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A CONTENT ANALYSIS OF SELECTED NEWSPAPER ETHICS CODES

By

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ABSTRACT

A CONTENT ANALYSIS OF SELECTED NEWSPAPER ETHICS CODES

By

Brenna Lynn Maloney

A content analysis of 47 newspaper ethics codes was conducted to determine how the watchdog watches itself; or, more specifically, to discern how news organizations define their moral obligation as depicted through ethics codes. Former AP Bureau Chief Frank Wetzel's 1992 Newspaper Codes of Ethics Hypercard program was the source of the codes; only those codes from his program pertaining to print journalism in the United States were selected for study.

Content was analyzed primarily from two perspectives: code structure and code depth. How a code is constructed can be as crucial to the codes' success as its content and degree of specificity.

In general, the codes touched upon many ethics issues, but rarely defined the issues in a manner which would lend themselves to easy application to what journalists might call "real world" situations.

Studium Ad Prosperandum
Voluntas in Conveniendum†

†*The will to succeed*
The grace to compromise

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INTRODUCTION

John Godfrey Saxe's poem of the men from Indostan tells the tale of six blind men who, never having seen an elephant, endeavor to describe it according to their sense of touch. As each man lays hands upon a different part of the animal--its broad side, tusk, trunk, ear and tail--each man perceives the elephant differently: as a wall, a spear, a tree, a fan and a rope.

> And so these men of Indostan
> Disputed loud and long,
> Each in his own opinion
> Exceeding stiff and strong,
> Though each was partly in the right,
> And all were in the wrong!

So, too, is the scholar's attempt to study ethics and journalism. With each attempt to lay hands upon the relationship of one to the other, the scholar comes away with a different perspective, sometimes incongruous with those of the past. For the working journalist, the dilemma is even more taxing than for the scholar; the journalist must put theory into practice. Intense criticism from the public has served to substantially muddy the waters. Cries for accountability, social responsibility, integrity and truth by an angry public have left journalists with the notion that the profession "needs to clean up its own house before it condemns so insistently the moral squalor in the houses of others" (Merrill, p.15). If the commonly perceived functions of journalism are to inform, educate, entertain and serve the public as a "watchdog" for society, what sould the profession's ethical responsibilities be? This study attempts to discover how the watchdog watches itself. More

specifically, this study seeks to discern what news organizations perceive their moral obligations to be as depicted through newspaper ethics codes.

JUSTIFICATION

Ethics is often defined as a branch of philosophy concerned with the rightness or wrongness of human conduct. As philosopher Antony Flew noted, ethics can be viewed as a "standard by which a particular group or community decides to regulate its behavior" (Flew, p.112). By extension, **ethics codes** can be defined as "voluntary sets of rules aimed at proscribing certain types of conduct deemed unethical" (Hausman, p.125). The need for such codes in journalism has become a much disputed issue.

For some, codes are a tool to tame unruly ethical tangles. Codes are created with the intention of serving as a collection of standards by which journalists can gauge their behavior, enabling them to maintain a clear perspective in a challenging environment. As veteran journalist Hodding Carter III aptly phrased it,

> The domain of the mass media today is an ethical jungle in which pragmatism is king, agreed upon principles as to daily practice are few, and many of the inhabitants pride themselves on the anarchy of their surroundings.

While the abuse levels in journalism have been substantial, so, too, has been the scholarly and practical efforts to put right the ethical system. Elliot suggests that "the process of producing a code of ethics is intellectually healthy because it constitutes critical analysis of the profession by its practitioners" (p.5). In other words, the sheer construction of a code enables news organizations to formulate and crystallize ethical philosophies that guide future conduct. Remember, ethics is a normative science; its aim is not

to describe the way people **do** behave in practice, but the way people **ought** to behave (Omoregbe, p.3).

Some speculate that formal ethics codes elevate the stature of journalism as a craft or a profession. Davenport (1990) writes, "Journalists must be able to justify actions to themselves, realize the outcome of those actions even before they take place, and successfully articulate their judgments publicly" (p.81). Journalism ethics codes do not as yet have the enforcement power of legal or medical ethics codes; they are not legally binding, nor are they enforced by licensing agencies or policing bodies. Nevertheless, the level of consciousness is raised as journalists are prompted to direct their attention toward ethical conduct and public accountability.

In contrast, a healthy percentage of journalists bristle at the notion of formalized ethics, envisioning, perhaps, unbreakable, rigid rules or, at the other end of the spectrum, ambiguous, intangible prose. Codes often receive criticism for being impractical, as principle and practice sometimes fail to mesh. Christians, Rotzoll, Fackler (p.xv) write,

> Two different mindsets are involved, making fusion difficult. The study of ethics requires deliberation, careful distinctions and extended discussion. The newsroom tends to emphasize other virtues: toughness and the ability to make rapid decisions in the face of daily crises.

Codes must be constructed and implemented with great care. Too stringent, the codes act as a barrier, serving only to frustrate and confuse journalists. Too innocuous, the codes fail to function, representing an "ideal system which is all very noble in theory but no good in practice" (Singer, p.2). The reverse should be true. Ethical standards that have no practical application suffer, more than likely, from a theoretical defect; for, again, the purpose of ethics and ethics codes is to guide practice. Elliot claims that the problem with

codes is not their intent, but the fact that "journalists can't seem to write them [codes]." She writes, "Even if journalists can identify and agree upon some behaviors that they condone and others that they condemn, what emerges from most attempts to write codes is a confusing mix of the two against an overlay of conventional practices" (Elliot, Conceptual, p.1).

Other critics point to the fact that formal codes smell of censorship, either imposed by government or by peers. "Neither form goes over well in a field whose practitioners pride themselves on being independent, autonomous and beholden to no one" (McCulloch, p.95).

Regardless of who professes to have the better argument, ethical uncertainty has marked the field of journalism for quite some time. Universal sensitivity to ethics was slow to evolve. The birth of newspaper ethics codes came in 1923 at the hands of the American Society of Newspaper Editors. These Cannons of Journalism were constructed at a time when "journalism" was becoming more of an industry and a big business, necessitating that some care be placed on ethical conduct and overall "image" (Bertrand, p.18). The Society of Professional Journalists, Sigma Delta Chi followed up in 1926 with a code of its own. The interest in ethics was largely academic at first. A surge in ethics did not come again until the late 1960s, with an increased fervor in the public's interest in journalistic conduct and the corresponding presence of ombudsmen (those who were designated to field complaints and questions by readers). In the early 1970s, the advent of press councils, especially the National Press Council in 1971, confirmed a societal anxiety over journalism ethics (Bertrand, p.18). Such councils served as a forum for public concern over journalistic practices. And there were a good many concerns:

•In 1972, politicians and journalists alike felt the brunt of criticism during the Watergate scandal.

•In 1979, the media again fell under scrutiny after *Chicago Sun-Times* reporters Pamela Zekman and Zay Smith nearly won a Pulitzer Prize for their extensive report on shakedowns of small businesses by government inspectors in Chicago. The "Mirage" case was condemned by some because of the ethically questionable news-gathering techniques of the team.

•In 1981, it was the Washington Post, typically a leader in high ethical standards for journalism, which shocked the nation by returning a Pulitzer Prize. The dramatic account of "Jimmy," an eight-year-old heroin addict was a fabrication by the tales' writer, Janet Cooke.

These examples mark only a few of the more publicized scandals. Needless to say, by this time in history, "journalism ethics" was quickly becoming an oxymoron. It comes as no surprise, then, that in the last twenty years of scholarship and practice a great stir of self-examination and self-regulation emerged. As an awareness of the journalists' fundamental duties to society feverishly spread, steps were being taken to correct ethical lapses of the past. The focus came to rest on codes. Said one former ombudsman, "Every time three or more newspaper editors get together they are likely to write a code of ethics unless somebody stops them" (Seib, p.4).

News organizations that have codes give the appearance of moral uprightness to their employees and, more importantly, to the public. Yet, the existence of that code and the content of that code are two different things. What do these codes say?

Davenport and Izard (1985) dissected media (print and broadcast) ethics codes to determine the "fixed value system" of the news organizations that produced those codes. A random sampling of 100 newspaper managing

editors and broadcast news directors nationwide indicated that across the board, certain activities are considered to be more ethically acceptable than others. Davenport and Izard also unearthed several areas of ambiguity: enforcement of codes, management and financial interests, conflicts of interest (p.4). In the last ten years, the Davenport and Izard study comes closer than any other published in leading scholarly journals such as *Journalism Quarterly , Newspaper Research Journal, Journalism Abstracts* and *Journal of Mass Media Ethics* to examining specific content of media ethics codes. The present study attempts to fill in a gap in the research by circumventing the opinions of editors and dealing with the content of ethics codes themselves.

There is an intrinsic value to the examination of journalistic codes. While many scholars have delved deep into the literature of philosophy and classical thinking, soaking sponge-like the wisdom of Aristotle, Kant, Rawl and Mill, some theorists prefer to tackle the question of journalism ethics from an occupational or professional perspective. Gewirth (1986) suggested that, by definition, a professional works from a level of "expertise and uses this expertise to provide valued services to other persons" (Gewirth, p.282), much like a doctor, a lawyer, even a certified public accountant. Gewirth put forth what is known as the "Separatist Thesis" which states, "professionals, by virtue of their expertise and consequent roles, have rights and duties that are unique to themselves and that may hence be not only different from, but even contrary to, the rights and duties that are found in other segments of morality" (Gewirth, p.282). So stated, the journalist, like other professionals, is afforded unique rights as a result of his or her unique responsibilities. Yet, consider momentarily the way ethics codes of journalists measure up to the ethics codes of doctors, lawyers, and certified public accountants. The actions

of *these* professionals are governed by mandatory codes of conduct prescribed by their respective professions. A breech in these codes may lead to lawsuits and the loss of the right to practice. The ethics code of a journalist has not historically been used as a yardstick for litigation. Journalism ethics codes appear to be unlike other professional codes for this and other reasons.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The review of literature must cover significant ground to lay the foundation for analysis of the codes themselves. Ethics is a field extensively explored; what is represented here is, in actuality, only a small piece of what has been researched on the whole. As far as code construction and usage is concerned, what news organizations deem ethically important is somewhat contingent upon the perceptions of society. Therefore, studies represented here delve into journalists' perceptions of the current ethical "climate," the industry's perceptions of ethics codes; public and media expectations of conduct; journalistic motives for resolution of ethical dilemmas; individual and collective decision-making; tactics of the industry for handling ethical dilemmas; code enforcement possibilities; skepticism of codes.

Bill Moyers, former presidential press secretary and veteran journalist once said, "What is happening often depends on who is looking." Indeed, Mills' (1983) qualitative study on newspaper ethics revealed that there is a great deal of variance and little agreement upon what constitutes an ethical dilemma. Studying the views of 153 reporters and editors from 10 news organizations across the United States regarding ethical decision-making, including the scope and frequency of such instances, Mills discovered that the most striking difference in perception rested in the very definition of what ethics <u>is</u>. "At one end of the frequency scale, respondents felt they encountered no ethical decisions in the course of their work. At the other

end, respondents perceived their jobs to be an unending series of ethical decisions" (p.590). Mills provided several verbatim quotes from those who claimed to be free from ethical dilemmas. These illustrate the narrow scope by which ethics can be judged (p.590):

> It just doesn't occur in the general run of news and features work **(reporter from a large metropolitan daily).**
>
> As a general assignment reporter, I don't have the kind of daily working relationship with news sources which could conceivably lead to ethical decisions **(reporter from a medium-sized daily).**
>
> I'm in sports and seldom encounter ethical situations **(baseball writer for metropolitan daily).**

Generally speaking, Mills' study yielded that "ethics were viewed as questions of adherence to a narrowly defined code of professional behavior" (p.594). Few professionals seemed to be able to project ethical dilemmas beyond a limited set of rigid parameters.

While Mills found the ethical climate to be murky from a practicing journalists' perspective, Anderson's (1987) study examined ethical attitudes and practices among American journalists from what might be described as the "industry's" point of view. In particular, Anderson sought evidence of code usage by managing editors of daily newspapers throughout the country. His findings indicate that existing codes are pervasive and high ethical standards appear, on at least a cursory level, to be of importance to management. He specifically noted the following results:

<u>Codes</u>

- Editors indicating that ethics codes were *posted* in their newspaper buildings: 25%.

- Type of code displayed: ASNE Statement of Principles: 58%
  SPJ Code of Ethics: 38%

APME code: 17%
Other: 21%

•Editors indicating that their newspapers had developed their own codes to supplement the national code: 45%
Larger circulation papers having done so: 55%
Smaller circulation papers having done so: 34%

Practices

Editors indicating the following practices:

•Distributed codes to staff members: 46%
Larger circulation papers: 86%
Smaller circulation papers: 66%

•Issued memos to remind employees of particular ethics issues: 75%
Larger circulation papers: 71%
Smaller circulation papers: 60%

•Had attended convention seminars where ethics had been a featured topic: 79%
Larger circulation papers: 86%
Smaller Circulation papers: 72%

•Had taken a college course in ethics: nearly 33%
Larger circulation papers: 31%
Smaller circulation papers: 38%

•Had conversed with employees about ethical issues: ALL RESPONDENTS

•Had suspended a reporter or editor for unethical practices: 22%

•Had fired a reporter or editor for unethical conduct: nearly 25%

Anderson's study illustrates the level of awareness of ethical issues among editors of large circulation and small circulation daily newspapers. And, too, the results seem to demonstrate an effort on the part of editors to educate employees and encourage ethical conduct. Ninety-five percent of the editors agreed that it is important for employees to be made aware of the various ethics codes in the field of journalism. More importantly, 67% of the editors disagreed that codes of ethics are so vague that they are of little

practical value. The present study is designed to test this last assertion. Levels of code specificity can be determined according to the amount and extent of definition afforded to each separate ethics topic within a code.

Braman (1988) sought to measure public expectations of media conduct against standards outlined in ethics codes. Prior to Braman's study, no research had been done to examine the degree to which the public and the media agreed on performance standards (p.71). Through a comparison of public complaints, considered by Braman to be an expression of the public's level of standards, submitted to the National News Council and standards offered in specific ethics codes, Braman searched for correlations between the Council's decisions and the codes' pronouncements. Braman isolated nine distinct categories of behavioral standards stated in the complaints and echoed in the codes. The list includes standards pertaining to:

1. role of the media
2. media effects
3. facticity
4. logic of interpretation
5. fact-gathering procedures
6. reporting
7. presentation style
8. media knowledge base
9. public access

Several noteworthy results came from Braman's analysis. In regard to the media's "role," the public view was directed toward placing limits on media activities. Standards concerning facticity were among the most commonly expressed. Standards pertaining to the logic of interpretation (the way stories are put together from gathered facts) proved to be vastly different in the two camps. Only two of the 18 standards mentioned by the public were also

mentioned in the media, suggesting that the public seeks a higher level of standards for the fact-gathering procedures than does the media. Additionally, the public had very specific ideas about the media's knowledge base which should include: science, criminal law, law in general, education, accounting, government, manufacturing, sexual distinctions, business, weapons and defense (p.77). To remedy deficiencies in these areas, the public recommended that journalists ought to know more, actively seek technical explanations and have technical experts on staff. Braman found overall discrepancies between the public expectations as illustrated in the complaints and in the media expectations as delineated in the codes. Braman attributed many of these discrepancies to the perceptions the public has of the press. Consider her composite profile of the media derived from the public's responses (pp.77-78):

- Has a sense of news as a fixed, finite and findable body of facts.
- Believes media techniques are biased and can be used to serve particular purposes.
- Assumes intentionality in errors or distortions of the news
- Expresses doubts regarding the comprehensiveness of the media's knowledge base.

These views, of course, are neither shared by the media, nor are they necessarily accurate. They do, however, illustrate several points of contention and go far to explain why the media are so frequently at odds with the public and why the public so harshly criticizes the press for unethical conduct. It is important to recognize the differences in opinion. If one were to accept the argument that codes are news organizations' tool to grandstand to the public, public contentment with code content is essential. If one were

to accept the argument that codes are legitimate tools used by news organizations to maintain high levels of accountability, public contentment with content is still an issue.

Singletary, Caudill, Caudill, and White (1990) studied the motives that journalists bring to the resolution of ethical dilemmas. Questions concerning reporters' ethical orientation were posed to 61 professional journalists and undergraduate mass communication students in attendance at a SPJ-SDX conference. The researchers created a list of "motives" for ethical decision-making and a corresponding list, based on consistent ethics literature, of descriptive statements which juxtaposed ethics and reasons for acting. Statements and motives were combined into a "deck" which the subjects were required to sort along a continuum of Extreme Agreement to Extreme Disagreement. Results of the study identified a significant proportion of professionals and students as having a Factor 1 or "mainstream" ethical orientation.

Figure 1: Mainstream Ethical Orientation

Factor 1

Statements accepted

Credibility with audience
General sense of morality
Public's need to know
Standards of employer
Standards of the field

Statements rejected

Personal advancement
No knowledge of ethics
Pragmatism
Punitiveness

Existence of a "mainstream" ethical orientation suggests that despite the lack of universal ethics codes (written or otherwise), there is some consistency and commonalty in ethical orientation. This is valuable to the present study, for it suggests that universal codes can be constructed to guide journalists.

Concerned with the notion that the majority of interest generated for the sake of journalism ethics has manifested itself purely at the anecdotal level (i.e., journalistic "horror stories"), Whitlow and Van Tubergan (1978/79) attempted a more scientific, if not more sophisticated, understanding of media ethics through the use of Q-factor analysis. Q-factor analysis describes human subjectivity with the rigor of science, but retains much of an individual subject's cognitive system. Specifically, they sought to determine if reporters adopted personal systems of ethics or if reporters, on the whole, collectively adopted and followed a common set of professional ethics. Q methodology necessitates a small sample of relevant individuals. Therefore, 34 investigative reporters from a variety of backgrounds (varying years of experience, newspaper size, education) were selected for the study. Whitlow and Van Tubergan developed nine categories to which the behavioral inclinations of the reporters were measured. These were situations involving:

1. differences in values between reporter and news organization.
2. differences between professional values and private interests.
3. confidentiality.
4. the public's right to know and the reporter's ability to suppress.
5. the news sources' offering of gifts or favors.
6. the reporter's ability to influence events.
7. the obtaining of information through the reporter's buying the information with real or implied threats or favors to the sources.

8. the obtaining of information through the reporter's concealment of identity or purpose through similar deceptions.

9. the obtaining of information through the reporter's use of other surreptitious, and possible illegal, means of observation.

Three investigative reporter profiles were generated as a result of the study. Reporter types A, B and C can be described by the following inclinations:

TYPE A
Less likely to: Engage in deception or potentially illegal acts to get a story

More likely to: View the law as presenting only a minimum behavior standard; feel a reporter's job is not just to get a story; endorse compassion and humanitarianism; be guided by a personal sense of compassion for others

TYPE B
Less likely to: Agree that compassion is a basis for professional behavior; be passive about "getting a story"

More likely to: Believe that a reporter's job is to get the story, no matter what it takes; engage in deception and/or illegal practices including: wearing disguises, misrepresenting self, mislead sources, use false documents, steal, pay sources for information, "romance" or have sex with source

TYPE C proved to be a middle-ground between Types A and B. Type C reporters are less aggressive than Type B, but more willing than Type A to overstep some ethical boundaries to "get the story."

While some of the behaviors expressed in the Whitlow and Van Tubergan typology may appear shocking, their ability to group these behavior tendencies into three categories is nontrivial. It demonstrates first, that reporters do have collective tendencies in relation to ethical conduct. Second, it clearly indicates that there is a rogue element--Type B reporters--which acts outside of this ethical realm. What seems to differentiate one group from another is the means by which information is gathered; specifically, what conduct is acceptable toward such goal. Ethics codes and their enforcement

policies might very well have an impact on conduct; Type B reporters would be quickly replaced at a newspaper that enforced a strict code.

The American Society of Newspaper Editors Ethics Committee attempted to ascertain to what degree ethics codes were enforced in newsrooms. A 1986-87 report produced by the Ethics Committee questioned 662 newspaper editors from across the United States to discover how editors enforce ethical provisions in the newsroom. The Committee survey asked not only which newspapers had codes and how editors viewed ethical dilemmas, but in what ways were transgressors held accountable. The Committee found that newspapers with ethics codes seem to encounter more ethics violations than newspapers without codes. The cause and effect relationship underlying this is not clearly defined: does having an ethics code heighten awareness of ethics violations or did newspapers with ethics codes choose to implement their codes based on need due to intensity and frequency of violations? Editors from larger newspapers tended to have more rigid views of what is considered ethical and unethical conduct. Other findings showed (ASNE Ethics Committee, p.9):

•More than one out of every three editors reported at least one ethics violation occurred at his or her paper from 1983 to 1986.

•About one in six editors said at least one newsroom employee had been dismissed because of ethics violations from 1983 to 1986.

•A third of the editors said they had an ethics code.

•Nearly three out of ten of the editors said their code included penalty provisions.

Editors were asked to indicate what action(s) they might take in a given series of unethical hypothetical situations and what factors were taken in consideration to make that judgment. Among the various forms of

discipline, those types most frequently chosen were (in order of severity): verbal reprimand(as many as three), written reprimand, suspension, dismissal. A reporter's attitude (motivation) and length of service and experience were cited as being determining factors. Enforcement policies have been a fairly significant discussion topic in journalistic circles. Whereas codes were once written without such policies, the thinking on this is beginning to shift: punitive codes appear to have more clout.

Pritchard and Morgan (1989) were dubious that ethics codes actually helped shape journalist's decisions in ethically questionable situations. In theory, the postulated relationship between formal, written codes of conduct and behavior suggests that journalistic behavior will be regulated by codes. Ethics codes are intended to set parameters for legitimate conduct. Given those parameters--given ethics codes--a journalists' behavior might be expected to be "more ethical." Yet as Pritchard and Morgan note, the actual relationship between intensions and actions is problematic for, in practice, ethics codes may have little or no bearing on how a journalist conducts him or herself. Pritchard and Morgan used a "natural experiment designed to examine ethical decision-making by journalists whose work is governed by markedly different ethics codes" (p.934) from the *Indianapolis Star* and the *Indianapolis News*. Although their news staffs are separate, the *Star* and the *News* are owned by the same company, thus holding constant at least some organizational attributes which may also affect journalistic attitudes and behavior (p.936). The managing editor of the *News* was responsible for the codes' creation in 1985. It was based on common elements borrowed from other codes, a common practice. In length, the code is 1,060 words and focuses exclusively on conflicts of interest (p.936). The *Star's* code was constructed in 1980. In addition to its conflict of interest segment, the 807 word code places

emphasis on fairness, sensitivity, and compassion in reporting (p. 936). In questioning city/state staff members, the general prediction which forecast the *Star's* staff as being "more ethical" as a result of having a more encompassing, albeit shorter, code, was not supported. Pritchard and Morgan's results led them to believe that formal ethics codes may have less of an impact on journalistic behaviors as scholars and practitioners might assume. Pritchard and Morgan concluded that the link between ethics codes and journalistic behavior is "almost certainly indirect and mediated by a wide variety of other factors. Unwritten professional norms may be the best predictors of behaviors in situations that give rise to ethical questions" (p.941). In this context, ethics codes would serve a more symbolic purpose: to indicate to the press and public alike that the news organizations support ethical conduct and accountability.

Pritchard and Morgan are not alone in their skepticism over the usefulness or wisdom of ethics codes, as evidenced by frequent articles in the journalistic trade journals about codes. An example of such comes from *Washington Post* staff writer Achenbach's 1991 article in *The Quill*. Referring to the *Post's* code of ethics he stated, "The truth is, this code of ethics is a load of malarkey. No self-respecting journalist would be caught near this thing....It never gets specific enough--Instead, the tone is so self-righteous, so excruciatingly lofty, it makes the job seem like a favor we're doing on behalf of the common man" (Achebach, p.22).

Black and Barney (1985) argued that codes may be of marginal use to a neophyte working in the media but essentially useless to seasoned journalists. Codes, they claimed, are of value only in that they attempt to organize, standardize, and codify ethics, which is a sign to novices and non-journalists that the industry is genuinely concerned with ethics. Beyond that,

Black and Barney stated that "codes tend to be bland statements drawn up in response to public disenchantment with media. They are both unenforced and unforceable" (p.7).

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The dispute over the virtues and vices of ethics codes is obvious, yet the use of codes--even for "appearances'" sake-- is widespread. Before conclusions can be drawn regarding their application, the content of these codes bears examination. In light of this discussion, a number of questions present themselves:

RQ1: How do codes vary in terms of:
a. length
b. number of ethics topics

H1a: Larger circulation papers will have longer codes than smaller circulation papers.

H1b: Larger circulation papers will cover a greater number of ethics topics than smaller circulation papers.

The American Society of Newspaper Editors Ethics Committee's 1986-87 study on ethics codes points to the notion that editors from larger circulation papers tend to have more rigid views about what is and is not ethical conduct, and one may discover as a result that ethics codes of larger circulation papers are more extensive than codes of smaller circulation papers. Larger paper codes may encompass a wider range of ethics topics than those covered in smaller papers. Small circulation papers also have smaller staffs. Editors may opt to communicate ethical guidelines informally. Larger papers may have a greater need for formal, written guidelines, as it is more difficult to communicate informally with a large group of people.

RQ2: How does the presentation style of codes vary?

RQ2: How does the presentation style of codes vary?

H_{2a}: A greater percentage of codes will be structured with such elements as a title, introduction, statement of purpose or preamble to familiarize readers with the codes' purpose and intent.

H_{2b}: Larger circulation newspapers will use command language with greater frequency than smaller circulation papers.

H_{2c}:Newspapers with enforcement codes will be more likely to use command language than request language.

Given that many journalists tend to be skittish around ethics codes, how those codes are "presented" can be as important as what they include. Presentation style can be defined in terms of elemental structure. Does the code have a title, introduction, preamble or statement of purpose? Is there cohesion among these elements? Code structure can be inducive to understanding and accepting code content. A preface to the body of the code made up of preliminary statements of purpose or introductions explain to the reader the basic ethical philosophy of the news organization and detail why such a code is needed. The value of the ethics codes rests not only in their prescription of behavior, but also in their ability to express this ethical philosophy. Codes that lack such structure lack the underlying justifications that convince a reader of the importance of the code. Support for Hypothesis 2_a can be attributed to two measures. First, Anderson (1987) revealed that code writers frequently borrow code concepts from national ethics codes such as the ASNE's Statement of Principles, SPJ Code of Ethics or APME code. These beginning codes were carefully constructed to express ideology as well as accepted behavior. Used as starting points, these codes can be altered to fit a particular paper's needs. Studies indicate that a significant proportion of

code writers rely heavily on existing codes to serve as models. "Borrowing" is a direct cause of code similarity. Pritchard and Morgan's (1989) study cited the *Indianapolis Star* and *Indianapolis News* as examples of "piecemeal" codes. Second, newspapers under the same ownership may carry the same codes. A code at a Gannett paper on the East coast, for example, may be essentially the same as a code at a West coast Gannett paper.

Style can also be viewed in terms of language and tone. Codes that use command language project a more direct, aggressive (perhaps rigid), "us-against-them" image, which journalists may find threatening or offensive. Request language projects a more indirect, suggestive, flexible, "we're-on-your-side image." To a reluctant "audience," these language distinctions may have a significant impact on code acceptance and usage.

RQ3: What topics are included in the ethics codes and how are they defined?

H_{3a}: A greater percentage of ethics topics will be stated but undefined in the ethics codes.

H_{3b}: Smaller circulation newspapers will be less likely to define ethics topics than larger circulation newspapers.

Public and journalistic concern over ethical conduct has generated a recognizable number of ethics topics which appear to be of the most concern. These particular topics will surface during the content analysis and represent a core of salient ethics topics. Nonetheless, code writers may generate codes which intentionally lack specificity. Elliot (1990) noted that as codes are often equated with the rules of conduct against which journalists will be held accountable, news organization often opt for ambiguous, loosely constructed codes. The very fact that the organization HAS a code is supposed to send a signal to the public and journalists alike that the organization is ethically

conscious. However, these same codes are kept purposefully vague to ensure "flexible interpretations." Codes may also lack specificity simply because they are poorly written. No code can be all-encompassing, but, as Elliot (1990) states, "even if journalists can identify and agree upon some behaviors that they condone and others they condemn, what emerges from most attempts to write codes is a confusing mix of the two against an overlay of conventional practices" (p.1).

Smaller circulation papers seem more able, according to Izard, Hesterman and Davenport (1986-87), to justify what larger circulation papers would consider ethical lapses, especially in terms of conflicts of interest issues. While journalists in larger markets strive to remain relatively anonymous in their communities, small circulation journalists may be very active in their communities. Smaller circulation journalists claim that they are often "needed to serve on communities or organize community activities, partly because there aren't enough citizens to do it all. They also say small-town readers are more likely to see the non-participation as a lack of interest or aloofness" (p.11). Stein (1984) also points to the fact that smaller circulation papers cannot afford the risk of losing advertising or libel suits.

RQ4: How do codes vary in terms of listing and defining enforcement procedures?

H_{4a}: Codes with higher degrees of specificity will be more apt to include and define enforcement procedures than codes with low degrees of specificity.

H_{4b}: The use of "disclaimers" will be more prevalent in codes with low degrees of specificity.

By their very nature, specific codes would inherently define enforcement procedures if the code made such provisions. Beyond that, though, consider that if news organizations take the time and effort to define

what is expected of their employees, they will be certain to include, in no unspecific terms, the consequences of violations.

"Disclaimers" serve as catch-alls for news organizations. In the event that any potential ethics violations have been overlooked in the drafting of the code, which is likely in codes with low degrees of specificity, news organizations remind employees that no code is all-encompassing Common sense and judgment are required by journalists. When in doubt, journalists are expected to seek an editor's advice.

METHODOLOGY

Forty-seven newspaper ethics codes were selected from former AP Bureau Chief Frank Wetzel's 1992 Newspaper Codes of Ethics Hypercard program. The program is an assembly of media ethics codes Wetzel accumulated at random from various newspaper societies, individual newspapers, the Poytner Institute for Media Studies and from ethicist Eugene H. Goodwin's collection. Wetzel's program was selected for two reasons. Although this body of codes was not systematically gathered, it is, to this researcher's knowledge, one of the more extensive and accessible compilations. Second, Wetzel markets the database as an aide to journalism schools and newspaper publishers. It is designed for comparative studies and ethical instruction. During a time when ethics instruction is becoming more and more essential for students and professionals alike, this researcher saw an importance in the analysis of a database proported to achieve this end.

The codes chosen for study relate only to print journalism; broadcast codes were excluded. Several of the print codes were discarded as they represented Canadian newspapers, were incomplete or did not fit the guidelines of the protocol. Some of the codes date as far back as 25 years; others have been revised and updated. All are said to be presently in use, although less than half of the codes were dated. Wetzel's program was sporadic, at best, in this regard; hence, generalizations cannot be made about the codes based on their construction time and revisions. From geographical and circulation size vantage points, these 47 newspaper codes make up a fairly

respectable sample of U.S. dailies with ranges in circulation from over one million to barely ten thousand (see map and table, Appendix A).

Content was analyzed primarily from two perspectives: code structure and code depth.

How a code is constructed can be as crucial to the codes' success as its content. So stated, the codes were analyzed to determine 1) presence or absence of content components (e.g., title, introduction, preamble, statement of purpose, body, conclusion); 2) language tone as expressed through "command" or "request" verb phrases which , in effect, either order obedience or suggest compliance with code stipulations. In relation to code depth, it was necessary to examine how well-defined, specific and encompassing each code was.

Depth was determined by 1) code length; 2) number of ethics topics addressed; 3) degree of topic specificity (see Protocol, Appendix A). This study not only sought the presence or absence of ethics topics (as deemed paramount by the literature), but for the presence or absence of enforcement policies. This was done to explore a possible trend toward *ensuring* accountability--with such provisions written in, codes cease to exist in name only.

Ethics topics were determined from an examination of all sample codes. Several topics were especially difficult to define. To illustrate, news organizations showed such variance in defining the category "Conflicts of Interest," that its definition for coding purposes includes topics that deserve a separate definition. "Political Involvement" presented a similar difficulty. In contrast, a clear distinction could more readily be made with "Gifts": Meals, Lodging, Transportation, Books/Recordings, Free Memberships, Free Passes.

The topics coded for in this study are not all encompassing, rather, they represent those topics used with the greatest frequency or consistency.

A reliability test was conducted between two coders when coding was 10% complete. Agreement was 95-100% in all categories save two: "Independence" and "Watchdog." Scott's Pi was used to determine reliability. The results on the test run on Independence and Watchdog were so low, they should have been stricken from the study. Yet, this researcher felt that despite the nebulousness of both, the two topics were essential components of many of the codes. Both definitions were thoroughly revised and the coders were retrained and retested. Agreement on these topics was then 100%. Estimates on code length showed some variance, as a formula was used to calculate approximate length. Because the study was based on a limited but randomly selected group of ethics codes, few generalizations can be made beyond the study's scope.

RESULTS

Of the 47 ethics codes analyzed, eight were produced by national organizations or chains. These include: APME, ASNE, Dow Jones Company, Inc., Gannett, Knight-Ridder, Scripps-Howard and SPJ/SDX. All other codes came from newspapers varying in circulation size. (see Figure 2).

Figure 2: Circulation Size of Newspapers
(N=47)

Size	Frequency
more than 500,000	9
250,001 to 500,000	6
100,001 to 250,000	10
50,001 to 100,000	4
25,001 to 50,000	8
10,001 to 25,000	2

Ownership of the newspapers was widely distributed (see Ownership, Appendix A), although 15% of the analyzed newspapers were owned by Gannett and 10% were owned by Knight-Ridder. None of the codes came from the Mountain Standard Time Zone (see Map and Geographical Region, Appendix A). Thirty-four percent of the codes came from the Eastern Standard Zone. Codes from Central Standard and Pacific Standard were evenly distributed.

The first research question sought variances in codes by length and number of topics. No significant correlations could be made to link circulation size with either the length of the codes or the number of ethics

topics covered in a single code. Correlation coefficients between circulation size and code length measured at .0422; circulation size and number of ethics topics measured at .0490. An obvious relationship exists between length and number of topics: the longer the code, the more topics there are likely to be in the code. Hypothesis 1_a and 1_b, however, cannot be statistically justified. It is certainly true that some of the longer, more topically diverse codes fell within the bracket of large circulation newspapers. The *Philadelphia Inquirer's* (circulation size: 443,629) code, for example, is more than 10,000 words long. It addresses and defines 26 different topics. By contrast, the ethics code at *The Bellingham Herald* (circulation size: 26,053) is only 676 words long and addresses 12 different topics.

Hypothesis 2_a, which speculated that codes would tend to include elements describing the nature and purpose of the code, was supported. Forty-five percent of the codes held either the title "Code of Ethics" or "Professional Standards." Eight of the 47 codes were untitled. Figure 3 represents a list of titles frequently used.

Figure 3: Code Titles
- Ethical Standards
- Ethical Guidelines
- Ethics Policy
- Code of Professional Ethics
- Code of Conduct
- Ethics: A Statement of Principles
- Newsroom Policy
- Code of Professionalism and Ethics

Nearly 60% of the codes began with a preamble: an introduction or series of explanatory statements. The tone of these statements varied from one code to the next; most presumed the honesty, integrity, trust and

professionalism of journalists; most presumed that a newspaper must strive to attain the highest standards and to publish a newspaper that is fair, accurate and objective. Yet, in addition to serving as general reminders of the duties and obligations of a journalist, many of the preambles made special note that the *appearance* of a journalists' behavior must also be carefully guarded, lest a misperception lead to a loss in public trust. The *New York Daily News* code reminded readers that, "Journalism carries heavy responsibilities in a democracy"; which is why, as the *San Jose Mercury News* suggested, "A profession that subjects people and institutions to intense and constant scrutiny must itself maintain the highest of principles." The *Charlotte Observer* (NC) had, perhaps, one of the best preambles for its overall justification of the inherent value of ethics codes:

> When a newspaper talks about ethics, ordinarily it has in mind the sinners and the saints of the world at large. A major function of the U.S. daily press is a ceaseless calling-to-account of public officials. That chore is vital in a quite literal sense: Without the press's continuing attention, the muscular but delicate division of American political power would collapse. But who calls the press to account? Ultimately, the readers do, but a casual glance through U.S. newspapers will confirm that their stewardship is not rigid. Bad newspapers can prosper. In the short-term economic sense, then, *The Observer's* ethics policy is unnecessary. A fair number of people will buy the paper whether it is written and edited by people who think about the ethical implications of their actions. So when a newspaper like *The Observer* adopts an ethics policy, it does so as a matter of self-discipline. The newspaper is powerful; *The Observer's* ethics policy is a way, perhaps awkward, of trying to see that the power is used fairly. Awkward, because that amount of self-consciousness may seem prissy. Awkward, because no policy can cover every situation. And no policy can supplant the editor's obligation to hire men and women of good character. But in the gray areas, where private lives and public responsibilities may meet, a policy can offer some guidelines.

Forty percent of the codes included a statement of purpose describing the codes' objective. Here, too, a great deal of variance exists from one code to

the next. Some preambles were nothing more than good rhetoric; others tried to be a bit less ethereal. Several examples include:

•These standards aim to assist us in honoring our basic responsibility to gather, report, write and edit faithfully, factually, impartially and fairly.
Albany Capital Newspapers

•...to reinforce these established journalism traditions of ethical conduct.
The Milwaukee Journal

•The code below represents the preferences of the senior editors of The Star as to how they want news and editorial staff members to comport themselves.
The Minneapolis Star

•...to help you understand the standards of excellence and the editorial principles that we have established for ourselves.
Rochester Times-Union

•...to offer ethical guidelines to help avoid conflicts.
San Jose Mercury Times

•...as guidelines of professional conduct for the management and staff.
San Francisco Examiner

•These standards set forth guidelines of honorable conduct.
The Seattle Times

And perhaps the most puzzling statement of purpose comes from the *Wilson (NC) Daily Times* ' ethics code: "The *Wilson Daily Times* has no separate, formal ethics statement, but it does adhere to a strict code of ethics."

Those newspapers with circulation sizes of more than 500,000; 250,001 to 500,000; and 100,001 to 250,000 were labeled as "large circulation newspapers." All others were classified as "small circulation newspapers." Hypothesis 2_b regarding the use of command language by large circulation papers was not supported. None of the large circulation newspapers used command language more than 40% of the time. In fact, the use of request language in

all of the codes, regardless of circulation size, was overwhelming (see Table 1). Only one code, from the *Jersey Journal*, was written with neutral language.

Table 1: Use of Request Language According to Circulation Size (N=47)

Size	% of Request Language	N
more than 500,000	88.9	8
250,001 to 500,000	66.7	4
100,001 to 250,000	50.0	5
50,001 to 100,000	75.0	3
25,001 to 50,000	37.5	3
10,001 to 25,000	100.0	2

Significant conclusions cannot be drawn for Hypothesis 2_C, which suggested that newspapers with enforcement codes would be more likely to use command language over request language. Enforcement policies were measured through four variables: verbal reprimands, written reprimands, suspension and dismissal. Forty-two percent of the codes (N=18) stated at least one of these variables as an enforcement policy. So few of the codes defined these variables, however (as Figure 4 illustrates), that to make generalizations from the data to support Hypothesis 2_C would be ill-advised. The death of Hypothesis 2_C is nontrivial, however, for it suggests one of two things: either this sample of ethics codes did not accurately reflect the industry's inclusion of enforcement policies or that public debate regarding the necessity and value of enforcement policies has had little practical application on the codes themselves.

Figure 4: Use of Enforcement Policies (N=47)

Variable	Stated (frequency)	Defined (frequency)
Verbal	1	1

Written	3	1
Suspension	6	1
Dismissal	8	0
	18	3

On the whole, codes tended to cover ethics topics without defining them, fully supporting Hypothesis 3_a. Table 2 illustrates the extent to which ethics topics were defined. The first column shows the number of codes that stated a specific ethics topic. The second column gives the number of how many of those stated topics were define.

Table 2: Coverage and Definition of Ethics Topics
(N= 47)

	Frequency	
Ethics Topic	**Stated**	**Defined**
Gifts	45	3
Conflicts of Interest	41	33
Political Involvement	38	24
Secondary Employment	36	31
Transportation	34	21
Integrity	32	8
Meals	30	15
Books/Recordings	24	18
Fairness	23	5
Inappropriate relationship w/sources	19	16
Accuracy	17	9
Watchdog	16	2
Anonymous Sources	16	3
Credible	14	6
Truthful	14	5
Lodging	13	3
Plagiarism	13	6
Independence	12	2
Free Membership	11	5
Misrepresentation	9	3
Obscenity	8	3
Misappropriation	7	2
Accountibility	6	3
Illegal Activities	6	2
Misidentification	5	2
Paid Sources	4	1

While Independence and Watchdog were difficult variables for this researcher to define, they did make appearances in 25.5% and 34% of the codes respectively. Interestingly, they were not well defined: both measured at 4.3%. As expected, several variables were frequently used, but infrequently defined. Integrity peppered nearly 70% of the codes, yet was defined only 25.5% of the time it was used. Fairness appeared in approximately half of the codes, yet was defined barely 10% of the time. True enough, these variables are a bit nebulous; still, even the more tangible variables experienced a lack of definition. Misrepresentation, Misidentification, Misappropriation and Anonymous Sources were all poorly explained variables. A handful of the variables which do appear to have been significantly defined ought to be regarded, in all fairness, as "loaded variables." Conflicts of Interest, Political Involvement and Secondary Employment each are variables that, to satisfy the coding protocol (see Appendix B), are defined by a number of subtopics that could bear categories of their own. In this way, the percentages of stated and defined ethics topics may appear to be artificially bloated. Topics that did make a healthy showing in the codes and were well defined include Meals, Transportation, Books/Recordings, Free Passes and Inappropriate Relationships with Sources.

Smaller circulation newspapers proved to be less likely than larger circulation newspapers to define their ethics topics. This supports Hypothesis 3b. Larger circulation newspapers were twice as likely to define their topics than smaller circulation papers.

Degree of code specificity was measured by a simple "count" command on SPSS/PC+. Codes that both stated and defined their ethics topics were given a higher numerical value than those that did not. Highly specific codes cannot officially be said to be more apt to include enforcement procedures as

Hypothesis 4_a posits because of the limited amount of defined enforcement policies in the sample codes. While no statistically significant results can be generated for the present study, this researcher did note a propensity for highly specific codes to include such policies. Data does partially support Hypothesis 4_b, which suggests that the use of code disclaimers will be more prevalent in less specific codes. Thirty-one percent of the codes classified as "less specific" included code disclaimers. Interestingly, nearly 70% of all the codes included a statement informing the reader to consult the editor if uncertain how to proceed in an ethical dilemma.

A qualitative review of the codes revealed that the coding protocol did not cover every ethics issue mentioned in each code, only those that appeared with some frequency. A number of codes did provide segments on the ethics of complaints, corrections, libel, abuses of press credentials, rape victims, homosexuals, jury duty, absenteeism and even photographs of dead bodies.

Several of the codes were obvious versions of a national organization or chain code but had been slightly altered to cover a specific issue of concern to a particular newspaper. The *Grand Forks (ND) Herald* even magnanimously thanked at the end of its code all the newspapers which had unknowingly made "contributions" to its code. The *Washington Post* included sections relating both to pseudonyms and anonymous sources. Less obvious, perhaps, but a another example nonetheless, the *St. Paul (Minn) Pioneer Press & Dispatch* had a special section in its code relating to April Fools' Day. It read in part:

> We will NOT run April Fools' columns. These columns run outlandish items about people and events which most people may realize are phony but which others take at face value. We make enemies with this approach.

Each code has its strengths and weaknesses, but the *Wilson Daily Times'* code is by far the most misguided. Not only did this 540-word code make stipulations concerning a formal dress code for its reporters, it also concluded with a few lines dedicated to gum chewing. It read: "Chewing gum is permitted in the newsroom; however, blowing bubbles adds no distinction to the news staff. You may chew, but do not blow."

There were several codes of distinction. Gannett produced two ethics codes: one labeled "Corporate," one labeled "News" to address both the business and news sides of journalism. A code of impressive length was the *Philadelphia Inquirer's* 10,000 word code. The *Inquirer*'s code discussed a brood of issues not covered by this study's protocol, including missing persons, bylines, polls, attribution, rape victims, juveniles, crime news, court proceedings, public meetings, public records, prior restraint, gag orders, search warrants, shield laws, composite characters and privacy.

Of all the codes in this study, The *Detroit Free Press* Guidelines was the most exemplary (see Guidelines, Appendix C). This is due largely to the fact that the code both stated and defined its ethics topics. The code began with a short note addressed to the *Free Press* newsroom expressing the need for general ethics guidelines. In the introduction the code clearly described to whom the code applied and how it was to be applied. Twenty-six different ethics topics were addressed, the most of any code in the study. Of the 26 topics, only two were left undefined. These Guidelines also brought to light topics not included in the protocol: race/ethnic issues, privacy issues, sexism. The code did not include any enforcement policies; nonetheless, it is a good example of a thorough and well-defined code.

One of the poorest examples in the study came from the *Jersey Journal* (see *Jersey Journal,* Appendix C). Barely 200 words long, this code covered

four ethics topics and did not define a single one. The code summed "ethics" up into "two basic rules which should guide everyone." The first of these rules sketchily related to outside activities, while the second related to receiving gifts from sources. That such a code could be used by journalists to ensure ethical conduct is ludicrous. Nothing can be gained from reading this code; it is too vague for application and less humorous than the *Wilson Daily Times'* code.

CONCLUSIONS

In George Bernard Shaw's *Pygmalion*, Colonel Pickering was appalled by Alfred Doolittle's suggestion that he be paid a fee for the "use" of his daughter. "Have you no morals, man?" Pickering asked. "Can't afford them, Governor," Doolittle answered. "Neither could you if you was as poor as me." Journalists may well think that they can't afford morals either, especially considering the effort it takes to formalize beliefs into ethics codes. Are codes necessary? Are they useful? Are they worth it? The objective of this study was two-fold. First, it sought to analyze newspaper ethics codes as a means of discovering how the watchdog watches itself. Second, it sought to assess Frank Wetzel's database, which has been designed and is being marketed for comparative studies and ethical instruction. Wetzel's database was, by far, the easier of the two tasks, for the watchdog does not consistently value the ethics code.

The value of a journalistic ethics code is contingent upon a news organization's long-term expectation of it and the code's overall orientation. Two theoretical approaches can be taken: codes are either meant to present the minimal expectations for all practitioners or the perceived characteristics of the ideal practitioner (Elliot, Conceptual, p.6). One is attainable; the other is not. Under the belief that codes set the minimal expectation level, those journalists who fail to live up to the code will be held morally, perhaps legally, blameworthy. This perspective suggests something of a negative

feedback loop: a journalist will not be praised for following the code, only punished for breaking the code. Punishment and praise are distributed differently if a news organization cottons to the notion that a code presents ideal expectations. In this case, a journalist is praised for coming close to the ideal, but never chastised for falling short of it. If news organizations favor the former, then enforcement policies are necessary. A code that establishes minimal standards cannot rely on voluntary obedience; the code must be applicable to all. Yet, as one journalist pointed out, "It is human nature that rules that lack enforcement mechanisms will be virtually ignored." Unfortunately, the profession is a long way from coming to an agreement on how enforcement policies should be carried out. Nonetheless, in making the distinction between code orientation, two theoretical frameworks exist: one idyllic, the other practical, one general, the other highly specific. Both types of codes can be of use to journalists.

To accept that the *concept* of a journalistic ethics code is intrinsically good raises a new set of questions: which ethics issues should codes cover and how should codes be constructed. If the average newspaper reader is willing only to plow through the first five paragraphs of a news story, it is safe to assume that the average news professional is going to be stymied by a 15-page ethics code. A codes' length must not exceed reasonable limits. Codes in this study ranged between 1,000 to 2,000 words--no more than two to three pages. Ideally, for a code to be tangible and applicable to practical situations, it should have as many ethics topics as possible, all defined in the most specific, concrete manner possible. Sheer practicality, however, suggests that any code of ethics must first be digestible. Imagine the size and length of a code if code writers attempted this: such a treatise would be monstrous, reaching epic

proportions. On the other hand, ill-defined, nebulous codes would prove to be understated, inefficient and impractical. Is there a middle ground?

Undoubtedly, code writers must be judicious in selecting topics for inclusion. Some topics can be dismissed out of hand, as they are more applicable to a newspaper's legal bylaws or personnel policies and have little to do with formalized ethics. Examples of such might include court proceedings and gag orders or employee dress codes and absenteeism. In narrowing this topic field down, it should be noted that every ethics code needs to address accountability. News organizations as a whole and journalists as individuals must always be prepared to accept responsibility for their actions. If this issue is not made paramount, the goal of ethics codes is defeated outright. In the case of minimum standard codes, accountability might be expressed through enforcement policies; more idyllic codes would hold the journalist on his or her honor to be personally accountable.

Beyond this, there is bound to be some variation in topics from code to code. Certain topics, consequently, should be made universally important. Codes would do well to provide a statement of purpose that would allow news organizations to outline the code's overall objectives and offer justification of these objectives. This statement section might also address the newspaper's role as a societal watchdog and emphasize the importance of remaining free from governmental control and the influence of special interests.

The average number of ethics topics covered by codes in this study was 11. With so many pressing issues, how are code writers to decide which to address? The main body of the code might be divided into three sections covering 1) General Conduct, 2) Truth and Accuracy and 3) Integrity and

Fairness. Each of these main headings would, of course, be supported by numerous subcategories.

Integrity and Fairness might be the most essential category. If news organizations are truly meant to serve society as a watchdog, then news organizations must be as fair as possible in their assessment of that society. Fairness denotes an even-handedness of news gathering and processing; hence, it would prohibit Inappropriate Relationships with Sources and practices such as Misrepresentation and Misidentification and other ethically questionable newsgathering techniques. Integrity has more to do with the moral uprightness and high moral standing of the news organization and its employees. As such, issues relating to Politics and Conflicts of Interest would need to be covered.

Truth and Accuracy focus on the product of the journalist's labors. Truth demands factual, honest work. Accuracy demands technical or mechanical correctness in the work. Plagiarism, Quotations, Corrections and Facticity are all vital issues for this section.

Finally, the General Conduct category would include other pressing issues, such as Freebies, Secondary Employment and other outside activities.

Choosing which topics to address in an ethics code may appear to be an unwieldy task, but defining these topics may also present a problem. Some topics lend themselves to succinct definition. Plagiarism, for example, can easily be defined in this way: "To take and use someone else's ideas, writings as one's own." Other topics are more difficult to define either because of their encompassing nature or because of their ambiguity (e.g., Conflict of Interest, Fairness). Is there a rule of thumb for defining *these*? Many news organizations shy away from producing codes that are **not** vague and ill-defined, primarily because they fear such codes would be misinterpreted and

used against them in litigation (Goodwin, p.16). Small circulation newspapers are notorious for keeping their definitions on the hazy side. Most of these newspapers are too small to afford sizable law suits.

One of the more frustrating aspects to practitioners, however, is that codes lack consistency in their definitions. One man's meat is another man's poison. Perhaps it would be safest to say that a "good" definition ought to have the following elements:

1. An explanation of the topic (e.g.,"Fairness means...")
2. Some justification as to why a particular behavior is or is not acceptable.
3. An example, if necessary.
4. What to do in the case of special circumstances.

The *Detroit Free Press* gives a "good" definition of **Paying for News**:

> When money is paid for information, serious questions can be raised about the credibility of that information and the motives of the buyer and seller. We generally avoid paying for information. Exceptions must be approved in advance with the managing editor.

From reading this, a journalist understands what Paying for News is, what the rationale behind the proscription is and what is to be done in the case of special circumstances.

The pervasive use of request language in this study suggests that news organizations wish to approach their employees in a non-threatening, non-accusatory manner. Request language is, certainly, more aesthetically pleasing than command language and, one could wager, a more supportive means of communicating the news organization's ethical objectives to its employees.

Sometimes less is more. Keeping a code to a digestible length and covering fewer, better-defined topics may be the best way to make the

strongest impression on journalists; it might raise their awareness level without overwhelming them.

A replication of this study might focus on obtaining a larger, more complete sample of ethics codes. One of the objectives of this study was to evaluate Frank Wetzel's database. Wetzel's Hypercard program actually inhibited much of this research. The program did not provide a scientifically pure sample from which to study. Several of the codes were incomplete; nearly all lacked dates of when the codes were written and possibly revised. Wetzel provided a tempting convenience and good starting point, but one that may not necessarily be of the highest value to scholarly research.

The study suffered from other maladies as well, independent of Wetzel's program. The coding protocol was not able to accommodate each ethics topic that appeared in every code. Consequently, a number of well-stated and well-defined ethics topics were not analyzed. It would have been interesting, too, if the extensiveness of a topic's definition could have been worked into the coding protocol. Sometimes comparing two codes because they both stated and defined a topic was like dealing in apples and oranges: one code's definition was often inferior to another's.

It is important to remember that ethics codes are not the end-all, be-all to ethical living. Codes provide a framework within which particular decisions can be made. Codes are only a small part of a whole process of raising the journalistic level of ethics consciousness and accountability. News organizations should try to view ethics as an onion--something that is made up of many overlapping and fragile layers. Having an ethics code is one layer, posting the code is another, holding ethics seminars and informal meetings is yet a third. None of these things by themselves is enough to ensure ethical conduct. No news organization will ever produce the definitive ethics code;

no code will ever cover all situations. Yet, writing and disseminating a code helps to crystallize a news organization's moral philosophy and serves as a guidepost to journalists, reminding them of what is minimally required and/or what is ideal.

"The fact that journalism ethics has never been better by no means establishes that it is as good as it should be, or even as good as it needs to be to perform its vital role" (Josephson, Map, p.39). One cannot, however, underestimate the value of ethics codes and the deliberation and decision making that goes on in news organizations to create these criteria.

How does one set the standards of rightness or wrongness of human conduct? How often will these standards change over time? Can a code be written that would transcend all of this? Should such a code be written? All of these troubling questions remain. The need for ethics codes in journalism may no longer be as great an issue as is the question of how these codes will continue to take shape and how they will effect the behavior of news organizations. The ethics codes of a mere 47 newspapers clearly echo that uncertainty.

APPENDIX A
NEWSPAPERS, LOCATION, CIRCULATION
(as cited in the 1992 Editor and Publisher Yearbook)

STATE	NAME	OWNER	CIRCULATION
01NY	Albany Times-Union	Hearst	109,710
02GA	Atlanta Constitution	Cox Enterprises	510,378
03WA	The Bellingham Herald	Gannett	26,053
04AL	Birmingham Post-Herald	Scripps-Howard	175,462
05NC	Charlotte Observer	Knight-Ridder	
06IL	Chicago Tribune	Tribune Company	620,173
07MI	Detroit Free Press	Knight Ridder	911,679
08NY	Elmira Star & Gazette & Sunday Telegram	Gannett	35,421
09ND	Grand Forks Herald	Knight Ridder	339,468
10NJ	Hackensack Record	Macromedia, Inc.	161,797
11CT	Hartford Courant	Times Mirror Corporation	228,172
12HI	Honolulu Advertiser	Persis Corporation	97,367
13NJ	Jersey Journal	Newhouse Newspapers/ Metro Suburbia	66,131
14MO	Kansas City Star	Capital Cities/ABC,Inc.	317,932
15FL	Lakeland Ledger	Lakeland Ledger Publishing Corp	79,379
16CA	Los Angeles Times	Times Mirror Corporation	1,066,950
17KY	Lousiville Courier Journal	Gannett	232,034
18FL	Miami Herald	Knight-Ridder Newspapers, Inc.	421,350
19WI	Milwaukee Journal	Journal/Sentinel, Inc.	231,348
20Minn	Minneapolis Star Tribune	Cowles Media Company	408,365
21NY	New York Daily News	Tribune Company	637,644
22FL	Orlando Sentinel	Tribune Company	279, 222
23CA	Orange County Register	Freedom Newspaper	334,242
24PA	Philadelphia Inquirer	Knight-Ridder	443,629
25NY	Rochester Times-Union	Gannett	80,285
26Minn	St. Paul Pioneer Press & Dispatch	Northwest Publications	190,733
27CA	San Jose Mercury News	San Jose Mercury/News	253,420
28CA	San Francisco Examiner & Chronicle	Chronicle Publishing Company	514,985
29WA	Seattle Times	Hearst Corporation	520,840
30SD	Sioux Falls Argus Leader	Gannett	48,331
31IL	Southern Illinoisan	Lee Enterprises	29,518
32SC	The Sun News		34,400
33WA	Tacoma Morning News Tribune	Tacoma News, Inc.	121,544
34MI	(Traverse City)Record Eagle	Ottaway Newspapers	26,749
35CT	Torrington Register-Citizen	Eagle Publishing Group	17,125
36CA	Visalia Times-Delta	Gannett	29,963
37DC	Washington Post	The Washington Post Company	747,503
38Del	Wilmington News-Journal	Gannett	140,563
39NC	Wilson Daily Times	Wilson Daily Times, Inc.	18,596

ORGANIZATION CODES

40APME
41ASNE
42Dow Jones & Company, Inc.
43Gannett (Corporate)
44Gannett (News)
45Knight Ridder
46Scripps-Howard Newspapers, Inc.
47SPJ/SDX

APPENDIX A (continued)

OWNERSHIP

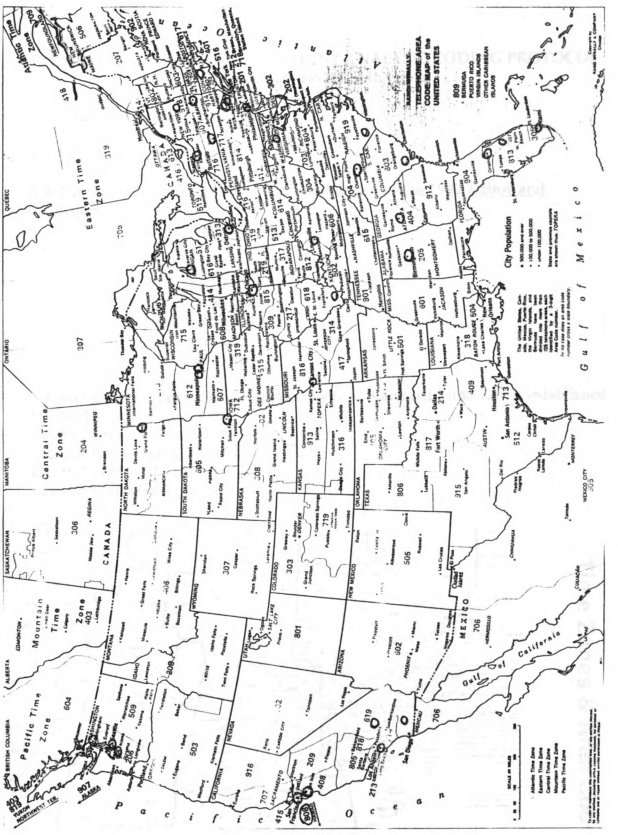
01 Capital Cities/ABC, Inc.
02 Chronicle Publishing Company
03 Cowles Media Company
04 Cox Enterprises
05 Eagle Publishing
06 Freedom Newspapers
07 Gannett Newspaper
08 Globe Newspaper
09 Hearst Corporation
10 Knight-Ridder Newspaper,Inc.
11 Lake Enterprises, Inc.
12 Lee Enterprises, Inc.
13 Macromedia, Inc.
14 Newhouse Newspapers
15 New York Times Company
16 Northwest Publications, Inc.
17 Ottaway Newspapers
18 Page Publications
19 Persis Corporation
20 Phoenix Newspapers, Inc.
21 Society of Professional Journalists, Sigma Delta Chi
22 San Jose Mercury News
23 Scripps-Howard
24 Tacoma News,Inc.
25 Times Mirror
26 Tribune Company
27 Washington Post Company
28 Wilson Daily Times, Inc.
29 Journal/Sentinel, Inc.

APPENDIX A (continued)

GEOGRAPHICAL REGION (by time zone):

I.	III.	IV.
PACIFIC	**CENTRAL**	**EASTERN**
Bellingham, WA	Birmingham, AL	Albany, NY
Honolulu, HI	Carbondale, IL	Atlanta,GA
Los Angeles, CA	Chicago,IL	Charlotte, NC
San Francisco,CA	Grand Forks, ND	Detroit, MI
San Jose,CA	Kansas City, MO	Elmira, NY
Santa Anna,CA	Louisville, KY	Hackensack, NJ
Seattle, WA	Milwaukee, WI	Jersey City, NJ
Tacoma, WA	Minneapolis, Minn	Lakeland, FL
Visalia, CA	Saint Paul, Minn	Miami, FL
	Sioux Falls, SD	Myrtle Beach,SC
	Traverse City,MI	New York, NY
		Orlando, FL
		Philadelphia,PA
		Rochester,NY
		Torrington, CT
		Washington, D.C.
		Wilmington, Del.
		Wilson, NC

APPENDIX A
(continued)



APPENDIX B

NEWSPAPER ETHICS CODE: CONTENT ANALYSIS CODING PROTOCOL
(07 February 1993, Tenth Draft)

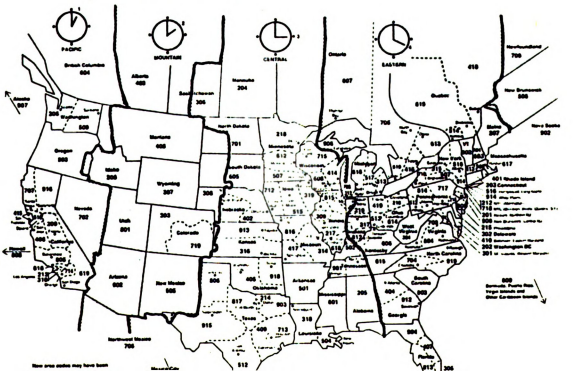
V1. Code identification number

V2. Full newspaper name

V3. Circulation: based on divisions established in the 1992 Editor and Publisher Yearbook:

1. more than 500,000
2. 250,001 to 500,000
3. 100,001 to 250,000
4. 50,001 to 100,000
5. 25,001 to 50,000
6. 10,001 to 25,000
7. 5,000 to 10,000
8. less than 5,000

V4. Geographic region: as designated by U.S. Standard Time Zones established by the Uniform Time Act.
Pacific Standard Time=1
Mountain Standard Time=2
Central Standard Time=3
Eastern Standard Time=4



U.S. and Canada
Time Zones & Area Codes

V5. Ownership: The name of the organization which owns the newspaper. This might be a chain owner like Gannett or an independent company.

V6. Title of code: Indicate if the code has a special title, such as "Standards and Ethics," "Code of Principles," or "Code of Professional Standards."

V7. Length of code: Code length will be measured by word count. An inch of text will be measured in each code. The number of words that appear in that inch will be counted. By measuring the entire text and multiplying by words per inch, the approximate word count for the entire code can be reached.

V8. Preamble: Does the code have an introduction or a series of opening explanatory statements?

V9. Statement of purpose: Does the code contain a general statement which describes or states the code's objective?

V10. Command or request language: Language voice will be determined by verb usage. Verb phrases are created when a verb's infinitive, present participle, or past participle is combined with an auxiliary verb. Auxiliary verbs will indicate whether code content is intended as a command or a request. Command statements imply necessity, obligation, requirement. Request statements imply suggestion, possibility, option. Command auxiliary verbs include: will, must, shall; request auxiliary verbs include ought, should, might, may, could.

Example:	**Command**	**Request**
Infinitive + Auxiliary	will accept	may accept

The verb phrase coded is the first one encountered after each ethics topic is addressed. Codes will be classified as request or command based on the majority of the language.

V11. Number of ethics topics: The number of ethics topics helps to indicate how ethically extensive the code is. Topics are determined from an examination of each of the codes (e.g., "Fairness," "Social Responsibility"). Most codes list ethics topics under separate headings, making them relatively easy to spot.

V12. Comments: Add special notes about the code if necessary.

V13. Topic Specificity: Coders will look for the presence of characteristics which define an ethics topic. The nouns and adjectives used to describe and explain a topic create a level of specificity which prevents nebulous interpretations on the part of the journalist.

V13a. Independence: Free from government control; free from official coercion; free from influence from public/private sector on direct news content

V13b. Credible: Believable

V13c. Truthful: In accordance with fact; honest

V13d. Watchdog: The news organization acts as a constructive critic of society; refers to the public's right to know; refers to the news organization's responsibility to public service and public welfare

V13e. Accountability: News organization accepts responsibility for its actions and, if called to do so, will explain and thereby justify its actions.

V13f. Integrity: Can be expressed in two ways. First, as a general sense of "fair play" on the part of the individual journalist. Second, through maintaining the reputation of the news organization. Many of the codes make reference to the notion that perceived ethical breeches are almost as damaging as actual ethical breeches.

V13g. Accuracy: Refers to technical or mechanical correctness, e.g., correct spelling of a proper noun, correct facts and information. Coders should also look for mentions of misquoting, inaccurate quoting, quote corrections and quote fabrication.

V13h. Fairness: Denotes an even-handedness of news collection and production. Allows persons publicly accused the earliest opportunity to respond. Bias and distortion of facts are two examples of the antithesis of fairness.

V13i. Newsgathering Techniques (Misrepresentation): also known as masquerading. Here the journalist assumes the role of someone else in order to get information. Examples include posing as a law enforcement officer, a lawyer, or a doctor.

V13j. Newsgathering Techniques (Misidentification): Occurs when a journalist either purposefully misidentifies him or herself to a source or allows the source to make false assumptions as to his or her identity.

V13k. Newsgathering Techniques (Misappropriation): To take dishonestly, especially for one's own use. This might include stealing documents from a news source or using newspaper property for personal use; also includes using inside knowledge for personal gain.

V13l. Anonymous Sources: Also known as unidentified sources or as confidential sources. These are sources whose information is used under the condition that they themselves will not be identified as the source.

V13m. Paid Sources: Source who will receive payment for information. The payment may be monetary or otherwise (e.g., special favors, special treatment).

V13n. Inappropriate relationships with sources:
A. Blood relatives
B. Spouses
C. Sexual
D. Monetary

V13o. Conflicts of interest: Journalists are to remain free from obligations to news sources and special interests. Outside activities become "conflicts" if they:
a. Detract from or interfere with the employee's duties
b. Impair the credibility or integrity of the newspaper
c. Dilute loyalty to the newspaper

Such conflicts may include:
•Public speaking engagements and/or
•Journalistic contests and/or
•Financial investments and/or
•Community service and/or
•Volunteer work and/or
•Other (specify)

V13p. Secondary Employment: as a free-lancer or by moonlighting

V13q. Political involvement:
•Making monetary contributions to a candidate or for a ballot issue
and/or
•Holding a public office
and/or
•Attending a banquet, dinner, rally, protest where their presense might be interpreted as support
and/or
•displaying bumperstickers, posters, signs or other material advancing political causes
and/or
•Other (specify)

V13r.Gifts (Freebies): A tangible item received without payment, whether in cash, products, services or a combination of products and services. Coders should note if there is a dollar amount limit specified

V13s. Gifts (Freebies)
Meals: free food or drink/discounts
and/or
Lodging: free accomodations/discounts
and/or
Transportation: reduced travel rates, free trips
and/or
Books/Recordings: these items are often sent to papers for review
and/or
Free Membership: to a private club or similar organization
and/or
Free Passes: entrance into an event for which admission is charged to the general public but not to the journalist
and/or
Other(specify)

V13t. Obscenity: Indecent, vulgar or obscene words, phrases or visuals

V13u. Plagiarism: To take and use another person's ideas, writings as one's own

V13v. Illegal activities: drug usage or trafficking, gambling or other

V13w. Other (specify)

Additional Ethics Advice:
V14a. Code Disclaimer: Any general statement which suggests that the code is not all-encompassing or does not apply to all situations

V14b. Use of Common Sense: Any general statement which suggests that ethics is a common sense issue

V14c. Use of Judgment: Any general statement which suggests that journalists must use their own judgment in certain ethical dilemmas

V14d. Editor's Advice: Any general statement which suggests that journalists should consult with editors when faced with an ethical dilemma.

V14e. Other (specify)

Consequences of lapses in ethics: What happens to news members who break the rules and guidelines

V15a. Verbal reprimand

V15b. Written reprimand

V15c. Suspension

V15d. Dismissal

APPENDIX B (continued)

NEWSPAPER ETHICS CODE: CONTENT ANALYSIS CODING FORM
(07 February 1993, Tenth Draft)

V1. Code identification number_____

V2. Full newspaper name _____

V3. Circulation 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

V4. Geographic region _____

V5. Ownership_____

V6. Title of code: YES=1 NO=2

(list)_____

V7. Length of code _____(Words)

V8. Preamble: YES=1 NO=2

V9. Statement of purpose YES=1 NO=2

(list)_____
_____
_____
_____

V10. Language: Request=1 Command=2 Neutral=3

V11. Number of ethics topics _____

V12.Comments:_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

V13. Topic Specificity (check all that apply)

		Present YES	Present NO		Defined YES	Defined NO
V13a.	Independence	☐	☐	V13aa	☐	☐
V13b.	Credible	☐	☐	V13bb	☐	☐
V13c.	Truthful	☐	☐	V13cc	☐	☐
V13d.	Watchdog	☐	☐	V13dd	☐	☐
V13e.	Accountability	☐	☐	V13ee	☐	☐
V13f.	Integrity	☐	☐	V13ff	☐	☐
V13g.	Accuracy	☐	☐	V13gg	☐	☐
V13h.	Fairness	☐	☐	V13hh	☐	☐
V13i.	Misrepresentation.	☐	☐	V13ii	☐	☐
V13j.	Misidentification	☐	☐	V13jj	☐	☐
V13k.	Misappropriation	☐	☐	V13kk	☐	☐
V13l.	Anonymous sources	☐	☐	V13ll	☐	☐
V13m.	Paid sources	☐	☐	V13mm	☐	☐
V13n.	Inappropriate relationships with sources	☐	☐	V13nn	☐	☐
V13o.	Conflicts of interest	☐	☐	V13oo	☐	☐
V13p.	Secondary employment	☐	☐	V13pp	☐	☐
V13q.	Political involvement	☐	☐	V13qq	☐	☐
V13r.	Gifts	☐	☐	v13rr.	☐	☐

*Amount specified?*_____

		Present		Defined	
		YES	NO	YES	NO
V13s.	Gifts (Freebies) Is anything forbidden? If so, which ones?				
	i. Meals	☐	☐	☐	☐
	ii. Lodging	☐	☐	☐	☐
	iii. Transportation	☐	☐	☐	☐
	iv. Books/Recordings	☐	☐	☐	☐
	v. Free membership	☐	☐	☐	☐
	vi. Free passes	☐	☐	☐	☐
V13t.	Obscenity	☐	☐	☐	☐
V13u.	Plagiarism	☐	☐	☐	☐
V13v.	Illegal activities	☐	☐	☐	☐
	Additional Ethics Advice (check all that apply):				
V14a.	Code Disclaimer	☐	☐	☐	☐
V14b.	Use of Common Sense	☐	☐	☐	☐
V14c.	Use of Judgment	☐	☐	☐	☐
V14d.	Editor's Advice	☐	☐	☐	☐
V14e.	Other(specify)	☐	☐	☐	☐
	Consequences of lapses in ethics(check all that apply):				
V15a.	Verbal reprimand	☐	☐	☐	☐
V15b.	Written reprimand	☐	☐	☐	☐
V15c.	Suspension	☐	☐	☐	☐
V15d.	Dismissal	☐	☐	☐	☐

Detroit (MI) Free Press Guidelines
DETROIT FREE PRESS
Dec. 13, 1984
To: Free Press newsroom
From: Dave Lawrence

Several years ago we distributed "professional guidelines" to deal mostly with conflict-of-interest matters. We've continued to send these guidelines to new staff members. They fall short, however, of satisfying the need for a broader set of ethics guidelines. Instead, we have addressed ethical questions as they have come up. Below you'll find broader guidelines.

FREE PRESS GUIDELINES

1. Introduction:

These guidelines are intended to serve in a variety of situations. They apply to everyone working for the Free Press newsroom - fulltime and parttime staff members, and freelancers on assignment. They obviously cannot envision all circumstances. These are not legal standards. Other news organizations may view some matters differently. Those affected by our coverage may differ with us over what is "fair" or "accurate." Occasions will arise where news decisions must be made that will be at variance with these guidelines; nevertheless, they represent what we ourselves strive for. Whenever doubt exists on a question of ethics or taste or sensitivity, please discuss that doubt with a supervising editor.

2. Accuracy and fairness:

Our fundamental objective is fair, accurate coverage. We want to report all sides of a story. It is important to what we believe in and to our credibility to obtain comment from anyone mentioned in an unfavorable context. If one side cannot be reached before publication, we will continue to try after deadline.

3. Attribution, unnamed sources:

Our readers usually are best served when we can identify news sources by name. We should work hard to identify the source(s) although there will be instances when the pursuit of truth will best be served by not naming a source. Sources will be named unless the reason not to do so is an overriding consideration. Except in a justifiable instance, we will not allow an unnamed source to use us to attack an individual or an organization. We will work hard to corroborate information from any unnamed sources. A decision to use unnamed sources will be made with the advice and consent of a supervising editor.

When material is used in a story from sources other than the writer's own reporting, those sources - other publications, previous Free Press stories, radio or TV newscasts, etc. - should be indicated in the story. That attribution need not be made for simple, verifiable facts like dates, but is essential for information that goes beyond simple fact - quotations or descriptions not heard or seen by the current reporter, characterizations or other generalizations not based on the writer's own reporting, etc.

A fictitious name will be used only in rare and justifiable circumstances, and the decision to do so will be approved by a managing editor. In such an instance, the story will state explicitly that the person's name has been changed, and why.

4. Confidentiality:

Since the U.S. Supreme Court has ruled that the First Amendment does not extend to journalists the absolute right to protect the confidentiality of news sources, reporters on their own cannot guarantee sources confidentiality in a published story. If a demand is made after publication for the source's identification, a court may compel us to reveal the source. In circumstances where the demand for absolute confidentiality is made as a condition for obtaining the story, that situation needs to be discussed with a supervising editor before a commitment is made. Trust works both ways - the editor must be able to trust the reporter fully, and vice versa.

5. Corrections:

We publish corrections or clarifications for errors of fact and when we believe there is an omission, distortion or circumstances which could result in an incorrect or unfair impression. When an error is confirmed, a straightforward correction will be written promptly. Corrections should report the correct information and not restate the error except when clarity demands.

6. Misrepresentation:

Staff members generally should identify themselves as Free Press staff members. In those justifiable circumstances when we may be unable to report a story without concealing our identity, approval of a managing editor is required. The story's value should justify the decision to conceal our identity. Whenever we have not disclosed our identity in reporting a story, the story needs to say so.

Staff members doing freelance work for another company should make that fact clear to sources.

Freelancers may identify themselves as being on assignment for the Free Press, but not as Free Press staff members.

7. Obscenity:

Our guiding standard is whether an important journalistic purpose is served by using objectionable language. The harsher the language, the more important our purpose should be. Only the broadest sort of guidelines can apply; a word or phrase that is newsworthy in one context may be entirely objectionable in another. The use of any obscene or tasteless

language is limited to quoted material. The speaker and the audience are of primary importance in determining whether any obscenity will be reported. Generally, when an obscenity is deleted in a quotation, hyphens will stand for all but the first letter. Harsh obscenities may be used only with approval of a managing editor. See the Free Press style guide for more details.

8. Outside review of copy:

We avoid promising sources or subjects of news stories an opportunity to review articles, photos or artwork before publication. In the rare instance when a prepublication review might be justified, the decision will be made by a supervising editor with the knowledge of the staff members involved. In cases when a partial review may be desirable - to check technical data, for example - a supervising editor should be consulted.

We avoid promising sources that they will be treated in a particular way in a story in exchange for information.

9. Paying for news:

When money is paid for information, serious questions can be raised about the credibility of that information and the motives of the buyer and seller. We generally avoid paying for information. Exceptions must be approved in advance by a managing editor.

10. Plagiarism:

Using someone else's work without attribution - whether deliberately or thoughtlessly - is a serious ethical breach. Staff members should be alert to the potential for even small, unintentional acts of plagiarism, especially in the reporting of complicated stories involving many sources.

Borrowing ideas from elsewhere, however, is considered fair journalistic practice. Problems arise in the gray areas between the acceptable borrowing of inspiration and the unacceptable stealing of another's work. Our standards:

Words directly quoted from sources other than the writer's own reporting should be attributed. That may mean saying the material came from a previous Free Press story, from a television interview, from a magazine or book or wire service report.

When other work is used as the source of ideas or stylistic inspiration, the result must be clearly your own work. That is, what is acceptable to learn from another are the elements of style and approach - tone, rhythm, vocabulary, topic ideas - and not specific words, phrases, images.

Any questions about what is acceptable should be discussed with a supervising editor.

11. Quotations:

What appears within quotation marks should be what the person said, with ellipses indicating omissions. Indirect quotations or partial quotations often can solve the problems of a speaker's grammatical or syntactical error or the lack of clarity.

Quoting in dialect or using a non-standard spelling will be done only rarely, must be in good taste and must serve an important journalistic purpose. Grammatical errors, when they are not important to the news or when they would make the speaker look foolish or take on undue importance, are to be avoided.

If the speaker obviously meant to say something other than what was said, the intended word may be inserted parenthetically or outside the direct quotation.

12. Race, ethnic origin:

The race of a person in the news won't be reported unless it is clearly relevant to the story or is part of a detailed physical description. If a strong case cannot be made for mentioning race, it should be omitted.

Racially and ethnically derogatory terms are to be treated as obscenities; such a term should be spelled as an initial followed by hyphens, and be used only in quoted material, when it is essential to a story, and with approval of a managing editor.

Photos or art work which foster racial stereotypes are to be avoided unless there is justifiable news value. In such cases, a supervising editor should be consulted.

13. Recording interviews and phone conversations:

Except in rare and justifiable instances, we do not tape anyone without that person's knowledge. To do otherwise violates a general policy of treating people as we would want to be treated. An exception may be made only if we are convinced the recording is necessary to protect us in a legal action or for some other compelling reason, and if other approaches won't work. Such instances require a managing editor's approval in advance.

14. Respect for privacy:

The public's right to know often needs to be weighed vis-a-vis the privacy rights of people in the news. We need to respect not only their legal rights, but also their own and our readers' sensibilities about what is reasonable coverage and what is unfair or intrusive coverage. Generally, we do not identify living victims of sex crimes or persons whose safety would be jeopardized by publishing their names or addresses. Exceptions must be approved by a managing editor.

15. Sexism:

Women and men should not be treated differently. Physical description and familial connections of a woman are appropriate only if a man would be described comparably in similar circumstances. We generally avoid terms that specify gender, e.g., police officer rather than policeman, although such uses as actor/actress and waiter/waitress are acceptable. Phrases that suggest there is something unusual about the gender of someone holding a job (woman lawyer, male nurse) should be avoided. When referring to members of a

group, a construction correctly using THEIR is generally preferable to one requiring HIS or HER.
Photos which foster sexual stereotypes or exploit the subject's physique should have justifiable news value to be used.

16. Taste and tone:
We seek to avoid offending our readers and yet not compromise our reporting of the news. A story or photo or drawing of questionable taste should have significant news value to justify what some readers will regard as offensive. Whenever the slightest doubt exists about taste, consult a supervising editor. Avoid condescending tone or patronizing descriptions when writing about people or places. We do not ridicule others' mannerisms, customs or errors in language, no matter how subtly.

17. Gifts, books, records:
We accept nothing of value from news sources or from sources whose activities are, or are likely to be, the subject of news coverage by the Free Press. This includes free travel, merchandise, lodging, reduced rates or discounts available only to members of the media, free memberships in clubs or organizations, and loans of cash or merchandise. Unsolicited gifts should, where possible, be returned to the donor with a note explaining our policy. If this is not possible, the gift may be donated to charity with a note to the donor explaining the circumstances. Gifts of token or insignificant value may be accepted if returning them would be awkward or inappropriate. Meals and/or drinks shared with news sources should be paid for, wherever possible, by the staff member. When the cost of a meal includes an additional sum (for example, a $500-a-plate political fund-raiser), the staff member will pay the price of the meal and be reimbursed by the Free Press.
Books and records received for review purposes belong to the Free Press. Some books are distributed to staff members for background uses. Books and records assigned for review belong to the reviewer, but are not to be sold or exchanged. No one should derive any profit - either by resale or tax writeoffs - from these books or records. Books not reviewed or otherwise distributed are donated to local libraries. Unreviewed records are given to charities.

18. Tickets:
Free tickets to events for which the public must pay should not be accepted by staff members or members of their households in behalf of the staff member. Staff members required to attend events where press box facilities are not provided should purchase tickets and be reimbursed by the Free Press. Photographers and reporters assigned to cover sports or political events may use such facilities as review seats, press boxes, press galleries or press rooms which are necessary to cover the event. Access to press boxes or press galleries may be granted to other staff members when the access is necessary to developing information or skills.

19. Outside activities:
Staff members should avoid outside activities that might conflict with the staff member's responsibility to the Free Press and to our readers. Examples would include work for an employer who is the subject of Free Press news coverage; work for an employer whose employment of a Free Press staff member might indicate an endorsement by the Free Press or the staff member of his or her product, service or business; a staff member's endorsement of any product or cause (for pay or for free) which might imply an endorsement by the Free Press; work for an employer who competes with the Free Press for either circulation or advertising revenue. Discuss any such activity in advance with a supervising editor.
The Free Press is the exclusive owner of the work for which it pays. Any disposition of that work requires Free Press approval. Freelance work is permitted for publications not in direct competition with the Free Press.
Appearances on radio or television by staff members are generally permissible, but a supervising editor should be consulted in advance of the appearance. A staff member should not enter into a commitment for regular involvement with a radio or television station without first consulting a managing editor.

20. Business interests, investments:
A staff member may not enter into a business relationship with a news source. A staff member may not make investments which could come into conflict with the staff member's duties. A staff member with investments or stock holdings in corporations should avoid making news decisions that involve those corporations.
Unpublished information gathered by the Free Press may not be used by staff members for investment decisions. Staff members should try to ensure the confidentiality of information gathered by the Free Press by making every effort to keep such information from reaching anyone who might attempt to use it for personal gain before it is published. Staff members should be careful in dealings with news sources - and particularly those in the investment community - not to disclose before publication the nature of any story that has the potential to affect the price of any stock. And because timing of an investment is often crucial, no one outside the Free Press should know in advance the publication date of any such story.
When there is doubt about the appropriateness of a business investment or about any possible conflict of interest, the staff member should discuss the situation with a supervising editor.

21. Personal relationships:
No staff member should write about, report on, photograph or make a news judgment about

any individual related to him or her by blood or marriage or with whom the staff member has a close personal relationship. Writing or editing a story about a friend's business, for example, presents a conflict and should be avoided. A staff member who finds himself or herself in a situation where a conflict of interest (or the perceptions of such) becomes likely should consult beforehand with a managing editor about the circumstances.

22. Travel:

We do not accept travel junkets or special media rates from airlines, agencies and governmental travel organizations or free travel with sports teams. In the latter case, we will accept the same discount the team receives. Transportation costs necessary to the performance of Free Press duties are paid by the Free Press. Inaugural flights, where government regulations prohibit the sale of tickets, will be taken only in cases where there are compelling coverage reasons and then only by the person(s) assigned to such coverage. Unique situations, e.g., military transportation necessary to covering a story, will be handled on a case-by-case basis in consultation with a supervising editor.

23. Connections:

Staff members need to avoid using their Free Press positions to obtain personal or financial benefit for themselves, family or friends. We cannot use the company's name to curry favor, imply a threat or pressure, seek personal gain, expedite personal business, or seek special consideration. (For example, it would be improper to use company stationery for a personal complaint letter.)

24. Political activity:

Journalists should avoid work for pay or as a volunteer in a political campaign or organization. If a staff member has a close relative - spouse, parent, child, brother or sister - or a person with whom the staff member has a close and continuing personal relationship, who is involved in a political campaign or organization, the staff member should not cover or make news judgments about the campaign or organization; if the individual circumstances are felt to justify another course of action, a managing editor needs to be consulted. If a staff member feels compelled to seek public office, the executive editor's permission is required.

JERSEY JOURNAL

The cornerstone of a newspaper is its integrity. Jersey Journal reporters and editors --in protecting this integrity-- must avoid impropriety and the appearance of impropriety as well as any conflict of interest or the appearance of conflict.

Two basic rules should guide everyone:

1. News department employees shall not perform services of any kind on behalf of a public or political agency or individual except with specific consent of the editor. Outside employment is not prohibited, but advance approval of the editor must be obtained by any employee who desires to engage in outside employment or engage in political activity or public relations. No employee shall exploit his or her connection with The Jersey Journal in the course of activities outside working hours.

2. News department employees should show good judgment in refusing to accept gifts or gratuities from any person or organization in any way involved with the business or The Jersey Journal. common sense should prevail; gifts should not exceed a nominal value. Any question concerning the propriety of accepting such gifts should be discussed with the supervising editor.

Acceptance of press credentials for coverage of an event or trips related to special news coverage must be approved by the editor.

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