



The Role of the Reporter in a Post-Factual Age

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What journalists say

- “Journalism is meant to give people a true sense of their world so they can participate and have a voice in how their world is structured.”
 - Arianna Huffington, former editor in chief of Huffington Post Media Group
- “Journalists who thrive will be those who offer news consumers the same sense of trust that a skilled mountain guide provides to climbers after an avalanche.”
 - Andrew Revkin, *The New York Times*

Defining journalism

- Journalism “is not defined by technology, nor by journalists or the techniques they employ. ... The principles and purpose of journalism are defined by something more basic: *the function news plays in the lives of people.*”
 - Kovach & Rosenstiel

Elements of journalism

Kovach and Rosenstiel

- Journalism's first obligation is to tell the truth
- Its first loyalty is to citizens
- Its essence is a discipline of verification
- Its practitioners must maintain an independence from those they cover
- It must serve as an independent monitor of power

Elements of journalism

Kovach and Rosenstiel

- It must provide a forum for public criticism and compromise
- It must strive to make the significant interesting and relevant
- It must keep the news comprehensive and proportional
- Its practitioners must be allowed to exercise their personal conscience
- Citizens, too, have rights and responsibilities when it comes to the news

Journalists' role conceptions

- Disseminator
 - Impartial transmission link
 - Objective, uninvolved
 - Strive for accuracy, speed of transmission
- Interpretive
 - Personal responsibility for information
 - Investigative
 - Provides analysis

Journalists' role conceptions

- Adversarial
 - Journalists as cultural critics
 - Involved
 - Have personal, political responsibilities
- Populist mobilizer
 - Belief in public journalism
 - Importance of setting political agenda
 - Provide people with forum to express views

Journalists' role conceptions

- Contextualist
 - High value on acting with social responsibility, contributing to society's well being
 - Constructive journalism
 - Solutions journalism
 - Restorative journalism
 - Duty to alert the public to both threats and opportunities
 - Holds firm to journalism's responsibility to portray the world accurately

The challenges

- The media environment
- Social media
- The political environment
- Audience perceptions

The media environment

- Journalists are being asked to produce more content than before
 - And with fewer resources
- They are working in an uncertain industry
 - Huffington Post, ESPN just had a round of layoffs
- News cycle is 24/7
- More information is coming at them with less time to process

The media environment

Traditional journalism

- Accuracy
- Verification (pre-publication)
- Balance
- Impartiality
- Gatekeeping

Online journalism

- Immediacy
- Post-publication correction
- Transparency
- Partiality
- Gatewatching and crowdsourcing

Social media

- Far right groups use of “attention hacking” to increase the visibility of their ideas through the use of social media, memes and bots
 - Target journalists, bloggers, and influencers to help spread content
- Spread of profitable, “I can’t believe it” news
 - In the two months before the 2016 U.S. presidential election, more than one-third of top stories about Trump and Clinton on social media were from fake news sites

Social media

- One fake story quoted Clinton saying she'd like to see more people like Trump run for office because, "they're honest and can't be bought"
 - In one week, it got 480,000 shares, comments and reactions on Facebook
 - A *New York Times* story about Trump writing off a \$916 million loss on his 1995 taxes got 175,000 Facebook interactions

Social media

- Media dependence on social media, analytics and metrics replaces judgments about newsworthiness
 - Clickbait makes them vulnerable to manipulation

Social media



- “Social media is a short-form medium where resonant messages get amplified many times. This rewards simplicity and discourages nuance. At its best, this focuses messages and exposes people to different ideas. *At its worst, it oversimplifies important topics and pushes us towards extremes.*”

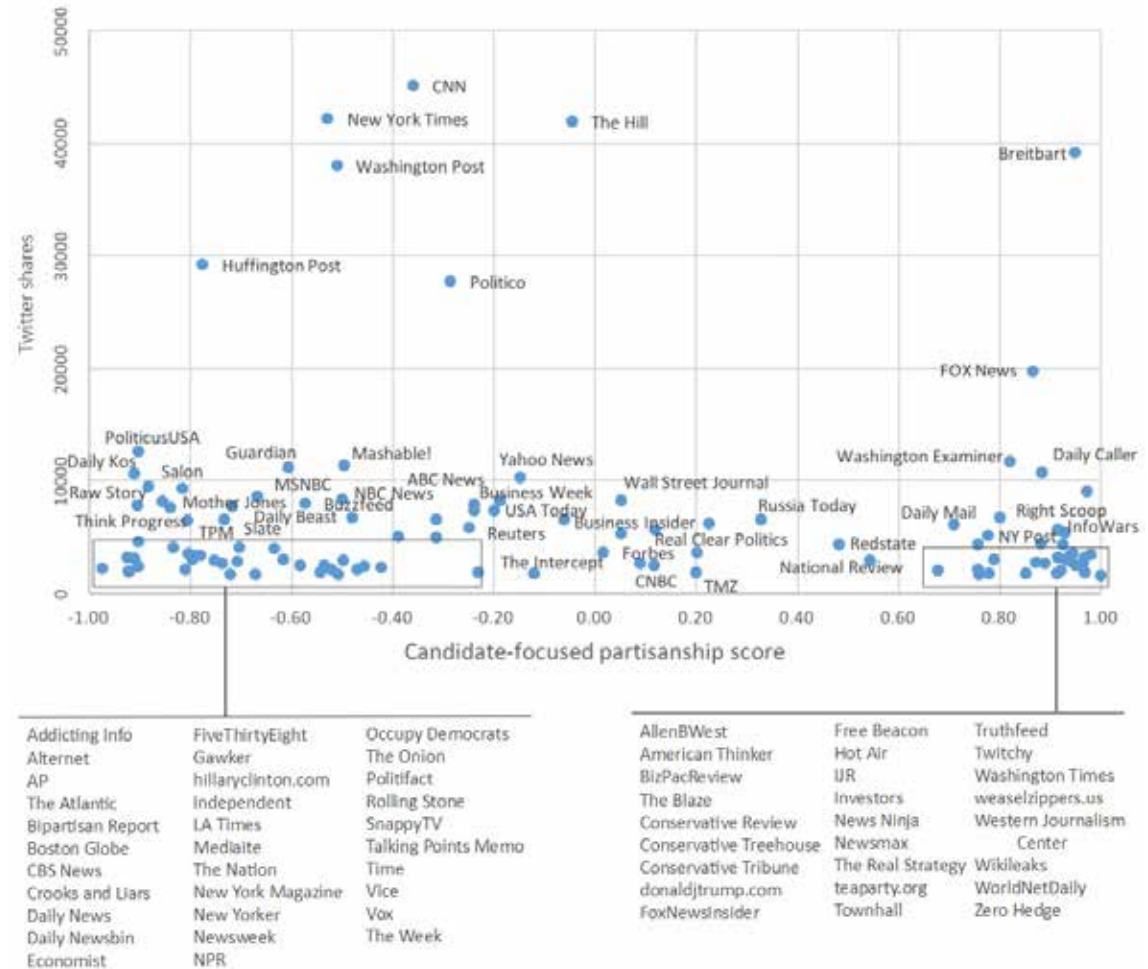
- Mark Zuckerberg, Feb. 16, 2017

The political environment

- Trump has called the media “the enemy of the people”
 - Bannon has said the media are the “opposition party” and it “should keep its mouth shut and just listen for a while”
- Increasing polarization and news fragmentation has led to decrease in common ground or even agreement on a common set of facts
 - Assymetric influence of right-wing sites on the broader media agenda

Audience perceptions

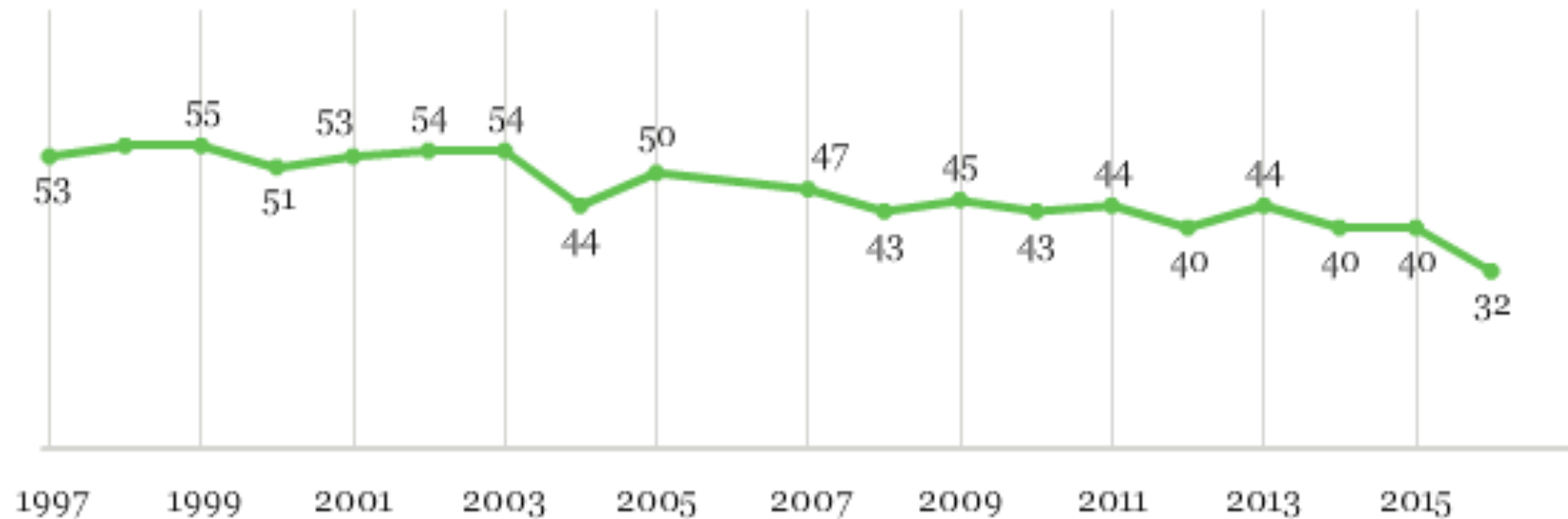
- Filter bubbles
- Bias is often in the eye of the reader
 - Gunther study
- 20% of people are at the extremes
 - But have more influence on the political process than those in the middle



Audience perceptions

In general, how much trust and confidence do you have in the mass media -- such as newspapers, TV and radio -- when it comes to reporting the news fully, accurately and fairly -- a great deal, a fair amount, not very much or none at all?

■ % Great deal/Fair amount



Audience perceptions

- According to a Quinnipiac study in February, 52 percent of Americans trust the media more than Trump
 - 37 percent trust Trump more

Where next?

- Slow journalism
- Activist journalist
 - Blend of adversarial and interpretive role
 - Eye on making significant information interesting and showing its relevance
- Must be accurate
- Must be transparent