

The fake news – fake narrative epidemic Pt. 2

A girl on her back in broken glass being raped is going to end up with more than a few cuts. She would have been dripping blood and leaving an easily-followed trail as she left the house. The first passersby she encountered outside would probably have called for an ambulance, as obviously she would have needed immediate medical attention. The police would have gotten involved, and probably nailed the boys involved as they'd also have a few gashes of their own. (It was pitch dark in there, remember? How would they have avoided all that broken glass?)

This was fake news. It didn't happen. But it fit the fake narrative (the campus "rape culture"). That it was published is more testimony to collapsing critical thinking skills at major publications. Rolling Stone used to be a good source for information I'd not see elsewhere. I don't know that I'd trust them now. They may have learned their lesson, given the lawsuits they've faced including from a university administrator contending that her career was badly damaged by "Jackie's" allegation that she didn't take the campus "rape culture" fake narrative seriously enough.

Fake narratives give rise to fake news about "hate crimes" (by, e.g., Trump supporters against minorities) that never happened. Fake narratives are frequently promulgated by intellectually dishonest means. Note how many "phobias" we have now. Homophobia, xenophobia, transphobia, Islamophobia ... did I miss any? A phobia is an irrational fear, of course. There are legitimate phobias, such as claustrophobia and agoraphobia. You don't argue with their sufferers, you try to cure them or manage their conditions if you can.

But try to challenge one of the fake phobias, or fake

narratives more generally, and something quite interesting happens. Basket of deplorables type remarks allude to it.

Around the end of the 1980s, I tried on several occasions to reason with my fellow academics about “affirmative action.” Silly me, thinking that arguments (in the sense of logic: presenting conclusions backed up with evidence) were what mattered. I once gave a carefully referenced, 30-plus slide presentation on the subject at a humanities conference, showing first how vague the concept and directives on affirmative action were from the outset, how this alone spelled trouble as no one could be sure what the law required, and then how Supreme Court decisions such as *Griggs v. Duke Power* (1971) shifted policy from nondiscrimination to racial realignment, presuming an unstated ideal no one could certify was attainable. This, I observed, was the source of common words like underrepresented group, which logically and conceptually presuppose correct representation. Based on this I laid out the reasons why (1) it was not working, if the intent was to increase the representation of black faculty on campuses; (2) one reason it could not work was that government programs cannot “give” people motivation and skills; (3) the number of officially designated underrepresented groups would expand, because federal law had created a spoils system able to be taken advantage of; and finally (4) the results would drive groups apart instead of bring them together. It would breed hostility from white males when they realized their legal disadvantage, and it would breed hostility from blacks when the programs failed. Awarding freebies to some at the expense of others always does this. Always.

I might as well have been talking to the walls.

Afterwards – most of the audience having sat quietly with a constrained chill – I tried to open up a dialogue with a woman who had challenged my motives during the Q&A session. Without looking me in the eye she snapped, “I’ve heard it all before!”

Eventually I ceased talking to female academics.

Before long I was encountering reasons to believe that purposeful deafness to basic logic when it went up against a dominant narrative was the order of the day on topics other than that one. These included many features of history, where academic historians have a blind spot over what they brand as “conspiracy theories”; they include globalization, which we are assured by economic “experts” is a good thing; they include the origin of life and human origins (evolution), involving myriad claims about states of affairs that are scientifically untestable; they include man-made climate change over claims which should be testable and rationally decidable, but where we now have scientists resigning their positions over the oppressive conditions this official narrative has created.

Challenge any of these narratives, and you won’t be answered with reason. You’ll get snarky, condescending responses. You’ll be treated as uninformed, unintelligent (or “uneducated”), or worse. A decision to challenge a fake narrative can be career-ending.

A more interesting question is, How did all these fake narratives, the basis for the real fake news of mainstream media, government, and academia, get started? What purpose do they serve? In the case of dominant media, one has to go back a full century. One learns of Oscar Callaway, then a Senator from Texas, writing in 1917 on the controlled press following the loss of his Senate seat due to his opposition to U.S. entry into what became World War I. His observations were entered into the Congressional Record:

In March, 1915, the J.P. Morgan interests, the steel, shipbuilding, and powder interest, and their subsidiary organizations, got together 12 men high up in the newspaper world and employed them to select the most influential newspapers in the United States and sufficient number of them

to control generally the policy of the daily press.... These 12 men worked the problems out by selecting 179 newspapers, and then began, by an elimination process, to retain only those necessary for the purpose of controlling the general policy of the daily press throughout the country.

They found it was only necessary to purchase the control of 25 of the greatest papers. An agreement was reached; the policy of the papers was bought, to be paid for by the month; an editor was furnished for each paper to properly supervise and edit information regarding the questions of preparedness, militarism, financial policies, and other things of national and international nature considered vital to the interests of the purchasers.... This policy also included the suppression of everything in opposition to the wishes of the interests served.

The effectiveness of this scheme has been conclusively demonstrated by the character of the stuff carried in the daily press throughout the country since March, 1915. They have resorted to anything necessary to commercialize public sentiment and sandbag the National Congress into making extravagant and wasteful appropriations for the Army and Navy under false pretense that it was necessary. Their stock argument is that it is "patriotism." They are playing on every prejudice and passion of the American people.

Callaway, who had been attacked in the press for his lack of "patriotism" (rather like the critics of Bush II's war), wanted an official investigation. Nothing was done, and the whole thing fell down the memory hole. Media consolidation has continued ever since. It took a quantum leap when Bill Clinton signed the 1996 Telecommunications Act. This act eased restrictions on media cross-ownership, so that one conglomerate could own multiple concerns. It was part of neoliberal so-called deregulation. What it did was allow the dominant corporate actors to strengthen their control over information through buyouts and mergers. Today over 90% of

mainstream media, which includes newspapers, television networks, cable stations, web concerns, magazines and their websites, Hollywood production companies, and much more, is owned by six megacorporations.

It's all about the attempt to control narratives as much as possible. The purpose of fake narratives is to create an artificial reality – often an economic reality where things are rosier than they really are, by, e.g., presenting an “unemployment rate” that excludes you from the labor force if you haven't looked for work in a month. Numbers can be made to look impressive even if they don't mean much. A fake narrative now is how the Obama administration has overseen a “recovery” with massive job growth, etc.

Economics, however, is now mostly mass psychology. Its purpose is to make the visible national elites look good, just so long as they have the favor of the globalist elites, of course. Obama had that. Trump will not, so that even if his policies bring about a jobs renaissance, we will likely hear nothing except downsides. The fake news story about Russian hackers as well as repeated accounts of how Hillary Clinton “won the popular vote” have already done plenty to delegitimize the Trump presidency before it has even starts.

This isn't over, however. Until the Internet era, media corporations could rely on their narratives for a controlled public. Alternative media has changed the rules of the game. People can get their news from DrudgeReport.com or Breitbart.com or NewsWithViews.com instead of the Clinton News Network (CNN), or MSNBC, or ABC, or even FOX.

Mainstream media have lost control. They want it back! Hence their fake news about “fake news.” If nothing else, it is embarrassing to a multi-billion dollar operation like CNN to be proven wrong over and over, rendered almost irrelevant, by little outfits run on shoestring budgets out of home offices by guy with websites and a handful of researchers and writers

most of whom work for free!

But that's what we've got!

Information has never been more widely available than it is today. It might be a good idea to make use of it, because I've got a hunch a crackdown of some kind is coming. That, however, is another article.

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