



# Post-Truth: A Response

Matt Moore



## ISKO Singapore David Clarke on Post-Truth

 Patrick Lambe | 16 plays

# Post-Truth





# Post-Truth

- Politics used to be based on truth, evidence and rational discourse between engaged citizens.
- Now, politicians have no regard for the truth and citizens do not hold them accountable for this. Citizens do not listen to each other.
- New technologies such as social networks (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube) and search (Google) have created “filter bubbles” that lead to populaces that are less informed and more polarized.
- Also microtargeting, social bot attacks, fake news factories, trolling all undermine democracy.



## What we agree on (1)

“I would like to live in a society that is open-minded, fact-loving, search savvy and truth seeking. To this end we need to hold our political leaders, businesses and institutions accountable to adopt truthfulness as a core value, to respect data privacy and in plain and simple terms to not deal in lies.”



## What we agree on (2)

“The Internet democratised the world of information. It levelled the playing field between citizens and institutions, and it gave a voice to many previously marginalised individuals and communities.”



## What we agree on (3)

- The need for personal responsibility.
- The need for collective action.
- The need for regulation.
- The need for competition.
- The need for technological alternatives.



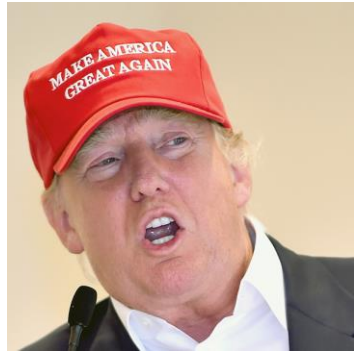
# Post-Truth







# Make America Great Again vs Make Truth True Again



<b>MAGA</b>	<b>MTTA</b>
The world was better in the past.	The world was better in the past.
That past is somewhat vague.	That past is somewhat vague.
The world is bad now.	The world is bad now.
That past was the dominance of American industrial economic power.	That past was the rule of truth, facts, and evidence.



# Are filter bubbles real?

- “We find that the increase in polarization is largest among the groups least likely to use the internet and social media” - <https://doi.org/10.3386/w23258>
- “However, the analysis presented here already shows that to date there is only scant empirical evidence at network level for the existence of well-developed, exclusive echo chambers or filter bubbles, at least within the Australian Twittersphere.” - <https://eprints.qut.edu.au/113937/>
- “We find that social networks and search engines are associated with an increase in the mean ideological distance between individuals. However, somewhat counterintuitively, these same channels also are associated with an increase in an individual’s exposure to material from his or her less preferred side of the political spectrum.” - <https://doi.org/10.1093/poq/nfw006>
- “Our results suggest that people who are both not politically interested and who do not use diverse media are more likely to be in an echo chamber... While it is concerning that some individuals are likely to be caught in an echo chamber, it is worth noting that this segment of the population is ... about 8%” - <https://doi.org/10.1080/1369118X.2018.1428656>



# Does microtargeting work?

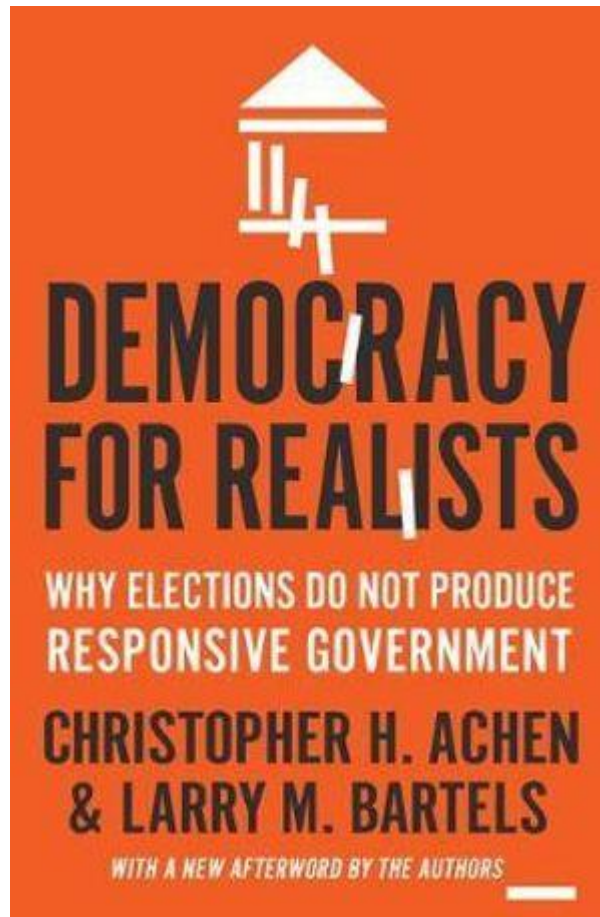
- Problem: Many parties involved in these activities are inherently untrustworthy.
- “What has been proven is that this micro-targeted advertising on social media was highly effective in persuading undecided voters to support Trump... Unfortunately, we do not have the necessary data to be able to understand why it worked for Trump and not for Clinton.”  
[https://www.uc3m.es/ss/Satellite/UC3MInstitucional/en/Detalle/Comunicacion\\_C/1371258998853/1371215537949/A\\_study\\_analyses\\_the\\_impact\\_of\\_targeted\\_Facebook\\_advertising\\_on\\_the\\_elections](https://www.uc3m.es/ss/Satellite/UC3MInstitucional/en/Detalle/Comunicacion_C/1371258998853/1371215537949/A_study_analyses_the_impact_of_targeted_Facebook_advertising_on_the_elections)
- “I think the Conservatives might win a majority on Thursday because they are better at marketing. Specifically, digital marketing. More specifically, Facebook advertising.” - <https://www.marketingweek.com/2017/06/05/mark-ritson-how-win-election/>
- “When Procter & Gamble Cut \$200 Million in Digital Ad Spend, It Increased Its Reach 10%.” - <https://www.adweek.com/brand-marketing/when-procter-gamble-cut-200-million-in-digital-ad-spend-its-marketing-became-10-more-effective/>



“Democracy relies on a well-informed public”

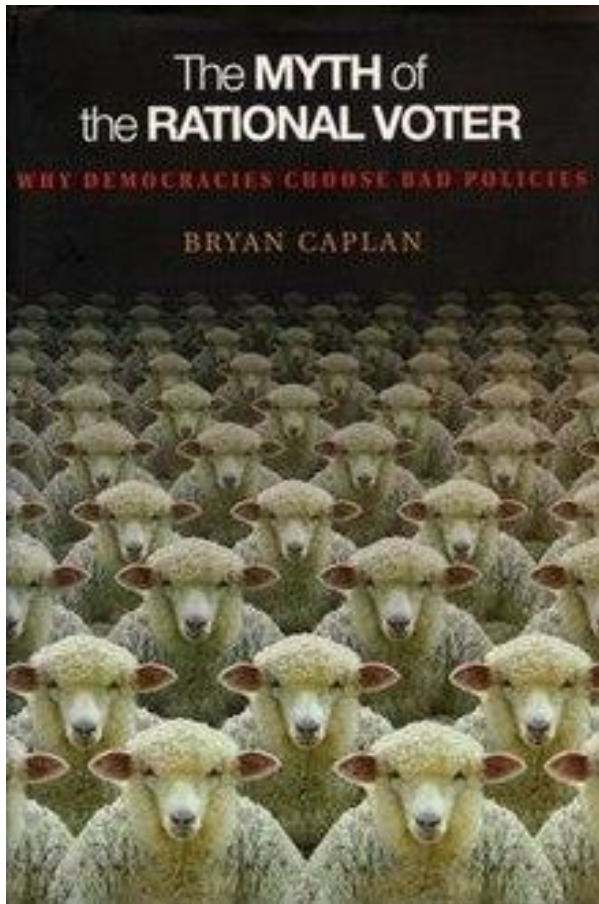


~~“Democracy relies on a well-  
informed public”~~



“That evidence demonstrates that the great majority of citizens pay little attention to politics. At election time, they are swayed by how they feel about “the nature of the times,” especially the current state of the economy, and by political loyalties typically acquired in childhood. Those loyalties, not the facts of political life and government policy, are the primary drivers of political behavior. Election outcomes turn out to be largely random events from the viewpoint of contemporary democratic theory. That is, elections are well determined by powerful forces, but those forces are not the ones that current theories of democracy believe should determine how elections come out.”





“What happens if fully rational politicians compete for the support of irrational voters — specifically, voters with irrational beliefs about the effects of various policies? It is a recipe for mendacity.”



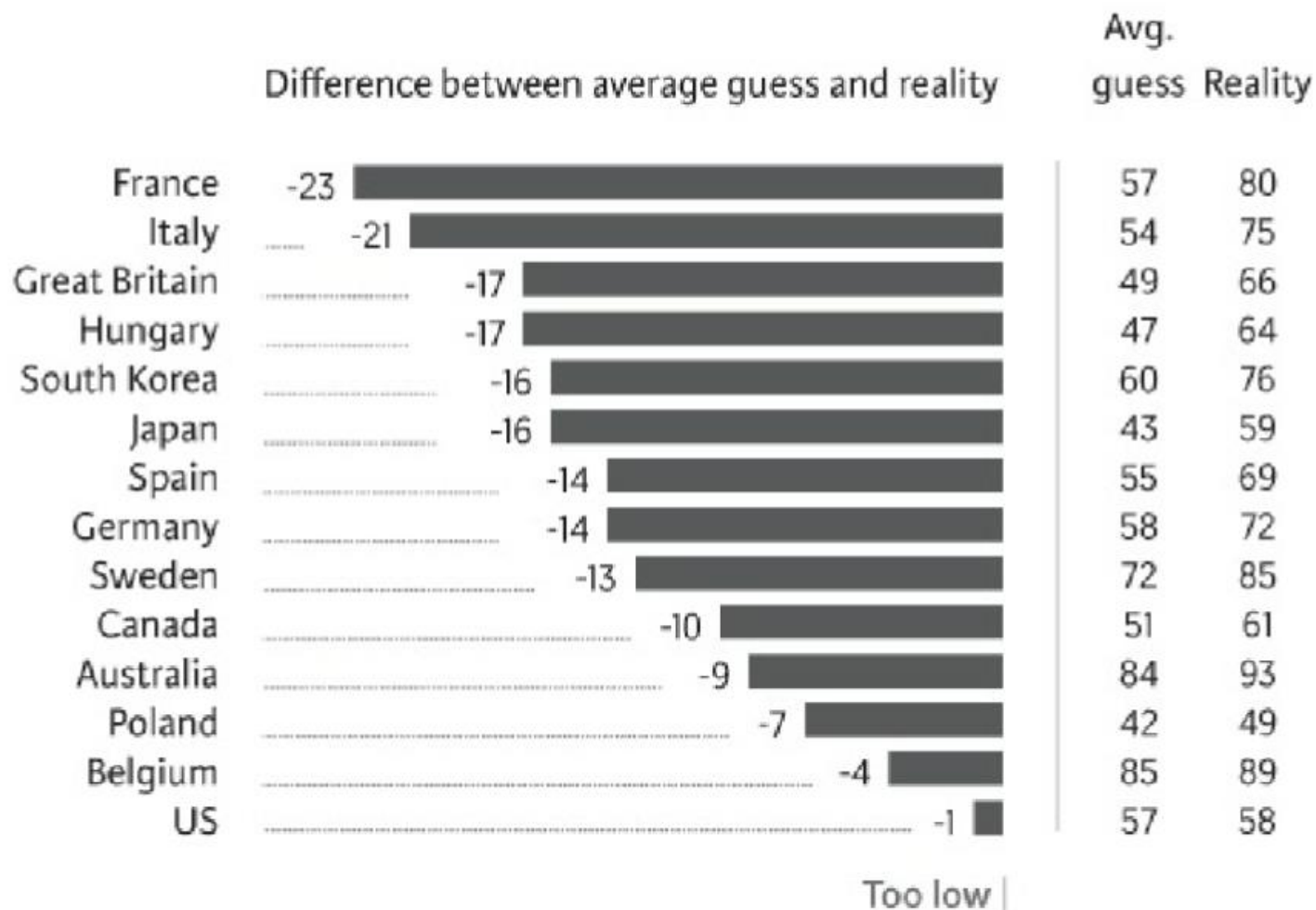
# Are we getting stupider?

“Rational ignorance is a fascinating area of study, and provides us with many of the longest-standing measures of political ignorance we have, as it got a lot of attention in the US in the forties, fifties and sixties. These studies measured understanding of various ‘taught facts’ (how government works, who is responsible for what) and ‘surveillance facts’ (things we need to update, like which party controls the Senate, the current unemployment rate, etc.). This knowledge – or lack thereof – has barely changed over the decades: we’re about as wrong now as we’ve always been. For example, a 1947 Gallup survey showed that just 55% of people could tell you which party was in control of the Senate – and this was virtually unchanged in 1989.”

*The Perils of Perception: Why We’re Wrong About Nearly Everything. Bobby Duffy. 2018.*



**Q. Out of every 100 eligible voters in your country, how many do you think voted in the last election?**

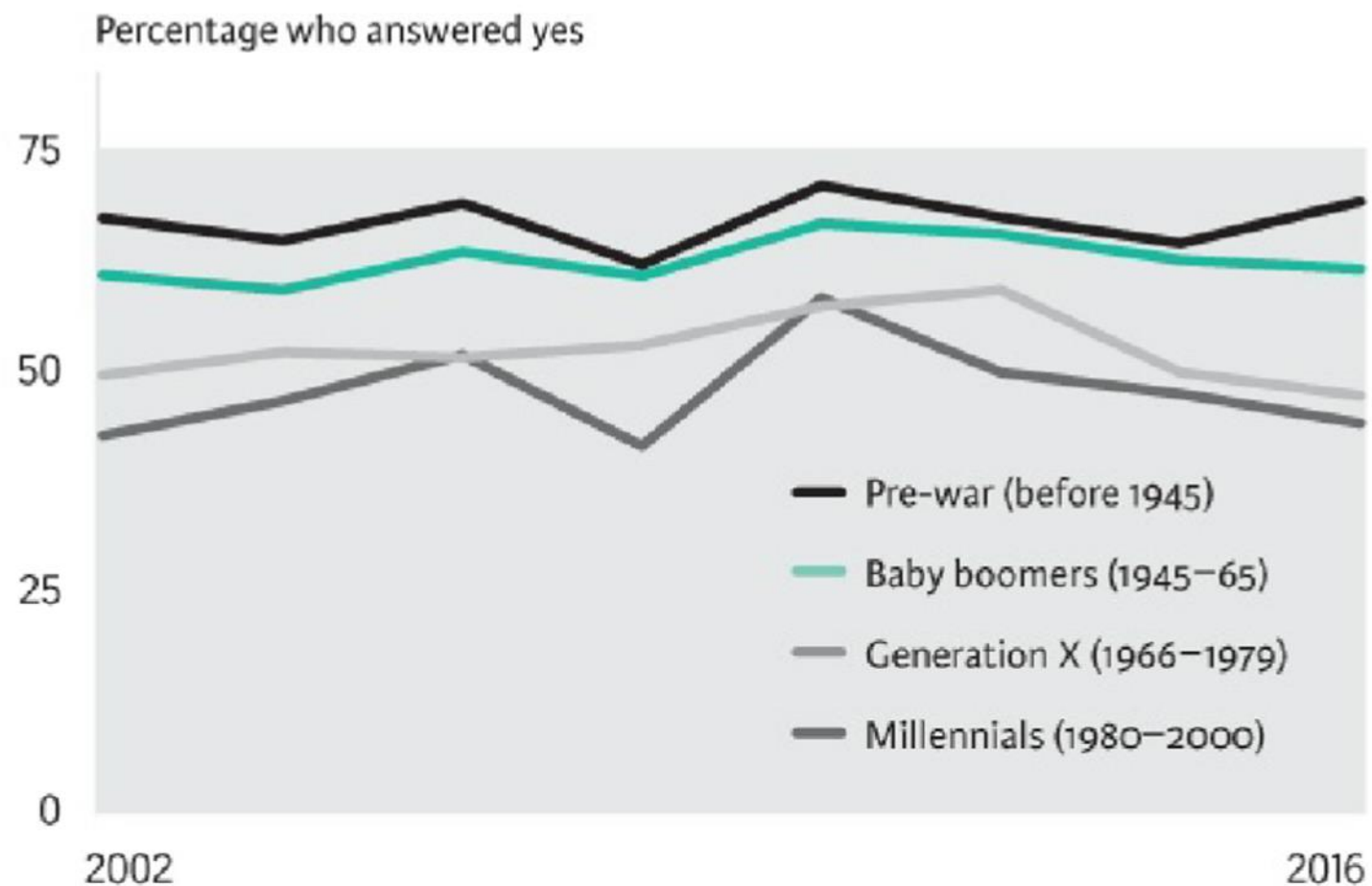


**Figure 23.** All countries underestimated the proportion of the population that voted in the last major national election.

*The Perils of Perception: Why We're Wrong About Nearly Everything.* Bobby Duffy. 2018.

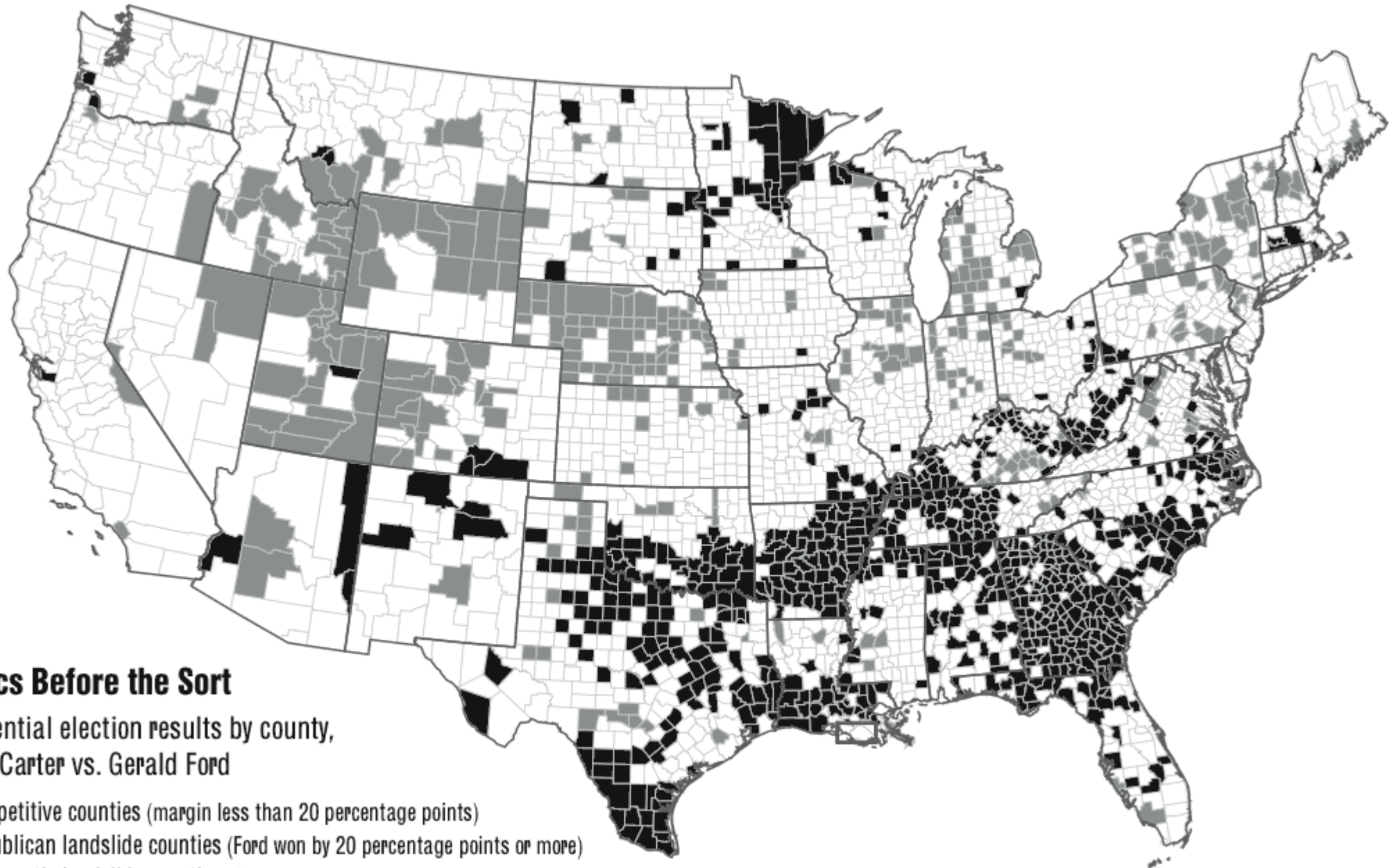


### Q. Do you feel closer to a particular party than all other parties?



**Figure 26.** Younger generations in the Netherlands are less likely to feel attached to one particular political party.

*The Perils of Perception: Why We're Wrong About Nearly Everything.* Bobby Duffy. 2018.



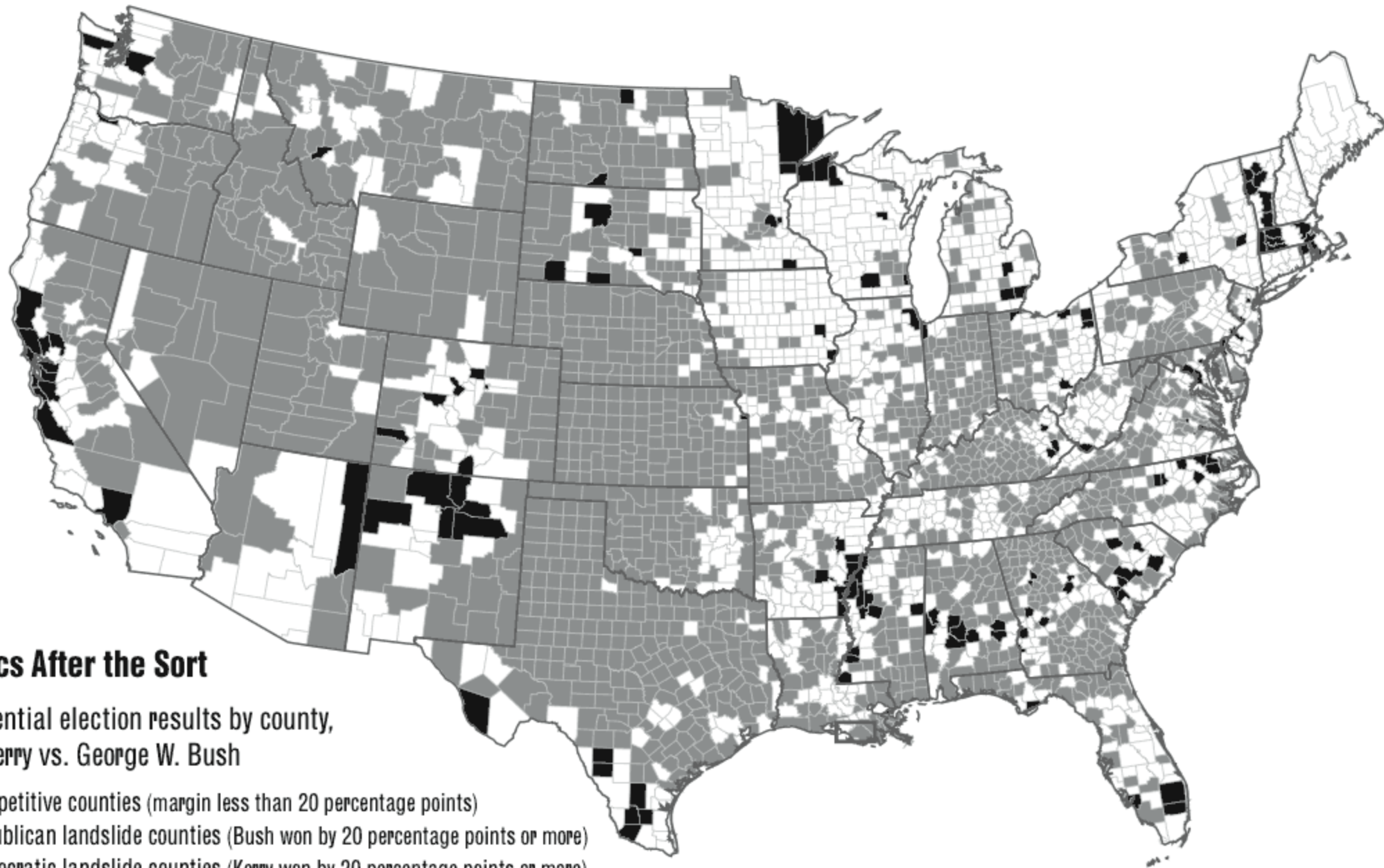
**1976**

## Politics Before the Sort

Presidential election results by county,  
Jimmy Carter vs. Gerald Ford

- Competitive counties (margin less than 20 percentage points)
- Republican landslide counties (Ford won by 20 percentage points or more)
- Democratic landslide counties (Carter won by 20 percentage points or more)  
(Democratic and Republican votes only)



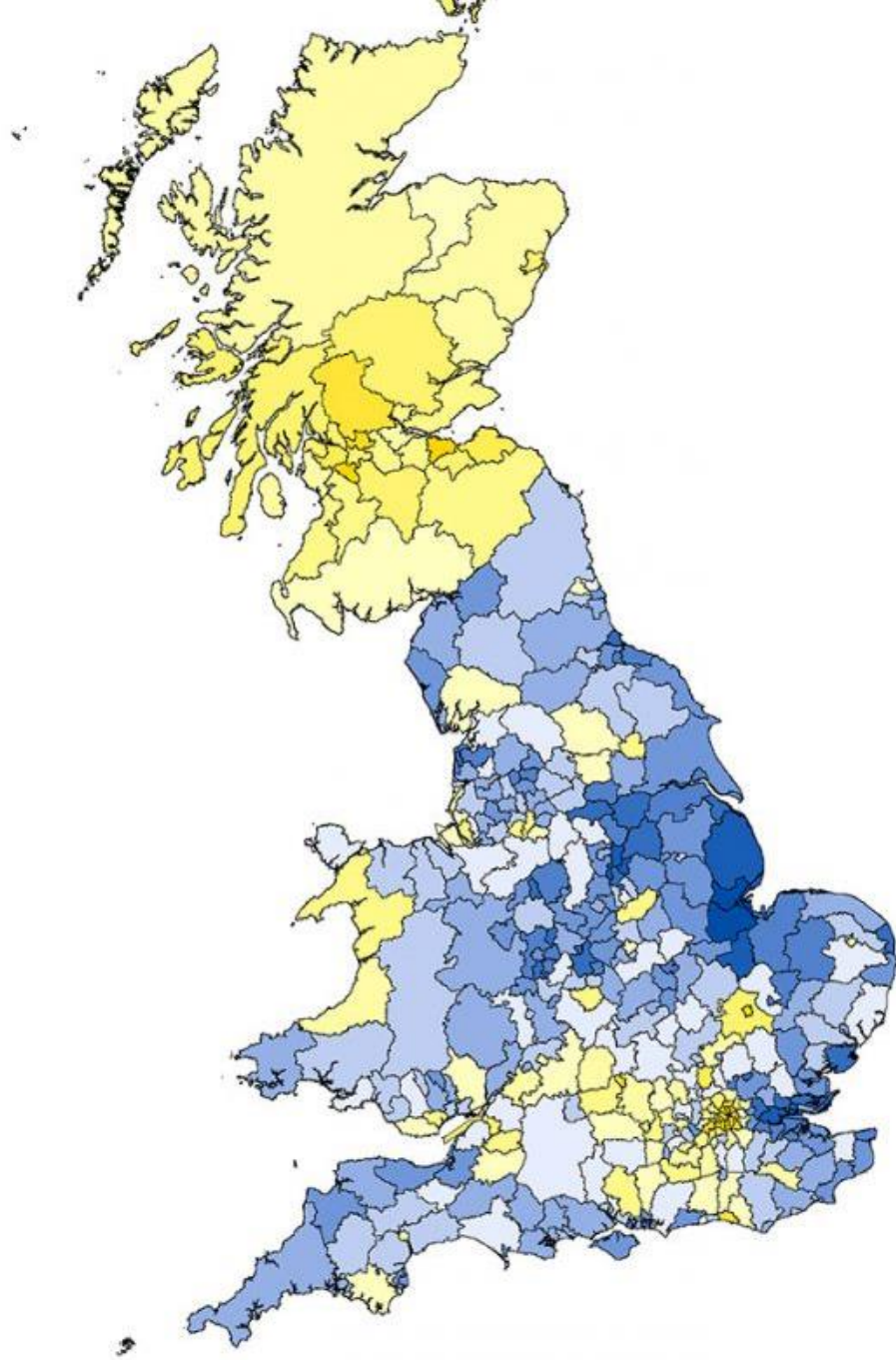


## 2004 Politics After the Sort

Presidential election results by county,  
John Kerry vs. George W. Bush

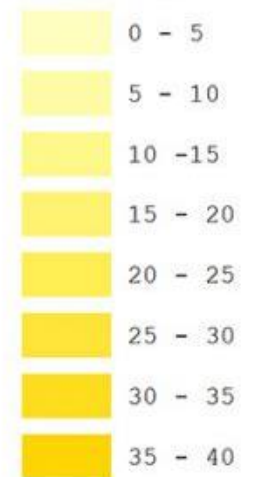
- Competitive counties (margin less than 20 percentage points)
  - Republican landslide counties (Bush won by 20 percentage points or more)
  - Democratic landslide counties (Kerry won by 20 percentage points or more)
- (Democratic and Republican votes only)





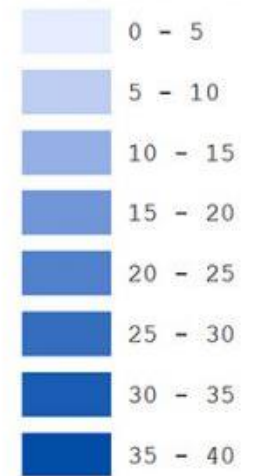
Shading - "Remain" majority

Majority percentage



Shading - "Leave" majority

Majority percentage



<http://www.ox.ac.uk/news-and-events/oxford-and-brexit/brexit-analysis/mapping-brexit-vote>





**DANGER:  
EXTREMELY  
FLAMMABLE**

HARMFUL OR FATAL IF  
SWALLOWED. VAPORS MAY  
CAUSE FLASH FIRE.

Contains Gasoline

Vapors may ignite explosively.  
Prevent buildup of vapors. Do  
not store indoors, in car trunk or  
other enclosed area. Keep away  
from heat, sparks, and flame.

**KEEP OUT OF REACH  
OF CHILDREN**

2008 2008 Model, 2008 Fuel  
CAUTIONARY STATEMENT

**Gasoline**

3.7 Litres

.8 Imp. Gallons

1 U.S. Gallon



**MIDWEST CAN COMPANY**

FRANKLIN PARK, ILLINOIS 60131



Democracies must function even if their publics are:

- Busy
- Lazy
- Ill-informed
- Bigoted



# Democracies need to have:

- The broadest possible access to the democratic process.
- Representatives that actually represent their constituents.
- Information that is accessible:
  - Affordable.
  - Usable.
  - Useful.
- Information that is diverse:
  - Perspective.
  - Source.
  - Format.
  - Emotional register.
- Decision-making processes that:
  - Represent these diverse constituencies.
  - Use evidence.
  - Produce good decisions.
  - Communicate those decisions reliably and effectively.
- Experts who are respected and used appropriately.



“We need an online information commons that is non-partisan and beyond the reach of individual commercial interests - a digital equivalent of the public library.”





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# Post-truth politics

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

 This article or section appears to be **slanted towards recent events**. Please try to keep recent events in historical perspective and add more content related to non-recent events. *(September 2018)* [\(Learn how and when to remove this template message\)](#)

**Post-truth politics** (also called **post-factual politics**<sup>[1]</sup> and **post-reality politics**<sup>[2]</sup>) is a **political culture** in which debate is framed largely by **appeals to emotion** disconnected from the details of **policy**, and by the repeated assertion of **talking points** to which factual rebuttals are ignored. *Post-truth* differs from traditional contesting and falsifying of facts by relegating facts and expert opinions to be of secondary importance relative to appeal to emotion. While this has been described as a contemporary problem, some observers have described it as a long-standing part of political life that was less notable before the advent of the **Internet** and related social changes.

As of 2018, political commentators have identified post-truth politics as ascendant in many nations, notably the United States, India, the United Kingdom, Russia, and Brazil, among others. As with other areas of debate, this is being driven by a combination of the **24-hour news cycle**, **false balance** in news reporting, and the increasing ubiquity of **social media**.<sup>[3][4][5][6][7][8]</sup> In 2016, *post-truth* was chosen as the **Oxford Dictionaries' Word of the Year**<sup>[9]</sup> due to its prevalence in the context of that year's **Brexit referendum** and media coverage of the U.S. **presidential election**.<sup>[10][11]</sup>

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## History [edit]

According to *Oxford Dictionaries*, the term *post-truth* was first used in a 1992 essay by the late Serbian-American playwright **Steve Tesich** in *The Nation*. Tesich writes that following the shameful truth of **Watergate**, more assuaging coverage of the **Iran–Contra scandal**<sup>[12]</sup> and **Persian Gulf War** demonstrate that "we, as a free people, have freely decided that we want to live in some post-truth world."<sup>[13][14]</sup> In 2004, **Ralph Keyes** used the term "post-truth era" in his book by that title.<sup>[15]</sup> In it, he argued that deception is becoming more prevalent in the current media driven world. According to Keyes, lies stopped being treated as something inexcusable and started being viewed as something acceptable in certain situations. Which supposedly led to the beginning of the post truth era. The same year American journalist **Eric Alterman** spoke of a "post-truth political environment" and coined the term "the post-truth presidency" in his analysis of the misleading statements made by the **Bush administration** after 9/11.<sup>[16]</sup> In his 2004 book *Post-democracy*, Colin Crouch used the phrase "post-democracy" to mean a model of politics where "elections certainly exist and can change governments," but "public electoral debate is a tightly controlled spectacle, managed by rival teams of professionals expert in the techniques of persuasion, and considering a small range of issues selected by those teams." Crouch directly attributes the "advertising industry model" of political communication to the crisis of trust and accusations of dishonesty that a few years later others have associated with post-truth politics.<sup>[17]</sup> More recently scholars have followed Crouch in demonstrating the role of professional political communication's contribution to distrust and wrong beliefs, where strategic use of emotion is becoming key to gaining truth for truth statements.<sup>[18]</sup>



# Nearly 130 public libraries closed across Britain in the last year

Services continue to be targets for local authority budget cuts, with remaining services increasingly reliant on voluntary staff



▲ Manchester's central library, which had 1.5 million visitors in 2017-18, according to Cipfa figures. Photograph: Christopher Thomond

Almost 130 public libraries have closed in the last year in Britain while an extra 3,000 volunteers have been brought in to run remaining services, as the decade's austerity pressures see local authorities continuing to apply swingeing cuts to budgets.

The annual survey of British libraries by the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (Cipfa) has revealed a similar picture each year since 2010, with the number of branches and paid staff falling every year.

Over the last year, spending on libraries by local authorities fell by £30m to £141m. There was a net loss of 127 public libraries in England, Wales and

<https://www.theguardian.com/books/2018/dec/07/nearly-130-public-libraries-closed-across-britain-in-the-last-year>



# Conflict & Representation

- Economic Inequality
- Ethnicity & Nationalism
- Age
- Education



# The Power & Limits of Education

Most of my peers think that if more people are skilled and more people are asking hard questions, goodness will see the light...

But I also don't want to naively assume what media literacy could do in responding to a culture war that is already underway. I want us to grapple with reality, not just the ideals that we imagine we could maybe one day build...

I also believe that it's important to help students truly appreciate epistemological differences. In other words, why do people from different worldviews interpret the same piece of content differently? Rather than thinking about the intention behind the production, let's analyze the contradictions in the interpretation...

To help students recognize their own fault lines, not the fault lines of the media landscape around them."

*danah boyd* - <https://points.datasociety.net/you-think-you-want-media-literacy-do-you-7cad6af18ec2>



# Deliberative Democracy Now!



Madison

## The Federalist No. 10

The Utility of the Union as a Safeguard Against Domestic Faction and Insurrection (continued)

By James Madison

Every man has a claim to the exercise of his own reason, and every man has a right to be governed by the laws which he has consented to pass. The only way in which this can be done is by the establishment of a government which is not only wise, but also just. The only way in which this can be done is by the establishment of a government which is not only wise, but also just.

## References

1. James Madison, "The Federalist No. 10," *The Federalist Papers*, ed. James Madison, (New York: Penguin Classics, 1964), pp. 101-16.
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10. James Madison, "The Federalist No. 10," *The Federalist Papers*, ed. James Madison, (New York: Penguin Classics, 1964), pp. 101-16.



# Feel the fear and do it anyway...

- Animotophobia
- Haphephobia
- Rupophobia
- Politicophobia
- Chronophobia



