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Assignment 1: Trusting Your Source

Trusting your source for accurate information, historical accounts, and unbiased delivery is incredibly important when writing academic papers; especially since students are so trusting of professors, scholars, or those that display merit. But when dealing with topics, such as the civil war, I think it would be impossible to find a completely accurate and unbiased delivery of the historical accounts of the civil war. After reading the reviews from the newspaper book reviewer, online blogger, and the reviews from Amazon.com book buyers; I am going into "Battle Cry of Freedom" open to possibility.

After reading the review from the New York Times book reviewer, I felt excited. Looking forward to "... the best one-volume treatment of its subject I have ever come across. It may actually be the best ever published (New York Times Reviewer)." He did point out some discrepancies, like the chapter titles; but he made it quite clear it was not at all a ding in McPherson's credibility or work as a whole. The book reviewer also seemed especially enthusiastic about McPherson foot notations and bibliography at the end of the book, which I would assume in his line of work (checking his sources when doing a review) would come in handy.

Once again, McPherson's detailed footnotes and bibliography are praised upon but this time by the online blogger. Even though the online blogger was not as enthusiastic about McPherson's book, he or she still commended him on his "balanced" perspectives. He also ended his review by stating that McPherson's work was "fair and extremely informative." Now, since reading all the reviews it was reassuring that McPherson's efforts to support his facts with an assumingly impressive bibliography and footnotes was dually noted by New York times book reviewer and the online blogger.

The reviews from the Amazon.com website were a completely different story. I was taken back by the accusations of false information and biased perspective, but this is a great example of why we check our sources. There were some reviews from Amazon.com that said McPherson was one-sided against the South, and dismissed important details because of this. Another reviewer actually cited the pages he

had issues with, and then followed each "inaccurate" statement from McPherson with his version, but he left out the sources for his "factual" version. Some of the Amazon.com review authors were well-written, which leads me to believe that they are well informed and educated; but others not so much. Sometimes with reviews such as these it is easy to simply dismiss the reviews because the authors are unknown, we do not know their academic authority or the sources of their knowledge; but it plants a seed of doubt for a future reader no matter their merits or lack thereof.

While reading "Battle Cry of Freedom" there are a couple things that I will look out for due to these reviews. I will be paying more attention to McPherson's point of view in order to decide for myself if he is biased, or if he really tells his story of the civil war from both angles equally. The other issue that was brought up is true motive in the South, which some Amazon.com reviewers felt was overlooked because of McPherson's love for the North. I would like to read more about the accounts from a southerner because all I have heard seems to have come from a northerner's perspective. Out of all of the reviews, I trust the one from the New York Times. I am drawn to it because of how well-written it was, and the excitement he expressed about his bibliography. But when it comes down to it, I will be making my own decisions as I read through the "Battle Cry for Freedom." If I choose to question events or facts, I will check McPherson's sources and then compare them to other accounts as needed. I believe that when we are discussing an event like the civil war: not all facts will be the same, for every perspective is different. And not every single event or account in the civil war can be proven, so perspectives and opinions have room to grow; that is why there are so many books written about this topic.

