

Are we living in a bubble?

I wrote this post back in November, and never published it. But today, I was reading the *Washington Post* and came across Paul Farhi's column regarding the Brian Williams "scandal." In case you haven't heard about it, it involves Brian "misremembering" being shot at in a helicopter in Iraq in 2003. Farhi writes:

*NBC News went into damage-control mode a day after the public symbol of the network, anchor Brian Williams, faced a **torrent** of derision and criticism for telling a story about his wartime reporting that has proved to be untrue.*

*As **public disapproval roared on social media**, NBC sought to protect and defend Williams, its lead anchor since 2004 and the most popular anchor in the nation.*

Bolding is mine. Notice that Farhi writes about the "torrent" of criticism and disapproval...on social media. I stopped reading the article after these two paragraphs because I don't think there's a torrent, or a deluge or even a rainstorm of derision outside of social media. I think this is a *social media crisis*, where people in social media all seem to be outraged by the "crisis" and where the rest of the country (those people sitting around their living rooms watching TV in the evening) couldn't care less. Notice too that Brian Williams was on TV last night as if nothing had happened. And maybe it only happened in our little social media bubble.

So this is where I started this post back in November:

When it started three years ago, I was a huge fan of Showtime's series *Homeland*. I was hooked and had to watch every episode. It bummed me out we had to wait nine months

between seasons.

But when the third season started this past September, I was no longer enthusiastic. I watched the first couple of episodes and found that I just didn't like the main character Carrie anymore. She had become way too crazy (she actually considers drowning her child!) and demanding and unreasonable. The story line had strayed so far from the initial *Homeland* that it was another story altogether. I quit watching. I no longer care.

Because I no longer care, I am no longer living in the *Homeland* bubble. The bubble is one where "everybody" is watching and commenting. Everybody just loves it. Articles and blog posts abound.

It seems that when you believe something or are a big fan of something, you surround yourself with like-minded people and views. In fact, your views are being reinforced. At times, you actively avoid being exposed to opposing views.

Notice what is going on with Uber and Bill Cosby. In case you haven't seen the reports, Uber threatened to expose the personal life of a reporter who was aiming to write an article about Uber. Several women have come forward to accuse Cosby of sexual assault. Both these cases are serious and they expose great flaws in a popular company and a beloved entertainer.

Many articles, blog posts and Tweets have been devoted to dissecting the PR and communications shortcomings shown by both Uber and Cosby. But here's the thing: does it matter? People are still using Uber. And it was reported that at a comedy show in Florida a few days ago, the comedian got a standing ovation.

There's a disconnect between the world at large and the bubble we surround ourselves with. In PR and crisis communications, both Uber and Cosby are toast. They've handled these situations poorly. But for those who don't delve into how things are communicated, who don't follow the news (and by the

way, journalists are living in a bubble sometimes too), the concern is just not there. They don't care about Uber's threats because Uber gives them a convenient way to get places. They ignore the accusations against Cosby because they find him funny.

What do you think? Are these controversies manufactured? Is the scandal for real? Are we living in a social media culture of outrage? Are we living in a bubble?