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Media Ethics, Fake News, Politics, and Influence in Public Life

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We are living in an unusual time that cannot be ignored, particularly from a media ethics perspective. The assault on truth, including but not limited to fake news, alternative facts, and post-truth, have created a moral panic and a threat to democratic life.

In late 2016, Sissela Bok provided a nuanced view on how lies and secrets have impacted public trust when she explained, "When I wrote my book [*Lying: Moral Choice in Private and Public Life*], I wanted to concentrate on clear-cut lies ... those I defined as statements that are made by somebody who thinks that [his or her] statements are false, and intends to mislead those who are listening or reading ... that's very different from innuendo, and shading the truth in various ways ... this year, we really are aware of so many different types [of lies], going out over so many different kinds of media" (McCoy, [2016](#), para. 6). Likewise in a blog post for the Arthur Page Society, Gary Sheffer, former CCO of GE and current board member for the Arthur W. Page Center, wrote, "Many people feel uncertain and uneasy about 2017, in part because of growing and relentless assaults on truth, reason and decency that have fractured longstanding foundations of public communications and policymaking" (Sheffer, [2017](#), para. 1).

Thus, we examine how three different books, spanning multiple decades, speak to the current political, social, and cultural issues influencing the practice of media and communication today. Each could be integrated into teaching, research, or both to better make sense of the turbulent environment in which we find ourselves.

References

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