported in August found millions of followers across thousands of groups and pages - Facebook acted later that month to remove and restrict QAnon activity. (Wikipedia)

As the year 2020 was ending, QAnon was all over the news. This story appeared in the Vancouver Province newspaper and shows the relationship with QAnon and 'fake news'.

Lily talks almost matter of fact about some of her mother's beliefs, sounding more fatigued by it all than flabbergasted. Nicole Kidman is a Satanist, Hillary Clinton has children hanging in her basement and Reese Witherspoon is eating children, the

Queen's University student recounts. And there is no way to persuade the woman she's wrong, says Lily. “It's cognitive dissonance. It's the most-heavy case of cognitive dissonance you could ever imagine.” Yet the twenty-one, year-old, is just one among a surprising new cohort: Canadians whose lives have been turned upside down after a family member or close friend became immersed in QAnon and its outlandish conspiracy theories.

With tie-ins to U.S. politics and adherence to bizarre, unfounded accusations against liberal, Jewish and Hollywood elites, the movement would seem like a quintessentially American phenomenon. But on a growing Reddit forum for relatives and friends of devotees, called QAnon casualties, numerous Canadians share tales of how the “cult” has fractured their families or marriages. Unlike in the U.S., QAnon seems to have limited impact on Canadian politics, but relatives say it is exacting a deeply personal toll, throwing once-loving relationships into disarray across the county.

Relatives spend hours watching videos, reading social media posts or talking to other adherents, while angrily rejecting attempts to refute their strange ideas, loved ones say. And though not directly part of the QAnon mythology, believers tend to aggressively reject wearing masks and other precautions against COVID-19, even when it might put family members at risk. Some say their Canadian family members wanted to vote in the U.S. presidential election, legally or not, so they could back Donald Trump.

Two Canadians affected by the phenomenon agreed to interviews this week, though they asked that their full names not be published, fearing further family strife, ill effects on a business or abuse from Q followers. Sarah, thirty-five, an Alberta entrepreneur, said her parents are unshakable in their beliefs, showing more faith in YouTube videos by “some guy sitting in his mom's basement,” than verifiable facts. “They look at us like we're the idiots who believe the message from above without questioning it,” she said. “You can come at them with academic articles and news sources from a variety of different places, and all they'll say is, `That's the elite's agenda,' and they don't believe it because it's ‘fake news’.”

On the Reddit page, another Canadian woman painfully describes how she tried to get her husband to abandon his obsession with QAnon and work on repairing their relationship, to no avail. A few days ago, she posted that she was going away for a month and undergoing therapy. “He's always ranting on the phone, scrolling on Twitter, YouTube on speaker,” she wrote. “He says he loves me and his family, but he can't give up QAnon. It is the hill he will die on, a seven-year relationship destroyed with two kids under three, all for this bull.”

Lily says QAnon appears to have spread in Canada. In addition to her own mother, she cites a former boss and his wife, high school friends and fellow university students who have been drawn into the network. “You'd be surprised how many people are silently watching this shit in their basement,” she said. “I know people in my personal life who are university educated, in Queen's Commerce, who are in this. It's not all hillbillies and hicks and conservative weirdos … That's the most astounding thing about it to be honest.”

QAnon has had some peripheral impact on Canadian public life. Before a man was charged with ramming a truck full of guns into the grounds of Rideau Hall, where Prime Minister Justin Trudeau is living, the firm he owned had posted QAnon material on Instagram. A September 2020 anti-mask protest in Montreal featured QAnon signs and T-shirts.

A group of journalists and politicians have formed a group (see Linkedin.com) that prefer accurate news, instead of ‘fake news’ or QAnon type news. They state that ‘fake news’ is common practice worldwide - yes, some news is simply made-up. It is a serious problem, threatening both human well-being and economic progress. The objective of this group is to help companies and the general public to identify one hundred percent ‘fake news’ stories. As a result, both companies and the general public should be better able to select news sources that are above average trustworthy. Access to trustworthy information is not a human right, but it should be. There is a human right aimed at access to information, including how every person should have access to the

internet. But the human rights discussion is silent on the subject of untrustworthy information. Of course, they do not want the UN to decide what is trustworthy information and what is 'fake news', as that will lead to censorship of those with an unpopular opinion. We simply want the deliberate spread of one-hundred percent fake news by so-called serious media to stop (the made-up stories, presented not as satire or fiction or opinion, but instead fake news presented as real news).

'Fake news' can take many forms – in Canada the Canadian Broadcasting Corp. (CBC) faced an uprising within its ranks for accepting advertising that critics said amounts to corporate-sponsored 'fake news.' Hundreds of current and former staff, including Peter Mansbridge, Linden MacIntyre, Gillian Findlay, Bob McKeown and Adrienne Clarkson, expressed "grave concerns" over CBC/Radio-Canada Tandem, a new venture that works with marketers to create and publish what is known as branded content, or paid content: advertising that looks or sounds like regular editorial coverage. In response to the staff actions, CBC/Radio-Canada announced at year end, that it would "press pause" on any further Tandem contracts, and strike a working group comprising representatives of the news, sales, podcast, digital and other departments to study the concerns that had been raised. A group of six journalists spearheading the staff response to Tandem, including Ms. Findlay and investigative reporter Dave Seglins, sent a note to the group of more than four hundred expressing disappointment that their concerns had fallen on deaf ears, and they were calling for a town hall meeting with Ms. Tait.

As the year 2020 was coming to a close-a story by Thomas Daigle of CBC became a print media sensation. Daigle stated, an unlikely source has come under new scrutiny as a major conduit of Russian-linked disinformation: a Montreal-based website run by a retired University of Ottawa professor. The platform, Global Research, features a Canadian domain name and offers an ever-expanding collection of conspiracy theories, such as the myth that the 9/11 attacks and COVID-19 pandemic were both planned in-

order to control the population. The website also hosts articles experts have attributed to a Russian spy agency.

With more than 275,000 Facebook followers and a potential readership in-excess of 350,000 per article, the site has the biggest reach among "Kremlin-aligned" disinformation sites, according to the U.S. State Department. "This is part of a larger effort to sow disarray and distrust within Western democracies," said James Andrew Lewis, a senior researcher at the Washington, D.C.-based think-tank Center for Strategic and International Studies. U.S. intelligence agencies found Russian state actors mounted a multi-faceted assault before the 2016 U.S. election in an effort to undermine the candidacy of Hillary Clinton and bolster Donald Trump's odds of winning. They say the operation involved spreading false claims and amplifying divisive debates within American society online.

Russia was "so successful in 2016, I'm sure they'll try the same thing again in 2020," Lewis said, "and this website is part of that effort." Michel Chossudovsky, the University of Ottawa professor emeritus of economics who runs the site, told CBC News through a lawyer that his platform is not a Russian-aligned disinformation site and urged a reporter not to embark on a "witch hunt." In an email, the lawyer also said his client would not agree to an interview. The FBI has identified such proxy sites as one of the main tools used by Russia this year to sow discord and denigrate Democratic presidential candidate Joe Biden. FBI Director Christopher Wray told a congressional committee in September that the agency has again observed "very active efforts" by Russia to affect the election through "malign foreign influence," including the use of social media, state media and proxies.

Experts say the Canadian-based website fits into the broad network used by Russia to attain its objectives, but also say it is unknown whether there is any co-ordination with Moscow. Since 2001, Global Research has acted as the online component of the Centre for Research on Globalization, a self-styled "independent research and media organization" run by Chossudovsky. Along with more than forty

"research associates" and writers, the website lists a post office box within a convenience store as its mailing address, just down the street from Montreal City Hall. Chossudovsky, a frequent guest on the Russian state TV network RT, serves as the site's editor and is one of its main contributors. He has regularly questioned the seriousness of COVID-19, recently labelling it a "manufactured pandemic."

Disinformation researchers have previously singled out Russia and China as drivers of coronavirus conspiracy theories. One of Global Research's articles, featuring the unsubstantiated claim that the virus first came from a U.S. source, was tweeted in March by a Chinese foreign ministry spokesman and later deleted. Marcus Kolga, founder of the website disinfowatch.org said platforms like Global Research give outlandish narratives "an air of legitimacy that they wouldn't otherwise have," what's known as "information laundering." Global Research posted a piece underscoring Joe Biden's unproven "cognitive decline." The same article also warned of "the imminent danger of a Kamala Harris presidency," suggesting that as a prosecutor, she disproportionately jailed Black men because of a vendetta against her Jamaican-American father.

The website has also published articles sympathetic to the Russian-backed regime of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad and other pieces critical of NATO, the Western alliance that has sought to contain Moscow's aggression. The Globe and Mail reported in 2017 that Global Research had become the target of an investigation by NATO's information warfare specialists, who suspected the site was playing a role in amplifying Russian-aligned narratives with little basis in fact. This year, a U.S. State Department report identified Global Research as being part of a network of proxy sites that, while having no visible ties to Moscow, "serve no other purpose but to push pro-Kremlin content."

"It provides plausible deniability for Kremlin officials when proxy sites peddle blatant and dangerous disinformation, allowing them to deflect criticism while still introducing pernicious information," reads the report, published by the State

Department's anti-foreign propaganda arm, the Global Engagement Center. Based on analysis of web traffic on seven such sites from February to April of this year, the report pointed to the Canadian-based platform as the Kremlin-aligned disinformation site with the biggest potential audience. "At more than 350,000 potential readers per article, no other outlet had half as much reach as Global Research," it said.

Kolga, who is also a senior fellow at the Macdonald-Laurier Institute, an Ottawa-based think-tank, said it's hard to contain disinformation once it's posted on such websites and then shared by users on social media — especially on less regulated message boards such as 4Chan and in groups of QAnon believers. What's more, Kolga said, is that when the main voice of a disinformation website is tied to a respected university, "it makes it believable. That is the problem here." Chossudovsky's CV says he joined the University of Ottawa's economics department in 1968 and was promoted to the rank of full professor in 1979. In 2001, the faculty of social sciences granted him its Excellence in Teaching Award for "outstanding performance." The university's website still lists him as professor emeritus. Two other U of O professors, Marcel Mérette and Yazid Dissou, who appear alongside Chossudovsky in a 2014 picture on his website, said they weren't aware the photo was being used in that way until a CBC reporter brought it to their attention. Both sought to distance themselves from Chossudovsky. Mérette, currently the university's deputy provost, said he does "not endorse or support the views and opinions expressed by the former professor Chossudovsky on the website or in any other medium."

Dissou, an economics professor, similarly said he doesn't want to be associated with Chossudovsky's "activities or ideas," calling him a "former colleague who retired from the department more than six years ago." Chossudovsky's website also features photos of him in discussion with the late Cuban communist leader Fidel Castro. Chossudovsky's CV notes he holds Canadian, British and Irish citizenships and that he's been interviewed on such mainstream news outlets as CBC, CTV and BBC. In

2005, Jewish advocacy organization B'nai Brith complained to the university after the group became aware of Holocaust denial material on Chossudovsky's website.

"We remain concerned that the website still promotes conspiracy theories, including anti-Semitic ones," B'nai Brith Canada CEO Michael Mostyn said in an email to CBC. He pointed to a range of wild claims on the site, including the unfounded allegations that Israel worked with the U.S. to intentionally unleash COVID-19 and that Israel and Jewish-American politicians staged the 9/11 attacks. Chossudovsky declined to answer emailed questions from CBC about his links to Russia and the source of his website's funding. Instead, his Montreal-based lawyer, John Philpot, told CBC that Chossudovsky "pursues legitimate journalism as he has done for almost 20 years."

Philpot also said, "please (do) not embark on the type of witch hunt which has become common practice south of the border." Research from Stanford University's Internet Observatory, a program examining abuse in information technologies, found links tying Global Research to Russian military intelligence agency operations. The 2019 study, commissioned by a U.S. Senate intelligence committee, analyzed online content that Facebook attributed to the spy agency commonly known as the GRU. Based on the research, the State Department said Global Research published or reposted articles by at least seven authors using aliases — or "sock puppet personas," according to the Stanford report — to hide their ties to the GRU. The content remains accessible on the website.

According to a U.S. Justice Department indictment, six alleged officers from the same agency were charged in the U.S. for an array of cyberattacks around the world. The GRU was also linked to a hack of Democratic Party emails in 2016. In an interview, Stanford research scholar Shelby Grossman said the team looked for evidence that disinformation stemming from the spy agency wound up in the mainstream press.

"It didn't really succeed," she said, as the articles were only published on fringe sites such as Global Research. She said the content was more likely to reach audiences

who already tended to believe in conspiracy theories and "weird, Russian-aligned views." "That being said... this is still dangerous," she said.

Sources include, Tom Blackwell-Province, Thomas Daigle-CBC,

Chapter Nineteen

Polls have Become a type of ‘Fake News’

Eric Grenier is a senior writer and the CBC’s polls analyst – this is what he had to say about polls - the accuracy of political polling is being called into question again after the U.S. presidential election turned out to be closer than expected. But while it's clear there was a problem with the polls in the United States, Canada's experience in three pandemic elections does not suggest that polling on this side of the border is experiencing the same issues. When all the votes are finally counted in the U.S., Joe Biden is likely to beat Donald Trump in the national popular vote by about four or five percentage points. The polls had given Biden a lead of between eight and nine points, suggesting an error of roughly four points.

That's not terrific, but it matches the average performance of national polls in U.S. elections since 1972. Errors at the state level look likely to end up close to the historical average as well. Taking the aggregate, the polls missed the winner in only two states — Florida and North Carolina — while there were a couple of surprises in Senate races as well. Polling is an imperfect science, and some degree of error is unavoidable. But that error is supposed to be random. Instead, according to FiveThirtyEight, Trump beat his polls in sixteen of eighteen competitive races. It was an echo of 2016, when Trump also defied the odds. Pollsters later concluded that their samples were short on white voters without college degrees — a demographic that went massively for Trump. Steps were taken to include more of those voters in polling samples this time, and the data suggested Biden was making gains among them.

That proved to be wrong. Nobody yet knows why for certain, but some plausible theories are being suggested (for example, by the Pew Research Center and Nate Cohn of the New York Times). The theories point to everything from the U.S. political climate in 2020 to the COVID-19 pandemic. Could these factors be undermining Canadian

polling as well? If they are, we might have seen hints of them in the provincial elections held in New Brunswick in September and in British Columbia and Saskatchewan in October. There's no clear evidence that we did. When pollsters build a sample, they want it to be representative. If it is, the demographics of the sampled population should match those of the broader population.

But what if the people willing to talk to a pollster aren't representative, regardless of their demographic profiles? The theory goes that Democrats were more eager to participate in polls because they were more politically engaged than Republicans, as suggested by the number of people taking part in protests or donating to Democratic candidates. The president's years of attacks on institutions, polls and the media may have eroded trust in them among his supporters. So, when a diehard Trump fan gets a call from a pollster (so the theory goes), he hangs up. The combination of these two things would have made a polling sample disproportionately Democrat-friendly, even if the demographic profile of the respondents lined up with that of the population. If there was a problem with engaged progressives and distrustful conservatives here, we would expect to see the polls go wrong in roughly the same way they did in the United States.

Instead, we see no such consistent pattern in Canada. The right-of-centre Saskatchewan Party was underestimated by about five points in polls conducted in the last week of that campaign, but that's the exception. The polls in British Columbia were dead-on, with the B.C. Liberals (the main conservative option in the province) being overestimated by an average of just 0.3 points and the progressive parties — the NDP and the Greens — finishing within 0.1 percentage points of their average support in the last week of polling. In New Brunswick, the Progressive Conservatives were underestimated by four points — but so were the Liberals.

This suggests no clear partisan bias in the polls in these three elections. There were some differences between provinces, but there was no problem across the board and certainly nothing out of the ordinary. Another theory is that the models used by

U.S. pollsters to estimate turnout were badly calibrated, making bad guesses about whether a respondent would vote or not. The fact that polls of all registered voters seem to have performed better than polls of likely voters suggests the turnout models were a problem.

Perhaps voters with an inconsistent history of voting — something which normally would mark them as less likely to vote in these models — did in fact vote and broke disproportionately for Trump. In Canada, however, pollsters do not use turnout models (if some of them do, they don't say so publicly). Still, demographic differences in turnout have always been significant potential sources of polling error in any election on this side of the border. Nothing new there. When discussing how the polls performed, it's impossible to ignore how the pandemic made this U.S. election like no other — and how this had a big impact both on polling and voting.

When COVID-19 kept people in their homes this spring, polling response rates increased. But polls have consistently shown Democrats taking the pandemic more seriously than Republicans. Driven in large part by the U.S. president, the seriousness of COVID-19 itself has become a political issue — something demonstrated in the first presidential debate, when Trump mocked Biden for diligently wearing masks. This means the samples in polls might have had a disproportionate number of people staying home due to the pandemic, which would have made the sample disproportionately Democratic. One piece of evidence to support this theory is the fact that indications in the polls that areas with high rates of COVID-19 were swinging against Trump turned out to be false. Wisconsin was a COVID-19 hotspot around election day, and it was one of the states where Trump beat his polls by the largest margin.

This difference in attitude had an impact on voting behaviour: Democrats were much more likely to vote in advance polls and (particularly) by mail, while Republicans were more likely to vote in person. This could have disadvantaged the Democrats — some mail ballots might not have been delivered and they generally have a higher rejection rate than those cast in person. The polls could not have accounted for

this. The same sort of political divide has emerged here in Canada, as demonstrated by the disparity in party support between mail and in-person voting in B.C. and Saskatchewan. (Only about three per cent of ballots cast in New Brunswick were by mail, and they are not separated from other special ballots in Elections New Brunswick's vote tallies.)

In Saskatchewan, the New Democrats beat the Saskatchewan Party by 1.6 percentage points in the 13 per cent of the vote cast by mail. In the remaining 87 per cent of the vote cast in person, the Saskatchewan Party prevailed by 33.9 points. The NDP also did better in the absentee ballots in British Columbia. The B.C. NDP won the absentee vote by 21.4 points over the B.C. Liberals but carried the advance and election day in-person vote by just 9.8 points. It's possible that the COVID-19 divide between right and left had the same impact on the accuracy of the polls in Saskatchewan as they did in the United States. But in B.C., where the percentage of the total ballots that were cast by mail (36 per cent) was comparable to the percentage in the U.S. (about 40 per cent), the polls were extremely accurate.

In the end, the cause of the error in the U.S. is likely to be a mix of these and other factors, some of which are specific to the United States and some of which are not. But the perception of how accurate the polls were in the U.S. has been greatly influenced by how the counting unfolded. On election night, Trump was leading in Michigan, Wisconsin, Pennsylvania and Georgia because the votes counted first were those cast in person. When the mail ballots were counted, the four states shifted to Biden. Nevertheless, the narrative that the polls had completely failed was set. Had the final results of the election been known that night — that the Democrats had retaken the Midwest and won Arizona and Georgia for the first time since the 1990s — there would have been less focus on the accuracy of the polls.

There was also a shift in both B.C. and Saskatchewan when the mail ballots turned out to be enough to flip a few seats over to the New Democrats. They were not enough to matter, as the B.C. NDP and Saskatchewan Party had both secured

comfortable majority governments. But imagine what might have happened if these elections had been close enough for a handful of seats changing hands between the initial and final counts to make the difference between one party or another forming government. When an election is close, polls generally aren't precise enough to tell us more than that the election *is* close, and that one party might have a slightly better shot. Even in a perfect world, polls will always be off by a bit — and the direction in which that error goes is usually unpredictable. But they still help us understand the dynamics of a campaign. If there is one lesson for Canadians to take from how the polls performed in the United States, it's that polls are a good compass — not a GPS.

People throughout the world have become disenchanted with political polls, they believe that pollsters and their results are yet another form of 'fake news'. With this in mind we turn to Nate Cohn of the New York Times to put it in perspective for us all. In an in-depth article he stated, asking for a polling post-mortem at this stage is a little bit like asking a coroner for the cause of death while the body is still at the crime scene. You're going to have to wait to conduct a full autopsy. But make no mistake: It's not too early to say that the polls' systematic understatement of Trump's support was very similar to the polling misfire of four years ago and might have exceeded it.

For now, there is no easy excuse. After 2016, pollsters arrived at plausible explanations for why surveys had systematically underestimated Mr. Trump in the battleground states. One was that state polls didn't properly weight respondents without a college degree. Another was that there were factors beyond the scope of polling, like the large number of undecided voters who appeared to break sharply to Mr. Trump in the final stretch. This year, there seemed to be less cause for concern: In 2020, most state polls weighted by education, and there were far fewer undecided voters. But in the end, the polling error in states was virtually identical to the miss from 2016, despite the steps taken to fix things. The Upshot's handy "If the polls were as wrong as they were in 2016" chart turned out to be more useful than expected, and it nailed Joe Biden's one-point-or-less leads in Pennsylvania, Georgia and Arizona. The national polls

were even worse than they were four years ago, when the industry's most highly respected and rigorous survey houses generally found Hillary Clinton leading by four points or less — close to her 2.1-point popular-vote victory.

This year (2020), Mr. Biden is on track to win the national vote by around five percentage points; no major national live-interview telephone survey showed him leading by less than eight percentage points over the final month of the race. The New York Times/Siena College polls were also less accurate than they were in 2018 or four years ago. In 2016, the last two Times/Siena polls were among a very small group of polls to show Mr. Trump tied or ahead in Florida and North Carolina. This time, nearly all of the Times/Siena surveys overestimated Mr. Biden to about the same extent as other surveys.

In the months ahead, troves of data will help add context to exactly what happened in this election, like final turnout data, the results by precinct, and updated records of which voters turned out or stayed home. All of this data can be appended to our polling, to nail down where the polls were off most and help point toward why. But for now, it's still too soon for a confident answer. In the broadest sense, there are two ways to interpret the repeat of 2016's polling error. One is that pollsters were entirely wrong about what happened in 2016. As a result, the steps they took to address it left them no better off. Another is that survey research has gotten even more challenging since 2016, and whatever steps pollsters took to improve after 2016 were canceled out by a new set of problems. Of these two, the latter interpretation — real improvements canceled out by new challenges — may make the most sense.

"I think our polls would have been even worse this year had we employed a pre-2016 methodology," said Nick Gourevitch of Global Strategy Group, a Democratic polling firm that took steps to better represent Mr. Trump's supporters. "These things helped make our data more conservative, though clearly they were not enough on their own to solve the problem." The explanation for 2016's polling error, while not necessarily complete or definitive, was not contrived. Many state pollsters badly

underrepresented the number of voters without a college degree, who backed Mr. Trump in huge numbers. The pollsters went back to their data after 2016 and found that they would have been much closer to the election result if they had employed the standard education adjustments that national surveys have long used. An Upshot analysis of national surveys found that failing to weight by education cost Mr. Trump about four points in polling support — enough to cover much of the 2016 polling error. Other pollsters had similar findings.

But this time, education weighting didn't seem to help. State and national polls consistently showed Mr. Biden faring far better than Mrs. Clinton did among white voters without a degree. Early results made it clear that he didn't. Overall, the final national surveys in 2020 showed Mr. Trump leading by a margin of fifty-eight percent to thirty-seven percent among white voters without a degree. In 2016, they showed Mr. Trump ahead by far more, fifty-nine to thirty. The results by county suggest that Mr. Biden made few gains at all among white voters without a degree nationwide, and even did worse than Mrs. Clinton's 2016 showing in many critical states. In contrast, the 2016 polls did show the decisive and sharp shift among white voters without a degree but underestimated its effect in many states because they underestimated the size of the group. Many state polls showed college graduates representing half of the likely electorate in 2016, compared with about thirty-five percent in census estimates.

The poll results among seniors are another symptom of a deeper failure in this year's polling. Unlike in 2016, surveys consistently showed Mr. Biden winning by comfortable margins among voters sixty-five and over. The final NBC/WSJ poll showed Mr. Biden up twenty-three points among the group; the final Times/Siena poll showed him up by ten. In the final account, there will be no reason to believe any of it was real. This is a deeper kind of error than ones from 2016. It suggests a fundamental mismeasurement of the attitudes of a large demographic group, not just an underestimate of its share of the electorate. Put differently, the underlying raw survey

data got worse over the last four years, canceling out the changes that pollsters made to address what went wrong in 2016.

It helps explain why the national surveys were worse than in 2016; they did weight by education four years ago and have made few to no changes since. It also helps explain why the error is so tightly correlated with what happened in 2016: It focuses on the same demographic group, even if the underlying source of the error among the group is quite different. Polling clearly has some serious challenges. The industry has always relied on statistical adjustments to ensure that each group, like white voters without a degree, represents its proper share of the sample. But this helps only if the respondents you reach are representative of those you don't. In 2016, they seemed to be representative enough for many purposes. In 2020, they were not.

So how did the polls get worse over the last four years? This is mainly speculation but consider just a few possibilities: The president (and the polls) hurt the polls. There was no real indication of a "hidden Trump" vote in 2016. But maybe there was one in 2020. For years, the president attacked the news media and polling, among other institutions. The polls themselves lost quite a bit of credibility in 2016.

It's hard not to wonder whether the president's supporters became less likely to respond to surveys as their skepticism of institutions mounted, leaving the polls in a worse spot than they were four years ago. "We now have to take seriously some version of the shy Trump hypothesis," said Patrick Ruffini, a Republican pollster for Echelon Insights. It would be a "problem of the polls simply not reaching large elements of the Trump coalition, which is causing them to underestimate Republicans across the board when he's on the ballot." (This is different from the typical shy Trump theory that Trump supporters don't tell pollsters the truth.) A related possibility: During his term, Mr. Trump might have made gains among the kinds of voters who would be less likely to respond to surveys, and might have lost additional ground among voters who would be more likely to respond to surveys. College education, of course, is only a proxy for the traits that predict whether someone might back Mr. Trump or respond to a poll. There

are other proxies as well, like whether you trust your neighbor; volunteer your time; are politically engaged.

Another proxy is turnout: People who vote are likelier to take political surveys. The Times/Siena surveys go to great lengths to reach non-voters, which was a major reason our surveys were more favorable for the president than others in 2016. In 2020, the non-voters reached by The Times were generally more favorable for Mr. Biden than those with a track record of turning out in recent elections. It's possible that, in the end, the final data will suggest that Mr. Trump did a better job of turning out non-voters who backed him. But it's also possible that we reached the wrong low-turnout voters. It's well established that politically engaged voters are likelier to respond to political surveys, and it's clear that the election of President Trump led to a surge of political engagement on the left. Millions attended the Women's March or took part in Black Lives Matter protests. Progressive activists donated enormous sums and turned out in record numbers for special elections that would have never earned serious national attention in a different era. This surge of political participation might have also meant that the resistance became likelier to respond to political surveys, controlling for their demographic characteristics. Are the "MSNBC moms" now excited to take a poll while they put Rachel Maddow on mute in the background? Like most of the other theories presented here, there's no hard evidence for it — but it does fit with some well-established facts about propensity to respond to surveys.

Political pollsters have often assumed that higher turnout makes polling easier, since it means that there's less uncertainty about the composition of the electorate. Maybe that's not how it worked out. Heading into the election, many surveys showed something unusual: Democrats faring better among likely voters than among registered voters. Usually, Republicans hold the turnout edge. Take Pennsylvania. The final CNN/SSRS poll of the state showed Mr. Biden up by ten points among likely voters, but by just five among registered voters. Monmouth showed Mr. Biden up by seven among likely voters in a "high-turnout" scenario (which it ended up being), but by five points

among registered voters. Marist? It had a lead of six points among likely voters and five points among registered voters. The ABC/Washington Post showed a seven-point lead for Mr. Biden among likely voters and a four-point lead among registered voters.

It's still too soon to say whether Republican turnout beat Democratic turnout, but it sure seems possible. In Florida, the one state where we do have hard turnout data, registered Republicans outnumbered registered Democrats by about two percentage points among those who actually voted, even though Democrats outnumber Republicans among registered voters by about 1.5 points in the state. Here, there is no doubt that the turnout was better for the president than the polls suggested, whether they're private polls or the final Times/Siena poll — which showed registered Republicans with an edge of 0.7 points.

If Mr. Trump fared better among likely voters than among registered voters in Pennsylvania, a fundamental misfire on the estimate of turnout could very quickly explain some of the miss. Unlike the other theories presented here, this one can be proved false or true. States will eventually update their voter registration files with a record of whether voters turned out in the election. We'll be able to see the exact composition of the electorate by party registration, and we'll also be able to see which of our respondents voted. Perhaps Mr. Trump's supporters were likelier to follow through. We might start to get data from North Carolina and Georgia in the next few weeks. Other states might take longer.

Remember those Times/Siena polls from October 2019 that showed Mr. Biden narrowly leading Mr. Trump? They turned out to be very close to the actual result, at least outside of Florida. They were certainly closer than the Times/Siena polls conducted since. It wasn't just the Times/Siena polls that were closer to the mark further ahead of the election. Results from pollsters in February and March look just about dead-on in retrospect, with Mr. Biden leading by about six points among registered voters nationwide, with a very narrow lead in the "blue wall" states, including a tied race in Wisconsin.

One possibility is that the polls were just as poor in October 2019 as in October 2020. If so, Mr. Trump actually held a clear lead during the winter. Maybe. Another possibility is that the polls got worse over the last year. And something really big did happen in American life over that time: the coronavirus pandemic. “The basic story is that after lockdown, Democrats just started taking surveys, because they were locked at home and didn’t have anything else to do,” said David Shor, a Democratic pollster who worked for the Obama campaign in 2012. “Nearly all of the national polling error can be explained by the post-Covid jump in response rates among Dems,” he said. Circumstantial evidence is consistent with that theory. We know that the virus had an effect on the polls: Pollsters giddily reported an increase in response rates. High-powered studies showed Mr. Biden gaining in coronavirus hot spots, seeming to confirm the assumption that the pandemic was hurting the president.

But if Mr. Shor is right, the studies weren’t showing a shift in the attitudes of voters in hot spots; rather, it was a shift in the tendency for supporters of Mr. Biden to respond to surveys. Adding to the intrigue: There is no evidence that the president fared worse in coronavirus hot spots, contrary to the expectations of pundits or studies. Instead, Mr. Trump fared slightly better in places with high coronavirus cases than in places with lower coronavirus cases, controlling for demographics, based on the preliminary results by county so far. This is most obviously true in Wisconsin, one of the nation’s current hot spots and the battleground state where the polls underestimated Mr. Trump the most. The final polls in Wisconsin — including the final Times/Siena poll — showed Mr. Biden gaining in the state, even as polls elsewhere showed Mr. Trump making gains.

What happened in Miami-Dade County was stunning. Mr. Biden won by just seven points in a county where Mrs. Clinton won by twenty-nine points. No pollster saw the extent of it coming, not even those conducting polls of Miami-Dade County or its competitive congressional districts. Most polls probably weren’t even in the ballpark. The final Times/Siena poll of Florida showed Mr. Biden with a 55-33 lead among

Hispanic voters. In the final account, Mr. Biden may barely win the Hispanic vote in the state.

What happened in Miami-Dade was not just about Cuban Americans. Although Democrats flipped a Senate seat and are leading the presidential race in Arizona, Mr. Trump made huge gains in many Hispanic communities across the country, from the agricultural Imperial Valley and the border towns along the Rio Grande to more urban Houston or Philadelphia. Many national surveys don't release results for Hispanic voters because any given survey usually has only a small sample of the group. It will be some time until the major pollsters post their results to the Roper Center, a repository of detailed polling data. Then we'll be able to dig in and see exactly what the national polls showed among this group.

But if the Florida polls are any indication, it's at least possible that national surveys missed Mr. Trump's strength among Hispanic voters. It seems entirely possible that the polls could have missed by ten points among the group. If true, it would account for a modest but significant part — maybe one-fourth — of the national polling error. These are the initial guesses. Other theories will emerge. In time, to the extent they can be, all of them will be put to the test. And then we'll know more than we do now and can revisit this question.

The day after the US 2020 presidential election, this column came out in the New York Post by John Podhoretz – it said, every single major election year, they do it to us. They offer us numbers, and people interested in politics mainline them like heroin. We're soothed. We're calmed. Soon we are hungry for more, more, more. By election night, we junkies end up fried, damaged, and in need of rehab. It's time to go cold turkey before our last brain cells are destroyed.

Donald Trump won Florida by 3.5 points. In 2016, he won Florida by 1.1. This past election he tripled his margin of victory. And the polling? The final 538 average had Joe Biden winning Florida by 2.5 points. It was off by five. You'll hear people say this is a normal polling error, not a systemic failure. Bullbleep. This is the third race in a row

(presidency 2016, governor and Senate 2018, and this) in which Florida polling was almost comically wrong. That Florida disaster is mirrored in a longer and deeper national story. We've lived through a series of national elections in which we were sold a bill of goods — about the Obama re-election in 2012, about the Senate in 2014, about the Trump-Clinton contest in 2016 and about control of the House in 2018. Most polls got all these wrong too.

And yet we fell for their crap again. Political polling is a fraud. It claims to measure something that, it is now unmistakably clear, cannot be accurately measured. Polling's seductive promise is that it will take the guesswork out of understanding a complex and changing set of circumstances and replace that uncertainly with something that looks like science. But it's less like the physics that helps us shoot rockets into space and more like the set of the spaceship on "Star Trek." It's shiny. It has a lot of dials and lights. Things beep. But if you put it on the Cape Canaveral launchpad and lit it on fire, you would just burn to death. We should have known better than to listen. But we were lulled by the terminology devised by the lousy writers who control the nonsense language of social science — by the "ninety-five percent confidence intervals" and the "margin of error" and "non-response bias."

This is the kind of argle-bargle that phrenologists must have used to dazzle 19th-century smart people into believing you could make important determinations about a person's character from the bumps on his skull. Why does this matter? Because polling is not only bad for the chattering classes - it is bad for the country. It is used as a form of psychological warfare. It comforts and strengthens those whose priors are confirmed by the numbers and it depresses and paralyzes those who support candidates or policies the polling says are wrong.

Imagine a world in which polling simply became one of fifteen different tools used by politicians. Without being able to gull reporters and other politicians with yummy poll data that cannot be trusted, politicians would be compelled to become persuaders. They would have to take up ideas and argue them determinedly and

powerfully over a long period of time and slowly and arduously get people on their side. And the way we would know if their ideas were working would be how well they convinced other politicians and how voters view the decisions that are made as a result of those ideas being put into practice. It sounds like a ludicrous fantasy. But why, after all this, would anyone ever again listen to a pollster?

Another story published for The Daily Mail Online said; opinion pollsters have once again proved badly wrong in the US Presidential election, four years after Hillary Clinton was widely predicted to win and lost. Polls held just before election day this time around gave Joe Biden an average lead of ten points nationally, and narrower leads in swing states, which all-but evaporated on the day itself.

Nationally, Biden was predicted to lead Donald Trump by fifty-two per cent to forty-two per cent, according to polls. In fact, Biden has taken around fifty per cent while Trump has taken forty-eight per cent, with many ballots still left to be counted. Among the most inaccurate state polls were an ABC-Washington Post poll that gave Biden a seventeen-point lead in Wisconsin, a state where he is now tied with Trump with 49.3 per cent of the vote to forty-nine per cent.

Meanwhile a Quinnipac poll gave Biden a five-point lead over Trump in Florida and a four-point lead in Ohio. In the end, Trump won both - by three and eight points, respectively. As happened in 2016, Donald Trump appears to have been helped by 'shy' voters who turned out on election day but were not willing to admit who they were voting for ahead of time. Many experts and Trump supporters blamed the polling error on an increasing unwillingness of the public to declare their support for conservative candidates.

The same has been true in other countries in recent years, where polls have under-estimated right-wing support. In the UK, Brexit polls incorrectly predicted a win for Remain while polls before the 2019 general election showed rising support for the Labour Party as polling day drew near - in fact the Conservatives won a majority. Steve Hilton, Fox election analyst, said: 'It's been this relentless barrage of hatred toward President Trump and the complete assumption Biden was going to walk it. 'Because of the incredible degree of hate

that's been directed to former President Trump and his supporters by nearly all the media, you've got this situation... where people didn't necessarily want to admit to pollsters who they were supporting because it was socially embarrassing to do so.

If all you hear day in and day out that Trump is an evil, racist monster, then it's going to make it less likely you admit to supporting him, including to pollsters. 'And they haven't really taken that into account at all.' Hilton was previously an adviser to UK Prime Minister David Cameron, who was ousted from power after losing the UK's Brexit referendum - which pollsters also called wrong. The effect of 'shy' voters is known among pollsters as 'social desirability bias', as Nate Silver of FiveThirtyEight explained in an article ahead of the election explaining why Trump could still win. It means that people, when confronted by a stranger on the phone asking them what they think, are more likely to give the answer that they think that person wants to hear - rather than their true opinion.

Arie Kapteyn, a pollster who correctly called a Trump win in 2016, told Politico ahead of the election that he has been adjusting for that bias by asking people who they think their neighbors and friends will vote for. He explained that, when people are asked who they will vote for, they come up with a 10-point lead for Biden. But, when asked who friends will vote for, that lead drops to five or six points. 'One explanation for that may indeed be 'social desirability',' he explained. 'In general—and certainly on the phone—people may still be a little hesitant to say to that they're Trump voters.' Asking who friends or neighbors will vote for eliminates the social bias, because it allows people to talk about how popular they think a candidate is without implicating themselves in it.

Robert Cahaly, pollster for the Trafalgar Group who predicted a Trump win in 2016, added: 'In 2016, the worst being said about Trump voters is that they were 'deplorable.' '2020 is a whole different ballgame. It is worse this time—significantly worse. 'This year had more things where you can get punished for expressing an opinion outside the mainstream than almost any year I can think of in modern history. 'I'm finding that people are very hesitant [to share their preference for Trump], because now it's not just being called 'deplorable.'

'It's people getting beat up for wearing the wrong hat, people getting harassed for having a sticker on their car. People just do not want to say anything.' Cahaly pointed to the 2018 Florida governor's race as a recent example of how pollsters are still getting it wrong. Most called in favor of his Democrat rival, Andrew Gillum. In fact, DeSantis won by a narrow margin. On Fox News, host Tucker Carlson was also asking how pollsters got it so wrong. 'How do we screw it up? We, in effect, lied to people,' Carlson said on-air Tuesday night. 'How did that happen?' Carlson raised the prospect, which has been widely suggested by other political observers, that many Trump supporters are afraid to reveal their voting preferences to pollsters. 'The most basic question the polls raise: Is this a free country? If you're afraid to express a political view in public — you could be fired for it, banished for it — is that a free society? The answer is, of course not,' Carlson said.

Speaking on CNN, Maggie Haberman of the New York Times admitted that the polls were badly wrong and said that whatever had gone wrong in 2016 'still hasn't been fixed'. Ana Navarro, another CNN commentator and strategist, added that pollsters deserve to be 'tarred and feathered' after their performance. Recent polls from Emmerson and Quinnipiac also showed Texas as a toss-up between Trump and Biden, raising the prospect of a Democratic landslide if the historically red state flipped. But with 91 percent of votes reported, Trump held a commanding lead in the Lone Star state, six points ahead at 52.3 percent to 46.2 percent.

Carlson said that the 'obvious lesson' is that the media got it wrong. 'At some point we, the media, need to pause and ask ourselves serious questions about how we're thinking through what's going to happen and how we present it because our predictions affect outcomes, to some extent, and they also, of course, determine our credibility. People judge us based on our predictions,' Carlson said. 'Something really went wrong in the way we predicted a number of these races,' he said.

Speaking ahead of the vote, pollster Frank Luntz admitted that his profession 'is done' if Trump produces another upset (Trump lost). Speaking to Fox News, he said: 'Well, I hate to acknowledge it, because that's my industry — at least partially — but the public

will have no faith. No confidence. 'Right now, the biggest issue is the trust deficit. And pollsters did not do a good job in 2016, so if Donald Trump surprises people, if Joe Biden had a five- or six-point lead, my profession is done.' On the other hand, polls showing Biden leading in Arizona appeared to be confirmed on Election Day, after Fox News called the state for the Democrat with about three-quarters of the votes counted (he did win).

The final election forecast from data journalist Nate Silver's 538 website on election morning gave Biden an eighty-nine percent chance of winning the election - though as midnight approached, a Biden landslide had yet to materialize. For Biden's boosters, the early returns raised the frightful prospect of a repeat of 2016, when most polls showed a commanding lead for Democrat Hillary Clinton that failed to materialize when the votes were tallied. Similarly, polls in the UK predicted a decisive vote against Brexit in 2016 but were proven wrong by voters.

Among those suggesting that the Trump's prospects are being understated is Robert Cahaly of The Trafalgar Group, one of the only nonpartisan outlets that predicted a Republican victory in 2016 after finding that Trump was leading in the key battleground states of Michigan and Pennsylvania. This year Trafalgar's analysis in the final days leading up to the election found a small lead for Trump in both of those states, contradicting nearly every other major poll. In the last presidential election, the polling industry faced embarrassment after projections vastly underrated Trump's chances at winning. Cahaly said its 'quite possible' that the same will happen in 2020, again because a hidden Trump vote was overlooked.

'There are more [shy Trump voters] than last time and it's not even a contest,' Cahaly told The Hill. Susquehanna Polling and Research has also promoted the hidden Trump voter theory, as its most recent survey put Trump and Biden neck and neck in Wisconsin and gave the president a four-point lead in Florida. 'There are a lot of voters out there that don't want to admit they are voting for a guy that has been called a racist,' Susquehanna analyst Jim Lee told WFMZ this week. 'That submerged Trump factor is very real. We have been able to capture it and I'm really disappointed others have not.' But

many pollsters have rejected the idea that Trump voters are hiding, in part by disputing the reliability of Trafalgar's polling methods.

Trafalgar doesn't disclose their 'proprietary digital methods' so I can't really evaluate what they're doing,' Jon McHenry, a Republican pollster with North Star Opinion Research, told The Hill. 'They're far enough out on a limb that a year from now, we'll all remember if they were very right or very wrong.' McHenry said he thinks its unlikely that Trump voters would lie about their voting plans when approached by pollsters but acknowledged that data could be skewed if Trump voters are less likely to participate in surveys altogether.

However, he said that kind of 'skewed response pattern' wouldn't necessarily result in worse projections for Trump. He cited Pennsylvania as an example of a state where Democrats have been found to be less likely to speak to pollsters than Republicans, meaning that they may be underrepresented in the results. McHenry said that while he can't rule out response bias, he's 'skeptical' of it. 'It certainly wouldn't be enough to explain the national deficits we're seeing,' McHenry said.

The New York Post also did a story on why polls were so wrong again in 2020. Once again, reality has humiliated the polling industry. Far from the Democratic landslide that the RealClearPolitics polling average and prognosticators like Nate Silver at FiveThirtyEight anticipated. The 2020 presidential election was agonizingly tight, and Republicans gained seats in Congress and state legislatures. Independent pollster Richard Baris is also critical of his colleagues. “They hurt us bad this election,” Baris told The Post. “This industry is dominated by left-wingers. And a big, big problem is they’re trying to profile the voting behavior of people they don’t understand and may even despise.”

Polling has certainly gotten tougher since George Gallup’s day. As recently as 1997, more than a third of Americans routinely agreed to participate in pollsters’ surveys. By last year, that response rate had plummeted to six percent, a Pew Research Center study found. Yet Baris’ Big Data Poll, along with conservative-leaning pollsters

like Trafalgar and Susquehanna, managed to come closer to the Election Day results than the leading media outfits did. Baris' final poll of Florida gave Trump a two-point lead — one percentage point shy of the president's three-point victory there. In contrast, the New York Times/Siena poll predicted a three-point win for Biden in the Sunshine State. Quinnipiac found a six- point Biden edge.

Baris places the blame, in part, on groupthink within the industry. "I think they bully each other," he said. "They herd. That's when you start to mirror other pollsters because you're afraid that Nate Silver or CNN is going to call you an outlier." Another enemy of accurate polling is time. "You can't reach a truly representative group of people in a day," he said. "But many pollsters are under the gun from their media clients. They want a horse race number, and they want it now." Baris avoided that pressure by crowd-funding his battleground polls. His Twitter followers and podcast listeners ponied up the cash to conduct them — and chose the states he surveyed.

In return, they received above-average transparency, with access to Baris' poll questions, crosstab results, and maps showing just where in each state his respondents were found. "You have to look not just at who you poll, but where you poll," he said. "You can't say that a working-class man in Milwaukee has the same opinions as a working-class man in rural Polk County." But rural and working-class voters tend to be much more resistant to pollsters' entreaties — and that, Baris suspects, compounded his competitors' failure to anticipate Trump's support this year. "The way they're polling, they are reaching voters that skew too urban," he said. "In that case, your Republican sample will be stacked with the John Kasich Republicans, the Bill Kristol Republicans — and that's not the Republican Party that gave the presidency to Donald Trump."

Highly educated voters are often eager to answer a pollster's call, Baris finds, so it's easy for time-pressed pollsters to oversample them. "They are dying to tell you what they think. They want to enlighten you," he said. "The other people just want to have their dinner and go to bed. It takes more finesse and more time to get to them." Baris

also designed his poll to uncover secret reservoirs of Trump support — the under-the-radar "shy Trump voters" — by measuring what pollsters call social desirability bias.

In a six-question sequence, he asked whether respondents feel comfortable sharing political opinions with family, friends, neighbors, co-workers, strangers and pollsters. "You would be shocked at how uncomfortable people said they feel about talking to a pollster," he said. In Florida, for example, it came to thirty-three percent of all respondents. "The most uncomfortable groups were suburban women and black men aged thirty to sixty-five," Baris said. "Those are the shy Trump voters. And in the exit polls, Trump did unexpectedly well with those groups."

Long-time Republican pollster Frank Luntz's focus-groups work this year confirmed Baris' findings. "The fact is, Trump people don't like being interviewed by pollsters," Luntz said. "They tell me they would never consider talking to a pollster, because that would help the pollster manipulate them, and they are so wary of being manipulated." A focus-group setting, Luntz said, makes it possible to build trust with participants — a benefit that gave him insight into undecided voters' thought processes as Election Day approached. "It wasn't until the first debate that I realized they were evaluating the two candidates under a different metric I've never seen before," he said. "It wasn't, 'Do I agree with Trump's agenda or Biden's agenda?' It was, 'Can I tolerate Trump's persona, which I don't like, or do I take a risk with Joe Biden's agenda that I do not know?" he said. "They had completely different factors that they were choosing between with each candidate." Pollsters, he believes, should make more of an effort to empathize with these leery voters. "It requires you to say to them, I respect you, I appreciate you, I value you — and your opinion will have an impact," he said. "It's about humility. And too many pollsters approach this with a sense of arrogance."

Sources for this chapter include, John Podhoretz, Keith Griffith, Megan Sheets, Mary Kay Linge, Doree Lewak-New York Times, Nate Cohn-N.Y. Times, CBC

Musings & Thoughts

The term right-wing alternative media in Canada and the United States usually refers to internet, talk radio, print, and television journalism. They are defined by their presentation of opinions from a conservative or right wing point of view and politicised reporting as a counter to a perceived liberal bias of mainstream media.

At the beginning of the 2000s, blogs of all political persuasions became increasingly dominant. Conservative blogs such as Power Line, Captains Quarters and blogger Michelle Malkin covered and promoted a number of stories, for instance the Swift Boat Veterans' criticism of the war record of presidential candidate John Kerry. Particularly notable was the uncovering of the "Memo gate" scandal by Little Green Footballs and others. American blog Captains Quarters played a role in the 2004 Canadian election, outflanking a Canadian judicial gag order on media coverage of hearings related to a Canadian Liberal Party corruption scandal. The fallout from the scandal helped lead to a Conservative victory in the following election

Using the tools for modelling the spread of infectious disease, cyber-risk researchers at Stanford Engineering analyzed the spread of 'fake news' much as if it were a strain of Ebola. "We want to find the most effective way to cut the transmission chains, correct the information if possible and educate the most vulnerable targets," said Elisabeth Paté-Cornell, a professor of management science and engineering. She has long specialized in risk analysis and cybersecurity and is overseeing the research in collaboration with Travis I. Trammell, a doctoral candidate at Stanford.

Here are some of their key learnings: The researchers have adapted a model for understanding diseases that can infect a person more than once. It looks at how many people are "susceptible" to the disease – or in this case, likely to believe a piece of fake

news. It also looks at how many have been exposed to it, and how many are actually "infected" and believe the story; and how many people are likely to spread a piece of fake news.

Much like a virus, the researchers say that over time being exposed to multiple strains of fake news can wear down a person's resistance and make them increasingly susceptible. The more times a person is exposed to a piece of fake news, especially if it comes from an influential source, the more likely they are to become persuaded or infected. The so-called "power law'" of social media, a well-documented pattern in social networks, holds that messages replicate most rapidly if they are targeted at relatively small numbers of influential people with large followings.

Researchers are also looking at the relative effectiveness of trolls versus bots. Trammell says bots, which are automated programs that masquerade as people, tend to be particularly good for spreading massive numbers of highly emotional messages with little informational content. Think here of a message with the image of Hillary Clinton behind bars and the words "Lock Her Up!" That kind of message will spread rapidly within the echo chambers populated by those who already agree with the basic sentiment. Bots have considerable power to inflame people who are already like-minded, though they can be easier to detect and block than trolls.

By contrast, trolls are typically real people who spread provocative stories and memes. Trolls can be better at persuading people who are less convinced and want more information Paté-Cornell and Trammell say that much like ordinary crime, disinformation will never disappear. But by learning how it is propagated through social media, the researchers say it's possible to fight back. Social media platforms could become much quicker at spotting suspect content. They could then attach warnings – a form of inoculation – or they could quarantine more of it.

The challenge, they say, is that protection has costs – financial costs as well as reduced convenience and limitations on free expression. Paté-Cornell says the dangers of fake news should be analyzed as a strategic management risk – similar- to how we

have traditionally analyzed the risks posed by cyberattacks aimed at disabling critical infrastructure. “It’s an issue of how we can best manage our resources in order to minimize the risk,” she says. “How much are you willing to spend, and what level of risk are we willing to accept?”

‘Fake news’ is already a national security issue. But Paté-Cornell and Trammell predict that artificial intelligence will turbocharge ‘fake news’ in the years ahead - it will make it much easier to target people with ‘fake news’ or deep-fake videos – videos that appear real but have been fabricated in whole or in part – that are finely tailored to what a susceptible viewer is likely to accept and perhaps spread. AI could also make it easy to create armies of more influential bots that appear to share a target’s social background, hometown, personal interests or religious beliefs. Such kinds of hyper-targeting would make the messages much more persuasive. AI also shows great potential to counter this scourge by identifying fake content in all forms, but only time will tell who prevails in this new age arms race.

At times it seems that every crackpot is coming out of the woodwork to promote their version of the world as they see it – yet another form of ‘fake news’. For years, Newsmax was a bit player in the right-wing media universe. The twenty-two year-old news outlet was small compared with conservative media juggernauts like Fox News and Breitbart, with a modestly popular website and a little-watched TV network featuring shows with Republican B-listers like Diamond & Silk and Sean Spicer, the former White House press secretary.

But that changed after the recent US election in 2020, when Newsmax refused to call the election in Mr. Biden’s favor. Newsmax does not have a decision desk, so its refusal mostly amounted to a symbolic protest. Still, its buoyed Trump supporters who were defiant about the president’s loss and led Mr. Trump and his allies to embrace the outlet as a friendly venue. Since then, Newsmax TV has promoted a parade of conspiracy theories and false allegations of voter fraud, and has pointedly refused to refer to Mr. Biden as the president-elect.

The alternate-reality strategy is working and turning Newsmax into a legitimate contender for conservative eyeballs in the post-Trump era. Newsmax TV was getting its highest ratings ten days after the US election, with as many as 800,000 people tuning in to its prime time shows, according to Nielsen. (Before the election, it was averaging just 65,000 viewers at any given time, according to CNN's Brian Stelter.) Mr. Trump has been furiously sharing Newsmax clips and retweeting supporters who say they are turning to the network out of frustration with Fox News.

"He's very disappointed in Fox News," Christopher Ruddy, Newsmax's chief executive and a friend of Mr. Trump's, said in a CNN interview. Citing increased ratings since the election, Mr. Ruddy claimed that Newsmax is now "a major player in cable news." Sticking by Mr. Trump in defeat is also paying off online. Newsmax's app was the fourth most-popular app in Apple's App Store on Thursday after the election, ahead of TikTok and Instagram. For the first time, it beat both Fox News and Breitbart in Facebook engagement, according to data from CrowdTangle, a Facebook-owned analytics tool. And its YouTube channel has more than doubled its following since the election and now has more than a million subscribers.

Newsmax is still considerably smaller than Fox News. But its willingness to indulge fringe conspiracy theories and defend Mr. Trump with disproved voter fraud allegations has endeared it to the Trump base, and fueled speculation that Mr. Trump could use it as a template for his own post-presidency media venture. Election officials across the nation have said that there is no evidence of widespread vote fraud, and many Republican legal challenges have been thrown out in state courts. But on Newsmax TV, hosts have been encouraging Mr. Trump not to concede defeat, saying there is still a chance he will be proclaimed the winner.

"You dig in your heels, and you fight," said Carl Higbie, a Newsmax host, in a video that has been viewed more than nineteen million times on Facebook. Many conservatives have migrated away from Facebook and Twitter since the election. As the social media companies have clamped down on misinformation, they have clashed with

Republicans and conservatives who have spread lies about the election's outcome, leading to claims that the tech platforms are censoring them. The beneficiaries are Parler, a Twitter-like app that describes itself as the world's "premier free speech social network," the right-wing media app Newsmax, and other social sites like MeWe and Rumble, which have purposely welcomed conservatives.

Shortly after the election, Parler shot to the top of Apple's App Store in downloads. A few days latter, it had eight million members, nearly double the 4.5 million it had last week. Rumble said it projected seventy-five million to ninety million people will watch a video on its site in November 2020, up from 60.5 million the previous month. And Newsmax said more than three million people watched its election night coverage and that its app has recently been in the top 10 daily apps downloaded from Apple's App Store.

Sources include Kevin Roose, Mike Issac, Kellen Browning-N.Y. Times

Epilogue

As this author was completing the final chapters of this book, the 2020 US election had taken place and the Trump allies were flooding search engines with misinformation on president-elect (then) Biden's victory. The amount of 'fake news' by these right-wing fanatics was beyond belief so it seemed right to talk about it in this chapter (epilogue).

As late as early December 2020, now former President Trump, and his team continued to circulate fabricated claims of a stolen election and voter fraud. Their allies were flooding the internet search engines and social media with falsehoods intended to question the legitimacy of President-elect Joseph R. Biden Jr.'s victory. This dynamic — the Trump team broadcasting misinformation, which is then plugged into the high-wattage amplifier of social media — was an essential piece of Mr. Trump's campaign and administration and has, if anything, intensified in the wake of his defeat.

One particular brazen example surfaced a week after the election. Some users who entered the search phrase "Biden loses PA" into Google — not an uncommon search given Mr. Trump's claims — were directed to a page topped with a YouTube video entitled "Biden Loses Pennsylvania and Loses President-Elect Status." If the term "Biden loses" is entered, another video entitled "Breaking News!!! Biden Loses President-Elect Status" message appears for some users as the top video result. These claims are false.

Many Republicans had privately rightly conceded that Mr. Trump's path to victory was nonexistent but were reluctant to challenge him. Latter, Senator Mitch McConnell, the majority leader, refused to acknowledge Mr. Biden as the president-elect and said Mr. Trump was "one-hundred percent" within his rights to pursue legal remedies and recounts, though he did not comment on what he thinks the outcome of such outcomes will be. In the next breath, Mr. McConnell celebrate the victories of many Republican candidates — that were won in the same election.

As of November 10th, Mr. Biden was ahead by more than 45,000 votes in Pennsylvania, and while counting was still going on, his lead was insurmountable, according to analysts (in the end he did win that state). While Mr. Trump's allies focused their legal fights on Nevada, Wisconsin, Michigan and Georgia, Mr. Biden's margins of victory in those states were not overturned. The first video, posted by an obscure YouTube user who is linked to a blog that promotes conspiracy theories about the media, touts a debunked and fictitious claim that the political website RealClearPolitics rescinded Mr. Biden's win in Pennsylvania, and hence revoked his status as president-elect.

While most major news outlets, including The New York Times, called the race for Mr. Biden a few day's latter, RealClearPolitics had been more cautious. It had not declared a winner by November 15th, 2020, pending the outcomes in several states, including North Carolina and Alaska, where Mr. Trump was ahead. That did not stop Rudolph W. Giuliani, the president's lawyer, who has claimed — without providing evidence — that Democrats stole the election, from posting a tweet claiming the site had taken away Pennsylvania and made it a "toss up."

Tom Bevan, who runs RealClearPolitics, quickly shot back, "This is false. We never called Pennsylvania, and nothing has changed." Mr. Giuliani, who has roughly one million followers on Twitter, did not remove his post. He did not immediately return multiple requests for comment. Pam Bondi, another Trump legal adviser who has 110,000 followers, tweeted out a similar message, but deleted it later. Sean Spicer, Mr. Trump's former press secretary, took it a step further, appending a correction to his original tweet echoing the claim.

But the misinformation has spread through Facebook and Twitter anyway, amplified on social media by Trump supporters who have large followings, including Scott Presler and Diamond and Silk. "If you thought disinformation on Facebook was a problem during our election, just wait until you see how it is shredding the fabric of our

democracy in the days after," Bill Russo, a Biden press aide who has criticized social media companies, tweeted.

Alternative media in North America provides a range of perspectives and ideas that are not necessarily available in the profit-driven media products and outlets that dominate the Canadian mediascape. They include traditional media forms, such as books, newspapers, magazines, television, radio and film, as well as non-traditional and so-called "new media" forms such as zines and online publications and podcasts. Some definitions also include street theatre, murals, posturing and culture jamming. Media that challenge the status quo and provide alternative perspectives have a long history in Canada. In the early 19th century, Joseph Howe and William Lyon Mackenzie used their newspapers to oppose the establishment and encourage political reform. Toward the end of that century, poor working and social conditions spawned the labour press, which challenged the dominant partisan political press of the time, criticizing social inequalities and advocating progressive change.

Small book publishers appeared in Canada in the late 1930s and early 1940s as the Great Depression caused cutbacks at the major publishing houses. Trade publishers are large operations, comprising many departments and geared to market books that will be profitable. Although small presses do not disdain profits, they are often started by writers and staffed by themselves and several friends. Small presses in Canada include, among others, Coach House (established 1965 in Toronto) and Arsenal Pulp Press (1971 in Vancouver).

Similarly, in the 1960s an explosion of radical newspapers in cities across the country fuelled calls for social reform. These papers include the Georgia Straight, first published May 5th, 1967 in Vancouver. The Georgia Straight eventually became a free alt-weekly newspaper that later publications in other cities emulated, including *NOW* (established 1981 in Toronto) and The Coast (established 1993 in Halifax).

In 1966, student activists founded This Magazine in Toronto. It has been a platform for influential progressive voices in Canada ever since. Ad busters, a non-profit alternative magazine, was founded in Vancouver in 1989. Its message is largely anti-corporate and often derisively humorous. The editors of adjusters were most notably the activists who called for the Occupy Wall Street protest of 2011.

Political satire is often the subject of alternative media. Notable satirical publications include Frank (established 1987) and The Beaverton (2010), which spun off into a news spoof show on Comedy Network in 2016. In the early 1970s, Canada was at the forefront of establishing community access cable channels, on which local people could produce and air their own television programs. Throughout the 1970s and 1980s, the federal government established several programs to aid in the development of Indigenous newspapers and broadcasting. Québec has a particularly rich history of community radio broadcasting.

Today there are many independent and community media organizations operating in cities across the country that provide alternatives to corporate media fare. Over the last few decades there has been an explosion of newspapers and magazines directed toward specific ethnic, linguistic or cultural groups. A smaller number of publications are more explicitly political in focus and strive to provide social and political perspectives that are often left off the corporate-driven news and information agenda.

In the broadcast realm, the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC) maintains a range of policies in the areas of ethnic, community and Indigenous broadcasting that provide the framework for many small radio and television operations. The Aboriginal Peoples Television Network, established in 1999, has been particularly successful in developing alternative television fare specifically for Indigenous audiences.

Online organizations such as rabble.ca, The Tyee and The Rebel have created new platforms for delivering news and opinion. These platforms offer a mixture of written,

video and podcast content. Podcasting, which grew in popularity in the 2010s, simplifies the creation of special-interest programs. Podcasts and podcast networks are the digital equivalent of pirate or guerrilla radio stations because they do not require a licence to operate and bypass traditional mass media networks. Examples include Indian & Cowboy, a podcast network of Indigenous programming, and Canadaland, which is both a show and podcast network that focuses on media criticism.

For the most part, alternative media outlets are economically unstable. Due to their small size and reach, they have few economies of scale. With traditional forms of media (e.g., print and television), the size and demographics of alternative audiences are often unknown, making advertising and subscription sales difficult. Economic uncertainty also creates irregular publication dates and poor distribution, compounding these problems. Moreover, there is little in the way of government infrastructure to support traditional alternative media. Regulations requiring cable operators to provide and help fund a community cable channel have been weakened, and alternative broadcasters sometimes charge that policy makers try to force them to simply fill gaps in the programming offered by commercial broadcasters rather than allow them to develop formats of their own.

Online publishing of videos, articles or podcasts allows independent and alternative media companies to obtain detailed demographic information about their audiences. Furthermore, online crowdfunding platforms such as Kickstarter, Indiegogo or Patreon allow alternative media to generate revenue through one-time donations, usually to fund a new project or initiative, or through frequent, small donations that amount to subscription fees. These platforms and fundraising methods are used by both non-profit and for-profit media companies. Alternatively, online media can establish “paywalls,” which require readers to pay a subscription or one-time fee to access the publication, podcast or videocast. Alternative media provide perspectives that are often left out of dominant mainstream media. With rising concentration of ownership in the corporate media, the need for developing new media outlets is apparent. While

the Internet holds some promise for providing these alternatives, it is only a partial answer.

One would think that with all this negative publicity on ‘fake news’ coming from the general population, media and politicians that this tidal-wave of misinformation would start to dissipate – but no, it’s gotten worse. It does look like, there is no turning back and that ‘fake news’ is here to stay. The future could turn brighter as there are dozens of start-ups and small digital publishers that have launched in Canada (and the US) in the past few years to fill the gaps in coverage, as newspapers close or reduce service across the North America and the world. The positive response to these Independent news outlets tells one that there are many, many more new start-ups to come. The question is – will this new media be filled with ‘fake news’ or will they follow the old media and publish the truth – stay tuned.

Sources include, Glen Thrush, Linda Qiu-New York Times

The Last Word

This author has used copious pages in this book, quoting high caliber sources (mostly journalists and academics), and they have shown the reader that 'fake news' is indeed an ominous shadow hiding in the darkness. As 2020 was heading to a conclusion, a column by Kerry Hubartt in the News Sentinel titled, honesty is journalism's antidote to 'fake news' appeared. Here then is his take on things.

In the many years I taught a beginning news writing and reporting class as an adjunct faculty member at IPFW while working as a journalist full-time at The News-Sentinel, I made a point of trying to get across to my students the concept of being objective as a reporter.

The essence of my instruction was that news stories should never contain the writer's opinion. The longer I taught the class, it seems, the more suspect that ideal became due to the heightened frenzy in recent years over "fake news." Opinion, of course, can turn up in news writing in more ways than a reporter's blatant use of subjective conclusions. News can be "slanted" by interpretation of facts, imbalance in sources, omissions of available information and the overall emphasis of certain facts over others. Therein, to me, is the crux of what fake news really means — and I believe it's become more of a problem in commentary and social media than what I believe is normally responsible news coverage.

The reason I bring this up is because of a story I read last by a writer from the Greencastle Banner-Graphic, who summarized a recent panel discussion at DePauw University on the responsibility of journalists in disseminating information. The Pringle Institute for Ethics at DePauw hosted three experts to tackle the issue of neutrality for journalists and news sources. The panelists were Peter Catapano, editor of "The Stone," a philosophy and ethics blog published by The New York Times; Gary Hicks, professor of mass communications at Southern Illinois University in Edwardsville, Ill.; and William

Hamrick, professor emeritus of philosophy at SIU and a 1966 graduate of DePauw University.

Greencastle reporter Brand Selvia wrote that the discussion began with the question of what being “neutral” means to news sources when they report news or create content. Catapano made some excellent points in terms of journalistic responsibility, saying, journalists must separate the news article from the editorial.

“In journalism,” he said, “there has been a traditional border between news and opinion. … The journalist is responsible to deliver the news to the reader without that opinion.” He also aptly pointed out that even when writing opinion, journalists must back up their viewpoints with research. But the whole idea of journalists being “neutral” set my teeth on edge, because I have learned through the years that it is virtually impossible to do, and that if a news writer actually pulled it off, the end product would be a grocery list of facts and quotes.

I appreciated the comments of panelist Hicks, who said, “We need to responsibly report the facts. The polarization of the media is a real problem now. However, it is a mistake to believe that journalists need to be ‘neutral’ in their reporting, because you can give fringe ideas an audience.” What he was saying, wrote Selvia, was that journalists must be responsible with these narratives rather than neutral.

Rather than robotically neutral transcribers of information, Hicks described journalists and editors as gatekeepers of information. In other words, they analyze and digest the information they have gathered and then use the facts and comments from sources that explain the story and eliminate content that is irrelevant or inaccurate. “There is a difference between what is presented and how it is presented,” Hamrick explained. He sees the problem occurring in narratives that can be definitively split between conservative and liberal biases.

Hicks said, “There can’t be neutrality in a definite, literal sense. There is a judgment system in which journalists choose what to do as gatekeepers.” And, yes, that

could be considered subjective, based on the journalist's knowledge and training. But it should not be based on their particular views or political leaning.

Hicks even said reporters should be honest in their reporting by offering their own their takes on events. What does that mean? In my earlier years as a sportswriter, for example, I found that readers could experience what I experienced as a reporter when I accurately chronicled that experience in terms of descriptions that recreated it. Bland, emotionless, colorless writing about facts and figures without the human element, in my opinion, isn't good journalism. If a police reporter is on the scene of a crime or accident and is moved by the emotions, words and actions of victims, witnesses and police, won't the reporter's description of that make the story more relevant to the reader? Being objective doesn't mean being neutral. But it must, indeed, mean being honest.

The 'final last words' comes from the author of this book. "The world we live in, in 2021, is fragmented, broken, distant and full of untruths when it comes to the media. I have tried to give you, my readers, the gist of 'fake news' and my own follies regarding disinformation – and it is finally time to say goodbye and fully retire from all this chaos". Let's close this book with the lyrics of Frank Sinatra's song, "That's Life" followed by Bob Seger's "Against the Wind" – two lyrics I feel at home with and can relate to.

That's Life

That's life, that's what all the people say
You're riding high in April
Shot down in May
But I know I'm gonna change that tune
When I'm back on top, back on top in June

I said, that's life (that's life), and as funny as it may seem
Some people get their kicks
Stompin' on a dream

But I don't let it, let it get me down

'Cause this fine old world it keeps spinnin' around

I've been a puppet, a pauper, a pirate

A poet, a pawn and a king

I've been up and down and over and out

And I know one thing

Each time I find myself flat on my face

I pick myself up and get back in the race

That's life (that's life), I tell ya, I can't deny it

I thought of quitting, baby

But my heart just ain't gonna buy it

And if I didn't think it was worth one single try

I'd jump…

Against the Wind

It seems like yesterday

But it was long ago

Janey was lovely she was the queen of my nights

There in the darkness with the radio playing low,

And the secrets that we shared

The mountains that we moved

Caught like a wildfire out of control

'Til there was nothing left to burn and nothing left to prove

And I remember what she said to me

How she swore that it never would end

I remember how she held me oh-so-tight

Wish I didn't know now what I didn't know then

Against the wind

We were runnin' against the wind

We were young and strong, we were runnin' against the wind

The years rolled slowly past

And I found myself alone

Surrounded by strangers I thought were my friends

I found myself further and further from my home, and I

Guess I lost my way

There were oh-so-many roads

I was living to run and running to live

Never worried about paying or even how much I owed

Moving eight miles a minute for months at a time

Breaking all of the rules that would bend

I began to find myself searching

Searching for shelter again and again

Against the wind

A little something against the wind

I found myself seeking shelter against the wind

Well those drifter's days are past me now

I've got so much more to think about

Deadlines and commitments

What to leave in, what to leave out

Against the wind

I'm still runnin' against the wind

I'm older now but still runnin' against the wind

Well I'm older now and still runnin'

Against the wind

Against the wind

Against the wind

Still runnin' (against the wind)

I'm still runnin' against the wind

(Against the wind) I'm still runnin'

(Against the wind)

I'm still runnin' against the wind

(Against the wind) still runnin'

(Against the wind)runnin' against the wind, runnin' against the wind

(Against the wind) see the young man run

(Against the wind) watch the young man run

(Against the wind) watch the young man runnin'

(Against the wind) he'll be runnin' against the wind

(Against the wind) let the cowboys ride

(Against the wind) aah

(Against the wind) let the cowboys ride

(Against the wind) they'll be ridin' against the wind

(Against the wind) against the wind

(Against the wind) ridin' against the wind...

-30-

Sources include the Canadian Encyclopedia, Dean Kay & Kelly Gordon (That's Life), Bob Seger & The Silver Bullet Band (Against the Wind)

ABOUT THE BOOK

'Fake news' has been with us for a long time, for instance in 1939, the Nazi regime in Germany used lies disguised as news as a pretense to invade Poland. This book however is not just about 'fake news' it also looks at the under-belly of print journalism including the bias of big media like Fox and CBC News. While technically their brand of left-or-right wing journalism is not 'fake news', it is damn close. During this authors print tutelage (mostly during the last ten years) the media and newspapers in general have been under incredible stress, many are in gigantic financial trouble. The newspaper industry in particular, is literally hanging on by its fingertips – every day more papers close their doors for good and this is unhealthy, as generally speaking newspapers do not print 'fake news'.

'Fake news' seems to be more ground-breaking than real news. Fibs (lies) are often considerably different from tweets that have appeared in a manipulator's timeframe, sixty days prior to their retweeting them. 'Fake news' evokes much more emotion than the average tweet. Scholars created a database of the words that Twitter users used to reply to the 126,000 contested tweets, then analyzed them with a state-of-the-art sentiment-analysis tool. Fake tweets tended to elicit words associated with surprise and disgust, while accurate tweets summoned words associated with sadness and trust, they found.

A recent study suggests wariness of the internet is being fuelled by growing skepticism of social-media services such as Facebook and Twitter. One in four people who took part in the survey said they did not trust the internet, a view increasingly being driven by lack of confidence in social media, government and search engines. The study involved more than 25,000 internet users in twenty-five countries in North America, Latin America, Europe, the Middle East and the Asia-Pacific region. In this book the reader will find everything they want to know

about how ‘fake news’ is been circulated and how it has overtaken old media as the news of choice of millennials, generation Z and even millennials.

Also, in this book are two chapters on how provocative this author was – and yes, he also used ‘fake news’ in his newspapers and magazines - but in an entertaining way. To stay competitive, this author had to come up with outlandish promotions for his newspapers and they would have to grab people’s attention without offending them. The first of many of these promotions was a front-page picture of an outhouse. At this early stage in Turcotte’s career he thought that if he gave his readers a great front page and a controversial editorial page, then all else would take care of itself. Again, this was a template that the author would use over and over for the rest of his print days – ‘fake news’ yes, but in a humorous way.

The outhouse picture was both funny and disgusting at the same time. Turcotte found an old beat up out-door potty and opened the door. He took a copy of his competition (the other newspaper in town) and rolled it up loosely with the front page and masthead hanging down, so all could see. He placed it around the toilet paper holder and had a picture taken - the cutline of the front-page picture went basically like this “This is all this newspaper is good for.” This was certainly a form of ‘fake news’.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Due to his passion for the print media, newspaper ink has flowed through this author’s veins causing Reed Turcotte to spend the last forty-one years happily publishing newspapers, magazines and more recently books. Leaving North

Vancouver at the age of twenty-four, Turcotte started his print career with a little start-up newspaper called the ‘Quesnel Tuesday News’ and has not looked back since.

Turcotte has owned and published nine community newspapers, seven magazines and eight other books; Reed-All-About-It…Memoirs of a Controversial Publisher; Gold, Indians & War…Rock Creek & Colville 1859-1861; Greenwood…The Early Years of Canada’s Smallest City, When Canadian Newspaper Publishers Were King, Three Down Football - Past Present & Future, Canada's Beautiful Game and Retire -Reset & Reload. He currently resides in the Okanagan with his wife over-looking beautiful Lake Okanagan.

At one time this author, publisher and historian had publications that could be found all over Western Canada and the US Pacific Northwest, and it all started in Quesnel, B.C. in 1974.