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## “Defining Confirmation Bias” Video Transcript

### **Brendan Nyhan**

American Political Scientist and Assistant Professor, Dartmouth

*Confirmation bias* is the idea that we tend to accept information unquestionably when it reinforces some predisposition we have or some existing belief or attitude.

The flip side to that is *disconfirmation bias*—people tend to be unduly skeptical of information that contradicts some predisposition they have or point of view. We tend to be too accepting of information we want to hear and too critical of information we don’t want to hear.

The problem is when it comes to matters of fact where there is a right answer, there is evidence that is overwhelming for one side or the other and yet our predispositions are getting in the way of us getting that information.

Confirmation bias is important because we’re often trying to evaluate information and we would like to evaluate it in a way that’s accurate, but we also sometimes care about what the outcome is.

We have a preference for who’s right and when that preference affects what we believe, we may come to have inaccurate views, we may tend to have a narrow-minded view or a biased view, because our predispositions are influencing our judgments about the world.

### **Kevin Merida**

Managing Editor, *The Washington Post* (2013–2015)

I think readers are, they’re living in a world now where they can go find whatever will confirm their bias. If the *Washington Post* doesn’t report Ferguson the way they want it reported, they can go to a place that feeds their ideology, that feeds their view of the world. And those sites exist, that’s why they’re in business.

### **Tom Rosenstiel**

Executive Director, American Press Institute

We’re in a moment where people are choosing their own media and in politics, national politics, we have a sort of separation. You see more confirmation bias in source selection when it comes to national politics than anywhere else. But actually, moments of crisis like Ferguson and Baltimore and, I shudder to say, the next instance are moments where we open up the aperture just a little bit more and the meaning can change.

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## Student Notes

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**Student Notes** (continued)