

“(Journalists) should walk in the front door of a story, not sneak in the back door and then rationalize the deception by claiming it was the only way to get at the truth.”

Marvin Kalb,
U.S. journalist and educator

Every decision a journalist makes when gathering, organizing and presenting the news—with text or images—requires value judgments. All decisions have consequences that are direct and indirect, intended and unintended, short-term and long-term.

A journalist's decisions affect others. Those decisions may influence thousands of people's opinions on a political issue or a person's choice to remain in the community after being the subject of a story. Ethical journalism remains the same regardless of the form or medium. Journalists examine their actions on the basis of personal and professional standards. They abide by the standards of their organization, industry, society and community. Journalists work ethically, which means acting and thinking morally. To be moral means to distinguish between right and wrong. And journalists stay within the bounds of good taste and common decency.

ETHICAL DECISION MAKING

Thousands of journalists make many good decisions every day. However, when a story is wrong or unethical, the news organization that reported it suffers a blow to its reputation. The organization usually dismisses the reporter or editor responsible for it. This alone gives journalists a powerful reason to think through ethical issues.

Macro and Micro Issues

Journalists wrestling with ethical decisions identify a story's macro and micro issues. Macro issues are the main reasons for publishing the story—the objectives. Micro issues, such as the wording of a story or its headline, what visuals accompany it and where it is placed, tend to be less consequential but still important.

Too often, journalists get caught up in micro issues and forget a story's macro issues. Journalists in doubt about a story need to review the objective for the story. They also need to ask their standard questions: Whom does it hurt, and how many? Whom does it help and how many?

For example, in some cities, coalitions of merchants, homeowners and government officials combat prostitution because it often accompanies drug use and violence. They encourage the police to make more arrests, and they ask news organizations to publish the names of both prostitutes and their "johns," or customers. Editors realize that such publicity could ruin reputations, marriages and careers. Both clients and prostitutes often have spouses, children and colleagues who know nothing of their outside activities or of their criminal actions. In a big bust of 20 accused, one john was a scout leader and another was in a seminary. One of the prostitutes attended law school and another was trying to make ends meet financially for her family. Customers and prostitutes were both male and female. An editor might decide that identifying prostitutes and their clients could hurt the offenders and their families but benefit an entire community.

As the editors discussed the story, they initially focused on several micro issues: (1) placement—a story placed on a jump page is less damaging to the accused than a story on the home page; (2) space—a short story is not as noticeable as a longer one; and (3) graphics and visuals—the type and number of illustrations, if any, can set the tone.

The editors then revisited the macro issue—ridding the community of an unsavory business associated with drugs, violence and disease and other threats to family neighborhoods, children

news media credibility

News organizations must maintain credibility for two main reasons:

- First, people depend on news media for their information. They use multiple traditional and online sources. What separates professional journalists from citizen bloggers and everyone else who writes online is that journalists are trained in news judgment, vet their sources and report news accurately. News stories influence audiences, helping them form opinions ("Obamacare is a good/bad thing for me") and decide on daily activities ("I need to vote for the property tax increase today") that can have a great impact on their quality of life.
- Second, news media must be credible to succeed as businesses. News organizations need audiences for financial support. If audiences doubt the credibility of a particular news organization, they will change websites, channels or newspapers. When audiences turn away, advertising and subscription revenues decline. News budgets shrink and coverage diminishes, which drives away more viewers and readers. The downward spiral usually continues until that news organization ceases business.

two sets of guiding questions

A journalist should ask several questions when facing an ethical decision. Two of the most important are:

- Who will be hurt, and how many?
- Who will be helped, and how many?

Many news stories hurt someone or some group. If the story hurts a few people and helps several hundred, then publishing the story is most likely justified. Perhaps a local doctor has been accused of misdiagnosing symptoms, which has led to unnecessary surgeries and uncured ailments. The story would hurt the doctor and his family, but it would help many people when choosing a doctor.

Once the decision to publish a story has been made, journalists sometimes get too involved with the details of writing and publishing a story and forget to ask a second set of questions:

- What is the objective of the story?
- Will my decision contribute to the reason for writing the story?

Asking these questions will help you decide, for example, whether to include how a teenager committed suicide, if the objective of the story is to educate the community about the increase of teenager suicides nationally and the signs of teenage depression, using the incident as one of several local statistics.

six guides to ethical decisions

Retired journalist and professor H. Eugene Goodwin advised his journalists and students to ask themselves six questions while making an ethical decision. These are in addition to: Who will be hurt, and how many? Who will be helped, and how many?

1. What do we usually do in cases like this? (What is the news organization's policy on this type of situation, and is it a good policy?)
2. Is there a better alternative? (Harmful results often can be avoided or eased by trying something different.)
3. Can I look myself in the mirror tomorrow? (You must think about how you feel and whether you can live with your decision.)
4. Can I justify this to family, friends and the public? (If we know we have to explain our decisions to the public—in an editor's column, for example—then we might be more careful about our decisions.)
5. What principles or values can I apply? (Some overarching principles, such as truth, justice or fairness, will take priority over others.)
6. Does this decision fit the kind of journalism I believe in and the way people should treat one another? (Our judgments should correspond with the way we believe the media ought to be and the way people in a civilized society ought to behave.)

and businesses. Once they clarified their reasons for running the story, they were able to resolve the micro issues more easily. They put the story on the home page with a list of the names and mug shots of both the accused customers and prostitutes.

ETHICS MATTERS

Today's journalists are highly ethical and are always doing more to raise their ethical standards. Furthermore, they are concerned with audience perception of their behavior, even when they are acting ethically. Most news organizations publish guidelines to help journalists with the most common issues.

Some ethical issues arise in connection with deciding whether to publish something; these are called "content issues." Other issues arise from the conduct of the journalists gathering the information; these may be called "conduct issues."

ETHICS ISSUES REGARDING CONDUCT

Journalist's decisions, behaviors and practices make up their conduct. While pursuing stories, journalists are aware that their personal actions affect other people. Their conduct also influences how the public sees the news media.

Plagiarizing and Fabricating Information: Never Acceptable

"Plagiarism" is copying somebody else's work or taking somebody else's ideas and passing them off as one's own. Copying and pasting quotes and other passages from the Internet have made plagiarizing easy. But it is also illegal. Journalists who plagiarize or fabricate information are dismissed, as in the following examples.

Editors at The Washington Post fired Ben Domenech, a 24-year-old blogger, when they discovered he had previously plagiarized in printed and digital articles from a variety of sources. The New York Times reported that, in an interview, "Domenech said he never 'purposefully' plagiarized but admitted that some passages in his articles were identical to those previously published elsewhere."

In one well-known case, The New York Times fired reporter Jayson Blair after editors found fabrications in many of his stories. His duplicity included making up sources, creating false quotes from real people, not personally covering events about which he wrote, and lifting major portions of his information from other news reports. A follow-up story in The New York Times stated that Blair "repeatedly violated the cardinal tenet of journalism, which is simply truth."

Journalists who plagiarize or fabricate often complain that deadlines and competition forced them to act unethically. Legions of other journalists, however, work under the same deadlines and uphold high principles. They understand that no matter the explanation, if they plagiarize or make up information, they are lying to the public. The Boston Globe argued in an editorial that journalists who make up stories or plagiarize are stealing something more valuable than money. They are stealing the public's trust and the news organization's credibility.

Quoting Sources

Journalists search for and interview people who can be good sources for their stories. A source may be a witness to an accident, a citizen affected by a government action or an authority on a particular issue. Journalists seek sources with different opinions so that all sides of an issue are presented.

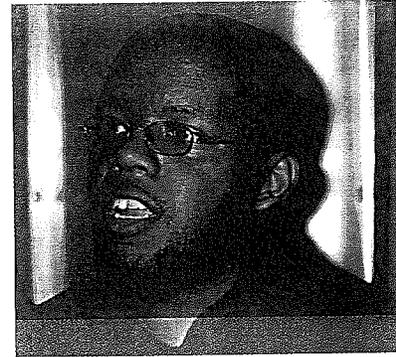
FRIENDS AND RELATIVES Students in journalism classes often want to use friends and relatives as sources in their stories. This is a bad idea, however, because it lessens the credibility of the story. Sources should be varied, not consistently hold the same background as the reporter. It also compromises a journalist's integrity because a relative or friend usually will not mind if the journalist makes up or changes a quote to fit into the story. Furthermore, when a journalist uses a friend as a source, the friend expects to be presented in a positive manner, or the journalist tries to make that friend look good in exchange for being in the story.

SCRATCHING BACKS Journalists need to know where to draw the line between being friendly and being friends with sources. Once that line is crossed, it becomes harder for journalists to remain objective. Also, sources who become friends expect preferential treatment. They may assume journalists will clean up their bad language or omit quotes that would reflect badly on them.

The old adage "You scratch my back and I'll scratch yours" is applicable here. Sources give credibility to stories, offer ideas, add a different perspective and help with leads for more information. However, sources do not consistently offer their time and information freely or out of the goodness of their hearts. They usually expect something in return. They might want only their point of view published. They might expect publicity in another story to further their own interests.

A journalist's job is to be honest. But journalists sometimes ignore stories that might hurt their relationship with a source. Some critics believe that it is because of friendly relationships with government officials that journalists simply accepted the reason that the United States invaded Iraq was because Saddam Hussein had weapons of mass destruction.

Journalists should not fear writing stories that cast sources, particularly political or governmental sources, in a negative light. The source might freeze the journalist out for a while, but not forever. And if journalists cultivate a variety of sources representing different opinions, they can continue to do their job. Journalists gain respect for writing balanced, fair stories. When a particularly negative story surfaces about an important source, the reporter might request the story be assigned to another reporter. Importantly, when journalists find that they are becoming too chummy with a source, it is time to ask the editor for a change in beats.



Journalists have a good reputation of being trustworthy. However, Jayson Blair of the New York Times abused the trust of his colleagues when he plagiarized his stories.



guest COLUMNIST

How to Get Information Out of Sources Without Cozying Up

By Dave Cuillier

Here are 10 tips on how to keep and maintain relationships with sources without getting buddy-buddy.

1. Be up front with sources from the start. Tell them, "I am not on your side." Set the standard that you are going to seek the truth and that you are going to dig deeply for it. People will take you seriously, sources will open up, and you will get better stories.
2. Be respectful, friendly, accurate and honest. Sources will respect you and talk to you even if they don't like what you report.
3. Avoid surprises. If you are going to publish or air something negative about someone, let them know in advance and get their side. They won't like it, but they will understand.
4. If you go to lunch with a source or to a social gathering, be there as a journalist, not a participant. Do not accept gifts, and pay for your own meals to delineate the boundaries.
5. One of the best ways to get to know something is through feature writing. Write positive stories as you try to get to know an agency, but make sure they are newsworthy features. Make sure the stories are legitimate and helpful for the public.
6. Even more important, don't be afraid to write negative, legitimate newsworthy stories about your sources early on. This will make clear the role you play in society. As long as you are accurate and up front, most sources will understand. Also, it will loosen up other tips about wrongdoing and problems in an agency.
7. Remind yourself: Public officials need me more than I need them. They will come back, and even if they are less forthcoming, I can get the information through other means.
8. Be transparent. If my boss, or more important, readers and viewers, knew what I was doing with my source, would they approve? Always think of your reporting as transparent.
9. If you feel that you can't pursue a negative story for fear of alienating important sources, discuss it with your boss and ask that another reporter be assigned to that story. Also, it might be time to shift to another beat.
10. If you're a supervisor, make sure your journalists know they can talk to you about these issues. The alternative is that they might hide good stories from you.

From Quill, April 2007.

ANONYMOUS SOURCES Journalists make clear at the beginning of an interview that everything is on the record and attributable. The public doubts sources who do not want to be named or held accountable for what they say. The credibility of the story and the journalist will diminish when no one is named to back up assertions. When a source supplies initial information but does not want to be attributed, the journalist finds someone else willing to talk on the record, if the story is important. For some beats, such as national security, reporters must deal with anonymous sources, but those beats are rare.

Most newsrooms have a two-source rule to confirm reports—and more is better, especially when the source is anonymous. Following the Jan. 8, 2011, shooting spree in Tucson, NPR inaccurately reported Gabrielle Giffords' death because "sources" in the Pima County, Arizona, sheriff's office confirmed the death. The second confirmation came from a congresswoman's office, who got the information from someone else. Neither source was identified, and neither was asked how he or she knew the information.

Recording Interviews: Audio Recorders and Video Cameras

Journalists ask sources if they may record the interview. They do not secretly record their interviews with sources because that tactic is devious and unfair.

Journalists refer to recorded interviews when their notes are confusing. They also use recorders to protect themselves in case they are accused of lying. Sources might claim the journalist misquoted them or even fabricated the entire interview. Some sources honestly forget what they said. If journalists record their interviews, however, they can prove their stories are accurate. They can also protect themselves more easily in libel suits.

The use of hidden cameras raises additional issues. Audio recordings capture only a person's voice, and journalists use them to make sure they have complete, accurate information. Video cameras, however, also record people's faces, clothing and actions. These videos often end up on television or the Internet. Many people would consider hidden cameras a greater violation of privacy than hidden audio recorders.

Lawsuits for invasion of privacy can arise when journalists hide video cameras or audio recorders in places where the people being recorded can reasonably expect their words and actions to be private. The threat of lawsuits discourages journalists from using hidden cameras or audio recorders unless the story is extraordinarily important and they have exhausted all other means of getting the information they need.

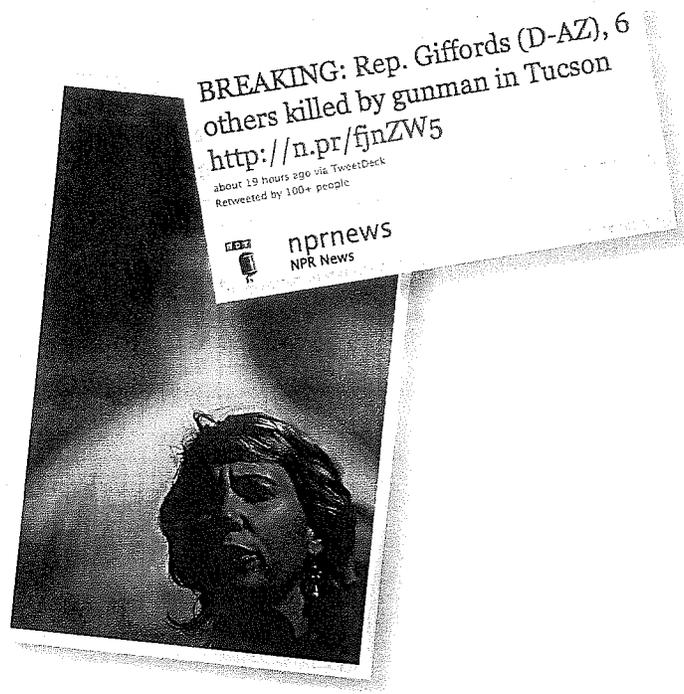
Eliminating Conflicts of Interest

A conflict of interest exists when journalists, their friends and relatives, or news organizations are in a position to benefit directly from the stories they cover.

ACCEPTING GIFTS: "FREEBIES" Most journalists refuse to accept money or anything else of value from the people about whom they write. Businesses do not usually give gifts without expecting something in return. And gifts could bias a journalist's story or cause the public to suspect gifts have influenced the coverage. An editor at The Washington Post has said, "On some newspapers (this one included), the acceptance of a bribe—for that is what it is—is a firing offense."

Gift givers are told their gift cannot be accepted because of policy guidelines. Unless it is worth only a few dollars—a cup of coffee, for example—journalists refuse gifts. Other newsroom guidelines require journalists to return the gift or send it to a charity. Journalists at the Detroit Free Press auction the amassed gifts annually and give the proceeds to charity.

Accepting gifts had unforeseeable repercussions for a city government reporter who resigned from The Press-Enterprise in Temecula, California. After a fire destroyed the home of reporter Tim O'Leary, he accepted money and gifts from city council members and secondhand clothing from a charity with the aid of a school



district trustee who wanted to help. Later, a city council member who gave \$500 to O'Leary became the mayor and the school district trustee became a city council member. When Mayor Chuck Washington complained to O'Leary about his coverage of a speech, the reporter rethought his situation and decided to return the \$500 with interest. Editors could find no evidence that the gifts had an influence on O'Leary's coverage, but accepting gifts is a violation of newsroom policy.

ACCEPTING TRIPS: "JUNKETS" Free trips, called "junkets," were once common. Fashion writers were invited to New York and television critics to Hollywood, with all their expenses paid. Sports writers might accompany their local teams to games in distant cities, with the teams paying all the writers' expenses.

Many travel writers insist they could not afford to travel if hotels, airlines or other sponsors did not pay for them. Their stories are often compromised and unrealistic, however, because most people on holiday do not get complimentary trips with first-class traveling and managers' red-carpet treatment. Thus, the writer's experience neither resembles that of most travelers nor helps them decide how to spend their vacations.

General Motors offered student journalists free round-trip airfare to Las Vegas, a night's stay at a hotel on the strip and the opportunity to drive new sports cars and SUVs in its First College Journalists Event during a weekend in September. The event was part of GM's campaign to target the 25-and-under set. Student journalists from many universities took the bait. One reporter for a student newspaper said that she was "inspired" by the junket and was going to suggest her paper run a full page on cars. But journalism professors and advisers said the trip contradicted the tenets taught in ethics classes. They also complained it was wrong for GM to lure student journalists, who are still learning about their profession.

PARTICIPATING IN THE NEWS Journalists want to avoid conflicts of interest that compromise their objectivity. Journalists also avoid even the appearance of a conflict and, therefore, the appearance of bias.

Journalists have lives outside of the newsroom, and sometimes those outside activities turn journalists into newsmakers. When that happens, editors worry that their journalists' involvement in events might undermine public confidence in the news organization's objectivity. Editors insist journalists' first obligation is to their primary employer. Reporters continue to represent their employers as objective news gatherers even after they leave work for the day. Journalists should "remain free of associations and activities that may compromise integrity or damage credibility," according to the Society of Professional Journalists Code of Ethics.

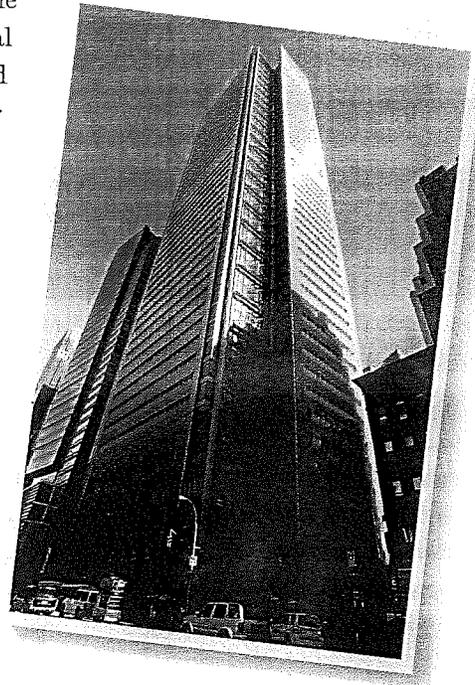
News executives generally agree that reporters should not hold public office, either elected or appointed. Most also agree journalists ought not serve as party officials or help with anyone's election campaign. When in doubt about a possible conflict, journalists talk with their supervisors.

Sometimes news media management activities present conflicts. For example, The New York Times teamed up with a commercial real estate development company, Forest City Ratner Companies, to erect a 52-story building near Times Square that would serve mostly as the Times headquarters. Included in the deal, but not disclosed to the public, was the caveat that if the real estate company was

short of funds, the Times was obligated to lend it \$119.5 million to complete the building. Thus, when Forest City Ratner became embroiled in a controversial \$3.5 billion development deal in Brooklyn, readers might have wondered whether stories in the Times would support Forest City Ratner's endeavor because of the newspaper's financial obligation to cover their joint project, should the developers lose.

FREELANCING Journalists at most news organizations are free to accept outside jobs, provided these jobs do not conflict with the journalists' regular work. Typically, journalists can work as freelancers, but they cannot sell their work to their employers' competitors, such as other media in the same market.

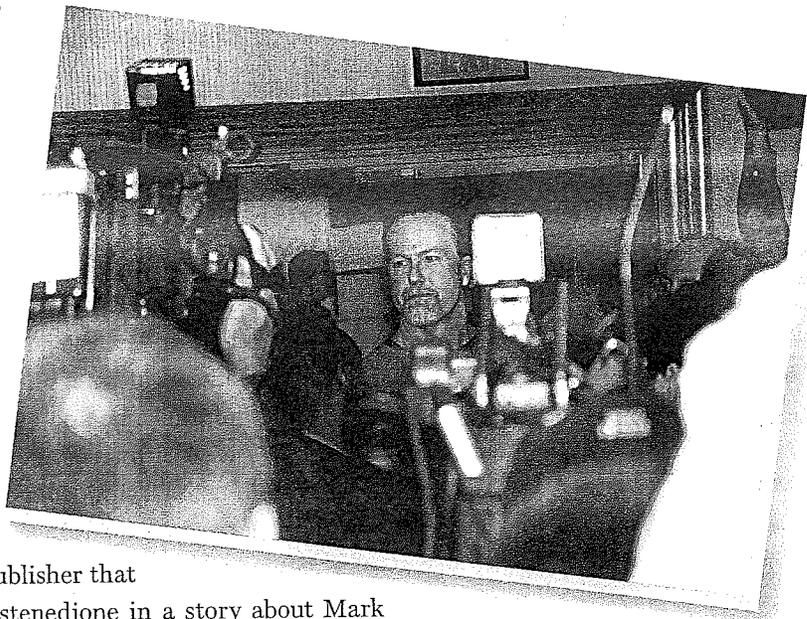
A reporter for the Dow Jones online business news site, MarketWatch, resigned over a conflict with her own website, Vator.tv, that featured executives of startup companies making pitches for investors. Dow Jones executives gave their consent to Bambi Francisco to create her website, with the stipulation that she could not promote the companies or refer to her website on MarketWatch. Nonetheless, she did both, while also writing about the activities of her website partner. Dow Jones executives affirmed the position that the company prohibits its journalists from investing in companies they cover and that the company "demands the highest journalism standards."



Maintaining Objectivity

Objectivity has two components: absence of bias and accuracy. Everyone has biases and opinions. Journalists' biases can greatly affect a story. They may influence selection of story topics, sources, questions asked, story angle, organization and presentation. For instance, journalists who are passionate about banning executions might have difficulty writing about capital punishment. They might unintentionally interview only sources who share their opinions. Or journalists, aware of their prejudices, might overcompensate in the opposite direction in their efforts to present an objective story. Journalists let their supervisors know when they cannot cover a subject objectively, and the editor or news director will assign the story to another reporter.

Sometimes, journalists do not realize that they have formed strong opinions that affect their reporting. For example, sports journalists agree that their enthusiasm for baseball was the reason that they overlooked the problem of steroid use in Major League Baseball for too long. Steve Wilstein, an Associated Press sports writer and columnist, told Editor & Publisher that his inclusion of testosterone-boosting androstenedione in a story about Mark





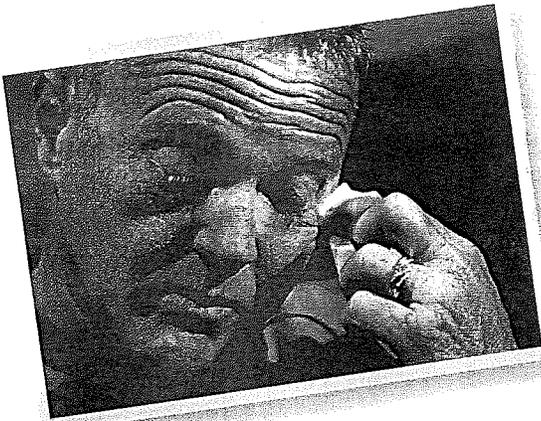
Journalists use independent thinking and data to find trends. For example, while some sources stereotyped that groups of native people of New Zealand acted out in violence because of because of a “warrior gene,” reporters looked into the situation further and connected the violence to their socio-economic situation.

McGwire was not picked up by sports writers because they “didn’t want to believe it.” They did not want to recognize the signs that other baseball heroes were using steroids. “It probably put a little pressure on other baseball writers,” Wilstein said, “because it threatened the sport they loved and required them to write about something that they probably did not want to write about.”

Objectivity also means integrating balance, fairness and accuracy within stories. Objective facts without context can create inaccurate impressions. In Quill magazine, Sally Lehrman, who teaches and practices science reporting and writing, criticized journalists who simply repeated a scientist’s claim that Maori, the native people of New Zealand, carried a “warrior” gene that promoted aggressiveness and violence and was linked to their high rates of alcoholism and smoking. Other journalists examined crime rates among Maori, which seemed to support the findings. If journalists had been independent, critical thinkers, they would have looked at the Maori in a social context to interpret the scientist’s findings. The Maori, descendants of the Polynesians, generally experience discrimination compared to white people in New Zealand. A well-established link exists between violence and poverty and lack of opportunity (high unemployment, low education levels, low incomes, health disparities). First, instead of automatically reinforcing a stereotype, Lehrman said, journalists needed to dig deeper to explain context. Second, by explaining context, journalists would have exposed and possibly helped the Maoris’ situation by giving the issue greater understanding.

Reporting Grief

Journalists try to be sensitive to victims and the public’s sense of decency as they photograph and interview victims and grieving relatives.



INTERVIEWING VICTIMS Few journalists are psychologists. They may not realize many disaster victims and their family members are in shock for several days or even months after an event and that shock can affect people in different ways.

Journalists often obtain an inaccurate story when they scramble to get an early interview. Victims in shock sometimes inadvertently twist or forget facts. They may later recant their stories or accuse journalists of making up the interview. Many journalists obtain more accurate and complete stories if they wait several days to interview victims. Although hard news stories can be written immediately after an event without interviewing victims, stories with more context and facts from the victim’s family can follow later.

Victims or their family members sometimes choose to speak to one journalist during their time of grief. Usually families select journalists who are respectful and considerate. These journalists ask to talk to the family’s representative, who might be another family member or close friend. In addition, journalists give their names and telephone numbers to the victim’s representative, not asking for an immediate interview, but asking the victim to call if and when the victim feels ready to talk. Compassionate journalists who do not pressure victims and their families receive more in-depth information about the victim and the event.

Respecting Privacy of Sources

The media sometimes intrude on the privacy of individuals. Although journalists are often within their legal rights, they are not necessarily proceeding ethically. Some people who become involved in major lawsuits, crimes and accidents may expect to be mentioned in news stories about them. Other citizens might be surprised to find themselves standing in the media spotlight and not understand what is happening. Journalists are sensitive to individuals who have been thrust into the news. The coverage of private citizens is often different from that of celebrities and politicians who seek publicity.

Practicing Deceit: Is It Justified?

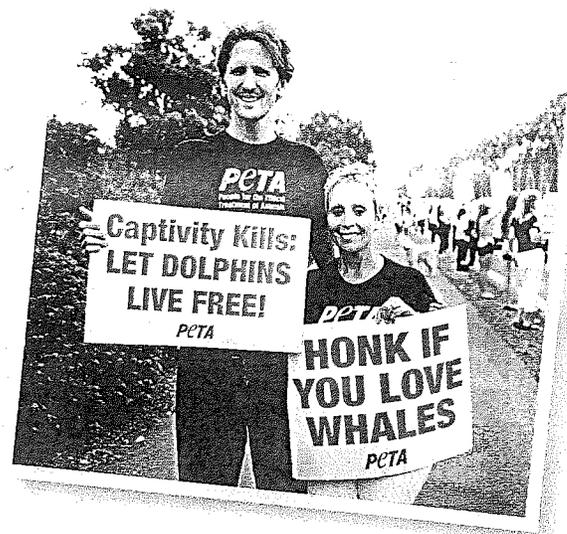
Journalists strive to be trusted. They believe that deceit is a form of lying and that lying is unethical. A few journalists may think deceit is the only way to get some stories. Yet most experts say the press should not criticize deceitfulness by public officials or businesses if journalists are also being deceitful while pursuing a story. An investigative story with many in-depth interviews and extensive background research provides a better story than one in which journalists misrepresent themselves.

POSING AND MISREPRESENTATION Journalists do not misrepresent themselves to sources. On some occasions, however, they may simply not reveal themselves. Restaurant reviewers would be ineffective if everyone knew their identities. Restaurant owners, eager to obtain favorable publicity, would cater to the reviewers, offering them special meals and service. Reviewers would be unable to describe the service and the meals served to the average customer. Another example is a journalist who wants to cover a protest rally. If protesters realized a journalist was present, they might either act more cautiously or perform for the journalist, behaving more angrily or violently to ensure that they got into the news.

Passive posing, where the reporter might appear to a business owner or government official as simply another member of the public, presents few ethical problems. The reporter is gathering only information available to any person. More serious ethical—and legal—problems arise when journalists actively misrepresent themselves in order to gain access to places and information closed to the general public.

In the past, journalists have posed as patients to gather information about a mental hospital or as laborers to write about migrant workers' exposure to the chemicals sprayed on farm crops. Although journalists could be exposing a social ill, they discover that the public disapproves of their conduct. They may even face legal penalties because of their dubious methods of gathering information.

Several states with strong agricultural industries, such as Iowa, South Carolina and Montana, have passed "ag-gag" laws. These laws usually prohibit anyone from gaining entry to or working for an agricultural-processing facility under false pretenses. The targets of these laws are animal-rights



activists investigating claims of mistreatment of livestock and reporters investigating sanitation and working conditions at food-processing plants. Spokespersons for agricultural businesses, like Emily Meredith of the Animal Agriculture Alliance, say the laws are necessary to deal with those who enter farms and processing plants under false pretenses to obtain emotionally powerful but selectively edited photos and videos. Reporters and activists say the laws threaten First Amendment values and allow business interests to hide unsafe practices. In Utah, an animal-rights activist was arrested for violating that state's law by shooting videos of a meatpacking plant. The prosecution was dismissed, however, because she had been standing on a public street as she shot the video. Meanwhile, a legal challenge to the constitutionality of Utah's law is moving through the courts. That case may determine whether ag-gag laws will proliferate.

Journalists talk to their supervisors before they use any form of deceit. News executives might allow journalists to pose only when no other safe way exists to obtain an important story. In addition, journalists state their use of deception in their stories and explain why it was necessary. Journalists also call all people criticized in their stories and give them an opportunity to respond.

Witnessing Crimes and Disasters



Journalists and photographers might witness terrible tragedies, such as people drowning, falling to their deaths or fleeing from fire. Journalists help other people who are in danger, particularly if they are the only ones on the scene. They react the same way they would if they saw a member of their family in physical danger. But when a victim is already receiving help from rescue workers, police officers, firefighters or medical technicians, journalists stay out of the rescuers' way and concentrate on reporting the event.

Journalists occasionally learn about a crime before it is committed or while it is in progress. The St. Petersburg (Florida) Times and WFLA radio station in Tampa, Florida, were soundly criticized when they telephoned a killer holding a hostage. The man killed a 4-year-old boy and three police officers and was holding a hostage in a gas station. WFLA called the gas station and aired live the conversation with the gunman. The Times also interviewed him. Ethics experts said the potential risk to the hostage outweighed the value of the information gleaned. Listeners and readers would have been as well served if the news organizations had learned the information later from police as opposed to learning it at that moment from the killer. Furthermore, the news organizations interrupted police officers trying to do their jobs, which could have resulted in an obviously unstable man killing another victim. Journalists are not hostage negotiators.

ETHICS ISSUES REGARDING CONTENT

News executives consider the best ways to inform, educate or entertain their audiences. News media are the fourth estate and are respectful and considerate to sources, subjects and audiences while balancing society's need to know. Audiences

might ignore the substance of an important story if the method of obtaining the information or the presentation of the content is controversial or unethical.

Covering Victims

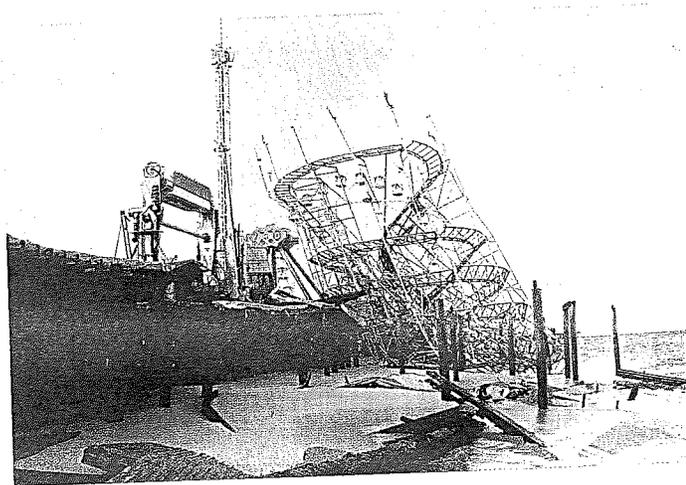
When journalists do not know why things happen, they sometimes want to speculate in an effort to explain it to audiences. Their speculations, however, mislead the public. Journalists refrain from guessing the “why” or “how” until the information is known for a follow-up story. For instance, journalists said a victim of a shooting was a single man who kept pornography. In reality, the victim was divorced and supported his two children who lived with him. This former public official, who was well-regarded in the community, had one 1950s Playboy magazine in a stack of other old magazines in his garage.

Journalists can transform heroes and victims into bad guys and vice versa by presenting allusions and incomplete facts. When two teenage boys were sitting outside on the porch of one boy’s home, they saw and tried to stop a burglar from getting into a neighbor’s home. One of the boys was killed in the scuffle. One newspaper stated that the victim was out at 4 a.m., smoking, had a gun and was a high school dropout. An anonymous source said the boy “liked to party.” Very little information was presented about the burglar. A different newspaper called the boy a hero and quoted the positive things his family and friends had to say. This newspaper story noted that the boys were sitting on the porch because they were minding the rules that smoking was not allowed in the house. The victim was enrolled at an alternative school for dropouts because he was determined to get a GED and he had a job. The gun belonged to the other boy, whom the victim was defending when the burglar stabbed him. The burglar had been arrested several times prior for burglary and aggravated assault with a deadly weapon.

Journalists steer clear of sensationalism, respect an individual’s privacy, avoid speculation and focus on the objective of the story.

HURTING VICTIMS AGAIN: THE NEWS STORY IS A SECOND WOUND A news story could inflict a second injury on victims and family members who lived through a disaster and experience it again when being interviewed or seeing it online, in print or broadcast. These stories trigger many comments on social media that might harm family members, even though bloggers and tweeters are trying to be consoling. News editors are careful to review the objective of the story, omitting sensational details and publishing only what the public needs to know.

Compassionate photojournalists and reporters ask themselves how they would want the press to treat them or their own family members if they were in the victim’s situation. They discuss the purpose of the story, what information the public needs and alternate ways to portray the emotion. They also weigh these crucial questions: Who will be hurt, and how many? Who will be helped, and how many?



Hurricane Sandy was responsible for about 185 deaths and destroyed many homes and businesses, including this amusement park. Journalists were sensitive in their interviews with victims, who were trying to move through their loss.

activists investigating claims of mistreatment of livestock and reporters investigating sanitation and working conditions at food-processing plants. Spokespersons for agricultural businesses, like Emily Meredith of the Animal Agriculture Alliance, say the laws are necessary to deal with those who enter farms and processing plants under false pretenses to obtain emotionally powerful but selectively edited photos and videos. Reporters and activists say the laws threaten First Amendment values and allow business interests to hide unsafe practices. In Utah, an animal-rights activist was arrested for violating that state's law by shooting videos of a meatpacking plant. The prosecution was dismissed, however, because she had been standing on a public street as she shot the video. Meanwhile, a legal challenge to the constitutionality of Utah's law is moving through the courts. That case may determine whether ag-gag laws will proliferate.

Journalists talk to their supervisors before they use any form of deceit. News executives might allow journalists to pose only when no other safe way exists to obtain an important story. In addition, journalists state their use of deception in their stories and explain why it was necessary. Journalists also call all people criticized in their stories and give them an opportunity to respond.



Witnessing Crimes and Disasters

Journalists and photographers might witness terrible tragedies, such as people drowning, falling to their deaths or fleeing from fire. Journalists help other people who are in danger, particularly if they are the only ones on the scene. They react the same way they would if they saw a member of their family in physical danger. But when a victim is already receiving help from rescue workers, police officers, firefighters or medical technicians, journalists stay out of the rescuers' way and concentrate on reporting the event.

Journalists occasionally learn about a crime before it is committed or while it is in progress. The St. Petersburg (Florida) Times and WFLA radio station in Tampa, Florida, were soundly criticized when they telephoned a killer holding a hostage. The man killed a 4-year-old boy and three police officers and was holding a hostage in a gas station. WFLA called the gas station and aired live the conversation with the gunman. The Times also interviewed him. Ethics experts said the potential risk to the hostage outweighed the value of the information gleaned. Listeners and readers would have been as well served if the news organizations had learned the information later from police as opposed to learning it at that moment from the killer. Furthermore, the news organizations interrupted police officers trying to do their jobs, which could have resulted in an obviously unstable man killing another victim. Journalists are not hostage negotiators.

ETHICS ISSUES REGARDING CONTENT

News executives consider the best ways to inform, educate or entertain their audiences. News media are the fourth estate and are respectful and considerate to sources, subjects and audiences while balancing society's need to know. Audiences

might ignore the substance of an important story if the method of obtaining the information or the presentation of the content is controversial or unethical.

Covering Victims

When journalists do not know why things happen, they sometimes want to speculate in an effort to explain it to audiences. Their speculations, however, mislead the public. Journalists refrain from guessing the “why” or “how” until the information is known for a follow-up story. For instance, journalists said a victim of a shooting was a single man who kept pornography. In reality, the victim was divorced and supported his two children who lived with him. This former public official, who was well-regarded in the community, had one 1950s Playboy magazine in a stack of other old magazines in his garage.

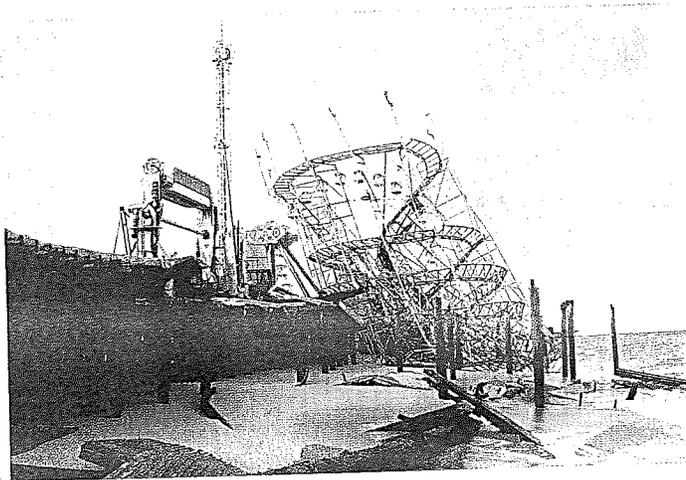
Journalists can transform heroes and victims into bad guys and vice versa by presenting allusions and incomplete facts. When two teenage boys were sitting outside on the porch of one boy’s home, they saw and tried to stop a burglar from getting into a neighbor’s home. One of the boys was killed in the scuffle. One newspaper stated that the victim was out at 4 a.m., smoking, had a gun and was a high school dropout. An anonymous source said the boy “liked to party.” Very little information was presented about the burglar. A different newspaper called the boy a hero and quoted the positive things his family and friends had to say. This newspaper story noted that the boys were sitting on the porch because they were minding the rules that smoking was not allowed in the house. The victim was enrolled at an alternative school for dropouts because he was determined to get a GED and he had a job. The gun belonged to the other boy, whom the victim was defending when the burglar stabbed him. The burglar had been arrested several times prior for burglary and aggravated assault with a deadly weapon.

Journalists steer clear of sensationalism, respect an individual’s privacy, avoid speculation and focus on the objective of the story.

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the writing COACH

Journalists Should Understand: Victims Face Wall of Grief

By Joe Hight, Colorado Springs (Colorado) Gazette

Most victims or victims' relatives face a wall of grief in the aftermath of a death or disaster. The wall blocks them from seeing that their lives may improve tomorrow. They don't see into the past or future; they see the present and feel the pain of the moment.

Then the reporter approaches them and violates their grieving space. Or, in a disaster, several journalists approach them.

So it's important to learn about coverage of victims.

Here are several tips concerning that coverage:

When approaching a victim, politely and clearly identify yourself before asking questions.

Treat each victim with dignity and respect. Veteran AP correspondent George Esper has said, "We should frame our questions with respect and research. We must be sensitive but not timid."

Treat each person as an individual, not as part of an overall number. Each person is different and should be treated that way.

Never ask "How do you feel?" or say "I understand how you feel." Simply say, "My name is . . ." and "I am sorry for what happened." Then ask questions such as "Could you tell me about your relative's life?" or "How did this occur?"

Realize that you are violating the victim's space and may receive a harsh or emotional reaction at first. Don't react harshly if you receive this reaction.

Allow the victim to say "no" after you make the approach and he or she refuses to answer your question. If the answer is "no," simply leave a card or number so the victim can call you later. Sometimes the best stories come this way.

Know that little things count. Call the victims back to verify quotes and facts. Ensure photos are returned immediately.

Try to call funeral homes or family representatives first to connect with a victim's family member. In most cases, relatives will want to talk about the victims' lives. In some cases, these may lead to bigger stories.

Avoid words such as "closure" to indicate that victims or members of the community have overcome the trauma connected with a death or disaster. Diane Leonard, whose husband, Secret Service agent Donald Leonard, was killed in the Oklahoma City bombing, said, "This will be a journey we'll be taking the rest of our lives. It's part of us, and always will be."

Using Visuals: Newsworthy or Sensational?

The visual coverage of disasters, including the Boston Marathon bombing, Hurricane Sandy, mass murders in Syria, Typhoon Haiyan in Asia and floods in India and Nepal challenge many news executives. They seek the proper balance between providing the public what it needs to see without presenting unnecessarily gory images or descending into sensationalism. Too much repetition of the same graphic can numb viewers' reaction to the horrific events and distract them from the purpose of the story. Yet visuals of people hurt or dying show the reality of the situation.

Editors and producers run photographs or videotapes because they tell a story. People upset by the images they see accuse the media of acting sensationally or running the visual for shock value. Debate surrounded seeing Saddam Hussein's

execution and hearing his final discussions, recorded by a cellphone, aired by TV networks and online. Others complained about the constant airing of Seung-Hui Cho's expletive-filled diatribe, filmed before he killed 32 students at Virginia Tech. Researchers explain that a numbing, saturation effect takes place in which viewers become less sensitive to such acts of violence.

News executives determine whether they should shield the public from unpleasantness or educate them. All media make decisions on a case-by-case basis. Like all wars, the battles in Syria and Iraq have been bloody and gruesome. Images of torture victims and burned bodies hung from a bridge scaffolding after an ambush in Fallujah shocked the nation. Journalists said words alone could not convey the situation as well as photographs did.

News organizations keep in touch with the public's attitudes—what is acceptable to city dwellers in the East might not be acceptable to rural folks in the Midwest. Also, journalists who cover a lot of murders and accidental deaths might no longer be able to objectively judge what the public will find acceptable.

Altering Images

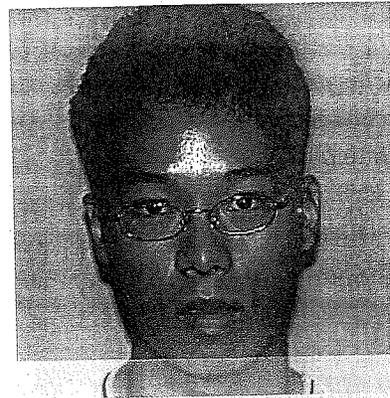
Photojournalists are loath to change the content of their photos in newspapers or online. Why? Because it is dishonest and unethical. Just as writers do not lie about the content of their stories, photographers do not lie about the content of their captured images. Photojournalists have always been able to alter their photos. In the days of 35 mm prints, photos could be cropped, enlarged or burned to provide more contrast. With digital imaging software photojournalists can remove a distracting object in the background of a photo without changing the essence and meaning of the picture.

Some alterations cause great debate. In a familiar photo that came to represent the Boston Marathon bombing, the New York Daily News doctored a gruesome image of a woman's leg that was later amputated. She was lying near the finish line, and they made the leg appear intact not only to remove the gore, but also to focus attention on her sister, who was nearby and whose look of disorientation represented heightened emotion. Another familiar photo was a man in a wheelchair whose leg was ripped away below the knee. Most editors cropped the photo to exclude the condition of his knee. The Atlantic was one of the few organizations that showed the whole image. The magazine's representative said it was a "true depiction of the terrible nature of this story." A New York Times senior photographer, on the other hand, said he did not believe that "the graphicness advances the story."

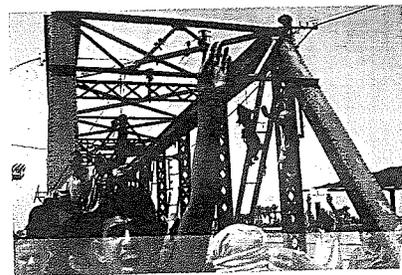
Deciding When to Name Names

News organizations have policies requiring journalists to fully identify everyone mentioned in their stories. However, the participants in some stories might make forceful claims for anonymity.

NAMING JUVENILES Journalists usually do not name children who are connected in any way to a crime. Children are not capable of dealing with the infamy associated with the news account that might affect them for the rest of their lives.



Seung-Hui Cho became more famous than his 32 high school victims when news organizations repeatedly aired portions of his self-made video. Victims, however, also should be remembered.



Iraqis chanted anti-American slogans after hanging the charred and dismembered bodies of four U.S. contractors from the superstructure of a bridge in Falujah over the Euphrates River. Although some news organizations published this photograph, others considered it too gory and disturbing. The photo, taken by Khalid Mohammed, was part of the portfolio of breaking news images that won a Pulitzer Prize for The Associated Press.

The debate and photos can be found online at <http://www.isciencetimes.com/articles/4952/20130417/doctored-boston-photo-why-ny-daily-news.htm>.

Traditionally, the criminal justice system has also shielded children under 18 who are accused or convicted of a crime. This protection has been explained on the grounds that juveniles understand neither what they did nor the consequences of their actions.

The main exception occurs when juveniles are being tried in adult court because the crimes of which they are accused are more serious than the ones juveniles usually commit or the suspects have already been punished for earlier serious offenses. And, if several teenagers are arrested and charged with committing crimes that terrorized a neighborhood, news executives might feel a need to identify them and perhaps their parents as well. Journalists might decide their obligation to calm people's fears by informing the neighborhood about the arrests outweighs their normal obligation to protect the teenagers and their families.

WRITING ABOUT VICTIMS OF SEXUAL ASSAULT A national study of news executives showed that most news organizations withhold the names of rape victims. The nature of the crime and the subsequent news coverage traumatizes and stigmatizes victims in unique ways. Sexual assault is an underreported crime, and news coverage discourages some rape victims from going to police. A study on rape victims showed that most victims were angry about being identified, and a few said they would not have reported the crime if they had known news media would name them. As a result of being named, most victims reported emotional trauma as well as embarrassment, shame and difficulties in their relationships with others.

Media identify people charged with rape but not their accusers. Another study, this time with audiences, showed they agreed that news media should not identify victims, but they wanted to know the accused's name. Sexual assault suspects, like those in other crimes, are always identified so the public has full knowledge about the situation. Bystanders might come forward with information about the accused. Neighbors of the accused are informed of the potential problem so they can take steps to protect themselves. Thus, identifying victims has little effect on audiences but may have negative effects on the victim. Results of the study indicated that naming the victim helps no one and hurts the victim again.

Covering Killers

People remember events based on how the media covered them. When news stories, photos and video focus on killers and their backgrounds and families—and not the victims—some critics say the media have glorified the killer and sent the message that killers are important and victims are not. For example, many people say they remember the news coverage of the gunman better than they remember any of the 20 children and six staff members whom he killed at Sandy Hook Elementary School. Were repeated stories about this mass murderer's background verging on sensationalism? Was the killer's story more important than those of the victims? Who should be remembered?

Most victims of sexual assault would like to remain anonymous. Journalists caution that news about sexual assault must have a purpose. The story about three women who survived a decade of abuse in Ohio was compelling for several reasons.



A similar charge was leveled against Rolling Stone when it ran a photograph of Dzhokhar Tsarnaev, the suspect in the Boston Marathon bombing, on its cover. Critics complained that the photo glamorized Tsarnaev, making him look like a rock star. Others said it made him look too handsome. Matt Taibbi, a Rolling Stone writer who played no role in the cover decision or the story that accompanied it, said the photo was an existing one that had been used in other news publications. A criminal defense attorney might find more objectionable the headline that identifies Tsarnaev as "The Bomber," as if his guilt had been established, and refers to him as a "monster."

Reporting on Public Figures and Celebrities

The public's right to know often outweighs a government official's or public figure's right to privacy. Most Americans seem to agree that journalists should expose government officials who abuse their power by steering lucrative contracts to cronies or who have personal problems, such as alcoholism, that affect their work.

But does the public have a right to know about a public official's private affairs, such as adultery? Proponents argue that if a politician breaks a solemn promise, such as a wedding vow, then promises to his or her constituency might also be meaningless. The public has a right to know about the character of the person who represents them. Another variable is whether the affair is with a member of the government which could lead to abuse of power or favoritism.

On the one hand, public figures and celebrities want to be the center of attention when promoting their causes, such as a new policy or an upcoming movie. When Angelina Jolie visited a camp for refugee children in Jordan as a special envoy for the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees, she welcomed the publicity she drew to the problems of those orphaned or separated from their families by the civil war in Syria. On the other hand, celebrities do not want the public to know personal

To help the media deal with issues concerning adult and children victims and survivors of rape and other violent crimes, the National Center for the Victims of Crime in Washington, D.C., has established guidelines that appear online at <http://www.victimsofcrime.org>.

Dzhokhar Tsarnaev the Terrorist

Rock Him and Stone Him

FACE OF EVIL
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What about the Victims?

"Scum of the Earth"

NOT the Face of a Rock Star!

THE BOMBER

How a Popular Promising Student Showed his true colors, a Monster That Should Be Paraded Through the Streets!

I ran over my brother with a carjacked SUV and my shoplifting mother can't visit me in jail.

Here is my current address:
Federal Medical Center, Devens
P.O. Box 879
Ayer, MA 01432

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Supplement to:
We Shall Never Forget 9/11 - The Kid's Book of Freedom
We Shall Never Forget 9/11 Vol.2 - The True Faces of Evil



Should a public official's private affairs make news? Journalists identify the purpose of a story and what audiences need to know, such as in the case of New York City mayoral candidate Anthony Weiner who was sexting explicit photos to several women.



oft-repeated rumors that quickly fly across Twitter, Facebook and other social media. Nonetheless, news organizations risk their reputations by publishing false information. All information should be checked out.

Reports of unsubstantiated information can have a national impact. Journalists from across the country were on the scene in West Virginia, covering a mine disaster that trapped 12 miners. As one tired reporter pulled away to return to his motel for the night, he heard shouts of "They're alive!" People were crying with joy, and he thought he heard the governor say that miracles could happen. Like most of the journalists at the scene, he immediately called his editor, and the happy news ran on the front page. Unfortunately, it was incorrect news. Only one of the miners was rescued. The reporter ran with second-hand information and did not confirm it with authorities.

When an event occurs, some of the news elements—such as the who, what, where and when—are readily available. It might take days or weeks to find out the why or how. Journalists do not provide the why through speculation and interpretation, which could mislead audiences. Theories and conjectures are not news.

Reporting on Terrorism

Terrorists want credit for violent acts. Media coverage makes them feel important, and they think it legitimizes their cause. They are responsible for bombings, hijackings and mass murders—news so compelling that news organizations are unable to ignore it. To attract even more publicity, terrorists conduct press conferences. Some want journalists to photograph and interview their captives. Others make videos that show hostages pleading for their lives, reading the terrorists' demands and warning that they will be killed if the demands are not met.

Some critics insist the media coverage encourages terrorists. They believe that if the media ignored terrorists, they would become discouraged and abandon their acts of violence. Former British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher urged journalists to stop covering terrorists, to starve them of "the oxygen of publicity." Other critics note that Americans have a right to know what is happening in the

things that might be damaging to their image or causes. Jessica Simpson, for instance, may cringe at reports that, instead of using a toothbrush, she sometimes wipes her teeth on the inside of her shirt. Critics say those in the public eye cannot have it both ways. Journalists use their professional news judgment to consider carefully whether a topic will affect the lives of their audiences.

Reporting Rumors and Speculation

Journalists publish established and investigated facts, but the temptation to publish unsubstantiated stories grows with the

world, and a news blackout might result in rumors about the terrorists' activities that are more frightening than the truth. They also fear terrorists would escalate their violence if journalists tried to ignore them.

News organizations often must decide whether to use information about a crisis or threat. The so-called Unabomber, whose decades-long series of terror bombings baffled law enforcement authorities, sent a lengthy manifesto to The New York Times and The Washington Post. He promised that his killings would stop if the papers published his writings. The newspapers' executives decided to publish. Not all journalists agreed with that decision to give in to terrorist demands. Nonetheless, the publication of the manifesto led to the arrest of Theodore J. Kaczynski. One of his relatives, who noted similarities between the Unabomber manifesto and other anarchist writings by Kaczynski, alerted law enforcement agencies.



Publishing Ads

Most news organizations reject advertisements that might be harmful for members of their community. Depending on management's views, the list of banned advertisements might include tobacco products, alcoholic beverages, movies rated NC-17, sexual aids, abortion services, handguns, massage parlors and escort services. Some news organizations, concerned about their audience's health and safety, no longer accept bar advertisements for "happy hour" because they worry the advertisements contribute to drunken driving.

Some advertisers want to dictate news content and placement of their ads. "60 Minutes" pulled a story about a tobacco company when the company threatened to sue the network. ("60 Minutes" eventually aired the segment.) Kimberly-Clark, maker of Huggies diapers, insisted that its magazine ads be placed adjacent to "happy baby" content. Other advertisers threaten to pull their advertising if news stories reflect negatively on their company's image or products.

CODES OF ETHICS

Major professional organizations in journalism have adopted codes of ethics. The codes encourage organization members to adhere to the guidelines. They also serve as models that individual media companies follow when setting their own policies. Online sites, broadcast stations and newspapers adapt the ethics codes to reflect local standards. What is acceptable in a metropolitan area might not be permissible for news media in a rural community.

the reporter's GUIDE to media credibility

The ASNE interviewed 3,000 Americans and ran 16 focus groups to find ways to improve public trust in journalism. The ASNE's study came up with six areas in which journalists should concentrate to improve news media credibility:

1. Avoid inaccuracies. Factual, grammatical and spelling errors undermine a story and its reporter's credibility.

2. Eliminate sensationalism. Sensational stories are often chased, but are usually less important than other stories.

3. Strengthen objectivity. Journalists shun the appearance of bias in their reporting—what stories are covered and how they are covered. Bias is defined as not being open-minded and neutral about the facts,

having an agenda and shaping the news to report it or showing favoritism to a particular social or political group.

4. Steer clear of manipulation of the press. The public worries that the press can be manipulated by powerful people, organizations and advertisers who want to shape news stories.

5. Name sources. Using anonymous sources reduces the credibility of a news story. Many people would not run the story at all if a source declined to go "on the record." Journalists should tell the public why an anonymous source is used.

6. Publicize corrections. Admitting errors and running corrections help credibility, not hurt it.

The American Society of Newspaper Editors (ASNE) adopted one of the industry's first codes, the Canons of Journalism, in 1923. Among other things, the ASNE declared that newspapers should act responsibly by being truthful, sincere, impartial, decent and fair. News organizations adopt codes of ethics to discourage the most obvious abuses, especially freebies, junkets and conflicts of interest. Although codes serve as guidelines for journalists' actions, some exceptional cases arise. The codes cannot solve every problem. Thus, decisions will always vary from one news organization to another—and that might be one of the system's great strengths. After considering their news organization's code of ethics, journalists decide which course of action is right or wrong, ethical or unethical. Inevitably, some journalists will be mistaken. But any effort to change the system—to force every journalist to conform to an identical predetermined standard—would limit the media's diversity and freedom. It would also limit Americans' access to information.