

The quote was real; the *sentence* was not

One mechanism of institutional communication — how an accurate-looking quotation, trimmed or cut with an ellipsis, can reverse what a source actually said.

BEFORE YOU BEGIN

How This Guide Works

This is part of **Incognati Civics**, applying the field-guide format to the way institutions communicate — press releases, official statements, guidance documents, corrections, embargoes — the packaging between a record and the public, examined the same way regardless of which institution or which side it favors. Each specimen goes deep on one mechanism, with primary documents, regulations, and nonpartisan scholarship listed in full on the references page.

INCOGNATI CIVICS — INSTITUTIONAL COMMUNICATIONS

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Selective Quotation & Ellipsis

Verba Excerpta

Governing precedent / case Quotation out of context **Status** Recurring in official statements and ads

OBSERVED SPECIMEN

STATEMENTS, ADS, AND PRESS MATERIALS

*An official statement quotes a report, a court, or a person — every word inside the quotation marks is genuine — but the surrounding sentence, the conditional clause, or the very next line is dropped. A review that concluded “there is no evidence of X, though further study is warranted” becomes “no evidence of X.” A film critic’s “a **stunning** failure” becomes “stunning.” The quotation is accurate at the word level and false at the meaning level; the ellipsis or trim is where the reversal happens.*

THE HOOK

Quotation marks signal fidelity, so a trimmed quote reads as the source’s own position.

THE MECHANISM

Meaning lives in whole sentences and context. Removing a qualifier, a ‘not,’ or the next clause can invert a claim while every quoted word stays true.

Field mark: when a quotation is doing heavy work, find the full passage — a missing qualifier or the next sentence can reverse a statement whose individual words are all accurate.

See the full references page for complete citations.

References

every source checkable at the link provided; DOIs given where the source has one

REFERENCE · SPJ

Society of Professional Journalists, Code of Ethics — context and fair representation of sources.

<https://www.spj.org/ethicscode.asp>

Standard against quoting out of context or misrepresenting a source's meaning.

REFERENCE

Nonpartisan fact-checking method guides (e.g., quote verification against the full transcript).

<https://www.poynter.org/ifcn/>

IFCN-affiliated guidance on verifying quotations against the complete source.

Reading a Quotation: A Gut Check

four questions before a real quote convinces you of a false claim

1 Find the full passage

Read the sentence around the quote, not just the quote.

2 Look for the ellipsis

A ‘...’ marks where something was removed — ask what.

3 Restore the qualifier

A dropped ‘not,’ ‘though,’ or ‘unless’ can flip the meaning.

4 Check the next line

The reversal is often in the sentence right after the quote.

INCOGNATI CIVICS

The Series Continues

This is Specimen No. 11 of the Institutional Communications section within Incognati Civics. The full queue of twelve specimens is listed on the cover. This section joins Elections, Federal Laws, and Official Data Reporting within Civics, with local government planned beyond it. The Incognati Atlas catalogs the underlying patterns across all of it.