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Bias in the Media

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Media bridges the gap between politics and the rest of the world by keeping people up-to-date on current events. Today there are a plethora of news outlets that people have access to. This complicates the claim that "in order to be a well-informed person, one must get their news from a variety of sources." I agree with this statement, to an extent; a source's credibility depends on whether there is an apparent bias within the article or the news site itself. On the one hand, an individual is able to pick and choose which news outlets appeal to their specific opinions. On the other hand, this wide range of choices also poses a serious problem: how can one tell if the sources they read put out credible information? A credible source consists of factual accounts of events and does not contain the author's personal opinion on the matter. In other words, sources that are credible do not contain any bias, whether it's

from the author, or the website the article came from.

I analyzed four different liberal leaning news articles on net neutrality and found that each one falls into a different category of credibility. In the first article I analyzed from, Forward Progressives, there is a very prominent bias--it mostly contains the author's opinion and does not quote any sources that comment on net neutrality. The second article comes from Buzzfeed, another source that publishes biased interpretations of events. In this article, however, the authors provide quotes from people and companies that opposed the repeal of net neutrality. My third article comes from the news site The Intercept, another website with some bias apparent in articles, but not to the extent of Forward Progressives or Buzzfeed. This author also incorporates input from people and companies from across the political

Author's note: This essay was assigned in my SBS 200 course as an analysis on sources in the media. The original prompt is as follows: "Some say that to be a well-informed person, one must read media from a variety of sources. Construct a thesis in response to this statement, and support your thesis with evidence from your original analysis of four news articles". We were given a media bias chart (creator unknown) that displayed rankings of the most to least partisan and/or reliable news sites. There were four color rankings (red, orange, yellow and green) and two sides to represent which side of the political spectrum the news sites fell on. Sites sorted into the red were the most partisan and/or did not report reliable accounts of a situation. On the chart, Forward Progressives fell into the red category. The orange category contained sites that provided unfair interpretations of the news. Buzzfeed was placed in this category. Sites in the yellow category presented less bias and had a fairer interpretation of the news. The Intercept was placed here. Lastly, news sites categorized into the green were deemed to be nonpartisan in their telling of the news. ABC news was put into this category. I was to pick a recent, relevant political event covered by four different sources from the respective categories and use one article from each source to argue why I agreed, disagreed or only partially agreed with the prompt. I did not categorize the sources myself.

spectrum that are against net neutrality being taken away. The final article is from ABC News, which consists of a factual, unbiased account of a conference the FCC leader gave. The authors provide direct quotes from the leader and the conference as well as individuals' and companies' responses to the news. A well-informed person gets their news from websites that present unbiased, factual accounts of events to ensure that the information, regarding net neutrality in this case, is nonpartisan.

Now, what is net neutrality? Implemented in 2014 by then-President Barack Obama, net neutrality required that Internet Service Providers (IPSs) such as Comcast, AT&T and Verizon, permit fair access to all websites and could not enforce prejudiced actions that interrupted loading speed, cost or content of the respective sites that their customers visited. On December 17th, 2017, Federal Communications Commissions (FCC) leader Ajit Pai, along with other members, voted three to two to repeal these laws.

Multiple news sources reported on the event. However, some takes were more informative than others. One such article was published by Allen Clifton on the news site Forward Progressives. Clifton's liberal views are apparent in his piece. He opens the article by stating, "the vast majority of them are simply conservatives who oppose it because Democrats support it" (Clifton, 2017). Essentially, he claims that those who do not share his specific beliefs are wrong and blindly take a side simply because their opponents disagree. This article is supposed to appeal to the masses. Clifton makes that evident in the article's title: "Killing Net Neutrality Should Terrify Everyone, Regardless of Political Affiliation". However, he negates this intent by brazenly labeling conservatives as ignorant, which further demonstrates that his target audience is those with leftist views.

Clifton also only outlines the cons to repealing net neutrality, and does not present outside data to support his stance. In other words, the article contains *his opinion* on the matter. He makes this evident by claiming that the only people who will benefit from repealing this law are big corporation Internet Service Providers (Clifton, 2017). By broadcasting his opinion as news, Clifton's article is a prime example of why people should not rely solely on one article for information. Readers only get one perspective and run the risk of consuming falsely reported information or information that does not contain evidence to back up the author's argument.

An article similar to the level of bias found in Clifton's is one written by Ryan Mac and Davey Alba on the platform Buzzfeed. They also discuss the cons of repealing net neutrality. However, what sets this article apart from Clifton's is the fact that Alba and Mac quote and/or cite people and companies who voiced their outrage on the repeal. Specific examples include Netflix, Twitter, Facebook and Google. e's title, the authors input an assumed collective reaction: "Internet: [GURGLING DYING SOUND]" (Alba & Mac, 2017). This sets the tone for the rest of the article: it is going to be casual. Furthermore, the article assures people that the fight is not over because Democrats and advocacy groups are likely to initiate events that will slow the implementation of repeal. Alba and Mac cite sources that range from openly conservative websites to another article published on Buzzfeed. The last article is a specific form of bias the authors create; they are citing an article from the very platform they write on, which means that the author of the other article is likely to agree with Alba and Mac's views on net neutrality as well as funnels more web traffic to other articles published on Buzzfeed. While this article offers a more diverse selection of

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sources and quotes, it is not enough to override the bias.

Unlike Clifton, Mac and Alba, author Zaid Jilani presents a more balanced account on the opposition to repealing net neutrality in his article published on the Intercept. While there is still an apparent bias, Jilani explicitly cites people and companies that are openly conservative. He claims "in some of the most right-wing and Trump-supporting corners of the internet, there is a rebellion brewing" (Jilani, 2017). Essentially, he is trying to prove that even those who would usually back what the president orders are outraged by the FCC's decisions. Some notable arguments against Trump include the fact that ISPs would be able to block sites that they do not agree with, and that the government and companies will be able to censor whatever they deem inappropriate (Jilani, 2017). By supplying these arguments made by influential figures in the conservative community, Jilani proves that both liberals and conservatives want to save net neutrality. He achieves the goal that Allen Clifton was attempting to reach in his article on Forward Progressives. However, even though Jilani effectively appealed to both sides, his bias is still apparent in the article because he is arguing that net neutrality needs to be saved, and quotes people who support him.

The past three articles' main focus has been to present the dangers and outrage over repealing net neutrality. All have one thing in common--they are filled with their author's opinion. This characteristic deems them unreliable when it comes to being a well-informed person because these articles only offer their author's perspective with evidence that supports the author's stance on the matter. ABC News' writer Jeffrey Cook, on the other hand, effectively presents a factual account of the FCC's decision, as well other

people's opinions on the matter, without inputting his own. cites Pai's argument that the repeal is a big decision that was induced to promote healthy competition (Cook, 2017). Consequently, there was backlash. Cook presents arguments made by Netflix, Democratic FCC Commissioner Jessica Rosenworcel, and Senators who claim net neutrality is a decision that will only benefit big corporations. To balance this perspective, Cook includes Comcast's (a prominent ISP) response, in which they vow to keep internet speeds and access to websites fair and consistent (Cook, 2017). These are just a few examples of how Cook achieves a fair and factual analysis of the controversial debate over net neutrality. The title of the article itself is neutral: FCC Votes to Repeal Net Neutrality Rules. Unlike Forward Progressives, Buzzfeed and the Intercept, there is no obvious bias from the author. Factual, fair content that does not have an apparent bias is the defining characteristic of a credible source.

In order to stay up-to-date on current events, people rely on the content put out by news sites. Some argue it is best to read a variety of sources to be well-informed. Doing so allows one to be exposed to different perspectives. I agree with this statement to an extent because it depends on whether or not there is an apparent bias in an article. To prove this, I analyzed and evaluated four articles on net neutrality from four different news sites. Three out of the four all contained the author's opinion and bias on the issue, arguing that net neutrality needed to be saved. The fourth source, ABC News, was the only one to provide a nonpartisan article on net neutrality. In order to be a knowledgeable person, one must read from credible sources that do not publish content with apparent bias.

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