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Truth and Media  
Responsibility Paper

Every morning your typical individual will wake up and go through a routine that almost always consists of checking one of the several media channels for their news. Whether it be Facebook, twitter, the radio, or television, the media we as individuals are exposed to is biased in one way or another. Failing to include the entire truth, or at times any of the truth, is a tendency developed to get our attention as the audience. Unfortunately, as truth seekers, we find ourselves growing “blind” to these misconceptions, which is our own fault. As technology grows in our society, we should be more focused on examining the media for its true tendencies more than simply what the headline says. Referring to more than one source and comparing/contrasting them is a great way to dissect the media using strategies such as ideology, bias, bullshit, and more. This paper will detail epistemic (study of knowledge) terms that can improve our focus and breakdown of today’s media.

By incorporating these epistemic terms into media stories, it interferes with people’s rationality and deception of the truth. Truth is the term we use dominantly to mean fact or reality. Aristotle defines truth as, “to say of that which is, that it is, and that of which is not, that it is not, is true.” Bullshit is today’s biggest cloud over our initial thought of what is true. To incorporate bullshit, is to try and impress the reader or listener with words that communicate an impression that something has or is going to happen. The bullshitter’s sole concern is personal advantage and advancement for his or her well-being. When a journalist or reporter has a story and either provides fake information or exaggerates the detail to a point that it is not true, it fits the term bullshit. The media employee is sacrificing the mind of the audience to gain their own success.

For the media to even think this should be an option is truthfully sad when thought about. To deceive the minds of their entire audience not only creates negative credibility but is insulting to their followers. Unfortunately, not everyone knows that terms like this exist in today's media which is the reason why it puts into question the loyalty certain organizations have to their followers. Jeopardizing or questioning the intelligence of the people who turn to you for information daily is unethical and should be focused on more often. Exaggerating the truth or "twisting" words to improve revenue displays disrespect to everyone who takes the time to read, listen, or view that specific media channel. While discussing Frankfurt in class, we were asked if bullshit was in fact a misrepresentation to a person's attitude, thoughts, or feelings. Originally, I had "No" written down because I thought that bullshit was done by only joking around and saying miscellaneous things with little to no useful intention. As the end of the semester nears, I have to say my answer has changed to "yes". Bullshit is used for far more reasons than we know. It is disguised frequently and if we don't know what to look for it may change an important perspective of ours for the worse. In concluding the term bullshit, I agree with Frankfurt, stating that "bullshit thus is a greater enemy of the truth than are lies."

Bias is yet another term applied in everyday media channels and is defined as an inclination of temperament or outlook to present or hold a partial perspective at the expense of (possibly equally valid) alternatives about objects, people, or groups. Anything biased is one-sided and does not have a neutral point of view. Bias is easier to identify than bullshit simply because of the reputation or consistent standpoints that a certain media channel holds. A common occurrence in a bias news story is to persuade more than prove a point. Media outlets can even include bullshit in their attempts to get you on "their side". At times, in an act of desperation, journalists, TV or radio hosts, and others can incorporate false information to once

again deceive the mind into thinking their point of view is more rational than the one we had already possessed. Cognitive bias is our human tendency to make systematic decisions in certain circumstances based on cognitive factors rather than actual evidence. Sometimes when we see or hear things in different words or terms it is enough to make us put our own beliefs into judgment and sometimes ultimately change our view entirely. However, as people in our society develop their own bias in sports, politics, etc. they ignore entirely the overall goal of the media channel and strive to hear what comforts them according to what they believe or value.

I believe that in discussing and researching these epistemic terms, the overall sincerity in communication has been lost. Media has developed so many jobs and taken such a large part in our daily lives that it has become a competition. Just like any competition, people will do what it takes to win or to get an advantage. This is where I feel the sincerity throughout mass media has developed a cloud over it. Trying to gain success has put the credibility of some media information in jeopardy because of its intention instead of the actual truth. I think this is where media has failed us. The idea of communicating with others used to be based on spreading true information while looking into someone's eyes because you knew what you were saying to them was true. Media has put communication channel sincerity on the decline because we not only do not have to face our audience face to face, but instead are capable of possibly creating change in perspective with words just by clicking "share" or "tweet".

As technology further increases into our daily lives I feel it is our moral responsibility to examine it for the terms I just discussed along with others if it is going to affect our actions or beliefs. Being more skeptical of the media will help individuals decipher lies from the truth. Using more than one media outlet and researching or comparing the two will portray a better picture of what we want to believe once we have factual credibility, or at least more than one

viewpoint. By doing this we can also overcome the disrespect journalists and reporters put towards their audience by exercising our ability to identify false or heavily exaggerated information. I believe that more classes that go further in depth of the media can assist greatly in our society's effort to dissect everyday information and are necessary even at the high school level. Increasing our skepticism early, as technology evolves, should be our individual responsibility because so much of what we hear in media affects our decision making or what we believe to be rational. Examining media thoroughly, using epistemic terms and definitions, can influence our rationality for the better by processing the information we need to create the beliefs that will affect us in a positive manner not only in our communities, but also individually.