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# Getting beyond "both sides": A Faculty-librarian pilot to explore critical approaches to curriculum and assessment

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- Brainstorm media sources
- Include any you know about (like/dislike)
- One media source per sticky note

# Getting Beyond “Both Sides”:

## A Faculty-Librarian Pilot to Explore Critical Approaches to Curriculum & Assessment

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Santa Clara University

for slides and speaker notes, see <https://bit.ly/30UNtII>



Complex/  
Analytical

Meets High  
Standards

Inaccurate/  
Fabricated  
material

*Journalistic Quality*



Far Left

Liberal

Conservative

Far Right

*Partisan Bias*





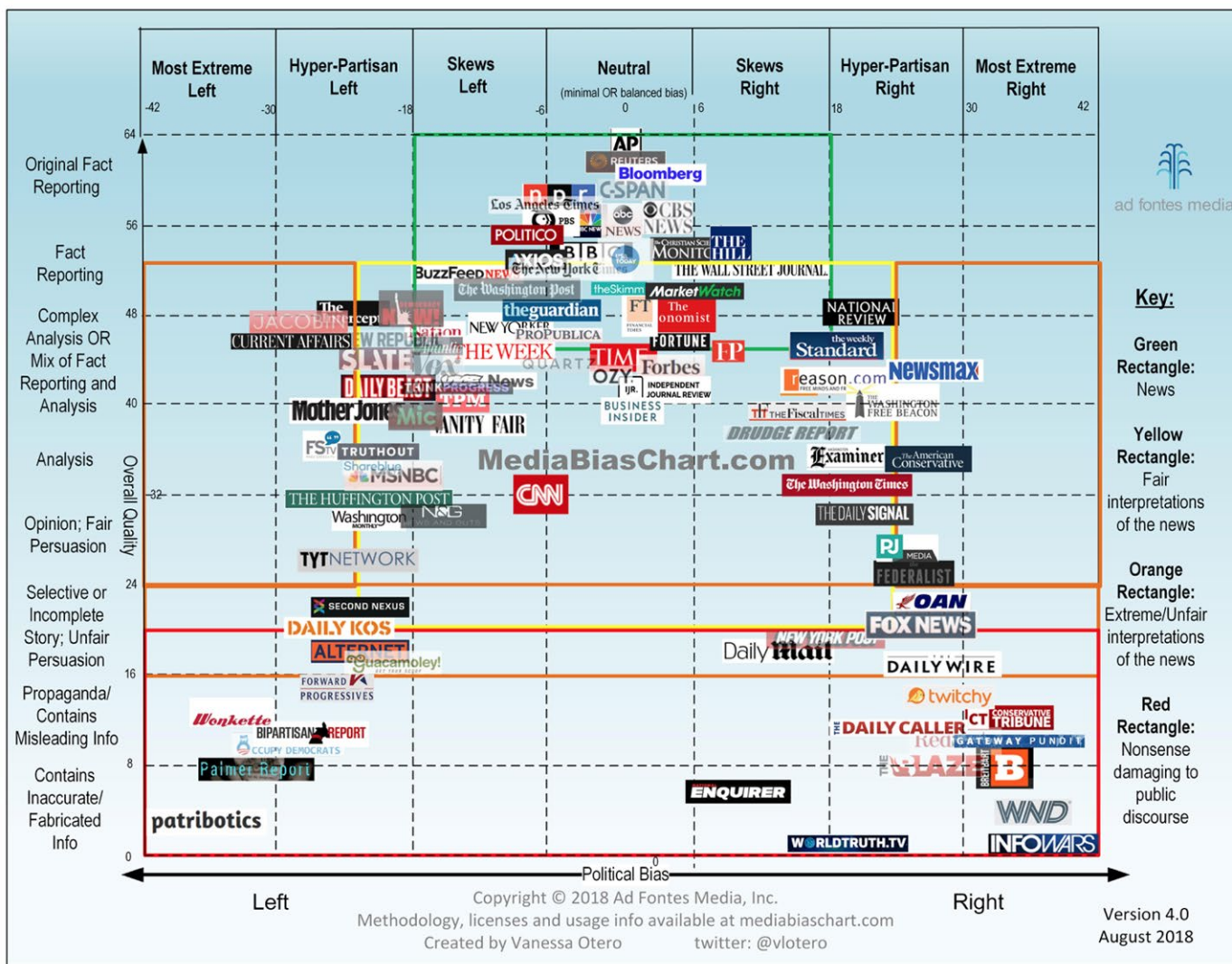
# Discussion

Do you integrate popular sources into writing curricula and assignments? Why or why not? If so, how?

What are some issues you've encountered with students' use of popular sources?

How do you assess students' use of sources, especially popular sources?

# MEDIA BIAS CHART





# Project goals

- Examine the effect of a collaboration between writing instructors and librarians on first year writing students' information literacy skills
- Engage in assessment of students' learning related to critical frameworks in writing and information literacy
- Explore the use of document-based interviews as a viable methodology for assessing students' grasp of threshold concepts in information literacy and writing



# Project partners

Julia Voss,  
Assistant Professor of  
Rhetoric & Composition



Course Theme:  
Higher Education in America

Loring Pfeiffer,  
Lecturer in Core Writing  
Program



Course Theme:  
Food in American Culture

Nicole Branch,  
Associate University Librarian  
for Learning and Engagement



Research Sessions: Media  
analysis & Trust Indicators





# Project timeline

- Summer 2018: Collaboratively (re)designed writing assignments
  - Curriculum focused on critical information literacy and popular sources
  - Received IRB approval to interview students
- Fall 2018: Piloted curriculum, recruited student participants
- Winter 2019: Interviewed each others' students
- Spring & Summer 2019: Coded essays & interview transcripts
  - What did students learn?
  - How do we know?
  - How should curriculum be revised for 2019-2020?



# Existing research on student source use

- Writing Studies: how students use (scholarly) sources in their writing
  - Howard, Serviss, & Rodrigue, “Writing from Sources, Writing from Sentences” (2010)
  - Serviss & Jamieson, eds. *Points of Departure* (2018)
  - Doesn't address popular sources
- Information Literacy Research: how to make students savvier Web users
  - Wineburg & McGrew, “Lateral Reading” (2017)
  - Caulfield, *Web Literacy for Student Fact-Checkers* (2017)
  - Head et al/Project Information Literacy, “How Students Engage with News: Five Takeaways for Educators, Journalists, and Librarians” (2018)
  - Provides limited insight into *why* students make the choices they do
  - Doesn't address how popular source selection & analysis affects students' writing



# Information literacy-enhanced writing curriculum

- Assignments and library sessions drew on:
  - Framework for Success in Postsecondary Writing (NCTE/CWPA/NWP, 2011)
  - Framework for Information Literacy for Higher Education (The Association of College & Research Libraries, 2015)



# Habits of Mind for Success in Postsecondary Writing

**Curiosity** – the desire to know more about the world.

**Openness** – the willingness to consider new ways of being and thinking in the world.

**Engagement** – a sense of investment and involvement in learning.

**Creativity** – the ability to use novel approaches for generating, investigating, and representing ideas.

**Persistence** – the ability to sustain interest in and attention to short- and long-term projects.

**Responsibility** – the ability to take ownership of one's actions and understand the consequences of those actions for oneself and others.

**Flexibility** – the ability to adapt to situations, expectations, or demands.

**Metacognition** – the ability to reflect on one's own thinking as well as on the individual and cultural processes used to structure knowledge.

# Information Literacy Frames

Authority Is Constructed and Contextual

Information Creation as a Process

Information Has Value

Research as Inquiry

Scholarship as Conversation

Searching as Strategic Exploration



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# Information literacy-enhanced writing curriculum

- Assignment design (Loring & Julia):
  - Multi-stage writing process with peer and instructor feedback
  - Librarian-led class sessions focused on helping students locate & evaluate popular sources
  - Topics:
    - Loring's students identified a food that some Americans regard as taboo, researched it, and argued about what the food's taboo status revealed about American culture
    - Julia's students identified a controversy on US college campuses, analyzed how it was covered in media across the political spectrum, and took a revised stance on the issue



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- Research Workshops (Nicole)
  - The [Media Bias Chart](#)
  - [Trust Indicators](#), developed by The Trust Project (created in collaboration between SCU's Markkula Center for Ethics and journalistic outlets)



# TRUST INDICATORS

## ✓ What is a Trust Indicator?

Out of an [initial set of 37](#), the Trust Project collaborators decided on a core set of [eight Trust Indicators](#) to implement first. They are:

- **Best Practices:** What are the news outlet's standards? Who funds it? What is the outlet's mission? Plus commitments to ethics, diverse voices, accuracy, making corrections and other standards.
- **Author/Reporter Expertise:** Who made this? Details about the journalist, including their expertise and other stories they have worked on.
- **Type of Work:** What is this? Labels to distinguish opinion, analysis and advertiser (or sponsored) content from news reports.
- **Citations and References:** What's the source? For investigative or in-depth stories, access to the sources behind the facts and assertions.
- **Methods:** How was it built? Also for in-depth stories, information about why reporters chose to pursue a story and how they went about the process.
- **Locally Sourced?** Was the reporting done on the scene, with deep knowledge about the local situation or community? Lets you know when the story has local origin or expertise.
- **Diverse Voices:** What are the newsroom's efforts and commitments to bringing in diverse perspectives? Readers noticed when certain voices, ethnicities, or political persuasions were missing.
- **Actionable Feedback:** Can we participate? A newsroom's efforts to engage the public's help in setting coverage priorities, contributing to the reporting process, ensuring accuracy and other areas. Readers want to participate and provide feedback that might alter or expand a story.

For explanations of the Trust Indicators and how we came to them, read [Lehrman's essay in The Atlantic](#).

Each news organization displays the Trust Indicators within their own design environment on both their article pages and website. See an early example of what the Trust Indicators look like in this [mockup](#). You'll find links to the Trust Indicators live on publisher sites on this [Trello board](#).





# Critical Assessment in Writing Studies

- Assessment should be meaningful and ethical, responsive to ALL of its stakeholders, informed by Guba and Lincoln's fourth generation evaluation principles
- This forces us to confront the "clash between the objectivist paradigm dominant in educational measurement theory and the social constructionist paradigm of composition studies" (p. 6)

Lynne, P. (2004). *Coming To Terms: A Theory of Writing Assessment*, Utah State University Press.



# Critical Assessment

## *Assessment for Whom?*

- “...assessment has become an element of managerial administrative practice heavily influenced by neoliberal ideology” (p. 5)
- “...propose an alternative conceptualization of assessment as an ethical, value-based social practice for the public good” (p. 5)

Wall, A. F., Hursh, D., & Rodgers III, J. W. (2014). Assessment for Whom: Repositioning Higher Education Assessment as an Ethical and Value-Focused Social Practice. *Research & Practice in Assessment*, 9, 5-17.



“By raising consciousness of the ethical and value-based decisions implicit in any assessment context, the practice of assessment truly becomes a complex social practice rather than a collection of technical data gathering approaches that might unwittingly serve power interests unintended by well-meaning individuals.”



# Research Methods

26 student participants

- 14 students recruited from 3 food-themed FYW sections
- 12 students recruited from 1 higher ed-themed FYW section



# Research Methods

26 student participants

- 14 students recruited from 3 food-themed FYW sections
- 12 students recruited from 1 higher ed-themed FYW section

16 interviews: open-ended + document-based questions

- 11 students from 3 food-themed FYW sections
- 5 students from 1 higher ed-themed FYW section



# Research methodology: grounded theory approach

- Open coded to identify themes
- Condensed those themes into codes
- Triple-coded interviews & essays
- Reconciled disagreements to refine coding definitions



# Research methodology: coding students' sources & source use

<b>Trust Indicators</b> <b>Source Analysis</b>	Best Practices, Author/Reporter Expertise, Type of Work, Citations and References, Methods, Locally Sourced, Diverse Voices
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# Research methodology: coding students' sources & source use

<b>Trust Indicators Source Analysis</b>	Best Practices, Author/Reporter Expertise, Type of Work, Citations and References, Methods, Locally Sourced, Diverse Voices
<b>Writing &amp; Research</b>	Topic development, Integrating multiple perspectives





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<b>Source Analysis</b>	Source types, Appropriate & accurate use of sources



# Reporting on findings

Analysis of  
**ESSAYS** only

Analysis of  
**INTERVIEWS** only

Analysis comparing  
**BOTH**  
essays and interviews

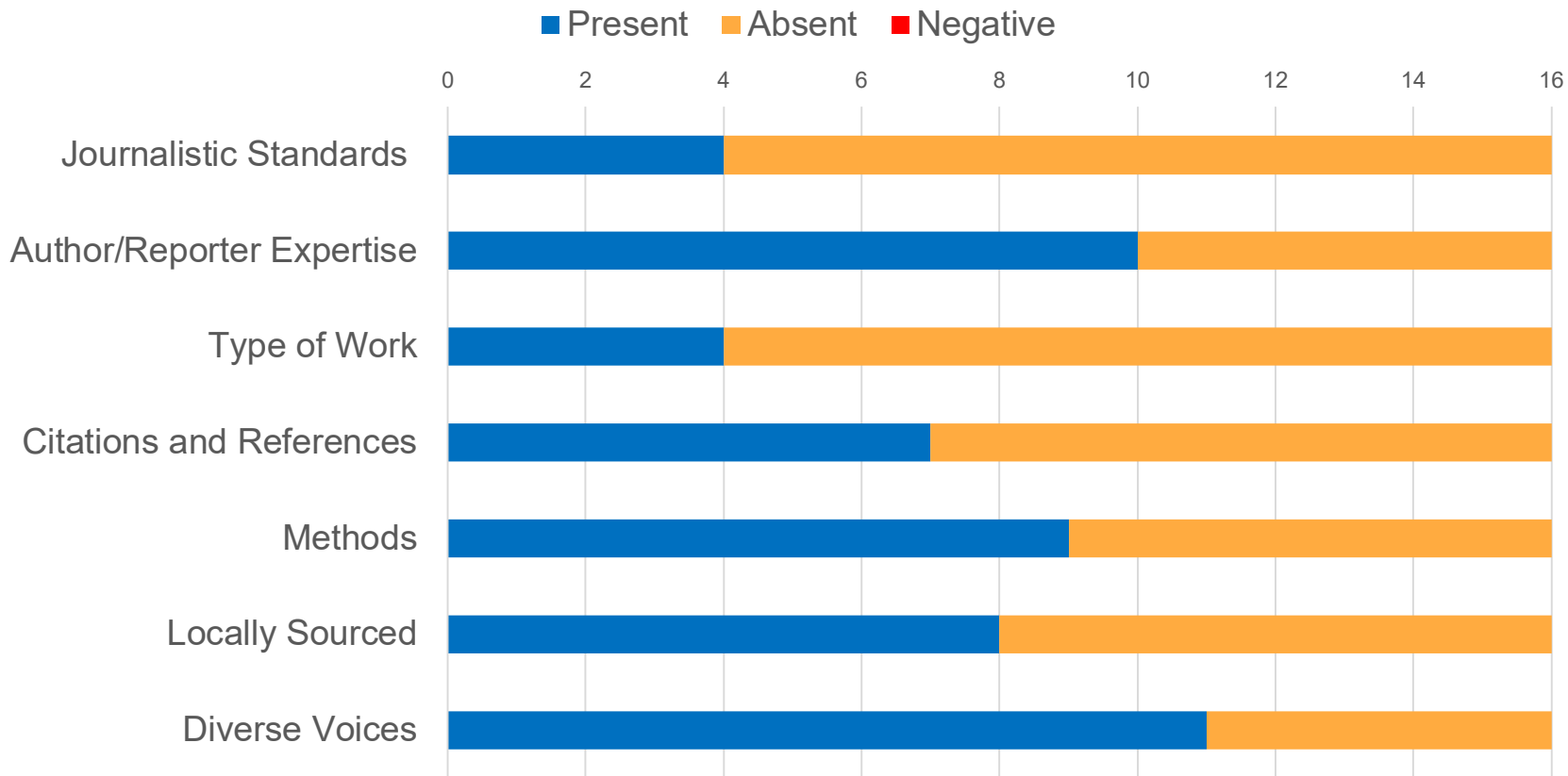


# Source Analysis (Trust Indicators)



# Essays. Trust Indicators for Source Analysis

## Awareness of Trust Indicators (Essay)



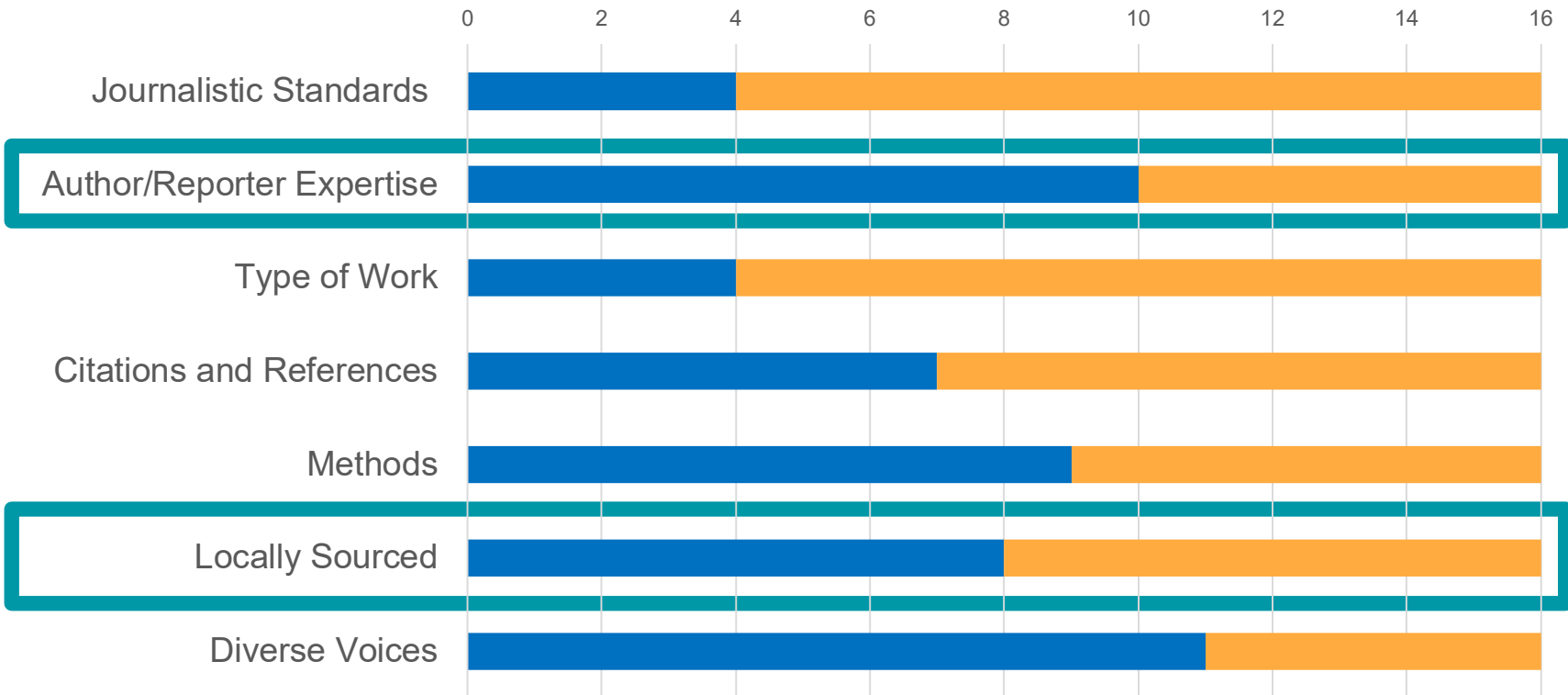


Essays.

Trust Indicators for Source Analysis

# Awareness of Trust Indicators (Essay)

■ Present ■ Absent ■ Negative



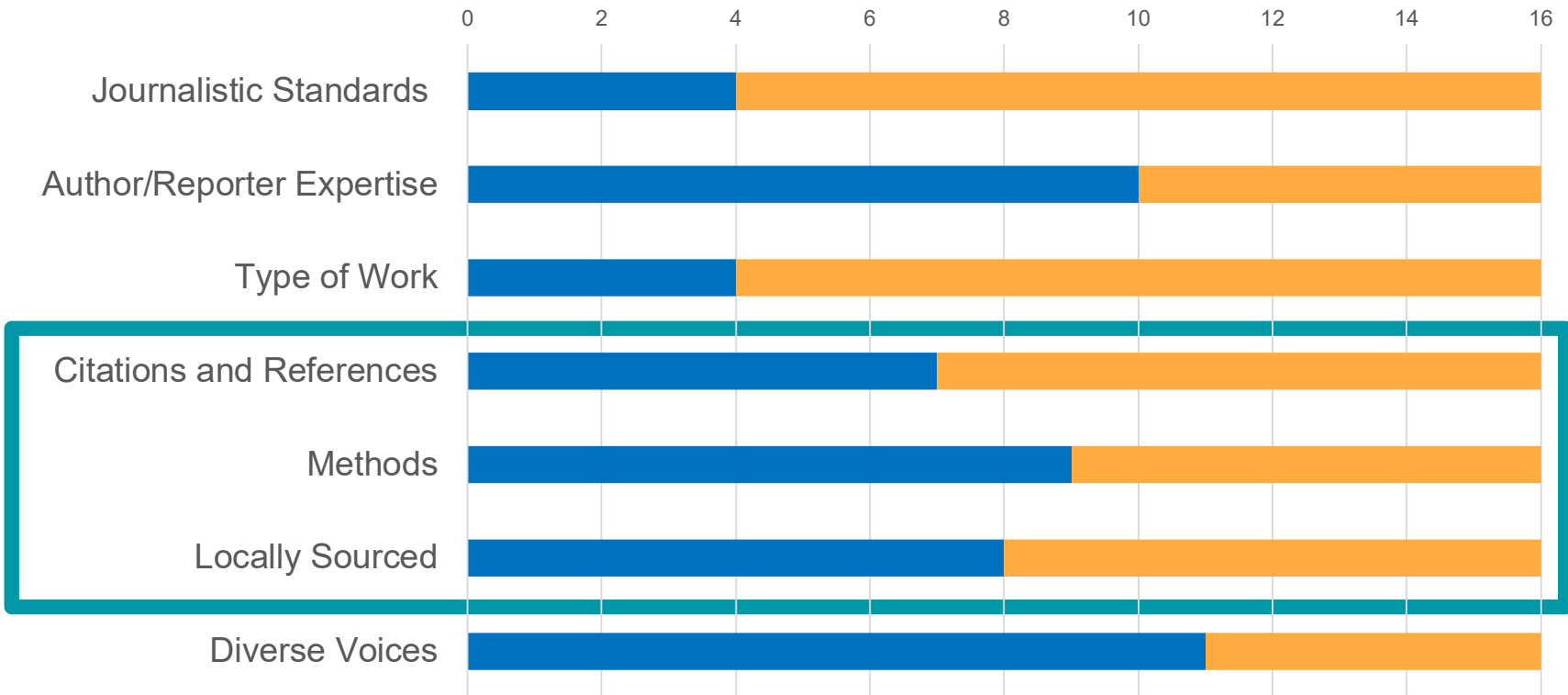


Essays.

Trust Indicators for Source Analysis

# Awareness of Trust Indicators (Essay)

■ Present ■ Absent ■ Negative





Essays.

Trust Indicators for Source Analysis

# Awareness of Trust Indicators (Essay)

■ Present ■ Absent ■ Negative

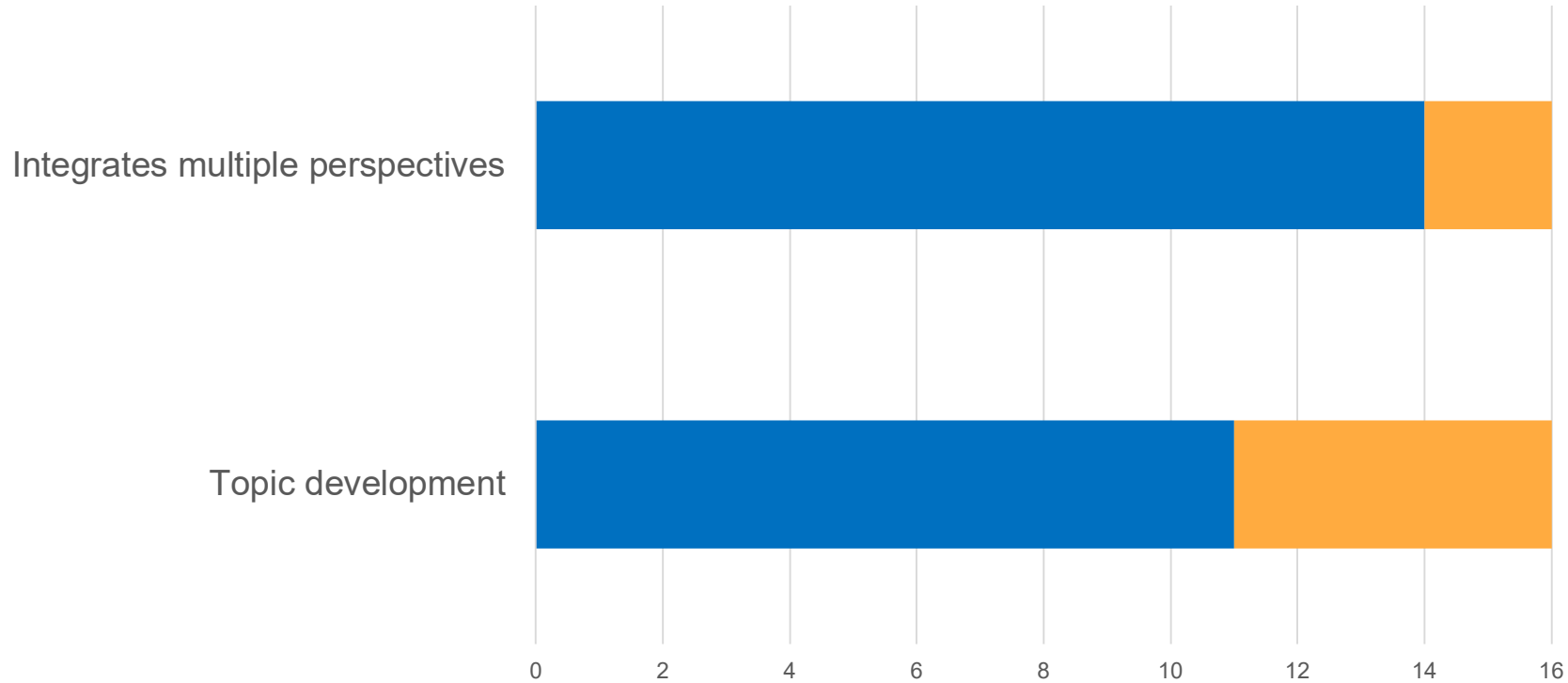
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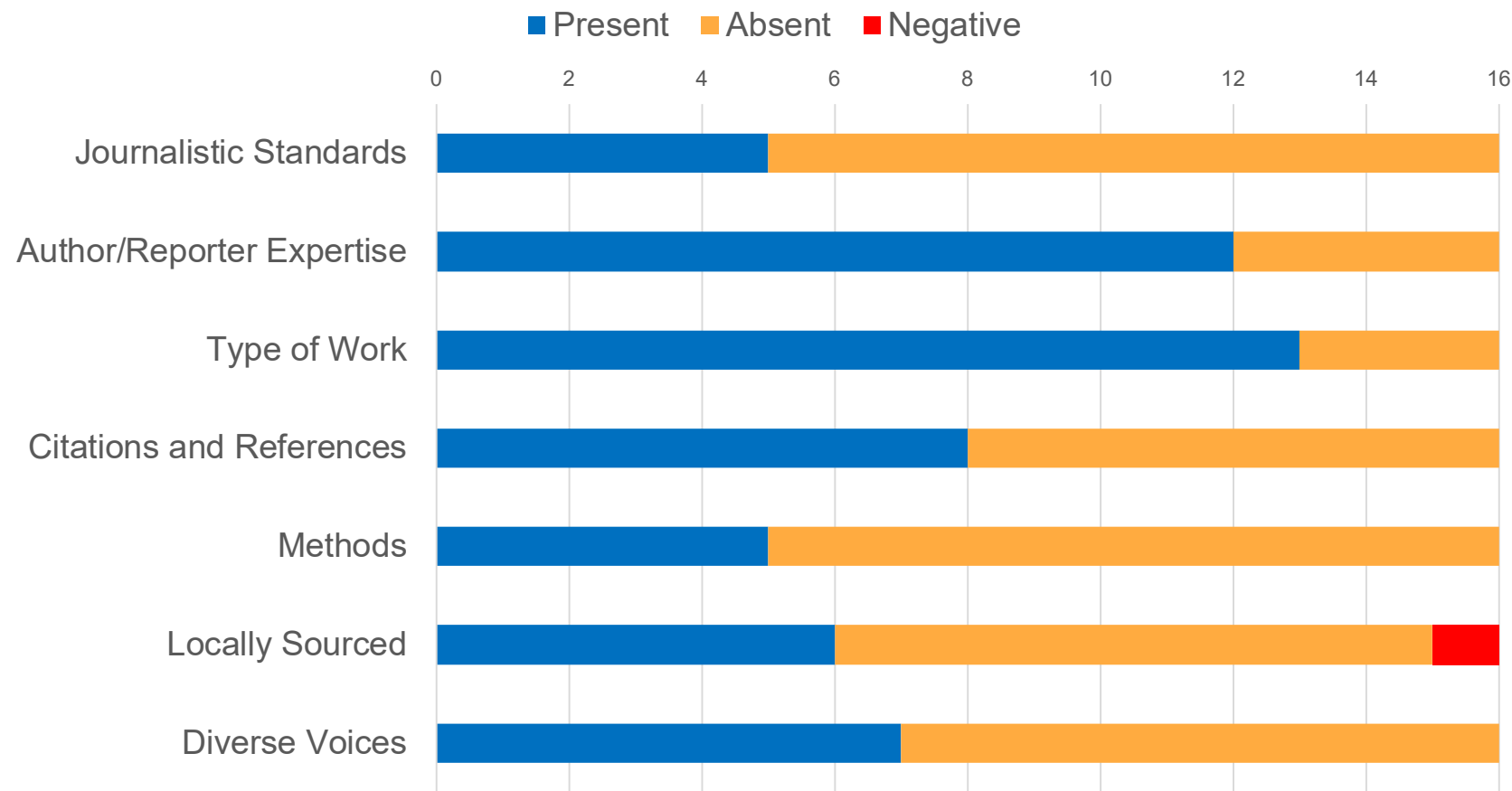
# Research & Writing Processes Demonstrated (Essay)

■ Present ■ Absent ■ Negative

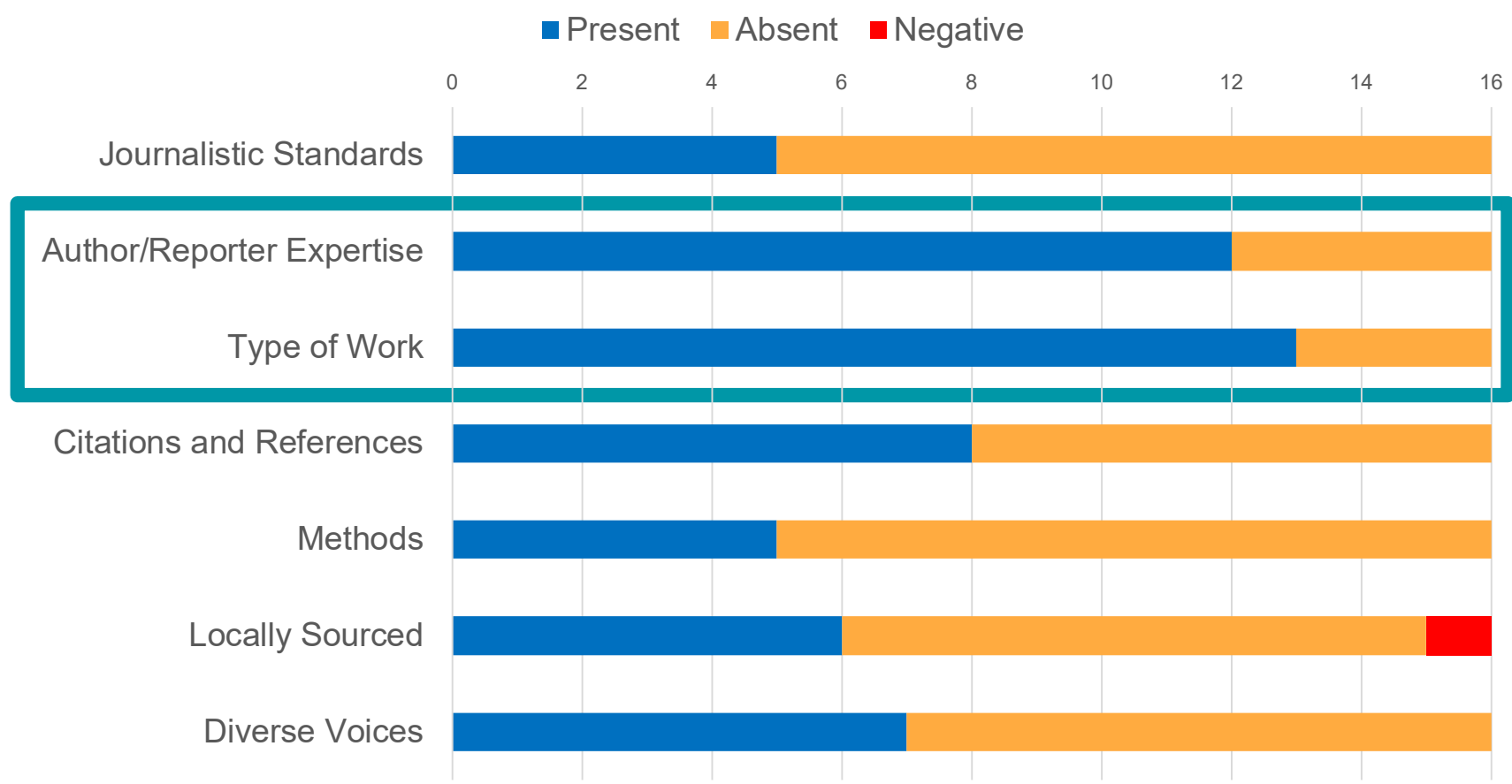


Interviews.  
Trust Indicators for Source Analysis

# Awareness of Trust Indicators (Interviews)



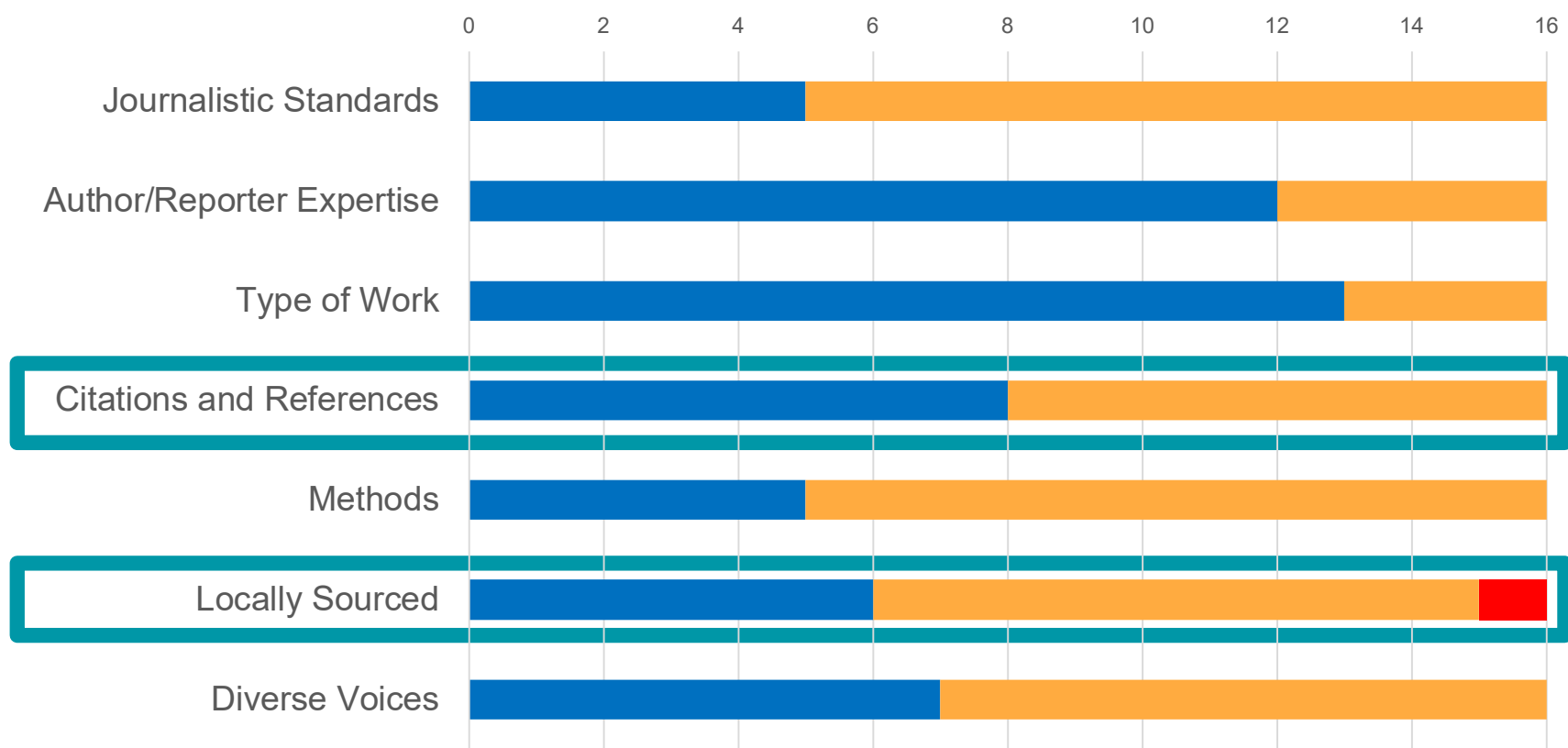
# Awareness of Trust Indicators (Interviews)



Interviews.  
Trust Indicators for Source Analysis

# Awareness of Trust Indicators (Interviews)

■ Present ■ Absent ■ Negative



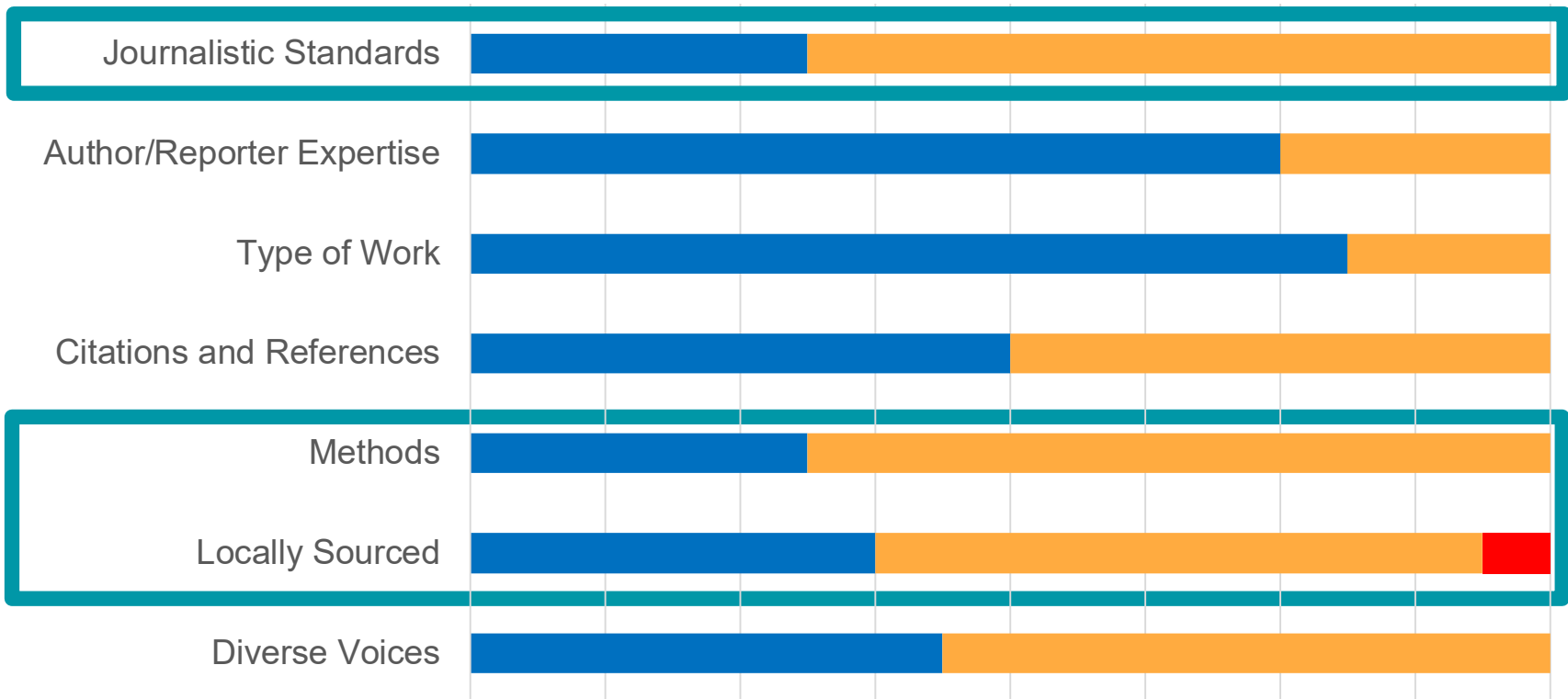


Interviews.  
Trust Indicators for Source Analysis

# Awareness of Trust Indicators (Interviews)

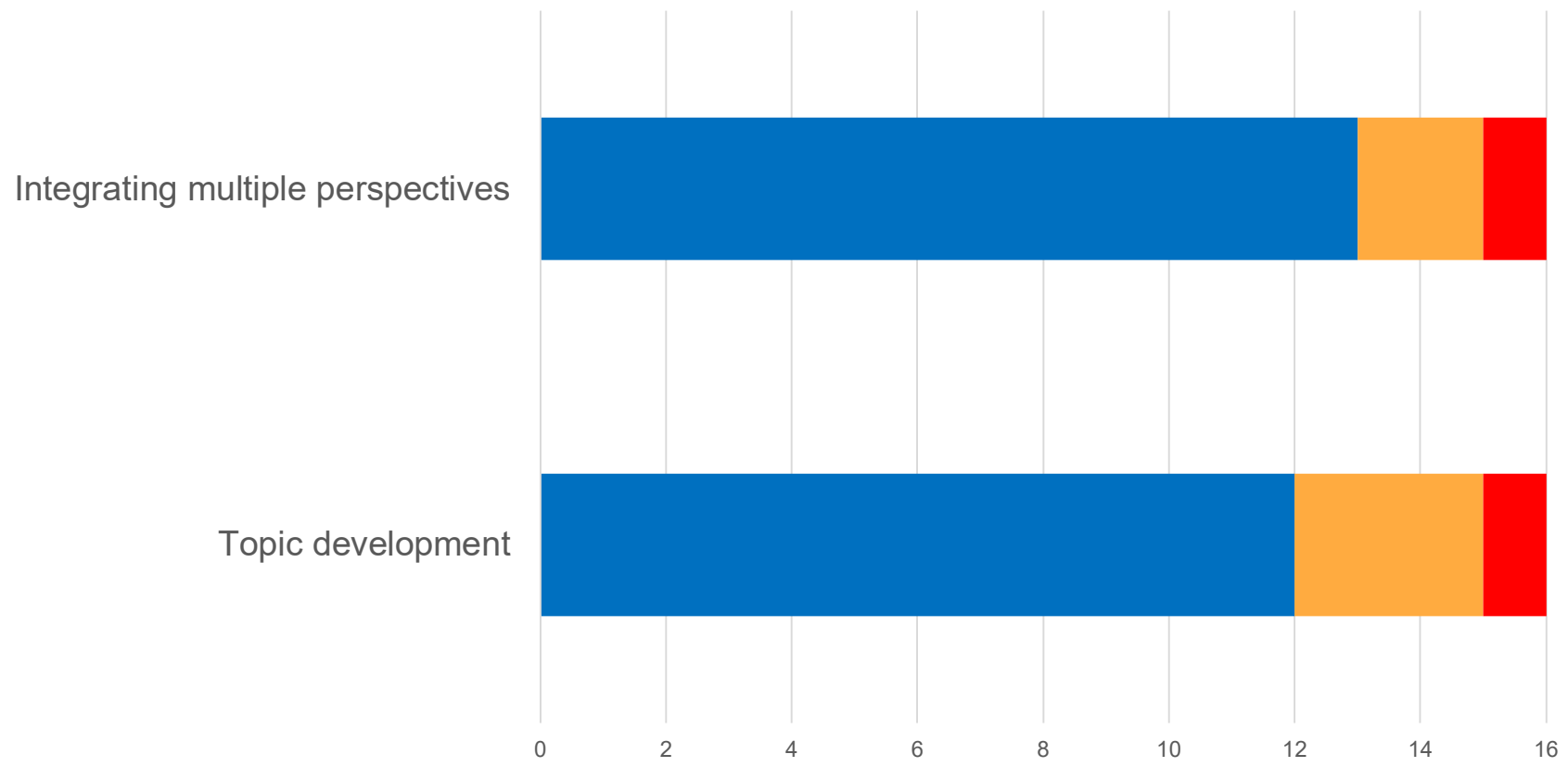
■ Present ■ Absent ■ Negative

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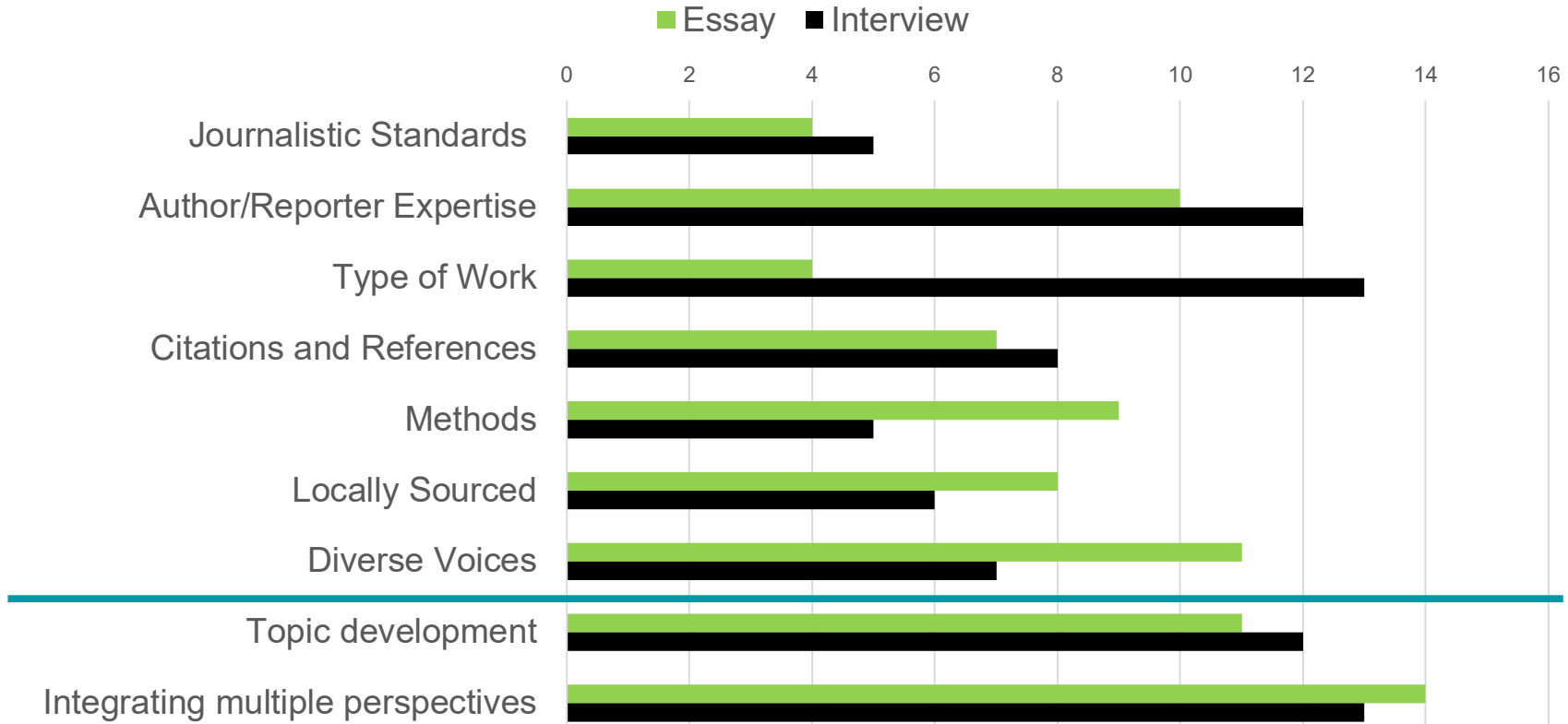
# Research & Writing Processes (Interviews)

■ Present ■ Absent ■ Negative



Essays vs. Interviews.  
Trust Indicators + Writing & Research

# Awareness of Trust Indicators & Writing/ Research Processes, Essay vs. Interview Comparison





# Source Types & Source Use

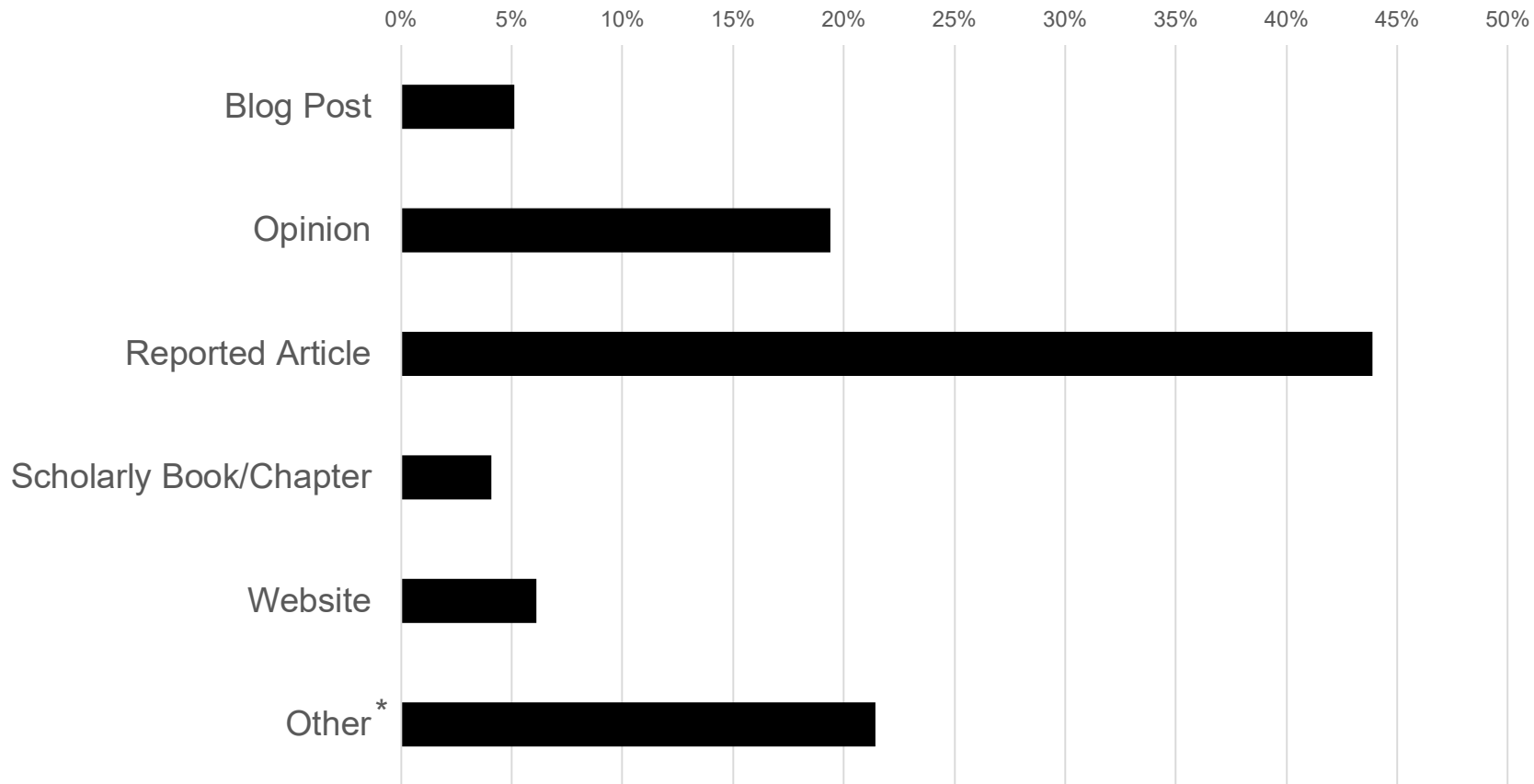




Essays.

Source Types Used

## Source Types Used



\*Includes explainers/encyclopedia entries, listicles, government documents, popular books, videos, etc



# Analysis of students' source use

## **Appropriate & relevant**

Does the source “make sense” in the context of the student’s use of it? Is the information pertinent to their argument? Is the referenced information presented credibly?

## **Accurate**

Is the information the student cites found in the source? If the information is present, does its use in the paper also accurately reflect the overall sense of the article (unless otherwise noted in student’s use in essay)?



# Analysis of students' source use – **TRY IT!**

**Appropriate & relevant**

**Read essay as a teacher:**

Does the source “make sense” in the context of the student’s use of it? Is the information pertinent to their argument? Is the referenced information presented credibly?



# Analysis of students' source use – **TRY IT!**

**Appropriate & relevant**

**Read essay as a teacher:**

Does the source “make sense” in the context of the student’s use of it? Is the information pertinent to their argument? Is the referenced information presented credibly?

**Accurate**

**Read source as a researcher:**

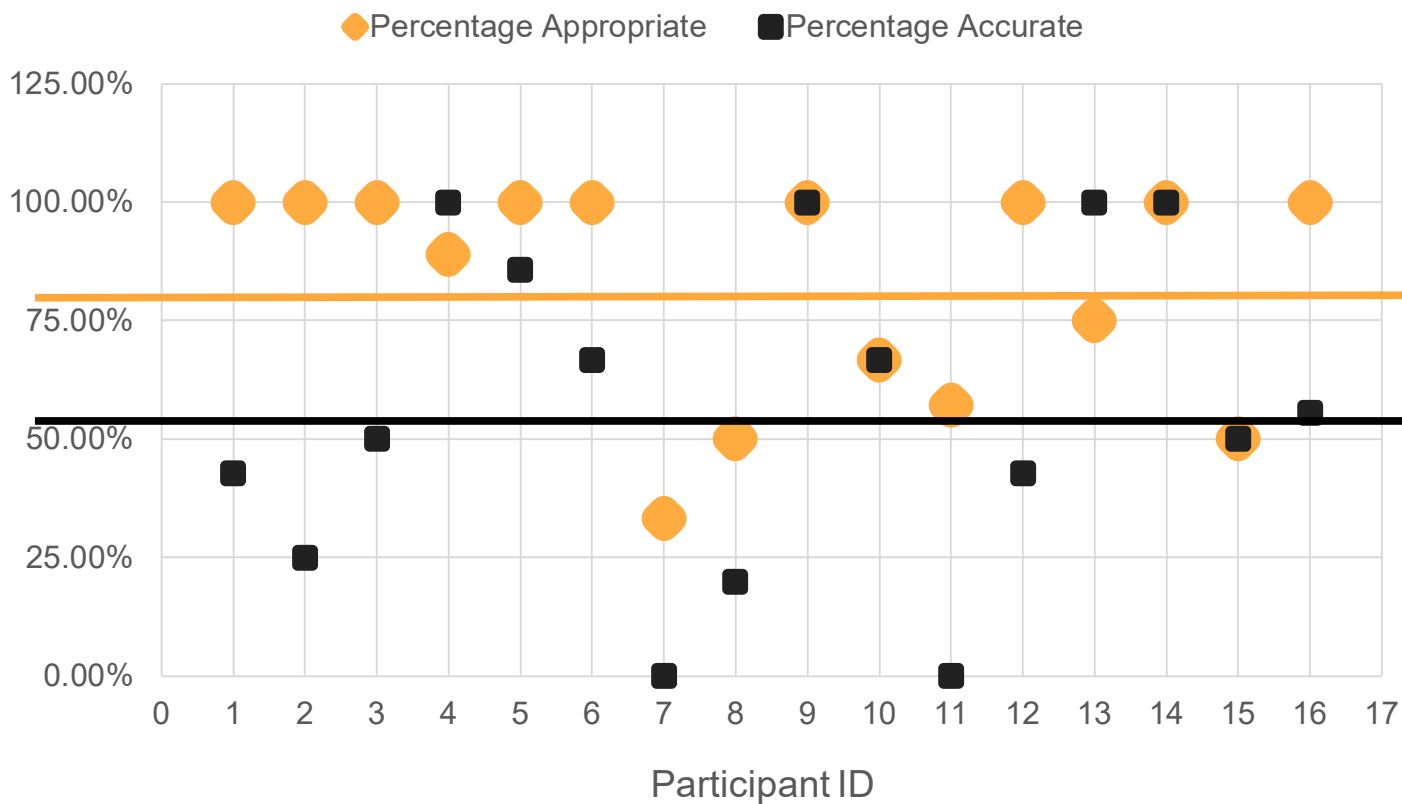
Is the information the student cites found in the source? If the information is present, does its use in the paper also accurately reflect the overall sense of the article (unless otherwise noted in student’s use in essay)?



# What did you notice?

- How did student write about source?
- What was your reaction to seeing the source yourselves?
- Have you seen similar student techniques for source use? How have you responded?

# SOURCE USE

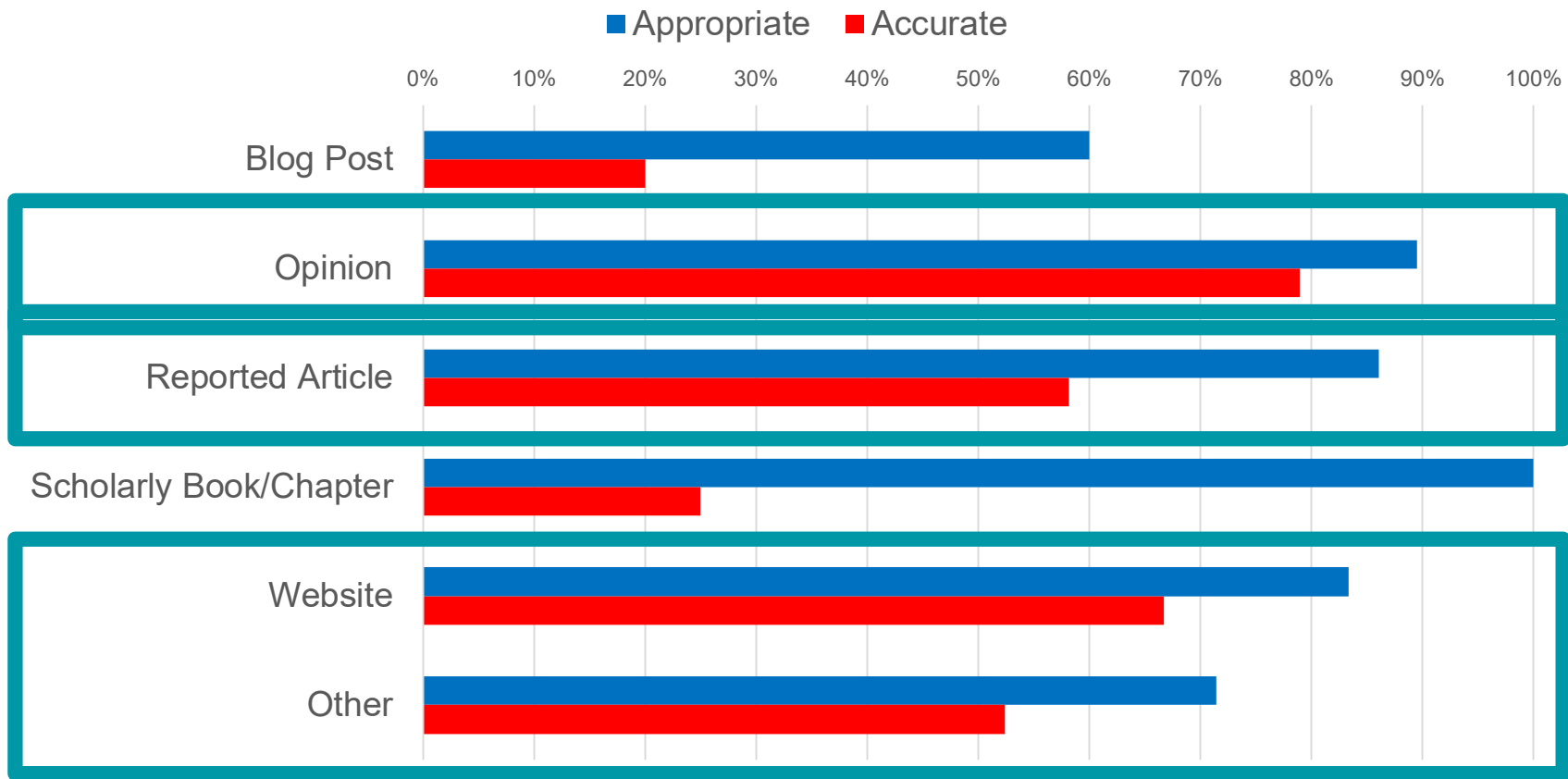




Essays.

Source Use by Source Type

# Comparing Source Types to Appropriate/Relevant & Accurate Source Use



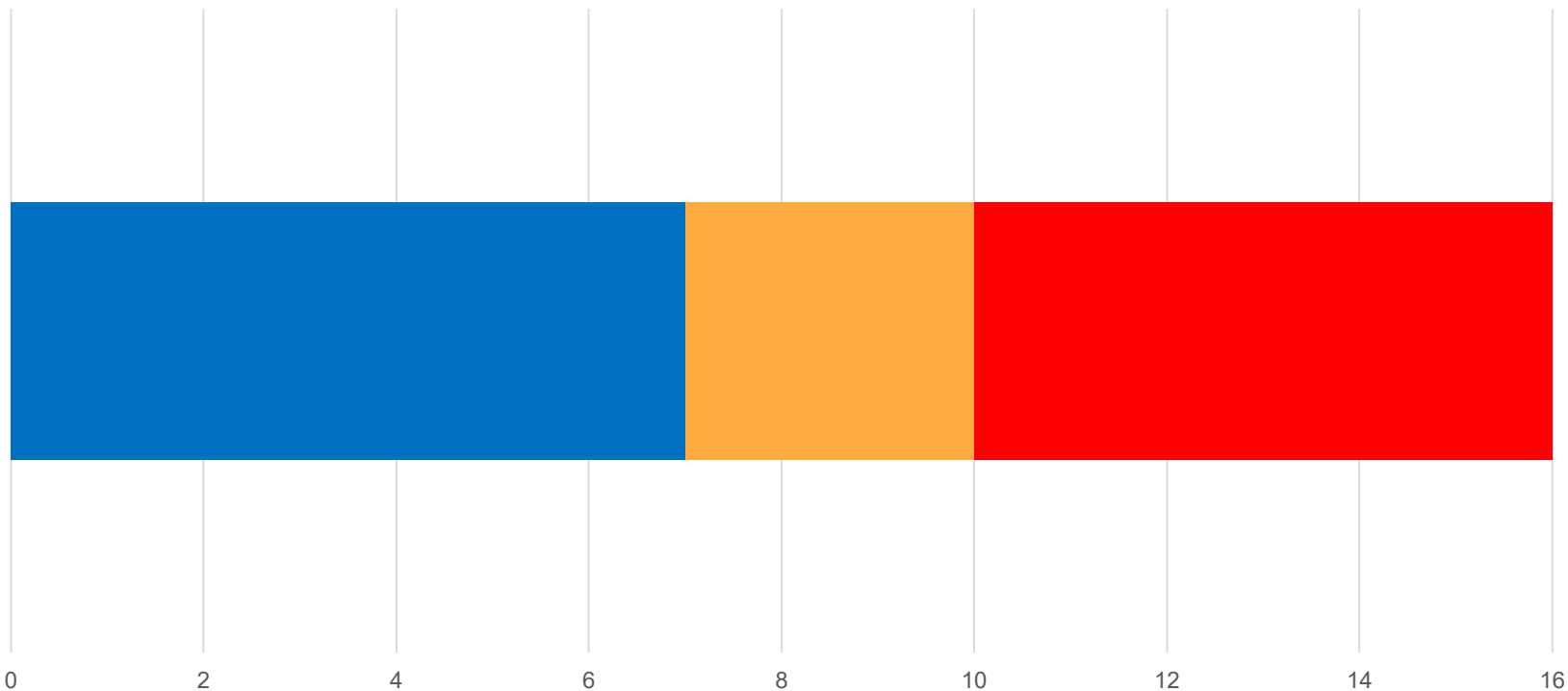


Essays.

Unsupported Claims

# Extent of Claims That Should Be Supported with Sources, but Aren't

■ None ■ A few ■ Many

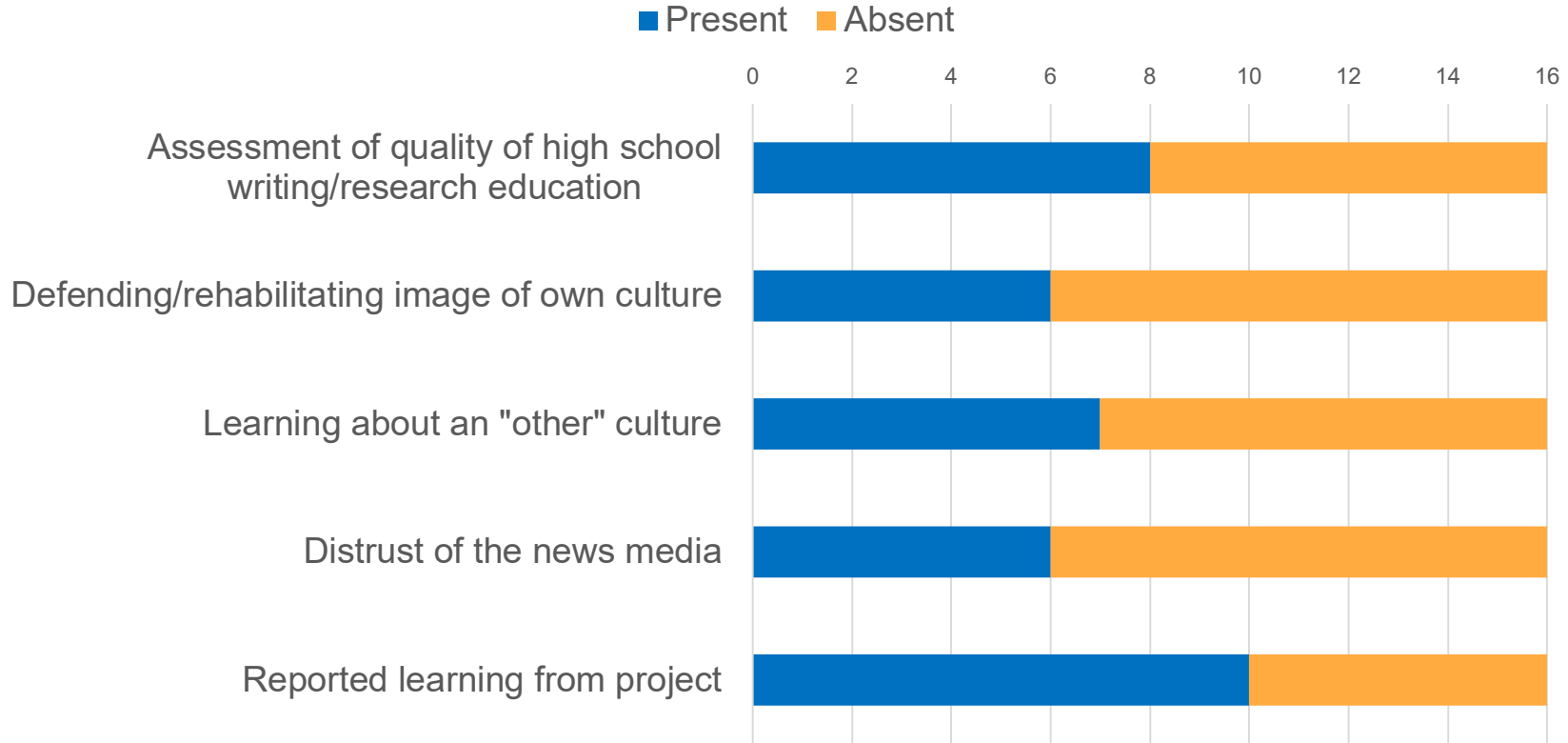




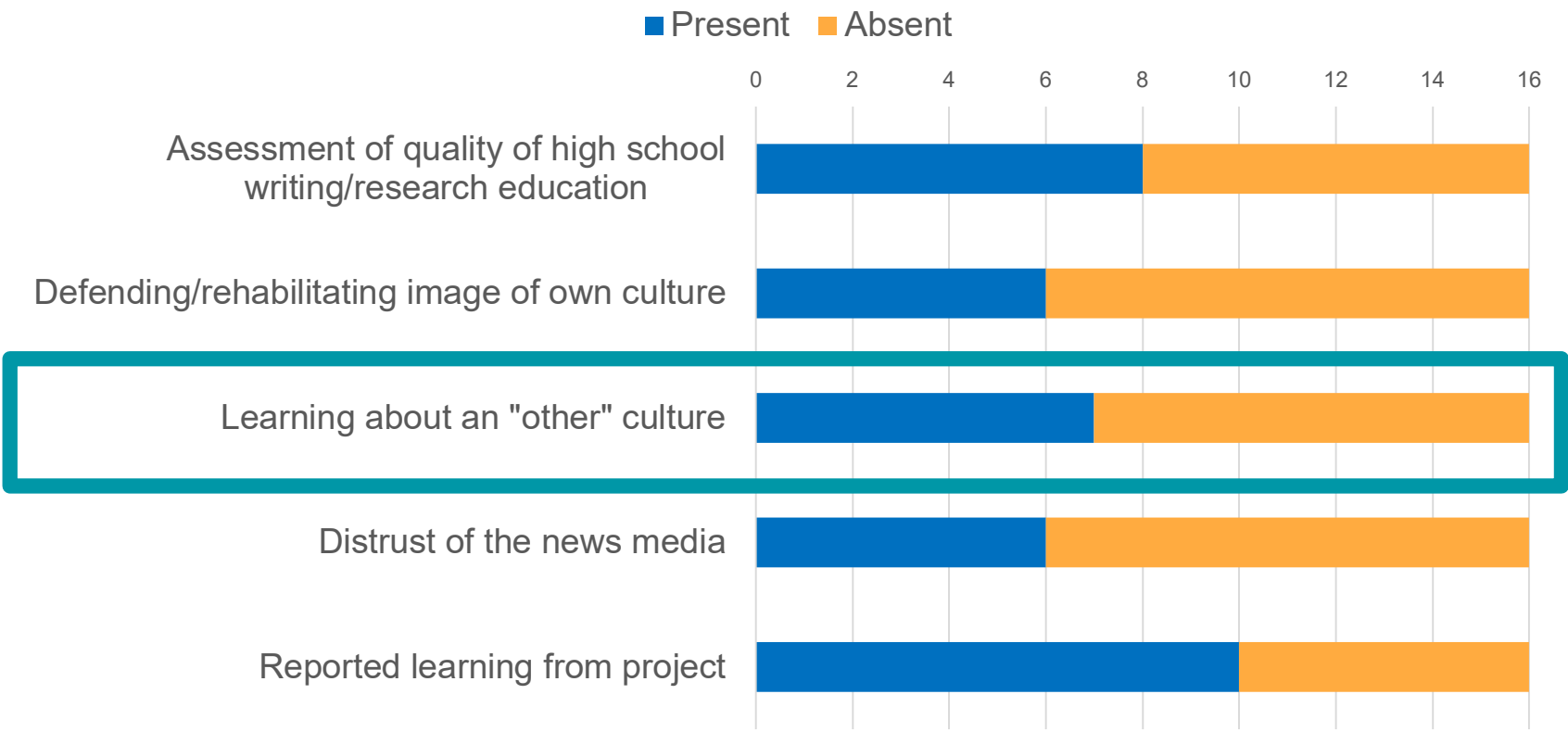


# Affective Dimensions

# Affective Dimensions of Writing & Research Learning Process



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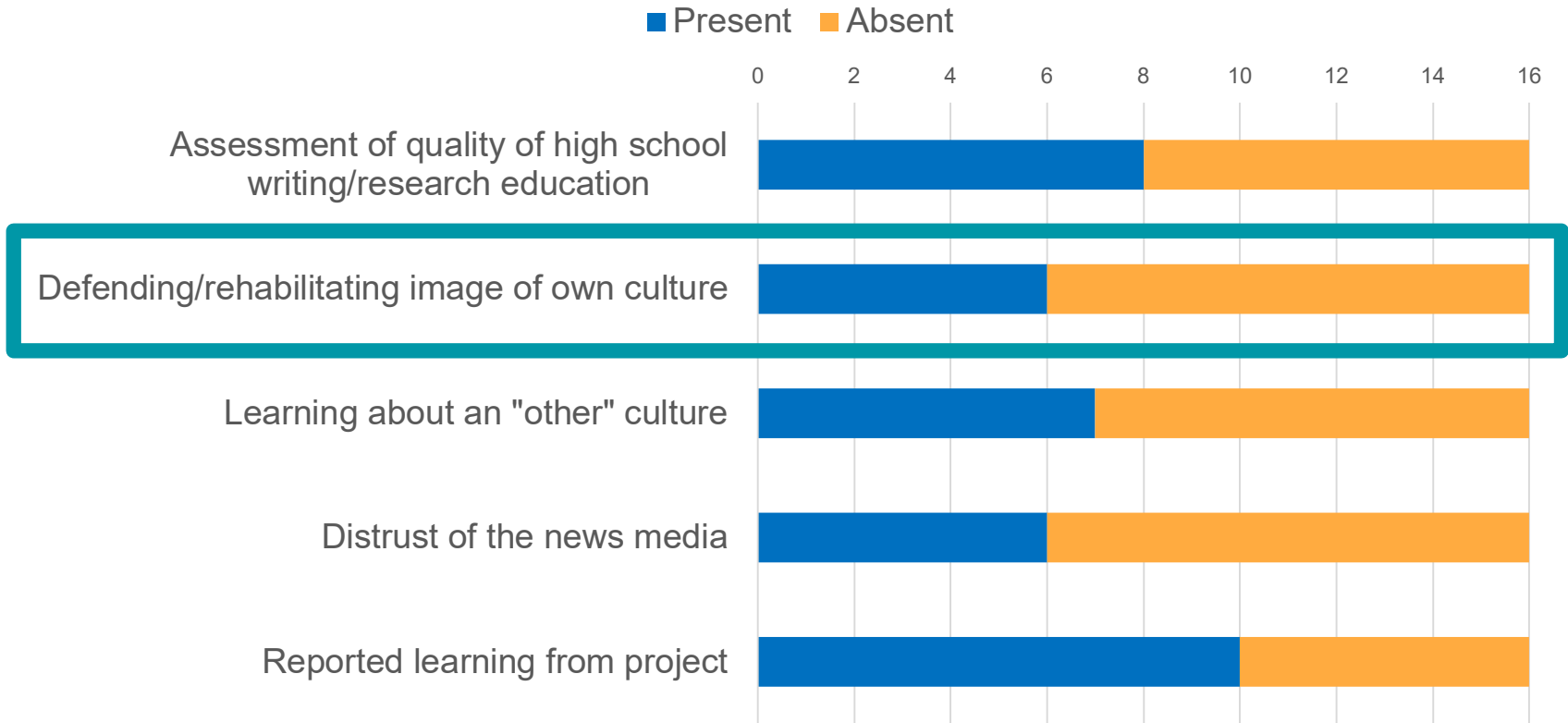


## Learning about “other” cultures, with implications for understanding of American culture

"You can't just [disapprove of eating dog meat], because dogs in American culture are very valued. You can't say that one animal is better than another. [...] I just jumped away from thinking about China and thought more about issues that are closer to home that are essentially the same issues, but we just don't think of it as a taboo. Like it's not a taboo to eat a cheeseburger, but it is the dog, and we're essentially doing the same thing." (CTW06)

"The American culture, I guess, seems to be very fixated on themselves and not really like looking on the viewpoints of others." (CTW10)

# Affective Dimensions of Writing & Research Learning Process



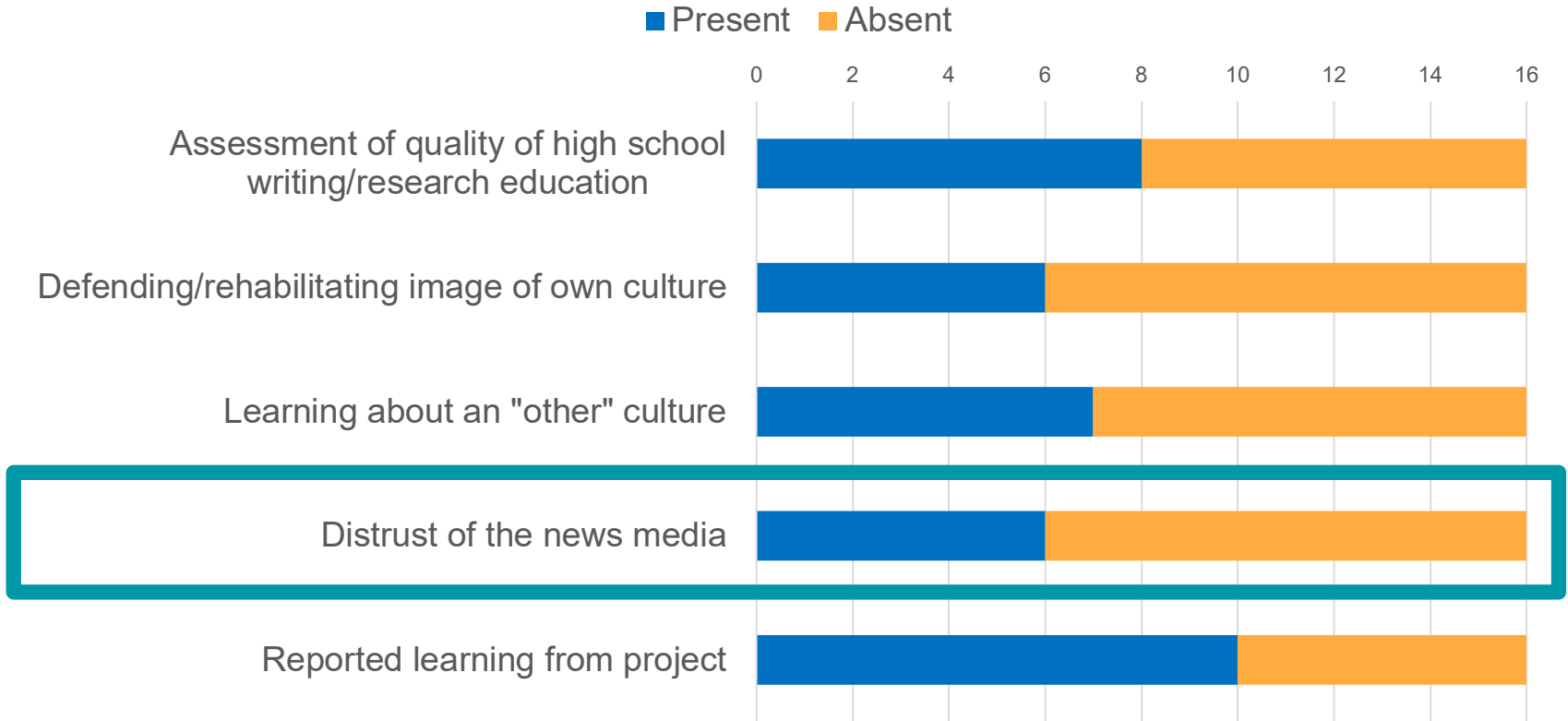
## Defending own culture

“...I chose durian which is like something I grew up eating because I'm [mixed race] and I talked about how like that food was like a source of tension between my family because it's like two different sides of my family.... And so I was like, well, this isn't a taboo to me but I can write an argument about why it's not taboo to me because I grew up eating it, and how people judge me for eating it.... So I just kind of like, oh, this is like personal connection to me so might as well just use that.”

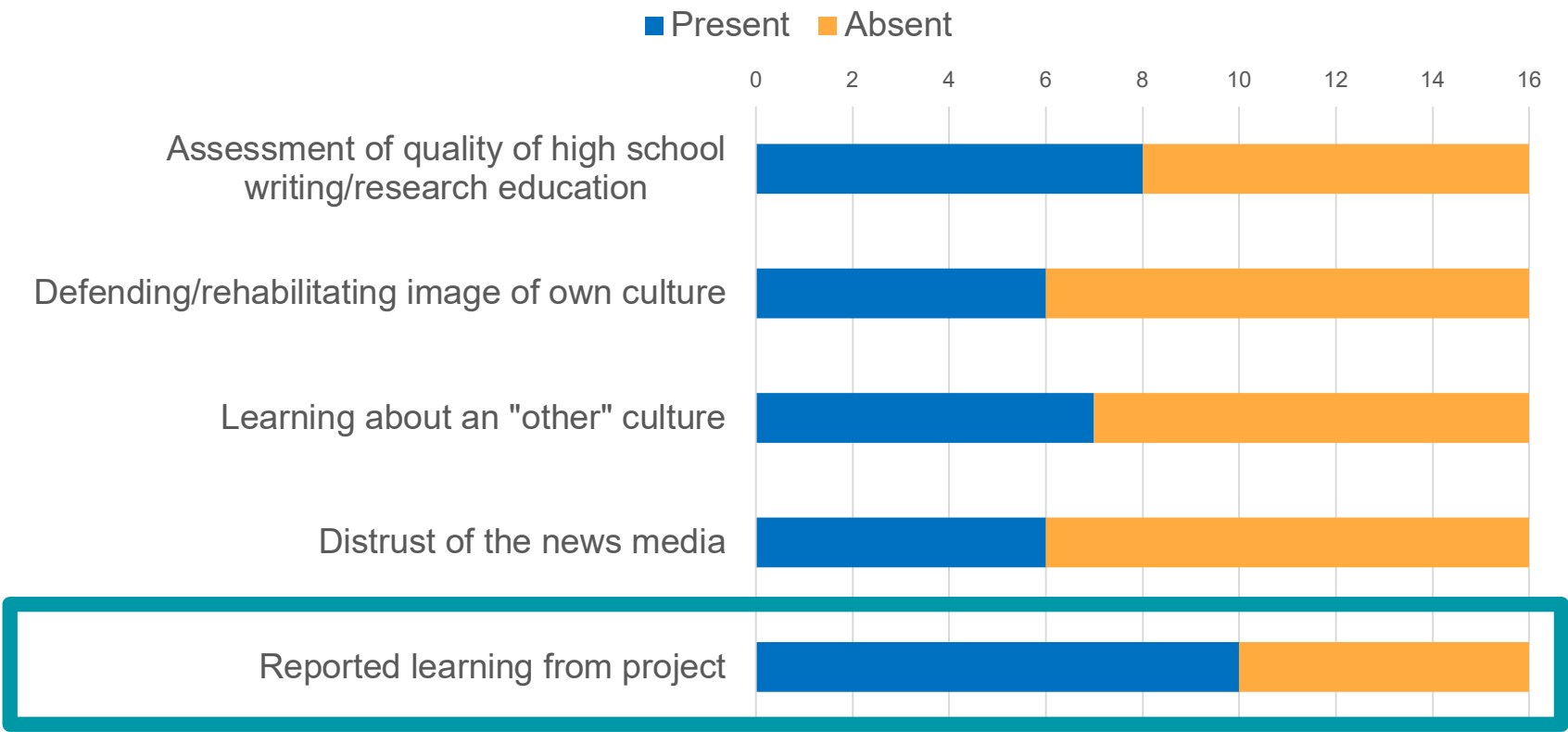
“And I was kind of trying to play to the source [Buzzfeed] ... it's [durian] portrayed as this really bad thing and people emphasize it really badly. And so I was trying to look for ... sources that were kind of showing like people trying and thinking like, 'oh, this is horrible. This is awful' and kind of like over exaggerating it...”

(CTW01)

# Affective Dimensions of Writing & Research Learning Process



# Affective Dimensions of Writing & Research Learning Process





## Reported Reasons for Limited Learning

"[G]rowing up as a person of this era, it's hard not to have high information literacy, just because you're dealing with fake news on a daily basis that you have to have some level of filter just built in if you're going to make sense of anything." (CTW04)

"I don't think much has changed [about my research skills]. I didn't really learn much about sources, **except** maybe specifically you can really trust book blog posts, trying to find more evidence, like more credible opinion pieces [...] I probably already know all of the skills when we're finding my Google search. And I already know how to refine because I Google a lot of things on a daily basis. [...] **but** I don't usually go through opinion pieces trying to look for the credibility. So I think the more practice the better." (CTW07, emphasis added)



# Conclusions



# Conclusions:

Neither written products nor students' interview-based self-assessments of learning are sufficient: mixed methods based in critical approaches are promising

Students' accuracy in using sources varies considerably according to source type

Students' ability to accurately represent sources is an area for growth, which faculty/librarian partnerships could help with

“Critical thinking”-related learning outcomes related to diversity and integration of multiple perspectives are often based on a white standard of American culture:

- Puts marginalized students in the position of writing about themselves from an outsider perspective (or writing themselves out of the picture)
- Fails to capitalize on the sophisticated critical information literacy demonstrated by minority-identifying students



# Curriculum Recommendations

- Provide students with instruction in popular-source media literacy. Include scaffolding step(s) that focus on research, not just writing.
  - Add an explicit step/practice for source analysis (Trust Indicators) and summary with feedback from instructor/library partner
- Pose critical information literacy as a novel, necessary, actionable skillset.
  - Distinguish between this approach and the generic media skepticism students may express.
- Foreground and learn from students' own stakes/identities.
  - Our results suggest that students who identify as members of marginalized communities have greater awareness of information bias and evaluate sources using a more nuanced interpretive lens.
  - Bringing a discussion of students' identities and the online representations of those identities into the classroom may provide groundwork for students' assessment of popular sources.













Unused

YRC

slides



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Source analysis (Trust Indicators)	Sources of support	Writing & research skills	Affective dimensions



<b>Source analysis (Trust Indicators)</b>	Sources of support	Writing & research skills	<b>Affective dimensions</b>

Integrating multiple perspectives

# Integrating multiple perspectives

“Well, I just wanted to make sure that I wasn't finding only things that show that it [eating dog meat] was bad, because then that would...it's kind of like, what's the word, like, not mean but it's really, like, one sided towards the cultures who don't have that, like, companionship with dogs. It's like not seeing their side of the view. So, like, I wanted to see more sides of the view, because I'm like in such an American way of thinking. [...] If we're so caught up on the dog thing. We should also, like, recognize that there's a lot of issues with our current, like, cows and sheep, like how we treat them.” (CTW13 5:10-5:49, 21:43-22:10)

# Integrating multiple perspectives

"What's the word I'm looking for, bringing everything we got together, like, coalesced, to make two things that are conflicting, like a good, a good compromise [...] there's like the two sides. They want different things. And, like, hey maybe, like, here's an idea on how we can, like, get that worked out, okay you guys gonna have to compromise, probably, but, like, this might work." (CTW14 32:21-33:23)

# Integrating multiple perspectives

“[W]orking on seeing how others are encountering other things like in real life, understanding that if there are, they're likely getting it from conservative sources that are not repeating the same things [trying] to do the same thing. So I'm seeing and understanding where somebody else is coming from.” (CTW16 25:59-26:20)



Affective dimensions

# Reporting on Information Literacy Learning

**Reported didn't learn much:** "You find enough evidence and then you stop, I feel like. Same thing with my writing skills. I'm like, I have enough writing skills. So I don't really care about developing any more." (CTW09 57:28-57:36)

**Reported learning:** "I think I know a lot more about [information literacy] because before I didn't really focus too much on like the biases of our authors, like, I didn't really get that, like, some publishers are more focussed on one side of an argument and that you need to look at a broad [array of], like, authors in order to understand what's really going on with an issue. [...] when we had one workshop where we learned about like fake news. And, like, sometimes it's obvious and sometimes just not as obvious. So I guess now that I'm more focussed on looking for, like, those things in news now" (8:40-9:22)

# Discussion Questions

- FYW Instructors: How do you work with popular sources in your FYW classes?
  - How have you worked with librarians on this subject
- How do you help students move beyond a knee-jerk “both sides” approach to the partisan state of contemporary news media?
- Have you integrated discussions of students’ identities and their experiences of life online into your classes already? Through what kinds of exercises/assignments?
  - Have you linked these discussions to the process of assessing and writing with popular sources?

Extra slides--  
made but not  
used for YRC

# Defending own culture

“Like why is a taboo, or like and but like when you say why it's taboo. You kind of have to reveal Like a deeper meaning behind the reason why the food is taboo. So I chose durian which is like something I grew up eating because I'm half Chinese half black and And I talked about how like that food was like a source of Tension between my family because it's like two different sides of my family and like that means like not only like the food but like also kind of like cultural tension like not really understanding each other and stuff like that. So that's how I kind of Say, okay, great. Um, and how did you select the topic or focus for that and political I say um so I remember she like listed or my professor listed A whole bunch of taboo foods that you could have written about. And I said during was on there and I thought that was kind of weird to me. Because like I grew up eating it, and it was something that I always like, you know, I like never seemed weird to

# Findings of Note: Affective Dimensions

One pair of unexpected findings--relating to students' engagement with multiple perspectives on their topics--was a connection between culture/identity and research:

- Just under  $\frac{1}{2}$  of students described learning about a culture different than their own over the course of the project →  $\frac{2}{3}$  of these students identified as a members of marginalized groups
  - Notes that the objections raised by most Americans to dog eating RE cruelty are equally true of animals Americans eat all the time (chickens, cows), stating that "You can't just because dogs in American culture are very valued. You can't say that one animal is better than another." (CTW06 22:08) and "I just jumped away from thinking about China and thought more about issues that are closer to home that are essentially the same issues, but we just don't think of it as a taboo. Like it's not a taboo to eat a cheeseburger, but it is the dog, and we're essentially doing the same thing." (CTW06 25:58)

# Findings of Note: Affective Dimensions

About  $\frac{1}{3}$  of students reported skepticism of the news media

- This was especially likely for students who completed the discourse analysis project ( $\frac{3}{5}$ )
  - Student comments on how everyone knows news is biased, but they don't really think about it and just go to the sources they prefer, without thinking about the fact that these sources have been created expressly for them. (CTW16 09:35)
- However, news skepticism wasn't correlated with scoring highly on source analysis, suggesting a disconnect between general skepticism and strategies for dealing with it

# Findings of Note: Affective Dimensions

When asked what they learned from the project, about  $\frac{1}{3}$  of students said they learned little or nothing

- This was especially likely for students who reported limited engagement across the board with source analysis, the research & writing process, and engaging with sources of support, compared to students who engaged with the IL curriculum substantially
  - Student reports that they learned a lot about information literacy: "I think I know a lot more about [info literacy] because before I didn't really focus too much on like the biases of our authors like I didn't really get that like some publishers are more focussed on one side of an argument and that you need to look at a broad like authors in order to understand what's really going on with an issue." (08:40) And "when we had one ca workshop where we learned about like fake news. And like, sometimes it's obvious and sometimes just not as obvious. So I guess now that I'm more focussed on looking for like those things in news now [...]" (CTW15 00:00)



# See notes in [meeting document](#)

Overview Chart explanation for source analysis

Detail: Tolerance for multiple perspectives

Overview chart on affective dimensions

Detail: Perception that students didn't learn much, linking that to limited engagement with IL curriculum

Detail: Marginalized identification as IL resources



# Transformative Research Paradigms

“recommend the adoption of an explicit goal for research to serve the ends of creating a more just and democratic society that permeates the entire research process” (2003, p. 159).

- Donna Mertens



# Elements of Transformative Paradigms

- (a) Do the authors openly reference a problem in a community of concern?
- (b) Do the authors openly declare a theoretical lens?
- (c) Were the research questions (or purposes) written with an advocacy stance?
- (d) Did the literature review include discussions of diversity and oppression?
- (e) Did the authors discuss appropriate labeling of the participants?
- (f) Did data collection and outcomes benefit the community?
- (g) Did the participants initiate the research, and/or were they actively engaged in the project?
- (h) Did the results elucidate power relationships?
- (i) Did the results facilitate social change?
- (j) Did the authors explicitly state their use of a transformative framework?



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