


(LECTURERS: More than is usually the case, you'll want to rehearse this with an eye on the time. This lecture is designed to be continued in our recitations. We like to conclude with the series of slides on the Pregnant man and then a deconstruction of the Texting report that opens the hour. Also, make arrangements to turn lecture hall lights back on at those times when students are reading.)

You'll want to have your Deconstruction Workbook out and ready today, as we'll be working from it.

ASK: I know what I think...but as a lecturer who is offended that students tear themselves away from my fascinating class to tend their cellphone, I may be victim to effects of cognitive dissonance...But what do you think?

- Is too much texting a mental illness?
 - Do you text excessively?
 - How about your friends or family members?
 - Do they have a texting mental illness?
- (Show the video. It launches from next slide)



Texting.wmv

NEWSFELLOW: NEWS FELLOW: LINK (INSERT) VIDEO TO THIS SLIDE AND SELECT "START AUTOMATICALLY"
run-time 1:50

(After it runs)

ASK: What do you think of this?

How do you react? With disbelief or skepticism?

What more do you need to know?

Can you make a reasoned assessment of its reliability?

We are now at the nitty-gritty of News Literacy, taking news reports apart and examining the reliability of the information. We call it Deconstruction.

Using the Deconstruction Workbook you brought to class today, we will examine a series of stories piece-by-piece.

Does the headline match the story? Does the lead (summary paragraph) spell out the main points?

We'll look at the difference between verification, assertion and inference.

How's the evidence in each story? Is it direct or arm's-length?

Does the reporter "Open the Freezer?"

Does the reporter place this tiny report in its appropriate context so that you're neither lost in the forest nor hugging a lone anomalous tree?

Does the reporter provide transparency...admitting what the reporter doesn't know and why not and how the reporter found out the key points?

We will almost certainly not have time to do all the examples in the workbook. You'll keep working on these in recitation.

Countdown To Test #2

Held in Recitation, week of
April 23-27
Emphasizes Lectures 7-11,
(Fairness & Bias through
Power of Images)
...but requires some use of
concepts from Test 1.
Same format: 10 questions,
100 points possible.



Lecturer should know the date of the Test #2 recitations in her/his lecture.

Deconstruction: "Application of News Literacy concepts to the analysis of component parts of a news report in order to dispassionately judge its reliability."



SLIDE: DECONSTRUCTING THE NEWS.

This week, we learn and practice a step-by-step process for pulling apart news stories of all kinds to assess their reliability.

Remember, that's the point of this course: not to make you a cynical smart-aleck, but to prepare you to lead your family, your workplace and your community by skillfully finding reliable information...information that is actionable.

The Deconstruction Work book includes a series of stories that illustrate the value of this deconstruction process.

We will almost certainly not have time to do all the examples in Lecture, so this process will continue in recitation.

Past students say this lesson sticks with them long after the final exam...annoys them...makes them read slower...deconstruct TV stories out loud instead of zoning out...to which we say YES!

A word to the wise: most of your grade on the final will rest on your ability to deconstruct with precision and sophistication, using all of the concepts, skills and vocabulary learned this semester.

Note the stories are not all perfect examples; they are the result of daily journalism like you will consume for the rest of your life.

In the next three slides I'm going to introduce to you the method by which you break a story down into its parts in order to judge its reliability.

We call this deconstruction.

A Deconstruction Worksheet

How to Judge Reliability

- 1) Summarize the main points: Does the headline and the lead support the main point(s)?
- 2) How close does the reporter come to opening the freezer? Is the evidence direct or arm's-length?

You can't do all eight steps of the deconstruction process on every story you read in your life.

But when the topic really matters to you and you're getting ready to make decision or take action...you better be sure you're working from reliable information.

Here's how:

1. Summarize the main points of the story.

Do the headline and lede support the main point(s) of the story?

2. Assess the evidence supporting the main points of the story. Is Direct? Arm's-Length? How close did the reporter come to opening the freezer?

A Deconstruction Worksheet

How to Judge Reliability

- 3) Evaluate the reliability of the sources using I'M VA/IN
- 4) Does the reporter make his/her work transparent?
- 5) Does the reporter place the story in context?

3. Are the sources reliable?

Are you reacting to them emotionally, or analyzing them intellectually?

(Remind them, the phrase is “better than”...these are not absolutes)

4. Does the reporter make his or her work transparent? How does the reporter know what is being reported?

5. Does the reporter place the story in context?

A Deconstruction Worksheet

How to Judge Reliability

6) Are the key questions answered?

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

7) Is the story fair?

(ANIMATION: who, what, when where, why, who all fade in, in succession.)

6. Are the key questions answered? (And what is left out.)

7. Is the story balanced? Should it be? Is it fair to the evidence and to key stakeholders?

When the information matters because you're going to make a decision, take action or share it with others...these questions matter.

And The Whole Point Is....

**What can a news consumer
Do with this information**

Is it actionable?

Again, the point of this process is not to make you an insufferable smart-alek. It is to help you find reliable information to:

- Make a decision
- Take action
- Make a judgment
- Share with others

Deconstructing the News

The power of Context

However, behind the image of two-year-old Jingdan lies a tale not of intentional cruelty but, it seems, one of misplaced love and fear: his sister disappeared from the same spot just two weeks ago.

"I was afraid I would lose him too," their father, Chen Chuanliu, said today.



<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-1248252/Chinese-boy-chained-lamp-post-dad.html>

(Animation: Each click brings up another element: Photo, Headline, Pull quote.)

Before we go through point-by-point, we need to address two terms that students stumble over.

Context and Transparency.

For starters, here is a simple example of context.

You see a photo of a toddler chained to a tree. What do you think?

(click up headline)

Reporter Tania Branigan in Beijing interviews the father, who says his daughter was abducted, so while he must work, he chains up the boy, Jingdan.

(click up pull-quote) Does that change how you see the photo? That is context, what you might call "The Rest of the Story."

As a news consumer, if you don't look for context, you can miss the story.

Deconstructing the News

The power of Context

THE HUFFINGTON POST

Chinese Man Locked In Cage All Day
'For His Own Safety' (PICTURES)



http://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/2012/03/06/chinese-man-locked-in-cage-all-day-for-his-own-safety_n_1323280.html

Lecture, here's an alternate version. Still not terribly well-sourced.

These horrifying pictures show the fate of a young Chinese boy forced to spend his days locked in a small wooden cage.

Wei Yun, now 23, was unable to stand, walk or talk as a child, and could only crawl. At the age of two he was crawling around the family home in southern China's Guangxi Province, when he knocked over a boiling pot of water.


After sustaining near-fatal injuries, Wei's parents began locking him in a wooden cage for his own safety, [Quirky China](#) reported.

Wei's father works away from home and rarely has the time to visit, meaning there is no one to watch over Wei while his stepmother Nong is out working during the day.

Because of these circumstances, she locks him away in the small cage all day while she is out.

This article references the story of the child chained to a tree

Key Definitions

Main Entry: **con·text** 

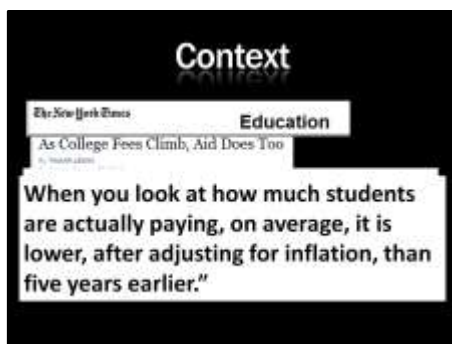
Pronunciation: \ˈkän-,tekst\

Function: *noun*

Context: Facts that surround an event or elements of a news story and provide meaning or significance

Here's a simple definition.

Let's look at some more examples.



(Animation: First headline, then scary data graph about costs rising, then graphs that show aid grew faster than costs for a net reduction in payouts by students) Text is included so you can read aloud.

Now, here's a more nuanced example.

The headline starts your ulcer.

But then there's this fact about aid increasing.

And finally this analysis. Payouts have dropped for students.

Wow...Does context ever matter. If you had the fees data alone, it would be a very different story than this.

(Lecturer: FYI:

October 28, 2010

As College Fees Climb, Aid Does Too

By [TAMAR LEWIN](#)

As their state financing dwindled, four-year public universities increased their published tuition and fees almost 8 percent this year, to an average of \$7,605, according to the [College Board](#)'s annual reports. When room and board are included, the average in-state student at a public university now pays \$16,140 a year.

At private nonprofit colleges and universities, tuition rose 4.5 percent to an average of \$27,293, or \$36,993 with room and board.

The good news in the 2010 "Trends in College Pricing" and "Trends in Student Aid" reports is that fast-rising tuition costs have been accompanied by a huge increase in financial aid, which helped keep down the actual amount students and families pay.

"In 2009-2010, students got \$28 billion in Pell grants, and that's \$10 billion more than the year before," said Sandy Baum, the economist who is the lead author of the reports. "When you look at how much students are actually paying, on average, it is lower, after adjusting for inflation, than five years earlier."

In the last five years, the report said, average published tuition and fees increased by about 24 percent at public four-year colleges and universities, 17 percent at private nonprofit four-year institutions, and 11 percent at public two-year colleges — but in each sector, the net inflation-adjusted price, taking into account both grants and federal tax benefits, decreased over the period.

Almost everybody has been helped by the federal government's increased spending on education, Ms. Baum said, either through Pell grants, which provide an average of \$3,600 for low-income students, or through tax credits, which go further up the income scale.

The increase in federal support this year was so large that unlike former years, government grants surpassed institutional grants.

"I think that's an aberration," Ms. Baum said. "Pell grants are unlikely to grow so rapidly in the coming years, and institutional grants are likely to grow, so I think the ratio will flip back."

This year, the report found, full-time students receive an average of about \$6,100 in grant aid and federal tax benefits at public four-year institutions, \$16,000 at private nonprofit institutions, and \$3,400 at public two-year colleges.

Truncated here....

<http://www.nytimes.com/2010/10/28/education/28college.html>



(Animation: Click brings up the context quote)

Remember this story from last week's lecture? When 5,000 red-winged blackbirds fell dead on New Year's Eve in Arkansas and 500 more in Louisiana, people went looking for connections and villains.

Conspiracy theories arose, environmental explanations were proposed...But this piece of context - 5 Billion birds die yearly - was essential to understanding the cause. (Which turned out to be blunt force trauma, likely caused by startled birds (fireworks on New Years Eve) crashing into each other and immovable objects like wires, buildings and trees.

In a first-day story about an unusual event, it pays to make sure you have the context...

<http://www.nytimes.com/2011/01/04/us/04beebe.html>

<http://www.newscientist.com/blogs/shortsharpscience/2011/01/happy-new-year-its-raining-bir.html>



(This example is better suited to Recitation, but it's very effective if you decide to take time in lecture)

Does the reporter place the story in context?

Let's see....Two counties is 3% of the 62...but %10 percent of the car thefts?

How many of you drive to school or have a car? Well, according to the Federal Bureau of Investigation's Uniform Crime Reports, a motor vehicle is stolen in the United States every 26.4 seconds. (Look at watch, wait 26 seconds, say "There goes one now!")

The FBI also calculates the odds of a vehicle being stolen were 1 in 207 in the latest study. So...how many cars in the lot west of here?

Furthermore, the odds are highest in urban areas like this Tri-state area....And I thought you should know that more than one in ten of the cars stolen in all 62 counties of New York State are stolen right here on Long Island...

How are you commuters feeling?... Can you remember if you looked your car?

If you leave, though, you'll miss this context...The car theft rate is the highest in the Western U.S., almost a full third higher than the US average. And the theft rate for the Northeast is about half the US average. And the car theft rate for Long Island? It's about one third the U.S. average. ...But, but, but...what about "*more than one in ten of the cars stolen in all 62 counties of New York State are stolen right here on Long Island*"?

That is true, but while Long Island accounts for about 15 percent of the state's population, it only sees about a tenth of the car thefts, so car theft is rare on Long Island, relative to almost anywhere in the country...

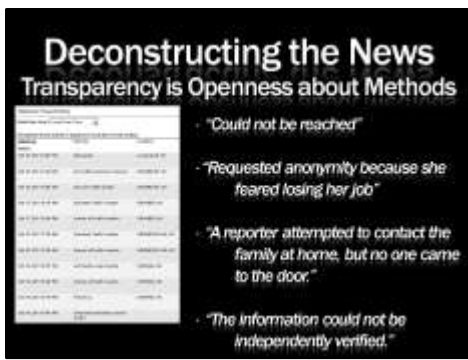
Key Definitions

Main Entry: **trans·par·en·cy** 🗣️
Pronunciation: \tran(t)s-'per-ən(t)-sē\
Function: *noun*
Inflected Form(s): *plural* **trans·par·en·cies**
Date: 1591

Transparency: The reporter specifies in the story what he or she *does not* know, and why it could not be learned; how they know what they do know; when the reporter pulls the curtain aside.

Step 4: Does the reporter make his or her work transparent?

Definition of transparent: Specifying in a story what you do not know or could not learn. For example: It could not be learned. He or she could not be reached for comment.



This is a Tracking Report for a package shipment.

Rather than get into the subtleties of transparency in a specific story, let's start with simple comparison.

Transparency is Fed Ex telling you how your package got from you to your Grandmother. Tracking the shipment lets you see the steps they took to deliver it.

That's what transparency is: The journalist letting you see the steps taken to assemble the story.

[CLICK HERE TO SHOW QUOTES](#)

Here is a list of common statements by which journalists make their work transparent...open to the public:

--Could not be reached

--Requested anonymity because she feared for her job.

--A reporter tried to contact the family at their home, but no one came to the door.

-The information could not be independently verified.

We'll circle back to this concept.



If your car is a Toyota , you want it to have a Toyota engine, Toyota brakes and Toyota steering wheel, not a shiny but mismatched part from a Chevy.

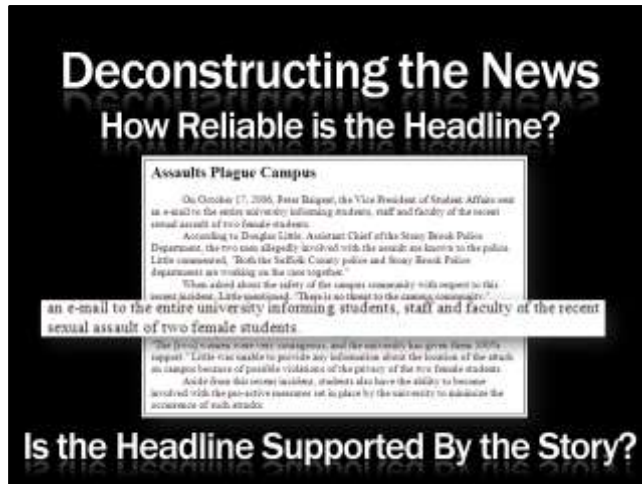
Same goes for a reliable news report. If the Headline and Lead are not matched to the story, you should be concerned.

SO, STEP 1: SUMMARIZE THE STORY

1. What are the main points?

A well-made, reliable story will have a headline and “lead” that match the facts.

One useful definition: The Lead is often the first paragraph and should generally give the main point of the story . Sometimes the lead is delayed because the reporter uses an anecdote to set the scene or hook the reader. Even then, there is usually still one paragraph, a bit further into the story, which gives you a summary of the main points. A hyped-up headline or lead is a warning sign: this report is more interested in gathering an audience than delivering reliable information.



(Animation: Click a 2nd time to bring up pull quote)

Turn to example 1 in the workbook

Assaults Plague campus.

The words intended to make you stop and read a story are the Headline, the stuff in big letters, and the “lead,” a summary sentence that tells you what the story is about .

ASK: Does this headline accurately summarize the story?

(It does not. Discuss why it does not.)

Stony Brook enrollment is approximately 22,000. What rate of crime per 1,000 students would constitute a plague?

ASK: Is the campus “plagued?”

Is this reliable information?



(Animation: Click for the WAPo headline, then click again for the main points)

Turn to example 2 and read the story you find there. (Wait)

The lead is often the very first paragraph, although some writers start with an anecdote or some scene-setting before they slip the “Lead” in.

So...

Ask: What’s the headline?

What does the “lead” tell you?

Is there any word in the headline that concerns you (Could?)

Conditional language can be kind of weasly. Watch out for that. If the headline writer feels the need to qualify a story right from the start, how reliable is it likely to be?

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2010/10/20/AR2010102003372.html>



(Animation: Don't click yet)

Turn to **example 3** In your workbook and read the story you find there. We're going to use it several times, so read it well.

ASK: What is the main point of this story?

Where did you find it? (In the 5th and 6th paragraphs.)

This is an example of a delayed lead.

Sometimes a reporter uses an anecdote to begin the story but then you should find a summary paragraph (journalists call it the Nut of the Story or Nut Graph) that tells you what the main points of the story are.

Deconstructing the News



In the lecture on Truth and Verification, we talked about the importance of judging the quality of the evidence for yourself.

Is it direct?

Arm's-Length?

Are assertions going about naked, with no evidence to give them dignity?

Deconstructing the News



2) Assess the evidence supporting the main points of the story.

In the lecture on Truth and Verification, we talked about the importance of judging the quality of the evidence for yourself.

Is it direct or indirect?

Are assertions going about naked, with no evidence to give them dignity?



WH money helps pay for NYPD Muslim surveillance

The AP confirmed the use of White House money through secret police documents and interviews with current and former city and federal officials. The AP also obtained electronic documents with digital signatures indicating they were created and saved on HIDTA computers. The HIDTA grant program is overseen by the White House Office of National Drug Control Policy.

Evidence: Did the reporter open the freezer?

Turn to example #16

Here's CBS' script from its broadcast of the AP story about White House drug control funds being used for the NYPD's surveillance of Muslim organizations, congregations and student groups across the Eastern Seaboard.

Where does this evidence fall on the spectrum we talked about in the lecture on Verification?

http://www.cbsnews.com/8301-201_162-57385677/wh-money-helps-pay-for-nypd-muslim-surveillance/?tag=contentMain;contentBody



(Animation: Mildly creepy...Question mark on a meat-hook swings out)

DID THE REPORTER OPEN THE FREEZER?

You recall the story of the New Orleans reporter who flinched from examining the freezer in the Convention Center that was supposed to be full of murder victims... and got the story wrong.

This course asks the question...How close does the reporter come to “opening the freezer? “ as a way to think about whether the story is based on direct or arm's-length evidence.

Just because a story relies on arm's-length evidence does not mean it is a weak story.

Often, that is the only evidence available.

But the news consumer should remember to stop and think when the story rests on eyewitnesses, when it rests on second-hand information.

Deconstructing the News

An Agent, a Green Card, and a Demand for Sex

The 16-minute recording, which the woman first took to The New York Times and then to the Queens district attorney, suggests the vast power of low-level immigration law enforcers, and a growing

Money, not sex, is the more common currency of corruption in immigration, but according to Congressional testimony in 2006 by Michael Maxwell, former director of the agency's internal investigations, more than 3,000 backlogged complaints of employee misconduct had gone uninvestigated for lack of staff, including 528 involving criminal allegations.

Evidence: Did the reporter open the freezer?

(Animation: Each click brings up the next element)

Back to **example 3**

(Don't click yet, but each click brings up another)

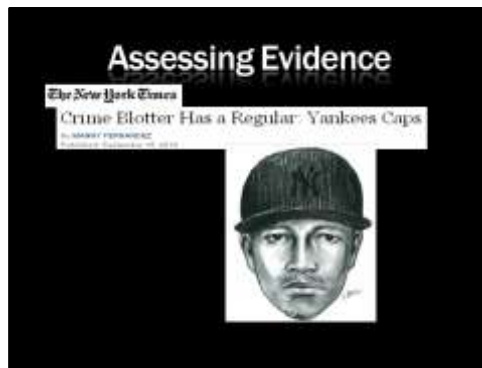
ASK: Where is the evidence? What kind is it?

ASK: How close did the reporter come to opening the freezer

Let students bring this out:

1. On the tape, the 16-minute recording.
2. Confirmed in congressional testimony by a named official, Michael Maxwell.
3. Statistics re: complaints back up point 3,000 pending misconduct complaints.

<http://www.nytimes.com/2008/03/21/nyregion/21immigrant.html>



Now let's read Workbook **Example #5** .:

ASK: What kind of evidence does the reporter collect? (Direct or arm's-length)

With that evidence:

- Can you conclude Yankees hat cause criminal behavior?
- Can you conclude all criminals wear Yankees hats?
- Can you conclude dumb criminals, the ones who get caught, wear Yankees hats?

What phrase have you learned about this common trap people fall into when they assume they have all the right facts? (Correlation does not equal causation...flawed inference.)

I think you could call that a context problem, by the way. If you don't have the whole picture, you may draw a faulty inference.

And if you conclude from this that all inference is flawed...you're ignoring the fact that most criminal investigation and scientific endeavor relies at least in part on Inductive reasoning built on sturdy three-part inferences like this: All Men are Mortal; Socrates is a Man; Socrates is Mortal.

<http://www.nytimes.com/2010/09/16/nyregion/16caps.html>

Test Inferences for Soundness

Main Entry: **ev-i-dence** 🔊

Pronunciation: \ 'e-və-dən(t)s, -və-,den(t)s \

Function: *noun*

Date: 14th century

Main Entry: **in-fer-ence** 🔊

Pronunciation: \ 'in-f(ə-)rən(t)s, -fərn(t)s \

Function: *noun*

Date: 1594

Evidence: Information that proves or disproves something

Inference: Taking information that is accepted as true and then drawing a conclusion that may or may not be valid

Evidence is information that proves or disproves something

Inference is an assertion that suggests a conclusion or relationship. To be sound, the assumptions must be accurate AND the connections must be carefully made.

Otherwise...you're on thin ice.

Aka: Correlation does not equal causation.

Aka: Post Hoc, Ergo Propter Hoc: Latin for "*after this, therefore because (on account) of this*" commonly referred to as a *logical fallacy*.



Now let's look at Workbook **Example #6** : Pulling all-nighters can lower GPA.

(Click brings up quote with data)

“Certainly the evidence is out there showing that short sleep duration absolutely interferes with concentration....” says one source...and then there's this study (CLICK NOW)

But does that mean all-nighters equate to lower grades?

OR...are lower GPA students more likely to pull all nighters.

Or...what are other possible conclusions?

Solid evidence is one thing.

Inductive reasoning, however, is dangerous if you don't understand Fallacy: which is the study of common thinking errors such as confusing correlation for causation.

http://www.usatoday.com/tech/science/discoveries/2007-12-14-all-nighters-gpa_N.htm

Deconstructing the News

3) Are the Sources Reliable?



Because most stories rely on interviews, news consumers looking for reliable information need to evaluate sources.

TO REITERATE A KEY POINT...In the past, some students have mistakenly applied an all-or-nothing standard. Any source who failed just one of the sourcing guidelines was ruled unreliable.

It's rarely that clear, which is why we have given you five rules for weighing sources.

Remember how important that word "BETTER" is. It's not absolute. It's relative.

If someone's an eye-witness, odds are good they are also a participant. That doesn't mean they're unreliable, but it does suggest you proceed carefully.

If someone's authoritative about a company, they're likely an employee, investor or competitor and therefore self-interested. But if the information they provide is verifiable, they may be a reliable source.

The point is, you're smart enough to take all this into account and make a nuanced judgment of reliability.

Judging the Reliability of Sources

1) **I**ndependent Sources Are **Better** Than Self-Interested Sources

2) **M**ultiple Sources Are **Better** Than Single Sources

3) Sources Who **V**erify Are **Better** Than Sources Who Assert

4) **A**uthoritative/**I**nformed Sources Are **Better** Than Uninformed Sources

5) **N**amed Sources Are **Better** Than Unnamed Sources

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

(ANIMATION: Each bullet point comes in (quickly) on the click. Instead of fading in, they fly in, just to keep the students awake.)

Just a reminder.

Here's how we evaluate sources in News Literacy.

Example 4

Afghan investigator: US burning of Qurans was intentional



freep.com

Quran-burning an accident, U.S. tells Afghanistan

KABUL, Afghanistan — The U.S. apologized Tuesday for the burning of Muslim holy books that had been pulled from the shelves of a detention center library adjoining a major base in eastern Afghanistan because they contained extremist messages or inscriptions.

The White House echoed military officials in saying that the burning of Qurans and other Islamic reading material that had been tossed in a pile of garbage was an accident.

In the workbook, look at **Example 4**.

These reports are built on the findings of two official inquiries by government officials

ASK: Use the I'M VA/IN analysis to think about what we've learned about weighing sources.

Let's have a volunteer

This one is tricky. Why? What makes these stories hard to assess and compare?

<http://www.reuters.com/article/2011/03/16/us-japan-quake-level-idUSTRE72F9K720110316>

Deconstructing the News

How to Assess Source Authority

Experts Had Long Criticized Potential Weakness in Design of Stricken Reactor

By TOM ZELLER Jr.

“Not banning them might be the end of nuclear power,” said Mr. Lochbaum, a nuclear engineer who spent 17 years working in nuclear facilities, including three that used the G.E. design.

Is the Source Authoritative? Independent?

Why or Why Not?

(Animation: click brings up GE Engineer)

Let's review Example 10.

ASK: Use the I'M VA/IN analysis.

How Much Weight do you give this source: None, Little, Some, A Great Deal

Why?

Is the story reliable?

What other problem do you see.

(Reporter is utterly opaque about graph after graph of context. How does he know these things. Where could we verify them?)

<http://www.nytimes.com/2011/03/16/world/asia/16contain.html>

Deconstructing the News

How to Weigh Sources

Accused G.I. 'Snapped' Under Strain, Official Says

By ERIC SCHMITT and WILLIAM YARDLEY

"When it all comes out, it will be a combination of stress, alcohol and domestic issues — he just snapped," said the official, who has been briefed on the investigation and who spoke on the condition of anonymity because the soldier has not yet been formally charged. His comments drew from accounts of the sergeant's state of mind from two other soldiers with whom he illicitly drank alcohol on the night of the shootings, the official said, and those soldiers face disciplinary action.

Verification or Assertion?

(Animation: click brings up the friend's quotes)

Please turn to Example 11

ASK: What kind of source is Mr. Browne, the soldier's lawyer?

How about the official?

Do they assert or verify?

Is this report a reliable description of the situation?

What examples of context and transparency do you find. How do they help you assess reliability of this report?

If we apply the three part test of anonymous sources (Transparency, Characterization, Corroboration) how does this one stack up?

<http://www.nytimes.com/2012/03/16/world/asia/suspect-in-afghan-attack-snapped-us-official-says.html>

Accused G.I. 'Snapped' Under Strain, Official Says

By ERIC SCHMITT and WILLIAM YARDLEY

WASHINGTON — The American staff sergeant suspected of killing 16 Afghan villagers had been drinking alcohol — a violation of military rules in combat zones — and suffering from the stress related to his fourth combat tour and tensions with his wife about the deployments on the night of the massacre, a senior American official said Thursday.

"When it all comes out, it will be a combination of stress, alcohol and domestic issues — he just snapped," said the official, who has been briefed on the investigation and who spoke on the condition of anonymity because the soldier has not yet been formally charged. His comments drew from accounts of the sergeant's state of mind from two other soldiers with whom he illicitly drank alcohol on the night of the shootings, the official said, and those soldiers face disciplinary action. As new details emerged about possible reasons behind the shootings, a lawyer who said he had been retained by the sergeant's family told CNN on Friday that the suspect was being flown to Fort Leavenworth, Kan., from the detention site in Kuwait he was moved to on Wednesday.

The sergeant's sudden transfer from Kuwait to the United States is the result of a behind-the-scenes diplomatic uproar with Kuwait, which learned of the sergeant's move to an American base on Kuwaiti territory from news reports before the United States government could alert the Kuwaitis about it, the senior American official said.

"When they learned about it, the Kuwaitis blew a gasket and wanted him out of there," the official said.

The lawyer, John Henry Browne, held a news conference in Seattle on Thursday and also spoke to some reporters individually. He told The Associated Press that the day before the massacre, a friend of the sergeant had lost a leg in an explosion. That could not be independently confirmed.

The comments by the lawyer, and the account by the American official, confirmed by a senior official at the Pentagon, are the most detailed descriptions so far of the state of the sergeant, a 38-year-old married father of two who was on his first combat tour in Afghanistan but his fourth over all, including three in Iraq, since he enlisted in 2001.

"There will be questions raised about his emotional and mental stability for a fourth deployment," the American official said.

The Army still has not named the soldier, but on Thursday a lawyer who said he had been retained by his family offered some information and questioned some of the American official's claims.

Mr. Browne said it was "nonsense" that there were exceptional marital tensions. "I know that is not true," he said at a news conference at his office Thursday night in Seattle.

Mr. Browne added that the inaccuracy of the claim made him "suspicious" of the suggestion that alcohol and stress contributed, though he noted that virtually anyone at a remote base in Afghanistan would be under stress.

The soldier and his wife had "a very healthy marriage," Mr. Browne said. Their two children are 3 and 4 years old.

A decorated soldier who grew up in the Midwest, the man enlisted within a week of the terrorist attacks of 2001, he said.

"He felt it was his duty to stand up for the United States," said Mr. Browne, who has handled many high-profile cases in the Northwest, including the recent defense of the teenage fugitive known as the Barefoot Bandit, Colton Harris-Moore.

Mr. Browne, who said he met with "a very large group of family members" on Wednesday and spoke with the soldier by telephone on Thursday, said the man had "been decorated many, many times. He's been to Iraq twice. He was injured twice and he was deployed back to Afghanistan. He is a career military man."

He added, "He was injured in Iraq in two places on his body, so he wasn't certain he was healthy enough to go back, physically."

Mr. Browne said the soldier suffered a concussion during a vehicle rollover accident caused by a roadside bomb. He also lost part of a foot in another episode.

He confirmed that the soldier, part of the Third Stryker Brigade, Second Infantry, had served three tours in Iraq with that unit.

He declined to say whether the sergeant might have psychological or mental health issues, and he also would not say whether the soldier had confessed. Mr. Browne said he would wait for the government to release the man's name.

Mr. Browne criticized anonymous reports from government officials, calling them baseless.

"The government is going to want to blame this on an individual rather than blame it on the war," he said.

Mr. Browne said that his client had been based at Joint Base Lewis-McChord, just south of Tacoma, Wash., for his entire career. He said that many but not all of his family members had moved from the Midwest to western Washington. He said the soldier had done "blue collar" work in the Midwest before he enlisted. The soldier's wife had "a very good job," he said, noting that he was being paid, not working on the case pro bono.

Mr. Browne told The A.P. that the sergeant's family said he had "never said anything antagonistic about Muslims."

The sergeant has refused to speak to investigators, invoking his right to a lawyer shortly after he surrendered on returning to his base after the shootings.

The soldier's wife and children have been moved from their home to Joint Base Lewis-McChord for their protection in anticipation of the release of the sergeant's name, the American official said. Concern for their safety was among the reasons for initially withholding the sergeant's identity, the official said.

Eric Schmitt reported from Washington, D.C., and William Yardley from Seattle.

This article has been revised to reflect the following correction:

Correction: March 17, 2012

An article on Friday about the American staff sergeant suspected of killing 16 Afghan villagers misstated the details of the relocation of the sergeant's family. They moved from their home onto Joint Base Lewis-McChord; their home was not located at the base.

And because of an editing error, the article misstated at one point the number of times the soldier served in Iraq. It is three, not two.

How to Judge Anonymous Sources

Transparency
Characterization
Corroboration (evidence/sources)

Anonymous sources present a number of challenges.

It's tempting to discount everything they say. They're not accountable for what they say and it's nearly impossible for a reader to judge if a nameless person is authoritative.

On the other hand, whistleblowers have exposed a great deal of dangerous, illegal or embarrassing behavior by government officials, corporate leaders and religious leaders.

So, other than trusting the reporter's judgment, what can you do?

Ask yourself these questions.

- Why is the person anonymous?
- Has the reporter offered information to demonstrate the person is informed?
- Is there any indication the person is self-interested?
- Does the source assert or verify?
- Is there any independent confirmation of what the source is saying? (Corroboration)

Deconstructing the News

How to Assess Source Reliability

The New York Times

Criticism and Questions Over Plan to Move Macy's Thanksgiving Parade Out of Times Sq.

By NOAH ROSENBERG
Published: March 9, 2011

But some critics are skeptical. A community leader who spoke on the condition of anonymity to preserve his publicly neutral stance, said he was at a meeting with Macy's representatives last year, at which the retailer "threatened to move the parade to another city," unless the route changes were agreed upon.

How Do You Weigh the Anonymous Source?

Let's read Example 9

ASK: Would you give this source:

- No weight
- Little weight
- Some weight
- A great deal of weight

Why?

Is this a reliable story? What could you conclude from it?

<http://www.nytimes.com/2011/03/09/nyregion/09parade.html>

Deconstructing the News

Shipment Travel History		
Selected time zone: Local Scan Time		
All shipment travel activity is displayed in local time for the location		
Date/Time	Activity	Location
Oct 16, 2011 4:42 PM	Delivered	LINDENHURST, NY
Oct 16, 2011 4:24 AM	On FedEx vehicle for delivery	HOLBROOK, NY
Oct 16, 2011 4:30 AM	At local FedEx facility	HOLBROOK, NY
Oct 17, 2011 8:13 PM	Departed FedEx location	HEASBET, NJ
Oct 17, 2011 3:54 PM	Arrived at FedEx location	HEASBET, NJ
Oct 15, 2011 7:22 AM	Departed FedEx location	HERNERSVILLE, NC
Oct 15, 2011 2:26 AM	Arrived at FedEx location	HERNERSVILLE, NC
Oct 14, 2011 9:37 PM	Left FedEx origin facility	DURHAM, NC
Oct 14, 2011 8:28 PM	Arrived at FedEx location	DURHAM, NC
Oct 14, 2011 8:14 PM	Picked up	DURHAM, NC
Oct 14, 2011 6:43 PM	Shipment information sent to FedEx	

4) Does the reporter make his or her work transparent?

Working through the Deconstruction steps, we're now at #4: DOES THE REPORTER MAKE HIS OR HER WORK TRANSPARENT?

In the prior lecture we described the scientific method, which includes publication of research findings with detailed data, methodology, etc and encouraging other scientists to review it.

In journalism, one form of peer review is called transparency: telling how you know what you know and why you don't know what you don't know.

Think of it as a behind-the-scenes tour...the reporter showing you how the information was gathered...or why it was not available.. This allows you to judge their work, just like you'd judge the findings of a scientist. If someone else could go find the same material, the story is reliable.

Key Definitions

Main Entry: **trans·par·en·cy** 🗣️
Pronunciation: \tran(t)s-'per-ən(t)-sē\
Function: *noun*
Inflected Form(s): *plural* **trans·par·en·cies**
Date: 1591

Transparency: The reporter specifies in the story what he or she *does not* know, and why it could not be learned; how they know what they do know; when the reporter pulls the curtain aside.

Definition of transparent: Specifying in a story what you do not know or could not learn. For example: It could not be learned. He or she could not be reached for comment.

Deconstructing the News

How Transparent is the Story?



National Public Radio Reports from Basra

STEP 5: DOES THE REPORTER MAKE HIS OR HER WORK TRANSPARENT?

Here is an NPR report from Basra, (Iraq)
Listen for examples of transparency

Example: NPR report from Basra. Listen for the statements of what it cannot verify or know with certainty.

(Next slide launches audio, a really good example of real-time transparency in which she says what she doesn't know.)

Npr_basra.wmv

NEWSFELLOW: NEWS FELLOW: LINK
(INSERT) VIDEO TO THIS SLIDE AND SELECT
“START AUTOMATICALLY”

Runtime 2:40

Deconstructing the News

Corrections are Institutional Transparency

The New York Times

Corrections

FRONT PAGE

An article on Saturday about the political donations of Paul Singer, a hedge fund manager, described inaccurately the source of significant contributions to the National Republican Senatorial Committee. Mr. Singer and others affiliated with his firm, Elliott Management, are collectively the top source of contributions to the committee, according to the Center for Responsive Politics, which collates campaign finance data. The hedge fund itself is not the committee's biggest source of money. (Under campaign finance rules, the firm cannot make such contributions.)

An article on Thursday about the perils of prescribing prohibited drugs to young children emphasized, in one instance, the case of a Louisiana teen that is borne in a family whose son has been weaned off several such drugs. As the database correctly noted, they live in Opelousas, not Opelous.

INTERNATIONAL

An article on Monday about the release of secret tapes showing that the former leader of the Roman Catholic Church in Belgium urged a man secretly abused by a bishop to keep quiet for a year, mistle the bishop could refer, mentioned the given name of the abuser. The retired bishop, who is the victim's uncle, is Roger Vangheluwe, not Ebert.

NATIONAL

An article last Friday about the effect of Defense Secretary Robert M. Gates to reduce the number of generals and admirals in the United States military described incorrectly the method used to calculate retirement benefits in the military. Pensions are based on base pay — not on full pay, which can include extra money to cover, for example, the cost of food and housing.

BUSINESS DAY

An article on Wednesday about a new computer currency tech-

nology called the monetarist estimated the reported capacity of advanced flash storage chips by 2014. It is 70 billion bits per square centimeter, not per square inch.

THE ARTS

An article on Tuesday about a dispute over whether a box of negatives bought at a garage sale are last work of Ansel Adams or at least partly the work of another photographer, Earl Browen, mentioned part of a comment by Arnold Peter, a lawyer for the man who bought the negatives. Peter said that an expert who originally attributed the acquisition to Adams had changed his

mind after viewing some photographs by Brooks. Mr. Peter said that "without possession of the negative, there is no evidence that Earl Browen created the acquisition from which the prints were made." He did not say "without possession of the negative of the negative."

CROSSWORD

The crossword puzzle on Tuesday gave an erroneous clue for 5 Across, seeking the answer "ESQ." for the father of Luther. The clue was incorrect because Luther is not the "only" book in the Bible that does not mention God. Neither does the Song of Solomon.

Errata and Comments:
nytimes@nytimes.com or call
1-800-NYT-6100
(1-800-898-6911)

Editorials: letters@nytimes.com
or fax (212) 556-3632.
Public Editor: Andrew Rossow
with a response or concerned about

the paper's journalistic integrity can
reach The Times's public editor, at:
Brooklyn, nytimes.com/nytimes.com
or call (212) 556-3632.

Newspaper Delivery:
subscriptions@nytimes.com or call
1-800-NYT6100
(1-800-898-6911)

STEP 5: DOES THE REPORTER MAKE HIS OR HER WORK TRANSPARENT?

Point of this is that corrections are institutional transparency: here's what we got wrong.



ANIMATION: Correction paragraph is superimposed on the website when you click.

Right after the New York Times did a detailed report on the working conditions in the factories where iPhones and iPads are made, a National Public Radio show called This American Life aired a long piece about the American playwright Mike Daisey, famous for his stage show about awful conditions on the Apple assembly line.

After This American Life aired their report, they learned Mike Daisey made up a lot of stuff.

This is the correction the show's website. Plus they aired an entire episode setting the record straight.

<http://www.dailytech.com/Famed+WriterMonologist+Caught+Lying+About+Much+of+Apple+China+Expos/article24253.htm>

http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/03/19/mike-daisey-this-american-life-apple-context_n_1363907.html?ref=media

<http://www.cnn.com/2012/03/19/opinion/su-he-apple/index.html>

<http://www.thisamericanlife.org/radio-archives/episode/454/mr-daisey-and-the-apple-factory>

<http://www.thisamericanlife.org/radio-archives/episode/454/transcript>

Deconstructing the News

Step 6:

Are the key questions answered?



One way to stay focused is to ask...are the key questions all answered?

Who, What, When, Where, Why and How are certainly a starting point.

Pay attention to questions that tug at you as you are watching or reading.

Perhaps Most important...What's missing?

Gaps should either be explained (transparency) or you need to pay attention to them in judging a story.

Deconstructing the News

The New York Times

Bronx Zoo Cobra Found Alive

Updated | 4:51 p.m.

She's been found!

An Egyptian cobra at the Bronx Zoo that had been [missing for seven days](#) was discovered "alive and well" on Thursday inside a nonpublic area of the zoo's Reptile House, not far from where she disappeared, said James J. Breheny, the zoo's director.

(Animation: Click will bring up the lead of the story)

Turn to Example 13 and read it.

ASK: Is there anything missing from this story?

What habit might that gap reinforce?

(Follow the News, Check Multiple Outlets)

<http://cityroom.blogs.nytimes.com/2011/03/31/bronx-zoo-cobra-found-alive/>

The Seattle Times

Winner of Eight Pulitzer Prizes

GOP voters' passion uneven for Romney, Santorum

Mitt Romney may lead in delegates and Rick Santorum might have momentum, but neither of the two leading Republican presidential candidates is having an easy time exciting even his own voters.

Out of a dozen states where voters in the GOP contest have been polled, most Romney voters have said they strongly favor him in just five of them. A majority of Santorum voters felt that committed to him only four times out of 11 states where he was on the ballot and voters were surveyed.

Balance or Fairness?

Let's look at Example #15

What can you conclude about Republican voters' enthusiasm for the leading candidates?

Should the candidates (or their spokesmen) have been given a chance to speak?

Is this an example of unfairness, imbalance, bias? Using the course definitions, give a specific answer.

http://seattletimes.nwsourc.com/html/politics/2017786971_apusgopcampaignpassiongap.html

Deconstructing the News

Case Study: The pregnant man story



Pregnant man is expecting baby in July

BY COMBINED NEWS SERVICES.

Thomas Beatie, who's expecting a girl, tells his story in a first-person account published in "The Advocate" magazine, that also includes a picture of him while he was 22 weeks pregnant.

pregnant.

Beatie, legally a male, lives with his wife, Nancy. He claims to have stopped taking his testosterone injections to get pregnant. "Sterilization is not a requirement for sex reassignment, so I decided to have chest reconstruction and testosterone therapy, but kept my reproductive rights," he wrote in the story for the gay and lesbian magazine.

"How does it feel to be a pregnant man? Incredible," he adds. "Despite the fact that my belly is growing with a new life inside me, I am stable and confident being the man that I am."

Assess reliability by Evaluating Sources & Evidence

Please turn to **Example 12: The Pregnant Man**.

The original story was in *The Advocate*, a magazine we might not have known much about.

ASK: What would it take for you to believe this story?

Deconstructing the News

Case Study: The pregnant man story

March 27, 2018

Thomas Beatie, a married man who used to be a woman, is pregnant with a baby girl

"A transgender man can be pregnant because he has the same organs as a woman," Dr Masterson said on the ABC Good Morning America show.

Some of the Beaties' neighbours in Bend voiced scepticism about the pregnancy claim. One resident, Josh Love, told ABC: "I couldn't say that he looks pregnant. I can stick my stomach out and almost make it look like that. I think it's kind of bizarre. I don't know if I believe it or not."

The Advocate said it had confirmed the story with Mr Beatie's doctor.

THE NEWS

AFRICA NEWS

THIS RECOMMENDS

- See police in Dora are waiting sides
- Maggie has ordered up of oil rig
- Ex security guard solves water table

ESTREAVUE SPACEMAN

Do These Sources Help?

Look at this March 27th story: it has more detail.

Story says he is expecting baby in July. Several more sources are cited...Are they reliable?

ASK: Why or why not.

How would you check it further?

With medical records?

What evidence shows that this is or is not a hoax?

This report relies heavily on the Advocate's story. Is that a reliable source?

Deconstructing the News

Case Study: The pregnant man story



Does This Sonogram Help?

Now we've got a Sonogram.
Does the sonogram have weight?
What kind of evidence is it?

Deconstructing the News

Case Study: The pregnant man story

'Pregnant man' Thomas Beatie gives birth to baby girl

James Dale of New York

The pregnant man who conceived a child after a gender-reassignment operation has apparently given birth to a healthy baby girl.

"She's really cute, really pretty," a source told ABC News.

Thomas Beatie, 34, told *People* magazine that he had given birth at a hospital in Bend, Oregon on Sunday. "The only thing different about me is that I can't breastfeed my baby. Did a lot of mother's don't," he said, adding that he planned to publish a book about the experience this autumn.

The bearded Mr. Beatie was born a girl and named Tracy.



Do Baby Photos Help?

How about the picture of him holding the baby?

What kind of evidence is that?

Is this an example of provisional truth?

What changed over time?

What kind of new evidence emerged?

(lecturer see BackgroundPak. Beatie has had three children now and 10 years of hormone treatment apparently did not prevent pregnancy. Beatie is a "top-only" transgendered person: Kept reproductive organs, but had breasts removed and took hormones for 10 years to get bear, male features, etc.)

Deconstructing the News

Too Much Texting a Mental Illness?

The need to always have phone in hand may signal a bigger problem.


03/27/2008



How reliable?

Now let's go back to the example we started with, the clip from ABC News saying that there is an epidemic of texting and it's an illness.

As you watch, keep a list of the evidence and of the sources.



Texting.wmv

NEWSFELLOW: NEWS FELLOW: LINK (INSERT) VIDEO TO THIS SLIDE AND SELECT "START AUTOMATICALLY"



(Animation: Slide opens with phone and mad texter. Each following clip brings up another source and then the final click is the study)

ASK: Evidence?

Sources?

(Three Vox Pop interviews.

Excerpts from a study.)

The apparent starting point is a study reported on in the American Journal of Psychiatry.

THAT would be an expert or informed source.

A Deconstruction Worksheet

How to Judge Reliability

- 1) Summarize the main points: Does the headline and the lead support the main point(s)?
- 2) How close does the reporter come to opening the freezer? Is the evidence direct or arm's-length?

You can't do all eight steps of the deconstruction process on every story you read in your life.

But when the topic really matters to you and you're getting ready to make decision or take action...you better be sure you're working from reliable information.

Here's how:

1. Summarize the main points of the story.

Do the headline and lede support the main point(s) of the story?

2. Assess the evidence supporting the main points of the story. Is Direct? arm's-length? How close did the reporter come to opening the freezer?

A Deconstruction Worksheet

How to Judge Reliability

- 3) Evaluate the reliability of the sources using I'M VA/IN
- 4) Does the reporter make his/her work transparent?
- 5) Does the reporter place the story in context?

3. Are the sources reliable? (Are you reacting to them, or analyzing them?)
4. Does the reporter make his or her work transparent? How does the reporter know what is being reported?
5. Does the reporter place the story in context?

A Deconstruction Worksheet

How to Judge Reliability

6) Are the key questions answered?

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

7) Is the story fair?

(ANIMATION: who, what, when where, why, who all fade in, in succession.)

6. Are the key questions answered? (And what is left out.)

7. Is the story balanced? Should it be? Is it fair to the evidence and to key stakeholders?

When the information matters because you're going to make a decision, take action or share it with others...these questions matter.

And the Whole Point Is... Is it actionable?

Can you reach a conclusion?

Can you take an action?

Can you make a judgment?

Can you share this information?

Again...WHAT'S THE POINT? THE SEARCH
FOR RELIABLE INFORMATION

Oh...and a good grade on the final, which is
all deconstruction.

Assignments:

-
-
- Each Lecture inserts own assignments...

Note, they are to bring the Deconstruction Guide to Recitation, as well.



hus endeth the Lesson...

Deconstructing the News

Deconstruct the Following Story

College Costs Keep Rising, Report Says

By TAMARA LEWIS
Published: 11/26/11 11:22 AM

The price of a college education rose substantially last year, despite a 0.1 percent decline in the [Consumer Price Index](#) from July 2008 to July 2009.

Hit hard by state budget cuts, four-year public colleges raised tuition and fees by an average of 6.5 percent last year. Prices at private colleges rose 4-4 percent, according to a [report](#) issued Tuesday by the [College Board](#).

Patrick Callan, president of the [National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education](#), called the increases "hugely disappointing."

"Given the financial hardship of the country, it's simply astonishing that colleges and universities would have this kind of increases," Mr. Callan said. "It tells you that higher education is still a seller's market. The level of debt we're asking people to undertake is unsustainable."

Multimedia

2008-9	2009-10
\$2,372	\$2,544
\$6,591	\$7,029
\$17,460	\$18,540

High Tuition

SEARCH TO RECOMMEND
TWITTER
EMAIL
SEND TO PHONE
PRINT
SHARE

SHARE WITH FRIENDS OF
FANTASTIC
THE FOX
WINTER
WATER SLINGER

Use All Eight Workbook Questions

(A full-scale deconstruction, best for recitation)
(After practicing just one element of the process on each of the preceding stories, you'll now go through the entire process on one story, using the Deconstruction Guide on the back page of the Deconstruction workbook)

Workbook Example #17: "College Costs Keep Rising"

What can you conclude?

How might this change a decision or action in your own life?

Deconstructing the News

Deconstruct the Following Story

For Youths, Depression Often Has a Sequel

By PAMBELLUCK

The New York Times

Published: November 1, 2010

About half of adolescents who recovered from [major depression](#) became depressed again within five years, regardless of what treatment or therapy they received to get over their initial [depression](#), a new study shows.

The study, [published Monday in Archives of General Psychiatry](#), also found that girls were more likely to have another major depression, which surprised researchers because, as adults, women have not been considered more likely to have a recurrence than men.

Use All Eight Workbook Questions

(A full-scale deconstruction, best for recitation)
(After practicing just one element of the process on each of the preceding stories, you'll now go through the entire process on one story, using the Deconstruction Guide on the back page of the Deconstruction workbook)


Workbook Example #16: "For Youths, Depression Often Has a Sequel"

What can you conclude?

How might this change a decision or action in your own life?



<http://youtu.be/79UFRfxmHk>




Gaddafi1.wmv

NEWSFELLOW: NEWS FELLOW: LINK (INSERT) VIDEO TO THIS SLIDE AND SELECT "START AUTOMATICALLY"



<http://gawker.com/5852485/heres-the-clearest-video-yet-of-gaddafis-capture>



Gaddafi2.wmv

NEWSFELLOW: NEWS FELLOW: LINK (INSERT) VIDEO TO THIS SLIDE AND SELECT "START AUTOMATICALLY"





Gaddafi3.wmv

NEWSFELLOW: NEWS FELLOW: LINK (INSERT) VIDEO TO THIS SLIDE AND SELECT "START AUTOMATICALLY"



After CBS aired a set of reports on children growing up homeless during the mortgage crisis in Florida, donations flowed in.

Here's why.

(Lecturer, run the video on the next slide)

http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2011/03/07/homeless-children-homeless-students_n_832415.html

<http://www.cbsnews.com/stories/2011/03/06/60minutes/main20038927.shtml>

http://www.cbsnews.com/8301-18560_162-57330802/hard-times-generation-families-living-in-cars/

<http://www.cbsnews.com/video/watch/?id=7389750n>

Homeless.wmv

INSERT VIDEO HERE. SELECT "PLAY AUTOMATICALLY" AND "PLAY FULL SCREEN"



Arielle and Austin Metzger



Tom Metzger

Indian Ocean Tsunami Report



OPTIONAL SLIDE AND EXERCISE:

Following up on the Recitation in which we reviewed Anderson Cooper's step-by-step verification, here's the story as it aired.

Anderson Cooper's Tsunami Story For CNN

coopersexslaves.wmv

NEWSFELLOW: NEWS FELLOW: LINK (INSERT) VIDEO TO THIS SLIDE AND SELECT
"START AUTOMATICALLY" run-time 5:21

Assessing Evidence

CBSNEWS

Pink slime in ground beef: What's the big deal?



It's actually "lean finely textured beef," a low-cost ingredient in ground beef made from fatty left over meat trimmings from other cuts. The bits are heated to about 100 F and spun to remove most of the fat, then compressed into blocks for use in ground meat. The product, made by South Dakota-based Beef Products Inc. (BPI), is then exposed to "a puff of ammonium hydroxide gas" to kill bacteria, such as E. coli and salmonella. There are no precise numbers on how prevalent

Take a look at Workbook Example #15 ASK: What kind of evidence is provided, direct or arm's-length?

(CBS/AP) "Pink slime," the gross-sounding name for ammonia-treated ground beef, is on America's mind in light of a recent report that up to 15 percent of beef found in children's government-subsidized school lunches, contain the colorful-sounding stuff.

[Report: USDA school lunch meat contains "pink slime"](#)
[McDonald's scraps "pink slime" from burgers](#)

Food advocates are now rallying around the headlines trying to get the meat off supermarket shelves and school lunch trays.

Though the term "pink slime" has been used pejoratively for at least several years, it wasn't until last week that social media suddenly exploded with worry and an online petition seeking its ouster from school lunches that quickly garnered hundreds of thousands of supporters.

Dr. Marion Nestle, professor of nutrition, food studies and public health at New York University thinks the nickname makes it easier for food advocates to flex their case.

"It sounds disgusting," said Nestle. "A lot of people have been writing about it. Therefore, more people know about it, therefore more people are queasy about it, particularly when you start thinking about how this stuff turns up in school lunches," she said.

Just what exactly is pink slime?

It's actually "lean finely textured beef," a low-cost ingredient in ground beef made from fatty left over meat trimmings from other cuts. The bits are heated to about 100 F and spun to remove most of the fat, then compressed into blocks for use in ground meat. The product, made by South Dakota-based Beef Products Inc. (BPI), is then exposed to "a puff of ammonium hydroxide gas" to kill bacteria, such as E. coli and salmonella.

There are no precise numbers on how prevalent the product is and it does not have to be labeled as an ingredient. Past estimates have ranged as high as 70 percent; one industry official estimates it is in at least half of U.S. ground meat and burgers.

The product has also been on the market for years and federal regulators say it meets standards for food safety. But advocates for wholesome food have denounced the process as a potentially unsafe and unappetizing example of industrialized food production.

The epithet "pink slime," coined by a federal microbiologist, has appeared in the media at least since a critical 2009 [New York Times](#) report. Celebrity chef Jamie Oliver has railed against it and it made headlines after McDonald's and other major chains last year discontinued their use of ammonia-treated beef, [HealthPop](#) reported.

But "pink slime" outrage seemed to reach new heights last week amid reports by [The Daily](#). The Daily piece dealt with the U.S. Department of Agriculture's purchase of meat that included "pink slime" for school lunches.

The story touched a nerve with Houston resident Bettina Siegel, whose blog "The Lunch Tray" focuses on kids' food. On March 6, she started an online petition on Change.org asking Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack to "put an immediate end to the use of 'pink slime' in our children's school food."

"When I put it up, I had this moment of embarrassment," she said. "What if only 10 people sign this?"

By Wednesday afternoon, the electronic petition had more than 220,000 signatures. Change.org organizers said that explosive growth is rare among the 10,000 petitions started there every month. Meanwhile, Google searches for "pink slime" spiked dramatically. But why is "pink slime" striking a nerve all of a sudden?

Issues with broad interest - such as food safety - can explode when they're picked up and disseminated by widely connected people, said Marc A. Smith, director of the Social Media Research Foundation.

"What's happening is that the channels whereby this flood can go down this hill have expanded," Smith said "The more there are things like Twitter, the easier it is for these powder kegs to explode." Siegel thinks the added element of kids' school lunches set off this round.

"That's what upset me. This idea that children are passively sitting in a lunch room eating what the government sees fit to feed them and McDonald's has chosen not to use it, but the government is still feeding it to them," she said. "That really got my ire."

The USDA - which did not directly address Siegel's petition - buys about a fifth of the food served in schools nationwide. The agency this year is contracted to buy 111.5 million pounds of ground beef for the National School Lunch Program. About 7 million pounds of that is from Beef Products Inc., though the pink product in question never accounts for more than 15 percent of a single serving of ground beef.

"All USDA ground beef purchases must meet the highest standards for food safety," agency spokesman Aaron Lavallee said in an email. "USDA has strengthened ground beef food safety standards in recent years and only allows products into commerce that we have confidence are safe." Beef Product Inc. stresses that its product is 100 percent lean beef and is approved by a series of industry experts. The company's new website, [pinkslimeisamyth.com](#), refutes some common criticisms of the product. For example it says some of the widely circulating photos of the slime are in fact chicken parts.

The National Meat Association also has joined the fight, refuting that the product comes from "scraps destined for pet food." The association also said that ammonium hydroxide is used in baked goods, puddings and other processed foods.

"It's one of those things. It's the aesthetics of it that just gets people's attention," Association CEO Barry Carpenter said. "And in this case, it's not even legitimate aesthetics of it. It's a perception of what it is."

Proponents of the process stress that it is both federally regulated and safe. Though Nestle said the focus on safety misses the larger point.

"I'm not arguing that that stuff is unsafe," she said, "I'm arguing that it's the lowest common denominator."

What do you think about the pink slime controversy?

http://www.cbsnews.com/8301-504763_162-57397475-10391704/pink-slime-in-ground-beef-whats-the-big-deal/

<http://www.latimes.com/news/nation/nationnow/la-na-nn-pink-slime-nutrition-20120315,0,3693045.story>

Deconstructing the News

Why I Am Leaving Goldman Sachs

By GREG SMITH

Published: March 14, 2012

TODAY is my last day at Goldman Sachs. After almost 12 years at the firm — first as a summer intern while at Stanford, then in New York for 10 years, and now in London — I believe I have worked here long enough to understand the trajectory of its culture, its people and its identity. And I can honestly say that the environment now is as toxic and destructive as I have ever seen it.

Let's read Example 8

ASK: Would you give this source:

- No weight
- Little weight
- Some weight
- A great deal of weight

Why?

Is this a reliable story? What could you conclude from it?

<http://www.nytimes.com/2012/03/14/opinion/why-i-am-leaving-goldman->



Let's review Example 11

(Longish. Let them read)

ASK: Is this a reliable report?

Do you believe it?

How does this story, largely based on anonymous sources, differ from the Cake Man story? (multiple sources, mix of evidence, etc)

<http://www.nytimes.com/2011/03/16/world/americas/16drug.html>

Image comes from : http://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/news/releases/2007/04/images/20070409-12_d-0119-1-515h.html

Deconstructing the News

How Transparent is the Story?



Reports of Qaddafi's Demise

Dealer's choice. Can use Qaddafi here instead of Basra


STEP 5: DOES THE REPORTER MAKE HIS OR HER WORK TRANSPARENT?

Here is an NPR report from Basra, (Iraq)

Listen for examples of transparency

Example: NPR report from Basra. Listen for the statements of what it cannot verify or know with certainty.

(Next slide launches audio, a really good example of real-time transparency in which she says what she doesn't know.)



Qaddafi_radio.wmv

Dealer's choice. Can use Qaddafi here instead of Basra

STEP 5: DOES THE REPORTER MAKE HIS OR HER WORK TRANSPARENT?

(This slide launches a series of radio reports on the death of Qaddafi in which most announcers do a really good job of real-time transparency, saying what they do and do not know.)

In Florida Everglades, pythons and anacondas dominate food chain



The reptile trade is a \$2 billion business in the United States, according to the Humane Society. About 11 million reptiles were kept as pets in 2005, according to the American Pet Products Manufacturers Association. More reptiles are imported here than anywhere else in the world.

http://www.washingtonpost.com/national/health-science/in-florida-everglades-pythons-and-anacondas-dominate-food-chain/2012/01/30/gIQAULTVdQ_story.html



(Animation: Click brings up quotes from both sides.)

Let's look at Example #15

What can you conclude about what happened?

Is it King's fault?

Should he have been given a chance to speak?

Was she a victim of prejudice?

How might this change a decision or action in your own life?

<http://www.newsday.com/news/nation/muslim-removed-from-flight-blames-rep-king-s-hearings-1.2764991>

Afghan investigator: US burning of Qurans was intentional

We believe it is intentional," Maulavi Khaliqdad, a member of the panel established by Afghan President Hamid Karzai, told Deutsche Presse-Agentur on Monday. "If they burnt one or two copies, then we could have said it could have been a mistake. But they took hundreds of such books to burn. Everyone knew those were religious books."

<http://www.nytimes.com/2012/03/01/world/asia/koran-burning-in-afghanistan-prompts-3-parallel-inquiries.html>

http://worldnews.msnbc.msn.com/_news/2012/03/05/10583005-afghan-investigator-us-burning-of-qurans-was-intentional



Take a look at Example 14

And remember the concepts we covered in Lecture 7:
Fairness, Balance and Bias

The Governor suspends a public official and demands his resignation.

Governor says the official MISLED officials about his actual residence.

Governor says Manzo reported he lived in Paterson.

Governor says on "Real Housewives of New Jersey," Manzo is shown at a home in Franklin Lakes.

ASK:

Using the concepts from Lecture 7, should this story be balanced (equivalent weight and time given to each side) or Fair to the evidence (reflective of the accepted truth)?

What is missing from this story?

(Public records, independent sources, Transparency about the provenance of the Manzo quote.)

http://www.nypost.com/p/news/local/gov_rips_housewives_hubby_uwTjSjBpiA4JgkORE6RxJI