TELL ME A STORY:

HOW NARRATIVES SHAPE REPORTERS' ETHICS

by
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ABSTRACT

MARY ELLEN HILL: "Tell Me A Story: How
Narratives Shape Reporters' Ethics
(Under the direction of Dr. Donald Shaw)

This study examines how reporters use workplace or newsroom narratives as guides for correct action in making ethical decisions. This analysis, based on in-depth interviews, employs the theory of narrative inquiry from the field of communication. The study shows that these narratives can lead to discussions on broader ethical matters. The journalists in this analysis consider narratives as part of their guidance system in their ethical decision-making. This dissertation looks at the decision-making process of a dozen reporters at weekly and major-market daily newspapers in the United States. These experienced journalists were interviewed in-depth. They were from the states of Arizona, California, Maryland, Ohio, Massachusetts, New York, Michigan, and Iowa. This study suggests that ethics codes or other forms of guidance are not as influential as the "cautionary tales" or newsroom narratives.

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A doctoral dissertation is just a part of an individual's quest for a life-time of learning. It is by no means a solitary work. It requires support from others. I am most grateful to my husband, Dr. Marcus Wagner, my mentors Ron Ellerbe, Clancy Sigal and my advisor, Dr. Donald Shaw. I would also like to acknowledge the contribution of the members of my committee.

In addition, I would like to acknowledge all of the hard-working journalists who took out time from their very busy schedules to participate in this study. I would like to note that my primary goal in studying journalism ethics was not to make an apology for bad behavior by a disreputable few in the industry, but to add to the body of knowledge concerning how ethics is maintained and learned at newspapers.

I cannot help but view the topic through the lens of a former reporter. In the newsrooms where I have had the privilege of working, I witnessed many acts of moral courage on the part of reporters. There are very few industries where ethics is discussed almost daily – newspaper journalism is one such industry. So, I also would like to acknowledge those reporters who have kept the faith and contributed *honest* labor to a demanding and sometimes thankless profession.

I first considered this topic while a graduate student at Ohio State University. Within my master's program, there were professional journalists from all over the country. One evening while we were all relaxing after an evening class, we began

to discuss Janet Cooke, a reporter notorious for fabricating a source. None of these journalists had ever met Cooke. Yet, it seemed that everyone had a personal story about how the Cooke matter had impacted his or her view of ethics. Many of these journalists had entered the industry about the same time as Cooke. And from that discussion on Cooke, we began to discuss other matters of ethics within the industry. It occurred to me that the infamous Cooke had ironically provided a service to journalism. Cooke's narrative seemed to be a touchstone for these journalists. She provided a kind of nexus around which other issues of ethics might be discussed. I decided that this apparent phenomenon deserved further study. I had come upon a researchable idea.

But I did not yet have the tools to study this apparent phenomenon. Then, several years later as a doctoral student at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, I took a course in organizational behavior from Dr. Steve May. He introduced us to organizational analysis. Further study yielded the questions of: "What are the dominant stories or legends that people tell (in an organization)? What messages are they trying to convey? What are the favorite topics of informal conversation?"[1] These questions seemed to connect with what I was trying to discover about the importance of stories in the newsroom. What were the effects, if any, of these "cautionary tales?" I wondered.

Later, I would read *Human Communication as Narration: Toward a Philosophy of Reason, Value, and Action* by Walter R. Fisher. It seemed that this work provided the analysis methodology for studying the apparent connection between the stories

[1] G. Morgan, *Creative Organization Theory* (Newbury Park: Sage, 1989), 298.

that reporters tell and their newsroom behavior as regards ethics. So, Dr. May's class provided a way to structure the questions, and my own supplemental research furnished a method to study this phenomenon.

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CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

Do workplace stories shape the behavior of journalists? At least one journalist would answer with a resounding 'yes':

> Because journalists are storytellers and gossip mongers, according to Frank McCulloch, former executive director of McClatchy Newspapers, anecdotes about senior editor behavior are saved and passed on from reporter to reporter sometimes for generations. These anecdotes, McCulloch believes, for better or worse…become the parables which shape the behavior of journalists.[2]

This is an interesting assumption that is explored in more detail in this study. Whilestorytelling is important, it seems that ethics codes may also play a role in shaping reporters' values. These codes may be indirectly working on reporters, as shown by this research. Journalists in this study have witnessed the strengthening of such codes by their newsroom managers after highly publicized violations against truth-telling, one of the basic tenets of reporting. In 2003, when the *New York Times* admitted that one of its reporters had engaged in systematic plagiarism and fabrication over a four-year period,[3] a round of introspection gripped[4] journalism.

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[2] D.H Weaver and G.C. Wilhoit, *The American journalist: A portrait of U.S. news people and their work*. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986), 136-137.

[3] N. Henry, "To My Former Students: How Race Works," *Chronicle of Higher Education*, (2003, May 30): B5.

[4] S. McLemee, "How Journalism Gets into Quandaries," *Chronicle of Higher Education* (2003, June 20): A12.

To make amends, the publication sanctioned the reporter, Jayson Blair, by firing him. The entire affair was reminiscent of a 1981 incident when a reporter at the *Washington Post* was guilty of fabrication and sensationalism. That reporter, Janet Cooke, was both forced to resign and to return her Pulitzer Prize.

At the time, the mention of Janet Cooke's name certainly carried a negative connotation for the *Post* and journalism at large. *Washington Post* editor Ben Bradlee said in his autobiography, "…(T)he words 'Janet Cooke' entered the vocabulary as a symbol for the worst in American journalism, just as the word 'Watergate' went into the vocabulary as a symbol for the best in American journalism."[5]

The Cooke matter proved to be pivotal, as incidents analogous to these occurred in the coming years of American journalism. For instance, in 1998 Stephen Glass, a 25-year-old writer at the *New Republic,* was fired after his editors discovered that he had fabricated 27 articles of the more than 40 he had written for the publication.[6] As his misdeeds were so spectacular, they were later portrayed in the film, *Shattered Glass.*

In that same year, columnist Mike Barnicle resigned from the *Boston Globe* amid allegations he had made up sources and facts, and stolen material from other writers. To make things worse, another *Globe* columnist, Patricia Smith, had been fired just

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[5] B. Bradlee, *Newspapering and Other Adventures: A Good Life* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1995), 435.

[6] S. Mnookin, "Times Bomb," *Newsweek* 141, 26 May 2003, 40-45.

two months earlier for similar conduct – specifically, making up characters and dialogue.[7]

What about incidents like these? What do they bring to everyday journalism? In their own way can they serve as "cautionary tales" for reporters, and can they even strengthen the dominant narratives in newsrooms?

Some researchers say that the behavior of other journalists can serve as a catalyst to guide the behavior of reporters. One study suggests that while most journalists have strong ethical beliefs that are products of their developmental years and their life experiences, many journalists are willing to compromise their individual ethics and give into organizational pressures.[8] This same study suggests that newsroom storytelling or workplace narratives a reporter is exposed to may be instrumental in helping journalists decide what constitutes ethical behavior. This intriguing assumption is further explored in this analysis. One journalism ethics researcher put it this way:

> Storytelling is one of the oldest forms known to man of passing knowledge….The story is one of the basic tools invented by the mind of man for the purpose of gaining understanding. There have been great societies that did not use the wheel, but there have been no societies that did not tell stories.[9]

Media scholars David H. Weaver and G. Cleveland Wilhoit agree that it is the day- to-day newsroom learning or workplace stories involving other journalists that

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[7] Ibid, 40.

[8] R. M. Steele, "Journalism Ethics: A Case Study in Television News Decision-Making," (Ph.D. diss., University of Iowa, 1990).

were said to be the most influential in how a reporter navigates the ethical landscape.

The social forces are very powerful indicators of how one behaves in the newsroom, they said.[10] These researchers also note that family upbringing and college teaching are generally important in shaping ideas about ethical matters. However, determining where these factors intermingle with narratives in the newsroom is beyond the scope of this study. Instead, this work defines the importance of storytelling in the newsroom.

In this study, none of the 12 mid-career journalists who were interviewed in-depth said they had checked their in-house ethics codes while attempting to decide on a proper course of behavior, although some were aware of such codes. Nevertheless, as we will see, some may have reacted to information contained in those codes. In addition, this study demonstrates that these journalists sometimes use a method consistent with narrative theory when reasoning about ethics.

This analysis reveals how these experienced reporters understand what controls their behavior within their newsrooms or among themselves. This study shows how reporters might carry their own codes internally, garnered through stories.

This study suggests that the newsroom storytelling or workplace narratives a reporter is exposed to plays a major role in how journalists decide what constitutes ethical behavior. Now, consider the research questions that have driven this analysis.

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[9] C. Haudman, "Crisis of Conscience: Perspectives of Journalism Ethics," (Ph.D. diss., The Union Institute, 1990).

The research questions explored were:

RQ1: What are the values embedded in the reporters' narratives?

RQ2 In reaching decisions regarding ethical issues or dilemmas does the individual reporter rely more heavily on established ethics codes, workplace stories, or on some other sources of guidance?

Preliminarily, the answer to Research Question 1 is that reporters in this research reveal through narratives their positions on bias, compassion, gift-giving, and acceptance as well as other value-laden issues. It is through these narratives that they access their value orientation.

In the case of Research Question 2, this study demonstrates that reporters rely more heavily on "cautionary tales" or workplace narratives than on ethics codes or other sources of guidance.

While the reporters in this study said they frequently consulted other reporters as a guide, none said they looked at ethics codes available to them. And when they consulted other reporters, guidance would often come in the form of narratives or stories. The confirmation of this belief has been one of the goals of this dissertation.

This study suggests that the stories that journalists hear may help to shape their ethical approaches in the profession. The narratives are recorded, and left to reveal the reporters' ethical orientations. This approach has been supported by another researcher. Workplace communication scholar John C. Meyer said, "Narratives seldom state a claim forthrightly and set out to prove it. They describe good and

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[10] D. H. Weaver and G.C. Wilhoit, (1986), 136-137.

bad actions and let the hearers infer what the story should 'mean' for them and their own actions."

For now, we are concerned about who these journalists are and any possible effect that these qualities may have on their ethics. For instance, it is assumed that it is significant that these journalists are mid-career, having spent some 18 years on average in journalism. This is important because these respondents have had enough time in the business to amass experiences. *Figure 1* gives the basic demographic details of the respondents.

In this study, questions were designed to explore the respondents' narratives about ethical dilemmas. For instance, in ***Section 2, Question 2 (See: Appendix D),*** the respondents were asked: "*What do you consider the primary values of your newsroom? Have you ever had any specific instances of what you've described? What were they?"* Thus, the respondent is invited to illustrate their values by using narratives. Another question exploring ethics required the respondent to give his or her view on what he or she considers salient values. In ***Section 2, Question 6*** **(See: Appendix D)**, *"Could you describe the most important lesson you learned about journalism ethics through writing stories?"*

The narratives used in the body of this study identify the researcher as such, and the participants are identified as respondents, along with the number of the interviews listed in ***Appendix E.***

Basic Demographics of Respondents in Study

Note: To protect anonymity of sources, the respondent numbers in this section do not necessarily correspond to those listed in Appendix E.

Respondent	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	Average
Gender	M	M	M	M	F	F	F	F	F	F	F	F	N/A
Years in Journalism	24	20	19	20	20	16	20	15	20	18	11	24	18.9
Age	45	41	36	44	45	39	45	45	42	39	41	46	42
Education Level	M.A.	B.A.	B.A.	HS	HS	B.A.	B.A.	B.A.	B.A.	M.A.		B.A.	N/A

Figure 1. **n=12 HS = High School**

CHAPTER 2
LITERATURE REVIEW

> Reviewing a story is to participate in the ancient rite of storytelling. We are always amazed at the range of events that come to our minds when we review our organizational stories with others engaged in the same review process. The stories range from mundane first job memories, to ethical dilemmas, to examples of the way a change in management practice can reshape an entire work environment. Interactions with mentors or heroes, and the values and informal norms taught by positive and negative experiences, have shaped all our lives in powerful ways …narrative is such a potent medium for transmitting and creating cultural identity.[11]

The scholarly literature that provides the general foundation of this study includes communication, organizational behavior, and mass communication ethics. The theoretical underpinnings are from the field of communication, that being narrative analysis. The literature is reviewed as follows: 1) how communication policy moves through organizations; 2) the importance of narratives in theworkplace; and (3) what mass communication researchers have said about the influences on journalists' ethics and values.

Interdisciplinary Approach

An interdisciplinary approach is necessary in the study of journalism ethics, according to one researcher. "While there is no shortage of books and articles on journalism ethics – and, of course, no shortage of ethical problems about which

[11] G.W. Driskill and A.L. Brenton, *Organizational Culture in Action: A Cultural Analysis Workbook*, (Thousand Oaks: Sage, 2005), 57- 58.

to write – one approach seems to have been largely overlooked: a broadly-based interdisciplinary framework of analysis…Such an approach is based on the concept that problems related to journalism ethics do not develop in a vacuum, and in order to understand the practices and ethics of journalism, it is essential to view the news process from within the context of overall society."[12]

In this study, the interdisciplinary approach takes the form of using a theory from communication and approaches from organizational behavior in order to understand how reporters assimilate values. Narrative as a research tool has earned its place among psychology, psychotherapy, education, sociology, and history.[13] Consider:

> The use of narratives in research can be viewed as an addition to the existing inventory of the experiment, the survey, observation, and other traditional methods, or as preferred alternatives to these "sterile" research tools. Either way, narrative methodologies have become a significant part of the repertoire of the social sciences.

And although the workplace of the newsroom is not studied directly in this work, the respondents provide some insight into the newsroom as a workplace through their interviews. Certain assumptions are made here. As a workplace, it is assumed that the newsroom has similar methods of assimilating its employees as other workplaces do. Organizational communication theorists have said workplace assimilation involves three distinct stages. These stages are: 1) anticipatory socialization, which occurs prior to one's entry into an organization;

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[12] C. Haudman, "Crisis of Conscience: Perspectives of Journalism Ethics," (Ph.D. diss., The Union Institute, 1990).

[13] A. Lieblich and others, *Narrative Research: Reading, Analysis, and Interpretation*, (Thousand Oaks: Sage, 1998), 1.

2) the encounter phase, which begins when one enters an organization and is confronted with the reality of its expectations, policies, and practices; and 3) metamorphosis, during which the new member acquires new attitudes and behaviors or changes old ones in order to meet organizational expectations and become an accepted, participating member.[14]

Some scholars believe that many reporters enter the *anticipatory socialization* process in college, where they receive some early training in journalism ethics.[15] Secondarily, there is the *encounter phase* of the cub reporter. But these new journalists often are not told what the newsrooms' policy might be nor are they ever told very much outright. They "learn the ropes" like any neophyte in a subculture. They read between the lines. And "certain editorial actions taken by editors and older staffers serve as a controlling guide."[16]

Thirdly, there is the *metamorphosis phase*; the new reporter is on the job. However, socialization does not end there. Ultimately, the reporter is integrated into the institution and becomes an "insider." The reporter is now one of the "gang" and has internalized the rules, including any that have to do with ethics. It is believed that this is where the role of the "cautionary tale" is the most significant. To confirm this has been one the goals of this dissertation. It should be noted thatthe final phase of organizational assimilation is disengagement or exit. This is not considered in this

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[14] T.D. Daniels and others, (1997). *Perspectives on Organizational Communication*, 4th ed. (Boston: McGraw-Hill, 1997), 140.

[15] D. H. Weaver and G.C. Wilhoit, (1996). 153.

[16] W. Breed, (1955). "Social Control in the Newsroom: A Functional Analysis," *Social Forces* 33, (1955): 328.

study because the respondents are all still employed at the publications, which are the focus of the interviews.

Broad Theory, Narrative Analysis

Again, this study has used narrative analysis as its theoretical underpinning. Narrative analysis seeks to analyze messages by looking at them as stories. According to Walter R. Fisher, who promulgated the narrative paradigm in *Human Communication as Narration: Toward a Philosophy of Reason, Value, and Action,* people have a natural need to tell stories.[17] And through stories people develop an understanding of one another.[18] Life experiences become meaningful through narratives. That is why it was necessary to know what narratives impact the journalists in this study. This research fits into a large body of scholarship on the importance of narratives.[19] Researchers have analyzed the importance of narratives in the workplace before.[20] However, until now, this research has not been extended to the workplace of the newsroom. It is important to understand how these journalists have been shaped by these narratives. These "cautionary tales" are still

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[17] W.R. Fisher, "Fisher's Narrative Paradigm," in Reinard, J.C. (2001) *Introduction to communication research,* J.C. Reinard, 3rd ed. (Boston: McGraw Hill, 2001), 167.

[18] Ibid.

[19] **See:** J. Jasinkski, (1993) (re) Constituting Community Through Narrative Argument: Eros and Philia in The Big Chill. *The Quarterly Journal of Speech* 79: 467:486; Kirkwood, W.G. (1992); Narrative and the Rhetoric of Possibility. *Communication Monographs* 59. 30-47; Mumby, D. K. (1987) The Political Function of Narrative in Organizations. *Communication Monographs* 54, 113-127; Rowland, R.C. (1987) Narrative: Mode of Discourse or Paradigm? *Communication Monographs* 54, 264-275; Adres, R. ed. (1989*) Narrative and Argument*. Milton Keynes: Open University Press.

[20] J.C. Meyer, "Tell Me a Story: Eliciting Organizational Values from Narratives," *Communication Quarterly*, 43, (1995): 210-224.

part of the narrative of the newsroom workplace. Indeed, the newsroom employees of tomorrow may be shaped by today's narrative.

> Speaking on the importance of narratives in the workplace, organizational behavior scholar Marsha Witten notes: "…narratives can set forth powerful and persuasive truth claims – claims about appropriate behavior and values – that are shielded from testing or debate. Narrative can provide models of correct behavior and rules for the extension of models to new situations. Narrative can impart values and affect problem definition."[21]

This study looks particularly at the latter part of this analysis at how values may be imparted in the workplace. This study extends the work situation to the newsroom and the communication of values in those newsrooms. As we will see, values and ethics are used interchangeably throughout the study. But first we must understand the narrative paradigm and how it compares to the rational world paradigm. The narrative paradigm is in contrast to the rational world paradigm. Communication theorist Em Griffin lists Fisher's five assumptions of the rational world paradigm:

1. People are essentially rational.
2. We make decisions on the basis of argument.
3. The type of speaking situation (legal, scientific, legislative) determines the course of our argument.
4. Rationality is determined by how much we know and how well we argue.
5. The world is a set of logical puzzles that we can solve through rational analysis.[22]

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[21] M. Witten in D.K. Mumby, *Narrative and Social Control: Critical Perspective*. (Newbury Park: Sage Publications, 1993), 105.

[22] W. R. Fisher, "Paradigm shift: From a rational world paradigm to a narrative one," in *A First Look at Communication Theory,* E.Griffin, (Boston: McGraw Hill, 2003), 327.

Fisher lists the narrative paradigm based on the following five assumptions:

1. People are essentially storytellers.
2. We make decisions on the basis of good reasons.
3. History, biography, culture, and character determine what we consider good reasons.
4. Narrative rationality is determined by the coherence and fidelity of our stories.
5. The world is a set of stories from which we choose, and thus constantly recreate, our lives.[23]

In the rational world paradigm, only the experts can present or discern sound arguments, but in the narrative paradigm almost anyone can discern parts of a good story and use it as a basis for action. Narrative inquiry is a non-traditional form of research that is still evolving in practice. Thus, there are few established protocols.[24] Nevertheless, narrative inquiry is perhaps the best research method to discuss newspaperethics. Reporters use narratives every day to tell the stories and reveal the values of others. They are story-tellers by profession and inclination. But what of their own stories? Do they also use this method to communicate culture within their own organizations? What do their professional narratives teach them?

In order to know the reporters' core values, the questions were phrased in such a way to allow the respondents to construct stories by way of illustration. In essence,

[23] Ibid.

they might use narratives to illustrate their values. Narratives can fill the gap between "what happened" and "what it means," according to proponents of narrative theory.[25] Through narrative analysis this study explores the values of reporters. The study uses the reporters' own narrative about ethical dilemmas. Further, this study attempts to discern the impact of the dominant narratives on the reporters' burgeoning ethics.

Definition of Key Terms

For this study, ethics is defined as the moral thinking and values in the American newsroom. Again, values and ethics are used interchangeably throughout the study. The classic definition of ethics is the "study of morality." There is a distinction between the two related ways in which morality can be studied: *descriptively and philosophically.* The descriptive study of morality (descriptive ethics) involves an attempt to describe or report the moral outlook of different cultural groups or subgroups. On the other hand, the attempt to examine, defend or justify moral judgments, rules, principles, or ideals belongs to the study of philosophical ethics. This study employs descriptive ethics to explore how reporters construct their ethical beliefs. But first it is necessary to define some of the terms used in this study.

(1) *Cautionary tales* of the newsroom are illustrative stories that have become lore in most newsrooms. They are often used to create a framework for ethical behavior.

(2) *Ethics*or *values* represent the moral reasoning used by journalists in writing and reporting the news. There have been various definitions used by mass communication theorists. One of the best

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[24] K. deMarrais and S.D. Lapan, eds., *Foundations for Research: Methods of Inquiry in Education and the Social Sciences*, (Mahwah, N.J.: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 2004), 113.

[25] Ibid., 107.

that is ascribed to a study by Journalism Professor Conrad C. Fink. He wrote, ethics is "the systematic search for choices in what's good or bad in human conduct – what's right or wrong. It's an effort to identify principles that constitute values and rules of life recognized by us as individuals, a group or a culture…."[26]

(3) Narratives are loosely defined as stories with a beginning, middle and end. One researcher who conducted a similar study defines narratives this way, "A sequence of events (a plot) together in time or causally related, with organization-related characters, which takes place in a setting somehow related to the organization."[27]

Theory or Paradigm?

Fisher calls his approach a paradigm rather than a theory. He believes that the narrative approach is broader than a theoretical approach.[28] According to Fisher, he is capturing a fundamental nature of the human being in that we experience life through narration or stories. Fisher states that theories of human communication do not adequately address questions like: How do people come to live and act on the basis of communicative experiences? What is the nature of reason and rationality in these experiences? What is the role of values in human decision-making and action?

> The fact that people can often draw morals from stories suggests an explanation of why stories might be remembered so accurately and have a strong impact on attitudes. People may use stories, even a single story, to build a theory inductively.[29]

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[26] Conrad C. Fink, *Media ethics*. (Needham Heights: Allyn and Bacon, 1995), 1.

[27] J.C. Meyer, (1995), 213.

[28] W.R. Fisher, "The Narrative Paradigm: An Elaboration," *Communication Monographs*, 52, (1985), 347-367.

[29] Ibid.

Inductive reasoning encourages learning from particular cases. Thus, people learn behavior from their own stories as well as those of co-workers or others in their field. Not all stories are fairy tales with which to put the children to bed. Instead, stories can provide real life guidance, especially the stories told in the workplace. These workplace stories can provide clues to as to who is considered a hero or a villain. Looking closely at these stories, the moral or ethical underpinnings of an entire industry or profession can be discovered. In fact, "through corporate myths and histories, we can characterize the organization's culture. We simplify complex themes so they are more easily understood and draw meaning from history."[30] The rules of the workplace are covertly communicated through narratives. Storytelling has the power to set the core values of an organization. According to the *Journal of Management Information Systems:*

> People drink in knowledge informally and at times, unconsciously. That is, they learn much incidentally, while eating in thecafeteria, chatting in the halls, observing their colleagues' and supervisors' behavior - and through the vicarious experience of others. Therefore, knowledge transfer can occur even in the absence of deliberate intention to teach or learn.[31]

People do not learn simply through a system of rewards and punishments, communication theorists say. They can also learn through storytelling and observing behavior of exemplars in the workplace

> Researchers have revealed that children and adults also learn through simply observing others…even in the absence of any reinforcements and whether or not the mimics intended to learn.

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[30] Ibid.

[31] W. Swap and D. Leonard, "Using Mentoring and Storytelling to Transfer Knowledge in the Workplace," *Journal of Management Information Systems*, 18, (Summer 2001): 95.

> Thus, when novices are immersed in an organization or culture they value…a great deal of learning can occur through observing the expert's behavior.[32]

Organizational behavior scholars Swap and Leonard define the organizational story as a detailed narrative of past management actions, employee interactions, or other intra-or extra-organizational events that are communicated informally within the organization.

> Such narratives will ordinarily include a plot, major characters, and outcome. A moral, or implication of the story for action, is usually implied if not explicitly stated. Normally, these stories will…reflect organizational norms, values, and culture.[33]

Communication theorists say storytelling or narratives in the workplace is even more important than statements of policies and norms. And most stories told in the workplace are negative. Workplace narratives about reporters fabricating stories certainly fall into this category.

> Managers interested in how knowledge accrues in the organization cannot ignore these important transmitters. Organizational stories are special kinds of communication because they don't just impart information. They can sometimes portend the future or at least guide future behavior. An organizational story gives a preview of what may happen if a similar incident should occur again. A story contains a blueprint that can be used to predict future organizational behavior.[34]

By closely monitoring the kinds of stories told in an organization, it may be possible to uncover the values promulgated in a particular organization or even

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[32] Ibid.

[33] Ibid.

[34] A. Hastorf, and A.M. Isen, *Cognitive Social Psychology*. (New York: Elsevier, 1982), 287.

industry. Since the 1970s, researchers have used the narrative paradigm to explain cultural value systems.

Fisher first conceptualized the narrative approach in 1978. Since that time, it has attracted some criticism. "…the study of narrative should focus upon rhetoric that either explicitly tells a story or that clearly implies a story," said Robert C. Rowland, a critic of the paradigm, adding:

> Only rhetoric that tells a story can fulfill the functions that Fisher and others identify as being served by narrative. Through the development of the plot and identification with characters, narratives can make powerful and persuasive arguments. If the plot and characters are not present these functions cannot be fulfilled. While much rhetoric contains or refers to narrative, much does not. And if we treat discursive rhetoric as it were a story, we will miss the point entirely. Moreover, if human are defined as storytelling animals, we may forget that humans do many other things as well.[35]

A narrative that serves an epistemic, as opposed to an aesthetic function, becomes subject to proving its point through evidence or through the confines of the rational world paradigm, Rowland said. Therefore, the narrative paradigm cannot supplant the rational world paradigm entirely. Despite the criticism, some communications theorists are using the narrative approach to explain a host of human interactions, including the communication of values in the workplace.

Narratives in the Workplace

In organizations, people justify their decisions by telling stories to co-workers. The person's values can be embedded in the types of stories which he or she tells, as

[35] R.C. Rowland, "Narrative: Mode of Discourse or Paradigm?" *Communication Monographs*, 54, (September 1987): 273.

we will argue.[36] In her essay, *Narrative and Obedience in the Workplace*, Marsha Witten asserts that narratives are powerful forms of communication for the exercise of covert control at the workplace.[37]

> It is partly through the recounting of narratives…that hierarchical relationships in organizations are imagined, workers are taught the parameters and obligations of their role, and behavioral norms in service of the organization's ends are conveyed.[38]

According to Witten narratives help enact a culture of obedience in the workplace. Narratives accomplish this by producing a shared version of reality and moral agreement in the workplace. Also, the role of exemplars cannot be underestimated in these narratives. For the newcomer or even the veteran, the impact of cautionary tales serves an important purpose in creating a common story in the workplace.

> For newcomers to organizations in particular, exemplars aid selection of suitable rules to follow in specific instances of choice and provide guidance for behaviors not covered by rules, Witten holds.[39] Guiding tacit knowledge, exemplars are not generally matters of conscious attention. Instead by operating beneath the level of discursive awareness, they help form the "deep structure" of organizational order – a set of taken for granted, unexamined assumptions about what is appropriate behavior in the organization.[40]

Early Ethics Orientation

How the newcomers take on newsroom ethics is explored in this study by asking each reporter to compare his or her ethics when he or she first entered journalism to

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[36] J.C. Meyer, (1995), 210-224.

[37] M. Witten in D.K. Mumby, ed., *Narrative and Social Control: Critical Perspectives,* (Thousand Oaks: Sage, 1993), 98.

[38] Ibid.

[39] Ibid., 107.

[40] Ibid.

their present value orientation. Early in their careers, the reporters in this study said they relied on their workplace narratives or the stories told by other reporters to guide them. The journalists in this study were asked by the researcher to: "*Tell how you would describe the person you are now as far as newsroom values versus the person you were in the beginning of your career."*[41]

Several of the respondents described themselves as "naïve" when they first entered the business. Others said their ethics have changed little or not at all. One respondent's viewpoint sums up those who believe they were naïve by saying, "I think I was probably more of a smart aleck and a little more insensitive (to the) fall out of people who I wrote about, even the politicians… I'm more mature. The more you do the job the more sensitive you are to people. I wanted to be a little more respectful of sources and convincing to readers."

People are simply natural story tellers, when attempting to communicate values. Fisher said:

> I propose (1) a reconceptualization of humankind as Homo narrans (storytelling animals); (2) that all forms of human communication need to be seen fundamentally as stories – symbolic interpretations of aspects of the world occurring in time and shaped by history, culture, and character; (3) that individuated forms of discourse should be considered as "good reasons" – values or value-laden warrants for believing or acting in certain ways; (4) and thata narrative logic that all humans have natural capacities to employ ought to be conceived of as the logic by which human communication is assessed....Any ethic, whether, social, political, legal, or otherwise, involves narrative.[42]

[41] Question altered slightly for flow of text.

[42] W.R. Fisher, (1984). "Narration as Human Communication Paradigm: The Case of Public Moral Argument," *Communication Monographs*, 51, (1984): 3.

The Rational World Paradigm	***The Narrative Paradigm***	***Possible Reporter Effects***
In the rational world paradigm, people are essentially rational.	In the narrative paradigm, people are essentially storytellers.	A story will be told to illustrate an ethical point of view before a reporter points to a code of ethics.
People make decisions based on argument.	People make decisions based on good reasons.	Reporters will make decisions about what stories to accept and which to reject on the basis of what makes sense to them or good reasons. Reporters will have value-laden warrants for believing or acting in certain ways.
The communicative situation determines the course of the argument.	History, biography, culture, and character determine what we consider to be good reasons.	Stories about ethical dilemmas that are specifically relevant to the reporter are a persuasive factor that affects behavior.
Rationality is determined by how much we know and how well we argue.	Narrative rationality is determined by coherence and fidelity of our stories.	Reporters believe the stories that are internally consistent and truthful.
The world is a set of logical puzzles that we can solve through rational analysis.	The world is a set of stories from which we choose, and constantly recreate, our lives.	Stories about ethical dilemmas told by veterans to newcomers to newsrooms "ring true." Thus, these stories are powerful indicators of behavior.

Figure 2 **– Rational World, Narrative World & Possible Reporter Effects-**
Adapted from Fisher (1987) by Katherine Miller In *Communication Theories; Perspectives, Process and Contexts*, McGraw-Hill Higher Education.

Media Scholars on Reporters' Values

The value systems of reporters have been studied before, most notably by Pamela Shoemaker and Stephen Reese,[43] Paul Voakes,[44] as well as Patrick Lee Plaisance and Elizabeth A. Skewes, who based their study on Voakes'.

In a 1992 random-sample mail survey, Plaisance and Skewes found in their nationwide probability sample of 600 newspaper journalists that honesty was ranked as the most important value by far by most journalists. Fairness was valued next.[45]

Moreover, continuing research into the value system of reporters has shown that there are a host of influences on a reporter's value system. In 1985, organizational factors were studied by media scholar Philip Meyer. In that study of working newspaper journalists, half of the daily newspaper circulation in the United States was accounted for by the 734 respondents. The study concluded that organizational factors were important in journalists' ethical judgments.[46]

In 1990, journalism scholar Michael Singletary et al. conducted an analysis of 13 motives for ethical decision-making by 17 professional journalists and 49 mass communications students. This study showed that most journalists were

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[43] P. Shoemaker and S. Reese, *Mediating the Message: Theories of Influences on Mass Media Content,* 2nd ed., (New York: Longman, 1996).

[44] P.S. Voakes, "Social Influences on Journalists' Decision-Making in Ethical Situations," *Journal of Mass Media Ethics*, 12, (1997): 18-35.

[45] P.L. Plaisance, and E.A. Skewes, "Personal and Professional Dimensions of News Work: Exploring the Link between Journalists' Values and Roles," 30, (Winter 2003): 388-848.

[46] J.W. Smith, (1985). "The Organizational Correlates of Journalists' Ethical Values (Manoya, newspaper, multivariate analysis of variance, professionalism, non-orthogonality," (Ph.D. diss., University of North Carolina Chapel-Hill, 1985), 249.

"mainstream" ethicists, meaning their ethical concerns centered on credibility, their personal sense of morality, the public's need to know and the standards of their field and their employer.[47] The research of Singletary and others was guided by the following questions: "Are reporters' ethical orientations (the logical-moral structure that leads to ethicality) unique to the individual, or characteristic of the field? What are the motives – or some of them – that reporters have for making ethical decisions?"[48]

The researchers found the following outline for ethical decision-making:

(A) Personal Advancement. Resolution of ethical dilemma on the basis of what the decision will do for the professional's career.

(B) Colleagues as Referents. A reporter's position is based on what the reporter believes is the position of his or her colleagues.

(C) Knowledge as Power. (Knowledge for Knowledge's Sake) This category of motivation involves the gathering of information that has little substantive justification. For example, a reporter might look through the garbage discarded by a celebrity or a politician in order to gain insights into the personal life of the person.

(D) The Public's Need to Know. The reporter believes that the public needs information for political and constitutional purposes.

(E) The Ability to Punish. For some reporters, the opportunity to punish others by public exposure might be a strong motive for ethical decision-making.

(F) Pragmatism (or Instrumentality). "Doing whatever it takes to get the job done" is a likely stance of some journalists in response to an ethical dilemma.

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[47] M.W. Singletary and others, "Motives for Ethical Decision-Making," 67, 4, (Winter 1990): 964.

[48] Ibid., 965.

(G) General Sense of Morality. Some reporters' ethical decision-making probably is guided by a sense of doing or not doing something simply because it is, or is not, the "right thing to do."

(H) Credibility with the Audience. A journalist might be motivated to one ethical stance or another by a perceived need to maintain credibilitywith the audience. For example, the reporter might not "want" to name a cleric arrested for solicitation, but might feel that he or she must name the person in order to maintain credibility with the audience.

(I) Standards of the Employer. Some individuals might make one ethical decision if left to their own conscience, but another based on what they feel is consistent with an employer's policy.

(J) Perceived Standards of the Field. Some ethical positions are likely derived from what the individual sees as the prevailing standards of the field.

(K) No Knowledge or Concern with Ethical Formalities. Some people know nothing of codes of ethics, though perhaps some know but have little concern about them.

(L) Legality. A reporter might decide an ethics issue on the basis of what is legal, aside from personal aspects of morality.

(M) Religion. For some people, religion might be the basis for ethics and morality. Thus, a decision on ethics might well be decided on the basis of Biblical theses, such as, 'Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.'[49]

The respondents in this study were similar to the reporters studied by Singletary et al. in that some said they accessed their newsroom values by first considering the public's need or (right) to know or their own general sense of morality. Also, some respondents said they used the advice of colleagues as referents to define the values

[49] Ibid., 966-967.

in their newsrooms. However, none said they used their in-house codes to access these values.

Challenge of Codes

Making it even more difficult for reporters to navigate through the ethical maze using codes is that some media companies have refused to put codes in print. This has been done because according to media theorist Clifford Christians, "They want to forestall the possibility of plaintiffs using those codes as evidence of negligence."[50] The fear of having written codes turned against them is not wholly unfounded. Former Sen. Alan Simpson (R-Wyo.) was known for carrying around the Society of Professional Journalists' code of ethics and brandishing it when it suited his purpose. In fact, Simpson read the code aloud on the Senate floor just prior to Clarence Thomas's nomination to the U.S. Supreme Court.[51] Later, he accused a reporter of violating a part of the code because of the reporter's alleged unfair coverage of Thomas.[52]

Thus, keeping the code out of print in some instances is the preference of some proponents of the media, lest it fall into the hands of those who would use it as a cudgel against the press. This makes the importance of narratives, and how reporters use them for ethical guidance, even more significant. However, it is not the belief of this study that the narrative is a replacement of ethic codes or other modes of

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[50] C.G. Christians and others, *Good News: Social Ethics and the Press*. (Oxford University Press, 1993), 135.

[51] J. Achenback, "Oh THAT Code of Ethics: Unearthing the Guide to What Every Journalist Needs to Know." *The Washington Post,* 19 October, 1991, D1.

[52] Ibid.

reasoning from the rational paradigm. Several of the reporters in this study know what is in their codes of ethics. These written codes, however, do not appear to be the gateway source of guidance for them.

Fisher said, "The narrative paradigm is a fabric woven of threads of thoughts from both the social sciences and the humanities. It seeks, like any other theory of action, to account for how persons come to believe and to behave."[53]

This is not to say that reporters never use the tenets of the rational paradigm to reach conclusions about ethical behaviors. Although these approaches may be different, they are linked. The premise here is not that reporters will use the narrative paradigm exclusively, but that the narrative serves to supplement the rational world paradigm.

> Narration is often viewed as antithetical to logical reasoning, one the province of the arts, the other the province of the sciences. Poetry, fiction, history, painting, and sculpture draw on narrative for their subjects and methods. Physics, chemistry, biology, medicine, engineering, and other sciences draw on inductive and deductive logic in their approaches. In everyday life, however, the two approaches are not so far apart; in fact, they are inextricably linked.[54]

Consistent with the narrative paradigm, reporters will believe stories about ethical dilemmas that have coherence and fidelity. This means that those stories that strike a chord in the reporter will remain with them as part of their repertoire of how to behave when faced with similar dilemmas. Also, such stories are internally consistent with a beginning, middle and an end. These stories or exemplars are powerful

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[53] W.R. Fisher, *Human Communication as Narration: Toward a Philosophy of Reason, Value, and Action,* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1987), 98.

[54] Daphne A Jameson, *The Journal of Business Communication*, 38, (October 2001): 476.

indicators of behavior of the reporter in the field. One study found thatthe dominant forms of decision-making by television journalists were based on evaluating potential consequences of actions, rather than following prescribed principles. In fact, that study showed decision-making relied heavily on storytelling.[55] This study expects to find the same thing.

All the journalists in this study eschew fabrication as a grave sin against the industry. However, that ultimately is not what this study is about. It is likely that many others in the industry would likewise condemn this obviously unethical behavior. This study was not designed to discover if the respondents believed fabrication is unethical behavior for journalists. This study is about how narratives are an essential part of ethical reasoning, and how cautionary tales can spark discussions on ethics. Several of the respondents said that the ethical policies in their organizations were shored up after the Jayson Blair affair. Thus, their analysis of Blair led them to discuss other matters of ethics in their newsroom. Reporters agree that Blair and others violated a basic tenet of truth-telling, but other matters are not so clearly defined. For instance, there may be disagreement across newsrooms on whether a reporter should accept gifts.

According to the American Society of Professional Journalists, any gifts, favors, free travel, or special treatment "can compromise the integrity of the journalists and their employers" and therefore, nothing "of value should be accepted."[56]

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[55] R.M. Steele, "Journalism Ethics. A Case Study in Television News Decision-Making," (Ph.D. diss., University of Iowa, 1990).

[56] V. Alia, *Media, Ethics and Social Change*, (Routledge: New York, 2004), 141.

On the other hand, one editor who seemed to leave open the possibility of gifts said, "A moral absolute? Yet suppose there is a story of global importance, the fare is astronomical…and my publisher won't pay the bill?"[57]

Standards are in flux in some places as journalism attempts to adjust to the lessons of Blair and others. One respondent said, "(Editors) are being (more vigilant) in recognition of the Jayson Blair (scandal), (and) trying to value the reader more and give the reader (some understanding of) how we make some decisions." After the Blair story broke, this journalist said his newsroom assembled a readers' advisory group to gauge how the community viewed local journalists.

Other respondents said that there were meetings about ethics in their newsrooms after the stories broke about Barnicle, Blair, or Glass. The behavior of Blair and others mentioned in this study apparently served to focus newsroom conversation on ethical behavior. Asked about their views on the greatest value to uphold in the field, this is just a sampling of what some said:

Respondent 1:	Always be truthful, do what's right.
Respondent 4:	One value to uphold, you should always be truthful to yourself. You should know what boundaries you won't cross.
Respondent 8:	Accuracy and truth. Don't lie, don't make stuff up.
Respondent 12:	Highest value is truth. Such comments as we will see can be organized into distinct patterns.

[57] Ibid., 141.

CHAPTER 3
NARRATIVE ANALYSIS, METHOD & PROCEDURE

Narrative theory has been used in this study to show the importance of the narrative in the workplace, particularly in that of the newsroom. The findings in this study are consistent with the narrative paradigm promulgated in Walter R. Fisher's *Human Communication as Narration: Toward a Philosophy of Reason, Value and Action.*

Stories serve to give meaning to abstractions such as fairness for a reporter. This derived meaning is the power. Further, "narratives serve to encapsulate and entrench the values which are key to an organization's culture."[58] By looking at narratives, culture creation can be revealed. The goal in studying culture construction through stories is consistent with others who have studied narratives. In his study of day care program employees, organizational behavior scholar J.C. Meyer said his goal was to understand "key values in the organization." And through this, "one can gain insight into basic characteristics of its culture, which further in-depth qualitative study can explore."[59]

Narrative Theory and Analyzing the Narrative

The stories in this study have been considered under the general rubric of narrative analysis. Fisher, an early proponent of the theory, looks at narratives as a rhetorician.

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[58] J.C. Meyer, "Tell Me a Story: Eliciting Organizational Values from Narratives," *Communication Quarterly*, 43, (1995): 210.

He analyzes the narratives of public discourse. In a sense, Fisher sets up the paradigm that other researchers are laboring under. Fisher's work is the umbrella theory, which is offset by the rational world paradigm. (***Figure 2***). For instance in the rational world paradigm, people are essentially rational. In the rational world paradigm, the world is a set of logical puzzles that can be solved through rational analysis. In the narrative paradigm, people are essentially storytellers. In the narrative paradigm the world is a set of stories from which we choose, and constantly recreate, our lives.

The rational world belongs to the world of quantitative approaches such as survey research, whereas the narrative paradigm is more closely aligned with that of the qualitative world.

> The process is hard to mechanize (with qualitative data). It is necessary to listen not only with the tidiest and most precise of one's cognitive abilities, but also with the whole of one's experience and imagination. Detection proceeds by a kind of "rummaging" process. The investigator must use his or her experience and imagination to find (or fashion) a match for the patterns evidenced by the data.[60]

This "rummaging" process of this research begins with interviews. The in-depth interviews with the journalists elicited the reporters' recollections of value-laden stories. Thus, this study does not conduct a narrative analysis in the traditional sense. A dozen experienced journalists were interviewed and themes were culled from this encounter to discover the values embedded in the reporters' narratives. The journalists were from the states of Arizona, California, Maryland, Ohio,

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[59] Ibid., 217.

[60] G. McCracken, "The Long Interview," *Qualitative Research Methods*, Series 13, (Sage University Paper, 1988), 19.

Massachusetts, New York, Michigan and Iowa. All the participants of the study are currently employed as either editors or reporters at either weekly or daily newspapers. All the journalists selected for this study were known to the researcher, after either having worked alongside the researcher or after having attended graduate school with the researcher. It was these associations with the respondents that provided the researcher an entrée into the reporters' world of values. The journalists were chosen to be included in this study were selected because of their range of experience in the industry.

The interviews were a significant part of discovering the journalists' narratives. And most of the journalists interviewed offered spontaneous narratives when queried about values. Often, the narratives were used to put flesh on the bones of ambiguity. For example, respondents used narratives to explain the notion of objectivity. In fact objectivity is considered to be a "prime journalistic virtue."[61] But what does it mean to be objective?

One journalist in this study who wanted to illustrate the value of objectivity did so by telling a story. This journalist described objectivity this way, "I'm in a band….We put out CDs. I've never had one of our albums reviewed here…." ***(See: Appendix E, Respondent 12).***

Not covering a story that would speak or relate to his own interest was a demonstration of objectivity to this journalist. But in order to flesh out his

[61] M. Hirst and R. Patching, *Journalism ethics: Arguments and cases,* (Melbourne: Oxford Press, 2005), 40.

understanding of the concept of objectivity, the journalist felt compelled to tell a story.

The research procedure required the researcher to listen very carefully to this narrative in order to discern the value of objectivity. Note the research question which prompted this response did not contain the word objectivity. In part, this question was*: "What do you consider the primary values of your newsroom?"* (***See: Appendix D, Section 2, Question 2)*** The journalist employed a story to illustrate this value.

This study has sought to discern the nuance of the journalists' values in the stories. There is no one way to analyze narratives. On the other hand, there are certified protocols for conducting interviews in research. However, there are no rigid protocols that purport to mine values from narratives. This researcher agrees with Czarniawska who said, "There is a growing richness of such approaches, and researchers must keep a conviction that there is no one best method of narrative analysis….Rather than striving for a rigorous narrative analysis or for purity of a genre, reading and writing of narratives will remain a creative activity."[62]

In addition to objectivity, reporters are also concerned with the concepts of fairness and compassion. The following is an analysis of the text to show how the workers in this study relate abstractions like fairness and compassion. These were categories identified in the stories the respondents told.

Mining the Narratives

One respondent told a story to illustrate how he navigates the waters of bias and fairness. It is here where the narratives have their greatest power to illuminate

[62] B. Czarniawska, 31.

values. It is one thing to tell a reporter to be unbiased, but it is something entirely different to "show" this by way of illustrations, as narratives can.

Researcher:
Could you tell me as much as possible about the details of your experience as a reporter who has faced any kind of ethical dilemma in your career or as a student?
Respondent 12:

I always get friends, entrepreneurial friends, who want me to write a story about them for the paper. Typically, I tell them I can't do it because it'll be a conflict of interest. I refer them to someone else. I wouldn't let any of my reporters do it. Reporters directly under my charge. The last ethical issue? We've been doing a series of stories on the mayor and various scandals and other misdeeds that have gone on. One of the stories had to do with the mayor firing the president or the director or chair of the board of police commissioners. He installed a new chair which happened to be a friend of his from high school. The person he put in that position that I went to college with. He married one of my best friends from college. I had to divest myself of that story. My reporter discovered this in his daily beat reporting. I went to the Metro Editor, and I explained the situation that I wanted to keep a distance from it. And someone (else) ended up editing the story.

Compassion

The struggle between getting the story and being compassionate to sources is one faced daily by reporters. On the one hand compassion may involve telling the story and through it, prompting change. On the other hand, the ultimate compassion may be not telling the story. One respondent used a story to illustrate this dilemma.

Researcher:

Could you tell me as much as possible about the details of your experience as a reporter, who has faced any kind of ethical dilemma in your career as a professional or as a student?

Respondent 4:

There was a young man who did suicide by cop. He got himself into a position where he confronted police with a fake gun. I got a family friend at the deceased's house. He was adamant that the family didn't want to be bothered. They were upset and in grief. So, I go back to my car and I call my desk. The more gruesome, the more horrifying, the editor said I should "cry" and say if I don't get something from them I'm going to be fired. I decided not to do that. I decided that I wasn't knocking on their door again. I'm not going to offend them by knocking on the door. I told the desk I did it, and they still wouldn't talk to me. In order to solve my ethical dilemma, I have to create another ethical dilemma by lying.

Another respondent said early in her career she had to weigh compassion for the sources versus duty to the reader.

Researcher:

Could you tell me as much as possible about the details of your experience as a reporter, who has faced any kind of ethical dilemma in your career or as a student?

Respondent 5:

One (dilemma) was as a student. I was editor of the college newspaper and I heard rumors about an issue where a father of one of the staff people, one of my editors worked at the university, and there were some allegations of sexual harassment. This guy was a professor at the university. I had to decide whether to pursue that story. The (same) student's mother died recently, and she was very fragile, and I couldn't bring myself to (print the story). The adviser let me make the decision myself. I remember saying maybe "I'll never get to the *New York Times*." The man ended up

making some settlement and leaving and going to (another) university. I think my personal ethics trumped maybe my role as a journalist. I think it's a dilemma (that) has surfaced for me over the years. On the police and medical beat, one issue in particular was being there with a dead body, and wondering if you should really be there. It was issues of privacy and how much the public really had a right to know. That incident in college was a big one. What you personally believe versus what journalism is owed. Do you help the person personally or focus more on the story? You come across people who are poor and struggling and you want to help them. You feel torn. Another time, I was in a room with a dying boy. He needed things, and I put down my notebook and started giving him his water or whatever. I was the only one in that room. Trying to figure out where that line is going to be or if that line matters. I held his hand; it didn't mean I'd lost some crucial detail. You're there in the moment. Who has the trump card, is it the journalist or the human being?[63]

There were a dozen structured interviews with journalists for this study. Later, in this chapter, one case is analyzed to show the interview sequence. As part of qualitative analysis, it is common for "the researcher (to choose) segments of text – verbatim quotes from respondents – as exemplars of concepts or theories."[64] In some ways, the journalists in this study were not very different from those studied in the research done by Weaver and Wilhoit in 1992. In their comprehensive study of 1,410 journalists, Weaver and Wilhoit discovered that the love of writing and the desire to make a difference or to serve as an activist were cited most frequently as the reasons that people entered the business. [65] This is noted to show that in this current

[63] This line separate the interview from the text.

[64] N.K. Denzin and Y.S. Lincoln, eds.. *Collecting and Interpreting Qualitative Materials,* (Thousand Oaks: Sage, 2003), 282.

[65] D.H. Weaver and G.C. Wilhoit, *The American Journalist in the 1990s: U.S. News People at the End of an Era,* (Mahwah: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1996), 54.

study the respondents' reasons for entering the field are somewhat similar to the larger group of reporters surveyed by other researchers. The reporters in this study could be seen as veterans in the field in that the average time in the business was more than 18 years. Therefore, it is assumed they have internalized the rules and values of the industry. Ultimately, the researcher of this analysis is hoping to provide a glimpse of the mid-career journalists and how they may use narratives to reveal their beliefs about ethical behavior.

Overall, the reporters in this study use workplace narratives to guide them in correct behavior in the newsroom in some instances. But it should be noted that these journalists reject outright fabrication without much prompting from either documents, editors, or others. The overarching narratives concerning fabrication do seem to lead to more detailed discussions on ethics in the various newsrooms.

A few of the journalists said their newsrooms decided to update their written policies only after the scandals involving Blair and others. One respondent said, "We had ethics training. We went to a class and got a booklet on ethics and had to sign off (on having read the booklet). It was after the Jayson Blair thing. If we wind up in court, we can say we've had ethics training. It's all the stuff we've been (already) practicing in the newsroom."

But one might ask, how do the reporters already "know" what to do? Was it the written codes? Perhaps, yet none of the reporters in this study believed that written policies guided their actions. Instead, they said discussion with others about fabrication and other ethical issues were more likely to be discussed when deciding

on a correct course of behavior. The narratives that their colleagues shared were deemed more important than any written guidelines.

In their book, *The Moral Media*, Lee Wilkins and Renita Coleman put it this way, "…the workplace clearly establishes norms and, at its best, promotesethical discussion."[66] This study does not look directly at the behavior in the newsroom, however. Instead, this study takes careful note of the narratives told by the respondents and how the narratives are retained by them.

(a) Provoke storytelling

(b) Collect stories

(c) Interpret the stories (what do they say?)

(d) Analyze the stories (how do they say it?)

(e) Set it together with other stories

Figure 3 shows how narrative theory relates to this study. This figure is based on Barbara Czarniawska's *Narrative in Social Science Research.*[67]

Stories were collected as part of a questionnaire, as suggested in part (a) of *Figure 3*. The respondents were given several prompts to initiate storytelling, such as *"Could you tell me as much as possible…*? ***(Question 1, Section 2, See: Appendix D)*** or *Could you describe the most important lesson…*? **(*Question 6, Section 2, See: Appendix D)*** The stories were collected via tape recorded telephone interviews, as suggested in part (b). The stories were interpreted to find out where they were similar or dissimilar, as in part (c). The stories were analyzed and placed in categories, as in

[66] L. Wilkins and R. Coleman, *The Moral Media: How Journalists Reason about Ethics*, (Mahwah: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 2005), 127.

part (d). Finally, the stories were set together with other stories to determine overarching categories, as in part (e) of *Figure 3.*

Embedded Values

The values embedded in the reporters' narratives are objectivity, accuracy, and breaking stories. These are the overarching categories in this study. And while the latter two issues seem concrete, objectivity appears to be less well-defined. Reporters use narratives to help define their ethics and how they define objectivity in particular. It is through the narratives that the reporters have been able to define abstract concepts like objectivity, compassion or fairness. Reporters are aware of their codes, but it seems to be through their stories that they come to understand the abstractions that drive their ethics.

Moreover, the respondents in this chapter talk about their early ethics orientation versus their present beliefs. The average time in the business for the participants in this study was more than 18 years. Some respondents say they gained compassion for their sources over time. It is the belief of this study that they gained compassion only after they had collected enough stories, theirs or someone else's, which helped them to define compassion. One respondent put it this way, "I have more insight and more awareness, and probably more respect for the people in my stories than I did at first."

[67] B. Czarniawska, *Narratives in Social Science Research* (London: Sage, 2004), 15.

Challenges & Background of Respondents

Any study of how reporters learn to assimilate ethical behavior faces challenges. Sometimes this wariness about motives comes from the industry. Often, journalists are suspicious of any scrutiny of their work. Journalist Brian Richardson said in an article in the *Journal of Mass Media Ethics* that there is a tendency among working journalists to view any study of ethics negatively or to perceive efforts to reveal the ethical decision-making process as an attempt to inhibit the journalists' work in some post-facto way.[68] Yet, it is among these workaday journalists where some answers may lie as to how journalists reach ethical decisions, and how they may use "cautionary tales" to do so. This possibility makes this study necessary. This study is by no means an attempt to inhibit the work of journalists or to provide ammunition for the industry's critics. Instead, it seeks to shed some light on how journalists work, and how there may be mechanisms that are not apparent that aid journalists as they seek correct action. This study uses narrative analysis as it explores the answers to a set of questions asked of these experienced journalists. In part, this study has been undertaken to discern the meanings embedded in the narratives.

Each respondent has his or her own reasons for wanting to become a journalist. But there are some common themes respondents gave for entering the field, as shown in *Figure 4.* The reasons that six of the journalists in this study became reporters can be summed up by one reporter who said, "I've always loved writing and being a

journalist would allow me to write and to make money." Two respondents said they were curious by nature, and journalism provided an outlet for this character trait. Two others said they wanted to be activists and change the world through what they wrote. One of these respondents said, "My job is to tell the story of the people. I always wanted to make a difference and expose (wrongdoing)."

One respondent said she became a journalist because it was the only major that interested her at her college. And finally, one respondent became a reporter because he liked his journalism instructor, who then became his mentor.

[68] B. Richardson, "Exploring Questions of Media Morality." *Journal of Mass Media Ethics*, 9, (1994): 109.

Motives for Becoming a Journalist	
Respondent	**Reasons**
R1	**Activism**
R2	**Writing**
R3	**Curiosity**
R4	**Activism**
R5	**Writing**
R6	**Writing**
R7	**Writing**
R8	**Writing**
R9	**College Major**
R10	**Curiosity**
R11	**Writing**
R12	**Liked J-Instructor**
***Figure 4* – Reasons given by respondents for entering the field of journalism.**	

Researcher's Background, Self as Instrument

The researcher had worked as a professional journalist for more than a decade before turning to scholarship. Of course, there is an advantage to having worked as a journalist. The interview is one of the primary techniques used by journalists for gathering information and interviewing has been employed extensively throughout this study. It should be noted that the scholar used her knowledge as a journalist to shape the questions but not to prejudge the answers of the respondents. Also, the scholar shared similar experiences as the respondents in this study. The scholar is an

African-American female, who has worked at several daily and weekly publications throughout the United States. Some of the respondentswere the researcher's former co-workers. This is likewise advantageous as the scholar was able to utilize sources from her previous work associations.

Interviewing

Interviewing was chosen as a data collection method to get at the narratives of reporters. Other researchers have shown that narratives can be obtained through interviews with organization members.[69]

> The purpose of the in-depth interview is not necessarily to answer questions, nor to test hypotheses, and not to 'evaluate' as the term is normally used. At the root of in-depth interviews is an interest in understanding the experience of other people and the meaning they make of thatexperience. [70]

Data Collection

Data collection was approved by the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill Institutional Review Board in December 2004 ***(Appendix A)***. Approval for use of the information was obtained from the respondents at various times throughout January and February 2005 ***(Appendix B)***. Data collection was completed in February 2005. Participants were asked to sign an agreement to be interviewed ***(Appendix C)***. Information was collected by means of a questionnaire containing

[69] J.C. Meyer, "Tell Me a Story: Eliciting Organizational Values from Narratives," *Communication Quarterly*, 43, (1995): 213-214.

[70] I Seidman, *Interviewing as qualitative research,* 2nd ed., (New York: Teachers College Press, 1998), 3.

24 items distributed to a dozen daily and weekly journalists across the country ***(Appendix D)***.

Some 18,000 words, including interview questions, were analyzed ***(Appendix E)***. Ultimately, the journalists selected were from a cross-section of the newspaper. One dozen reporters were interviewed. Nine were from daily newspapers and three others were from weekly newspapers. Each respondent was interviewed individually and the interviews typically lasted between 45 minutes to 2 hours. All respondents were interviewed by the researcher and each interview was tape-recorded and transcribed by the researcher. ***(Appendix E).***

The study results show that the size, circulation or publication frequency of the newspapers figured little into the results. The goal of this project was not generalizability, but rather to study ethics from the point of view of day-to-day veteran journalists.

The researchers employed the four standard rules of interviewing. These include, (1) read the question exactly as written. (2) If the respondent does not answer a question fully, use nondirective follow-up probes to elicit better answers. Standard probes include repeating the question, prompting with "Tell me more," and asking such questions as "Anything else?" and "How do you mean that?" (3) Record answers to questions without interpretation or editing. When a question is open-ended, this means recording the answer verbatim. (4) Maintain a professional, neutral relationship with the respondent. Do not give personal information, express opinions

about the subject matter of the interview, or give feedback that implies a judgment about the content of the answer.[71]

This is a small very specialized sample. However, this method was surprisingly challenging in that more than 100 hours of set-up, transcription, and interview time were required to collect the data. More hours were needed to construct meaning from the data. Yet more time was required to categorize the information. A protocol suggested by John W. Creswell's *Research Design: Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches* (1994) was utilized.[72] The approach required thatone transcript to be examined. The transcripts demonstrate the topic covered – newspaper ethics. Later, this one transcript was compared to that of other respondents. Ultimately, several transcripts were analyzed for common themes. Color-coded abbreviations were used next to common themes. The themes were then converted to categories which were used in the results. The in-depth interviews were structured around several groupings of questions ***(Appendix D).***

Using the rules of interviewing provided standardization for the questionnaire. This is important because "standardization reduces the interviewer's contribution to the measurement error." [73] Telephone interviews were especially useful in this kind of study because many journalists are too busy for in-person interviews.[74] The

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[71] J.F. Gubrium and J.A.Holstein, eds., *Handbook of Interview Research: Context & Method*, (Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, 2001), 70.

[72] J.W. Creswell, *Research Design: Qualitative & Quantitative approaches*. (Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, 1994), 155.

[73] J.F. Gubrium and J.A. Holstein, (2001), 72.

[74] E.S. Adler and R. Clark, *How it's Done: An Invitation to Social Research*. (Canada: Wadsworth Publishing Company, 1999), 219.

advantages of this interview method are that there was a good response rate and little missing data. Telephone interviews may have some limited interpretative value as they exclude the gazes and nonverbal cues that make up human communication. Another disadvantage of this method is that transcription can be time consuming and there could be some interviewer effect.[75] As previously noted, the researcher attempted to minimize interviewer effect by following prescribed interview protocols. All the information used in the analysis was culled from the interview data. According to scholars Denzin and Lincoln, "This interview context calls for the interviewer to play a neutral role, never interjecting his or her opinion of a respondent's answer. The interviewer must establish what has been called 'balanced rapport'; he or she must be casual and friendly on the one hand, but directive and impersonal on the other."[76] The researcher was exclusively responsible for transcribing the interviews. Some transcribed information has been intentionally left blank to protect the identities of the respondents. The researcher has noted these areas where information has been left blank for this purpose. Other information has been added in places to clarify quotes. The researcher has noted these areas as well.

Single Case Illustration

The case of *Respondent 3* has been reproduced in this section to illuminate some of the thinking of the reporters in this study about the "cautionary tales" of fabrication as well as other issues. The responses of *Respondent 3* show how he has assimilated the "cautionary tales."

[75] Ibid., 228.

The researcher has chosen one case to illustrate how narratives work. The case of *Respondent 3*[77] was chosen because of the story he tells about circumventing the published ethical guidelines of his publication and how he forms narratives to show how he has created workable guidelines for himself through various ethical dilemmas. *Respondent 3* has worked as a foreign correspondent for a major daily newspaper in the East. He is a 41 year old and African-American male. He has a degree in engineering. *Respondent 3's* responses will be examined in more detail, using narrative analysis.

(Statement 1) *Researcher*: *How long have you been employed in journalism?* **(Statement 2)** *Respondent 3***:** I started at (name of paper deleted to protect anonymity of respondent) in 1985 as a reporter trainee after college. That would be 20 years ago in August (2005). (**Statement 3)** *Researcher: What made you decide to become a journalist?* **(Statement 4)** *Respondent 3*: I think it's a general curiosity and a quest for adventure. **(Statement 5)** When I was 10 years old, I worked as a paper boy. I used to fold the papers and read the front page. **(Statement 6)** I remember asking my mother what were POWs, and why were they coming home. **(Statement 7)** I wanted to travel and experience and do things. I think (that's why) **(Statement 8)** I decided to become a journalist. **(Statement 9)** *Researcher: Could you tell me as much as possible about the details of your* **(Statement 10)** *experience as a reporter, who has faced any kind of ethical dilemma in your career as a professional or as a student?*

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[76] N.K. Denzin and Y.S. Lincoln, eds., *Collecting and Interpreting Qualitative Materials.* (Thousand Oaks: Sage, 2003), 69.

(Statement 11) *Respondent 3:* (Ethics) is a daily process in this profession and craft. **(Statement 12)** We're constantly faced with ethical dilemmas in terms of accuracy and fairness. (**Statement 13)** Every day we have to go back to the well**. (Statement 14)** At my paper, we have a 50,000-word conflict of interest policy. **(Statement 15)** In that 50,000 word conflict of interest policy, it says that you can't pay sources for information. But (when you're abroad) you can't apply the same construct as America. You have to pay an official for a bribe (just) to come into the country. It's just the way it works. **(Statement 16)** You (hire) a fixer and that's their job. I was covering this hostage situation in Peru; rebels had taken over the Japanese embassy. We found one of the rebels had a twin brother. (Good story) about one brother a school teacher and the other a **(Statement 17)** rebel, right? It was a great story. **(Statement 18)** We went to interview the brother. The family owned a store. They wanted to be paid $200. We said we don't pay anything to sources. **(Statement 19)** But it's a great story and we're the first Americans to get it. I just looked around and what (**Statement 20)** happened was that we bought $200 worth of merchandise in the store, and **(Statement 21)** just "forgot"[78] to take it with us when we left. (It's unfair) we buy (sources) $200 **(Statement 22**) or $300 lunches (in America), but yet you can't go into a poor areas to do **(Statement 23)** interviews about these people, and not even supposed to bring them food. (**Statement 24)** There are times in some countries where you have to let **(Statement 25)** the foreign ministry spend thousands of dollars on you but (the code) says **(Statement 26)** that you can't take any gift over

[77] John James was the pseudonym chosen by *Respondent 3*. *Respondent 3* is used for consistency.

[78] Quote marks inserted by researcher for emphasis.

$25. It's offensive (to them) if you don't let the foreign ministry do that and you don't get your story, if you don't let them do that. **(Statement 27)** *Researcher: What do you consider the primary values of your newsroom?* **(Statement 28)** *Respondent 3*: Primary values of the newsroom are to report accurately and fairly, and present the reader with information to make an informed decision. It's done every day. There are lapses. Journalism is always a work in progress.**(Statement 29)** *Researcher: Tell me your thoughts and feelings when you learned about any reporter at your publication or any other, who fabricated a story.* **(Statement 30)** *Respondent 3:* Our paper would point to Jayson Blair. There were problems at the paper. I was disappointed. I didn't think it was egregious as it (turned out to be). I said, I hope that this isn't a black person. I immediately thought also of Janet Cooke. I thought this is so terrible because he was young and black. My immediate thought was this is just another black eye we don't need …. People in all professions break rules and codes every day. A nurse decides to kill patients, nobody can guard against that, because that's the last thing that a nurse would do. I didn't think we were in a crisis (in journalism). These things happen. I'm not making light of it. I knew it would be (made out to be) a crisis because (Blair) was black, because whatever we do has far greater resonance.

Respondent 3 is very critical of Blair and others. However, he continues to find ways of justifying his own behavior that may be in conflict with the "50,000-word" ethics policy of his own paper. He indicates that ethical behavior is not fixed, if skirting the policies is in service to getting the story. *Respondent 3* apparently

thinks that paying sources is a lesser sin than outright fabrication. He said, "I just know that it is not ethical to write a non-story when there is no story." Thus, the written policies –against offering gifts for example – do not seem to carry the same weight for *Respondent 3* as the "cautionary tales." The stories of Blair and others are seen by *Respondent 3* in absolute terms versus a written policy that is apparently more malleable, if it means getting the story.

Identifying Patterns of Justification

This study looks at the link between the journalists' own narratives concerning ethical dilemmas and those of other journalists, especially the "cautionary tales" or those identified as overarching narratives, which include tales of fabrication. These have been identified as the overarching narratives because most of the reporters in this study mentioned the specific cases of Blair, Barnicle, Glass, and Cooke with little or no prompting.

In *Respondent 3's* case, he uses different language to describe his own experiences than those of the fabricating journalists. Notice in **Statement 14** that*Respondent 3* is well aware that his paper's conflict of interest policy forbids him from paying sources. However, he is willing to bend the rules for the sake of what he characterizes as a "good story" **(Statement 16**). In fact, *Respondent 3* seeks additional justification, by later noting that this is not just a good story but a "great story." **(Statement 19)** He advances the idea that written ethical policies must be secondary to getting the "great story." **(Statement 19)** Also, *Respondent 3* notes his paper's written policy specifically states that no one is to take gifts over $25. **(Statement 26).** Again, the policy is seen as an obstruction to getting the story. So, *Respondent 3* is willing to

suspend these written rules for the sake of getting not just a "good" or "great" story, but for getting the story at all.

Asked about journalists who broke the newspaper industry's core value against fabrication, *Respondent 3* becomes a little more stern and judgmental of his analysis of the situation. Without prompting, *Respondent 3* points to Jayson Blair as an example of a poor journalist. He immediately begins to excuse his own actions by saying that ethical policies are different whether a reporter is working in the United States or a developing nation. *Respondent 3's* narrative about his ethical dilemma sets him up as guiltless for finding a way to pay sources, albeit indirectly. His narrative tone even implies that his self-perception is that he is clever for getting the "great story" without paying for it directly. Whereas, the rhetoric to describe Blair's and Cooke's offenses is more value-laden. What they did was "terrible" and a "black eye."

Besides showing that*Respondent 3* was considerably less judgmental about his own ethical lapses than those of others, *Respondent 3's* narrative reveals that he was familiar with the "cautionary tales" of Cooke and Blair. He had taken away from these incidents that a core value of the industry is to write only what is truthful.

Later in the interview, *Respondent 3* is asked more specific questions about Cooke.

Researcher: *Do you remember Janet Cooke?*

Respondent 3: Yes.

Researcher: *What, if anything, does that case mean to you?*

Respondent 3:

The first thing it meant to me was that you can't get away with (fabrication). There are no short cuts here. Editors must be critical and skeptical of our colleagues' work. (Finally, I) think that there is incredible pressure on reporters at top notch organizations to produce or there's perceived pressure, and we need to deal with that as a profession.

Note *Respondent 3* is more absolute about his feelings on Blair or Cooke than he is about the written polices of his own paper. "I just know that it is not ethical to write a non-story when there is no story," he said.

Respondent 3's case is similar in style and form to the others in this study. Researchers tell us that "how we learn from the singular case is related to how the case is like and unlike other cases (i.e. comparisons)."[79]

> Naturalistic, ethnographic case materials, to some extent, parallel actual experience, feeding into the most fundamental processes of awareness and understanding…The reader comes to know some things told, as if he or she had experienced it. Enduring meanings come from encounter, and are modified and reinforced by repeated encounter. We come to know what has happened partly in terms of what others reveal as their experience.[80]

Respondent 3's case is similar to at least nine of the other cases studied in that each mentions the cases of Janet Cooke or Jayson Blair without prompting. Also, Stephen Glass is mentioned in a few cases. Mike Barnicle is mentioned in one. This was done after the respondents were asked about their knowledge of any case where a news story was fabricated.

The research specifically designed an open-ended question with the prompt: "*Tell me your thoughts and feeling."* This was done so that the respondents could begin a

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[79] N.K. Denzin and Y.S. Lincoln, *Strategies of Qualitative Inquiry,* 2nd ed., (Thousand Oaks: Sage, 2003), 145.

[80] Ibid.

narrative concerning story fabrication in newsrooms**.** It was assumed that the respondents would discuss cases in their own newsrooms, but also what has been identified as the overarching narratives of Cooke, Blair, Glass, and Barnicle. In almost every case, the respondents have borne this out. The respondents were given no encouragement to mention these cases. The question was designed to allow the respondents to *own* the narrative. The stories were theirs to tell.

As in *Respondent 3's* case, several of the respondents report being angered and confused over the overarching narratives of fabrication involving the industry's most notorious cases. They describe these transgressors as being harmful to the newspaper industry. They describe their own emotions in terms of being "disappointed" (*Respondents 2 and 3*); "amazed" (*Respondent 9*); "irritated" (*Respondent 8*); "horrified" (*Respondent 10*); and "appall(ed)" (*Respondent 4).* Clearly, the adjectives used to describe the cases of Cooke, Blair, Glass, and Barnicle are negative ones. The reporters seem to have taken these cases personally.

CHAPTER 4
FORMAL ETHICS of CODES & COMMISSIONS

In 1923 the American Society of Newspaper Editors (ASNE) approved a code at its first meeting.[81] The ASNE said its purpose was to enhance the status of journalists, while protecting reporters from outside attacks. Founders were encouraged to formulate a code of ethics in order to give prestige and legitimacy to the media. This code, the Canons of Journalism, was one of the industry's first. Among other things, the ASNE said that newspapers should act responsibly by being truthful, sincere, impartial, decent, and fair. News organizations were encouraged to adopt the code, which discouraged the most obvious of abuses, especially gifts, junkets, and conflicts of interests.[82]

It would be several years before the press' ethics would receive similar scrutiny. In 1947, the Commission of Freedom of the Press was assembled. The report was written by Robert Maynard Hutchins and 12 other intellectuals of that time. The report concluded that the press was a servant of democracy, and when it shirked that duty it was in danger of jeopardizing a free press. The 133-page Hutchins

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[81] B.J. Evensen, "Journalism's Struggle over Ethics and Professionalism During America's Jazz Age," *Journalism History*, 16:3-4, (Autumn-Winter 1989): 54.

[82] F. Fedler, *Reporting for the Media*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 610.

Commission report "calls on the press to improve itself in the name of morality, democracy, and self preservation."[83]

In its report, the Hutchins Commission argued that readers "needed and were entitled to an honest and accurate account of the day's events in a context that gave those events meaning, and those journalists had a moral obligation to provide that information. This idea became what we now call 'the people's right to know.'"[84]

> Two main conclusions stood out in the Hutchins report: (1) that the press has a responsibility to society; and (2) that the libertarian press of the United States was not meeting its responsibility. Therefore, a need for a new journalistic theory (or emphasis) existed.[85]

On the one hand there are codes, which are written guidelines for reporters, and on the other there is the Commission's report which provided a new way for reporters to think of their work and the press' obligations. It is the belief of this work that narratives are part of the formulation of a "professional consciousness"[86] that has been developing for decades. Neither codes, commissions nor narratives have the teeth of law. But this study shows that they may form important combinations, which help to guide the ethics of reporters.

The development of journalism ethics has not happened in a vacuum. It has a long and illustrious history. In fact, "ethical and moral development for journalists has

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[83] S. Bates, "Realigning Journalism with Democracy: The Hutchins Commission its times, and Ours," *The Washington Program,* (Communication Policy Studies, Northwestern University, 1995), 21.

[84] S.R. Knowlton, *Moral Reasoning for Journalists: Cases and Commentary*, (Westport: Praeger, 1997), 33.

[85] J.C. Merrill, *Journalism Ethics: Philosophical Foundations for News Media*. (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1997), 13.

[86] Ibid.

been in some journalism school curricula for at least half a century."[87]

And while commissions and codes are part of the overt system which attempts to define ethics, narratives may be part of thecovert system that may be as equally important as commissions or codes in defining that value system of journalists. We say covert because there has been little study to date of the reporters' narratives and how these stories may reveal the ethics of journalists. That is why this study may be important for those within the industry. Weaver and Wilhoit in a 1992-1993 survey found that ethics topped a long list of topics on which reporters wanted in-service training.[88] Studying newsroom narratives and how they are assimilated may help journalists to understand how reporters learn about ethics.

In this section of the study, it will be argued that there were certain areas of significance when considering the broad area of formal ethics and newsroom experience. These areas are gift giving or acceptance and bias. Each of these areas in turn will be considered along with how the reporters viewed their ethics in relationship to these matters. In this study, the subjects of gifts and conflicts of interest or bias emerged distinctly as one might expect. As far back as the 1920s in the proposed ASNE code, acceptance of gifts from sources was considered an obvious abuse of power or conflict of interest.

Gifts

Certainly, offering or accepting a gift iscommonly forbidden in newspaper ethics codes across the country. According to the Society of Professional Journalists Code

[87] Weaver and Wilhoit, (1996), 152.

[88] Ibid.

of Ethics, "Journalists should refuse gifts, favors, fees, free travel and special treatment…if they compromise journalistic integrity."[89] Many journalists are often offered gifts in exchange for free publicity.[90] This is a common dilemma for reporters.

Gifts can either involve money, services or products. Ethical dilemma involving gifts were outlined by media scholar Michael Bugeja in his book, *"Living Ethics: Developing Values in Mass Communication."*

> Bugeja defines gifts as; (a) Junkets, or an expense-paid trip so that a journalist can cover an event. Officials at a ski resort, for example, might offer a magazine editor a week at the resort to write a favorable review of the facilities; (b) Freebies, or gifts such as free meals or tickets, to befriend or influence a journalist. Officials at a new casino might invite a reporter for a banquet or send him or her tickets to see a top-name celebrity or even provide gambling chips to "try out" the new slot machines or tables; (c) Bribes, or an outright payment or promise to buy services or goods from a media outlet in return for some favor. For instance, a lawyer can promise to purchase advertising from a TV station whose general manager cancels an investigative consumer segment about a product manufacturer by the lawyer's client.

In this study, four of the 12 respondents identified gift offers as the central ethical dilemma in their careers. At least one other respondent said the gift flow was the other way. As a foreign correspondent in a developing nation, the respondent said he was expected to bring a gift or to pay sources in exchange for interviews. Conversely, as a reporter in an industrialized nation, where the acceptance of drink or dinner is considered part of the environment, this foreign correspondent believed he could not turn down these "gifts," if he expected to get the story. The following question was asked of the respondents to get at specific ethical dilemmas:

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[89] Ibid., 396.

[90] R.F. Smith, *Groping for Ethics in Journalism,* 5th ed., (Ames: Iowa State Press, 2003), 386.

Section2, Q uestion 1 (See: Appendix D) *– Could you tell me as much as possible about the details of your experience as a reporter, who has faced any kind of ethical dilemma in your career as a professional or as a student?*

Respondent 1:

Any time you work in **(city name deleted**), you're up against all sorts of dilemmas and people want to give you free stuff (in exchange for stories). I have had people who want (ed) to give me cash money for doing stories, and you have to turn that down because that's not what you're there for. In my capacity, I've seen people trying to hook you up for hooking them up. There were some people I worked with in **(city name deleted**) who was a section editor (and a photographer), who would go into a (local business), and say to the owner stuff like, 'if you can give my friend and me these nice leather jackets, we'll write a good story about your business.' And the (business owner would) write off the jackets as being stolen. There was an editor and photographer team walking around wearing this free stuff. Everything from expensive sunglasses to free coats.

Respondent 9:

Ongoing one that everyone faces is what you can accept (from) sources and stuff. If you go and interview someone and they offer to feed you, that's kind of a constant one. You write about someone and they're grateful and they give you a gift which you're not supposed to accept.

Respondent 10:

At the **(paper name deleted)** you couldn't keep anything. If someone (wants to) thank you (by sending you) some flowers, they would expect you not to even accept that; that was ridiculous. No one has really offered me anything. When it comes to ethics, you just know what you're not supposed to do anyway.

Bias and conflicts of interest

Another long-time common ethical dilemma for reporters is the appearance of bias or conflicts of interests. This was also mentioned in the early days of the development of a code of ethics by the ASNE. Bias can surface in many ways. In this study reporters were concerned about their personal relationship with sources or how it would be perceived. One respondent summed it up this way:

Respondent: 6:

I've been at papers where (there were) big ethical dilemmas. And I think there but for the grace of God go I, and I think, how do I protect myself from those things? I error on the side of caution. Being black you don't want to have any ethical problems. I say to my editors, "now this is my college boyfriend," (who is a source for a story).

Another respondent, who is an editor, said he does not write nor does he allow reporters under his charge to write stories about a band he is in. The band could survive a lack of publicity from his paper, but the paper may not survive charges of conflict of interest, he said.[91]

Concerns about conflicts of interest or bias have long been of interest to media ethics scholars as well as those in the industry. In fact, many newspapers at one time had nepotism polices that prevented spouses from working in the same newsroom. Journalists sometimes postponed their marriages and simply lived together to get around such rules.[92]

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[91] Respondent 12.

[92] R.F. Smith, *Groping for Ethics in Journalism*, 5th ed., (Ames, Iowa State Press,2003), 377.

Summary

Non-monetary conflicts of interest are often faced by reporters. Overall, the reporters in this study say that conflicts that may arise from personal relationships are monitored by editors. Also, the respondents in this study say that they are aware that their ethics codes forbid conflicts of interest or acceptance of gifts. Interestingly, none of the respondents said they had received this information directly from the codes, but rather from others who had read the code. The respondents in this study say that they relied more on word of mouth about prohibitions rather than on any forms of written guidance.

The way that the respondents deal with these conflicts takes the form of "transparency" in one instance or simply avoiding the appearance of a conflict in another instance. For example, one respondent said that she uses a former boyfriend as a source, but points out this fact to editors. She believes if she is "transparent" about this issue, then it does not present a conflict. Another respondent said he simply foregoes any publicity that his paper might provide his band. He does not allow his band to appear in his paper so as not to have the appearance of a conflict of interest.

The prohibition of gift acceptance seems straightforward to the respondents in this study, as one said, "...You just know what you're not supposed to do anyway." But is it so straightforward? Often, there are written rules on gift-giving and acceptance. That much is true. However, these rules are not inviolate as *Respondent 3* relates in some detail in the previous chapter. This respondent comes to his ethics, not from his code, which expressly forbids gift giving and acceptance over a certain dollar amount, but he accesses his values through a narrative. Through this narrative, he explains why the

code does not work for him. Thus, his value system is more defined by his narrative than any document.

Meanwhile, several of the respondents in this study identified gift acceptance as one of the central ethical dilemmas in their careers. Many newsrooms have ethics policies which forbid the acceptance of gifts over a certain monetary value, as *Respondent 3's* newsroom policy of not accepting any gift over $25. Nevertheless, none of the respondents mentioned ethics codes as the place where they would go to access information about gifts or bias. Instead, they related narratives about how they learned to handle these dilemmas or the respondents offered stories about how others had handled these matters.

Thus, these narratives go beyond ethics codes. These narratives demonstrate how ethics are formed in the field. Ethics codes commonly mention ethical dilemmas like the acceptance of gifts or bias as in the SPJ code, but it is the narratives that ground the reporters in the day-to-day reality of ethics. Reporters use these narratives to find their value orientations. It is interesting that the narratives are significant guides when choosing what do when offered concrete items such as a leather jacket, flower or meals, as the cases of previous respondents show. In the previous chapter, we saw the importance of the narratives as guides when the reporters are trying to decide on even more abstract questions, like what does it mean to be fair or to be compassionate? In this chapter, we have explored the more concrete questions relating to accepting gifts or avoiding apparent conflicts of interest.

CHAPTER 5
NEWSROOM VALUES & PERSONAL ETHICS

The reporters in this study were asked directly about newsroom values. Also, they were asked to compare how their values may have changed over time as they gained experience in the business. These responses are analyzed in this section because they have yielded the most detailed information. Hence, the responses provided the greatest insight into the reporters' values.

The formal ethics are typically enunciated by ethics codes or spelled out by a commission as discussed in the previous chapter. Meanwhile, media scholars agree that "while a variety of mechanisms of accountability have been advocated, codes of ethics have been the most widely used."[93]

After the Society of Professional Journalists (SPJ) amended its code in 1973, many newsrooms began writing codes for reporters. But Boeynik said that at best, evidence is mixed in answering the question of whether codes influence the decision-making of journalists. The SPJ Code of Ethics was drawn up in 1926, revised in 1973, and revised again in 1984, 1987, and 1996. [94]

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[93] D.E. Boeyink, "How Effective are Codes of Ethics? A Look at Three Newsrooms," *Journalism Quarterly*, 71, (Winter 1994): 893-904.

[94] J. Iggers, *Good News, Bad News: Journalism Ethics and Publid nterest*, (Boulder: Westview Press,1998), 38.

In its most recent formulation, the SPJ Ethics Committee has reduced the basic principles to four major tenets to thefollowing: seek truth and report it; minimize harm; act independently; and be accountable.[95]

According to the Society of Professional Journalists code under the heading of "seek truth and report it," reporters are further encouraged to "test the accuracy of information from all sources and exercise care to avoid inadvertent error...." Further, the code encourages reporters to "refuse gifts, favors, fees, free travel, and special treatment…."[96]

The responses of the participants in this study were in line with the values encouraged by the SPJ codes. For instance, three respondents cited accuracy in this study as a primary value. One said that truth trumped everything else**.** Three others identified objectivity as a primary value in their newsrooms**.** Three said that breaking stories was the greatest value. One believed that the editors' crusade to enforce open records law was the highest value. And one respondent said that her newsroom had no values.

The respondents in this study rarely mention codes. Instead, themes that are commonly enunciated in codes are implied by the narratives told by the respondents. Perhaps their training in journalism has encouraged them to internalize these behaviors. The themes in this section are objectivity, accuracy, truth, breaking stories and the "public's right to know."

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[95]Ibid.

[96] http://www.spj.org/ethics_codes.asp

In ***Section 2; Question 2 (See: Appendix D)*** the respondents in this study were asked; *What do you consider the primary values of your newsroom? Have you ever had any specific instances of what you've described, what were they?*

Objectivity

A salient issue in their responses on this question was the issue of objectivity**.** From their early training, reporters are bombarded with the notion of objectivity. Ultimately, the "ideology of objective journalism reigns supreme: here neutrality and balance are the prime journalistic virtues."[97] The SPJ code once called for journalists "to perform with intelligence, objectivity, accuracy and fairness." Later, amended versions called for journalists "to serve the public with thoroughness and honesty."[98] Now, the SPJ code cautions that reporters must act independently and avoid conflicts of interest, real or perceived. Also, the code advises reporters to disclose unavoidable conflicts.[99] This is the transparency notion of objectivity that has received some scrutiny lately.

Some of the respondents in this study still believe in the notion of objectivity. On this topic, they said:

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[97] M. Hirst and R. Patching, *Journalism Ethics: Arguments and Cases,* (Melbourne: Oxford Press, 2005), 40.

[98] J. Iggers, *Good News, Bad News: Journalism Ethics and the Public Interest,* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1998), 39.

[99] R.F. Smith, *Groping for ethics in journalism.* (Ames: Iowa State Press, 2003), 35-36.

Respondent 2:

I think their primary values are standard journalism values that you be objective. If you have a conflict, know someone and you have to write an expose type story, and you let them (the editors) know, and they're aware of your relationship and they can take you off or say it's not going to affect the story. And make sure that you get both sides of an issue.[100]

Respondent 12:

We have a fairly lengthy ethics policy that everyone has to read and sign. Goes into travel on the company dime. We have an ethics committee within the last year that put together our ethics policy. It's a high priority placed on it. Frequently, you have conversations about ethics. Reporters and editors who do other things too. I'm in a band, for one. We put out CDs. I've never had one of our albums reviewed here. It's more of a newspaper policy. Where there could be a perceived conflict, if the review is a glowing review. It begs the question, well, this guy works for you, and of course you're going to write something nice. (We had a columnist and)[101] her husband was picked up on a prostitution charge. He was co-chair of the (exact name deleted) Democratic Party and he ran for secretary of state. We ran a story and a directive that came from on high, and we had to acknowledge that he's married to our columnist, so that we don't look like we're not trying to hide something. They're real keen, if there's ever a story that involves a family or friend, and we have to divulge that in the story.

Respondent 9:

To be as impartial as possible and see both sides of the story, and avoid anything that gives anyone the impression that we are not being impartial. Usually, I have

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[100] The respondents' views have only been partially transcribed. For complete details of this and other responses, see Appendix E.

[101] Some information has been added in parentheses to clarify the quote.

more instances where both sides have hated it, which I consider a compliment. I don't think I've been attacked just by one side too often.

Accuracy

Early in a reporter's career, he or she is invariably taught the so-called 5W and H questions. These questions address *who, what, when, where, why, and how* of stories. It is through this mechanism that accuracy is stressed. Also, reporters are aware of the correction pages that exist in most American newspapers. No one wants to wind up on the correction pages. "The need for accuracy is linked with the responsibility to correct errors; the deliberate distortion and suppression of information are condemned."[102]

The American Society of Newspaper Editors (ASNE) Statement of Principles puts it this way, "Good faith with the reader is the foundation of good journalism. Every effort must be made to assure that the news content is accurate…"[103]

The principle of accuracy was important in three of the respondents' newsrooms.

Respondent 6

You want to be accurate. When the new editor came in that was one of his issues. He sends out these memos newsroom wide and they say we need people to be much more careful, and they say we're going to be tracking errors. (Since the memos were instituted) there has been a decline in the number of errors.

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[102] R. Keeble, *Ethics for journalists,* (Routledge: London, 2001), 14.

[103] E.E. Cohen and D. Elliott, *Contemporary Ethical Issues: Journalism Ethics, a reference handbook.* (ABC-CLIO: Santa Barbara, 1997), 142.

Respondent 3:

Primary values of the newsroom are to report accurately and fairly, and present the reader with information to make an informed decision. It's done every day. There are lapses. Journalism is always a work in progress.

Respondent 8:

Primary values of your newsroom are accuracy and relevance. We're very big on relevance, and have things that other people (other papers) don't have. Accuracy and beating the competition would be our values. So, we use trusted sources. We're told "check it out completely, and have back up." [104]

Breaking Stories

Journalism is a deadline driven and competitive industry. Reporters are under constant pressure to break stories. Thus, it is no wonder that three of the respondents in this study identified breaking or getting the story as the primary value of their newsrooms. Recall that *Respondent 3* spoke repeatedly about getting the story, and how at times a prescribed written code may have to take a backseat to getting the story. Or, it could be that the respondents were confused by this question. Perhaps, they confused what has value in the ethical sense with that which is valuable in the material sense. There was no follow-up prompt to clarify the term value, so it is not

[104] This respondent also mentions breaking stories or getting the story as a value. However, *Respondent 8* was placed in the category of accuracy because the respondent mentioned this value three times.

possible to tell from the data as collected. A follow-up study might explore this area of the "value" of getting the story versus what is considered ethically *valuable.*

Still, it is important to note that a few respondents believed in the value of getting the story. The following represents other respondent who say the primary value in their newsrooms is getting stories:

Respondent 1:

It's to report the growth and development of the east valley (deleted response)[105]. We want to bring people the home news. Our newspaper is here to make money. Ethics seems to be a dying thing. The value (here is) what's profitable.

Respondent 5:

Getting stories in the paper is a primary value. They just want to get stories in the paper. They value investigative exposes. They recently came up with this ethics policy and it's mostly driven by "don'ts." They're going to have to do almost surveillance on us (to make sure the rules are followed). Values are not to plagiarize, and not to have conflicts of interest. Transparency is a new value, letting the reader know or see (how news decisions are made). They're trying to be (more vigilant) in recognition of Jayson Blair, trying to value the reader more and give the reader (some understanding of) how we make some decisions. They assembled a reader's advisory group. The editor at his last paper had a big series where a lot of the reporting was flawed. They took somebody's word for a lot of stuff, and it turned out it was wrong.

Respondent 7:

The primary ethical value is to fill a void to capture what is going on in this town. We break stories left and right. We also have another duty to cover the arts and theater scene. We fill a niche for people.

Other values identified by respondents were truth and the "public's right to know." And at least one respondent said her newsroom had no values.

Respondent 4:

I'd have a hard time in saying there are any ethics in my newsroom. Things are definitely slanted. It's a very right-wing paper, and they don't mind expressing that in the newspaper. They won't name rape victims. They won't go that far. We had an incident where a 13-year-old girl delivered a baby and dumped it out the window, and it died. They wouldn't name the girl who had done this…The boy, the father, put the baby in a bag and put it on the stoop of the church. The columnists blamed the mother of the girl. Ultimately, the father, who was a minor, was indirectly identified (by the columnist).

Looking Back, Absorbing the Narrative

The interviews in this study were conducted with mid-career journalists with an average time in the industry of 18 years or more. These reporters were asked about their perception of their early value system to see if they perceive it as having changed over time. The least time in the business of these dozen respondents was 11 years. Several of the reporters said that their perspectives on ethics have "matured" over time. They said they have gained a better understanding of the "rules" on ethics through their newsroom experiences. Others said they do not believe their values have changed much over time.

They were asked: *Tell me how you would describe the person you are now as far as newsroom values when you first started in journalism as opposed to now.* ***(Section 2, Question 5, See: Appendix D)***

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[105] This response was deleted to protect the anonymity of the respondent.

Respondent 4:

Coming out of college I had a lot of ideological framework. I was going to break into this business and really report about people of color and write the positive stories that don't get covered. Every once in awhile, I'll get a positive story, but that's not what sells. I don't think my ethics have changed a great deal. Maybe when I first started o out I wouldn't have been as aggressive about going after people who have lost someone. I do need to get something. I can't get beat by the competition. I push a little harder. I am sometimes in their face, and I break into their mourning period because I need to get a story. I'm not as nice as I used to be.

Meanwhile, two others said they have gained compassion for their sources over times. These reporters said they consider this part of their moral obligation. And it is now part of their value system.

They said:

Respondent 5:

I have more insight and more awareness, and probably and more respect for the people in my stories than I did at first. I didn't realize the power that I had (as a reporter). If someone was willing to tell me something, I would put it in.

Respondent 9:

As a rookie reporter, it takes time to understand (what)the newsroom ethics are. I don't remember it being talked about in college. In college they said don't plagiarize and that was about it. When I started I think it was several years before we really sat down and had a talk about ethics as a newsroom. Obviously, you don't take anything and don't plagiarize. Don't belong to organizations that you might be covering, which for feature (writing) could be about anything.Don't put up yard signs for political candidates, (for example). I've gained a better understanding of the rules. It's given me a greater appreciation of what being impartial means. You try as much as you can

to strike a fair balance. Our ethics policy is pretty strict. It's probably better to error on the side of being too strict than too lenient.

Four respondents describe themselves as "naïve" when they first entered the field.

Respondent 1:

Editors would say 'go do this and do that.' I would be right on the ball. Now, I think things out a little bit more. If I disagreed with somebody I would say, do you think this is a good idea? I think that if somebody told me, if there was something unethical they wanted me to do I don't think I would have done it. I have my own personal principles. I'd force them to discipline me. I came from a high school education and I didn't have the advantage of all these classes that you take at a university where they tell you what's right and wrong, you kind of have to feel your way around. You have to discover the ropes and everything else. I think when I was 25 (I thought) you have to go along to get along. Now, I've been around now I truly know what's right and what's wrong.

Respondent 2:

I was so naïve when I first started. I started as an intern at (**publication name deleted).**[106] They used to tease me about how naïve I was. I don't know that I had very strong values. I had what I came out of journalism school with. 'You have to be objective, get both sides of the issue.' The biggest ethical dilemmas are people wanting to see your copy before it goes into print. I tell them no. I've always been very strong on that, 'no, you don't see the copy before it goes into print.' The owner or publisher will have to overrule you. The more stories I do, the more selective I am about what has value to the story.

[106] This response has been deleted to protect the anonymity of the respondent.

Respondent 3:

I think my values are still the same. Just because you have more experience, and you understand how institutions work. I was pretty naïve when (I came) into this profession. You also start to understand what it's like to be on the other side. If you're critical of an administration because they failed to solve the homeless problem, there's going to be homelessness. Young reporters can focus on the problem and nobody is doing anything and let that be the overriding focus of the story. You start to realize the measure of what is a good domestic or foreign policy is not so much in terms of what they can do. (When you're more experienced), you try to get the whole picture of the dynamic that's at work.

Respondent 7:

I don't think there's been that much of a change.

Respondent 8:

I think it has not changed. I have never accepted a gift. I'm completely sensitive to accuracy. That was always a must for me. I felt I could not make mistakes. I had to get things above board as I can. That hasn't changed in 15 years.

Respondent 10:

The values have remained consistent.

Respondent 11:

Maybe (I'm) not as naïve about certain things. (I'm) being a little more sharp. I think fundamentally what I would distinguish as fair or right or wrong has always been there. [107] Finally, four respondents said they do not believe their values have changed much or not at all over time.

[107] This response has been truncated. For the complete response to this question see *Respondent 11* in Appendix E.

Respondent 12:

I still have the same values. My thing is that I like to constantly learn new stuff. If someone isn't helping me grow then I don't want to work with that person. I came into it blind. It's not like I had planned since I was a kid to be a reporter. Since I've (been) doing it such a long time. Two weeks after I graduated from high school, I was working at the (name of paper deleted). Tell the truth, and if you can help somebody help them. All of those things I learned coming up. I think today I still have the same values. Now I'm trying to help other people get in. The biggest change is that I've gone from being infant, pubescent to an adult, as an editor I feel more paternal. I have to watch over my charges and make sure they're properly fed and getting their sleep.

Summary

It is interesting that the major topics identified by the reporters and the primary values in their newsrooms are also the same topics outlined in many codes of ethics or by a value system accepted by the industry. For instance, "many successful journalists relate objectivity to their value systems."[108] The goal is to cover the word as it exists without letting the reporters' opinions get in the way. Journalists have traditionally been trained to "go very far along the objective continuum."[109] And that training has largely been through ethic codes.

Yet, generally the reporters in this study do not believe that such codes affect their behavior. In many ways, they may not be aware that these codes are affecting their behavior. Whether or not they are aware of it, the codes may have put a template on their minds. Some respondents said that they were "naive." However, they did not believe that this alleged naiveté extended to their moral behavior. In fact, they said

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[108] M. Bugeja, *Living Ethics: Developing Values in Mass Communication,* (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1996), 21.

their moral behavior had not changed significantly since they first entered the industry. Newsrooms and codes are potent combinations in that newsrooms clarify things and distill codes. It is the newsroom where the codes take life. Although several respondents described themselves as naïve, they didn't mean they were naïve about right or wrong. The respondents indicated they were naïve about the processes of journalism. These processes tended to become clearer after the journalists had spent more time in newsrooms.

[109] R.F. Smith, *Groping for Ethics in Journalism,* 5th ed., (Ames: Iowa State Press, 2003), 77.

CHAPTER 6
STORYTELLING, CAUTIONARY TALES

Storytelling often comes from experience. And while codes of ethics may give reporters examples, they do not give the reporters experiences. Blair and others are more closely related to experiences than formal codes of ethics. Thus, we must discover something about the journalistic mind to understand the impact of those experiences. Narrative inquiry provides a method of understanding that journalistic mind. Through narrative analysis, you can discover quite a lot about several newsrooms. Recall the overarching narratives of Cooke, Blair, Barnicle, and Glass.

Cooke was a *Washington Post* reporter who wrote a heartbreaking account about an eight year old heroin addict named Jimmy for which she won a Pulitzer in 1981. Two days after receiving the award, Cooke admitted Jimmy did not exist.[110]

Barnicle was a columnist for the *Boston Globe*. In 1998, he resigned amid allegations that he made-up sources and facts and had stolen material from other writers.[111]

Glass was a 25-year-old writer at the *New Republic* in 1998. He was fired after his editors found that all or part of 27 articles he had written for the magazine were fabricated.[112] Later, a film entitled "*Shattered Glass"* was made about his exploits.

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[110] S. Mnookin, "Times Bomb," *Newsweek,* 26 May 2003, 45.

[111] Ibid.

[112] Ibid.

Blair was a 27-year-old reporter for the *New York Times* who had lifted quotes, falsified scenes, and faked interviews in 2003.[113]

The respondents were asked a series of questions about Jayson Blair, Janet Cooke, Stephen Glass, and Mike Barnicle. Ten of the 12 respondents remembered Cooke. An equal number remembered Glass. Only seven remembered Barnicle. Not surprisingly, all of the respondents remembered Blair, who was involved in the most recent case of journalistic fabrication.

Questions about Blair elicited some of the most detailed responses:

The respondents were asked in **Section 3, Question 3 (a):** *What does that case mean to you, if anything?*

They responded:

Respondent 1:

If you really want to go write fiction, go write fiction, but not in the newspapers.

Respondent 2:

I followed Blair pretty closely. I thought it was pretty sad. He felt that pressured to do that.

Respondent 3:

There were problems at the paper. I didn't (know) it was as egregious as it was...I immediately thought also of Janet Cooke…This is just another black eye.

Respondent 4:

He blew it. He broke the cardinal rule. You don't lie or make up stories. You report the facts.

Respondent 5:

It's the same thing. It's that charismatic person who's able to get around the editing process. That one should be a huge wake-up call to every newsroom about the inexperience you have when you (hire a young reporter). They really need to be supervised closely. (Young reporters) don't really understand. They are more focused on their ambition and getting on the front page, and they don't fully appreciate the power they have and the respect for the newspaper or the reader. A lot of those people get weeded out and they try to go on to law school.

Respondent 6:

That had a huge impact on me. He, after the scandal, was interviewed all over the place. More than ethics, there seems to have been some mental illness issues. He had some unaddressed mental health challenges. He wrote about some family living somewhere and he described the cattle outside the house. He didn't even have to go to their house, and (he could have) just called them up. Maybe the problem with him, he didn't quite know how to get the information.

Respondent 7:

Totally untrustworthy. That would be it.

Respondent 8:

He's a liar, and a self-aggrandizing clown. He was unrepentant and tried to blame the situation on racism.

Respondent 9:

He seems to be in the Stephen Glass mold. He made up a lot, not just a little. Instead of doing the actual work, he made things up. Again, he was seen as a whiz kid. I'm sure there (was) a lot of satisfaction in the newsroom when he was found out.

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[113] Ibid.

Respondent 10:

It's embarrassing. It didn't help that he was black. That lady from Boston was also black. Unfortunately, that was one of the first things I thought about. It was unfortunate and sad. It was come on, this isn't the movie business.

Respondent 11:

I didn't know as many specifics about that to compare him to Janet Cooke. One of the disturbing things (about Blair) is that it had gone on for quite a while, and he worked for a very prestigious company, the *New York Times*. I think maybe that's what's most disturbing about what he did, and that there was a pattern.

Respondent 12:

He just needs to be smacked.

Fabrication

In this section, reporters were given an invitation to construct a narrative of their feelings about fabrication. Specifically, in **Section 2, Question 3** they were asked, "*Tell me your thoughts feelings when you learned about a reporter, at your publication or any other, who fabricated a story***."**

The respondents said:

Respondent 1:

I'm enraged when that happens. It destroys the credibility. The public perception is that (nothing is) real and they're making this all up. You shouldn't have to put fiction into a newspaper. Didn't Jayson Blair, didn't he fabricate quite a few stories? Then, there are rumors that where I work there are people who allegedly made things up. I'm angered by that. I've worked for 20 years, and I've seen a decline of the product. It's being spit on.

Respondent 2:

I've heard about reporters who fabricated (stories). (There was that) lady at the *Washington Post* (and) Jayson Blair at the *New York Times*. I was disappointed because both are African-Americans at major publications. When you have two people like that at such a high level, it makes it difficult for the rest of the reporters. (It makes people think) African-American reporters lack credibility. Blair took down himself, and took down another African-American editor, you don't have that many to begin with. I think it had a negative impact on African-American reporters. We already have enough barriers we're facing. I think it makes it more difficult for us.

Respondent 3:

Our paper would point to Jayson Blair. There were problems at the paper. I was disappointed. I didn't think it was egregious as it (turned out to be)[114]. I said, "I hope that this isn't a black person." I immediately thought also of Janet Cooke. I thought this is so terrible because he was young and black.

Respondent 4:

There have been instances where there was a reporter who did a story on Donald Trump . . . Throughout the story every quote is an anonymous source. So, the editor says get the reporter on the phone. He told him, "You can't make up quotes in a story like this." I think it's well-known that he does this. I think he still does it today. I have a problem with this. I try to make sure I don't make too many stories where he's the rewrite (person) and I'm dumping my quotes to him. I made it a point that I don't share a byline with him. I saw the movie "Shattered Glass" about that kid at the *New Republic*. I was shocked that he got away with what he got away with for so long. I think it totally violated the public trust. It was just like that Jayson Blair. There wasn't (sic) enough checks and balances to make sure that this guy wasn't doing this. It is appalling to me. I think that there were a lot of accusations that (the Blair case) was going to hurt a lot of African-American reporters.

[114] Parenthetical information added for clarity.

Once again, black reporters would have to work doubly hard to advance in the business. He definitely hurt us all. On one level, he hurt all journalists. The public doesn't believe what comes out of reporters' pens or mouths. I think he hurt African-American reporters on another level because it's hard enough to make it in this business. I think it'll be that much harder for black folks to get into these newsrooms and to advance. People might think we all have a little bit of that Jayson Blair in us.

Respondent 5:

The ones I knew were at my publication. There were fabricated quotes in a story. An obit writer who made up people (to quote). It wasn't harming. He was making up some of the people. We had an art critic, who took something from a reference book that he didn't attribute, but he was crazed on deadline. A feature reporter who made up a quote about a *New York Times* reporter. I felt sorry (for them) and tried to understand why they had done it. It was mostly just sad. It wasn't like Jayson Blair, (who was) someone just trying to get ahead.

Respondent 6:

I always feel bad for people." Gee, that's a tough break." The reason I feel bad, one phone call will get you something. At one level, this job isn't hard to do at a basic level, just show up. Just call one person. We had (a writer who fabricated sources). She was making up people and stuff. Just make one call, and you fill out your stuff so much. I feel bad for people when they get caught committing fiction.

Respondent 7:

I can think of one person. We were being edited by the (local major metropolitan daily) as well. She turned in this story about the guy who runs the Police Athletics League Arts. According to the story, he confessed to stealing $25,000. She just happened to be there. I called the person at the police department, found it wasn't true, and I canned her. She said she was trying to be funny. I didn't think it was very funny, considering the volume of stories I have to look at.

Respondent 8:

That is irritating. We're not about fiction. We're about fact. When I read about people like Jayson Blair it really irritates me. It puts African-American reporters under more

scrutiny. I am the only African-American at my company. I don't want anyone think I would be capable of making up things. It annoys me going back to Janet Cooke. That kind of thing is not funny. All we have is our credibility.

Respondent 9:

I couldn't believe it. That it would get by the editors either. I've heard the famous cases Blair and Glass and Janet at the *Washington Post*. I was amazed that they would go so far from their journalistic training to do something like that. But also I could understand the lure of doing something like that as a feature writer. You see these great stories, and you can't nail them down or get them on the record. They made it up instead. I can't imagine doing it, but I understand the frustrations when you have to ditch a good story because you just can't nail it.

Respondent 10:

You feel horrified and shame (sic). It makes the whole industry look bad. There's bad people in every field. In journalism you're the voice of the people and watchdog; you suppose. The *New York Times* guy and those two Boston folks come to mind. It's shameful. It makes people wonder about – there's bad seeds in every field – you. You just feel an extra sense of responsibility. You're supposed (to be) the voice of the people. Just to sensationalize something just for awards' sake or to make a story sound better is horrible. Or even to take someone's writing to claim it as your own. It's not journalism; that would be called fiction.

Respondent 11:

We had a person here that had to do with a quote or something from a politician's office. Essentially, he created a response for someone he had never spoken to. It wasn't a Janet Cooke scenario in creating total fabrication. He was disciplined. Yeah, I thought he should have been fired.

Respondent 12:

My first thought is "oh, God, I hope he's not black." Stephen Glass and Mike (Barnicle) I'm familiar with their work. When it happens to people, I don't know that's one of the first things I think about. I am where I am now, and where I've been and because of my age, for some reason people think that I got here because I'm some black kid who needed a break or something. I'm kind of use to it. It pisses me off because I've watched over the years, particularly say the last 15 years, it started the 90's and the tech boom and Internet became popular, if a TV station is your storefront church and newspapers were the cathedral, bearers of the truth. I've steadily watched as we've gone to the 24-hour news cycle. Now, anybody can make up your own paper and pass it off as real. Media has become the bad guy. People already think we're making up stuff, and things like that come along it just perpetuates (it). When it is someone black, now we're not just perpetuating, he didn't belong here in the first place thing and he's a member of the lying media. It's like "ah, man," and then you're catching hell on both fronts. All the people I know bust our ass to get here and to stay here, and then you have people like that and piss over everything. And it's hard to dig out of a hole, when people keep throwing dirt on your head.

Summary

In this section, eight of the respondents mentioned Blair without specifically being prompted about the *New York Times* reporter. Stories about fabrication were taken very personally by these reporters. They used very personal adjectives to describe their feelings about fabrication. Various respondents said they were alternately enraged, disappointed, shocked, appalled, irritated, amazed, and horrified.

Here we argue as Fisher does that a person's reasoning is displayed in the

narratives or stories he or she tells. Through these narratives, we discover how the reporters make sense of their role as reporters and how they want to be viewed by those outside the profession. Not surprisingly, the narratives told by the reporters in this study about fabrication, always put this behavior in a bad light, especially if they are the well-known "cautionary tales" of Blair and others. Through their use of disapproving adjectives to describe these acts, the respondents clearly want to separate their practices from Cooke and others. None of the respondents in this study said they had ever engaged in fabrication or any other serious journalistic sin. However, they did tell stories of colleagues who had crossed the line. But, even here, they attempted to separate these incidents from those of the more well-known "cautionary tales."

Let's look at the responses of two of the respondents, where colleagues at their publications were accused of fabrication. *Respondent 5* describes an incident, where an obituary writer at the respondent's paper "made up people (to quote)." The respondent said the behavior "wasn't harming" (sic). Also, the respondent further distances the errant colleague from the more well-known transgressors by saying "***It wasn't like Jayson Blair***." Note, *Respondent 11* who said, "Essentially (my colleague) created a response from someone he had never spoken to. The respondent quickly added, ***"It wasn't a Janet Cooke scenario in creating total fabrication***." The respondent notes that the colleague had been disciplined. After prompting, the respondent says the discipline did not go far enough and the colleague should have been fired.

Clearly, *Respondents 5 and 11* do not want their organization to be seen as a place where a Janet Cooke or Jayson Blair might be employed, although they have in-house examples of reporters behaving in similar ways. And note how *Respondent 9* describes Blair, "***He made up a lot, not just a little***." And while this statement does not absolve anywould be in-house fabricators it implies that Blair's sin was a matter of the proportion of the fabricated material.

On the other hand, two other respondents talk about locally generated fabrication, and they say they took action – one directly, one indirectly. *Respondent 7* is an editor, and he said one of his reporters fabricated a story and he fired the reporter. Meanwhile, *Respondent 4* said one of the reporters at her publication is "known" for making up quotes. *Respondent 4* said that the only recourse is to make sure that she does not share a by-line with the culprit. It should be noted that the questions relating to fabrication and the specific areas of fabrication were separated in time and space in the questionnaire. The purpose of this separation was to give the respondents an opportunity to discuss other instances of fabrication that did not include the principle actors in the "cautionary tales."

This section shows the power of narrative analysis because the impact of the "cautionary tales" is evident as the respondents discuss the morals they have taken from these tales. One respondent said of Blair, "***He blew it. He broke the cardinal rule."*** This "rule," as it were, comes from stories about Blair, and others of his ilk. It might be said that such a "rule" is not necessary. However, if that were the case would instances such as Blair's crop up? Thus, it is through these stories and their

own experiences that the respondents have learned certain rules.

In this chapter, the reporters used the overarching narratives of Blair and others to discuss their views on fabrication. It is interesting that the respondents' often used the case of transgressors like Blair, to begin discussing incidents within their own newsrooms of those who had either plagiarized or fabricated information.

Chapter 7 of this study draws conclusions about the study and the use of narrative theory. It also suggests areas of further study.

CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSIONS, DISCUSSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS

Narrative theory has been used in this study to show the importance of the narrative in the workplace, particularly that of the newsroom. The findings in this study are largely consistent with the narrative paradigm put forth in Walter R. Fisher's *Human Communication as Narration: Toward a Philosophy of Reason, Value and Action*. The narrative paradigm seeks to analyze messages by looking at them as stories.[115]

One of the messages in this study is expected. There is sound condemnation of fabrication by the respondents. Still, the "cautionary tales" told in the newsrooms provided a springboard for other conversations about ethics. This study cannot be generalized because of the use of a small specialized sample of 12 experienced journalists, interviewed in-depth. A recommendation for further research would be to ask these questions of a much larger group of journalists, and compare those findings to these.

Black & White

Also, a similar study might explore in more detail the levels of emotions between white and black journalists. In this study, the African-Americans had very strong

[115] J.C. Reinard, *Introduction to Communication Research*, 3rd ed., (New York: McGraw-Hill Higher Education, 2001), 168.

feelings about Blair and Cooke, who are also African-Americans. These feelings seemed to be much stronger than those of the white respondents in this study. Further such a study might require two coders, one black and one white. This is suggested because there may have been some interviewer effect in that most of the somewhat vitriolic comments about Blair and Cooke came from the African-American respondents, who were speaking to an African-American researcher. It is possible they would not share similar concerns with a non-African-American interviewer. Many of the respondents' comments specifically touch on race, when speaking about African-Americans who were guilty of fabrication.

Conversely, the white respondents did not mention race in any of the responses. Was this because the interviewer is African-American? And how does race play into these "cautionary tales" or how they are assimilated? Does the "retelling" of these "cautionary tales" vary by race? Do African-American journalists judge other blacks more harshly? How does this affect the narrative, and by extension does this affect the reporters' ethics? Are the ethics of African-American reporters shaped by a different interpretation of the "cautionary tales" than that of whites? Further study might illuminate this area. Such a study might include focus groups. This would be a small group that could be interviewed in depth. The journalists could be divided by race. Are there different values that are stressed by minorities in comparison to Caucasians? We shall have to ask.

Women

In addition, it might be useful to explore any gender gap that might exist among a

representative sample of male and female journalists. A few of the women journalists in this study spoke of compassion as an important value. None of the male respondents did so. Have men developed ethical theories for men without regard to the experiences of women? Or is there no distinction between the ethics of female and male journalists?

There were four men and eight women in the study. ***(See: Figure 1)*** There were five Caucasians, and seven African-American in the study. Nine work for daily newspapers and three others work for weeklies.

Irrespective of race or gender, an analysis of narratives as applied in this study does have the power to illuminate some values. Through this analysis, it became possible to explore the thoughts, feeling and ethical beliefs of day-to-day journalists.

> In an organization, storytelling is the preferred sense-making currency of human relationships among internal and external stakeholders. People engage in a dynamic process of incremental refinement of their stories of new events as well as on-going interpretations of culturally sacred story lines. When a decision is at hand, the old stories are recounted and compared to an unfolding story line to keep the organizations from repeating historically bad choices and to invite the repetition of past successes. In a turbulent environment, the organization halls and offices pulsate with a story life of here and now that is richer and more vibrant than the firm's environment.[116]

The following illustration is a summary of the findings and the efficacy of the use of narrative analysis as a research method. Questions were asked of a dozen experienced reporters in order to reveal how reporters establish their ethical framework. It was discovered that the ethics of these reporters are formed partly by codes, perhaps operating under the radar, long after the young reporter has left

[116] D. Boje, *Narrative Methods for Organizational and Communication Research*, (London: Sage, 2001), 106.

journalism school, and by stories that are the attendant result of experience.

The rational world paradigm	**The narrative paradigm**	**Reporter Effects**	**What was found**
(1) People are essentially rational.	**(2)** People are essentially storytellers	**(3)** A story was told to illustrate an ethical point of view before a reporter points to a code of ethics.	**(4)** None of the respondents said they referred to a code of ethics, but several told stories to illustrate newsroom ethics.
(5) People make decisions based on argument.	**(6)** People make decisions based on good reasons.	Reporters will **(7)** make decisions about what stories to accept and which to reject on the basis of what makes sense to them or good reasons. Reporters will have value-laden warrants for believing or acting in certain ways.	The reasoning of **(8)** the reporters are displayed in the narratives they told about compassion or fabrication, for example.
(9) The communication situation determines the course of the argument.	**(10)** History, biography, culture, and character determine what we consider to be good reasons.	**(11)** Stories about ethical dilemmas that are specifically relevant to the reporter are a persuasive factor that affects behavior.	**(12)** This area was not studied. There was no direct study of behavior. This area might be explored in a later study.
(13) Rationality is determined by how much we know and how well we argue.	**(14)** Narrative rationality is determined by coherence and fidelity of our stories.	**(15)** Reporters believe the stories that are internally consistent and truthful.	**(16)** The reporters' specific narratives were not analyzed for how truthful they believed the stories to be. But they were consistent with a beginning, middle and end.
(17) The world is a set of logical puzzles that we can solve through rational analysis.	**(18)** The world is a set of stories from which we choose, and constantly recreate our lives.	**(19)** Stories about ethical dilemmas told by veterans to newcomers "ring true." Thus, these stories are powerful indicators of behavior.	**(20)** Again, behavior was not directly studied. However, some reporters said they relied on narratives of colleagues to guide them when making ethical choices.

Figure 5 **is an illustration of how reporters might fit into the narrative paradigm.**

Figure 5 pulls together the collection of findings. *Figure 5* is an extension of the analysis grid introduced in Chapter 2, which explains the contrasting paradigms of the rational world and that of the narrative. In Box 4 of *Figure 5*, we note that none of the respondents said they referred to a code of ethics before deciding on a course of action. However, several stories the respondents relatedhighlight newsroom values. They illustrate more abstract values such as compassion. In order to describe what these values entail, the reporters use a narrative to define these values. Other values are also illustrated by storytelling. This shows the manner in which reporters assimilate ethics is consistent with the narrative paradigm

In Box 2, *Figure 5,* we see that the paradigm notes that people are essentially storytellers. And in Box 3, *Figure 5*, we surmised that reporters would illustrate an ethical point of view with a story, before pointing to any ethics code. This research supports that. In Box 7, *Figure 5,* it was assumed that reporters would make decisions on what stories to accept and which to reject on the basis of what makes sense to them or good reasons. Respondents in this study displayed their reasoning by sharing narratives. For instance, they defined what it means to be compassionate to sources by telling a story. They had value-laden warrants for believing or acting in certain ways. This is consistent with the narrative paradigm. In Box 10, *Figure 5,* it was proposed that stories about ethical dilemmas that are specifically relevant to the reporter would be persuasive factors affecting behavior. It was not possible to determine this with the data that was collected. There was no direct study of behavior in this analysis. Therefore, one might propose a study

whereby behavior is studied directly. For instance, it might be possible to accompany a smaller group of reporters on stories for an extended period of time. In this, a researcher might be able to determine if there is a difference between what people do and what people say they do.

In Box 15, *Figure 5,* the stories were not analyzed for truthfulness so it was not possible to determine if the reporters believed the stories that are internally consistent and truthful. A researcher would have to be present when the incidents occurred. Again, this might be an area where direct observation might be necessary as the stories are unfolding. But, it can be noted that the stories the respondents told were internally consistent with a beginning, middle and end. Finally, in Box 19, *Figure 5,* it was proposed that stories about ethical dilemmas told by veterans to newcomers "ring true."

Thus, these stories are powerful indicators of behavior. It should be noted that reporters said they relied on narratives of colleagues when making ethical choices. This may be yet another instance where a researcher must be on site to test this. For instance, if a veteran is giving advice to a new reporter that new reporter might be observed to test how he or she is assimilating or acting upon or rejecting the narratives of the veteran

It is noted in Box 20, *Figure 5* that behavior is not directly studied. However, some reporters said they relied on narratives of colleagues to guide them when making ethical choices.

Further Study

This study was limited in answers to ***Questions, 5, 6 and 7 in Section 3 (See: Appendix D)***in that the reporters largely did not have a definition of ethics. When asked about their definition of ethics, they often asked the interviewer to define the term. But because of the established interview protocols, the researcher could not oblige. Nevertheless, when the question was taken out of the abstract and the respondents were asked specifically about newspaper ethics or the definition of situational ethics, the respondents were more inclined to answer. More detailed questions might have been, *do you feel your ethics vary by situation? If so, how? Could you describe an instance of this?* The interviewer did not ask these questions because the protocol had already been approved by this committee and the Institutional Review Board. Future study in this area might ask these questions.

A few of the respondents noted that ethics do not vary by situation. Five of the respondents defined newspaper ethics as being fair. In these narratives, a set of taken-for-granted norms, such as fairness or compassion are elucidated by the narratives. It would be interesting in further study to look at one organization in depth through a series of interviews in order to determine what might be the overarching narratives in thatorganization, and to discover how these narratives illustrate the values in that organization. Such a study might discover how conflicting narratives are being negotiated in the culture. For instance, how well is the newspaper balancing its obligation to advertisers and readers? How are reporters coping with the demands of advertising versus their duty to the public?

Now to review the research questions from Chapter 1:

RQ1: What are the values embedded in the reporters' narratives?

The research shows that the reporters in this study use narratives to help guide them and define more abstract concepts like compassion and fairness as demonstrated in Chapter 3. Several reporters actually defined newspaper ethics as fairness. ***(See: Various Respondents in Appendix E).*** It was later in the questioning that the journalists were able to define ethics more precisely, and this was done through narratives.

RQ2: In reaching decisions regarding ethical issues or dilemmas does theindividual re porter rely more heavily on established ethics codes, workplace stories or other sources of guidance?

On balance, the reporters used narratives to define their ethics. They also relied on the narratives of other reporters to guide them. Ethics codes were at work in the background. The reporters were aware of such codes in a general way, but none of the respondents said they used these policies to guide them.

Narrative analysis can be invaluable to any organization, but especially to a newsroom where so much is shrouded in mystery even to those who work within the industry. In fact, "Clarifying the values stressed in a culture also enhances understanding of the motivations of its members. Such knowledge will also heighten members' awareness of taken-for-granted assumptions, suggest directions for future development of the organization, and potentially reduce conflicts."[117]

[117] Ibid., 220.

These findings suggest that workplace narratives are among the factors that shape reporters' ethics. Reporters in this study use workplace narratives to shape their professional ethics. They use narratives from their own experiences and from the experiences of others. And they also use the well-known "cautionary tales" to start discussions about other ethical matters. Out of those discussions come stories about behavior and ethical decision-making. As surely as journalists tell stories to the public, they tell stories to each other … and to themselves.

Ultimately, narrative theory does not present definitive, hard truth as in the tradition of the rational world paradigm. Narrative theory seeks to explain an aspect of life through its stories. The slice of life that this study analyzes is how reporters come to their values. And while people can be rational, they are also storytellers. It is through these stories that their experiences are given meaning. Codes may suggest values, but stories seem to be instrumental in defining those values.

Conclusion

Overall, this study showed that narratives can lead to discussions on broader ethical matters, especially when those discussions are regarding overarching narratives, like that of Jayson Blair and others. In this study the respondents used narratives to define their ethics more than they tended to use any ethics codes. Embedded in these narratives were the reporters' values. How do these narratives, as those presented here, play in everyday conversation? Is there a collective narrative? If so, how is it formed across newsrooms? What are the common values embedded in these narratives across newsrooms?

Finally, it would be interesting to see if these narratives have a direct effect on behavior. And do these narratives form the true and abiding ethics code for journalists?

If we are to better understand where journalists get their ethics, scholars must understand the importance of the narrative in the workplace or newsroom. It is intriguing to speculate whether narratives are more important than codes in the formation of ethics. One might be interested in studying just when narratives became more important. Is this truly a shift in the industry? Apparently journalists are grounded in the codes when they are just starting out. Is this reliance on stories or narratives something that happens only to the mid-career journalists, like those represented in this study? It would interesting to study relatively inexperienced and veteran journalists to see if such a split exists between those who rely on codes and those who seek some other form of guidance, such as narratives. With those in this study, there was a kind of pride the journalists seem to take in not having viewed their codes. Was this because codes are considered elementary forms of ethics education?

Appendix A

Parables & the Communication of Ethics to Reporters[118]

Principal Investigator:
Mary Hill, Ph.D. Student–University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill
Email: roflol@email.unc.edu or ntrprzing@aol.com
Phone: (310) 482-1068

Dear Participant:

I am requesting an interview with you because of your experience in day-to-day journalism at an American newspaper. The intended product of this research is my doctoral dissertation for the School of Journalism and Mass Communication at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. The results may also be presented in other forms such as a published article or presentation at a conference, to help journalists and educators to understand the ethical behavior of reporters.

Your opinions are crucial to this study. Interviews will be taped by phone or in person (where permitted). You may obtain a copy of the tape by request. Please note that the researcher will not share the tapes of the interviews without your express permission to do so. No copies will be made and all originals will be destroyed after the study or sent to you upon request. The questions in the interview may take up to two hours. The interviews will be conducted by telephone.

You need not be quoted in the study. However, if the researcher finds this necessary she will do so by providing you with a pseudonym, so that your privacy is protected. If you wish, you may make up your own pseudonym for the purposes of the study. Individual news organizations will not be named.

You will not receive monetary compensation for this study.

Please take a moment to sign the informed consent notice, and tape disposal agreement following this letter.

Thank you for your cooperation.

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[118] This was the working title. Final title: Tell Me a Story: How Narratives Shape Reporters' Ethics.

Appendix B

Informed Consent for Participating in Research Project

This study considers the relationship between a reporter's knowledge of "parables" or stories in the newspaper industry regarding ethical lapses, and the possible effects on the value system of reporters. It is performed in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the researcher's Ph.D. in Mass Communication at the University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill.

There are no foreseeable risks with this research. The main potential benefit is in contributing to the scientific knowledge of this subject. No costs or payment are associated with participating in the study. If any discomfort should arise regarding material addressed in the study, participants can call the number listed on the letterhead to ask questions or discuss their feelings. A more complete statement of the nature and purpose of the research will be available when the data collection is complete.

The respondents hereby agree and understand the following:

1. The time required for this study can be two hours.
2. The nature of the participation includes a telephone interview consisting of a background questionnaire and a self-report questionnaire delivered and returned by United States mail.
3. My participation is entirely voluntary. I may terminate my involvement at any time without penalty.
4. All my data are confidential. All research measures will be destroyed within five (5) years of the completion of the study.
5. All data are for research purposes.

If I have questions about the research, or if I would like to receive a copy of the aggregate findings of the study when it is complete, I can contact the researcher by calling (310) 482-1068 or writing to:

Mary Hill

Post Office Box 661104 Los Angeles, CA 90066.

Signed_____Date_____Signed_____Date_____

Appendix C

Interview Tape Disposal Agreement:

(Respondent) (Researcher)

Tell Me A Story: How Narratives Shape Reporters' Ethics
Principal Investigator:
Mary Hill, PhD Student – University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill
Email: roflol@email.unc.edu or ntrprzing@aol.com
Phone: (310) 482-1068

Date of Interview: Tape no:

Audio Tape

I have agreed to have this interview recorded for research purposes with any restrictions noted below in addition to any restrictions given verbally during the interview. I understand that no commercial broadcast or sale of the readings will be allowed.

If I have circled "no restrictions" below, the researcher is free to use the tape for academic purposes, including transcribing or playing it for classroom discussion.

Restrictions: (Circle as many of the following as you want to apply)

1. No copying or distribution of the tape.
2. Use pseudonym in any publications.
3. The pseudonym I have provided is _____.
4. Erase or destroy tape at conclusion of research project.
5. Send original tape to me at conclusion of research project.
6. Send me a duplicate of the tape within 30 days of the interview.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Please provide a return address below, if you would like the tape sent to you:

Appendix D

IRB Approved Questions:

Section 1: Questions

1. What is your position?
2. How long have you been employed in journalism?
3. What made you decide to become a journalist?
4. What is your education level?
5. Race? Age? Gender?
6. For how many papers have you worked?

Section 2: Questions

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1. Could you tell me as much as possible about the details of your experience as a reporter, who has faced any kind of ethical dilemma in your career as a professional or as a student?
2. What do you consider the primary values of your newsroom? Have you ever had any specific instances of what you described? What were they?
3. Tell me your thoughts and feelings when you learned about a reporter, at your publication or any other, who had fabricated a story.
4. Tell me about a time, if any, when you had a difference of opinion about an ethical decision with a manager, editor or senior reporter? What was the result?
5. Tell me how you would describe the person you are now as far as newsroom values when you first started in journalism as opposed to now. If there has been a change, what contributed to that change?
6. Could you describe the most important lesson you learned about journalism ethics through writing stories

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Section 3: Questions

1. Do you remember Janet Cooke?
    a. What does that case mean to you, if anything?
    b. If you were telling someone about Cooke, what would you say?
2. Do you remember Stephen Glass?
    a. What does that case mean to you, if anything?
    b. If you were telling someone about Glass, what would you say?
3. Do you remember Jayson Blair?
    a. What does that case mean to you?
    b. If you were telling someone about Blair, what would you say?
4. Do you remember Mike Barnicle?
    a. What does that case mean to you, if anything?
    b. If you were telling someone about Barnicle, what would you say?

Now, I would like to turn to some more general questions.

5. How do you define ethics?
6. How do you define newspaper ethics?
7. How do you define situational ethics?
8. Do you feel pressure from editors or others to behave in a particular way? How so?
9. Do your ethics differ from those of your superiors (editors, publishers, etc.)? How so?
10. How do ethics function in your organization?

11. In your view, if there was one value that a reporter should uphold, what would it be?

12. Have you ever faced an ethical dilemma in your organization?

Respondent Answers to Questions

*(**Researcher's Note Regarding Appendix E**: The author transcribed the interviews verbatim. However, to protect anonymity, some portions have been intentionally left blank. Incomplete sentences in this section are given parenthetical information to clarify quotes. Also, the reader will note that spoken language often does not conform to traditional grammar rules. Certain ungrammatical portions have been left intact to protect the integrity of the quotes. The term "sic" has been employed to show that the information has been precisely reproduced).*

Appendix E
Respondent 1

Section 1:

1. ***What is your position?***[119]

2. ***How long have you been employed in journalism?***

I've been in daily journalism for 20 years. January 3 was my 20th anniversary. I've always looked forward to that date of getting that job, and it's like that day won't go away. I was a photographer for 16 years (of those professional years). At both places I've written stories. Four years ago, I began designing newspaper pages, copy editing stories, and writing headlines.

3. ***What made you decide to become a journalist?***

My job is to tell the story of the people. I always wanted to make a difference and I wanted to expose things. You can't be on the take and trying to help anybody. You can't walk around with your hand out. Telling the stories of people in the community is the big payoff.

4. ***What is your education level?***

I have a high school education and nothing more.

[119] The response to this question was deleted to protect the identity of the subject.

5. ***Race? Age? Gender?***

Caucasian, 44 years old, male.

6. ***For how many papers have you work?***

Two.

Section 2:

1. ***Could you tell me as much as possible about the details of your experience as a reporter, who has faced any kind of ethical dilemma in your career as a professional or as a student?***

Any time you work in (city name deleted), you're up against all sorts of dilemmas and people want to give you free stuff (in exchange for stories). I have had people who want to give me cash money for doing stories, and you have to turn that down because that's not what you're there for. In my capacity, I've seen people trying to hook you up for hooking them up.

There were some people I worked with in (**city name deleted**). (This was a section editor) who would go into a (local business), and say to the owner stuff like, "if you can give my friend and me these nice leather jackets, we'll write a good story about your business." And the (business owner would) write off the jackets as being stolen. There was an editor and photographer team walking around wearing this free stuff. Everything from expensive sunglasses to free coats.

2. ***What do you consider the primary values of your newsroom? Have you ever had any specific instances of what you've described? What were they?***

It's to report the growth and development of the east valley in **(deleted response to protect identity of respondent)**. We want to bring people the home news. Our newspaper is here to make money. Ethics seems to be a dying thing. The value (here is) what's profitable. Mid-level managers talk about "oh, good, we have an ad on the front page of a section front." They openly talk about advertising. Personally, I feel that I'm here to gather the news. But you frequently see advertising people in the editorial meeting. It's really weird. I think in order for us to do our job editorial product needs to be separate from the advertising product.

3. ***Tell me your thoughts and feelings when you learned about a reporter, at your publication or any other, who had fabricated a story.***

I'm enraged when that happens. It destroys the credibility. The public perception is that (nothing is) real and they're making this all up. You shouldn't have to put fiction into a newspaper. Didn't Jayson Blair, didn't he fabricate quite a few stories? Then, there are rumors that where I work there are people who allegedly made things up. I'm angered by that. I've worked for 20 years and I've seen a decline of the product. It's being spit on.

4. ***Tell me about a time, if any, when you had a difference of opinion about an ethical decision with a manager, editor or senior reporter? What was the result?***

I can't think of any sort of time when I've gotten into it with another person on that.

5. ***Tell me how you would describe the person you are now as far as newsroom values when you first started in journalism as opposed to now. (If there has been a change), what contributed to that change?***

Editors would say "go do this and do that." I would be right on the ball. Now, I think things out a little bit more. If I disagreed with somebody I would say, do you think this is a good idea? I think that if somebody told me, if there was something unethical they wanted me to do I don't think I would have done it. I have my own personal principles. I'd force them to discipline me. I came from a high school education, and I didn't have the advantage of all these classes that you take at a university where they tell you what's right and wrong, you kind of have to feel your way around. You have to discover the ropes and everything else. I think when I was 25 (I thought) you have to go along to get along. Now, I've been around now I truly know what's right and what's wrong.

6. ***Could you describe the most important lesson you learned about journalism ethics through writing stories?***

The most important of anything is to tell the truth and (to) be honest even when it hurts. That's not just in journalism, that's in life. Tell the truth always. Report that truth accurately. We're in the business of communicating. Don't be afraid to fight your boss, stand up to them.

Section 3:

1. ***Do you remember Janet Cooke?***

No.

(a) ***What does that case mean to you, if anything?*** [120]

(b) ***If you were telling someone about Cooke, what would you say?***

2. ***Do you remember Stephen Glass?***

Yes, I do. He fabricated something along the lines there.

(a) ***What does that case mean to you, if anything?***

It means there's a lack of integrity. He didn't report the facts truthfully and accurately. He made up sources. It angers me because there's a whole world full of interesting people.

(b) ***If you were telling someone about Glass, what would you say?***

You don't have to make stuff up. Everybody has something to say. Go out and do something else, if you can't get a (truthful) interesting quote.

3. ***Do you remember Jayson Blair?***

Yes.

(a) ***What does that case mean to you, if anything?***

If you really want to go and write fiction, go write fiction, but not in the newspaper.

(b) ***If you were telling someone about Blair, what would you say?***

I would say don't follow him. Write the truth.

4. ***Do you remember Mike Barnicle***

No.

(a) What does that case mean to you, if anything?[121]

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[120] Section 3, Questions 1(a) and (b) were not asked. They are reproduced here for consistency. These questions were not asked because the respondent said he did not know Cooke.

[121] These questions were not asked. They are reproduced for consistency.

(b) If you were telling someone about Barnicle, what would you say?

5. ***How do you define ethics?***

Ethics are a sense of integrity. Doing the right thing even when nobody is looking – that's ethics.

6. ***How do you define newspaper ethics?***

I would say newspapers as a whole are fairly ethical. You have the money making machine who's beating the drum. Newspapers want to be ethical but they don't always know how. Newspapers are more ethical than say television news. They (TV news people) do things frequently that are not exactly truthful.

7. ***How do you define situational ethics?***

Situational ethics should be the same as your ethics. It's integrity. You're always doing right, regardless of the situation. Always trying to do the right thing. You have to choose right.

8. ***Do you feel pressure from editors or others to behave in a particular way? How so?***

No.

9. ***Do you think your ethics differ from those of your superiors (editors, publishers etc.)? How so?***

I have some editors (I disagree with because) I think it's wrong to have these advertising people in an editorial meeting and they have input and their interest is solely on the money. I would just think you guys stay on your side of the building and sell your ads and this paper will get out. It differs because I would ask those people to not be such a presence in the newsroom.

10. ***How do ethics function in your organization?***

Truth and integrity and telling the stories of the people in our community. We got into this business to tell the story of the people. Comfort the afflicted and afflict the comfortable.

11. ***In your view, if there was one value that a reporter should uphold, what would it be?***

Always be truthful, do what's right.

12. ***Have you ever been faced with an ethical dilemma in your organization?***

I went to this one assignment one time. I can't remember why I was there. (This source) wanted to give me cash money. At the time, she was trying to give me a day's wages. She wanted to give me money to take her picture. I said no, I don't want your money. I said I just want to do my job. I could have taken her money and nobody would have ever known. I didn't take it, because it wasn't right.

Respondent 2

1. ***What is your position?***

   Response deleted to protect identity of respondent.

2. ***How long in journalism have you been employed in journalism?***

   Since 1981.

3. ***What made you decide to become a journalist****?*

   I've always loved writing, and being a journalist would allow me to write and make money.

4. ***What is your education level?***

   I have a B.A. degree in journalism. Collateral studies in graphic arts and photography. I've always had the intention of having my own publication.

5. ***Age? Race? Gender?***

   46 years old, African-American, Female.

6. ***For how many papers have you worked?***

   Two newspapers.

Section 2:

1. ***Could you tell me as much as possible about the details of your experience as a reporter, who has faced any kind of ethical dilemma in your career or as a student?***

   No response. She said she couldn't think of an instance.

2. ***What do you consider the primary values of your newsroom? Have you ever had any specific instances of what you've described? What were they?***

   I think their primary values are standard journalism values that you be objective. If you have a conflict, know someone and you have to write an expose-type story, and you let them know, and they're aware of your

relationship, and they can take you off or say it's not going to affect the story. And make sure that you get both sides of an issue. There's the typical separation of advertising and editorial, key values I think that they have, and not letting advertising (interfere with editorial), that's a constant battle. Not let the demand and wishes of advertisers affect editorial direction. That's one of the biggest challenges. It's a constant parade and everyone knows everyone very well. It's not unusual for sales people to come in (the editorial meeting). You have to establish a very firm line. I understand the needs of both editorial and advertising. I (educate the advertisers). I tell them I really don't care that they're doing this campaign, that's not of news interest to my readers.

3. ***Tell me your thoughts feelings when you learned about a reporter, at your publication or any other, who fabricated a story.***

I've heard about reporters who fabricated. The lady at the *Washington Post*, (and) Jayson Blair at the *New York Times* (fabricated stories). I was disappointed because both are African Americans at major publications. When you have two people like that at such a high level, it makes it difficult for the rest of the reporters. (It makes people think) African American reporters lack credibility. Blair took down himself, and took down another African American editor, you don't have that many to begin with. I think it had a negative impact on African-American reporters. We already have enough barriers we're facing. I think it makes it more difficult for us.

4. ***Tell me about a time, if any, when you had a difference of opinion on ethical decision with manager, editor or senior reporter. What was the result?***

This happened at a magazine I was working for. It was a freelance assignment. It was a black-owned publication called (**name deleted**). I was supposed to interview this principal. (The editor) wanted me to write the story a certain way, a little fluffier, just adding things in . . . .He wanted more things like where she lived, what her house looked like, glitzy-type stuff. Stuff I thought wasn't appropriate for the story. He added the stuff in. I didn't do it. He showed my copy before it went to press, and she didn't like it, and she changed it. I wish I had taken my name off of that

5. ***Tell me how you would describe the person you are now as far as newsroom values when you first started in journalism as opposed to now.***

I was so naïve when I first started. I started as an intern at **(publication deleted).**They used to tease me about how naïve I was. I don't know that I had very strong values. I had what I came out of journalism school with. You have to be objective, get both sides of the issue. The biggest ethical dilemmas are people wanting to see your copy before it goes into print. I tell them no. I've always been very strong on that, "no, you don't see the copy before it goes into print." The owner or publisher will have to overrule you. The more stories I do, the more selective I am about what has value to the story.

6. ***Could you describe the most important lesson you learned about journalism ethics through writing stories?***

Making sure you're positive in your facts. If you're not, you get chewed up. You have to be very cognizant of facts. Be careful of where you're getting information and making sure it's accurate.

Section 3:

1. ***Do you remember Janet Cooke?***

   Yes.

   (a) ***What does that case mean to you, if anything?***

   What I've said already. (The story she wrote) put a damper on people finding out what was really going on in the inner city.

   (b) ***If you were telling someone about Cooke, what would you say?***

   What I've said already.

2. ***Do you remember Jayson Blair?***

   Yes.

   (a) ***What does that case mean to you, if anything?***

   I followed Jayson Blair pretty closely. I thought it was pretty sad he felt that pressured to do that.

   (b) ***If you were telling someone about Blair, what would you say?***

   (The Blair scandal) took out a very promising person, in terms of the editor.

3. ***Do you remember Stephen Glass?***

   No.

   (a) ***What does that case mean to you, if anything?***[122]

   (b) ***If you were telling someone about Glass, what would you say?***

4. ***Do you remember Mike Barnicle?***

   No.

   (a) ***What does that case mean to you, if anything?***[123]

[122] These questions were not asked. They have been reproduced for consistency.

(b) ***If you were telling someone about Barnicle, what would you say?***

5. ***How do you define ethics?***

Ethics is a standard by which you operate.

6. ***How do you define newspaper ethics?***

You make sure you treat everything and everyone fairly and evenly, and you stick by that standard come hell or high water.

7. ***How do you define situational ethics?***

You get into a situation where it may challenge your ethical standards and you have to look at it and say, and weigh it. If I stick by my standards, what is going to be the end result, and it may be unnecessarily damaging to someone. I may have to think about or adjusting because of the particular situation. I think that's a very rare instance, because that's the whole point of having a standard. You might have to bend or circumvent the ethics for the moment. You don't make it a practice.

8. ***Do you feel pressure from editors or other s to behave in a particularway in the newsroom?***

No. They suspect you know what the ethics are and they don't need to pressure you.

9. ***Do you think your ethics differ from those of your superiors (editors, publishers etc?) How so?***

We have a new section that's about etiquette. It's a column. In this my ethics differ from the publisher's. Two things are going on; (the columnist on ethics) is a friend of the publisher. (The columnist's family is prominent in the

[123] These questions were not asked. They have been reproduced for consistency.

community). I feel like this is a bit of pandering. This is valuable space. Two months we haven't run a community calendar. I felt it was a poor use of our limited editorial space to run the column. (The publisher is) pandering to a particular company that might potentially be an advertiser.

10. ***How do ethics function in your organization?***

No response.

11. ***In your view, if there was one value that a reporter should uphold, what would it be?***

The value I'm most proud of is fairness. To me, I think that is the biggest thing is to hold on to. Treat all of your interview subjects fairly.

12. ***Have you ever been faced with an ethical dilemma in your present organization?***

No.

Respondent 3

Section 1:

1. ***What is your position?***

Response deleted to protect identity of respondent.

2. ***How long have you been employed in journalism?***

I started at (**publication deleted**) in 1985 as a reporter trainee after college. So, that's 20 years in August (2005).

3. ***What made you decide to become a journalist?***

I think it's a general curiosity and a quest for adventure. When I was 10 years old as a paper boy, I used to fold the papers and read the front page. I remember asking my mother what were POWs, and why were they coming home. I wanted to travel and experience and do things. I think (that's why) I decided to become a journalist.

4. ***What is your education level?***

I have an undergraduate degree from (an Ivy League institution). I did a minor in the history of science. (The college I attended) doesn't have a journalism program.

5. ***Race? Age? Gender***

African-American, 41, Male

6. ***For how many papers have you worked?***

One newspaper.

Section 2:

1. ***Could you tell me as much as possible about the details of your experience as a reporter, who has faced any kind of ethical dilemma in your career as a professional or a student?***

(Ethics) is a daily process in this profession and craft. We're constantly faced with ethical dilemmas in terms of accuracy and fairness. Every day we have to go back to the well**.** At my paper we have a 50,000-word conflict of interest policy. In that 50,000 word conflict of interest policy, it says that you can't pay sources for information. But (when you're abroad) you can't apply the same construct as America. You have to pay an official for a bribe (just) to come into the country. It's just the way it works. You (hire) a fixer and that's their job. I was covering this hostage situation in Peru; rebels had taken over the Japanese embassy. We found one of the rebels had a twin brother. (Good story) about one brother a school teacher and the other a (rebel) right? It was a great story. We went to interview the brother. The family owned a store. They wanted to be paid $200. We said we don't pay anything to sources. But it's a great story, and we're the first Americans to get it. I just looked around, and what happened was that we bought $200 worth of merchandise in the store, and just "forgot"[124] to take it with us when we left. (It's unfair) we buy (sources) $200 or $300 lunches (in America) but yet you can't go into a poor areas to do interviews about these people, and not even suppose to bring them food. There are times in some counties where you to let the foreign ministry spend thousands of dollars on you but (the code) says that you can't take any gift over $25. It's offensive

[124] Quote marks inserted by researcher for emphasis.

(to them) if you don't let the foreign ministry do that and you don't get your story, if you don't let them do that.

2. ***What do you consider the primary values of your newsroom?***

Primary values of the newsroom are to report accurately and fairly, and present the reader with information to make an informed decision. It's done every day. There are lapses. Journalism is always a work in progress.

3. ***Tell me your thoughts and feelings when you learned about any reporter, at your publication or any other, who fabricated a story.***

(I would) point to Jayson Blair. There were problems at the paper. I was disappointed…I didn't (know) it was as egregious as it was…I immediately thought also of Janet Cooke…This is just another black eye

4. ***Tell me about a time, if any, when you had a difference of opinion on an ethical decision with a manager, editor or senior reporter. What was the result?***

I never felt that there was ethical issue. An ethical issue is something the public has the right to know or need to know.

5. ***Tell me how you would describe the person you are now as far as newsroom values when you first started in journalism, as opposed to now. (If there has been a change), what contributed to this change?***

I think my values are still the same. Just because you have more experience, and you understand how institutions work. I was pretty naïve when you come into this profession. You also start to understand what it's like to be on the other side. If you're critical of an administration because they failed to solve the homeless problem, there's going to be homelessness. Young reporters can focus on the problem

and nobody is doing anything and let that be the overriding focus of the story. You start to realize the measure of what is a good domestic or foreign policy is not so much in terms of what they can do. (When you're more experienced), you try to get the whole picture of the dynamic that's at work."

6. ***Could you describe the most important lesson you learned about journalism ethics through writing stories?***

Its sounds sort of common place, but it's almost imperative that you at least report both sides. You have to pursue that other side even if they don't want to comment. If you sit down with the other side, in order to be fair, and you listen to them, and see how they react. You want to pursue that other side to the nth degree. Even if you hate people, it's worth listening and talking to them because that's what we do. It's important to sit and talk to people face to face, because it changes everything. You can put into perspective.

Section 3:

1. ***Do you remember Janet Cooke?***

Yes.

(a) ***What does that case mean to you, if anything?***

The first thing it means to me was that you can't get away with (fabrication). There are no short cuts here. Editors must be critical and skeptical of our colleagues' work. I think that there is incredible pressure on reporters at top notch organizations to produce or there's perceived pressure, we need to deal with that as a profession. I think that's what drove Stephen Glass and Jayson Blair. They thought they had to produce exclusives.

(b) ***If you were telling someone about Cooke, what would you say?***

She was driven by the need to please her editors. Nobody's story has perfect quotes.

2. ***Do you remember Stephen Glass?***

Yes.

***(a) What does that case mean to you, if anything*?**

See response in answer 1a.

(b) If you were telling someone about Glass, what would you say?

See response in answer 1a.

3. ***Do you remember Jayson Blair?***

Yes.

(a) What does that case, if anything mean to you?

See response in answer 1a.

(b) If you were telling someone about Blair, what would you say?

See response in answer

4. ***Do you remember Mike Barnicle*?**

Yes.

(a) What does that case mean to you, if anything?

It means the same thing (as Blair and Cooke).

(b) If you were telling someone about Barnicle, what would you say?

Same thing I've already said.

5. ***How do you define ethics?***

Doing the right thing.

6. ***How do you define newspaper ethics?***

*Y*ou would read that it's a philosophical guideline for how we cover the news, and treat subjects in the news that are intended to provide balanced and fair reporting, that provides our readership with enough information to make an informed decision.

7. ***How would you define situational ethics?***

It's the day-to-day practice of journalism. We have these guiding philosophies, but situational ethics means that we reserve the right to augment our guidelines for a particular situation. It's subjective depending on the situation you're confronted with.

8. ***Do you feel pressure from editors or others to behave in a particular way? How so?***

I don't feel pressure because I think I know how to behave.

9. ***Do you think your ethics differ from those of your superiors (editors, publishers etc.)? How so?***

Not really differ. In general one of the reasons I've stayed in this profession and this newspaper is because in general we see eye to eye. They're interesting people.

10. ***How do ethics function in your newsroom?***

There are constant reminders. There are post mortems every day (in the form of memos). (Editors) ask us, if we thought a story was fair or how we're phrasing things. (Paper deleted) reporters are reminded that they are forbidden to attend fundraisers during campaigns and not allowed to display bumper stickers or signs on lawns, that kind of thing.

11. ***In your view, if there was one value that a reporter should uphold, what would it be?***

One value we should always keep, to every day try as hard as you can, to divorce oneself (sic) of your own personal biases and experiences and to try as hard as you can to judge things in their own context. That's the value that serves journalists and individuals the best. It's very difficult to do. I don't think it's possible to be objective but I do think it's possible to be fair. End your day with the question, am I being fair?

12. ***Have you ever been faced with an ethical dilemma in your current organization?***

See response to question 1 this section.

Respondent 4

1. ***What is your position?***

Response deleted in order to protect identity of respondent.

2. ***How long have you been employed in journalism?***

I've been employed in journalism for 15 years.

3. ***Why did you become a journalist?***

To help people, and to do positive stories about African-Americans.

4. ***What is your education level?***

Bachelor of arts in journalism.

5. ***Race? Age? Gender?***

African-American, 39, Female.

6. ***For how many papers have you worked?***

I have worked for seven newspapers.

Section 2:

1. ***Could you tell me as much as possible about the details of your experience as a reporter, who has faced any kind of ethical dilemma in your career as a professional or as a student?***

Normally, newspapers don't do stories on suicides. Sometimes they go gaga over suicides. I felt when I was assigned to cover this woman's suicide. I get there and her body is still laid out. I was always taught that suicides in newspapers glorifies suicides and encourages people to get publicity by killing themselves…This woman (who committed suicide) danced on Broadway. In the end it turned out to be one of my best written stories of the year. I felt like I had no choice. We really don't have the option to refuse an assignment.

(On another story that created a dilemma), Rev. Al Sharpton was holding a protest of someone who had been killed by a police officer, police brutality. Al Sharpton had a march or a protest of some sort. I didn't actually cover the protest or march. Someone else did. I did rewrites or updating stories. The editor said I needed to make some phone calls and get some more quotes. He said, "This story is too positive." The story was too upbeat about Al Sharpton, and said he was doing the right thing. I was supposed to hunt down someone. We're supposed to be relaying the facts and observing for the public in an impartial way. I thought to myself, this is wrong. I chose not to call anybody. When I was asked, I said I couldn't reach anybody. (In yet another instance), there was a young man who did suicide by cop. He got himself into a position where he confronted police with a fake gun. I got a family friend at the deceased house. He was adamant that the family didn't want to be bothered. They were upset and in grief. So, I go back to my car and I call my desk. The more gruesome, the more horrifying, the editor said I should "cry" and say if I don't get something from them I'm going to be fired. I decided not to do that. I decided that I wasn't knocking on their door again. I'm not going to offend them by knocking on the door. I told the desk I did it, and they still wouldn't talk to me. In order to solve my ethical dilemma, I have to create another ethical dilemma by lying.

2. ***What do you consider the primary values of your newsroom? Have you ever had any specific instances of what you've described? What were they?***

I'd have a hard time in saying there are any ethics in my newsroom. Things are definitely slanted. It's a very right-wing paper, and they don't mind expressing that in the newspaper. They won't name rape victims. They won't go that far. We had an incident where a 13-year-old girl, delivered a baby and dumped it out the window,

and it died. They wouldn't name the girl who had done this…The boy, the father, put the baby in a bag and put it on the stoop of the church. The columnists blamed the mother of the girl. Ultimately, the father, who was a minor, was indirectly identified (by the columnist).

3. ***Tell me your thoughts and feelings when you learned about a reporter, at your publication or any other, who had fabricated a story.***

There have been instances where there was a reporter who did a story on Donald Trump . . . Throughout the story every quote is an anonymous source. So, the editor says get the reporter on the phone. He told him, "You can't make up quotes in a story like this." I think it's well known that he does this. I think he still does it today. I have a problem with this. I try to make sure. I don't make too many stories where he's the rewrite (person) and I'm dumping my quotes to him. I made it a point that I don't share a byline with him. I saw the movie "Shattered Glass" about that kid at the *New Republic*. I was shocked that he got away with what he got away with for so long. I think it totally violated the public trust. It was just like that Jayson Blair. There wasn't (sic) enough checks and balances to make sure that this guy wasn't doing this. It is appalling to me. I think that there were a lot of accusations that (the Blair case) was going to hurt a lot of African-American reporters. Once again, black reporters would have to work doubly hard to advance in the business. He definitely hurt us all. On one level, he hurt all journalists. The public doesn't believe what comes out of reporters' pens or mouths. I think he hurt African-American reporters on another level because it's hard enough to make it in this business. I think it'll be that much

harder for black folks to get into these newsrooms and to advance. People might think we all have a little bit of that Jayson Blair in us.

4. ***Tell me about a time, if any, when you had a difference of opinion about an ethical decision with a manager, editor or senior reporter? What was the result?***

See answer to question 1.

5. ***Tell me how you would describe the person you are now as far as newsroom values when you first started in journalism as opposed to now. (If there has been a chance), what contributed to that change?***

Coming out of college I had a lot of ideological framework. I was going to break into this business and really report about people of color and write the positive stories that don't get covered. Every once in awhile, I'll get a positive story, but that's not what sells. I don't think my ethics have changed a great deal. Maybe when I first started out I wouldn't have been as aggressive about going after people who have lost someone. I do need to get something I can't get beat by the competition. I push a little harder. I am sometimes in their face, and I break into their mourning period because I need to get a story. I'm not as nice as I used to be.

6. ***Could you describe the most important lesson you learned about journalism ethics through writing stories?***

Don't compromise myself in that it's just a job and it's not going to fulfill me. I won't be making stories up to fit someone's idea of what the news should be. I don't make up quotes. I've discovered there's a way to look for the answer you're looking for, if you feed people the question in the right way. It's not exactly a free flow interview. I feed people questions and sort of getting them to give it back to me. I don't feel like I'm completely cheating.

Section 3:

1. ***Do you remember Janet Cooke?***

Yes, I remember Janet Cooke.

(a) What does that case, if anything, mean to you?

I remember hearing about it afterward. There was resurgence when she had cereal for dinner because she couldn't afford anything else. The pressure she was under to come up with the big story.

(b) If you were telling someone about Cooke, what would you say?

I can never get to the point that I'm so interested and dedicated to please my editor going to the point that this woman went to, to please her editor. Yeah, you won a Pulitzer, but you made everything up. It was based on a total lie. I can't see people caving into that kind of pressure. The news is what it is. The story was wonderful fiction but it doesn't belong in newspapers. She inadvertently shaped me. I realized it's just a career, not really my life. That's stepping way over the line.

2. ***Do you remember Stephen Glass?***

Yes.

(a) ***What does that case, if anything, mean to you, if anything?***

I remember when the controversy first broke. (The members of his) newsroom were so young. Everybody in the newsroom, the average age was 25 or 26. They had no experience, they hadn't been out there. He seemed to love the attention

and being the star was all about getting the big story. He used some of his youthfulness. When editor asked him a question, he would respond, “Are you mad at me?”

(b) If you were telling someone about Glass, what would you say?

Your stories should be fact based and should not depend on whether or not your editor likes you.

3. ***Do you remember Jayson Blair?***

Yes.

(a) What does that case, if anything, mean to you?

He blew it. He broke the cardinal rule. You don’t lie or make up stories. You report the facts.

(b) If you were telling someone about Blair, what would you say?

See response to question 3, Section 2.

4. ***Do you remember Mike Barnicle?***

Yes.

(a) What does that case, if anything, mean to you?

Even after his controversy he was hired by (another paper). Shows how some people can bounce back.

(b) If you were telling someone about Blair, what would you say?

I don't think he should have been given a second chance. It just shows you how certain people of certain persuasion, i.e. white can get a second chance even when it's undeserved.

5. ***How do you define ethics?***

Truthful, unbiased, more or less present the whole picture, newsworthy, not because it's glorifying or sensational, it's human, rather than salacious. Above all it should be truthful.

6. ***How do you define newspaper ethics?***

Be truthful to your readers. You won't make up quotes. You don't put your own personal opinions in your story.

7. ***How would you define situational ethics?***

If you had a certain ethics to fit acertain situation. There was a state s enator who just got arrested. I think it's because he's a Democrat black politician who got arrested for the same thing, there would be different rules of how he is covered.

8. ***Do you feel pressure from editors or others to behave in a particular way? How so?***

No.

9. ***Do you think your ethics differ from those of your superiors?***

No response.

10. ***How do ethics function in your organization?***

See response to question 3, Section 2.

11. ***In your view, if there was one value to uphold, what would it be?***

One value to uphold, what it would be that you should always be truthful

to yourself. You should know what boundaries that you won't cross.

12. ***Have you ever been faced with an ethical dilemma in your organization?***

See response to question 1, Section 2.

Respondent 5

Section 1:

1. ***What is your position?***

Response deleted to protect identity of respondent.

2. ***How long have you been employed in journalism?***

18 years in journalism.

3. ***What made you to decide to become a journalist?***

I liked writing. I liked people and I wanted to do something that was important.

4. ***What is your education level?***

Masters (of Arts) in journalism.

5. ***Race? Age? Gender?***

Caucasian, Female, 39 years old.

6. ***For how many papers have you worked?***

I worked for three papers and a wire service.

Section 2:

1. ***Could you tell me as much as possible about the details of your experience as a reporter, who has faced any kind of ethical dilemma in your career or as a student?***

One (dilemma) was as a student. I was editor of the college newspaper and I heard rumors about an issue where a father of one of the staff people, one of my editors worked at the university, and there were some allegations of sexual harassment. This guy was a professor at the university. I had to decide whether to

pursue that story. The (same) student's mother died recently, and she was very fragile, and I couldn't bring myself to (print the story). The adviser let me make the decision myself. I remember saying maybe I'll never get to the *New York Times*. The man ended up making some settlement and leaving and going to (another) university. I think my personal ethics trumped maybe my role as a journalist. I think it's a dilemma has surfaced for me over the years. On the police and medical beat, one issue in particular was being there with a dead body, and wondering if you should really be there. It was issues of privacy and how much the public really had a right to know. That incident in college was a big one. What you personally believe versus what journalism is owed. Do you help the person personally or focus more on the story? You come across people who are poor and struggling and you want to help them. You feel torn.

Another time, I was in a room with a dying boy. He needed things, and I put down my notebook and started giving him his water or whatever. I was the only one in that room. Trying to figure out where that line is going to be or if that line matters. I held his hand; it didn't mean I'd lost some crucial detail. You're there in the moment. Who has the trump card, is it the journalist or the human being?

2. ***What do you consider the primary values of your newsroom? Have you ever had specific instances of what you've described? What were they?***

Getting stories in the paper is a primary value. They just want to get stories in the paper. They value investigative exposes. They recently came up with this ethics policy, and it's mostly driven by "don'ts." They're going to have to do almost surveillance on us (to make sure the rules are followed). Values are not to

plagiarize, and not to have conflicts of interest. Transparency is a new value, letting the reader know or see (how news decisions are made). They're trying to be (more vigilant) in recognition of Jayson Blair, trying to value the reader more and give the reader (some understanding of) how we make some decisions. They assembled a reader's advisory group. The editor at his last paper had a big series where a lot of the reporting was flawed. They took somebody's word for a lot of stuff, and it turned out it was wrong.

3. ***Tell me your thoughts and feelings when you learned about a reporter, at your publication or any other, who had fabricated a story.***

The ones I knew were at my publication. There were fabricated quotes in a story. An obit writer who made up people (to quote). It wasn't harming. He was making up some of the people. We had an art critic, who took something from a reference book that he didn't attribute, but he was crazed on deadline. A feature reporter who made up a quote about a *New York Times* reporter. I felt sorry (for them) and tried to understand why they had done it. It was mostly just sad. It wasn't like Jayson Blair, (who was) someone just trying to get ahead.

4. ***Tell me about a time, if any, when you had a difference of opinion about an ethical decision with a manager, editor or senior reporter? What was the result?***

(There was a disagreement with an editor over) whether or not when we were supposed to be in the room, when (a) child died. Photo side wanted us to keep pushing. I didn't want to do it. I said this woman was under enough duress. The top editor agreed with me and said to err on the side of compassion and restraint.

5. ***Tell me how you would describe the person you are now as far as newsroom values when you first started in journalism as opposed to now.***

I have more insight and more awareness, and probably and more respect for the people in my stories than I did. At first I didn't realize the power that I had (as a reporter). If someone was willing to tell me something, I would put it in.

6. ***Could you describe the most important lesson you learned about journalism ethics through writing stories?***

How hard it is to get at the truth. To really explain a complicated story in the newspaper, when a lot of the important stories we just scratch the surface of. People's motivations are very complicated. When you interview people one time, we're often missing the big story

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Section 3:

1. ***Do you remember Janet Cooke?***

Yes, I remember Janet Cooke.

(a) What does that case mean to you, if anything?

That case means when editors get excited about a great story, reporters become more concerned about getting a great story in the paper than about whether it's true or not. To me that's journalistic ambition.

(b) If you were telling someone about Cooke, what would you say?

I think I would say it shows the importance of editor oversight or the lack thereof. Just that there are often charismatic reporters that capture the imagination of editors, and too often those people are given free reign, there has to be editors who put a tough eye on the stories that are coming out.

2. ***Do you remember Stephen Glass***?

Yes.

(a) What does that case, if anything, mean to you?

Mostly because I saw the movie ("Shattered Glass"). It means the same thing as Janet Cooke. Someone with a huge ego, and ambition, fabricated.

(b) If you were telling someone about Glass, what would you say?

Glass is ambition and personal gain over what the goals of what journalism should really be.

3. ***Do you remember Jayson Blair?***

Yes.

(a) What does that case, if anything mean to you?

It's the same thing. It's that charismatic person who's able to get around the editing process. That one should be a huge wake-up call to every newsroom about the inexperience you have when you (hire a young reporter). They really need to be supervised closely. (Young reporters) don't really understand. They are more focused on their ambition and getting on the front page, and they don't fully appreciate the power they have and the respect for the newspaper or the reader. A lot of those people get weeded out and they try to go on to law school.

(b) If you were telling someone about Blair, what would you say?

See answer to 3a above.

4. ***Do you remember Mike Barnicle?***

Yes.

(a) What does that case, if anything mean to you?

It symbolizes laziness.

(b) If you were telling someone about Barnicle, what would you say?

He got too arrogant, and felt secure and too lazy to do real reporting, which happens to older reporters.

5. ***How do you define ethics?***

(It's) an incredibly important arena too often neglected by reporters and ethics, part of our daily discussion. They should be the values at the heart of what we do, having integrity and respect, trying to get as much of the truth out there as we can and not neglecting parts of our city or groups of our readers. The recent scandals have drawn more attention to accuracy.

6. ***How do you define newspaper ethics?***

We need to pay attention to, again, the values at the heart – seeking out the truth and trying to stand up for the disenfranchised. What we're doing is a public service. We're the voice of society and democracy.

7. ***How do you define situational ethics?***

Ethics are ethics. I don't think they vary by situation.

8. ***Do you feel pressure from editors or others to behave in a particular way? How so?***

No, I don't.

9. ***Do you think your ethics differ from those of your superiors (editors, publishers etc.)? How so?***

Publisher's ethics are more on making money, and mine are journalism as a public good, a public service. But when we talk about fairness and accuracy we're mostly in the same boat.

10. ***How do ethics function in your organization?***

No response.

11. **In *your view, if there was one value that a reporter should uphold, what would it be?***

One value – be fair.

12. ***Have you ever been faced with an ethical dilemma in your organization?***

(Helping) that little boy (who was) dying was my ethical dilemma. We followed the family for a year. I didn't have to consult a document to know what to do. Just help.

Respondent 6

1. ***What is your position?***

Editorial writer.

2. ***How long have you been employed in journalist?***

3. ***What made you decide to become a journalist?***

I'd gone to graduate school and gotten a degree in fiction writing. I guess I met somebody who took me to a NABJ (National Association of Black Journalists) conference. Once I went to NABJ, I saw a lot of potential. I guess it was looking for paid writing work.

4. ***What is your education level?***

Masters of fine arts in fiction writing.

5. ***Race? Black? Age?***

African-American/Jewish, 41, female.

6. ***For how many newspapers have you worked?***

Two papers.

Section 2:

1. ***Could you tell me as much as possible about the details of your experience as a reporter, who has faced any kind of ethical dilemma in your career or as a student?***

I've been at papers where (there were) big ethical dilemmas. And I think there but for the grace of God go I, and I think, how do I protect myself from those things?

I err on the side of caution. Being black you don't want to have any ethical problems. I say to my editors, "now this is my college boyfriend," (who is a source for a story).

2. ***What do you consider the primary values of your newsroom? Have you ever had any specific instances of what you've described? What were they?***

You want to be accurate. When the new editor came in that was one of his issues. He sends out these memos newsroom wide and they say we need people to be much more careful, and they say we're going to be tracking errors. (Since the memos were instituted) there has been a decline in the number of errors.

3. ***Tell me your thoughts and feelings when you learned about a reporter, at your publication or any other, who had fabricated a story.***

I always feel bad for people. Gee, that's a tough break. The reason I feel bad, one phone call will get you something. At one level, this job isn't hard to do. At a basic level, (you) just show up. Just call one person. We had (a writer who fabricated sources). She was making up people and stuff. Just make one call, and you fill out your stuff so much. I feel bad for people when they get caught committing fiction.

4. ***Tell me about a time, if any, when you had a difference of opinion on an ethical decision with a manager, editor or senior reporter.***

I was a fact checker at a magazine, and there was desire to be hip and flip in the language and not always get the facts down. You'd have to argue with them. As a fact checker, I'd say it's not quite accurate. There's a desire to tell a really good story which sometimes nudge people to ignore the fact checking. It's a "don't let the facts get in the way of a good story" type thing.

5. ***Tell me how you would describe the person you are now as far as newsroom values when you first started in journalism, as opposed to now.***

I think that I was probably more of a smart aleck and a little insensitive (about) the fall out (for the) people who I wrote about, even the politicians. I now err on the side of being accurate. I'm more mature. The more you do the job the more sensitive you are to people. I wanted to be a little more respectful of sources and convincing to readers."

6. ***Could you describe the most important less you learned about journalism ethics through writing stories?***

Protect naïve people. Every so often you talk to people who don't get it, it would be easy to exploit them, and if I'm interviewing them I ask a lot of confirming questions. Don't take advantage of people.

Section 3:

1. ***Do you remember Janet Cooke?***

Yes, I do.

(a) What does that case man to you, if anything?

It's almost like walking into a room where there's like cocaine on the table, say go ahead try it, who's going to know. She could do the job or take the drug, make something up. The danger for journalist is that it's kind of easy to make stuff up. It makes black journalists look bad.

(b) If you were telling someone about Cooke, what would you say?

I'd say, she wrote for the *Post,* and she understood what a good story was, but she didn't know how to get the pieces of it legitimately. The lesson here is that unless you get a wild story, you don't have a story to tell. You can find out a child

who never used drug (and write that story), but it's not as sexy. I would say people make up stuff, and it's like they've lost their faith.

2. ***Do you remember Stephen Glass?***

Yes, but not as well (as Cooke).

(a) What does that case mean to you, if anything?

No response.

(b) If you were telling someone about Glass, what would you say?

I'm less sympathetic, because Janet Cooke is a black woman and (Glass) didn't resonate with me. Just do the job.

3. ***Do you remember Jayson Blair?***

Yes.

(a) What does that case mean to you, if anything?

That had a huge impact on me. He, after the scandal, was interviewed all over the place. More than ethics, there seems to have been some mental illness issues. He had some unaddressed mental health challenges. He wrote about some family living somewhere and he described the cattle outside the house. He didn't even have to go to their house, and (he could have) just called them up. Maybe the problem with him, he didn't quite know how to get the information.

(b) If you were telling someone about Blair, what would you say?

There are ways to get information without making it up. I don't know if there is more sophisticated training or maybe some people should fact check for awhile.

4. ***Do you remember Mike Barnicle?***

Yes.

(a) What does that case mean to you, if anything?

I have a tremendous amount of respect for Mike Barnicle. He's amazing and talented. Why didn't he just stick to the facts?

(b) If you were telling someone about Barnicle, what would you say?

I think Barnicle got into parable writing. I felt sorry for him. But he landed on his feet, he's not hurting. With him it's more of a disappointment. You want to believe him and trust him. You want his journalism to be pure. He got a little lazy maybe.

5. ***How do you define ethics?***

No response.

6. ***How do you define newspaper ethics?***

It's a code by which you practice the profession, which includes being accurate and thorough and close to right as you can get.

7. ***How do you define situational ethics?***

There are certain situations where the basic code doesn't cover the details. There are odd situations and you have to do your best to cover those situations. Go for transparency, and make sure you've told (at least three people in the newsroom), where the kink might be (in a story).

8. ***Do you feel pressure from editors or others to behave in a particular way? How so?***

No. The pressure we get is to do the right thing.

9. ***Do you think your ethics differ from those of your superiors (editors, publishers etc?) How so?***

No.

10. ***How do ethics function in your organization?***

I don't consult a document. I just go ask somebody (what the policy is on ethical matters).

11. ***In your view, if there was one value that a reporter should uphold, what would it be?***

Accuracy.

12. ***Have you ever been faced with an ethical dilemma in your organization?***

No. But because of Barnicle (and others) I put in more (information) than I need to, and I let the editors take it out.

Respondent 7

Section 1:

1. ***What is your position?***

Response deleted to protect identity of respondent.

2. ***How long have you been employed in journalism?***

20 years

3. ***What made you decide to become a journalist?***

Not quite sure, just an interest in civic events. I came from a political family back east, and I had brothers and sisters who were multi-degreed people. I was always into writing ever since I was a little kid. I thought I could do it.

4. ***What is your education level?***

Ongoing. On again and off again thing in political science. No degree yet.

5. ***Race? Age? Gender?***

Caucasian, 45 years old, Male.

6. ***For how many papers have you worked?***

I've worked for 10 newspapers, a few magazines, and a now-defunct a wire service.

Section 2:

1. ***Could you tell me as much as possible about the details of your experience as a reporter, who has faced any kind of ethical dilemma in your career or as a student?***

At (newspaper name deleted by interviewer), we had all those ethical questions. Many controversies occurred there. There was a headline where my ethics were

questioned. (A local city councilmember) displayed to me during a conditional off the record situation that he had been making hash pipes out of his house. He who a part-time ceramics teacher. He showed me these things. I went over to his house after a meeting one time. So, I go with him we have this wine and we're talking. He wants to show me this stuff. But it has to be off the record. I said "John, I can't do that." He was compelled to show me these ceramic pipes, he sold through the mail, and this on the heels of (a drug scandal in the city). He admitted to me that he got high all the time. I kept quiet about it. You make these promises. He's up for re-election. But then his (next door neighbor) was mad because her son came home with one of these discarded (hash) pipes, loaded up with weed, and it's one of John's pipes. Suddenly, it does become an issue. Other parents complain, and I'm like holy-sh**, what can I do. During this period things are coming up about John. I said 'the pipes you showed me, every kid in town has one.' I said 'what I am supposed to do about it?' So, I write this story, but I hang the story on the people who are complaining.

John said, later, it was an antique pipe collection. He said he collects them as a hobby. Then, John called, (the editor of the paper) and questioned my ethics. Headline appeared "(Reporter's[125]) Ethics Questioned."

The questions (from editors and others) were; was I concocting this story on behalf of the powers that wanted to be? Were there political conspirators, I was working with? My view of it was, we walk the line but you have to tell the truth.

2. ***What do you consider the primary values of your newsroom? Have you ever had any specific instances of what you've described? What were they?***

The primary ethical value is to fill a void to capture what is going on in this town. We break stories left and right. We also have another duty to cover the arts and theater scene. We fill a niche for people.

3. ***Tell me your thoughts and feelings when you learned about a reporter, at your publication or any other publication, who had fabricated a story.***

I can think of one person. We were being edited by the (local major metropolitan daily) as well. She turned in this story about the guy who runs the Police Athletics League Arts. According to the story,he confessed to stealing $25,000. She just happened to be there. I called the person at the police department, found it wasn't true, and I canned her. She said she was trying to be funny. I didn't think it was very funny, considering the volume of stories I have to look at.

Then, there was another guy, a theater and movie expert, who talked a great game. Then, I suspected, he was just too good, then, someone found a review out of the *New York Times*. He ripped it off—someone called in from (the local university) to report him. I said no wonder he can do five or six stories a week. He was lifting everything off the web. I had to let him go. There was no way I could keep him.

4. ***Tell me a bout a time, if any, when you had a difference of opinion about an ethical decision with a manager, editor or senior reporter? What was the result?***

No response.

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[125] The reporter is named in the headline. However, the researcher deleted the name to protect the identity of the respondent.

5. ***Tell me how you would describe the person you are now as far as newsroom values versus when you first started in journalism, as opposed to now. (If there has been a change), what contributed to that change.***

I don't think there's been that much of a change.

6. ***Could you describe the most important lesson you learned about journalism ethics through writing stories?***

This is a very powerful medium. One that has its own distinct set of responsibilities, geared back to our primary customer, and that is the reader. I don't allow undue influences, and we're responsible to the readers, and not to the sources of the information. Our responsibility to the reader is greater (than to sources). It's not a touchy feely friendly business some of the time. We're not here to make friends of these folks, although we can be friendly.

Section 3:

1. ***Do you remember Janet Cooke?***

Yes.

(a) What does that case, if anything mean to you?

There was a lot of pressure put on her to produce. She fabricated a lot of that information as I recall. She won the Pulitzer.

(b) If you were telling someone about Cooke, what would you say?

It's wrong to make things up. It was embellished. I'm not sure how all this went down. It certainly wasn't a Jayson Blair or Jack Kelley.

2. ***Do you remember Stephen Glass?***

No, just vaguely. Didn't he make things up in a magazine?

(a) What does that case mean to you, if anything?[126]

(b) If you were telling someone about Glass, what would you say?[127]

3. ***Do you remember Jayson Blair?***

Yeah, I remember.

(a) What does that case mean to you, if anything?

Totally untrustworthy. That would be it.

(b) If you were telling someone about Blair, what would you say?

No response.

4. ***Do you remember Mike Barnicle?***

Yes.

(a) ***What does that case mean to you, if anything?***

He ain't (sic) trustworthy either.

(b) ***If you were telling someone about Barnicle, what would you say?***

I've had tens of thousands of stories and I didn't have to make any of that stuff up.

5. ***How do you define ethics?***

No response.

6. ***How do you define newspaper ethics?***

It all goes back to the community. You're responsible to a huge demographic. I can only think of what (a county) supervisor said about me. He said, I was very fair, and that's about as good as you can do. You can say all you want about objectivity, the real thing you have to be is fair, and give them that extra call

[126] This question was not asked. It has been reproduced for consistency.

back. Be wary about most things. If your mother says she loves you, check it out. Give everyone their due, and a chance to say whatever they have to say.

7. ***How do you define situational ethics?***

If your ethics and morality are in tune, that would be your guide, and how you behave. I don't think I've come up with a situation where my morality and fairness didn't come through. People get into journalism because they have a higher sense of community, absent their literary ambitions; they care about things and people. They are about the place they report about. Chances are you're probably fairly well-meaning. Ethics don't vary by situation.

8. ***Do you feel pressure from editors or others to behave in a particular way? How so?***

No, I think I set the standard. A lot of newspapers are renting out advertising space on page one.

9. ***Do you think your ethics differ from those of your superiors (editors, publishers etc.)? How so?***

(The publisher) has been very ethical about everything he's ever done. (Publisher) has been pretty hands off. He runs advertising, and his editors run the newspaper. The standards are really high here.

10. ***How do ethics function in your organization?***

Fairness.

11. ***In your view, if there was one value that a reporter should uphold, what would it be?***

Just be fair. Talk to both parties. We don't want a one-sided program here. Be empathetic. Know your facts so you can improve your writing.

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[127] This question was not asked. It has been reproduced for consistency.

12. ***Have you ever been faced with an ethical dilemma in your organization?***

(Note: The respondent is an editor and did not offer a personal ethical dilemma, but rather that of a reporter who works for his paper).

We had this situation where this guy was on foot in those fleece sweat pants with a loose band. He fled as he was jumping the fence; the gun in his pants went off. The cop returned fire, and he killed him. They say he had a gun and shot at the cops, but they couldn't confirm or wouldn't say (about the gun). There were no powder burns on his hands. First we reported that he had no gun powder burns on his hand. We find out later, that's why (because the gun went off while in his pants). His father said he did take the gun out with him that night. They found the gun that he was carrying around in his pants. The paper later had to report that the suspect had a gun when the cops shot him. (The reporter), who is black, was accused by the black community of selling out to the cops, because he reported the suspect had a gun. It disturbed (the reporter) He has a number of sources who are important, who were really opposed to reporting this information. They said that's "bull sh** and you're a f******* (Uncle) Tom." He could have said there's nothing here. He could have fudged that story. He didn't. He took the heat. It was an ethical thing for him to do. Tell the truth, you know the truth, tell it, it's your job.

Respondent 8

Section 1:

1. ***What is your position?***

Response deleted to protect anonymity of respondent.

2. ***How long have you been employed in journalism?***

Employed in journalism for 15 years.

3. ***What made you decide to become a journalist?***

I decided to be a sports writer.

4. **What is your education level?**

Bachelor's degree.

5. ***Race? Age? Gender?***

African-American, 40 years old, Female.

6. ***For how many papers have you worked?***

Six newspapers.

Section 2:

1. ***Could you tell me as much as possible about the details of your experience as a reporter, who has faced any kind of ethical dilemma in your career or as a student?***

I wouldn't say I've faced any kind of ethical dilemmas. I've had to educate folks that we are fact-gatherers and not cheerleaders. (Public Relations) people say you're supposed to be the voice of business, and we would have to say we're not, but we're chroniclers of business.

A former colleague got sued in 1995 over a story that had errors in it. So, when I started here, the editor made me camp out at the courthouse. (The editor) made me read the documents twice. I felt protected and safe (that the facts were right for the story).

2. ***What do you consider the primary values of your newsroom? Have you ever had any specific instances of what you've described? What were they?***

Primary values of your newsroom are accuracy and relevance. We're very big on relevance, and have things that other people (other papers) don't have. Accuracy and beating the competition would be our values. So, we use trusted sources. We're told "check it out completely, and have back-up."

3. ***Tell me your thoughts and feelings when you learned about a reporter, at your publication or any other, who fabricated a story.***

That is irritating. We're not about fiction. We're about fact. When I read about people like Jayson Blair. It really irritates. It puts African-American reporters under more scrutiny. I am the only African-American at my company. I don't want anyone think I would be capable of making up things. It annoys me going back to Janet Cooke. That kind of thing is not funny. All we have is our credibility.

4. ***Tell me about a time, if any, when you had a difference of opinion on an ethical decision with a manager, editor or senior reporter. What was the result?***

Never over ethical things, just play of stories and things like that.

5. ***Tell me how would describe the person you are now as far as newsroom values when you first started in journalism as opposed to now? (If there has been a change) what contributed to that change?***

I think it has not changed. I have never accepted a gift. I'm completely sensitive to accuracy. That was always a must for me. I felt I could not make mistakes. I had to get things above board as I can. That hasn't changed in 15 years.

6. ***Could you describe the most important lesson you learned about journalism ethics through writing stories?***

Be accurate. I learned from camping out at two different occasions at the court-house. I just had to make sure to be careful and make sure the facts are OK and be very fair, break your back to give people the opportunity to comment. I always had this but this was reinforced (through writing stories).

Section 3:

1. ***Do you remember Janet Cooke?***

Yes

(a) What does that case mean to you, if anything?

What a piece of work. That case taught me you don't write fiction. If there's no Jimmy, tell the truth. If you have to make one up to hold on to your job, maybe that job isn't worth it.

(b) If you were telling someone about Cooke, what would you say?

This is not somebody you should ever consider as a role model. She let her personal demons get into her professional life.

2. ***Do you remember Stephen Glass?***

Yes.

(a) What does that case mean to you, if anything?

I knew a little about him, because a friend of mine went to law school with him. I believe it was the *New Republic*, where he worked. He was allowed to go unchecked because he was the editor's pet.

(b) If you were telling someone about Glass, what would you say?

The checks and balances obviously broke down.

3. ***Do you remember Jayson Blair?***

I do.

(a) What does that case mean to you, if anything?

He is a liar, and a self-aggrandizing clown. He was unrepentant and tried to blame the situation on racism.

(b) If you were telling someone about Blair, what would you say?

We're in a culture where we have very little tolerance and don't cry wolf. Why would an editor become so seduced by this guy that they let everything (go) and not pay attention? Just make sure everything is right. I'll gladly share my tapes with my bosses. I want to make sure they have my back.

4. ***Do remember Mike Barnicle?***

Yes.

(a) What does that case mean to you, if anything?

Another person who made up columns, and there was a lot of talk about double standards (because of) Patricia Smith (who did the same thing is black). She was treated rougher than Barnicle because she was black.

(b) If you were telling someone about Barnicle, what would you say?

I would say just because he was a columnist he still didn't have a right to make up things. You must clearly label fiction. Columns need to be based on factual events.

5. ***How do you define ethics?***

No response.

6. ***How do you define newspaper ethics?***

It's a set of values which govern the newsgathering process, reporting process and how the information is presented.

7. ***How do you define situational ethics?***

How the person is going to represent themselves. You have a source, but the source wants to get paid, and that's a no-no. Most legitimate, real papers will say "no thank you", but the *National Enquirer* would do checkbook journalism in that situation.

8. ***Do you feel pressure from editors or others to behave in a particular way? How so?***

I don't feel any particular pressure. When we were hired we were given the (ethics) code. We don't have seminars although I think we should. I have read the written code of ethics.

9. ***Do you think your ethics differ from those of your superiors (editors, publishers etc.)? How so?***

In terms of the line editors, I would have to say no. But it differs from (the) publisher's because he is not a news guy. He doesn't really interfere with us. He's a business guy. Our executive guy is a schmooze guy. He has lunch with a lot of

people and goes golfing (with potential sources). But the executive editor is a solid journalist. He won a Pulitzer.

10. ***How do ethics function in your organization?***

My front page on the bottom strip, they have ads, and I don't like that. This decision was made by the publisher. I still think it's upsetting. Newspapers are an advertising supported product, but there is a time and place. Right below the bottom front is not a place for ads.

11. ***In your view, if there was one value that a reporter should uphold, what would it be?***

Accuracy and truth. Don't lie, don't make up stuff.

12. ***Have you ever been faced with an ethical dilemma in your organization?***

No.

Respondent 9

Section 1:

1. ***What is your position?***

Feature writer.

2. ***How long have you been employed in journalism?***

20 years.

3. ***What made you decide to become a journalist?***

(The) college I went to only had four majors. And one was journalism, nursing, business and human services.

4. ***What is your education level?***

Bachelor's in journalism**.**

5. ***Race? Age? Gender?***

Caucasian, 42, Female.

6. ***For how many papers have you worked?***

I have worked for one newspaper.

Section 2:

1. ***Could you tell me as much as possible about the details of your experience as a reporter, who has faced any kind of ethical dilemma in your career or as a journalism student?***

Ongoing one that everyone faces if what you can accept (from) sources and stuff. If you go and interview someone, and they offer to feed you, that's kind of a constant one. You write about someone, and they're grateful and they give you a gift which you're not supposed to accept.

2. ***What do you consider the primary values of your newsroom? Have you ever had any specific instances of what you've described?***

To be as impartial as possible and see both sides of the story, and avoid anything that gives anyone the impression that we are not being impartial. Usually, I have more instances where both sides have hated it, which I consider a compliment. I don't think I've been attacked just by one side too often. I did a story on gay marriage. The story wasn't probably as controversial as it might have been. If I'd written it more as good and bad points of gay marriage, but it was told from the viewpoint of (two) men. I'm generally telling the story from the viewpoint of the subject. Several (calls) from people who liked it, and a few said I was ruining society, that stories like that didn't belong in the paper.

3. ***Tell me your thoughts and feelings when you learned about a reporter, at your publication or any other, who had fabricated a story.***

I couldn't believe it. That it would get by the editors either. I've heard the famous cases Blair and Glass and Janet at the *Washington Post*. I was amazed that they would go so far from their journalistic training to do something like that. But also I could understand the lure of doing something like that as a feature writer. You see these great stories and you can't nail them down or get them on the record. They made it up instead. I can't imagine doing it, but I understand the frustrations when you have to ditch a good story because you just can't nail it.

4. ***Tell me about a time, if any, when you had a difference of opinion on an ethical decision with a manager, editor or senior reporter? What was the result?***

There have been cases whether we should name sources. One time I was doing a story on three guys with HIV. Understanding they wouldn't be named, mid- way, the editors decided that wouldn't be acceptable. We went back to them and gave them the opportunity to back out of the story and one of them backed out of the story. I went back. I just told them I understand if you guys want out of this.

5. ***Tell me how you would describe the person you are now as far as newsroom values when you first started in journalism as opposed to now. If there has been a change, what contributed to that change?***

As a rookie reporter, it takes time to understand the newsroom ethics are. I don't remember it being talked about in college. In college they said don't plagiarize and that was about it. When I started I think it was several years before we really sat down and had a talk about ethics as a newsroom. Obviously, you don't take anything and don't plagiarize. Don't belong to organizations that you might be covering, which for feature could be about anything. Don't put up yard signs for political candidates, (for example). I've gained a better understanding of the rules. It's given me a greater appreciation of what being impartial means. You try as much as you can to strike a fair balance. Our ethics policy is pretty strict. It's probably better to error on the side of being too strict than too lenient.

6. ***Could you describe the most important lesson you've learned about journalism ethics through writing stories?***

Give both sides and don't take sides. There will be times you'll write a story and two sides are completely opposite and you know that one side can't be telling the truth. But you let the readers decide for themselves.

Section 3:

1. ***Do you remember Janet Cooke?***

Yes.

(a) What does that case mean to you, if anything?

She made up a story about a little 8-year-old (heroin) addict or something. I can't remember the details.

(b) If you were telling someone about Cooke, what would you say?

No response.

2. ***Do you remember Stephen Glass?***

Yes.

(a) What does that case mean to you, if anything?

He made up a lot of stories. I saw the movie "Shattered Glass." One of the things that struck me about that movie and the scenes in the meeting, and everyone wants to top everybody. It's always like that in meetings.

(b) If you were telling someone about Glass, what would you say?

Thinking of how frustrating to sit in meetings with him, and find out he made them all up and that probably would have sent anyone who worked with him over the edge. Here they were trying to compete with somebody who wasn't playing by the rules.

3. ***Do you remember Jayson Blair?***

Yes.

(a) What does that case mean to you, if anything?

He seems to be in the Stephen Glass mold. He made up a lot, not just a little. Instead of doing the actual work, he made up things. Again, he was seen as a whiz kid. I'm sure there's a lot of satisfaction in the newsroom when he was found out.

(b) If you were telling someone about Blair, what would you say?

No response.

4. ***Do you remember Mike Barnicle?***

Not really.

(a) What does that case mean to you, if anything?

He was a columnist for Boston. I can't remember if he was making it up or other people were writing the columns for him.

(b) If you were telling someone about Barnicle, what would you say?

Not enough information for response.

5. ***How do you define ethics?***

No response.

6. ***How do you define newspaper ethics?***

The rules and guidelines that help us present the news fairly and impartially as possible without the suggestion of bias.

7. ***How do you define situational ethics?***

These are rules and guidelines that you adapt to fit whatever circumstances that you find yourself in.

8. ***Do you feel pressure from editors or others to behave in a particular way? How so?***

I don't feel any pressure as far as ethics. They want people involved but there are many, many things you can't do because of your jobs.

9. ***Do you think your ethics differ from those of your superiors (editors, publishers etc.)? How so?***

I feel like if there is a problem it doesn't have to deal with my reporting. In every newsroom there's this gradual breaking down of the wall between the newsroom and advertising.

10. ***How do ethics function in your organization?***

Get both sides of the story and present them fairly.

11. ***In your view, if there was one value that reporter should uphold, what would it be?***

See response above.

12. ***Have you ever been faced with an ethical dilemma in your organization?***

We had ethics training. We went to a class and got a booklet on ethics and had to sign off. It was after the Jayson Blair thing. If we ever wind up in court, we can say we've given them ethics training. It's all the stuff we've been practicing in the newsroom. The whole discussion came out of that was what groups you can belong to. There's no open and shut answer.

Respondent 10

Section 1:

1. ***What is your position?***

Business reporter.

2. ***How long have you been employed in journalism?***

16 years.

3. ***What made you decide to become a journalist?***

Being nosy. I enjoy learning new things and meeting new people.

4. ***What is your education level?***

Bachelors in journalism.

5. ***Race? African American, Female, Age?***

African-American, Female, 39.

6. ***For how many papers have you worked?***

I have worked for two newspapers.

Section 2:

1. ***Could you tell me as much as possible about the details of your experience as a reporter, who has faced any kind of ethical dilemma in your career or as a journalism student?***

At the (paper name deleted) you couldn't keep anything. If someone thank(ed) you (with) some flowers. They would expect you not to even accept that, that was ridiculous. No one has really offered me anything. When it comes to ethics, you just know what you're not supposed to do anyway.

2. ***What do you consider the primary values of your newsroom? Have you ever had any specific instances of what you've describe? What were they?***

Any journalist is supposed to be truthful and fair.

3. ***Tell me your thoughts and feelings when you learned about a reporter, at your publication or any other, who had fabricated a story.***

You feel horrified and shame (sic). It makes the whole industry look bad. There's bad people in every field. In journalism you're the voice of the people and watch dog. You suppose. *The New York Times* guy and those two Boston folks come to mind. It's shameful. It makes people wonder about – there's bad seeds in every field – you. You just feel an extra sense of responsibility. You're supposed (to be) the voice of the people, just to sensationalize something just for awards sake or to make a story sound better is horrible. Or even to take someone's writing to claim it as your own. It's not journalism, that would be called fiction.

4. ***Tell me about a time, if any, when you had a difference of opinion on an ethical decision with a manager, editor or senior reporter. What was the result?***

One of the very first stories I did for the (paper name deleted) was covering crime. It was a feature story involving a couple that had 14 kids. All the editors saw was a black couple on welfare. It should have been a front page story. All the editor could say, was, "did I get calls about them being on welfare?" One of the reasons I wanted to be a journalist was to help people. The way they treated that story that was racist. And ethics have to do with racism, if it affects your judgment.

5. ***Tell me how you would describe the person you are now as far as newsroom values than when you first started in journalism, as opposed to now. (If there has been a change), what contributed to this change?***

The values remained consistent.

6. ***Could you describe the most important lesson you learned about journalism ethics through writing stories?***

I'm always cautious about people's feelings, especially when I covered crime. To me, it's just a story, (but to them) it's their life. One time when I was covering crime, it was a gang shooting. The very first day of school, a kid shot another kid. I was the night crime reporter. That happened that night. They wanted me to chase it down because I was black. That was one of the most difficult interviews ever. (The victim's) father looked at me with such contempt. The mother was drinking, but she did just lose her baby. I said I'm giving you the opportunity to tell us about your kid. They said now you have to go to the shooters house. I got to that door. The mother of the shooter wanted to kick my ass, and I felt like a slime ball. As a young reporter, that was a lesson in terms of fairness. I didn't even see it then. I figured that other kid was the shooter. Why did I need to go over there? But you're innocent until proven guilty.

Section 3:

1. ***Do you remember Janet Cooke?***

No. I don't remember her.

(a) What does that case mean to you, if anything?[128]

(b) If you were telling someone about Cooke, what would you say?

2. ***Do you remember Stephen Glass?***

Yes.

(a) What does that case mean to you, if anything?

[128] This question not asked. It has been reproduced for consistency.

It's just horrible. It goes back to making up stuff.

(b) If you were telling someone about Glass, what would you say?

It's sad for the field.

3. ***Do you remember Jayson Blair?***

Yes.

(a) What does that case mean to you, if anything?

It's embarrassing. It didn't help that he was black. The lady from Boston was also black. Unfortunately, that was one of the first things I thought about. It was unfortunate and sad. It was come on, this isn't the movie business.

(b) If you were telling someone about Blair, what would you say?

It's an embarrassment to your profession. Race came to mind real quickly. People always act like something was given to you. You feel like you have to work twice as hard. Unfortunately, I knew race was going to be a factor in the way people look at (Blair's case). It doesn't matter what color the person is. I was not happy that he was black. It was unfortunate that that black editor had to be let go too. They were trying to imply he had some special ties to the black editor. It was unfortunate he had to take the fall.

4. ***Do you remember Mike Barnicle?***

No. I don't remember him.

(a) What does that case mean to you, if anything?[129]

[129] This question was not asked. It has been reproduced for consistency.

(b) If you were telling someone about Barnicle, what would you say?

5. ***How do you define ethics?***

Being fair which means, untainted.

6. ***How do you define newspaper ethics?***

In order to be fair, you have to be unbiased. If you're accepting anything big or if you have some type of relationship with the person you're writing about then you can't be unbiased. You're just a person, and it's just a job.

7. ***How do you define situational ethics?***

People make exceptions when covering something.

8. ***Do you feel pressure from editors or others to behave in a particular way? How so?***

No. I feel like I'm an ethical journalist.

9. ***Do you think your ethics differ from those of your superiors (editors, publishers etc.)? How so?***

No.

10. ***How do ethics function in your organization?***

I've never consulted an ethics code or document. It's important to cultivate sources but realize that there's always a line. You always have to remember your role and be objective, and don't get too close. You need to be close to sources in order to get news, but you have to realize your role at all times as a fair and ethical journalist.

11. ***In your view, if there was one value that a reporter should uphold, what would it be?***

Be fair.

12. ***Have you ever been faced with an ethical dilemma in your organization?***

A few years ago, they ran a picture of people plunging to their death after 911. I didn't have a problem with it. It was shocking but it was news. Those are decisions that have to be made all the time. I wouldn't want that to run if that was anyone that I knew.

Respondent 11

Section 1:

1. ***What is your position?***

   Environmental writer.

2. ***How long have you been employed in journalism?***

   This will be my 24th year.

3. ***What made you decide to become a journalist?***

My combination of my love for writing and my being part of the Watergate era and having questioning about authority, and wanting to hold public officials accountable. Originally, because I wanted to become a writer. A lot of writers and successful authors had started off in journalism.

4. ***What is your education level?***

Masters degree in journalism.

5. ***Race? Gender? Age?***

Caucasian, 45, Male.

6. ***For how many newspapers have you worked?***

Three newspapers.

Section 2*:*

1. ***Could you tell me in as much detail as possible about your experience as a reporter who has had to face any kind of ethical dilemma in your career or as a journalism student***?

Environmental writing in general isn't a black and white issue, you have to be able to ground yourself well, and make sure you're giving it the perspective that the story deserves.

2. ***What do you consider the primary values of your newsroom?***

One of the best things would be our publisher who's willing to hold public officials accountable in terms of public records. They pride themselves on how much money they've spent (on lawyers) to keep public records open. They challenge government officials who are withholding public documents. It gives reporters a sense of confidence to know that you have someone behind you, who is going to back you up. The newsroom value is the public's right to know. Tenacity of sticking to your guns and making sure public meetings and public records are followed to the letter of the law.

3. ***Tell me your thoughts and feelings when you learned about a reporter, at your publication or any other, who had fabricated a story.***

We had a person here that had to do with a quote or something from a politician's office. Essentially, he created a response for someone he had never spoken to. It wasn't a Janet Cooke scenario in creating total fabrication. He was disciplined. Yeah, I thought he should have been fired.

4. ***Tell me about a time, if any, when you had a difference of opinion about an ethical decision with a manager, editor or senior reporter? What was the result?***

Have not had any experience with this.

5. ***Tell me how you would describe the person you are now as far as newsroom values when you first started in journalism, as opposed to now. (If there has been a change), what contributed to that change?***

Maybe not as naïve about certain things. Being a little more sharp. I think fundamentally what I would distinguish as fair or right or wrong has always been there. One of the compliments I got from an attorney defending a mass murderer, this guy had killed seven people, and four were children. The defense attorney said there are times you are a real SOB, but the honest to God truth is, I read it and it's true. I can't deny what you've written is true. He only gave two interviews after the conviction and one was to me. In his letter was to authorize the mass murderer to speak to (me). I spoke to the mass murderer for seven hours.

6. ***Could you describe the most important lesson you learned about journalism ethics through writing stories?***

Be fair, accurate and balanced. Make the extra phone call. Make the effort to reach both sides, and make it known to both sides that you did. Be equally discriminating and tough in terms of your line of questioning for both sides.

Section 3:

1. ***Do you remember Janet Cooke?***

Oh, yes.

(a) What does that case man to you, if anything?

It was pretty disgraceful to have a complete fabrication for the quest for opportunity. There are so many places where she was wrong it's hard to begin. There is no replacement for credibility.

(b) If you were telling someone about Cooke, what would you say?

(What she did) hurts the credibility of the entire industry. It take years, if not longer, to recover. She once worked at (my paper). The less spoken layer of that

is that a lot of her motivation is trying to get recognized and win a major award. Too much of this business shouldn't be focusing around getting awards. It should be doing your job, doing a public service and not trying to win an award.

2. ***Do you remember Stephen Glass?***

No.

(a) What does that case mean to you, if anything?[130]

(b) ***If you were telling someone about Glass, what would you say?***

3. ***Do you remember Jayson Blair?***

I didn't know as many specifics about that to compare him to Janet Cooke. One of the disturbing things is that it had gone on for quite a while, and he worked for a very prestigious company, the *New York Times.*

(a) What does that case mean to you, if anything?

I think maybe what's most disturbing about what he did, was that there was a pattern.

(b) If you were telling someone about Blair, what would you say?

I would say go research more of the specifics on your own. He came forward and admitted that the details in his stories were things he created.

4. ***Do you remember Mike Barnicle?***

No.

(a) What does that case mean to you, if anything?[131]

(b) If you were telling someone about Barnicle, what would you say?

5. ***How do you define ethics?***

[130] This question was not asked. It has been reproduced for consistency.

No response.

6. ***How do you define newspaper ethics?***

It's erratic. I feel like it depends on which newsroom you go to. There are places that place a high value and others their sense of ethics may not be as strong. I don't want to say the news is necessarily slanted. It does happen sometimes. I don't think there's a bias editors are directing to put into stories. Ethics are balance and a sense of fairness.

7. ***How do you define situational ethics?***

Ethics on a case by case basis. If things are made to fit at certain times.

8. ***Do you feel pressure from editors or others to behave in a particular way? How so?***

No. We've taken on a couple of sacred cows and I haven't been told explicitly to back off. As an environmental writer, you'll never be the most popular because you're taking a sharp and critical look at business community and corporations, who are the biggest polluters, who are also the largest advertisers.

9. ***Do you think your ethics differ from those of your superiors (editors, publishers etc.)? How so?***

Yeah. I think I have a stronger value-system in some ways. I feel good and I get a good response. There are some people in my newsroom a couple of editors would see eye-to eye with me on a lot of things, and a couple of them who would substantially not see eye-to-eye.

10. ***How do ethics function in your organization?***

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[131] This question was not asked. It has been reproduced for consistency.

I've had certain editors if it comes up with a group who they feel is too liberal, and they immediately write them off, and don't care what they have to say. That gnaws at me a lot. Why would you give a lot of credence to a business lobbyist and not to an environmental activist? I may feel out of a sense of fairness give the side to speak. They believe (some sources) are too radical, they immediately write them off.

11. ***In your view, if there was one value a reporter should uphold, what would it be?***

Credibility.

12. ***Have you ever been faced with an ethical dilemma in your present organization?***

We don't have an ethics code on paper. We're all just guided by our conscience, and our understanding of how the business should be run.

Respondent 12

Section 1:

1. ***What is your position?***

Assistant metro editor.

2. ***How long have you been employed in journalism?***

19 years.

3. ***What made you decide to become a journalist?***

Got into it by mistake. I was in high school. I was in a physical science class that they had over registered students for. My guidance counselor said there was a space in the publications class, that's the class that puts out the newspaper. I hit it off great with instructor.

4. ***What is your education level?***

Bachelor's degree dual major in journalism and black studies

5. ***Race? Gender? Age?***

African American, 36, Male.

6. ***For how many papers have you worked?***

I have worked for 5 publications, including a magazine.

Section 2:

1. ***Could you tell me as much as possible about the details of your experience as a reporter, who has faced any kind of ethical dilemma in your career or as a student?***

I always get friends, entrepreneurial friends, who want me to write a story about them for the paper. Typically, I tell them I can't do it because it'll be a

conflict of interest. I refer them to someone else. I wouldn't let any of my reporters do it. Reporters directly under my charge. The last ethical issue. We've been doing a series of stories on the mayor and various scandals and other misdeeds that have gone on. One of the stories had to do with the mayor firing the president or the director or chair of the board of police commissioners. He installed a new chair which happened to be a friend of his from high school. The person he put in that position that I went to college with. He married one of my best friends from college. I had to divest myself of that story. My reporter discovered this in his daily beat reporting. I went to the metro editor and I explained the situation that I wanted to keep a distance from it. And someone ended up editing the story.

2. ***What do you consider the primary values of your newsroom?***

We have a fairly lengthy ethics policy that everyone has to read and sign. Goes into travel on the company dime. We have an ethics committee within the last year that put together our ethics policy. It's a high priority placed on it. Frequently, you have conversations about. Reporters and editors who do other things too. I'm in a band, for one. We put out CDs. I've never had one of our albums reviewed here. It's more of a newspaper policy. Where there could be a perceived conflict, if the review is a glowing review. It begs the question, well, this guy works for you, and of course you're going to write something nice. (We had a columnist and) her husband was picked up on a prostitution charge. He was co-chair of the (exact name deleted) Democratic Party and he ran for

secretary of state. We ran a story and a directive that came from on high, and we had to acknowledge that he's married to our columnist, so that we don't look like we're not trying to hide something. They're real keen. If there's ever a story that involves a family or friend, and we have to divulge that in the story.

3. ***Tell me your thoughts and feelings when you learned about a reporter, at your publication or any other, who had fabricated a story.***

My first thought is oh, God, I hope he's not black. Stephen Glass and Mike (Barnicle) I'm familiar with their work. When it happens to people, I don't know that's one of the first things I think about. I am where I am now, and where I've been and because of my age, for some reason people think that I got here because I'm some black kid who needed a break or something. I'm kind of use to it. It pisses me off because I've watched over the years, particularly say the last 15 years, it started the 90s and the tech boom and internet became popular, if a TV station is your storefront church and newspapers were the cathedral, bearers of the truth. I've steadily watched as we've gone to the 24-hour news cycle. Now, anybody can make up your own paper and pass it off as real. Media has become the bad guy. People already think we're making up stuff, and things like that come along it just perpetuate. When it is someone black, not we're not just perpetuating, he didn't belong here in the first place thing and he's a member of the lying media. It's like ah, man, and then you're catching hell on both fronts. All the people I know bust our ass to get here, and to stay here, and then you have people like that and piss over everything. And it's hard to dig out of a hole when people keep throwing dirt on your head.

4. ***Tell me about a time, if any, when you had a difference of opinion about an ethical decision with a manager, editor or senior reporter? What was the result?***

I've had instances where I was told information off the record, and I had a conversation with the then-metro editor, and I was working on a story about (the mayor) I had a tip he was going to become chairman (of a high profile law firm). I got the story, got the information. We went back and forth and I told him who my source was, I told him it was someone in the mayor's office. We took the conversation to the managing editor. The metro editor was skeptical at first. (Ultimately, the respondent was not required to reveal his off the record source).

5. ***Tell me how you would describe the person you are now as far as newsroom values when you first started in journalism, as opposed to now. (If there has been a change) what contributed to that change?***

I still have the same values. My thing is that I like to constantly learn new stuff. If someone isn't helping me grow then I don't want to work with that person. I came into it blind. It's not like I had planned since I was a kid to be a reporter. Since I've doing it such a long time. Two weeks after I graduated from high school, I was working at the (name of paper deleted). Tell the truth, and if you can help somebody help them.

All of those things I learned coming up. I think today I still have the same values. Now I'm trying to help other people get in. The biggest change is that I've gone from being infant, pubescent to an adult, as an editor I feel more paternal. I have to watch over my charges and make sure they're properly fed and getting their sleep.

6. ***Could you describe the most important lesson you learned about journalism ethics through writing stories?***

I think probably the most important lesson about ethics through writing stories is that you can't always think like a journalist. Sometimes you have to put yourself in someone else's shoes. If they're sensitive stories, you may have a salacious detail, but does it really have a place in the story? Is it germane to the topic? When this comes out, this could rip apart a family or something. It could cause someone to lose their job. I've become a little more understanding of that. You get wiser and pick your battle. I learned to be more sensitive and draw upon experiences. You can't forget that you're human too. You can draw upon all of your life experiences, a lot of things you thought wouldn't come in hand, end up coming in handy.

Section 3:

1. ***Do you remember Janet Cooke?***

Yes. Who doesn't? Anybody who has been through J-school in the last 20 years remembers Janet Cooke.

(a) What does that case mean to you, if anything?

At the time that I heard about, I didn't know she was black. I heard she made up this story, man that's f***** up because it destroys credibility. I said, 'Damn, had to be black.'

(b) If you were telling someone about Cooke, what would you say?

A man has only got two things in this world, his balls and his word, and if you break either one of them, you're screwed.

2. ***Do you remember Stephen Glass?***

Yes.

(a) What does that case mean to you, if anything?

It meant the same disappointment.

(b) If you were telling someone about Glass, what would you say?

I'm a part of journalism. It's what I love to do. When someone does something to damage that, I take it personally.

3. ***Do you remember Jayson Blair?***

Yes.

(a) What does that case mean to you, if anything?

He just needs to be smacked.

(b) If you were telling someone about Blair, what would you say?

I went from being disappointed, to almost sympathetic, to pissed off. I thought maybe there's got to be more to it; maybe something drove him to this. Once I heard his ignorant-self (sic) speak, I thought, 'Fool, I don't feel sorry for you. You're giving everything a bad name as a brother and as a journalist.'

4. ***Do you remember Mike Barnicle?***

Yes.

(a) What does that case mean to you, if anything?

He's a bastard. Black eye on journalism is a black eye on me.

(b) If you were telling someone about Barnicle, what would you say?

Here's a guy who was a household name, and he was a star in journalism. Janet Cooke is working at (a department store). This is a part of the establishment

cracking. I met (Barnicle) before and thought (he) was a bit of a bastard. I knew something wasn't right. One of the old boys network gets it in the end.

5. ***How do you define ethics?***

No response.

6. ***How do you define newspaper ethics?***

(Ethics is defined as) The soul of the paper. Without ethics you could put anything in there. Ethics define what that newspaper is, and how people perceive you.

7. ***How do you define situational ethics?***

Go with your gut. Granted there are bad people out there that have no ethics. Go with your gut, and relying on your upbringing or life experiences. Some things you can write it and immediately don't feel good about it.

8. ***Do you feel pressure from particular editors or others to behave in a particular way? How so?***

Yes. A story I was editing on a city noise ordinance, the radio can't be heard from 100 feet from your car. I was talking to copy editor who was an intern. We were trying to come up with a headline. He said, "Counsel takes crunk out of trunk." Senior copy editor, old white guy, but he said people don't know what it means. It was a generational thing and part of it was his environment too.

9. ***Do you think your ethics differ from those of your superiors (editors, publishers, etc.)? How so?***

Not really, sometimes there are matters of (cultural) ignorance, but they're open for discussion.

10. ***How do ethics function in your organization?***

    Just get all sides.

11. ***In your view, if there was one value a reporter should uphold, what would it be?***

    Highest value is truth.

12. ***Have you ever faced with an ethical dilemma in your present organization?***

    Fortunately, I haven't run across those situations. A lot of times you go with your gut.

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