

**THE TRUMP EFFECT?**

➤ Given President Trump's near constant accusations of "fake news" and assertions that many media outlets are "failing," it is ironic that journalism is experiencing something of a rebirth precisely because of Trump. He is such a constant producer of attention-getting behavior that the media disseminate. A president like Trump could not survive without the media to publicize and talk about every tweet and unconventional thing he says.<sup>1</sup>

**IS JOURNALISM DYING? CAN WE AFFORD TO LET IT?**

➤ Until recently, the demise of so many print outlets led to numerous stories about whether journalism was dead. Many cities have gone from two daily newspapers to one or none. But newspapers are not the same as journalism. Papers, at least the print versions, could die out altogether, and journalism would still thrive as long as we remain a culture willing to pay for quality reporting. (That means when you run into a paywall on the *Wall Street Journal* or the *New Yorker* or the *Guardian* or *Mother Jones* asking for a contribution, think seriously about the role good journalism plays in keeping democracies strong and whether it's worth a little beer money to help keep it alive.)

## 9.5 HOW THOSE IN THE MEDIA CAN SHAPE POLITICAL NARRATIVES

**TELL ME A STORY.**

➤ The primary purpose of the news media (if not all the other interactive channels that shape our life choices) is to tell a convincing story. We know that politics is about creating a narrative and convincing others to believe it, and we rely on the media—the myriad channels of communication we have created—to convey those narratives. Ideally, in the news business, those are fact-based narratives. But in the political world there are plenty of people who want you to believe something that is not fact based or that represents only one part of the truth—either to get you to reject the facts altogether, or to put them in a light that benefits the storyteller. The essential goal of these political narratives is to legitimize or delegitimize the claims to political power. That means that storytelling shapes those narratives on which the health of democracy depends, but also the narratives that threaten its health.

**EXACTLY WHO ARE THE STORYTELLERS?**

➤ We've talked about journalists. At the pinnacle of political reporting is the Washington press corps, the elite cadre of writers and broadcasters who have worked their way up the ladder of power in Washington. Some of

<sup>1</sup>According to Axios, print news, cable TV, books, and social media are all experiencing a "Trump bubble" (<https://www.axios.com/newsletters/axios-am-c85d5c8e-ad0e-473d-bc9a-a8dcc8b6bc66.html>).