

Routledge Research in Journalism

THE FUTURE OF THE PRESIDENCY, JOURNALISM, AND DEMOCRACY

AFTER TRUMP

Edited by
Robert E. Gutsche, Jr.



The Future of the Presidency, Journalism, and Democracy

This volume examines the effects of Donald Trump's Presidency on journalistic practices, rhetorics, and discourses. Rooted in critical theory and cultural studies, it asks what life may be like without Trump, not only for journalism but also for American society more broadly.

The book places perspectives and tensions around the Trump Presidency in one spot, focusing on the underlying ideological forces in tensions around media trust, Trumpism, and the role of journalism in it all. It explores how journalists dealt with racist rhetoric from the White House, relationships between the Office of the President and social media companies, citizens, and journalists themselves, while questioning whether journalism has learned the right lessons for the future. More importantly, chapters on liberal media "bias," the First 100 Days of the Biden Presidency, gender, and race, and how journalists should adopt measures to "reduce harm" hint as to where politics and journalism may go next.

Reshaping the scholarly and public discourse about where we are headed in terms of the Presidency and publics, social media, and journalism, this book will be an important resource for scholars and graduate students of journalism, media studies, communication studies, political science, race and ethnic studies, and sociology.

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After Trump

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To Matías Gutsche



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Preface

Writing about Donald Trump hasn't been easy. Even from the outside looking in — not one who was directly impacted by those policies, beaten by his police, isolated or insulted by his rhetoric — watching and writing, thinking and explaining, and wondering and questioning has still been an emotional rollercoaster. Putting these words onto a page should be more cathartic than it is, really.

This isn't a value statement about Trump, himself, but commentary about the realities of his time in office, of the behaviors of his brethren, and the long-lasting effects of his presence in national and international politics from the Office of the President. Still, to be clear, and as I have written about elsewhere, despite what popular sentiments might be, Trump's Presidency shouldn't be treated as something more unique than anyone else's, even though his media presence and the way he discussed and shaped policy might be. Yet, my thoughts about this book today relate to the role of journalism in all of this turmoil and the ways in which Trump's rhetoric has unveiled that journalism often seems to create many of the same social problems that it then likes to investigate related to reproduction of racisms and gendered narratives, hegemonic explanations of everyday life, and the sensationalism of political performance. Maybe that is why this writing wasn't therapeutic.

There are many who have had to listen to me complain about the seemingly endless television interviews on Trump that I did between 2018 and 2022, many which (on the part of the journalists) attempted to simplify the complexities of U.S. societies and cultures, explaining the conservative perspectives on bombastic statements that Trump would make that then would lead the news cycle, and my concerns about equally seemingly endless studies coming from the fields of Journalism and Digital Journalism Studies that seemed to ignore the very nature of journalistic practice, journalism's collusion with the power elite, and its racist tendencies in storytelling, hiring, and trust-building that contributed to Trump's rise and were overshadowed by a sick focus on Twitter and social media.

This collection is fueled by those concerns, as was the first volume I edited on Trump, with many of the same authors who appear in these pages. *The Trump Presidency, Journalism, and Democracy* appeared in 2018 and then in

paperback in 2019. Just as this new volume was edited with a new baby cooing in the background in 2021, I worked with authors on the first project, editing pages in my family's firstborn's intensive care room in a hospital near Miami. The project's papers stood in a stack on a counter next to the little one with marks on them and full of ideas about how a new president had already influenced journalism and political ideologies. No one knew what was to come. And then we found out, didn't we?

That book, I think, was a success in pushing past techno-babble and determinism, though it wasn't without its failures: One reviewer wrote that "[o]ne of the book's valuable services is the narrativizing of a great many events in the realm of journalism that occurred in order to put Trump in the White House" but that "[s]ome contributions are difficult to place, and typos indicate apparent hastiness. The result is a patchwork of studies that never quite coalesce." Well, given the state of my life at the time, maybe that's why *The Trump Presidency, Journalism, and Democracy* lacked a fine-tooth combing (that and the incessant need by publishers to push the final touches on overworked proofreaders pumping out more work than ever before), and I take the hit. Life chaos is not an excuse. I'll admit, though, that our "hastiness" then might also have been because we were in a hurry to capture the most intense political time in our generation, our writers ranging from academics to activists, public officials to private citizens, and journalists. So much had happened, and we wanted to say something while trying to still make it make sense. Forgive us, then, if we appear hasty again.

To my friends and colleagues, thank you for taking the time to listen and to provide feedback on this project and all of the conversations around it. Specifically, I thank my wife, Carolina, who supports my ideas even when they seem to go against the grain and who confirms that when I talk about Trump I sound like a liberal and a conservative – or neither – and that this is OK; in fact, that this is what I should be sounding like. I appreciate her for engaging me in her own intellectual contributions that make me think harder. Your own work and achievements will soon overshadow mine (if they haven't already). That's the plan, anyway!

I wish to thank my dear friends Mathew Wallace, Amit Chopra, LaTasha DeLoach, and Stephen Heidt for their time talking through some of these ideas and for supporting my family during both a physical and philosophical pandemic over the last couple of years. I also thank Bonnie Brennen with whom I work as an Associate Editor at *Journalism Practice*, an experience which brings along with it (beyond the many hours of reading and communicating) insights into my own work and the chance to help support the work of so many others. I am thankful for Bonnie's insightful conversations about the field, careers, politics, and journalism. Relatedly, to my guests on the journal's podcast that I produce and host, "The J Word: A Podcast by Journalism Practice," I am also thankful for conversations that are enlightening in both complicating practice and furthering theory.

Thank you should also go to Mette Furbo, Krishna and Bernd Schulze, Valeria Vendries, Graeme Gilloch, Paul D'Angelo, Brian Goss, Joanne Westworth, Steve Dealler and Jan Worthington, Oscar Westlund, Juliet Pinto, Sydney Forde, Oscar and Vicky Estrada, my parents, Stella, and our closest friends for their continued lifting of spirit and workload when the times arise. A special thank you to the Lancaster University Press Office, particularly Sarah Carter and Paul Turner (now in the Lancaster University Management School), for their constant work keeping me updated on media engagement where we can bridge “town and gown” divides of universities and the public.

This project came together through my engagement as a Fellow with the Institute for Social Futures at Lancaster University, which opened my mind to new ways of thinking about politics and journalism “after Trump.” I am grateful for the opportunity to have presented initial thoughts on this project in ways that fed ideas into my comments to authors and in the editing of the project overall. Especially thankful for the Journalism Innovation and Leadership Programme, a Google News Initiative, in the School of Arts and Media at the University of Central Lancashire in the U.K., for the School of Business and Creative Industries at the University of the West of Scotland, for the Community Seminar Series at Robert Gordon University in Aberdeen, Scotland; for the Department of Media and Performance at the University of Huddersfield, and for a special series on politics and journalism for the U.K.’s Association for Journalism Education US Presidential Election Symposium.

And to my editors at Routledge, thank you for taking a chance on two volumes about Trump – the first that featured a wide range of author types and this one that attempts to form a deeper understanding about journalism and societies while still in the moment of figuring out what’s been happening, and why, to our societies and journalism(s). To this volume’s contributors: Many thanks for working on this during a pandemic and turning around smart scholarship in a few months to speed up the process of scholarly publishing and our ability to capture social and cultural change (and its constants) in the moment.

Lastly, to my sons, Martín and Matías: Let’s work together to prepare you for the good fight.

Robert E. Gutsche, Jr.
Lancaster, United Kingdom
January 2022

Introduction

How Trump Tested the Press, They Failed, and We Wonder, “Now What?”

Robert E. Gutsche, Jr.

Introduction: Problematizing the Trump Problem

He's gone (as of this writing), but Donald Trump – and Trumpism – won't easily leave or be forgotten.

In early 2022, it's a bit too easy to use the phrase “post-Trump” when thinking of how we move forward in the years ahead, even as a new President has taken the helm and as Trump remains on the fringes of the political limelight. This term, “post-Trump,” is one we debated using for this volume. More than just meaning “after,” the term “post” is used to symbolize that we have moved past, rejected, or normalized to the degree of making covert the influence and era of something. In this case, Trump. We thought it would be a good idea, particularly as the idea of “post-truth” has been a hot-button term used in Journalism Studies, particularly during the early days of Trump's taking to the political scene. Through “post-truth,” scholars argued that due to politically motivated news and social media messages infiltrating audiences, the undermining of single truths presented by elite and mainstream journalism was complicating the authority of whose information could be taken seriously and challenged the interpretations of those journalisms(s) by providing “alternative facts” (for review, see Gutsche, 2019a, 2019b). In turn, “truth” stopped mattering to some publics, as dis- and mis-information, lies, falsehoods, misleadings, and flak (Goss, 2019) replaced the binary of what was or wasn't a “fact” (for review, see Godler, 2020).

At some point, somewhere and someone complicated the notion of “post-truth” to adopt a more nuanced notion of just what that meant for everyday life and, especially, journalism and political communication. What emerged was a massive push for scholars to adopt the ideas of mis- and dis-information in their discussions of Trump, his followers, and the challenges journalists face in terms of their legitimacy and authority (Gutsche & Hess, 2020). What was missing in some of that conversation was the segment of society (and not always conservatives) that believed journalism only ever told someone else's truths anyway (Tischauer & Benn, 2019). It's unclear where “post-truth” went in this new discussion exactly, as scholars

and journalists worked to solidify that what came from mainstream and elite journalism was indeed almost without question “true” and that the “post-truth” discussion didn’t really apply to that type of journalism but instead to information sources *influencing* the news. In other words, the issues of “truth” scholars promoted were related to news sources for and influences upon elite news – not the elite news itself. This isn’t to say that scholarship about “fake news” and “post-truth” is meaningless. These keywords – mis- and dis-information and “fake news” – have become complicated by journalists and academics alike (Gutsche, 2019b; Wardle, 2017) in ways that do highlight tangible troubles facing journalism today.

There are few doubts that recent governmental elections in the U.S. and elsewhere have been subject to hacking, “outside” political influence, and fraud, certainly. And, there is equally no doubt that media users and producers are faced with increased pressures against their authority in a fragmented media landscape, one that through digital technologies is spreadable, marketable, and influential among communities of various political positions. Deep fakes, AI tricks, social media, and a lack of scrutiny by audiences are equal threats to the traditions and positions of “legitimate” mainstream media, not to mention the very lack of access to media itself that leads to what was rightly predicted to be a failure of technology to democratize (Hindman, 2009). Academics are doing a fine job marking their terrain in measuring the impact of “fake news” and information that’s intentionally right or wrong, presenting to the world a common face of understanding that Trump was either a fluke, a result of hate-spewed rhetoric or of an uneducated and gullible voting bloc, or technology either gone overboard or misused and misunderstood by users. But these answers are too easy and taint the way we can predict what comes next for journalism. Indeed, in the year since Trump left the White House, journalism scholars are searching for what the next hot topic will be beyond trust, as though the Biden Administration and the social structures upon which Trump built his time in office are absent of ills for their investigations.

What Trumpism (and journalism’s explanations of and for it) brought to U.S. society through rhetoric, social policies, and racist and hyper-militarized policing was a spotlight shining not only on Trump the TV star but shining on the sins of the nation, with an unveiling of power dynamics that have benefited democratic institutions, including journalism. With its focus on (white) America First and as a venue for conservatives who have felt slighted by national politics and media talking heads, Trumpism placed at the top of its priority list debates and decisions, desires for the expansion of the “safe” suburbs, policing of the “dangerous inner city,” the economic/racialized/social prosperity of white families, the rule of the stock market and privatization, the removal of immigrants from U.S. jobs and lands, and the purity of the police. These are all things that mainstream journalism in the U.S. also strives for (e.g. French, 2016; González & Torres, 2011; Gutsche et al., 2022). Ideas such as nationalism, tribalism, exceptionalism,

racism, patriotism, hyper-Capitalism (in no particular order) are embedded in the very make-up of journalism's focus on business and financial news, police and "law and order," celebrations of U.S. military expansions that lead the free market and attacks on livelihoods and lives across the globe, and hegemonic maintenance of white supremacy in journalism classrooms and coverage of what happens in the geographies, availability, and options of voting. It's too bad so many people missed this when they were focused on or distracted by Trump and his war with the press.

Maybe the problems I listed here are too big for journalism alone to tackle. Maybe journalists and their scholar friends are too afraid of advocacy journalism at the same time we have rejected normative interpretations of objectivity as revealing not just the dynamic shift in what journalism could look like if it advocated for social justice but what problems it would reveal within the power dimensions of how journalism operates and what fallout could emerge ideologically for audiences who would see that their democracies, economies, social roles, and entertainment venues that they use to understand life are built like a house of cards. Yes, I know that was a long sentence, but all of this is to say that we chose "After Trump" rather than "Post-Trump" for this book for a reason, though I am sure you could argue "after" isn't quite right either, but we had to get Trump in the title somehow.

At this point, dear reader, you have either become overwhelmed by my pessimism and cynicism, you see these issues far too clearly and simply adopt the words on the page, or all of this sounds like a bunch of bullshit (we talk about this a bit later, too). Maybe in you there is a sense that these ideas are too far away from solutions. Or maybe we all have been trained to think that journalism can't have anything to do with stopping murder by police, motivating military operations abroad (and increasingly, at home), or influencing political gerrymandering that tries to block a sense of agency among voters while also physically manipulating where and how they are represented in government. As you read these pages I urge all of us to stop seeking solutions only. Let's just, first, see if we can agree on what the problems might be. In this introduction, I outline some of the imaginaries and communication structures to set a tone for the remainder of the volume's offerings.

Is Journalism Better Yet?

Journalism, in the midst of its own decades-long battle with the internet for the capturing and retention of money, for legitimacy and relevance that saw rise during the times of satire journalism (Berkowitz & Gutsche, 2012; Gutsche et al., 2015), and the digital spread of access and platforms (e.g. Carlson, 2007) has had some of its toughest times as the target of Trump's wrath. Mainstream journalism's values and virtues have been defended by local and national reporters, educators, scholars, and public

voices; yet, citizens increasingly have moved away from believing the press. Their movement is in part because of mis- and dis-information plaguing social media channels but also because of the political and philosophical pressures that shape their ideas and ideals of what “America” is, what it should be, why it wasn’t “great” when Trump took office, if and how it is “great again,” and if elite, mainstream media perpetuate or put down ideas that citizens find resonate with their own ideas or that they find revolting. *The Future of the Presidency, Journalism, and Democracy: After Trump* places these perspectives and tensions in one spot, focusing on the underlying ideological forces around media trust, Trumpism, and the role of journalism in it all.

The Future of the Presidency, Journalism, and Democracy: After Trump follows the 2018 volume *The Trump Presidency, Journalism, and Democracy* (Gutsche, 2018a).¹ That book was one of the first academic collections in journalism and media studies to look at how Trump’s rise to the Presidency influenced journalistic norms, practices, political rhetoric, and discourse. Now, “after Trump,” this new book is a unique volume that extends scholarship about conventional and controversial aspects of how journalism covered (or didn’t) communities that were either supportive or stricken down by Trump’s rhetoric, the hate-filled public policies that were proposed and implemented, and ideas about what his Presidency would bring to those who voted for him.

While books today about Trump abound, this project serves to reset discussions about journalism and Trump – not just to look back at what we got right or wrong in the field’s initial research and practice. Here, instead, we wish to reshape the scholarly and public discourse about where we are going in terms of the Presidency and publics, social media, and journalism, with much of the work rooted in critical theory and Cultural Studies. We also hope this project will serve as a bookend of sorts, a way not just to reflect back *before or during Trump* but to be reflexive about the future, repositioning initial arguments through the developments of the past few years and into a new era that is riddled with remnants of what led to the 2016 election of Donald Trump and the 2020 election that showed not as much a windfall for change but a deeper divide within U.S. society. At the center of this change: journalism(s), the roles of fake news and social media, an influx of mis- and dis-information, media fragmentation, normalization of hate speech, the rise of the Right-wing, escalated violence against U.S. Blacks and African Americans by their own government through public-supported policing, and social action that supports social justice. It’s a long list that’s not nearly complete, and no one could have guessed the daily disruptions the Trump Presidency brought for journalists, citizens, and academics that we are still trying to understand in these pages, especially if and when the popular journalism scholars of today refuse to complicate matters through critical interpretations of journalisms’² collusive powers (for more on such complications, on what I use to consider the notion of

collusion, see Cook, 2005; Freedman, 2014; Gutsche, 2015; Janeway, 1999; Jones, 2015; Mills, 2016).

The Future of the Presidency, Journalism, and Democracy: After Trump tries to take a breath and capture these contestations, movements, and moments surrounding them while they are in recent collective media memory and when a country and its multiple collectives attempt to understand (or forget) our social conditions that got us here, that remain, and that are more foundational than we would like to admit. More directly is an interest in the degree to which journalism has come to turn to “trust” and “truth” to counter challenges of “bias” and elitism of the media and an often-uncomplicated embrace by industry promises of social media and technologies to save them. Of courses, one can’t downplay the influence of computers on journalism as much as we can’t discount COVID-19, a global pandemic, and its own impact on discussions surrounding politics and the press. That said, the snapshots of where journalism is today and where it may be heading (and why) can’t be overshadowed or led to distraction. This project represents many a perspective counter to what is done on journalism during Trump, digging deep at the salient influences of race and fear and resistance and agency.

There is an argument to be made that journalism merely covered what Trump put out and that as politics will, or already has, “returned to normal.” So will journalism, the idea goes, and we have seen a return to “normal” within the easy days of Joe Biden’s press coverage (Gutsche, 2020a), where journalists take a seat, the authorities speak, and the journalists report. For those who need stats for this simplification, but also for those who like context, there is this from Pew (2021) about press coverage in Biden’s First 100 Days:

Overall, 32% of stories about the Biden administration had a negative assessment, while 23% had a positive one and 45% were neither positive nor negative. But those numbers varied widely by types of media outlets. Fully 78% of the stories from outlets with predominantly right-leaning audiences carried a negative assessment. That stands in stark contrast to the 19% of stories with a negative assessment from outlets with left-leaning audiences and about a quarter of stories (24%) from outlets with a mixed audience.

There has been some critical journalism on such things as Biden’s troop withdrawal from Afghanistan, which went less than well, even by the Democrat’s Darling *The New York Times* (Aikins et al., 2021).³ But even today, as I write this, the *Times* still fits its mold not just of “liberal bias” but of its ideological/power bias that elevates Capitalism and makes it synonymous with American patriotism. Just as it pushed to war through sport metaphor (Lule, 2004), the *Times* applies the same with its news analysis of Biden’s COVID-19 approach, writing, “Biden’s New Vaccine Push Is a Fight for the U.S. Economy” (Tankersley, 2021). The piece, on the top of the newspaper’s

homepage, reads like a sports story about Biden's quarterback play against the virus:

President Biden's aggressive move to expand the number of vaccinated Americans and halt the spread of the Delta variant is not just an effort to save lives. It is also an attempt to counter the continuing and evolving threat that the virus poses to the economy.

Elsewhere in the story, journalists write:

"We're in a tough stretch," [Biden] conceded on Thursday, after heralding the economic progress made under his administration so far this year, "and it could last for a while."

Think this is that different from the take by conservative press? Only in terms of whether Biden is the team favorite. Take this top story from Newsmax (2021) on the same morning, headlined, "Amid a Few Cheers, Many Worries as Businesses Face Biden's Vax/Test Mandates," which starts off with:

Big names in Corporate America including Amazon.com Inc cheered President Joe Biden as he mandated employees either get vaccinated or be tested regularly at businesses with 100-plus employees [*sic*]. But some midsize companies worried that the plan would be tough to carry out and unpopular with many workers.

Earlier on Thursday, Biden took aim at vaccine resistance in America, announcing policies requiring most federal employees to get COVID-19 vaccines and large employers to ensure their workers are vaccinated or tested weekly.

...

Much of Corporate America was silent as it digested the news. A few household names such as Amazon supported Biden, and Microsoft Corp and Facebook Inc said they already required vaccines for those entering U.S. offices.

But some midsize companies worried about losing employees at a time when they are trying to grow business.

...

Jay Baker, president of Jamestown Plastics in Brocton, New York, offered a succinct assessment. "I think it's bull –."

“I’m not a fan of the federal government mandating anything,” he said. “This is not the bubonic plague. This is not typhoid – and they seem to be treating it like it is.”

In both articles from the *Times* and Newsmax the focus is on the economy. Maybe that makes sense. We all need paychecks and safe working environments, and in our Capitalist society and economy, jobs are important. Despite that one source (the *Times*) places Biden in a “field general role” comprised of both playing a high-stakes game and fighting to save lives, Newsmax similarly spoke of “cheers” from a grandstand of corporate America for Biden’s role and policy but also provides voices from the crowd that positions the article as anti-governmental involvement in individual health-related matters such as getting vaccinated. The differences in political positioning aside (pro- or anti-Biden), that the economy dominated the discussion on both sites, positioning a sports-centered feel as the means of explaining the Economy v. COVID-19, and focusing on geographic centers of New York City and Washington, D.C., these snapshots represent prevalent practices of journalism, those that are narrow political means of covering today’s issues.

These, of course, were not the only stories of the day from either site, nor are they that different from what appeared in (mainstream) local newspapers that morning of September 10, 2021, in the U.S., such as:

- Low voter turnout for local elections in Birmingham and Mobile, Alabama, that a local resident was one of those lost at the Pentagon in the events of 9/11, and that COVID-19 hospitalizations were dropping in the area led the pages of the *Press-Register* in Southwest Alabama.
- New COVID-19 deaths and hospitalizations, a local suspected of “killing another in homeless encampment,” a photograph from a funeral on the other side of the country for a soldier killed “while helping to screen Afghans and others trying to flee” Afghanistan following the U.S. military there led *The Bellingham (Washington) Herald*.
- A new law that allows for early Sunday sales of alcohol, the opening of a new store that sells “western modern boutique items,” and Biden’s plans for nationwide vaccines and tests were Page One news in *The Dickinson Press* in Dickinson, North Dakota.
- The building of a new bridge, “tensions” at a local rezoning hearing for a new hospital bed tower, a downtown revitalization project getting public feedback, and that a local hospital “halted” patient visits due to the pandemic were featured on the cover of the *Watertown Daily News* in upstate New York.
- A local providing aid to Haiti following a deadly earthquake there, the city receiving \$13 million in federal funds to “recover” from COVID-19,

a murder trial, and how a local academic is helping his own family members leave Afghanistan were on the cover of the *Arizona Daily Sun* in Flagstaff, Arizona.⁴

Despite the rise in metrics, search, and algorithms to capture, tell, and measure what people consume, the capturing of newspapers' front pages still provides a glimpse at what some journalisms look like (Bell & Coche, 2020). So, is *this* what journalism is, the age-old agenda-setting model of telling local communities what is important in terms of government, military, the "civiness" of voting and economy? I can see why people are tired of the news (for more critical analysis of news, see Auerback, 2015; Hallin, 1994). Patterns of economic-focused stories that normalize and maintain the hiding of corporate greed through narratives of corporate exceptionalism and "investment," of economies providing for the human race rather than the human race providing for the human race (often at the cost of other ecosystems and species), of work as being the main focus of our identities at the expense of our health and happiness shouldn't mean that this is what journalism is – or should be. At the same time that the public focus remains on real (read, legitimate) concerns of providing for our families and our futures, we have lost something by not demanding that journalism investigates (and not just through investigative journalism, where our minds immediately turn) deeper meanings and interactions of and with power, the contestation of intellectualism within which journalism finds itself in both practice and scholarship about it.

The social impact of anti-intellectualism in journalism has real (read, again, legitimate) implications (McDevitt, 2020). Here in the U.K., for instance, the National Health Service (NHS) has been purposely defunded to the degree that the normal wait for an emergency room appointment is *hours* – and already had been even pre-COVID-19. Basic surgeries are being cut from the list of what the NHS covers, cancer patients are dying because of a lack of access to care, ambulance response times can be in the hours, and NHS workers themselves are losing money based on salaries that haven't kept up with the impact of inflation for decades. But media outlets here in the U.K., which skew widely based on ideological and socio-political spectra, didn't waste a minute distracting the public from the issues at hand, foremost that of austerity.

When the pandemic first spread across England, citizens were asked by their government and encouraged by their media to praise the "heroes of the NHS," the front-line workers (for critical review, see Wood & Skeggs, 2020), at least once a week. These public "thank yous" included clapping sessions, where people stood outside their homes with pots and pans that they would bang to show their thanks for all healthcare workers were doing. In my neighborhood, the noise would go on for about three minutes and then silence would prevail for another week. In the meantime, journalists highlighted the social function of shaming, motivating people to call-out

their neighbors who weren't to be distracted (or bothered, or "arsed" as they say here in the North of England) to punch a pan in this public pandering.

At the same time, many of these same clapping citizens would be cheering the U.K.'s January 2021 exit from the European Union, known as Brexit – a racist and isolationist move that was needed, in part it was said, to help the government keep money it would otherwise send out of the country and instead use it for domestic institutions, such as the NHS. (Ironically, the week I am writing this, the government told us that they would increase taxes to help fund intentional shortfalls in the funding of the health service and its keyworkers [BBC, 2021a], making one wonder where the "savings" from Brexit are going. That's someone else's book, though.)

From my experience, there was little to no coverage of Brexit's impact on everyday life beyond markets and trading, movement of millions, and what the future could look like. The news often focused on when it might happen, the exit's delay, and the deadlines pushed until it finally went through. Little did people know that a year later, cancer treatment equipment, deep freezers, and other household electronics would be locked at the customs border, places such as McDonald's would run out of milkshakes, and the NHS would be bled dry of plastic vials for taking blood. During COVID-19, the NHS also ran out of lateral flow tests and continued to fail to adequately fund the health service as the pandemic remained. All of this was a combination of global economics, local workforce challenges, and national border control outcomes connected to Brexit. But, before that happened in the summer of 2021, 2020 was spent creating a never-ending cycle of and for COVID-19 news. And no one was doing anything about journalism that was taken over by COVID-19 news, bypassing social ills and solutions, problems, and other pandering that just didn't need to happen, because *everything* that wasn't just right was blamed on poor COVID-19.

Part of the 2020 distraction from politics in the U.K. and the pending doom of Brexit was the performance of 99-year-old Captain Tom Moore, a military veteran, who walked in his back yard round and round to raise £32 million for NHS Charities in the middle of The NHS' pending financial collapse. (As a side note, maybe Tom was so famous because people thought he was Major Tom from David Bowie's "Space Oddity," but I argue not elsewhere [Gallagher, 2021].) Tom died in February 2021 from a COVID-19-related illness after stretching social norms and travel rules to exit the country for a family vacation in Barbados, paid in part by British Airways who flew them there. Before then, he had been elevated by media and government alike in a form of COVID celebrity celebration (BBC, 2021b). According to one article about Tom's trek to the top:

The impact of Captain Tom's effort, on the media and popular culture in the first half of 2020, cannot be overstated. He was given an RAF flypast; awarded a gold Blue Peter badge; named GQ magazine's

“inspiration of the year”; made an honorary colonel and honorary doctorate; given a Pride of Britain award; became the first member of the FA’s Lionhearts squad (after a special visit from David Beckham no less); had a number one single with Michael Ball; smashed two Guinness World Records; launched a gin range; was unveiled as a new portrait at the National Army Museum; and drew Her Majesty out of isolation for a knighthood ceremony at Windsor.

(Gallagher, 2021)

Goodbye, Capt. Tom.

So, to recap: COVID-19-as-scapegoat and a real threat, the pending doom of Brexit, a poisoned NHS, and Captain Tom celebrity to distract from NHS defunding. You can’t make up this shit. And while Trump wasn’t such big news in the U.K. at the time (sans the 2021 coup), there certainly was his influence in our own daily news briefs and in the motivation that his rhetoric and politics and approaches had upon government leaders here. In the moment when these synergistic effects were taking place, journalism was at the center, loving every minute of the attention and ratings and the chance to take on audiences and rampant “mis-“and “dis-information” to build their authority as they did with fake news in years prior (Cushion et al., 2021; Gutsche, 2018b; Nielsen et al., 2020).

To some, the connections I am making in this chapter, particularly about power, will never make sense and would be equated to conspiracy theory (see my discussion on such in Gutsche, 2015). To others, they will be deemed as too simplistic. What about, though, if we complicate the Capt. Tom story a bit more by marking his media spectacle as being the result of the media rights to his tale? The then-Piers Morgan’s *Good Morning Britain*’s owner, ITV, replayed over and over again their exclusive coverage of Tom with the channel capitalizing on their stories’ footage that they owned and the overarching war-hero-turned-COVID-hero narrative (yes, he marched in his uniform) that also led to Tom’s knighting by the Queen. Consider this the media-entertainment-government/monarchy industry that still let the media/entertainment and government/monarchy off the hook for the demise of the NHS through narratives, policies, and explanations sought and provided to audiences, the anti-Asian rhetoric that spread through the U.K. during COVID-19, and the narratives that elevate military worker grunts into Joseph Campbell’s “Hero.”

Now, what if we complicate our Tom tale more by telling you that Tom’s daughter-in-law was a marketing guru in her own right that promoted his story through emotion, triggering, visual and social media storytelling, social currency, and herd mentality? Not everything is as it seems. And, more importantly, and sadly, is that in the whole narrative of the fight against COVID-19 that Tom led moved us away from seeing the NHS itself as the hero, or more accurately the heroes as those who live in a society that wish for “Socialized”

healthcare and pay for it with their taxes. If that were the story, what then? It would be a sports battle between the government defunding the very thing that the public had built and says it fights for. What a narrative that would be. Could we do the same in the U.S. context in ways that actually diminish Donald Trump's role in today's political landscape to elevate the rationalizations of marginalized societies, collectives, and individuals on "both sides?" What narratives could we change?

This edited collection, to varying degrees, takes some of these idea into account in its tone and tenor in terms of the Trump Presidency and journalism "afterward." One aspect all chapters share is that we must not ignore the veils of power that have been unveiled by Trump that show how journalists work (and where they work) in terms of determining what geographies (physical and ideological) are covered in political reporting but also what messages are heard. Trump, and perhaps more so his political and public supporters, have left an imprint on U.S. politics and political journalism that is both deep and wide. His behavior, policies, social media presence, language, and ability to curry favor with wide swaths of conservatives in the U.S. might have been his alone, but we must remember the Presidency is not just a person. It is an institution, and there ain't nothin' "after" about how alive and well this institution is.

Placing Blame vs. Complicating Context: Our Society Today

There was an infrastructure ahead of Trump that allowed for his policies to be implemented, and these infrastructures didn't leave when he did, a problem that must be addressed (and accepted) for journalists, scholars, citizens, and students if they wish to make change. Trump – and the institution of the Presidency – have reshaped the very practice and presentation of U.S. political journalism, at least for the time being. Journalism has become more partisan, predictive, and profitable, yes. And, on its own, journalism as an institution has taken to become the arbiter of truth that must be open to constant evaluation about what is considered "right" and "wrong" based on social outcomes, not what's popular at the moment.

After Trump, which is calm and clear and bright and positive (well, compared to the daily grind that was Trump news), one must ask how "watch-dog" the press will be over the nation's next leaders, particularly those not as overt as Trump in their meanings or emotions, policies and practices, beliefs, and bullshitting. One of the ways Joe Biden has survived in his first year in office is, in part, because of the way he played throughout the end of the 2020 campaign – largely staying silent. That doesn't bode well for the public to find out just what he's thinking and doing. How journalists cover social and political issues in the U.S. will remain influenced by the actions that the people's government – not just one man (or woman) – has

taken against members of the press and the public in the past. Take these moments into consideration:

- The anti-Trump, Barack Obama, didn't like journalists either, and he spied on them, too (Timm, 2021).
- Obama was named "The Deporter-in-Chief" for his record removal of immigrants from U.S. shores (NPR, 2017).
- Non-white citizens have long been subject to presidential-level racist policies and the blind eye of the Oval Office on issues of race embedded in U.S. society (Grigsby Bates, 2020).
- By the end of 2021, Biden had reproduced Trump's hateful and harsh immigration policies (Karni, 2021) and hadn't seemed to let go of the desire to maintain the nation's global hegemony (Polychroniou, 2021).

Journalism, ever the explainer of the everyday, not just has to cover the news of the day but has to explain the news in context, something that it struggled to do during the days of Trump. That lack of context helps, though, if we wish to return to times pre-Trump that we consider were really much better. If we do not wish to move beyond Trump in ways that can make journalism better (Gutsche, 2018c), then ignore this context. It will be a repeat of the Trump Show in which the moment operates in a vacuum and the audience is sucked into a single, dominant ideology of mainstream, elite journalism. Will a bit on the Trump Days help provide context so we can try to change things? If so, read on.

The Trump Press Scene: A Reminder

James Fallows, in *The Atlantic* in September 2020, took on what journalists missed before Election Day November 2016 and that he said they continued to miss throughout Trump's entire Presidency: "Many of our most influential editors and reporters are acting as if the rules that prevailed under previous American presidents are still in effect," Fallows writes. "But this president is different; the rules are different; and if it doesn't adapt, fast, the press will stand as yet another institution that failed in a moment of crucial pressure." In short, Fallows argues in his piece that journalists failed to "take sides" (advocate) for anti-racism in their coverage, particularly when that racism was coming directly from Trump's mouth, or labeling things "lies" or "facts" if they are or aren't. This argument would be debated throughout the 2020 election and the first year of Biden's Administration, as well.

Trying to maintain a status quo in reporting by not moving away from the norms (this would make the U.S. press more Left; it is already living in the Right) maintained Trump's rise, strengthened the resolve of his supporters, and made us of all blind to the deeper issues of our society and the ways in which our corporations, entertainment enterprises, cultural revolutions of conservatives, and the influence of often-times rushed and reductionist

daily journalism in local communities is making us rot from the inside out. Taking out Trump in journalism became the focus of decisions and reporting that normalized just what Fallows was asking for, naming racism and lies when they appear (for an example of some action taken, see Evans, 2019), but only seemingly when it came to Trump – not Biden or local news events, city council decisions, school board decisions, and other news events and issues where calling something as it is would lead to uncomfortable push-back by publics, advertisers, sources, and social circles.

A massive hit to traditional political journalism occurred in 2017 when the White House announced it would stop, or at the least greatly reduce, daily press briefings at the White House. What were journalists to do!? This move immediately threatened the performative power (see Gutsche & Hess, 2019) of journalists who rely on their pressers to showcase their skills and their “being there-ness” that contributes to their authority and legitimacy (for more, see Reich & Godler, 2017). When journalists thought this would correct itself after Trump’s tantrumed exit, Biden did lead to the return of the briefings on a regular schedule but he, himself, remained absent from the press until he was forced into it, particularly surrounding his withdrawal of troops from Afghanistan in September 2021 – nine months after taking office.

But even before then, there was trouble with Biden’s media image, with journalists complaining the new President was just too boring (Meek, 2021). Trump’s involvement of outside-Washington (read, conservative) reporters and voices into the briefing room (see Gutsche, 2018a) when briefings happened during his initial months in office were not just a reflection of the tensions of socio-politics in the U.S. – that Washington press are too far Left and focused on insider-political reporting – but were an early hint of just how he would fight his battle with the press beyond name-calling. He was shutting them out. This practice was extended as a norm throughout the Presidency until the COVID-19 crisis in 2020 when they resumed daily discussions from the press room. The rationale for Trump and others staying away from press gaggles was to silence journalists and control the message, something Trump also did with his incessant tweeting since he first took to a political podium.

Trump liked to ditch all forms of convention, including, allegedly, by writing his own social media posts, even at 4 a.m., and sidetracking official spokespeople. “President Trump thinks like he’s his own press secretary and he’s the one that ought to be the spokesman every day, and I’m not even sure he likes the idea he’s got someone called the spokesman or a press secretary,” Mike McCurry, who was a press secretary to President Bill Clinton, told journalists in 2018 (NPR, 2018). Press Room press conferences, a long tradition that provided daily visual updates to journalists, feeding their stories (both those that might be breaking news and evergreens that journalists build over a longer period of time), became a chance for Trump to interject onto the spotlight more ideologically conservative ideas in local

reporting more likely to run wire copy to fill pages, get clicks, and refresh content.

When that just didn't work for getting "good press" or what was run wasn't a good optic for him and his press secretaries, Trump took to Twitter and impromptu pressers, keeping journalists scrambling and, in effect, distracted from going deeper into his comments and tweets. In turn, they ended up not covering the stories they are paid to investigate or scrutinize but going for the lowest of hanging fruit. Kicking out the press from both their physical and practical roles actually served as a missed opportunity for journalists to abandon conventional forms of political reporting and return to nationwide news as they did once when national newspapers and cable news reports included environmental reporting, innovative school practices, airport expansions, and stories of "contemporary America," the stories I loved to write for *The Washington Post*, *Chicago Tribune*, and elsewhere (e.g. Gutsche, 2004). That was (and is) journalism, too.

Toward the end of Trump's tenure, journalists took to the first solution, though – abandonment – but only after *years* of reporting his every word, hate-filled and not. When journalists decided to not cover his tweets and to not air his speeches (even cutting him off mid-speech), it was too late and just too silly to have any effect (Lyons, 2020). Facebook and Twitter then decided to ban the man. As private companies, they do not need to adhere to the First Amendment, an argument that might become a bit tricky, though, when companies are so in-bed with government searches of people's data, relay governmental messages, and play host to the outputs of politicians and government agencies. One must ask how these acts are of collective forgetting that now make these decisions overshadow the past free-for-all that harmed "democracy." Still, I even advocated for "dumping Trump" from the media in 2020 (Gutsche, 2020b):

The solution, for now, may just be for the media to dump Trump, take a minimal hit for ignoring his antics, and spend their time returning to what made journalism good in the first place (enter a bit of nostalgia here): storytelling about everyday life, investigations into wrongdoings, and news coverage that is diverse and global, coming from all parts of the US and the world to unveil ill – but in doing so, bring us back together.

My concern and desire wasn't and isn't that we just shouldn't listen to Trumpish nonsense but that we seemed to be OK with what Trump was saying from even very early on in his political time, particularly when it was race-based (see Gutsche, 2018a, p. 2). Why didn't we stop it then?

Even as *The Washington Post* Fact Checker became a household name during the Trump era – it had been working for a decade prior, but, again, for insider-insider politics – others were collecting Trump's comments, perhaps simply because we couldn't believe he said some of the things he did, but

also because they became a type of Bible upon which to stand as a collective against Trump. To keep track, Amy Siskind (2018), an activist, writer, and organizer of the 2019 We the People March in Washington, D.C., published a 507-page book, *The List: A Week-by-Week Reckoning of Trump's First Year*. In it, she lists even the most banal moments of Trump's reign. Some items are better than others. And, she also numbers them. From June 2017 on pages 169 and 170:

- 74. “CNBC reported that the Trump regime is touting the creation of coal jobs that might not actually exist.”
- 77. “Frustrating House Republicans, Trump called their version of the VHCA/Trumpcare – which he had celebrated in the Rose Garden – “mean,” and said he hoped the Senate would pass a better version.
- 85. In an early sign of cracks from unfilled key roles in the executive branch, after the USS *Fitzgerald* collision, Trump was criticized by Brandon Friedman, a former Obama administration official, for leaving the positions of U.S. Navy secretary and ambassador to Japan unfilled.

What?

This is how crazy Trump made people that they literally had to mark down everything that happened. Siskind isn't arguing this is journalism, but *The Post's* Fact Checker did something similar – collecting and counting Trump's lies. OK, so Siskind's book cover also carried the following text that “[e]xperts in authoritarianism advise to keep a list of things subtly changing around you, so you'll remember.” So maybe it's the thought that counts, but journalism just keeps pouring out the same old stuff, obfuscating power relations by scapegoating. In this case, the scapegoat was . . . wait for it . . . Trump.

Around the same time that book came out, in September 2018, after resettling “across the pond” from the United States to England, I decided to take up public writing about journalism and Donald Trump. I had already edited my first Trump book about the tense relationships between the White House and the press earlier in the year, and with several months away from the classroom to share welcoming my first son with my wife, I hadn't really spoken about Trump too much outside of my own research. As I settled in, *The Washington Post* and Watergate journalist Bob Woodward published a book about the wacky and dangerous behavior and policies that had become daily and commonplace during the Trump Administration since he took office in January 2017.

Fear: Trump in the White House (2018) was called “best-selling” before it hit the shelves, and *The Conversation*, an academic blog that sometimes has its works republished in mainstream media, asked me to write my thoughts about it. My take was twofold: First, I asked in this piece, did we “really need to hear more about Donald Trump's behaviour? What is there that we don't already know? And what has anyone, including the media, done

with this knowledge anyway?” My argument surrounded the fact that, following countless news reports and mainstream coverage of another book, *Fire and Fury: Inside the Trump White House* (Wolff, 2018) that came out just months before in January 2018, coupled with Woodward’s own controversial background, namely that he seems to write insider politics for his own image and not really to break open the workings and culture of Washington politics and journalism, one should wonder if what we would be reading in his latest account could truly constitute a meaningful telling of policies, personalities, and practices. I wrote:

[T]he book comes on the heels of more than a dozen related titles by journalists this year alone. And they all tackle the same topics: misogyny, xenophobia, racial hatred, corporate greed. They are all based on personal experiences and stories of those whose names should not be mentioned. They all pretty much tell us the same thing: that Trump is a cruel, inept and unfit president. What more is there to know about him, and do we really want or need to know?

(Gutsche, 2018d)

More importantly, I questioned whether the book mattered in terms of identifying the trials and tribulations of journalism that led to Trump’s rise. Journalism, I posted, “should also be under scrutiny for celebrating the very kind of salacious ‘insider journalism’ that Woodward’s latest work exemplifies.”

My main concerns in that article, where I criticize Woodward for his previous books – especially the 2002 *Bush at War* that bowed to President George W. Bush and his handling of the 9/11 attacks, which “was based on unnamed sources and lengthy private conversations with Bush himself” – was that:

[t]he implications of Woodward’s “deep background” methodology are often glossed over by journalists and journalism scholars. Instead of being interrogated on the ethical issues deep background work presents regarding the identity of sources and how Woodward got to them, it is simply accepted as the price that must be paid for juicy detail.

These types of journalistic tactics aren’t much criticised by the mainstream press, and it’s even given a pass to use them by the political sources it uses. It’s simply part of doing business. In fact, such sources apparently like being on background not only to protect their identities, but because having secrets to leak is a mark of their power in Washington.

To me, this was a fairly banal assessment, but one that was a bit different from all of the other reports that basically sold Woodward’s book as

shocking and the epitome of journalism. So, while I rarely read comments to any blog post I make – they either make me angry, laugh with disdain, or make no sense – in this case I took a look. Only one stood out as calm, rational, but completely missing the point of the post. The author wrote:

This book catalogues, from an acknowledged master of journalism, a horrifying descent into darkest American polarization. The author’s dismissive tone does not do justice to the accolades that Woodward has accrued.

Sadly, my arguments were lost on our dear reader. By referring to Woodward as an “acknowledged master of journalism” and to the nation’s trajectory as “a horrifying descent into darkest American polarization,” the commenter represents the even-keeled approach of today’s single-minded Trump-haters. I found the mention of the “dismissive tone” especially ironic. The post wasn’t about Donald Trump. It was about Bob Woodward, and I was pretty clear about not dismissing his influence in creating a prized-based, celebrity journalism culture in which the journalist markets herself to today. But The Conversation commentator, perhaps without knowing it and with a tone that was fairly light and airy in this political climate, actually marked out the landscape that scholars and commentators follow today that I highlighted: demonize Trump and celebrate journalists.

Yet what of the people who want to understand Trump and critique and criticize the press? Simply put, we aren’t so popular. Even in talking with colleagues about this very book, they have had a hard time setting aside just how much they hate Donald Trump to look at the larger landscape. That short-sightedness can’t be good for scholarship, journalism, or society, though there has been a ton of solid work done on the normative impacts of Trump on journalism (i.e., Carlson et al., 2021). But little has been done since Trump took and left office by any major institution to fix the problems that got the country to elect him in the first place that I mentioned before but highlight here again:

- Domestic police forces, fueled by the U.S. international war machine, continue to be hyper-militarized with little chance they will give up their army-grade guns and tanks, even with the “defund” campaigns of 2020 that called not to disband police (though that might be a good idea in some instances) but to reduce their stronghold of physical force, particularly in non-white communities (Katzenstein, 2020).
- White cops were caught murdering innocent Blacks during Obama’s time, too (Wright, 2016). Schools continued to get shot up by people armed with military grade weapons, and little, meaningful alterations were made to gun laws that helped us put racist white people in jail for gun violence. Instead, we focused even more on jailing Black and other dark-skinned citizens who sometimes, honestly, needed guns to defend

themselves in some geographies from police who prey on these places and people.

- The Electoral College, which votes for the presidential candidate other than the one selected by the popular vote is still around, and that doesn't seem to be going anywhere (Prokop, 2016). Any discussion of getting rid of that is muted after each presidential election, as we are too tired to think about politics anymore for a while. And, bringing up the removal of the College midterm could lead to political consequences even for the party that is in power.
- Local and state governments continue to disinvest in their local services, including education, environmental protection, and efforts to reduce unfair jailing practices, police violence, institutional racism, and privatization of everyday public assistance (Harris, 2020). At the same time, the federal government undermines the autonomy and the symbolic power of the U.S. postal system – raging for decades before Trump and that proved to be a vital asset in the 2020 election as voters needed the service to mail in their votes mid-pandemic – and still operates to maintain control over its citizenry through racist housing policies, standardized and culturally insensitive testing in its educational programs, and underfunded health care plans. In each of these – development, education, and health care – privatization grows while individual and household economic divides widen, unable to avail themselves of opportunity.
- Journalism maintains its whiteness and hegemonic functions and forms in how and why it covers the news despite decades of calls for change (Callison & Young, 2019; Perloff, 2019; Usher, 2019).

Just a few more, if it's OK. It's important, I think, to see what's underlying in our society that has become far too obsessed with the personality and sensationalism of the Trump White House not to remove responsibility from that man and his supporters, but to show what each citizen is wrapped-up in — the social and cultural contestation that we rarely hear about in media and everyday discussions that aren't also mired in emotional, political rants. Here we go:

- While Black citizens continue to die in gun violence that's not as popular a story to report as those suburban school shootings involving white students, violence against non-whites intensified by government agencies such as the Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA) and the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agency that funnel violence and threats of raids into largely Spanish-speaking regions of our country. Indeed, as Trump and others in the GOP used immigration as a mainstay of their campaigns, particularly in the 2016 election and as an overtone to much of the policies of the Trump Administration, ICE has become a terrorist cell of its own, holding jurisdiction within

100 miles of any U.S. border. To visualize this, the border where ICE can work stretched from both sides of Florida, encapsulating the entire state. The border also consists of land that's halfway across the states of California, Wisconsin, Louisiana, and most of the states along the Eastern Seaboard (ACLU, n.d.).

- Guantanamo Bay is still running. Obama said he would close that, but it never happened. Biden doesn't seem to be doing it, either, though as of this writing small steps are being made to move detainees, though *where* they are held isn't really the point (Ali, 2021).
- Infrastructure, such as bridges and roads, are still crumbling, though Trump told us that fixing them was one of his aims when he ran for office. We will see if Biden's funds will go into actually fixing our aging nation and if politicians will even maintain support for the project (Democrats and Republicans) as they nearly stalled final attempts to pass legislation and funding in 2021 (Zhang, 2021).
- And, the very social fabric that we said we used to rely on to bring us together as "one nation" still doesn't exist, leaving us growing ever more fragmented and frustrated (Putnam, 2020).

It is ironic I write these words near the 20th anniversary of the events of 9/11 when the nation called for unity and Americanness, using the media to reflect upon the events of that day without reflecting on the media as lacking context as to why the events even happened both then and now (Gutsche, 2021), I must say I hope we can do better reflecting on Trumpism and journalism's roles in it.

Outline of Book

There is no record anywhere that the authors of this book share all of my sentiments in this Introduction. I merely reflect on their work and wish to politicize the project to aim toward critical interpretations of a field I have worked in and within which I now teach and research. Here, I present and connect the chapters in the book's sections.

The project opens with an analysis of the current politics of fear in the U.S. that became tantamount to Trump's Presidency, motivated by collective moral panic and cultural trauma related to globalization and Westernization(s) via a military-popular culture-media-entertainment industry (for similar discussion, see der Derian, 2009) that seems now to be remembered and viewed with some grainy, darkened, and hazed-out remembrance of the 2010s where some of us even then were calling out in concern for a dystopian future of American democracy and the brain-washing power of media that were echoed by academic and public scholars from Naomi Klein to Michael Moore to Noam Chomsky. In the chapter that opens this book's first section, "Trumpism and Its Attack(s) on Journalism:

Fear, Phobias, and Fighting ‘Bullshit,’” David L. Altheide writes that the “politics of fear” that emerged in the rise of Trump is triumphing through media and popular discourses of globalization and politics and “can only survive when users cannot think critically and are oriented to accepting brief, emotionally resonant messages.” It is a powerful message with which to start the book in an age of “bullshit” that we have seen around Trump’s time, the direct rejection of caring about truth (for more, see Ball, 2017; Frankfurt, 2009; Davis, 2017; McNair, 2018; Phillips, 2019). While Altheide doesn’t write about “bullshit” expressly, he connects media power to the current and future days of political reporting about the Presidency and “democracy.”

Relatedly, one of the major areas of research that emerged from Trump’s time in office is how journalists recognized and addressed conservative news media. This, of course, was featured in our earlier book on Trump and journalism but is elevated in its mood by wishing to outline its rise and its architectures, as Jessica Collier, Gina M. Masullo, and Marley Duchovnay do in their piece on audiences. Here, the authors turn to interviews with conservatives to understand why they desire the media they do, which is based largely around who they think they can trust to give them the news. Lindsey Meeks goes further into the discussion of trust by highlighting issues of “distrust” and presents practical solutions for growing trust between media and the Right-wing. We see in the last chapters of this section a further exploration of ideological forces at play within the diversity of U.S. voting systems and the degrees to which even the surprising adoption of Trumpism is rationalized. Specifically, Hannah Artman and Sallie Hughes look at stories of Cuban American voters from Miami who voted for Trump and were/are influenced by media to support conservative explanations of the everyday. Lastly, Prashanth Bhat turns to deplatforming as a means by which citizens and media outlets remove voices from the mainstream. In his work, he reveals the platforms and other digital places people go for Right-wing news when it is banned by the mainstream, elite journalism, offering serious thoughts for what deplatforming might mean for journalism of tomorrow.

Through this first section, we see how journalism is imbued with truth, bullshit, adoption, and scrutiny of information and messages both developed and relayed by news outlets themselves. The book turns then to its second section, “Journalism’s (Failed) Responses to Trump: From Dis-information to Social Distance,” where authors construct a landscape by which journalists function to maintain their positions of truth-tellers but also seem to fail to speak to and among all communities equally (for more on this as a normalized function, see Gutsche, 2014). Pam Creedon opens this section with her piece on “cultural war escalation” via Trump and local politics. I have long believed Trump emerged from a bottom-up, local-to-national movement of political actors, religious zealots, and hungry media that pushed to the top the agendas that were stewing during the Clinton years,

the early War on Terror years, and the Obama years that emerged with great wrath to bring about Trump (Gutsche, 2018a). Here, then, Creedon brings this discussion to her own life and a reflection of her state of Iowa that was in a complete state of political turmoil that mirrored that at the national level near the end of Trump's reign, particularly when efforts to end the teaching of critical race theory and protections for women's sports were woven into daily news. In short, this chapter helps to ground what is often a national conversation focused on politics and national reporters and media systems to a local one. In the following chapter, Stephen Heidt hones in on the national level of press coverage, particularly the coverage of presidential rhetoric that had international implications during an intersection of fear and pandering during a pandemic and Trump's run-up to the 2020 election where COVID-19 and his ego collided. Al Cross, then, takes us back to the local level and out of the realm of COVID-only to rural America and the role of local journalists in covering Trump throughout his Presidency. In this work, we see the impact that the divisiveness or perceptions of bias, the local and everydayness of the effects of radical politics, and a press unprepared (or predispositioned) for it has on editors and publishers, a group even more maligned than local journalists in academic work. Such insights provide a baseline for understanding where presidential journalism has been to predict where it might go.

In Part III, "Journalism and Politics in Opposition to Trumpism: From Bashing to Biden," authors look at the transition from Trump to Biden, from being a target of digital activists to how Biden has brought back "normal" and how that might not be a good thing. Sydney Forde opens this section with her take on Unfox My Cable Box, a digital activist campaign to get cable subscribers to remove Fox News from their subscriber packages. A part critical political economy and part commentary on the ills and misses of liberal-agenda activism, Forde gives us a hint at what could be coming in terms of more aggressive and individualized actions for shaping journalism about future politicians and what could be powerful platforming for citizens and journalists alike interested in supporting – or undercutting – social issues and the role of media in them following Trump's time in office. Leon Barkho reminds us that we are already, indeed, "After Trump," at least in the listed order of presidents, and discusses how Trump, himself, used rhetoric in his role as "former president," a term used frequently by journalists to characterize those who once sat in the Oval Office but have left, to make a case for his future political influence. Fred Blevens follows with his assessment of how a Biden Presidency has (or hasn't) changed how journalists look at the Presidency and the U.S.' role in global society by analyzing the words of journalists themselves. From shock at Trump to possible boringness with Biden, what emerges is a critique of what journalists "look for" in presidential coverage. Closing out this section, Nolan Higdon and colleagues write about the new normal (a term used by both those returning to "normal" as they hope to reach an end to COVID-19 and in an "After

Trump” Presidency). I find this idea of “returning to normalcy” especially interesting, as I wrote recently for the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication:

COVID-19 hasn’t changed us enough. So while the desire to return to normal is something that can change behavior and assist in the care of people, beware the danger of going forward, particularly in terms of our scholarship that frequently lags behind the times, becomes retrospective, and often shapes collective forgetting that keeps us in the pretty past.
(Gutsche, 2020c)

Higdon and his coauthors do not provide a nostalgic notion of “return” but actually challenge the very notion that Biden is “better,” though their arguments surround critical interpretations of the Presidency and its collusive nature with the press rather than picking on any one President.

The book’s fourth section is titled “Journalism’s Ideological and Practical Crisis: From Norms to ‘New, New, New’ Journalism?” Here, authors ask whether journalism has changed because of or since Trump, if the changes are beneficial for society, and if so, how those changes are sustained. Katherine M. Bell provides a provocative piece on whether journalism will be able to shed its racist histories and current tendencies and structures. COVID-19, despite its racialized disparities, really has hidden a lot of the news coverage on the underlying racial inequalities and intentionalities of U.S. politics, institutions, and societies. Bell asks if there can be a future for “anti-racist journalism.” Jesse Benn and Jeff Tischauser provide an equally critical assessment on the future of journalism, providing personal and scholarly takes on how the politics of today align with other critical and cultural assessments throughout this book, but also connect the ideological meanings of newswork in political speech as it applies to the structural and individual. In a type of response, I have placed Perry Parks’ piece on journalism that “minimizes harm,” or that should, as a means by which to interrogate the section’s chapters that came before it. Parks offers an intriguing and detailed analysis of what this journalism could look like, why it matters, and how the foundations for it are in scholarship and faith/philosophical systems already around us. Ending the book, as a type of conclusion, is a piece from Douglas Kellner, whose work opened the first book we did on Trump and journalism. Here, Kellner, possibly the dean of contemporary Cultural and Media Studies, argues that authoritarian populism that gave rise to Trump hasn’t gone away and actually never came to be – it always was. He ends his essay with words that I think are important for scholars today – and for those who are doing our journalism. Kellner writes here:

For as long as human beings have vision, goals, and autonomy, we can design, shape, and restructure our technologies, as well as be shaped and constrained by them. Hence, the future of the human adventure is

bound up in technopolitics and requires that we rethink the dynamics of technology, politics, and everyday life.

In the end, I hope we surround ourselves with this idea, and while I wish to encourage you to turn back to the work of several of these authors from our first project in 2018 to see how they have developed their ideas since, please consider these words as independent and intrusive, interrogative, and idealistic, because without the audacity of idealism (sorry, Obama, not “hope,” as he put in his own book’s title), we are doomed.

Notes

- 1 As editor, I have been very pleased with the work that the authors did there, which I have mentioned dozens of times in interviews I did during the Trump Presidency on CNN, Deutsche Welle, Al Jazeera, and elsewhere. This exposure, including independent and related scholarship done by chapter authors, served also to extend the scholarship of that project into community groups, engaging with citizens not just through conventional scholarship and classrooms but through conversations, debate, and discussion.
- 2 I should be clear that I intentionally use “journalisms” in the plural to represent not just the technologically diverse forms of journalism, which seems to have been the most dominant use of the term in the past, but the ideological even within the mainstream. My hope is the term can encourage people to see their own journalism(s) as being more than they appear and the potential to make them more. Journalism, largely in my use here, refers to mainstream, elite journalism.
- 3 If it matters for those reading this and as a point of transparency, I consider myself a Bob La Follette progressive.
- 4 For these and other “Page One” images from across the world, visit “Today’s Front Pages,” by the Freedom Forum at www.freedomforum.org/todaysfrontpages/#1.

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