

# How to Bridge Our Media-Driven Polarization

Michael Mercier  
Screen Education





How  
the media  
polarize us

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- 
1. Publish polarized news narratives
  2. Demonize those on the other side



# Polarized news narratives

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# Polarization



The news is polarized when each side literally says the polar opposite of the other regarding the same story.

# Polarization by Political Affiliation

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**Liberal**

**Conservative**

# Polarization by Type of Owner

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**Corporate/Mainstream**

**Independent/Citizen**



# Examples of polarized news narratives

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# Hydroxychloroquine

Ineffective, Harmful

**Liberal**

Highly Effective, Safe

**Conservative**

# Another study finds hydroxychloroquine does not help Covid-19 patients



By **Jacqueline Howard**, CNN

⌚ Updated 8:22 PM ET, Thu July 23, 2020



NARINDER NARAU/AP/GETTY IMAGES

## MORE FROM CNN




Donald Trump's terrible, horrible, no good, very bad week in court



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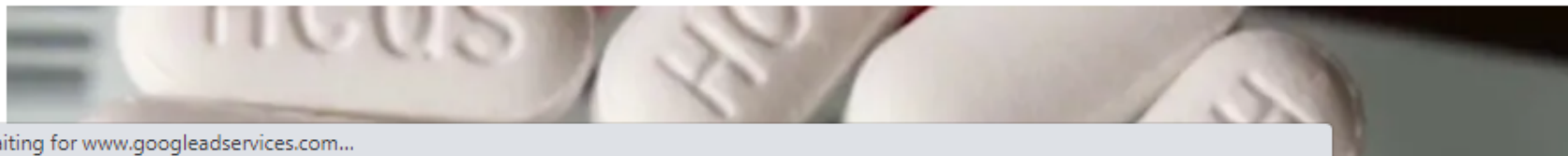
CORONAVIRUS · Published July 3, 2020 1:51pm EDT

# Hydroxychloroquine helped save coronavirus patients, study shows; Trump campaign hails 'fantastic news'

Drug touted by Trump was mocked by media



By Gregg Re | Fox News



Waiting for www.googleadservices.com...

# George Floyd Reaction

Peaceful Protests

Violent Riots

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**Liberal**

**Conservative**



# Antifa

A Philosophy, Myth,  
Fiction

---

**Liberal**

Violent Terrorist  
Organization

---

**Conservative**

# Hunter Biden's Laptop

Russian Disinformation

Real Evidence of Crimes

---

**Liberal**

**Conservative**

January 6

Violent Insurrection

Provoked by Feds, Antifa

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**Liberal**

**Conservative**

# Ivermectin

Ineffective, Toxic

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**Corporate/Mainstream**

Highly Effective, Safe

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**Independent/Citizen**






What are  
journalists  
supposed to  
be doing?

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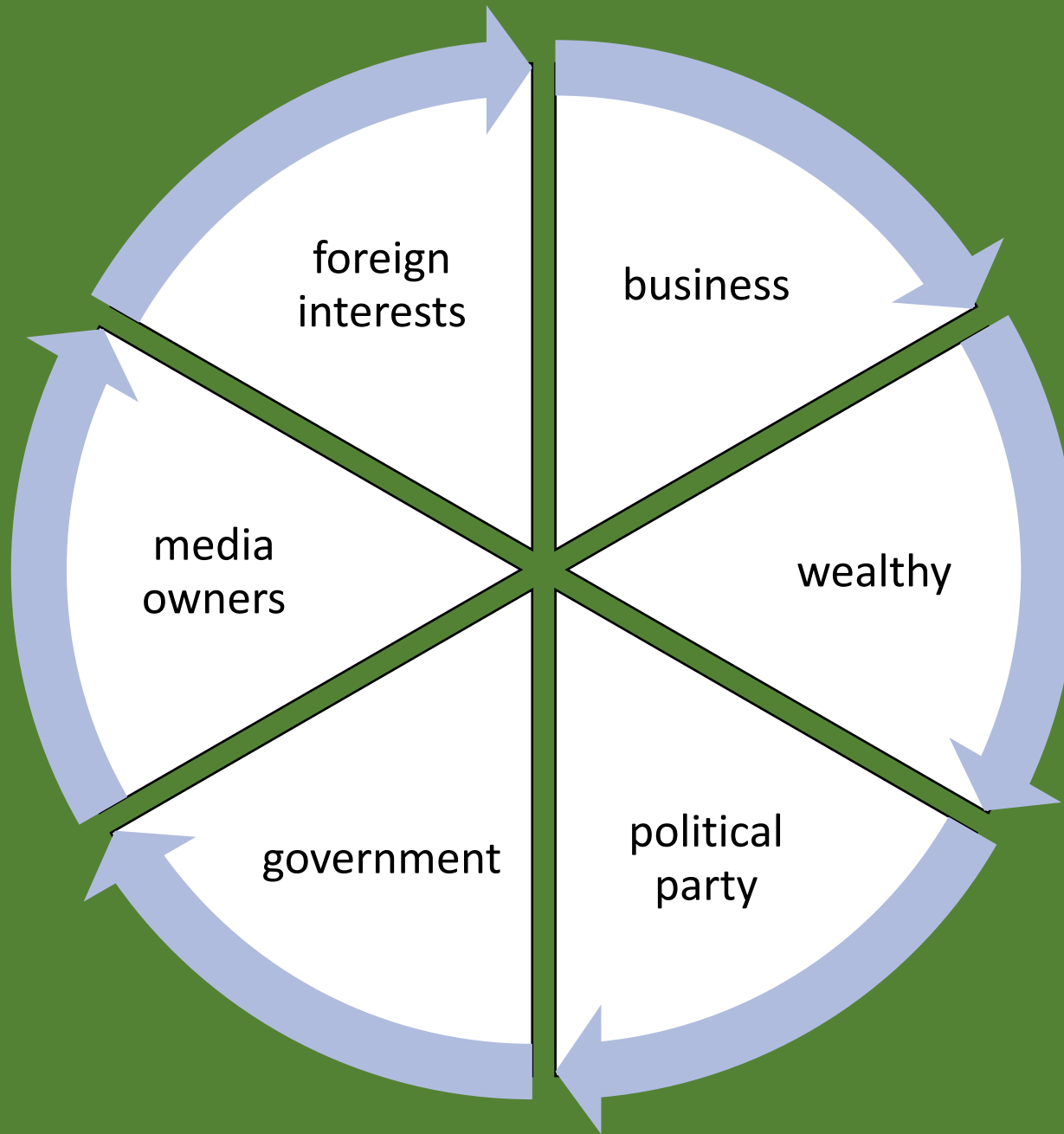
# American Press Institute



The purpose of journalism is...to provide citizens with the information they need to make the best possible decisions about their lives, their communities, their societies, and their governments.

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# Complete Set of Facts

- Who
- What
- When
- Where
- Why
- How

# Propaganda Techniques

## Fact-Related

- Fabrication
- Censorship
- Obfuscation
- Distortion
- Exaggerate

## Person-Related

- Demonizing-Idealizing
- Smearing-Whitewashing
- Dehumanizing-Humanizing
- Discredit-Ennoble

# American Press Institute

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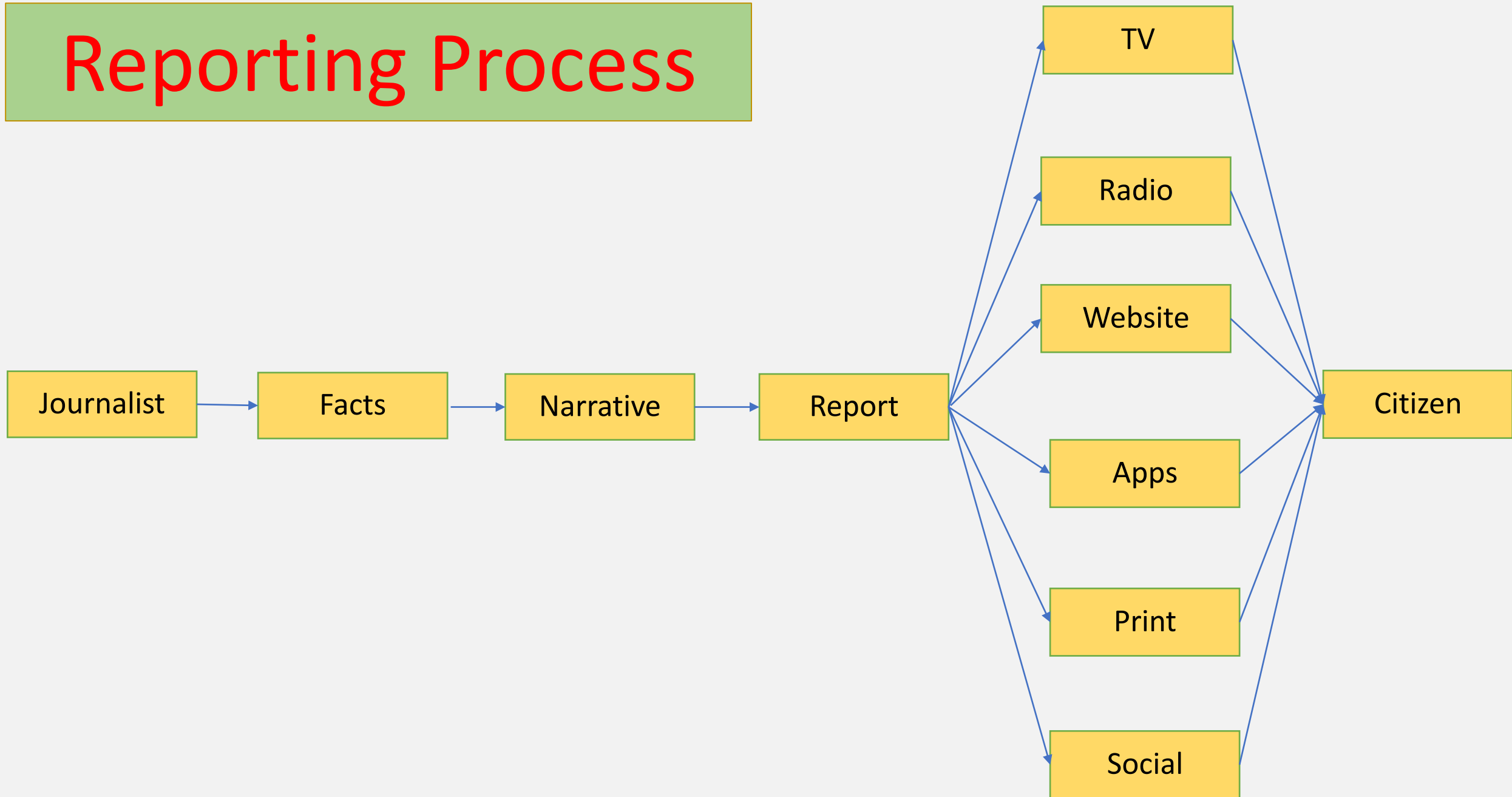




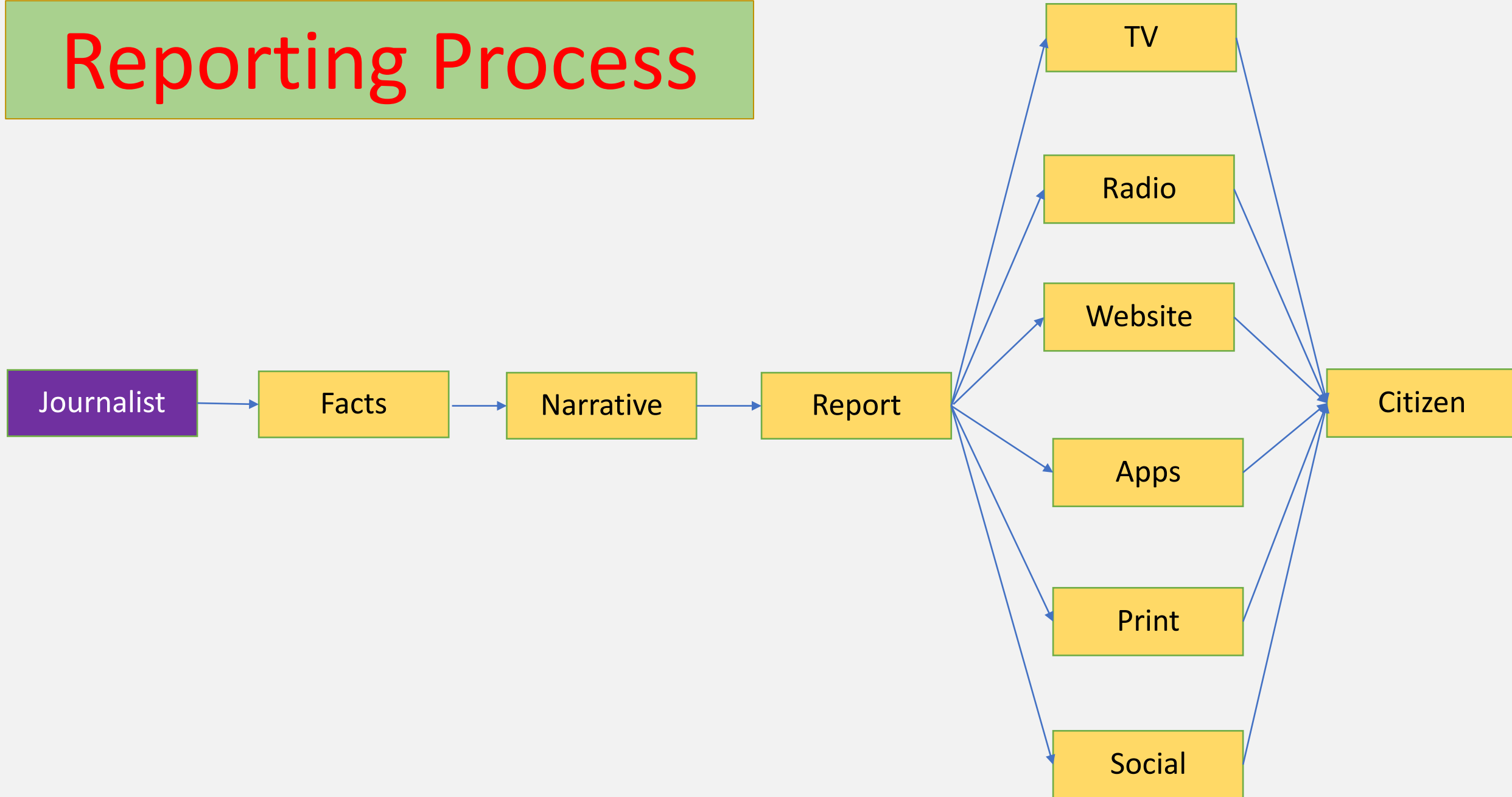
How are  
journalists  
supposed to  
be reporting?

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# Reporting Process



# Reporting Process



# Beat

Story

Story

Story

Report

Report

Report

Report

Report

Report

Report

Report

Report

# Healthcare

COVID-19

Opioid Crisis

Cancer

Deaths

Vax

New  
Variant

Deaths

China

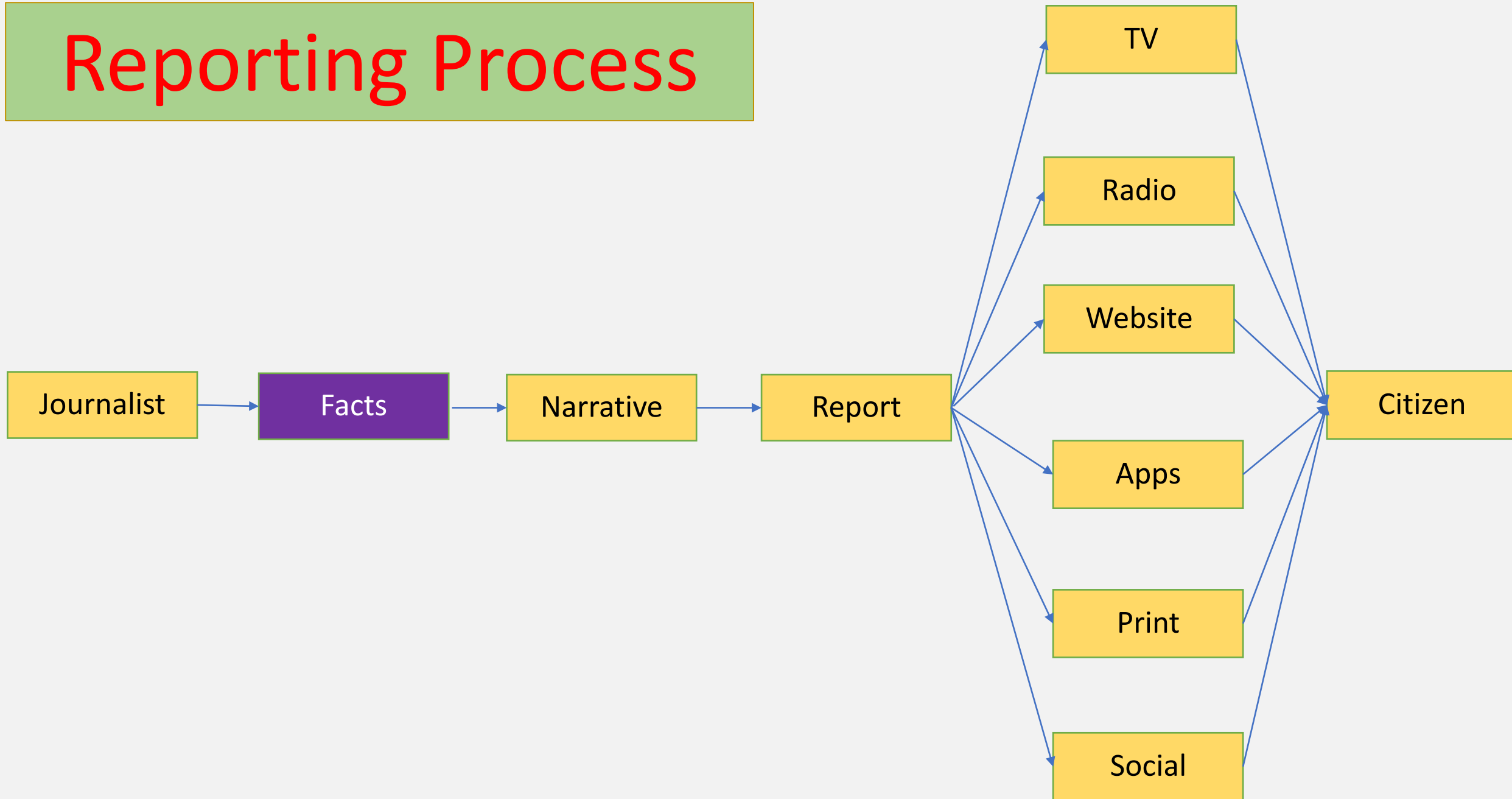
Sackler  
Family

U.S.  
Rate

New  
Meds

Causes

# Reporting Process

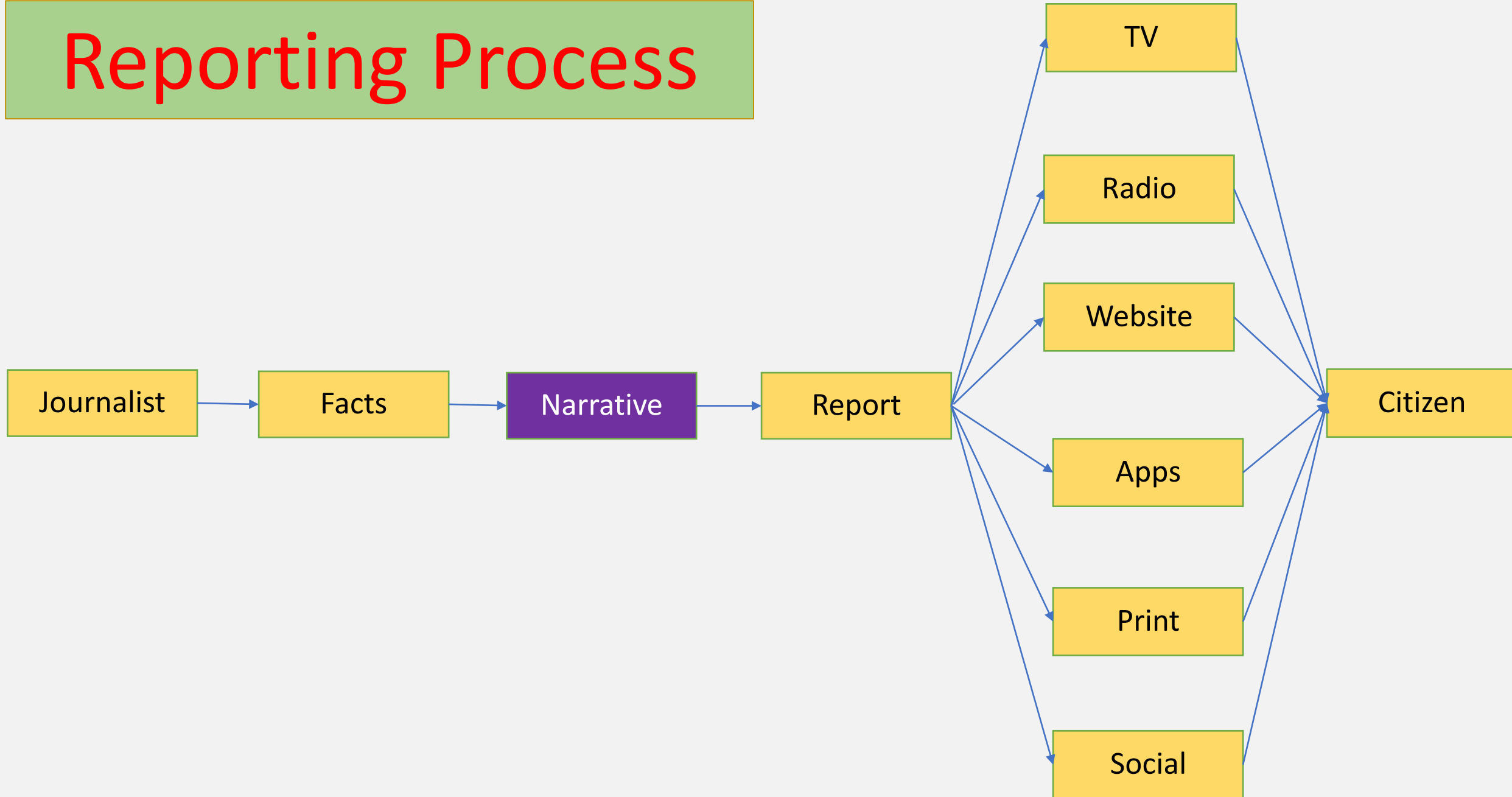




# Complete Set of Facts

- Who
- What
- When
- Where
- Why
- How

# Reporting Process



A narrative is a phrase that describes, frames, characterizes, summarizes the news event being reported on.

Levels of Narrative  
Mirror  
Levels of Reporter's Beatt

Beat

Story

Story

Story

Report

Report

Report

Report

Report

Report

Report

Report

Report

Facts should dictate  
narrative.


But, today, narrative  
dictates facts.

# Barack Obama

“...the information everyone receives is fractured, and people form facts around their opinions rather than their opinions around facts.”

(East Idaho News: 3/6/19)





“...the information everyone receives is fractured because journalists form facts around their narratives rather than their narratives around facts.”

# Propaganda Techniques

## Fact-Related

- Fabrication
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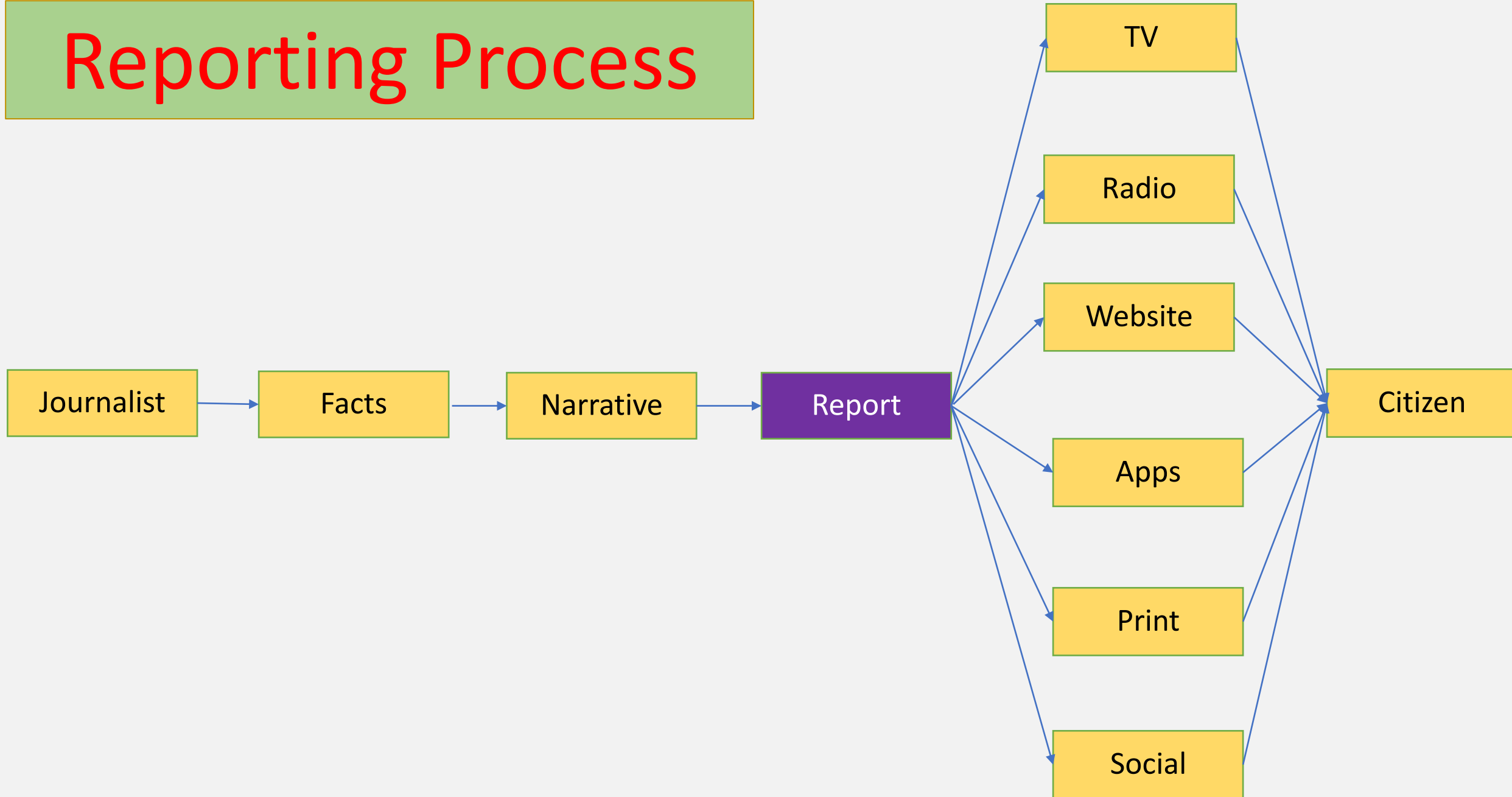
## Person-Related

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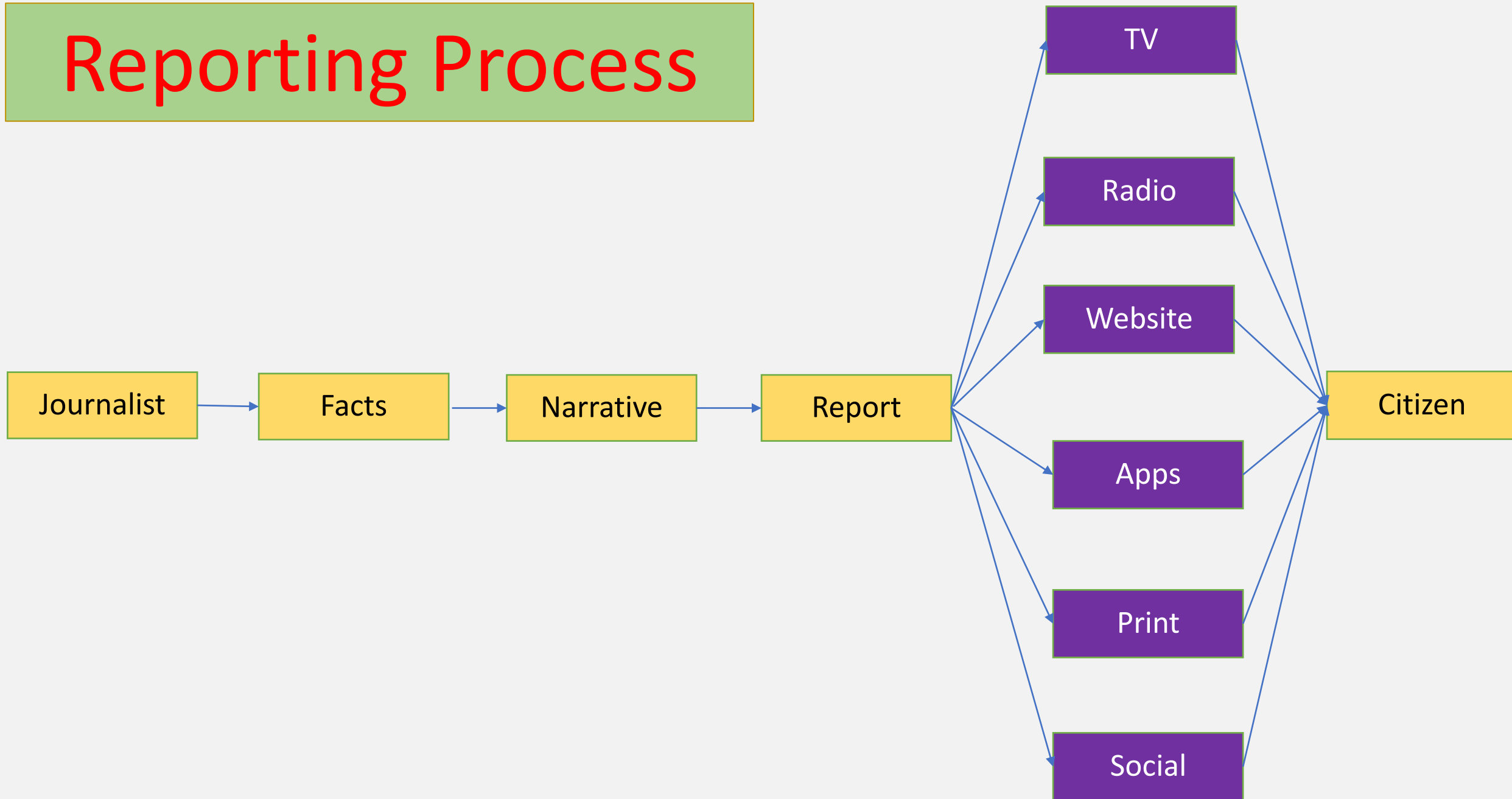
# More About Narratives

- Ossified Narratives
- Beating Mainstream Narrative
  - Joe Rogan/Dr. Malone
  - Canadian Independent Journalists

# Reporting Process



# Reporting Process



## Segmentation by Political Affiliation

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**Liberal**

**Conservative**

## Segmentation by Type of Owner

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**Corporate/Mainstream**

**Independent/Citizen**

# Roles Citizen Journalists Play

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- Document
- Investigate
- Analyze/Comment
- Interview

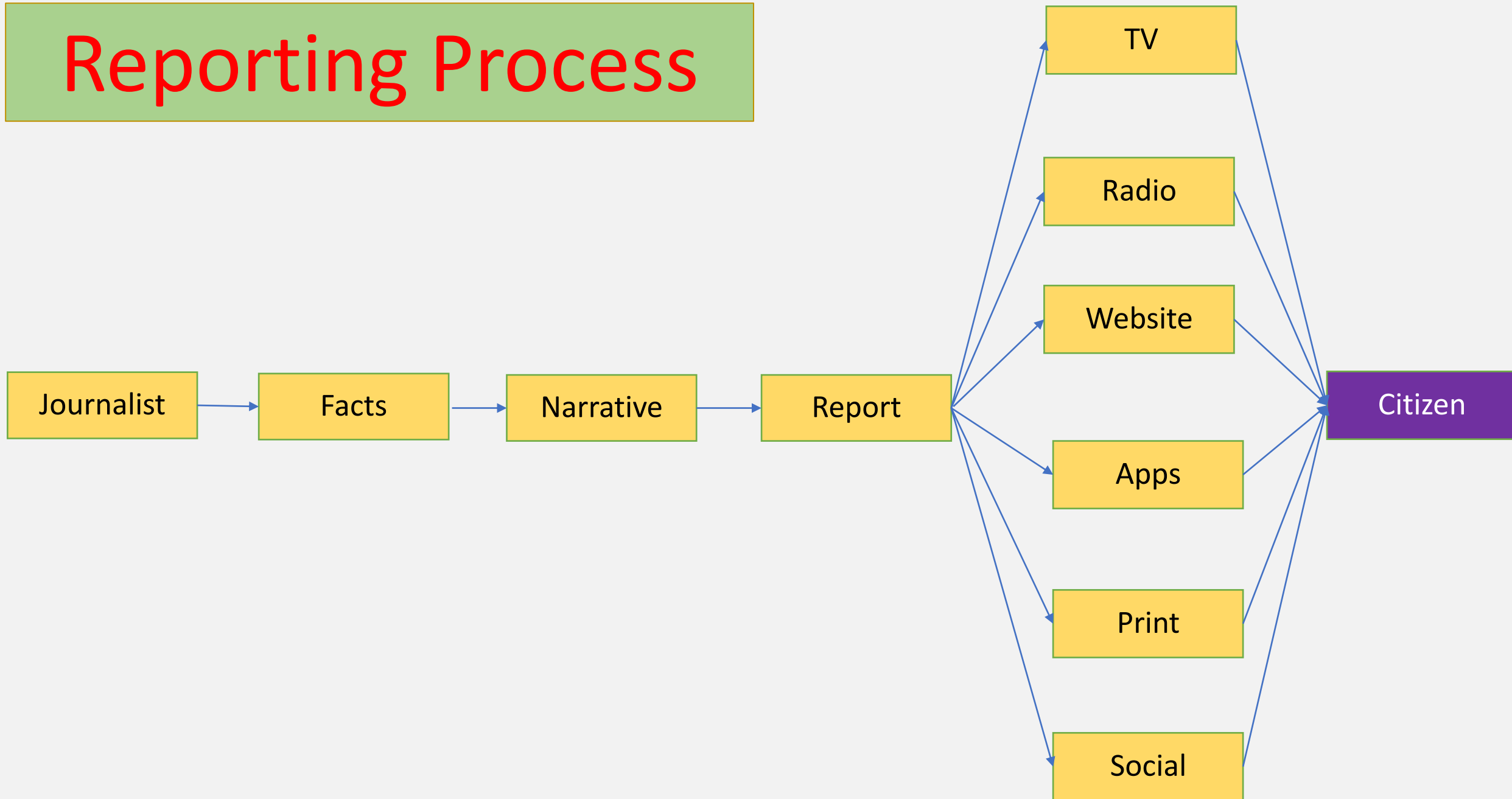


# Types of Citizen Journalists

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- work as journalists long-term
- emerge to address an urgent issue in the short term

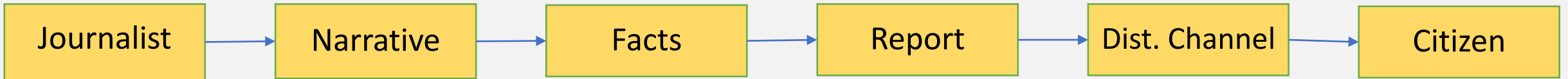
# Reporting Process



1. **Single News Types:** use only corporate/mainstream media on the political side with which they affiliate.
2. **All News Types:** sample all categories of media daily --- left and right, corporate/mainstream and independent/citizen journalists, primary sources.

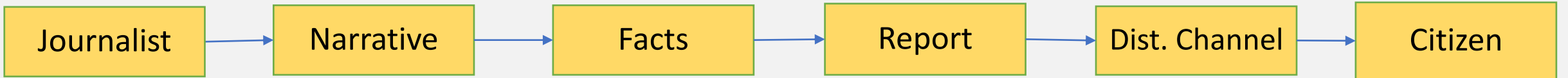
# Reporting Process

## Liberal



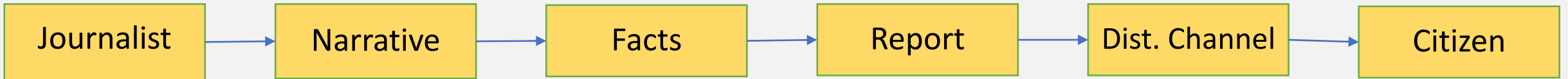
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## Conservative



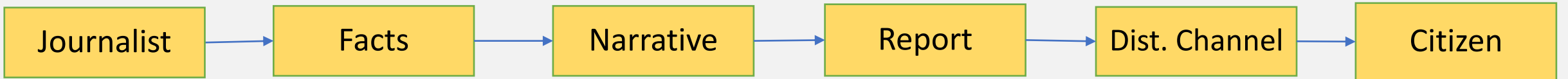
# Reporting Process

## Corporate/Mainstream



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## Independent/Citizen





How news  
polarization  
harms us

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# Individual Level

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1. Deprives us of total set of facts
2. Divides us into mutually-exclusive realities
3. Makes political dialogue impossible
4. Antagonizes us from friends and family

# Barack Obama

“We live in such a polarized time...If you watch Fox News, you’re in one reality, and if you read The New York Times, you’re in a different reality, and if you’re at BuzzFeed, you’re someplace else. It’s been challenging to have a common conversation.”

(East Idaho News: 3/6/19)

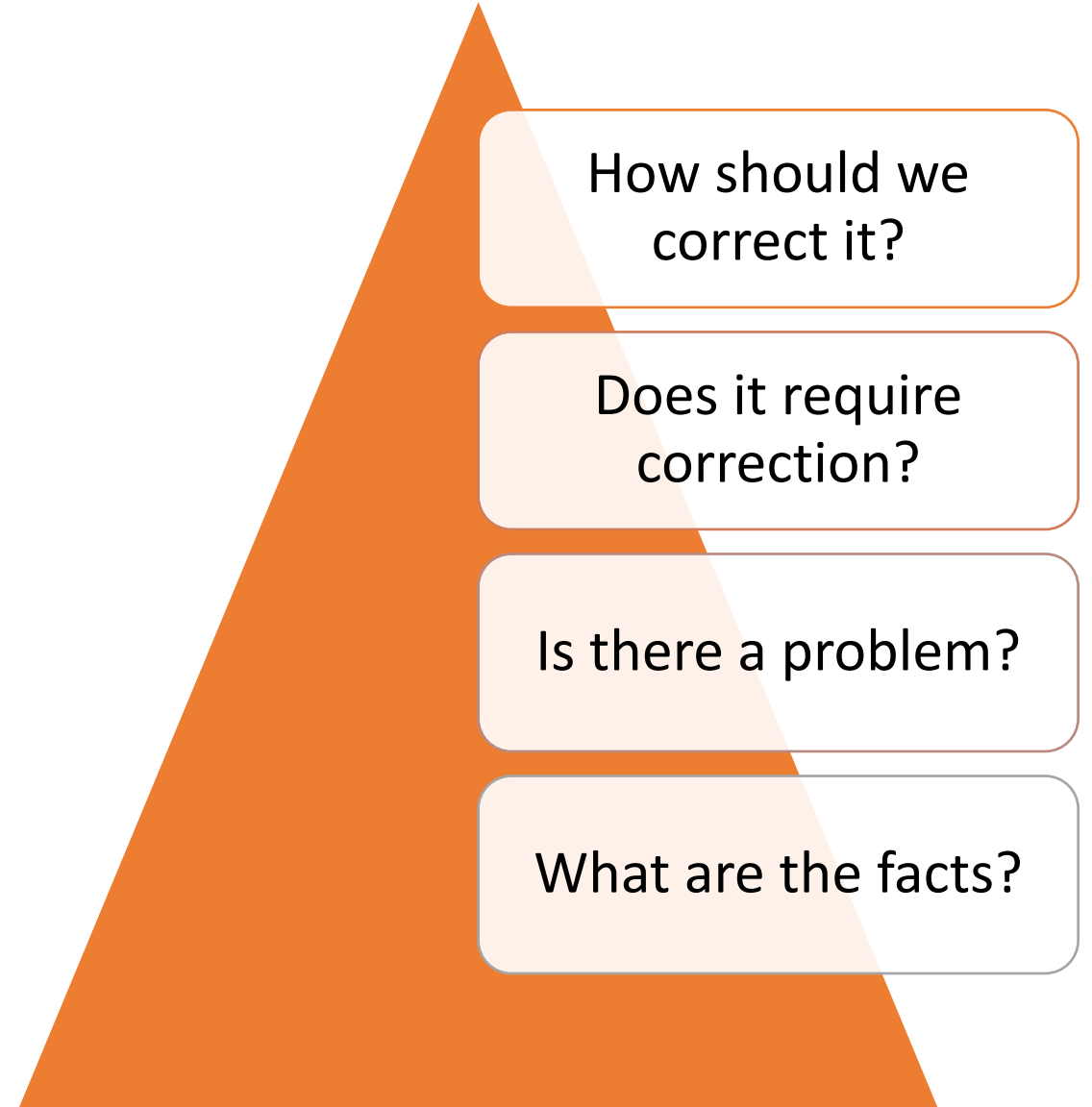


# Societal Level

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1. Not fully-informed
2. Can't engage in productive political discourse
3. Can't adequately vet proposed policies

# Anatomy of Policy Debate





# Signs of crisis in news media

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July 1, 2021

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Analysis

Ethics & Trust

## US ranks last among 46 countries in trust in media, Reuters Institute report finds

**Just 29% of people surveyed in the U.S. said they trust the news, compared to 45% in Canada and 54% in Brazil.**



**Start your day  
informed and**

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'Sleeping with the enemy' Russian troops try to pick up Ukraini...



4-month-old girl orphaned when parents die at drug-fueled par...



Ex-Goldman ex Leissner says lo blackmailed him

MEDIA

# Scandal-ridden CNN sees ratings dive by 90% after 2021 coverage

By Alexandra Steigrad

January 12, 2022 | 6:37pm | Updated

Ad : (0:02) ?





▲ S&P 500 4,319.94 +22.44 +0.52%  
▲ NASDAQ 14,522.38 +18.42 +0.13%



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Those annoying robocalls aren't going to stop today. But they could slow down soon

# Washington Post, New York Times, and NBC News retract reports on Giuliani



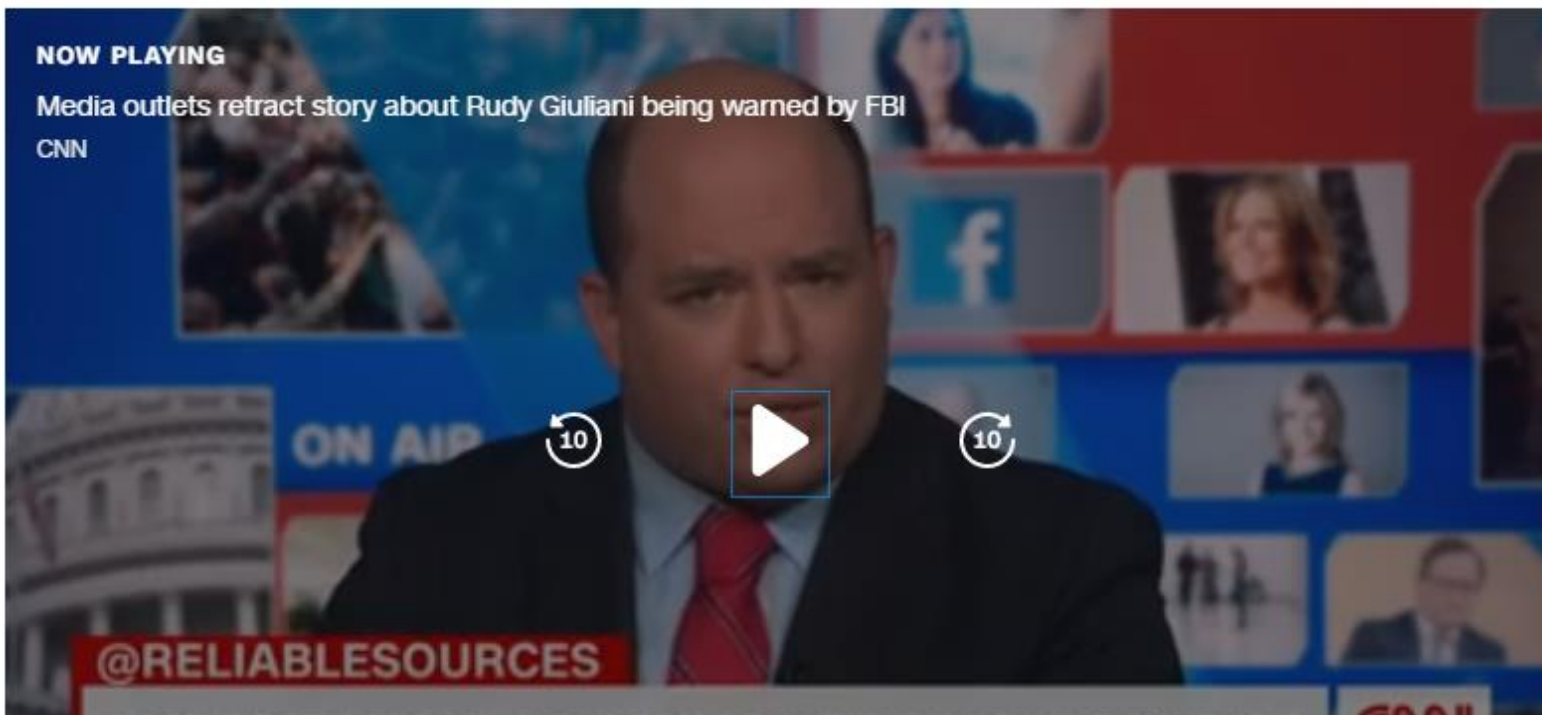
By [Oliver Darcy](#), CNN Business

Updated 12:30 PM ET, Sun May 2, 2021

NOW PLAYING

Media outlets retract story about Rudy Giuliani being warned by FBI

CNN



## MORE FROM CNN BUSINESS



Rhetoric professor explains Tucker Carlson's tricks



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AD

[Artist got Zagat review, art magazine article, and more.](#)



# Three journalists leaving CNN after retracted article



by [Brian Stelter](#) @brianstelter

🕒 June 27, 2017: 6:00 PM ET



Newsletter

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media newsletter

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# Opinion: The Post publishes correction on Trump call with Georgia investigator



## MOST READ OPINIONS



1 As prosecutors indict the Trump Organization, Trump indicts himself



# Texas reporter who said 'Fox Corp.' was muzzling her during rogue live shot is fired, says station tried to squash hydroxychloroquine stories

SARAH TAYLOR | June 16, 2021

f t in ✉



# The Washington Post settles lawsuit with Nick Sandmann after viral March for Life controversy



By [Oliver Darcy](#), [CNN Business](#)

Updated 12:51 PM ET, Fri July 24, 2020



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# Lawsuits

MEDIA · Published December 17

- **Nicholas Sandmann reaches settlement with NBC in Covington Catholic High School controversy**

Sandmann announced on Twitter the terms of the settlement were confidential



MARKETS

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▼ DOW	35,008.96	-19.84	-0.06%
▲ S&P 500	4,501.79	+10.75	+0.24%
▲ NASDAQ	14,166.79	+93.69	+0.66%

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# CNN settles lawsuit with Nick Sandmann stemming from viral video controversy



By [Oliver Darcy](#), CNN Business

Updated 6:06 PM ET, Tue January 7, 2020



LESA CORNWELL/AP/PTILE

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Elon Musk just took the entire EV sector down with these comments



George Soros warns China is facing an economic crisis

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# A timeline of Sean Hannity's panicked texts to Trump's inner circle reveals how 'worried' he was about the January 6 rally and Capitol riot

Eliza Relman and Sonam Sheth Jan 5, 2022, 1:09 PM





# Carlson says he felt obligation to meet with Trump on virus

*Fox News Channel's Tucker Carlson says he felt a moral obligation to meet with President Donald Trump to warn him about the seriousness of coronavirus*

By DAVID BAUDER AP Media Writer

March 18, 2020, 6:48 PM • 4 min read





OTR: No problems here

On Apr 30, 2015 3:00 PM, "Glenn Thrush" <gthrush@politico.com> wrote:

> No worries

> Because I have become a hack I will send u the whole section that pertains

> to u

> Please don't share or tell anyone I did this

> Tell me if I fucked up anything

>

>

> Insiders expressed confidence in Dennis Cheng, the campaign's relatively

> unknown campaign finance director, whose selection was seen as a signal the

> campaign was avoiding another mistake of '08: The empowering of celebrity

> donors who crowded out the younger, more aggressive bundlers who helped

> power Barack Obama's money machine.

>

NEWS

# Kyle Rittenhouse launches initiative to combat 'lies' from media outlets, personalities

By Yaron Steinbuch

February 22, 2022 | 8:12am | Updated







How do we  
find the truth?

---

Make a **daily habit** of  
consuming news from both  
liberal and conservative,  
mainstream and  
independent, news outlets.

Over time, learn the general tendencies of each outlet --- their viewpoints, narratives, censorship focus, fabrications, smears, etc.

- Identify factual discrepancies
- Do research to reconcile the discrepancies
- Use primary sources whenever possible



How do we  
bridge the  
polarized  
divide?

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# Try to wake up others

1. Share these insights with others.
2. Share news items with others that challenge the news they're receiving.
3. Share primary sources with others.
4. Challenge others to do their own analysis and generate their own conclusion.





How do we  
hold the news  
media  
accountable?

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# Challenge News Providers

- Reporters
- Expert guests
- Witnesses



# Methods

- Phone calls
- Emails
- Social media
- Print

# Examples

1. WVXU/NPR/This American Life
2. Mara Liasson – Trump ban on Muslims
3. David Greene – Russian friends
4. Caught censoring story archive
5. Ivermectin research
6. Smearing Tucker Carlson on VAERS report



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[Michael.Mercier@ScreenEducation.org](mailto:Michael.Mercier@ScreenEducation.org)