

Sharyl Attkisson on Media Bias

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STORY AT-A-GLANCE

- › In the 1950s, the CIA ran a covert campaign called “Operation Mockingbird,” in which they recruited journalists as assets to spread propaganda, and while the campaign officially ended in the 1970s, evidence suggests the project never really stopped
- › In her book, “Slanted: How the News Media Taught Us to Love Censorship and Hate Journalism,” Sharyl Attkisson addresses one of the most pressing issues of our time: media bias and the deterioration of objective journalism
- › Multinational industries, and the drug industry in particular, also wield powerful influence over content relating to their particular interests. As drug advertising became a major income stream for media companies, their reporting on health and medicine became increasingly biased
- › Big Tech companies are also masters of censoring anything that might hurt themselves or their technocratic allies
- › In terms of health, COVID-19 reporting has taken censorship and media manipulation to brand-new heights. All social media platforms are openly censoring dissenting views about the virus, particularly its origin and treatment. Even lauded doctors and scientists have been axed for speaking against the desired narrative dictated by the World Health Organization

Sharyl Attkisson is an award-winning investigative journalist with uncompromising integrity. Her book, “[Slanted: How the News Media Taught Us to Love Censorship and Hate Journalism](#),” was released in November 2020.

In this, her third book, she addresses one of the most pressing issues of our time: media bias and the deterioration of objective journalism — a topic on which she has first-hand experience.

A former anchor at CNN and CBS News, Attkisson now produces her own Sunday television news program, "Full Measure," as well as two podcasts: "Full Measure After Hours" and "The Sharyl Attkisson Podcast," in which she covers the kinds of stories that mainstream news no longer touches.

Slanted Media

Propaganda through media certainly isn't a new thing. Starting in the late 1940s,¹ the CIA ran a well-documented but at the time covert campaign called "Operation Mockingbird," in which they recruited journalists as assets to spread propaganda — news slanted in one way or another. While the program is always referred to in the past tense, as it is said to have been ended in the 1970s,² evidence suggests it never really stopped.

"There are all kinds of ways the Intel community has, and can, manipulate the news," Attkisson says, "but we reached a new level in 2016, 2017, because they don't even have to whisper in our ear to get us to report stuff. We hired them. Meaning, Brennan, Clapper, Comey — all of them were hired as consultants. They were invited on the news directly.

You didn't have to put them through a filter and anonymous sources, although plenty of anonymous sources were also used. But daily putting forth their propaganda, much of which, obviously, was proven false, particularly on the Trump, Russia narrative.

But every day, we allowed them to plaster the airwaves, even after they were proven admittedly wrong ... After two years of spewing this false information, they're still consulted by the media. They're still used. So, it's so easy for an Intel operation if they wish to use the media towards whatever goal they may have ...

I firmly believe that there have been ongoing [propaganda] campaigns that continue today. Maybe separate operations by intelligence agencies and officials to manipulate the news, and certainly have things reported a certain way to try to push for certain outcomes in politics here at home and internationally."

Big Industry Also Influences the News

Multinational industries, the drug industry in particular, also has a similar level of influence over content relating to their particular interests. In 1996, direct-to-consumer drug advertising was legalized, and as drug advertising became a major income stream for media companies, their reporting on health and medicine became increasingly biased.

The reason is simple. They cannot afford to "bite the hand that feeds them." If an advertiser doesn't want the public to know about a particular finding, all they have to do to influence the reporting is to threaten to withdraw its advertising, which will hurt the media company's bottom line.

Drug companies have also become major sponsors of medical education; thus, doctors are taught to prescribe drugs for all ills, but they're not taught about the side effects and drawbacks of those drugs.

Today, the drug industry also controls fact-checking organizations such as NewsGuard, as it is funded by Publicis, which is supported by drug companies. When feeding from the Big Pharma trough, how could they possibly be objective in their fact-checking? Reality shows us they can't because they aren't.

Big Tech – Master Manipulators of Minds

Big Tech companies, of course, are also masters of censoring anything that might hurt themselves or their technocratic allies. As just one of countless examples, you can no longer post a link to Mercola.com on Twitter.

First, they added a false warning that made it look like my site contained dangerous malware when readers would click on a posted link. After a while, they simply blocked the ability to post links to our site altogether.

"This started, and I traced this in my second book, 'The Smear,' to Media Matters ... the left-wing propaganda group that supported Hillary Clinton, Barack Obama, and is a big smear organization," Attkisson says. "They acknowledged going to Facebook about the time when they were worried that Donald Trump was going to get elected.

They really felt that the only thing giving him a leg up, and they still believe this today, is his social media outreach. They tried to think of a way to control, with the kind of social media and news people could get, so Media Matters lobbied Facebook and tried to convince them – and did so successfully – to taking a fact-checking brand-new role that nobody had ever asked for.

We're not begging for our information to be curated. That was a pretend demand created by the propagandists who wanted to control the information. They had to make us think that we needed a third party to step in and tell us what to think and sort through the information ... The fake news effort, the fact-checking, which is usually fake fact-checking, meaning it's not a genuine effort, is a propaganda effort ...

We've seen it explode as we come into the 2020 election, for much the same reason, whereby, the social media companies, third parties, academic institutions and NewsGuard ... they insert themselves. But of course, they're all backed by certain money and special interests. They're no more in a position to fact-check than an ordinary person walking on the street ...

They have interests. They make sure certain things are not seen, even if true. And I think this is the most serious threat that I'm looking at right now to our media environment.

I'm afraid that our kids will be telling their kids of a time when you used to be able to go on the internet and find most, any, information you wanted, because we are increasingly being pointed only to that which they, people who control the information, wish for us to see."

Presidential Treatment Takes on a New Meaning

In her book, Attkisson also spends an entire chapter dissecting the highly-biased treatment of President Trump, and how the media have, through their own admission, suspended traditional journalistic ethics simply because they consider him "uniquely dangerous."

"Therefore, you don't have to follow the normal rules and guidelines when it comes to fair and accurate reporting, which I think is one of the most absurd things I've ever heard in my life, from someone in our profession, because the standards exist precisely so that we report on everybody the same way," she says.

"In other words, using the same standards, whether we like them or not. Particularly, perhaps, if we don't like or agree with the candidate – that's when the standards become most important. But you need only look at Politico, for example, during the last election.

I interviewed them shortly afterwards. Someone in charge of some of their coverage ... in almost every answer to a question, she brought up President Trump and something negative about him.

One of the things she said was how many lies he tells per minute. She said, 'We actually had a team that calculated the number of lies per minute that President Trump told.' And I asked the obvious question, 'Well, what was that compared to Hillary's supposed lies per minute?' And she actually said, 'Oh, we didn't have the staffing to do Hillary too.'

Can you imagine a national news organization that purports to cover something fairly and we'll fact-check the lies per minute of one candidate and not the opposing candidate and pretend that that qualifies as fair news?

I also interviewed some noted liberals who have noticed the same thing: That they look at things from a fair-minded viewpoint and are no fan of President Trump, yet are appalled at how the media has dishonestly treated certain topics and information, which should make everybody wonder, 'Are we getting the truth when it comes to things that don't have to do with President Trump?

If the media can report so many things out of context and incorrectly when it comes to somebody they don't like, what else are we getting that's not in context or that's not fully true?"

The Invention of Lying

Prior to President Trump, virtually no one in the media would accuse someone of lying. The standard was to question an individual's statement or point out a discrepancy to another source, but not call it an outright lie, because it's easy to get confused on specifics. A lie is a very specific allegation that implies an intent to deceive. Just because you misremember a fact doesn't mean you lied.

"[In the book] I talk about the fact that ... I know I've probably been lied to many times, but I don't believe I've ever reported that somebody lied to me in a hard news report. Why? Well, a lie is a specific thing that requires you to know the mind of the person. And you as a journalist have to withhold, even if you think something is true without the evidence, you really can't say it's true.

I'll use the example I used in the book: Ford and Firestone tires. The executives consistently said there was no evidence that these tires were dangerous prior to the scandal around the 2000 time period where there were a lot of deaths. I had documents from a source that showed this very danger many years before.

It appeared that they were lying, but I didn't call it a lie because there are many other explanations someone could give. They could say, 'Well, these guys weren't there at the time. So, they didn't know that these discussions had been had. They didn't have access to the emails, their subordinates didn't tell them.' So, you don't know whether they're mistaken or lying.

And from a journalistic standpoint, we used to always take the objective road and say something like, 'Their testimony contradicts the documentary record.' That's good enough. People at home can make up their own mind.

But there was a turn taken, specifically, to target President Trump, whereby, the media started frequently calling things that he said, lies – even when there was simply something that was a matter of opinion, or could not be proven, or a mistake, none of which are lies.

The New York Times was proud of this when it did it. And I recount in the book the first time they made a headline where they talked about President Trump lying, and how that was cheered on by others in the media who then followed suit.

They were even cheered on by a journalism professor who wrote a big op-ed about how it was time to stop doing this objective reporting and that we needed to call out President Trump's lies frequently and often. It's just, again, from a journalistic standpoint, ridiculous ... I think this is a new and dangerous tactic that has really destroyed our objectivity in the eyes of the public. And rightly so."

Massaging COVID-19 Messages

In terms of health, COVID-19 reporting has taken censorship and media manipulation to brand new heights, eclipsing just about all previous efforts. They don't even hide the bias anymore.

All social media platforms are openly censoring dissenting views about the virus, particularly its origin and treatment. Even well-respected doctors and scientists have

been axed for speaking against the desired narrative dictated by the World Health Organization.

August 26, 2020, the CDC had released data³ showing 94% of people who had died during the COVID-19 pandemic in the U.S. died "with" the virus, not "from" it. Only 6% had COVID-19 listed as the sole cause of death on the death certificate. Hence, at that time the real death toll, those who unarguably died as a direct result of the infection, was only around 10,000.

"For deaths with conditions or causes in addition to COVID-19, on average, there were 2.6 additional conditions or causes per death," the CDC stated. This is an important distinction.

Yet mainstream media continued to report that nearly 200,000 had died "from" COVID-19 in the U.S, and have continued to add to the numbers, thereby increasing and ensuring national fear so they can continue to implement their lockdowns, face mask and vaccine mandates and other strategies to limit our personal freedoms and liberty.

"I think we need both numbers, in a separate sense, to have perspective and understanding of what's really happening," Attkisson says. "And it's something that very few people have shown interest in ... Early on, it was clear ... that the primary victims were those with the comorbidities and the elderly population in nursing homes and so on.

But then we sort of lost track of that. And then there seemed to be a propaganda effort to convince people that, initially, after understanding young people were at very little risk of serious illness and death, there seemed to be an effort to convince people that the youth must be very careful. That more young people are dying and getting sick.

I can only guess as to why that's important to some interests, but I suspect it has something to do with the fact that when the vaccine comes out, the market needs to be aimed.

You can't rule out young people, you must make them believe they need it, or else you've ruled out a huge section of the vaccine market. And they certainly don't want to make a vaccine that's not used by a giant percentage of the population. I think they have to create a market. Why do I think this?

Well, I was actually told by a top immunization official for the government, when they learned flu shots are ineffective in the elderly ... that the way around that was not to take flu shots away from the elderly – who would think that was dishonest because we've been telling it was necessary for so many years – but to convince parents to get their children and babies flu shots so that they wouldn't 'carry flu to the elderly.'

I remember him saying to me, 'The trick is going to be to convince parents to give a vaccine to their children who don't really need it themselves.' In other words, for a secondary supposed benefit for the elderly. And darn it, if you didn't see in the next season, they recommended flu shots for babies and children.

And they didn't tell anybody at the time that they were doing it because flu shots don't work in the elderly. They just started telling people that your kids need flu shots."

When a 'Case' Is Not a Case

The media are also grossly misusing the term "case," in reference to the COVID-19 case load. A case is a medical term for a patient with a symptomatic type of infection. It's not someone who tests positive for antibodies or pieces of viral DNA. By referring to all positive tests as "cases," they're able to fan the flames of panic, making the situation sound far worse than it actually is.

“ We're at a pretty scary time when scientists who are experts on these issues fear speaking what they believe

is the scientific truth because they'll be controversialized. ~ Sharyl Attkisson”

Many still do not understand that most of those who test positive for SARS-CoV-2 are asymptomatic. They think these are sick people in the hospital and that rising "case" numbers are a reflection of a rise in deaths. Statistics reveal this simply isn't true, and that there's not a linear correlation between positive tests and deaths caused by COVID alone.

"There are just so many things that are misreported," Attkisson says. "But if you try to report them accurately and factually, you get called out by those in the media who either didn't understand, or are simply so blinded by the propaganda narrative.

The New York Times did this. They actually called me and several other people out as 'coronavirus doubters,' although I had never said or written anything that even remotely denies coronavirus or denies the risk of it. But they were working very hard to silence voices who are simply reporting more accurately and with context on what's really happening.

By the way, when I spoke to some scientists ... and I said, 'Why don't you speak out or correct what you think is the misconception?' Separately, several of them told me they feared speaking out publicly because they were afraid they would be labeled a coronavirus doubter, and for fear of contradicting Dr. Fauci.

So, I said, 'We're at a pretty scary time when scientists who are experts on these issues fear speaking what they believe is the scientific truth because they'll be controversialized.'"

Search for Truth and Unbiased Facts

The clear take-home message I got from reading, "[Slanted: How the News Media Taught Us to Love Censorship and Hate Journalism](#)," is that there's a profoundly serious

problem with most mainstream conventional media.

The obvious question is: Where can you go to get the truth? We would like to be informed, but we also want the truth. We don't have time to waste to be brainwashed by propaganda. At the end of her book, Attkisson lists a variety of sources she's come to trust. It may be worth getting the book for those recommendations alone.

"I didn't make a comprehensive list," Attkisson says. "I'm sure I left many people out, but I tried to point to a few outlets and people, and I consulted some of my colleagues for their recommendations. It's not an easy answer. There isn't a place you can go. I can't say, 'Watch this news every day or read this publication.' It's more granular than that.

You have to find a reporter that you trust on a topic and then chase that reporter around ... That's where I think you can find a segment of truth. And it's not always, sadly, going to be objective truth.

Some of the reporters I name are coming from the left viewpoint or coming from a right viewpoint, but they have proven themselves to be brave reporters of a particular topic or controversy that I think you can rely on. But it's just not so simple as it used to be where you could just point to a person or an outlet and say, 'Watch that, and you'll get your fair shake at the news' ...

I would say, in closing, that I do think a new paradigm will develop when it comes to news reporting. There are people looking at how news and information can be reported in a way that it cannot be censored by big tech giants, political figures and nonprofits and so on ...

I'm told there's a way to develop a social media platform where you can post freely and also not be subject to censorship. I think things will evolve because people are tired of what they're seeing. And I hope something really positive, being an optimist, develops out of all of this down the road."

Sources and References

- ^{1, 2} [Encyclopedia of intelligence and counterintelligence \(First ed.\) Routledge, Operation Mockingbird](#)
- ³ [CDC. Wayback Archives. August 26, 2020](#)