Santa Clara University
Scholar Commons

Staff publications, research, and presentations | University Library

6-20-2019

Getting Beyond "Both Sides": FYC Instructors & Librarians Working Together to Cultivate Critical Information Literacy with Popular Sources

Loring Pfeiffer
Santa Clara University, lapfeiffer@scu.edu

Julia Voss
Santa Clara University, jvoss@scu.edu

Nicole Branch
Santa Clara University, nbranch@scu.edu

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholarcommons.scu.edu/library

 Part of the Information Literacy Commons

Recommended Citation
Pfeiffer, Loring; Voss, Julia; and Branch, Nicole, "Getting Beyond "Both Sides": FYC Instructors & Librarians Working Together to Cultivate Critical Information Literacy with Popular Sources" (2019). *Staff publications, research, and presentations*. 200.
https://scholarcommons.scu.edu/library/200

This Presentation is brought to you for free and open access by the University Library at Scholar Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Staff publications, research, and presentations by an authorized administrator of Scholar Commons. For more information, please contact rscroggin@scu.edu.

Beyond “Both Sides”: Using Popular Sources to Cultivate First-Year Students’ Information Literacy

Julia Voss (jvoss@scu.edu), Loring Pfeiffer (lapfeiffer@scu.edu)
Santa Clara University

Pet peeves about students' use of popular sources?

Characteristics of strong sources of information

©2016 SMEKENS EDUCATION SOLUTIONS • WWW.SMEKENSEDUCATION.COM

CREDIBLE
Other sources repeat the info.

ACCURATE
Info is current & timely.

RELEVANT
Info supports the topic.

Our Project: Popular Sources & Info Literacy in FYW

- Summer 2018: Worked with our librarian partner, Nicole Branch, to design curriculum for our FYW classes.
  - Curriculum focused on critical information literacy and popular sources.
  - Received IRB approval to interview students.
- Fall 2018: Piloted curriculum.
- Winter 2019: Interviewed each others' students.
- Spring 2019: Began coding interview transcripts and assessing students' responses to curriculum.
  - What did they learn?
  - What do we want to change 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)
- 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)
        - It has implications for how students assess popular sources, but it doesn’t provide insight into why students make the choices they do or how those choices affect their writing.

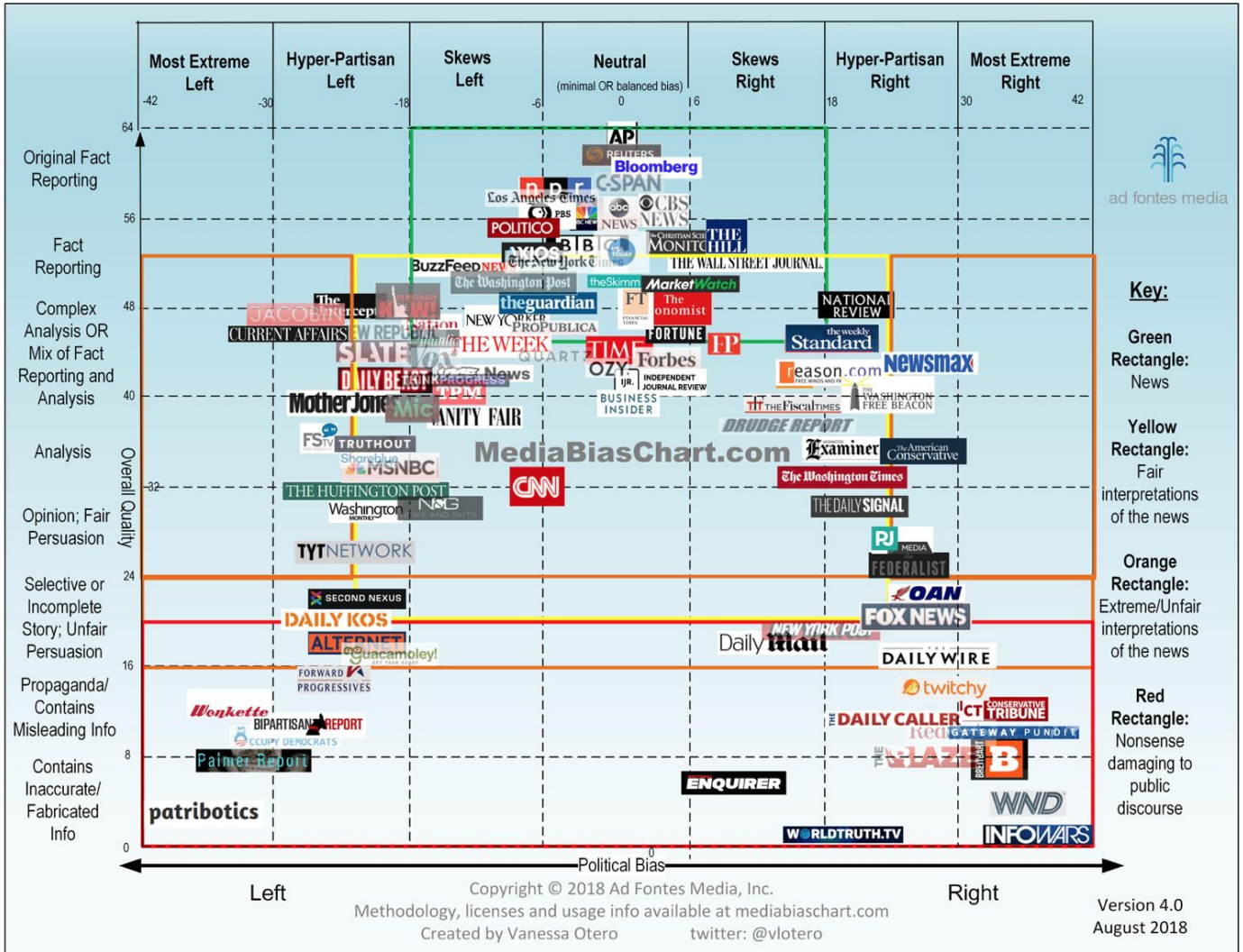
Our Curriculum

- In conceptualizing our assignments and designing our library sessions, we drew on:
  - The NCTE/CWPA/NWP Framework for Success in Postsecondary Writing (2011)
  - The Association of College & Research Libraries (ACRL) Framework for Information Literacy for Higher Education (2015)
- Our classes focus on different themes (Julia's: higher ed; mine: food), so our assignments differed; however, we incorporated similar elements.
  - Scaffolded essay assignments that asked students to use popular sources
  - Librarian-led class sessions that focused on providing students with tools for assessing popular sources

Our Curriculum, Cont'd

- Scaffolded Assignments
  - My students identified a food that some Americans regard as taboo, researched that food, and made an argument about what the food's taboo status revealed about American culture.
  - Julia's students identified a hot-button issue on American college campuses, and analyzed how that issue was covered in media across the political spectrum to understand the issue.
- Library Sessions
  - Nicole Branch designed tailored library sessions for each curriculum informed by:
    - The Media Bias Chart
    - The Trust Project, a partnership between SCU's Markkula Center for Ethics & various journalistic outlets.
      - The Trust Project developed Trust Indicators to help citizens assess news media

MEDIA BIAS CHART



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.

Research Methods

26 student participants

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

26 research-based essays

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

Open coding to identify themes, condensed those themes into codes, and triple-coded the interviews, reconciling disagreements to refine coding definitions

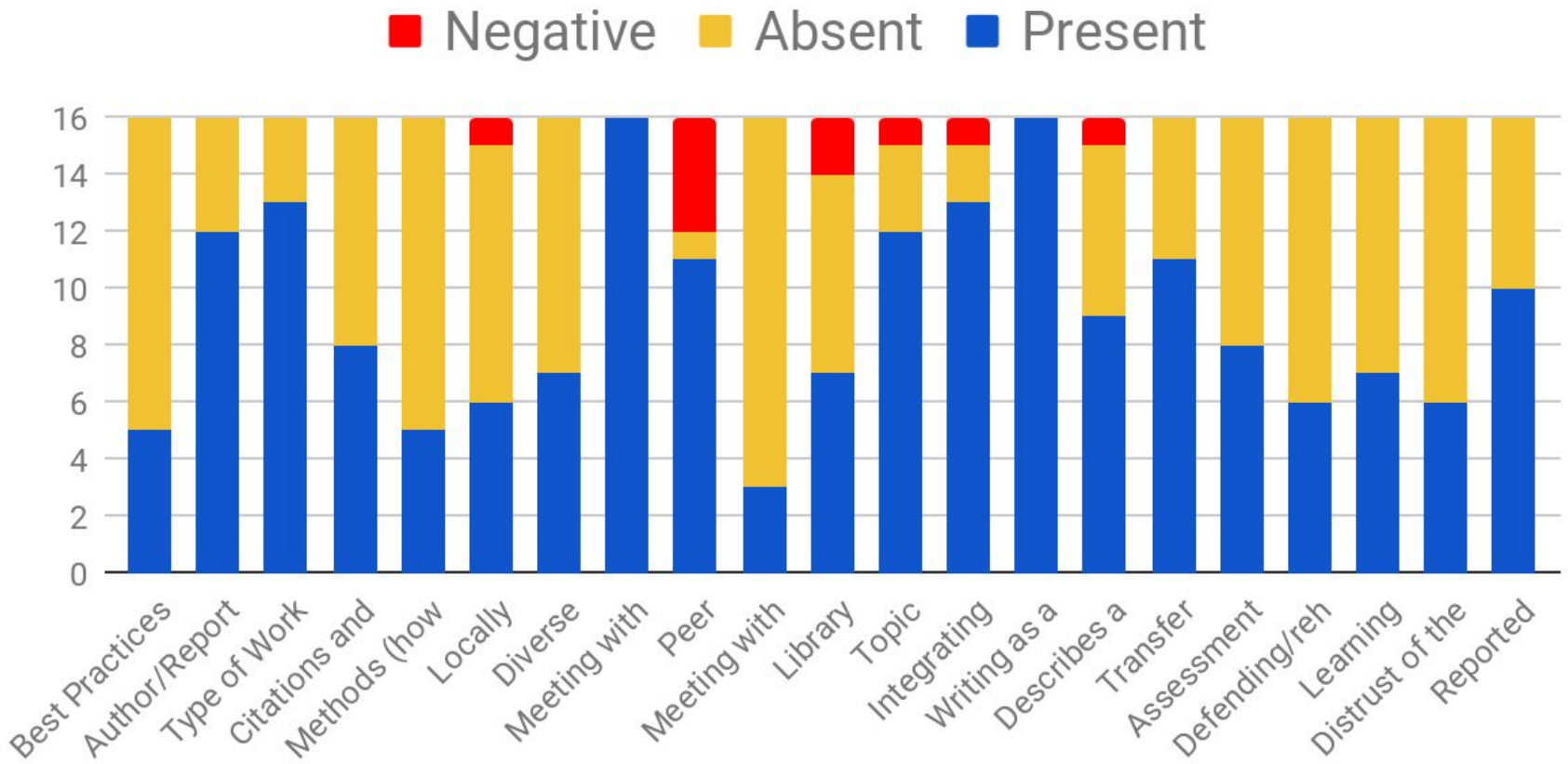
Source analysis (Trust Project Trust Indicators)	Author/Reporter Expertise, Type of Work, Citations and References, Methods, Locally Sourced, Diverse Voices
Sources of Support	Meeting with instructor, Peer discussion, Meeting with campus resource, In-class library workshop
Writing & Research	Topic development, Integrating multiple perspectives, Writing as a process, Describes a research process, Transfer
Affective Dimensions	Assessment of quality of high school writing/research education, Defending/rehabilitating image of own culture, Learning about an "other" culture, Distrust of the news media, Reported learning little

Research Methodology

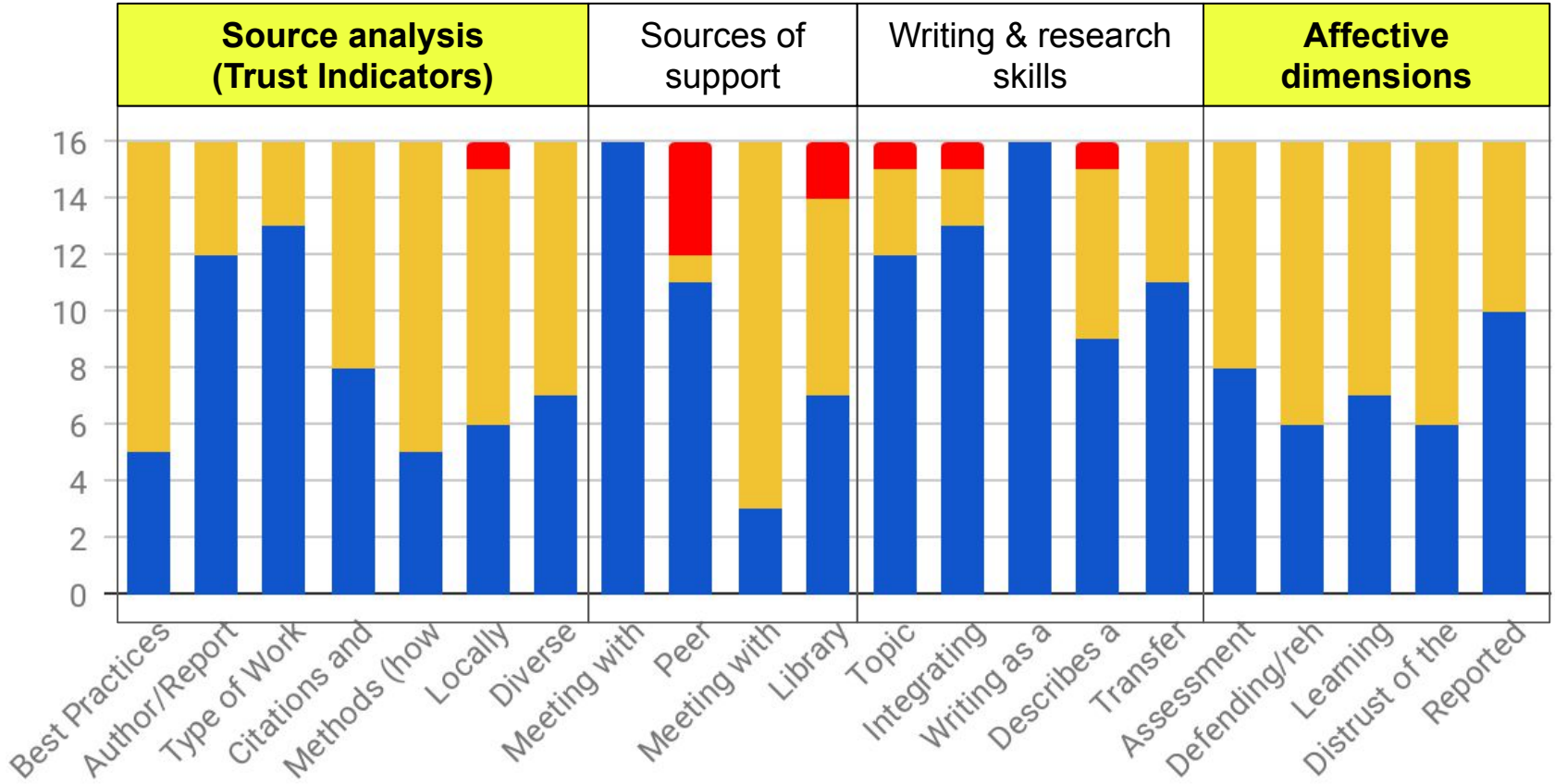
Open coding to identify themes, condensed those themes into codes, and triple-coded the interviews, reconciling disagreements to refine coding definitions

Source analysis (Trust Project Trust Indicators)	**Author/Reporter Expertise, Type of Work, Citations and References, Methods, Locally Sourced, Diverse Voices**
Sources of Support	Meeting with instructor, Peer discussion, Meeting with campus resource, In-class library workshop
Writing & Research	Topic development, **Integrating multiple perspectives**, Writing as a process, Describes a research process, Transfer
Affective Dimensions	Assessment of quality of high school writing/research education, **Defending/rehabilitating image of own culture, Learning about an "other" culture, Distrust of the news media, Learning reported from project**

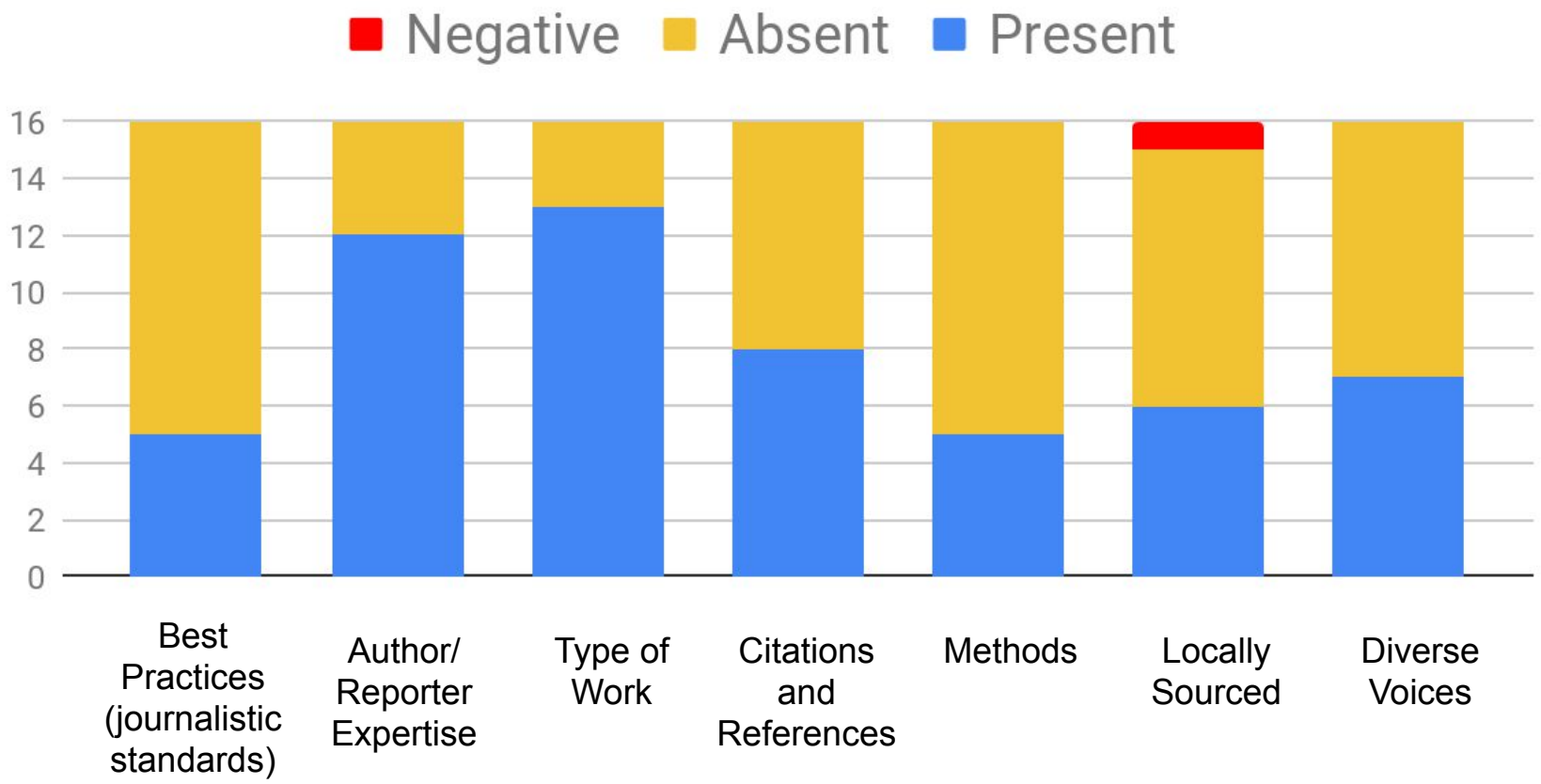
Interview Coding Results



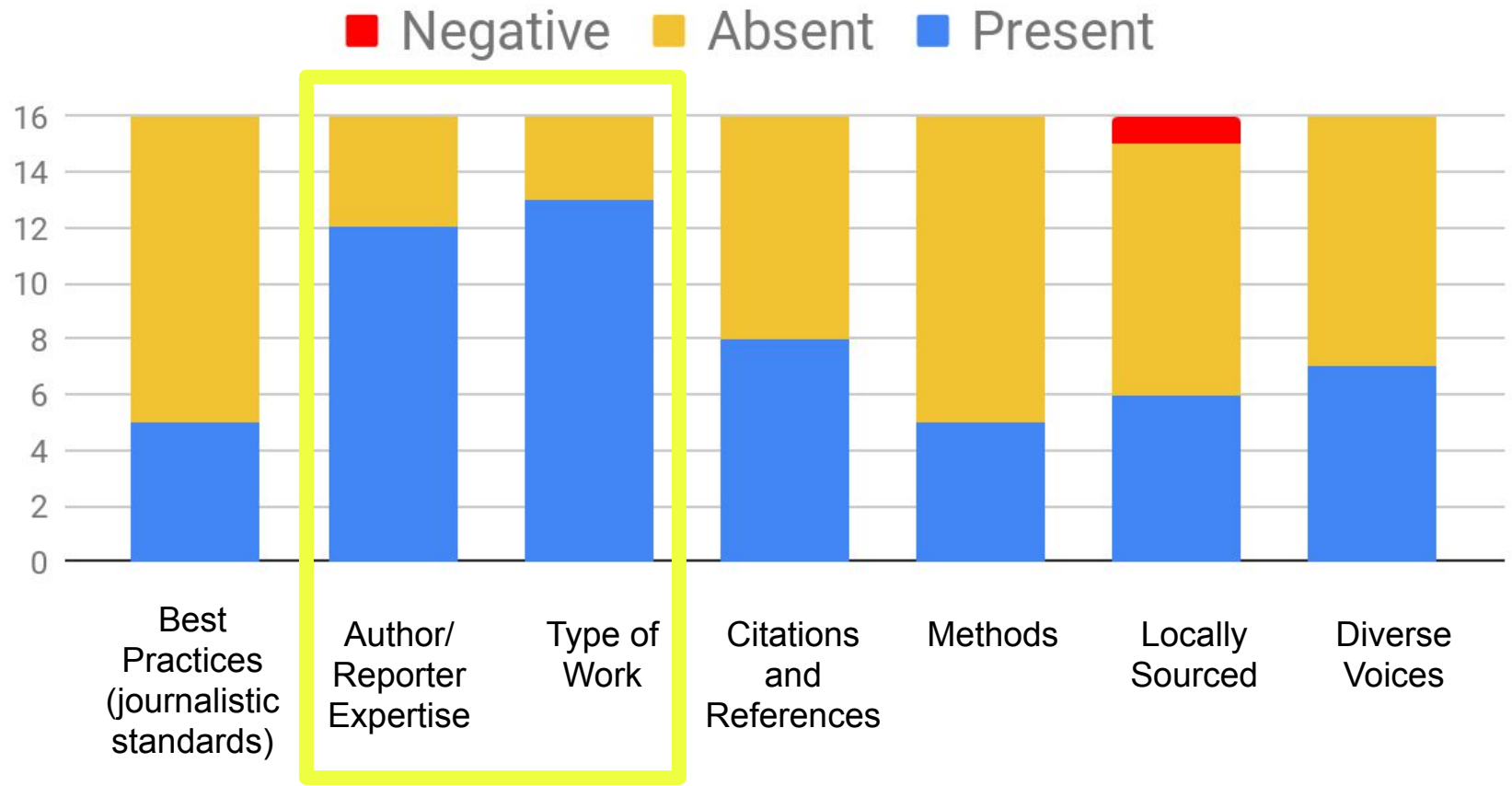
Interview Coding Results



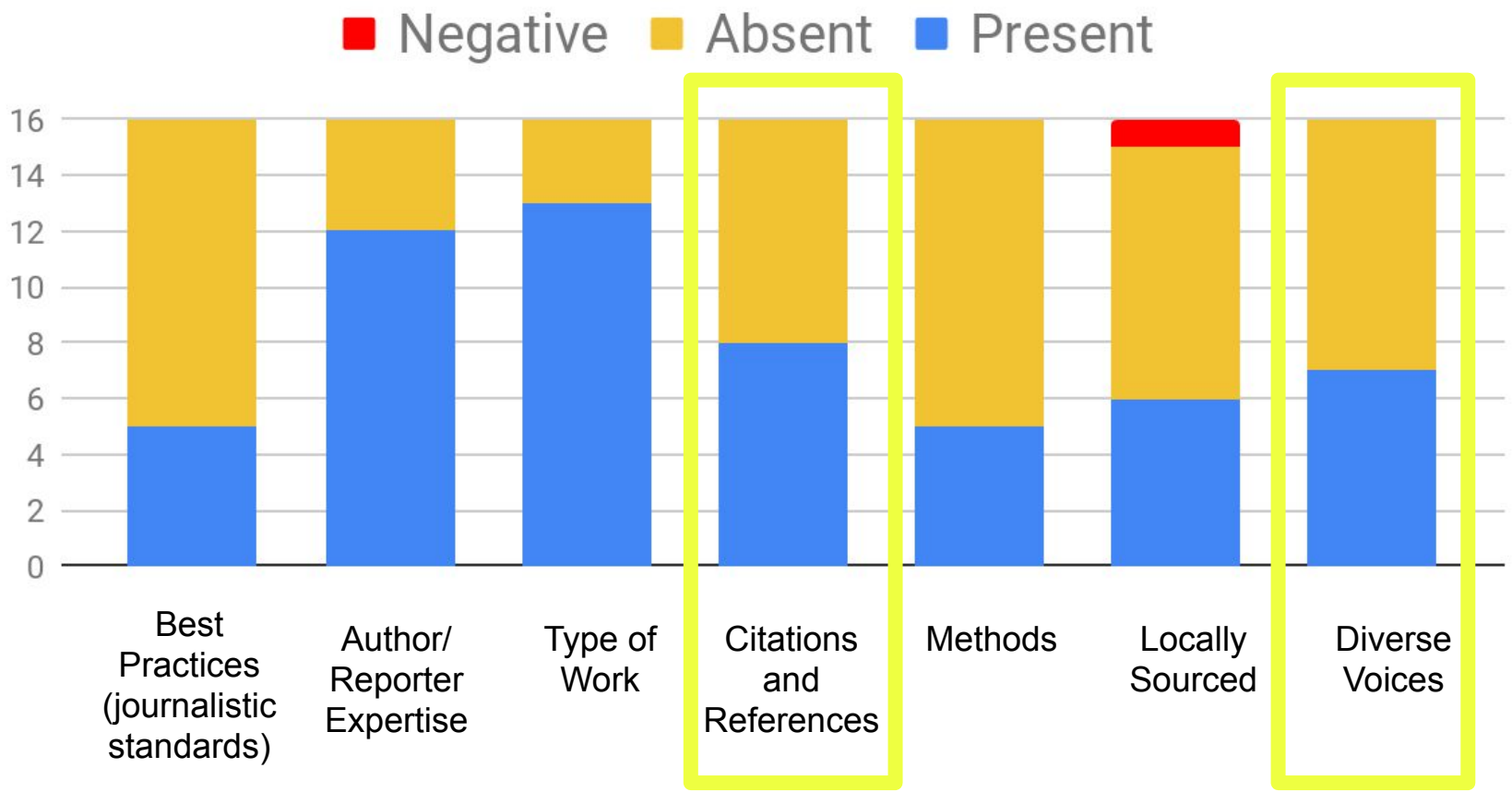
Source Analysis



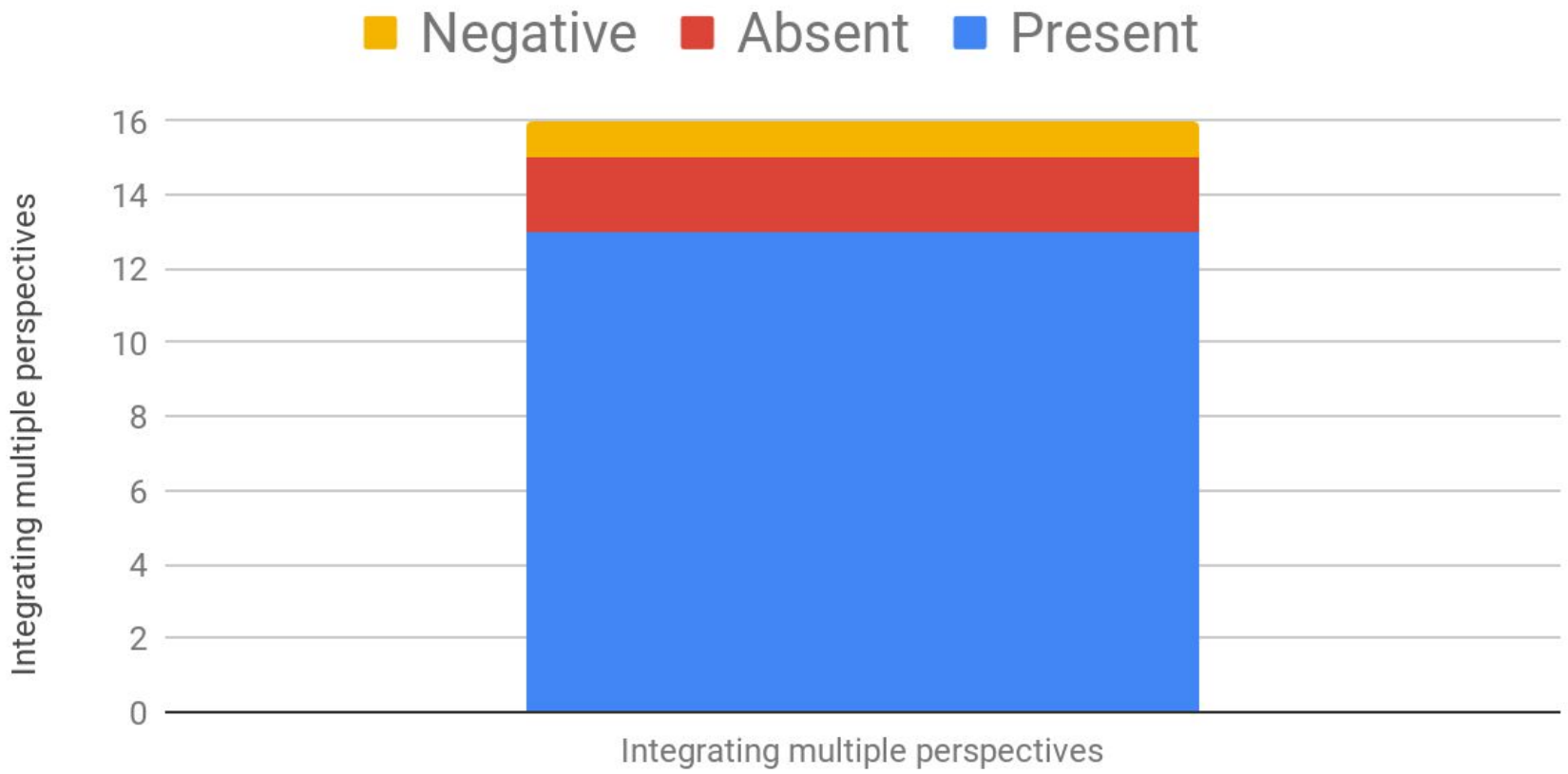
Source Analysis



Source Analysis



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)

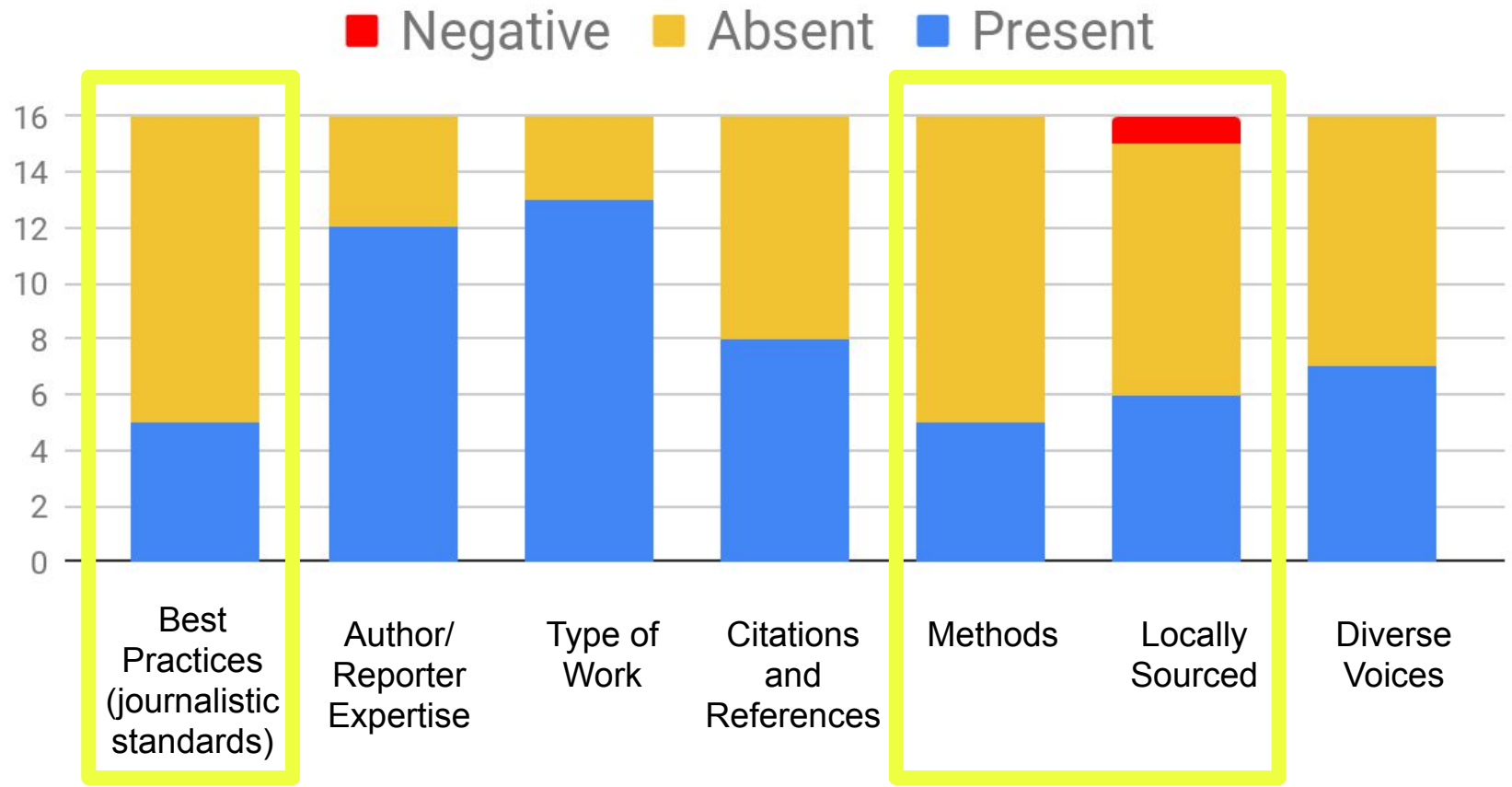
Integrating multiple perspectives

"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)

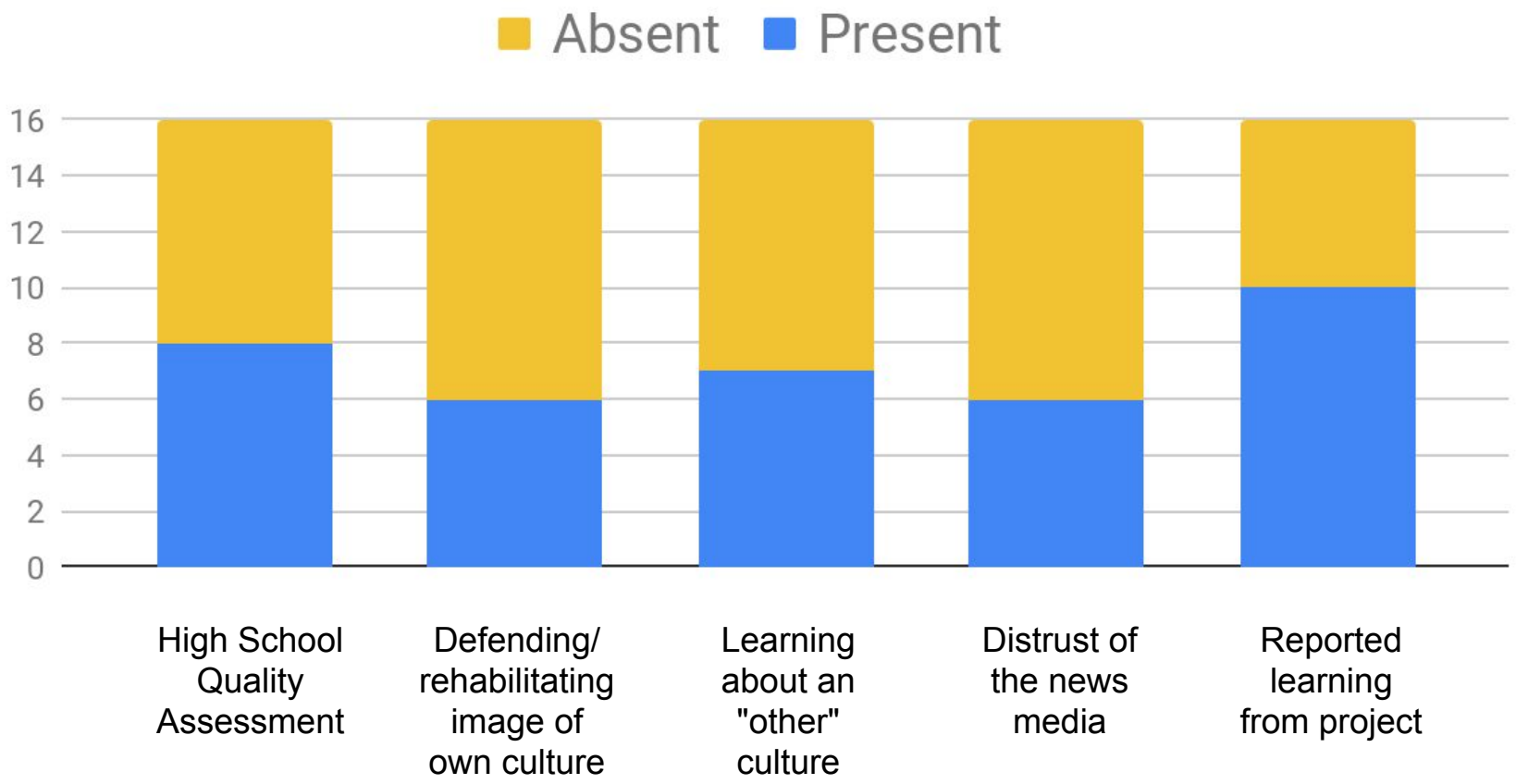
Integrating multiple perspectives

“[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)

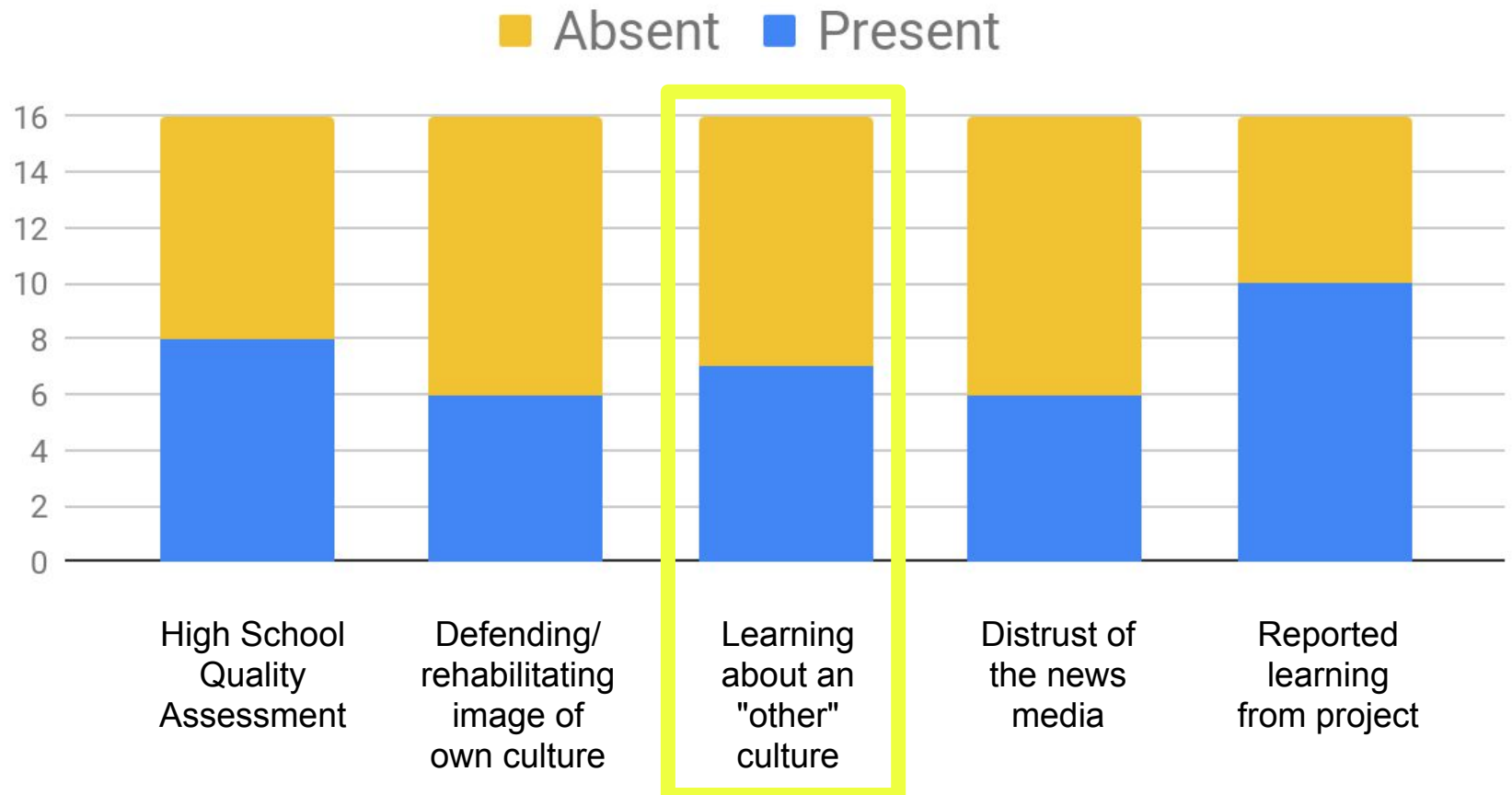
Source Analysis



Affective Dimensions



Affective Dimensions

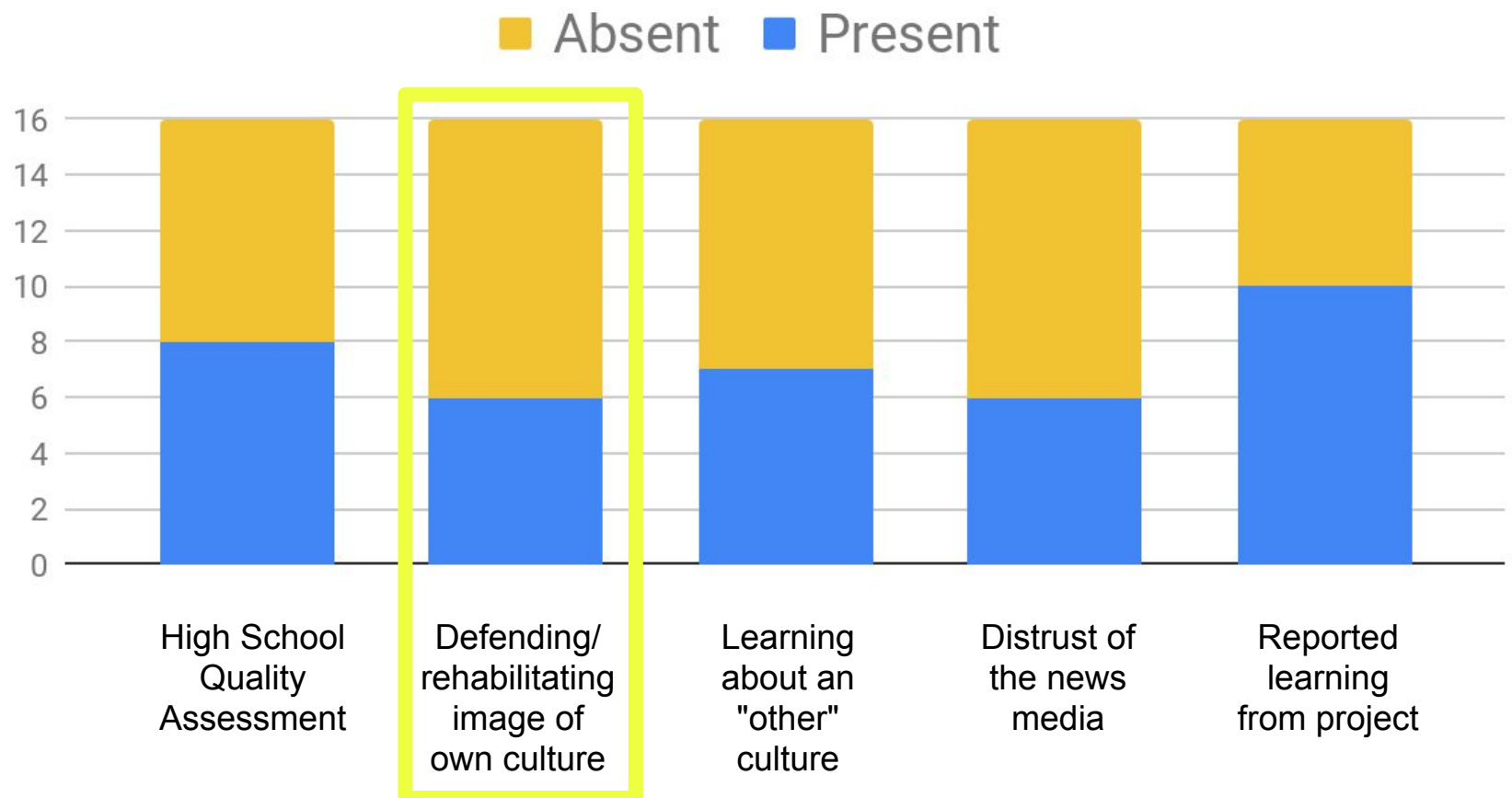


Learning about “other” cultures

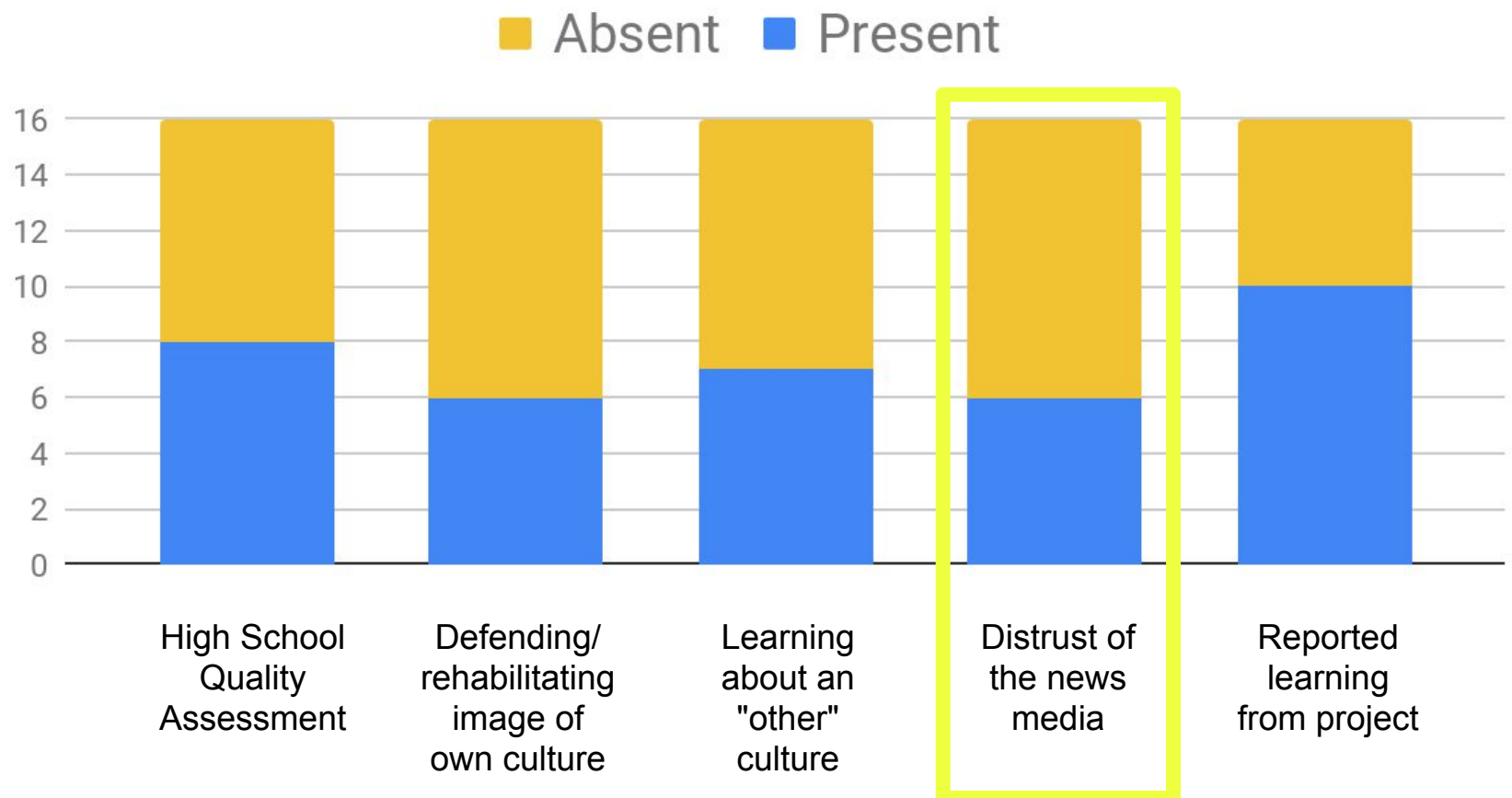
"You can't just [disapprove of eating dog meat], because dogs in American culture are very valued. You can't say that one animal is better than another. [...] I just jumped away from thinking about China and thought more about issues that are closer to home that are essentially the same issues, but we 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 22:08-25:58)

"The American culture, I guess, seems to be very fixated on themselves and not really like looking on the viewpoints of others." (CTW10 13:30)

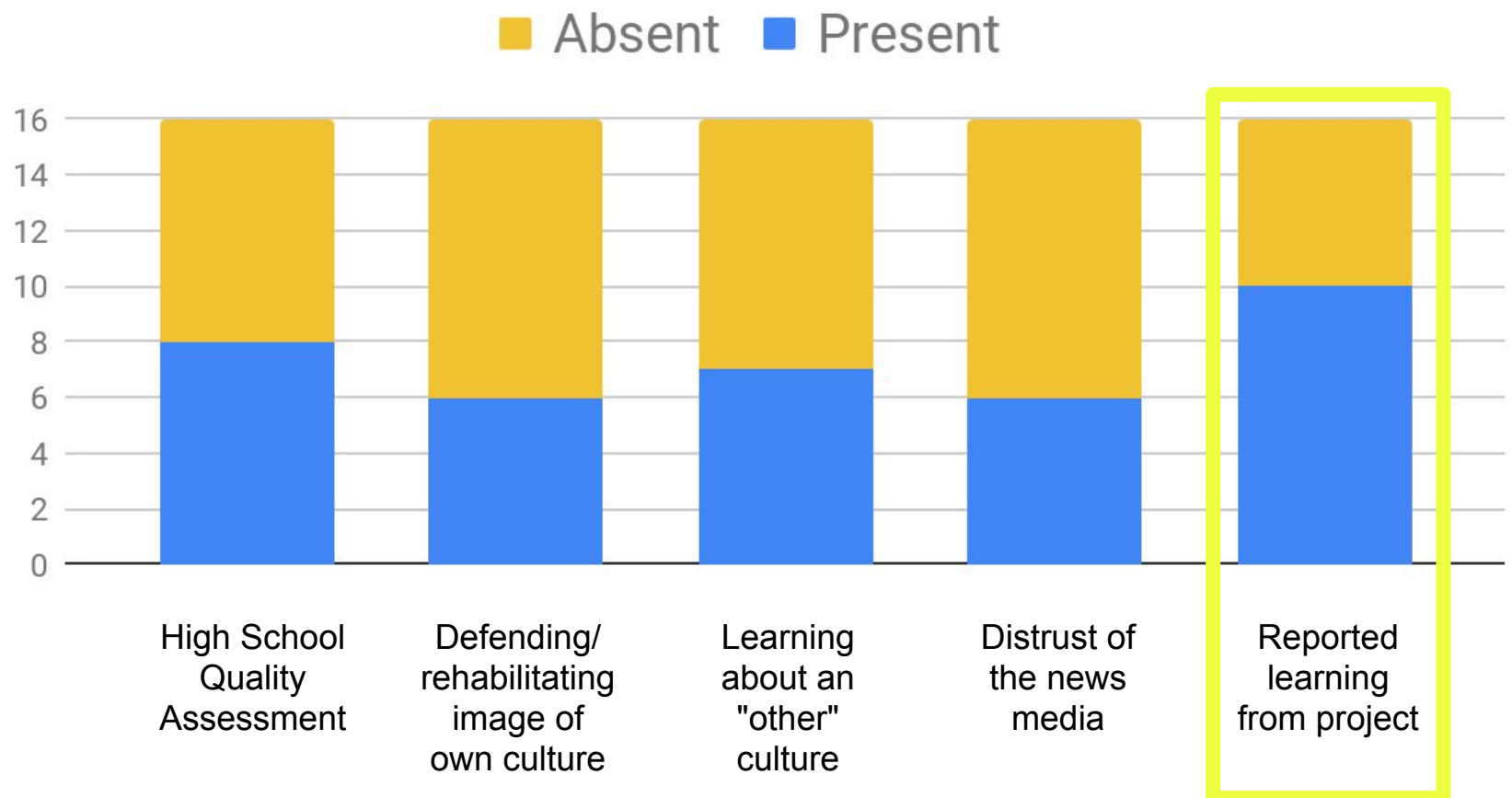
Affective Dimensions



Affective Dimensions



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)

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 10:21)

"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 22:24, emphasis added)

Curriculum Recommendations Based on Our Results

- Provide students with instruction in popular-source media literacy. Include scaffolding step(s) that focus on research, not just writing.
  - Doing so improves students' ability to engage multiple perspectives in their writing.
- 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.

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?

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 ½ of students described learning about a culture different than their own over the course of the project → ⅔ 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)
    - CTW10 13:30: "The American culture, I guess, seems to be very fixated on themselves and

Findings of Note: Affective Dimensions

About ⅓ of students reported skepticism of the news media

- This was especially likely for students who completed the discourse analysis project (⅗)
  - 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 ⅓ 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 09:22)

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