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Media plays a massive role in our understanding of events happening in a society or around the globe, but what constitutes a media source as credible? How are we able to trust it to give us our daily news reports? Some say that to be a well-informed person, one must read a variety of sources; however, this method misleads the reader into considering all media sources as being authoritative or credible, when indeed it really depends on what an individual is searching for. We can divide our news sources into four categories ranging from factual reports to fabricated information, and because all our sources have different positions on the credibility spectrum, from my perspective it is difficult to justify the statement with a simple yes or no. If an individual is searching for evidence-based news, then reading a "variety" of sources (implying that the reader drew sources from any of the four categories) is not a valid method of being "a well-informed person"; on the other hand, if an individual is investigating information on different author opinions, then examining a variety of sources is an acceptable method to be a well-informed person. To support this claim, I will consider the Douglas High School mass shooting in Florida, draw one article from each of the four media bias categories and from the liberal side of the partisan spectrum, and compare the articles' content to demonstrate the importance of credibility.

One of the most important aspects of news-search for any individual is to collect factual information and reliable content that remains impartial, but unfortunately, we cannot label all published articles as factual and justifiable. For example, we refer to the Florida shooting in an article from Natural News that states "...four deputies appear to have been ordered to stand down and allow the shooting to unfold in order to achieve a higher body count (for political gain)" (Adams 2018). Notice that the author, Mike Adams, incorporates a sense of uncertainty by writing "appear to have" which shifts his article to the *red tier* of the media bias categories. Adams did not provide facts in this statement, only an assumption; this becomes a large issue when one is news-searching through a variety of sources. Through this article, and the author's assumption, the reader is not able to determine if the deputies were "ordered to stand down" or not.

When seeking a factual news outlet, readers need sources that provide solid facts and unbiased information, which describes articles from the *green tier* of the media bias categories. The New York Times, for example, focuses on the details of the Florida shooting rather than the opinion of the author when mentioning "More than 40 "active shooter" episodes in schools have been recorded in the United States since 2000, according to F.B.I. and news reports" (Audra and Mazzei 2018). Clearly the author uses facts and statistics in the article, making it an excellent article to use when searching for reliable news. Comparing the credibility of the Natural News article and New York Times article proves that reading

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a wide variety of sources does not allow an individual to be well-informed when news-searching; not all of the articles in the media spectrum provide reliable information.

When searching for evidence-based news, we must read from specific and factual articles with unbiased information, but when investigating the opinions of authors or definite partisans, it is better to explore a variety of sources to become a well-informed individual. For example, if we drew an article from the *orange tier* of the media biased chart, we will find an article on the Florida shooting from Buzzfeed News, which states: "However, despite Trump's promises on a broad range of gun control actions, Republicans in Congress are divided and nowhere near formalizing a plan to address ending gun violence" (BuzzFeed News 2018). Individuals looking for the opinion of a liberal journalist would easily benefit from this work because the author states her own opinion on Congress' misaction towards gun safety. Notice that this news source is drawn from one of the lowest tiers on the media bias chart, yet someone who is seeking for a selective opinion of an author can use the source to their benefit. Another news source that can be drawn from the *yellow tier* is the Cable News Network (CNN). An article from CNN states, "The FBI said the caller provided information about "Cruz's gun ownership, desire to kill people, erratic behavior, and disturbing social media posts, as well as the potential of him conducting a school shooting" (Karimi 2018). CNN includes a direct quote from FBI evidence making it credible (although provides information to a designated partisan), which becomes a reliable source for people who are fishing for a clear-cut opinion or partisan. After analyzing these two sources from different media bias categories, we are able to conclude that any source applies to the idea of an individual being well

informed when it is used to search for an author's opinion.

The media bias spectrum ranges from factual content to opinionated statements, which complicates the statement that to be a well-informed individual you must read from a variety of sources; it all depends on whether the reader is exploring news or investigating an author/partisan's opinion. But how do readers distinguish a valid article from a fabricated article if it's not on the media bias chart? When searching for credible articles and inputs that range from politics to daily reports, it is coherent to look at sources that provide accurate material rather than expanding to a variety of sources because not all authors are reliable. What to look for in an article when searching for news is very specific.

Additionally, readers must consider partisan bias when searching through a variety of sources. Examining the media bias chart, we notice that the *green tier* is generally centered on the liberal-conservative partisan axis, meaning that those sources become the mainstream media in news-searching because the authors of the sources do not skew their article content to a certain partisan as much as the other *tiers*. Using one of Adam J. Schiffer's (2018) recent works, I am able to support this theory; "Not only are there more outlets providing political information from an increasing variety of platforms, but the content is far more varied as well… This should theoretically dull the urgency of the liberal-bias charge." Essentially, Schiffer discusses how readers claim that most articles are skewed liberal, but these mainstream sources are in fact neither liberal or conservative; they are rather considered skewed to a partisan because a majority "charge[s]" it as skewed and results in the resonance of the claim. I agree with this theory; a society or partisan may consider

mainstream media to skew to a certain "side" because others as well say that the media is skewed (resonance). Schiffer demonstrates that mainstream media is actually made up of factual reports and content, and I believe this idea aids in my argument of mainstream media being a more reliable source for news-searching.

Some people consider reading a variety of sources useful to becoming a well-informed person, but this method misleads the reader into considering all media sources as equally authoritative or credible, when indeed it really depends on what an individual is searching for. After inspecting five articles, I believe that to be well-informed with news you must pay attention to mainstream and credible sources in order to obtain factual and reliable information, and to be well-informed when searching for authors' opinions we can then read from a variety of sources ranging from fabricated to factual content. It is crucial to investigate sources on their credibility and differentiate falsity and factuality, and then determine whether it is applicable to one's news-search or opinion-search.

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