

OpEd: Trending Behaviors



It's the day after the US Presidential Elections, and the world seems to be in shock. Not me, I called it months ago. The trending behaviors were clear...

I told friends quite some time ago to practice saying the words "President Trump", it will make it easier on them. They said no way, won't happen... because they believed in reason or logic, because they believed in an intelligent establishment, because they believed in their fellow citizens. For all of those reasons, they didn't see it coming. Reason has long since left the building. The trending behaviors in entertainment and media clearly has favored the draw of Drama and Behaving Badly. Reality TV is the reality people actually enjoy and desire – else it wouldn't pay and the trend would have ceased long ago. But it hasn't – its persisted and grown like a plague – because in a way, it is.

Volume/Assertion

The quiet objective truth, those stated with facts or evidence, is easily drown out by volume. The louder you say something the more true it must be. This is because Volume is taken as confidence. The psychology of volume to punctuate orders or salient points in rhetoric gives folks the impression of confidence and Authority. Volume also tends to influence the level of confidence in one's Affirmation. Clearly, if one has such strong and loud convictions they must be based on something they know, right?? Something we don't know?? Wrong – that's a false assumption. Volume, when held by the ignorant, is usually the result of running out of facts to make a logical persuasion. But volume can be used

skilfully, especially when its well timed to assert key points or orchestrated to sway others views. (see more at [PsychologicalScience](#))

Repetition

Once you establish your Authority, one just needs to repeat yourself to assert your views until they are taken as truths. Truth (in the media especially) is not evidence or fact – it's what is repeated ad nauseam. When individuals of authority keeps repeating something, eventually it becomes a truth to the believers, and taken up as something unquestioningly obvious and inherently "known". When this adopted view is voiced en masse, it takes on its own life in the typical infectious patterns of mob psychology. First as individuals, then as a populace – they rearrange the facts to fit a believe system.

French social psychologist Gustave Le Bon (1841-1931) once wrote that "to imbue the mind of a crowd with ideas and beliefs, leaders have to use three clearly defined expedients: affirmation, repetition and contagion." ([The Crowd: A Study of the Popular Mind, 1895](#)). This is a codification of the cult phenomena, a manual of social manipulation. Recall the events of the Iraq war, and how often the administration at the time changed its definition of the wars goals and then repeated "Mission Accomplished". This is one part Assertion and one part Repetition. However, missing the 3rd pillar, not everyone bought it easily and cast much criticism at the time.

Sharing/Contagion

At present we have a highly successful infrastructure for contagion via social media. Our fascination with sharing facilitates all three pillars of influence and manipulation like never before, and allows for the contagion (viral videos,

posts, etc) to spread more rapidly than ever. So is it any wonder why the inflammatory comments was propagated via media channels and Twitter? It's using the contagion effect – the drama got people's attention (be it through shock or awe) and the ease in which it was shared and propagated kept it alive. Sharing allowed to keep the assertions and message repetition strong, persistent, and pervasive.

Use of social media as a primary mode of communication easily allows for information distribution, persistence, repetition, and contagion via "sharing". Trump knew this. He knew that, Westerns in particular, value the emotional appeal of Drama over Rationalism; knows that Volume asserts Authority; knows that Repetition defines Truth; and the value of Contagion. People are greatly impacted by peer pressure through the desire for connection and belonging. This is what helps bind our communities – shared connections, goals, interests. However that is a double edged sword, for the recruitment of others can be used to create social pressure.

You can't blame him, for he only used what we (the people) gave him...

Trending Behaviors

The changes in media programming, entertainment, infotainment (i.e. "news), and national leadership indicates the trending direction. Globally we're seeing a popularity with leaders espousing protectionism and nationalism. Leaders are forgoing behavior which prior generations would consider abhorrent in positions of political authority and visibility (overly casual, careless, reckless, and foul-mouthed ranting).

In short, it seems the political world as a whole has been taken by the social trend of emotional dysregulation, delusions of self importance, and just bad behavior. Welcome to a global trend in narcissism and borderline personality disorder. Look at some of the worlds leaders as of late:

Rodrigo Duterte, Boris Johnson, Rob Ford, Anthony Weiner, Dominique Strauss-Kahn. The list can go on and on.

Does this mean I was a Hillary supporter? No, I didn't believe her credentials necessarily outweighed her numerous scandals and choices of personal advantage. I believe that both are critically flawed. If the best predictor of the future is looking at the behaviors and decisions of the past, I think both are atrocious. Between the choice of a ranting Insecure Narcissist and a credentialed Elitist Narcissist, I choose the Sweet Meteor of Death (#SMOD). Let the heavenly body of a meteor fairly dispense a judgment of doom upon everyone without prejudice or merit.

Yes, I am often sarcastic, leaning heavily towards hyperbole (blame it on Monty Python), but in this case not by much...

My point is this – It should not have been a surprise to anyone... but we can LEARN from this.

Learning Moments

Flagrant bad behavior is a result of a combination of factors.

Personality disorders aside, elements such as Privilege, Perceived Immunity/Invulnerability, and the power of Rationalization all play a role. Those in or who seek power also trend towards narcissistic disorders, where the prior factors are only amplified. From an entertainment perspective, we're seeing more characters and reality TV stars rise who are characteristically emotionally immature, emotionally manipulative (hysterics, etc), or just unable to emotionally self-regulate. The trend is that people LOVE watching others implode or explode, for whatever reason – and we're rewarding it by PAYING THEM to keep entertaining us.

Any good trend or truth is reflected in both the microcosm or macrocosm. Meaning, these trends are made up of behaviors, views, and choices made by People. People that we know,

people in our families, people in our neighborhoods, and people in our relationships. The key here is that if there is a trend, and your eyes are open enough to see the trend – then it is what it is. Trying to disbelieve it won't change the trend, doubting it won't change the outcome. So here are some key points to think about:

- If your partner or friend is emotionally uncontrolled, then that behavior will very likely persist moving forward
- If someone states something as fact – yet without evidence, research, or proof – then they are merely Asserting their view or belief
- The Louder someone asserts their view, the more they are trying to enforce their Authority
- If they are Repeating a view, then they are likely trying to change the nature of the statement into perceived Fact
- If they are Recruiting others to share their view, then they are exerting pressure via Contagion

This is manipulation – and in a lifestyle that professes the value of Consensuality, there is no room for manipulation. If you see it, vote for an alternative by making the choice not to allow it in your life. It is toxic, world bending, and without action will take you down the path towards an eventual realization when you will say... “How did I get here?” But by then it will likely have gone on for too long, too far, and possibly too late...