

Reliable Stories

Helping Students Get It Right with
Different Types of Credibility Material

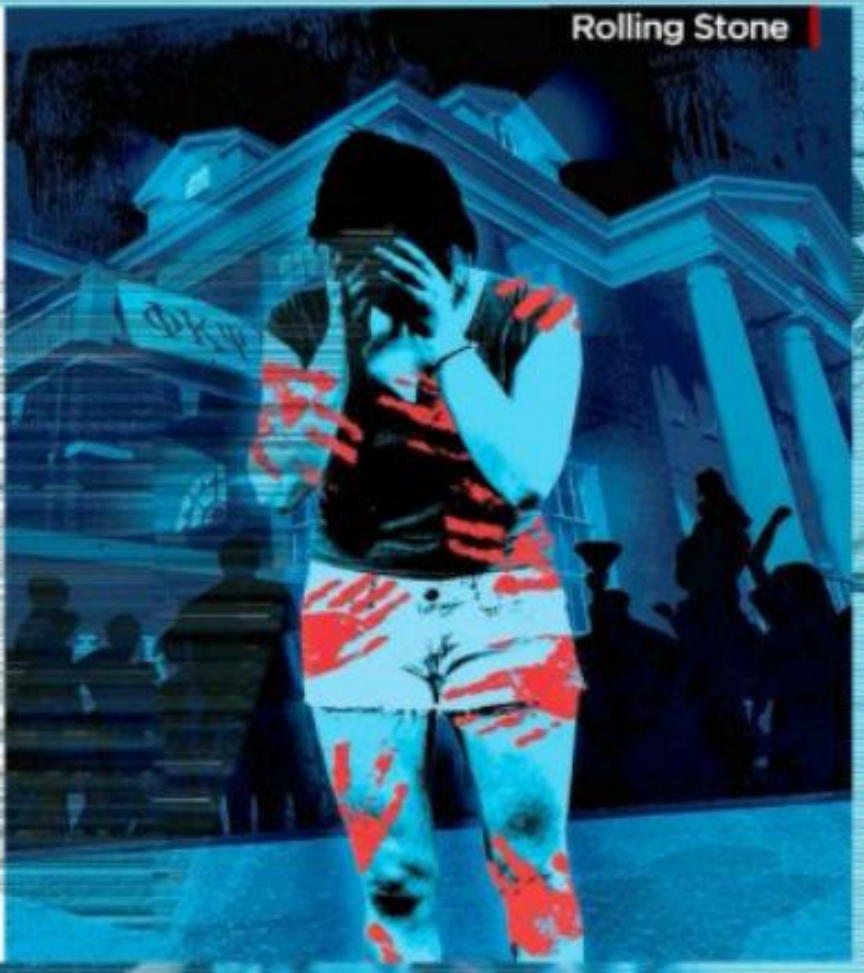
A RAPE ON CAMPUS

Jackie was just starting her freshman year at the University of Virginia when she was brutally assaulted by seven men at a frat party. When she tried to hold them accountable, a whole new kind of abuse began

Photo: Phillip Brasher/Photographer's Choice
The University of Virginia's reputation for being a liberal school is not always reflected in the actions of its students. In 2006, a group of seven men at a frat party brutally assaulted Jackie, a freshman at the time. The University of Virginia's response to the assault was slow and ineffective, leading to a lawsuit and a change in the school's policies.

Sixteen months ago, Jackie was a freshman at the University of Virginia. She was just starting her freshman year when she was brutally assaulted by seven men at a frat party. When she tried to hold them accountable, a whole new kind of abuse began.

BY SABRINA RUBIN ERDELY ILLUSTRATIONS BY JOHN RITTER



Plausibility over Fact

“The author of the discredited Rolling Stone magazine article about a woman's claim of being gang raped at a fraternity house sought to show jurors Friday why she found the woman so credible, **highlighting the emotion and level of detail with which she spoke during their interactions.**”

“Author of Retracted Rolling Stone Article Defends Relying on Jackie”, Chicago Tribune, Oct. 21, 2016.

Emotion and drama over Credibility

“Jackie and Erdely appear to have quickly developed **a close bond**, with Erdely sharing in Jackie’s excitement over her new boyfriend and trying to convince Jackie to seek treatment over her possible post-traumatic stress disorder. **‘I felt as though we really had developed a trusting and caring relationship,’** Erdely said.”

“Author of Retracted Rolling Stone Article Defends Relying on Jackie”, Chicago Tribune, Oct. 21, 2016.

Doubt over Evidence

“Perhaps more troubling are suggestions of collusion between Moscow and the Trump campaign. Trump strongly denies all this, the dossier has zero public evidence behind it, and it should be treated with skepticism. **But it reflects an unprecedented uncertainty: There is a disorienting kernel of doubt about whether we can fully trust the man who will occupy the Oval Office.**”

Source: Nicholas Kristof, “Donald Trump: Kremlin Employee of the Month?”, NYT, Jan. 14, 2017.

Manufactured Credibility

“It’s both plausible and completely unsubstantiated. Unlike Trump’s claims that Obama was foreign-born, even after the president produced his birth certificate, this hasn’t been disproved or discredited, and it was regarded as credible enough to brief the president and president-elect about. This occupies a murky middle ground: Maybe it’s true and maybe not.”

Source: Nicholas Kristof, “Donald Trump: Kremlin Employee of the Month?”, NYT, Jan. 14, 2017.

Donald Trump Explains

[Why You Don't Need Evidence](#)

Lay and expert credibility

Simos Georgiou, a police lieutenant in Pangrati precinct for 22 years, said the crime you encounter today is more violent. “You get more people coming in filing reports that they have been beaten up and mugged,” he said. “Twenty years ago, it was always burglaries that had happened when no one was home.”

Georgiou, decorated twice for stopping robberies at gunpoint, said that if you’re not willing to risk your life, then you should probably forget about being a police officer.

Eurostat data bear him out. According to Eurostat, which compiles data based on official death certificates from EU countries, between 1990 and 2000 an average of three policemen and policewomen died in the line of duty in Greece each year. Between 2000 and 2010, there was an average of eight such deaths a year.

The Need for Skepticism

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What We Can Do

- Professors: Set students research tasks that require very few sources but have them check the reliability of those sources.
- Librarians: Ask students if they have checked the substance of their source, however reputable it seems.

The Need for Depth

“The University of Pennsylvania found out in their research that women use language which is ‘nicer, more pleasant, and more intellectual, and rated male language as stronger, louder, and more aggressive.’ Using foul language was found mostly in male speech. This is why men associate foul language with their gender.”

Sabrina Erdely Explains

[The Problem with Superficial Research \(2012\)](#)