

Why Sources Matter

THREATS AND RESPONSES: INTELLIGENCE
THREATS AND RESPONSES: INTELLIGENCE; Defectors Bolster U.S. Case Against Iraq, Officials Say
 By JUDITH MILLER
 Published: January 24, 2003

THREATS AND RESPONSES: GERM WEAPONS;
C.I.A. Hunts Iraq Tie to Soviet Smallpox
 By JUDITH MILLER
 CIA investigates informant's accusation that Iraq obtained smallpox and related strains of smallpox from Russian scientists

BOOKS OF THE TIMES; Sounding an Urgent Terrorism Alarm to Deaf Ears
 By JUDITH MILLER
 Judith Miller reviews book *The Age of Sacred Terror* by Daniel Benjamin and Steven Miller; photos
 November 20, 2002

Why Sources Matter



What Are the Consequences When The Press Gets it Wrong?



Would the U.S. have invaded Iraq?

Why Critical Thinking About Sources Matters



To Be Fair...

"Saddam Hussein has spent the better part of this decade, and much of his nation's wealth, not on providing for the Iraqi people, but on developing nuclear, chemical and biological weapons and the missiles to deliver them."
 President Bush, Jan. 27, 1998.

"He will use those weapons of mass destruction again, as he has ten times since 1983."
 Sandy Berger*, National Security Adviser, Feb. 18, 1998



"Iraq is a long way from [here], but what happens there matters a great deal here. For the risks that the leaders of a rogue state will use nuclear, chemical or biological weapons against us or our allies is the greatest security threat we face."
 Sec. of State Madeleine Albright, Feb. 18, 1998.



"Fateful decisions will be made in the days and weeks ahead. At issue is nothing less than the fundamental question of whether or not we can keep the most lethal weapons known to mankind out of the hands of an unreconstructed tyrant and aggressor..."
 Sen. Joe Biden (D, DE), Feb. 12, 1998
 Now Vice President

*later convicted of stealing documents from the National Security Archive

New York magazine

The Source of the Trouble

Pulitzer Prize winner Judith Miller's series of exclusives about weapons of mass destruction in Iraq—courtesy of the now-notorious Ahmad Chalabi—helped the New York Times keep up with the competition and the Bush administration bolster the case for war. How the very same talents that caused her to get the story also caused her to get it wrong.

If Miller is an extreme example of the Times' ultracompetitive mind-set, she is also an example of an inherent problem of journalism: its reliance on sources.

Democracy Demands Critical Thinking:

Active, persistent, and careful consideration of a belief or supposed form of knowledge in the light of the grounds which support it and the further conclusions to which it tends. (Dewey, 1909, p. 9)

identify the elements in a reasoned case, especially reasons and conclusions;
 identify and evaluate assumptions;
 clarify and interpret expressions and ideas;
 judge the acceptability, especially the credibility, of claims;
 evaluate arguments of different kinds;
 analyse, evaluate and produce explanations;
 analyse, evaluate and make decisions;
 draw inferences;
 produce arguments.

Critical Thinking

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Recapping Last Week's Lecture on Truth and Verification

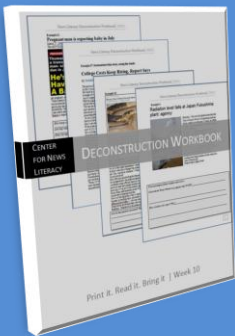


Code of Ethics

Society of News-Literate Citizens

1. Ask: Did the Reporter Open the Freezer?
2. Follow The Story

Reminder: Bring Deconstruction Workbook to Next Lecture



Print it.

Read it.

Bring it

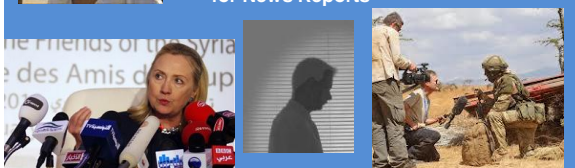
Journalists are people who need people



Says Who?



Critical Evaluation of people interviewed for News Reports



Smart Questions to Ask Yourself:

- ✓ Who is this source?
- ✓ How would this person know?
- ✓ Does anyone corroborate?
- ✓ Does this person verify or assert?
- ✓ Do they have a dog in the fight?

(Don't copy these. Wait for the mnemonic device)

Can Cell Phones Crash Airliners?



Says Who?

Says Who?



Judging the Reliability of Sources

Independent Sources Are **Better Than** Self-Interested Sources

Multiple Sources Are **Better Than** Single Sources

Sources Who Verify Are **Better Than** Sources Who Assert

Authoritative/Informed Sources Are **Better Than** Uninformed Sources

Named Sources Are **Better Than** Unnamed Sources

(Mnemonic Device: **I'M VAIN**)

How Journalists Pursue the Truth Look Who's Talking

Direct Evidence:

- Driver's testimony
- Eyewitnesses' accounts
- Breathalyzer Report
- Driving Records
- Accident Reports for the Road



Indirect Evidence:

- Police reports
- University officials' statements
- Driver's lawyer's statements
- Statements of victim's family & friends
- Statements of driver's family & friends
- Statements from Stony Brook students

Judging the Reliability of Sources

Independent Sources
Are **Better Than**
Self-Interested Sources

A Self-interested source...

The New York Times

Shell Suspends Drilling for Arctic Ocean in 2013

"We've made progress in Alaska, but this is a long-term program that we are pursuing in a safe and measured way," Shell Oil Co. President Marvin Odum said in the announcement. "Our decision to pause in 2013 will give us time to ensure the readiness of all our equipment and people following the drilling season in 2012."

Environmental groups opposed to drilling cheered the announcement.

"This is the first good decision we've seen from Shell," said Mike LeVine, an Alaska spokesman for Oceana. "Given the disastrous 2012 season, our government agencies must take advantage of this opportunity to reassess the way decisions are made about our ocean resources and to reconsider the commitment to explore for oil in the Arctic Ocean."



Independence: A Ruthless Standard

Libyan Woman Claims Rape By Soldiers, Is Dragged Away

HADEEL AL-SHALCHI | 03/20/11 04:48 PM

Important | Fascinating | Typical | Scary | Outrageous | Amazing | Infuriating | Beautiful

Read More: Gaddafi Protests, Libya, Libya Protests, Libya Rape, Libya Rebels, Libya Revolution, Libya Uprising, Libya Woman Rape, Muammar Gaddafi, World News

SHARE THIS STORY
Recommend 1005 recommendations. Sign

Her story could not be independently verified, but the dramatic scene provided a rare firsthand glimpse of the brutal crackdown on public dissent by Moammar Gadhafi's regime as the



TRIPOLI, Libya (AP) — A distraught Libyan woman stormed into a Tripoli hotel Saturday to tell foreign reporters that government troops raped her, calling off a tirade when hotel staff said a checkpoint, led her up, abused her, then led her away to be gang raped.

Her story could not be independently verified, but the dramatic scene provided a rare firsthand glimpse of the brutal crackdown on public dissent by Moammar Gadhafi's regime as the Libyan leader fights a rebellion against his rule that began last month.

Judging the Reliability of Sources

Multiple Sources Are **Better** Than a Single Source

TIME Multiple Sources

Could Dennis Rodman's North Korea Trip Affect U.S. Policy?

Korean leader Kim Jong Un, whose regime calls America "the sworn enemy of the Korean people" and produces YouTube videos of Manhattan's destruction.

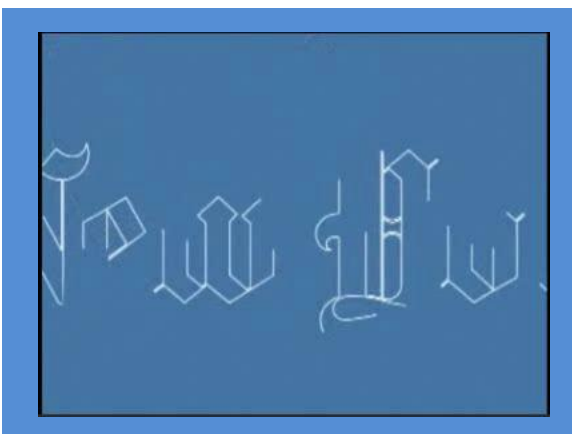
The State Department offered a virtually identical response: "We have direct channels of communication with the DPRK," deputy spokesman Patrick Ventrell said dutifully, before repeating the rest of Carney's response almost verbatim.

"The United States has direct channels of communications with the DPRK," explained White House spokesman Jay Carney, using the acronym for the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. "And instead of spending money on celebrity sporting events to entertain the elites of that country, the North Korean regime should focus on the well-being of its own people who have been starved, imprisoned and denied their human rights."

REUTERS / KCNA Not really, say some North Korea experts. "We have learned something more about Kim Jong Un's love of basketball," says Charles Armstrong, a Korea specialist at Columbia University's School of International and Public Affairs. But, he adds, Kim's fandom was

Jong Il are known as fans of American movies and other cultural exports: "Hollywood and NBA may be American icons, but Kim's demonstrated affinity for such forms of amusement does not signal an overture to Washington," adds Sung-Yoon Lee of the Tufts University Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy. "It certainly does not indicate intentions of reform or opening, coming just a couple of weeks after a nuclear test."

Reconstructing the Blackwater Incident in Nusoor Square



In Pursuit of Truth Blackwater shooting

They killed innocent people for no reason.

He started shooting bullets randomly.

Two helicopters also were firing at people.

Judging the Reliability of Sources

Sources Who **Verify**
Are **Better** Than
Sources Who **Assert**

Verifying or Asserting?

The New York Times

Texas Senator Goes on Attack and Raises Bipartisan Hackles



Saying that he had serious doubts about the source of payments that Mr. Hagel had accepted for speaking engagements, Mr. Cruz declared, "It is at a minimum relevant to know if that \$200,000 that he deposited in his bank account came directly from Saudi Arabia, came directly from North Korea."

Senator Ted Cruz, Republican, Washington

"He basically came out and made the accusation about money from North Korea or money from our enemies, and he just laid out there all of this accusatory verbiage without a shred of evidence," said Senator Claire McCaskill, Democrat of Missouri. "In this country we had a terrible experience with innuendo and inference when Joe McCarthy hung out in the United States Senate, and I just think we have to be more careful."

Verifying or Asserting?

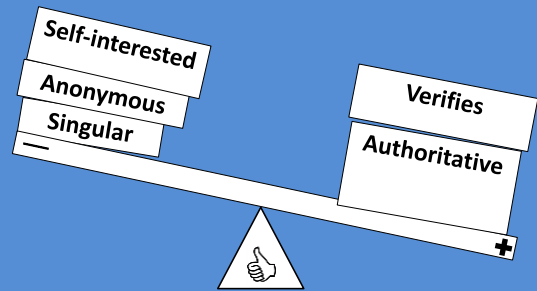
The Washington Post

Tunisians worry about loss of freedoms gained under the Arab Spring

Text Size | Print | E-mail | Reprints

By Elizabeth Bryant | Religion News Service, Published: October 5 | Updated: Monday, October 8, 11:25 AM

"I have no figures, I have no scientific studies," said Khadija Cherif, Tunis-based secretary-general of the International Federation of Human Rights. "But the assessment I make daily is that the vast majority of women are veiling because of pressure from their family or neighborhood or political manipulation."



Weighing Sources: Verification & Authority

A Corollary to Last Week's Lesson:



Just Like We Always ask:
"Did the Reporter Open the Freezer?"
You can also ask
"Did the Source Open the Freezer?"

Judging the Reliability of Sources

Authoritative/**I**nformed Sources
Are **Better** Than
Un-informed Sources

Vaccines are Dangerous? Sez Who?



Vaccines are Dangerous? Sez Who?



Authoritative vs. Uninformed Los Angeles Times

Steroid-related meningitis cases rise to 7 dead, 64 sick



"All patients who may have received these medications need to be tracked down immediately," said Dr. Benjamin Park of the Centers for Disease Control in a news release. "It is possible that if patients with infection are identified soon and put on appropriate antifungal therapy, lives may be saved."

Authoritative/Informed Sources vs. Un-informed Sources

Madison lab solves mystery of Arkansas bird die-off

Blunt-force trauma from flying into homes, cars cited as cause

By Lee Bergquist of the Journal Sentinel

Jan. 6, 2011 | (193) COMMENTS

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enlarge photo



Associated Press
Dead birds lie on the ground after

The mystery of the deaths of thousands of blackbirds in Arkansas this month has been solved.

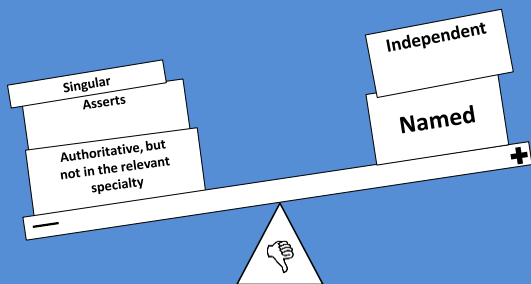
They died of blunt-force trauma, according to the National Wildlife Health Center in Madison. Samples of the blackbirds - and other blackbirds from a separate mass die-off about the same time in Louisiana - were brought to the little-known laboratory on Madison's west side for necropsies.

"They died of impact force to their bodies," said Scott Wright, chief of disease investigations at the center.

He said the birds clearly showed signs of bruises.

The Arkansas Game and Fish Commission said tests for evidence of pesticide poisoning were negative.

Weighing Sources: Authoritative is case-specific



Judging the Reliability of Sources

Named Sources
Are **Better** Than
Unnamed Sources

Who Was 'Deep Throat'?



Characterizing Unnamed Sources



Thousands displaced as Syrian authorities demolish Hama neighborhood

By Amir Ahmed, CNN
updated 9:32 AM EDT, Mon October 1, 2012



"Most of the residents have left their homes. The majority of them went to neighboring areas in the province. Some are still sleeping in the streets, and only a few of them remain in their homes," Abdallah said.

Another resident reached by phone Sunday said she's been living on the street, along with her two kids, for five days after her husband was detained by authorities and her home was burned. She did not want to be named for safety reasons.

Anonymous Source Characterized

MEMO | OCTOBER 1, 2012, 5:18 PM | 95 Comments

Feeling the Pressure to Drink for Work

By THOMAS H. DIXON

The New York Times

"There is a perception almost that you're impotent," said one nondrinker, an editor at a liquor-focused lifestyle magazine who asked not to be identified because many of his co-workers don't know he recently entered a 12-step program.

COLD SHOULDER: Terry Lavini

Characterizing Unnamed Sources

Despite Promise of Reforms, Syrian Forces Try to Disperse Protesters With Gunfire

By THE NEW YORK TIMES

DAMASCUS, Syria — The political crisis in [Syria](#) deepened on Monday as the armed forces in the restive southern city of Dara'a fired live ammunition in the air to disperse hundreds of pro-democracy demonstrators who had taken to the streets.

"They were marching peacefully, asking for their rights, when the army opened fire at them," said one witness who declined to be identified for fear of reprisals. "But this is not the end."

Evaluating Anonymous Sources

The Washington Post

NEWS | LOCAL | POLITICS | SPORTS | OPINIONS | BUSINESS | ARTS & LIVING

Still falling short on anonymous sources

By Andrew Alexander

Ombudsman
"Senior administration officials" said they were frustrated with how Deeds was handling his campaign. "administration officials" predicted he would lose on Tuesday.

All these anonymous sources were too much for Post reader Dee Ellison of Falls Church.

She's right. Anonymous sources often are necessary. And too many of them appear in The Post.

But there's another problem. When they must be used, The Post doesn't do a good enough job of explaining why.

Evaluating Anonymous Sources

HUFF POST MEDIA

Media Ethics: Issues Raised by Michael Lewis's Obama Article in Vanity Fair

Posted: 09/18/2012 2:38 pm

Put baldly, those sources who do not want to speak for attribution and/or edit their own quotations often speak for their own purposes and deliberately try to mislead the media. As Lord Northcliffe, owner of the *London Times* and *Daily Mail* once remarked, "News is what someone, somewhere is trying to suppress.

The rest is advertising,"

Evaluating Anonymous Sources

Transparency
 Characterization
 Corroboration (evidence/sources)

Evaluate The Sources

Sources

Outlets

Source Evaluation Workshop (Great Practice for the Final)

Evaluate The Source

CONGRESSIONAL BUDGET OFFICE | GAO

When Is A Self-Interested Source A Reliable Source?

Women in Texas Losing Options for Health Care in Abortion Fight

Many San Carlos patients struggle to reach Edinburg from their homes in impoverished neighborhoods called colonias. Maria Romero, a housecleaner with four children, who had a lump in her breast discovered at the San Carlos clinic, has no way to get there.

Ms. Parra, 33, the mother of five, managed to borrow a car to get to Edinburg after a pap smear at the San Carlos clinic indicated she might have cervical cancer. Further tests showed she was cancer-free.

Both women worry about getting birth control pills; the clinic may now have to charge them up to \$20 for a month's supply.

"I will have to go without," Ms. Parra said as she left an English class at a community center and was walking to pick up her two youngest children from a Head Start program. "If I get pregnant again, God forbid."

When is a Self-Interested Source a Reliable Source?



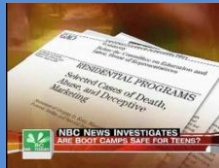
A SACRILEGIOUS HUMAN PAGES Kathy Kowalski with her mother, Dora Hask, 88, who has dementia and is the widow of a World War II veteran. The Department of Veterans Affairs took nearly two years to process her claim for a quarter's pension.

The New York Times

Veterans Wait for Benefits as Claims Pile Up

Each appointment and lost document has added weeks to the processing, now in its 15th month. So have skeptical department examiners, who have requested additional information on whether Mr. Selsky's heart palpitations and vision loss are related to his multiple sclerosis. "This should be a slam dunk," Ms. Selsky said. "He keeps getting worse, and they keep fighting and fighting and fighting with us. The stress is unbelievable."

Source Evaluation Workshop (Great Practice for the Final)



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(Mnemonic Device: I'M VAIN)

Key Lesson:

Evaluate Sources

Evaluate Sources

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Judging the Reliability of Sources

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(Mnemonic Device: I'M VAIN)

Looking ahead: Two Ideas Students Struggle With

Predictions History

CONTEXT

TRANSPARENCY

Connections Comparisons

A Source Who Saw Her Boss And Fears Retribution

Reminder: Bring Deconstruction Workbook to Next Lecture

Print it.

Read it.

Bring it

Thus endeth the Lesson...