Ethic Issues in Journalism: Maintaining Journalistic Independence

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Maintaining Journalistic Independence in Sports Journalism
Chris LaReau

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Conflict of interest is a major ethical problem that journalists must avoid. Journalists must always act independently in order to report on the truth, allowing them to avoid conflicts of interest created by the news outlet’s business interests.

Moving Forward

• Suggesting the need to move forward

League decision on information for money “as journalists must not pay for stories”

• Conflicts of Interest with ESPN

• ESPN pays billions of dollars to professional and collegiate sport leagues in order to cover the leagues’ business relationships with the media. This conflict of interest could occur through the news organization’s ownership and control of the media.

• Journalists’ professionalism in the conflict of interest cases, understanding the need to seek truth, report it, and act independently is greater than any business related conflict of interest.

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How to Avoid Conflicts of Interest:

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How NBC Deals with Sexual Misconduct Allegations

Emily Lawton

NBC dealt with sexual misconduct charges brought against them, despite ongoing discussions about the possibility of bringing additional claims. Public awareness is essential in ensuring that the news media remain independent and accountable for their actions.

The primary function of journalism is to serve as the foundation of truth, to be the gatekeepers of society. Journalists’ must give the public information (foundations) so that they can deduce the truth (which is actually occurring in society).

According to The Elements of Journalism, truth and transparency include the ability to remain objective, exercise judgment, not fabricate additional information, never deceive, rely on original reporting, and expose methods and motives.

In other words, journalists must double check facts, remove bias, treat everyone equally, rely on original facts and investigate motives of those involved in a story prior to publication.

The article, “NBC Tiptoes around sexual misconduct in coverage of Shaun White- and the Olympics in General”, was published by The Washington Post in efforts to show how accountability can be difficult task for journalists to achieve under corporate control. For the longest time, NBC ignored the accusations against Shaun White.

The case occurred in 2016 and there has been a lot published about it until NBC was put on the spot during the 2018 Olympics.

Accordingly, it is now the responsibility of journalists to report the story.

Publicly admitting that the accusers were true could demand the reputation of the company, harm the reputation of White and cause viewership to fall.

Disguised under motivational Olympic themes, NBC entertainment news focused on distracting the public from sexual misconduct charges.

Prior to the 2018 Olympics, everyone was aware of the Nassar sexual misconduct charges, but no coverage appeared to be forthcoming, everything seemed to vanish for the most part.

NBC has been written off its time to the Nassar scandal in its prime-time telecasts of the Games. NBC highlighted its efforts to opening counseling offices on Olympic grounds for those dealing with sexual misconduct. NBC’s network campaign aims at promoting realistic images for girls and women involved in athletics, instead of providing closure to those affected by sexual misconduct.

NBC is responding by becoming involved in a movement that does not give justice to victims of sexual misconduct and their families. The company has been accused of covering up sexual misconduct issues within the sports world.

Savannah Guthrie is an NBC journalist who tried to expose the sexual misconduct charges.

She did not want to bring up harassment but felt compelled.

Journalists must try to expose unethical conduct even if it has the possibility of harming their livelihood.

NBC did not necessarily admit to his actions, but to growth over the years.

Powerful NBC personalities have been fined for sexual misconduct charges, sometimes of sexual misconduct since 2012.

Ann Curry’s interview with Lauer suggested her efforts to expose wrong doings of people in a company she was previously employed by.

“I am trying to do no harm in these conversations.”

“Please let us know when you are ready to talk.”

We are waiting for an opportunity to have a real, substantive conversation, which has been occurring for some time, and I think it will continue to occur until the glass ceiling is finally broken.

Deception can come in many ways, shapes, and forms; however, it is the journalists’ duty to provide the public with facts.

By making efforts to overlook sexual misconduct charges and disguising themselves under positive themes, NBC businessmen presented truth from being exposed to the public as well as closure for victims.

Exposing the truth to the public can lead to powerful individuals being fired, yet journalists like Ann Curry and Savannah Guthrie are trying to shed light upon sexual misconduct allegations.

A journalist must set aside his or her beliefs in an effort to expose wrongdoing, even if they are directly affected by them.

Sexual misconduct has been encouraged, by NBC managers, to be reported. If they fail to do so, employees could be fired finding the unjust actions of their colleagues.

A major component in journalism that the Society of Professional Journalists discusses in their Code of Ethics is the importance of acting independently while reporting. This means that journalists should avoid common conflicts of interests, such as politics and other outside activities, which might compromise integrity or impartiality and may damage credibility.

The Women’s March On Washington

During one of the recent Women’s march in Washington D.C., some questions were raised as to whether journalists who are not covering the event should attend as private citizens.

The New York Times, The Washington Post and Buzzfeed News all sent teams of reporters down to the march, however they did not allow their reporters to attend unless they were on assignment. In an article from Wear Women Daily, an online women’s news source, Andrew Seaman, from the ethics chair for the Society of Professional Journalists, was asked about his thoughts on the decision made by these news sources.

He explained that, “Although it doesn’t explicitly address the topic of political rallies, it discourages journalists from taking part in political events. Guidance is especially important for any journalist who reports on politics and topics adjacent to politics.”

When covering a story like this women’s march, journalists need to remain impartial and fair, despite the underlying political reasoning for the march.

Politics and Journalism

The reason for the Women’s March happening was because it was in response to President Donald Trump’s attitude and actions towards females. Reporting politically charged stories can make for a complicated situation.

Avoiding active involvement with politically affiliated causes keeps the journalists’ impartiality in check.

Failure to act impartially compromises the ability to report as well as the reputation of the publication.