claims of “nearly six million” viewers to “nearly 5.5 million” viewers. In discussing the problems at Channel One, Obligation, Inc.’s Jim Metrock said:

Schools no longer have time for Channel One’s nonsensical. Academic time can’t be wasted anymore. The silliness and the often ugly-inappropriateness of Channel One’s content is angering school administrators, teachers, parents, and students. Channel One’s recent partnership with white board manufacturer Promethean in an effort to muscle into elementary schools will be a financial disaster for both firms. The downward spiral is accelerating for Channel One. The recent loss of half of their news anchors shows the employees are heading for the exits.

**Micro Issues**

1. How is Channel One different from the student newspaper or yearbook that sells advertising? From the PTA fund-raiser?
2. Are there certain sorts of ads that should be censored from Channel One?
3. A news service called ZapMe! installs and maintains computer labs for schools, providing the schools agree to log 4 hours per day per computer and allow ZapMe! to place ads of marketers on their Internet connections. It also tracks student demographic information. The company asks your local school district for permission to sign a contract. Do you write an expose of the practice or an editorial praising it?

**Midrange Issues**

1. Are there certain areas of U.S. life that should be protected from commercialization? Why or why not?
2. How would you respond to the argument that Channel One helps students learn, particularly about difficult issues?
3. Campaign for a Commercial-Free Childhood (CCFC) has called Channel One “nothing more than a business ploy to subject children to commercials.” How do you respond to that?
4. Would a preferable funding mechanism for schools be local taxes or state taxpayer support, or should schools just simply learn to do with less?

**Macro Issues**

1. Democracy works best with a well-informed citizenry. After going to its Web site and viewing some of the headlines, does Channel One fulfill that? What other sorts of commercialism appears in public schools? How is Channel One like or unlike those forms of commercialism?
2. What responsibility does Channel One have for heightening desires in children for the product/adverisd when their socioeconomic status leaves little chance that the child will be able to have the service at product?
3. Critique the statements of Metrock in the cash. Do you agree or disagree with him? Justify your answer after viewing a few of the 12-minute newscasts (some entire episodes can be found at http://www.obligation.org).
While the word loyalty is not present in English translations of the Phaedo, the overall tone of the work is a tribute to loyalty, in this case a willingness to die for a cause.

Social contract theorist Thomas Hobbes was the first major Western philosopher to assert that God did not have to be the focus of loyalty. In his historic work, The Leviathan, Hobbes asserted loyalty is a social act and asserted that the agreement allows people to form a social contract—that is the basis of political society. Unlike Socrates, Hobbes acknowledged that people could have more than one loyalty at a time and might, at certain times, be forced to choose among them—a notion most philosophers hold today.

Hobbes, unlike Socrates, also asserted that loyalty has limits. Loyalty to the ruler stops when continued loyalty would result in a subject's death—the loyalty to self-preservation being higher than loyalty to the ruler. The turmoil surrounding how the United States responds to terrorist acts and activities is a vivid example of how being loyal can inform decisions.

THE CONTRIBUTIONS OF JOSIAH ROYCE

American theologian Josiah Royce, who taught at Harvard in the early 1900s, believed that loyalty could become the single guiding ethical principle. In The Philosophy of Loyalty (1908), Royce wrote, “My theory is that the whole moral law is implicitly bound up in one precept: ‘Be loyal.’” Royce defined loyalty as a social act: “The willing and practical and thoroughgoing devotion of a person to a cause.” Royce would be critical, therefore, of the journalist who gets a story at all costs and whose only loyalty is to himself or the public relations profession who lets loyalty to an employer cause him to bend the truth in press releases or annual reports. To Royce, loyalty is an act of choice. A loyal person, Royce asserted, does not have “Hamlet’s option”—or the leisure not to decide. For in the act of not deciding, that person has essentially cast his loyalty.

Loyalty also promotes self-realization. Royce spent much of his academic career fascinated with the new Freudian psychology and he viewed loyalty in its light. As a person continued to exercise loyalty, Royce believed, he or she would develop habits of character that would result in systematic ethical action. Like other aspects of moral development (see the last chapter of this book), loyalty can be learned and honed, Royce believed.

Loyalty as a single ethical guide has problems. First, loyalty, incompletely conceived, can be bias or prejudice thinly cloaked. Second, few people maintain merely a single loyalty and if loyalty is to become a guiding ethical principle, we need to develop a way to help distinguish among competing loyalties. Third, in a mass society, the concept of face-to-face loyalty has lost much of its power. Finally, the most troubling question: whether it is ethical to be loyal to an unethical cause; for example, racism or gender discrimination.

However, Royce suggested a way to determine whether a specific cause was worthy of loyalty. A worthy cause should harmonize with the loyalties of others within the community. For instance, the loyalty of the journalist should be in harmony with the loyalty of the reader. The loyalty of the advertising agency should not conflict with the loyalty of either its client or the consumer. Our loyalty to free and unfettered political discussion as the basis of modern democracy and journalism meets Royce’s test of loyalty but is also the core of the debate over campaign finance laws.

To Royce, the true problem of loyalty as an ethical principle was not the poor choice of loyalties but failure to adhere to proper loyalties: “Theills of mankind are largely the consequence of disloyalty rather than wrong-headed loyalty” (Royce 1908).

Causes capable of sustaining loyalty, Royce noted, have a “super-individual” quality, apparent when people become part of a community. A spirit of democratic cooperation is needed for Royce’s view of loyalty to result in ethical action. For instance, advertising agencies demonstrate an ethical loyalty when they view their role as providing needed information for intelligent consumer choice, but more often they opt for loyalty to the bottom line because they suspect that competing agencies do.

Royce’s thought has been criticized on a number of grounds. First, some philosophers assert that Royce’s concept of loyalty is simplistic and that the adoption of loyalty as a moral principle may lead to allegiance to troubling causes. For instance, the advertising copywriter who scripts distorted television spots about a political opponent in the belief that she must get her candidate elected is demonstrating a troubling allegiance to a politician over the democratic process. Similarly, a reporter who must get the story first, regardless of its completeness or accuracy, would be demonstrating a misplaced loyalty to beating the competition.

Second, others have noted that Royce provides no way to balance among conflicting loyalties. Media professionals such as journalists are faced daily with a barrage of potential loyalties—the truth, the audience, the sources, the bottom line, the profession—and choosing among them is the most basic of ethical decisions. Other professions have similar dilemmas such as the documentarian who must be loyal to the truth in her art while at the same time being loyal to the producers who want large numbers of the ticket-buying public to see the final product.

Third, it is unclear how Royce’s ethical thinking would balance majority notions against minority views. Strictly interpreted, Royce’s notion of loyalty could inspire adherence to the status quo or strict majority rule. For instance, advertisements that stereotype groups of people despite evidence to the contrary help perpetuate incorrect images. The ads work because they appeal to the majority, but by stereotyping, they have crowded out more accurate impressions.

Yet despite these criticisms, Royce’s thought has much to recommend it. First, Royce speaks to the development of ethical habits. Second, Royce reminds us that the basis of loyalty is social and loyalty requires we put others on an equal footing with ourselves. Most important is the overriding message of Royce’s work: when making ethical choices, it is important to consider what your loyalties are and how you arrived at those loyalties.

JOURNALISM AS A PROFESSION

Loyalty is hot a fixed point but a range within a continuum. In Loyalty: An Essay on the Morality of Relationships, Fletcher (1993) identifies two types of loyalty. The first is minimal: “Do not betray me.” The second is maximal: “Be one with me.”
Between these two poles is a range of possibilities for allegiance and for corresponding media behavior. The location on the continuum for YouTube will differ from that of The Nation magazine.

One of the problems modern news media face is that a large percentage of the U.S. public subscribes to the notion that if the media are not maximally loyal—that is, one with government, the military and so forth—then they are traitorous. The media are routinely called disloyal by politicians, often for no greater sin than fulfilling the watchdog role, and it plays very well on the campaign trail.

Loyalty can be linked to role. A role is a capacity in which we act toward others. It provides others with information about how we will act in a structured situation. Some roles are occupationally defined—account executive, screenwriter, editor. Others are not: mother, spouse and daughter. We all play multiple roles and they help us define ourselves and know what is expected of us and others.

’When the role you assume is a professional one, you add the ethical responsibilities of that role. Philosophers claim that “to belong to a profession is traditionally to be held to certain standards of conduct that go beyond the norm for others” (Lebacqz 1985, 32) and journalism qualifies as one of those professions, with a higher expected norm of conduct.

However, not all journalists agree in practice. Hodges (1986) makes the distinction in this manner: when asked what she does for a living, one journalist says, “I am a journalist” while another says “I work for the Gazette.” Hodges claims the first speaker recognizes her responsibility as a professional while the latter merely acknowledges her loyalty to a paycheck. The first would be expected to be loyal to societal expectations of a journalist; the second may or may not.

Journalists and their employers have debated whether journalism should be considered a profession. Advocates of professionalism assert that professionalism among journalists will provide them with greater autonomy, prestige and financial rewards. Critics see the process of professionalization as one that distances readers and viewers from the institutions that journalists often represent.

Despite these debates, we sense that journalists have two central responsibilities that are distinct in modern society. First, they have a greater responsibility to tell the truth than members of most professions. Second, journalists also seem to carry a greater obligation to foster political involvement than the average person.

Philosophers note that while ethical dilemmas are transitory, roles endure. Role expectations carry over from one situation to another. Loyalty to the profession means loyalty to the ideals of the profession. To Aristotle, loyalty to a profession also would mean maintaining high professional standards. The Aristotelian notion of virtue means being the best television producer or advertising executive you can be in the belief that you are being loyal to the profession and its ideals.

**CONFLICTING LOYALTIES**

As you can see, we are no longer talking about merely a single loyalty. We live in an age of layers of loyalties, creating added problems and complications.

Sorting through competing loyalties can be difficult, particularly when loyalties in one role appear to conflict with the loyalties of another. Much has been written about this issue and we have adapted much of such framework from William F. May (2001), who outlined these layers of loyalties for college professors, but they are adaptable to those who work in the media. He offers four types of loyalty.

1. **Loyalties arising from situated humanity:**
   - demonstrate respect for each person as an individual.
   - communicate honestly and truthfully with all persons.
   - build a fair and compassionate environment that promotes the common good.

2. **Loyalties arising from professional practice:**
   - fulfill the informational and entertainment mission of the media.
   - understand your audience’s needs.
   - strive to enhance professional development of self and others.
   - avoid the abuse of power and position.
   - conduct professional activities in ways that uphold or surpass the ideals of virtue and competence.

3. **Loyalties arising from employment:**
   - keep agreements and promises, operate within the framework of the law and extend due process to all persons.
   - do not squander your organization’s resources or your public trust.
   - promote compassionate and humane professional relationships.
   - foster policies that build a community of ethnic, gender and socioeconomic diversity.
   - promote the right of all to be heard.

4. **Loyalties arising from the media’s role in public life:**
   - serve as examples of open institutions where truth is required.
   - foster open discussion and debate.
   - interpret your professional actions to readers and viewers.
   - serve as a voice for the voiceless.
   - serve as a mirror of society.

The problem of conflicting loyalties is evident in the reality that most media professionals work for a corporation. They owe at least some loyalty to their corporate employers. However, such loyalty seldom involves a face-to-face relationship. Corporations demand employee loyalty but are much less willing to be loyal in return. The fear is that one’s allegiance to the organization will advance the interest of the organization without any reciprocal loyalty to the employee. This is particularly true in the first years of this century when many news organizations, particularly newspapers, are going out of business from facing severe economic cutbacks.

Most ethical decisions, however, are not about loyalties to corporations or loyalty to an abstract concept such as freedom of the press or the public’s right to know. Most everyday loyalty decisions are about how you treat the subject of your interview or how you consider the consumer of your advertising. Such ethical decisions bring to the forefront the notion of reciprocity. Simply articulated, reciprocity requires that loyalty should not work against the interest of either party.
Even in a time of shifting loyalties, there are some loyalties that should only be reluctantly abandoned such as loyalty to humanity and loyalty to truth. Virtually no situation in media ethics calls for inhumane treatment or withholding the truth. You can probably articulate other loyalties you would rarely, if ever, abandon. Even if you can’t foresee every possible conflict of loyalty in your media profession, knowing where your ultimate loyalties lie is a good start to avoiding conflicts.

THE POTTER BOX

Ethical decision-making models, such as the one in Chapter 1 by Sissela Bok, help you make an ethical choice. In this chapter, you will learn a second decision-making model, one that incorporates loyalties into the reasoning process. The model was developed by Harvard theologian Ralph Potter and is called the Potter Box. Its initial use required that you go through four steps to arrive at an ethical decision. The case below will be used to familiarize you with the model.

You are the assistant city editor for a newspaper of about 30,000 circulation in a western city of about 80,000. Your police reporter regularly reports on sexual assaults in the community.

While the newspaper has a policy of not revealing the names of rape victims, it routinely reports where assaults occur, the circumstances and a description of the assailant, if available.

Tonight the police reporter is preparing to write a story about a rape that occurred in the early-morning hours yesterday on the roof of the downtown bus station. Police report that the young woman who was raped went willingly to the roof of the bus station with her attacker. Although she is 25, she lives in a group home for the educable mentally disabled in the city, one of seven women living there.

She could not describe her assailant, and police have no suspects.

Your reporter asks you for advice about how much detail, and what detail, he should include in the story.

The Potter Box has four steps (see Figure 4.1) that should be taken in order. They are (1) understanding the morally relevant facts, (2) outlining the values inherent in the decision, (3) applying relevant philosophical principles and (4) articulating a loyalty. You proceed through the four steps in a counterclockwise fashion beginning with the factual situation and ending at loyalties. We will examine each step individually.

**Step One: Understanding the facts of the case.** In the scenario, the facts are straightforward. As the newspaper editor, you have the information. Your ethical choice rests with how much of it you are going to print.

**Step Two: Outlining values.** Values is a much abused word in modern English. People can value everything—from their loved ones to making fashion statements. In ethics, however, values takes on a more precise meaning. When you value something—an idea or a principle—it means you are willing to give up other things for it. If, as a journalist, you value truth above all things, then you must sometimes be willing to give up privacy in favor of it. In the foregoing case, such a value system would mean that you would print every detail, because you value truth and would risk invading the privacy of a person who is in some important ways unable to defend herself. If, as a journalist, you value both truth and privacy, then you may be willing to give up some truth, the printing of every detail, to attempt to preserve the victim’s privacy.

Values often compete and an important element of using the Potter Box is to be honest about what you really do value. Both truth and privacy are lofty ideals. A less lofty ideal that most of us value is keeping our jobs. Journalists often value getting the story first or exclusively. A forthright articulation of all the values (and there will be more than one) in any particular ethical situation will help you see more clearly the choices that you face and the potential compromises you may have to make.

**Step Three: Application of philosophical principles.** Once you have decided what you value, you need to apply the philosophical principles outlined in the first chapter. For example, in the previous scenario, a utilitarian might argue that the

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**FIGURE 4.1** The four steps of the Potter Box
greatest good is served by printing a story that alerts the community to the fact that some creep who rapes women who cannot defend themselves is still out there. Ross would argue that a journalist has duties both to the readers and to the victim and they must be weighed before making a decision.

Aristotle’s golden mean might counsel a middle ground that balances printing every detail against printing no story at all. Kant would suggest that the maxim of protecting someone who cannot protect herself is a maxim that could be universalized, making a decision to omit some information justifiable. He would also argue to not use the woman as a means to your end—an exclusive story in this instance.

In this case, application of several ethical principles leads to the general conclusion that the newspaper should print some story, but not one that inadvertently reveals the victim’s identity or that makes her out to be hopelessly naive in her trust of strangers.

However, you should be alert that while different ethical principles in this scenario lead to the same conclusion, many, if not most, ethical dilemmas may not produce such a happy result. The principles point to different and even mutually exclusive actions on your part, leaving you to decide your ultimate loyalty. But this is why the Potter Box demands that you apply more than one ethical principle, so that if (or when) they vary, you are able to explain why.

**Step Four: Articulation of Loyalties.** Potter viewed loyalty as a social commitment and the results of using the Potter Box reflect that ethic. In the fourth step, you articulate your possible loyalties and decide whether they are in conflict. In the case above, you have a loyalty to the truth, to the woman, and to your job—just for starters.

But, your loyalties are not in severe conflict with one another unless you adopt an absolutist view of the truth the community needs to know. It is possible to counsel your reporter to write a story that tells the truth but omits some facts (for example, the woman’s residence in a group home and her mental disability), alerts the community to a danger (there’s a creep out there who police haven’t caught), protects the victim’s privacy (you won’t print her name or where she lives) and allows you to take pride in the job you’ve done (you’ve told the truth and not harmed anyone).

However, use of the Potter Box often highlights a conflict between loyalties. In these instances, we refer you to Royce’s concept: what you choose to be loyal to should be capable of inspiring a similar loyalty in others who are both like and unlike you. Journalists are often accused of being “out of touch” with their viewers or readers, a fact for which we are highly criticized.

Our experience with the Potter Box has been that the vast majority of ethical decisions will allow you to sustain a variety of loyalties—they are sometimes not mutually exclusive as we saw above. However, those decisions that are most troubling are ones where a loyalty becomes so dominant that you are forced to abandon other loyalties that once seemed quite essential.

While you may initially find the stepwise process of the Potter Box somewhat cumbersome, as you learn to use it you will become fluent in it. The following case study, “The Pimp, the Prostitute and the Preacher,” illustrates how you might use the Potter Box when making an ethical decision.

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**Chapter 4: Loyalty: Choosing Between Competing Allegiances**

**The Pimp, the Prostitute and the Preacher**

You are the court reporter for a daily newspaper in a city of about 150,000 in the Pacific Northwest. About a year ago, the local police force began to crack down on prostitutes working the downtown mall. However, the department sought to limit prostitution by arresting pimps rather than by arresting the prostitutes or their customers. The first of those arrests has now come to trial, and your paper has assigned you to cover it.

In his opening statement, the local assistant district attorney tells the jury that in order to convict a person of pimping under state law, the state must prove first that money was exchanged for sexual favors, and second that the money was then given to a third party, the pimp, in return for protection, continued work, etc. During the first two days of the trial, he calls as witnesses four young women, ages 14 to 16, who admit they have worked as prostitutes in the city but are a great deal less clear on the disposal of their earnings. Your story after the first day of the trial summarizes the details without disclosing their names.

Near the end of the second day, the prosecutor called a witness who said he had caught, protected the victim’s privacy (you won’t print her name or where she lives), and printed only a middle-aged man who in an almost inaudible response to a question lists his occupation as a minister at one of the more conservative Protestant churches in the city. He admits to having paid one of the young women for sex, and that day’s portion of the trial ends soon after his testimony is complete.

About 45 minutes later you are back in the office to write the story when the newsroom secretary asks you if you have a few minutes to speak with “Reverend Jones.” You look up and realize you are facing the minister who testified earlier. In the open newsroom he begins to cry, and on his knees, not to print his name. He even holds out a copy of the story you wrote on page one of this morning’s paper outlining why the names of the prostitutes had not been used. He asserts that should a story with his name appear, his marriage will crumble, his children will no longer respect him and he will lose his job.

After a few minutes the editor realizes what is happening and asks you, the minister and the news editor into his office for a conference.

Using the Potter Box, determine how you would report this story. Your decision will reflect a set of loyalties as well as the values and principles you have chosen. Others may choose differently. A justification model such as Potter’s or Bok’s does not eliminate differences. What it will do, ideally, is ensure that your choices are grounded in sound ethical reasoning and justifiable on demand.

When you are finished, the final casting of loyalties will inevitably create another fact for the first quadrant of the box. For instance, in this case, if the decision is to run the story, anything that might subsequently happen to the minister as a result—firing, divorce, even possible suicide—is now a hypothetical “fact” for the first quadrant of the Potter Box. With this new “fact” you return to the first quadrant of the Potter Box and go through it again. If you decide not to run the minister’s name and his parishioners discover his actions, the newspaper loses credibility. This is also a “fact” to be entered into the first quadrant of the Potter Box. Considering these additional although hypothetical “facts,” you may want to go through the process again to see if your decision will remain the same. (You might search the Web or see the Web site for this book for the story of Admiral Boorda, who committed suicide after it was revealed that he wore medals on his uniform he had not earned.) Regardless of your initial decision.
about the story, would the possibility of that subsequent “fact” obviously not known to the journalist at the time, make a difference in a later use of the Potter Box? Now that you’ve made a decision about revealing the name of the minister based on the facts, we’d like to introduce additional facts. Read them and go through the Potter Box again focusing less on the minister and more on larger issues that affect how the story is written and how it is run in the newspaper. This time, think about the notions of stereotyping, how minorities are portrayed in news reports, and what exactly we mean by “objectivity” and “truth.”

As the trial continues, it becomes clear that there are other factors at work. In your largely Caucasian community, the only people arrested for pimping have been African-American. All the young women who work as prostitutes are Caucasian; as are the customers who testify. As far as prostitution goes, your Pacific Northwest version is relatively mild. There are no reports of drug use among the prostitutes and their customers, and none of the prostitutes has complained of physical violence. Further, the prosecuting attorney cannot make any of the young women admit under oath that they ever gave the pimps any money. The jury’s verdict in this case is not guilty.

Do the new facts change your loyalties? Do they change the way you look at the trial? If so, in what way?

We recommend that you try using both the Bok and Potter justification models at various times in your ethical decision making. Becoming a competent practitioner of both methods will provide you with greater flexibility and explanatory power. We also recommend, regardless of the approach you use, that an unvarnished and critical discussion of loyalty become part of your ethical dialogue. We believe it will enable you to anticipate situations as well as react to them.

Suggested Readings


Cases on the Web

www.mhhe.com/medEthics8e

"She chose before losing the choice" by Tom Lyons
"Standing behind a reporter: The CBS/News Journal Controversy" by John Sweeney
"The anchor as activit" by Fred Bales
"The wonderful world of jokets" by Ralph Barney

CHAPTER 4 CASES

CASE 4-A
Who’s Facebook Page Is It Anyway?

AMY SIMONS
University of Missouri

Barrett Tryon joined the Colorado Springs Gazette staff in April 2012. He was hired to help draw users to the newspaper website, providing updates on breaking news and enterprise stories.

Tryon was no stranger to the Colorado Springs market. He’d spent more than a decade working for KRDO-TV, an ABC affiliate. In 2011, he won an Emmy for “Best Newscast” in a medium-sized market. That same year, the station’s website—of which Tryon was the managing editor—was given the award for best website by the Associated Press. On his station bio, he was described as “the face behind KRDO.com and KRDO’s Facebook and Twitter pages.” As the face of those pages, Tryon drew in more than 200 new followers to the station’s sites each week.

If there was one thing Barrett Tryon was confident he knew, it was how to use social media responsibly.

That’s why what happened to him at the Gazette surprised so many.

It started with a Los Angeles Times story published on June 12, 2012, announcing Freedom Communications-Holdings Inc.’s sale of the Orange County Register and six other newspapers to a Boston investment group. One of those papers: the Gazette.

Tryon posted a link to that story to his Facebook page, along with a pull quote highlighting his employer’s direct involvement.

Three hours later, Tryon’s boss, Carmen Boles, told him via email that the Facebook post was a violation of Freedom Communication’s social media policy, stating the LA Times article “does not meet our standards of factual information.” Soon after, in a second email, she included this passage:

Freedom Communications, Inc.’s Associate Handbook/Confidentially and Proprietary Rights policy prohibits you from posting disparaging or defamatory ... statements about the company or its business interests, but you should also avoid social media communications that might be misconstrued in a way that could damage the company’s goodwill and business reputation, even indirectly.

Tryon maintained he was acting within his rights under the First Amendment. He told his boss in an email, “it’s on my personal account, and from an LA Times article, I’m not removing it.”

The email exchange continued for several hours, and Boles told Tryon that corporate human resources would be handling the matter. Tryon, standing his ground, told Bowles “it’s only natural for someone to be interested in something that directly affects you ... I think there’s a huge difference between saying ‘eff off’ versus pulling a quote. But, since I violated the policy, I’ll deal with the consequences.”
The human resources department scheduled a meeting with Tryon for June 14, 2012, two days after the initial post. But, that meeting never happened because, Tryon told the *Colorado Springs Independent*, he insisted on bringing an attorney. Instead, Freedom Communications put Tryon on administrative leave. Meanwhile, the paper's decision ignited debate over the ethics and legality of social media policies.

Almost all news organizations and professional associations have some kind of social media policy or guideline. Many, like NPR, the *New York Times* and the *Roanoke Times*, even make them public. Most read like a list of common sense reminders: identify yourself as a journalist and a representative of your newsroom, maintain standards of confirmation and attribution, maintain copyright by linking to original sources, and don't post photos or videos of your own editorials. NPR's rules, for example, say, "Avoid harmful comments or opinions that are not grounded in reporting."

According to the National Labor Relations Act, which gives workers the right to organize, unionize and bargain collectively, some of these widely shared guidelines might be illegal. In response to Tryon’s case, Poynter.org published a memo issued by the National Labor Relations Board that ruled the following social media policy provisions unlawful:

- "Avoid harming the image and integrity of the company."
- "Do not express public opinions about the workplace, work satisfaction or dissatisfaction, wages, hours or work conditions."
- "Don’t comment on any legal matters, including pending litigation or disputes."
- "Instruction not to "reveal non-public company information on any public site."

"I really want to emphasize this—I think this is so important—is that this is not an effort for me to slam the Gazette, to slam Freedom Communications, to slam the new owners, 2100 Trust. That’s not what I’m doing," Tryon told the *Colorado Springs Independent*, in its report of Tyron’s unwanted administrative leave and the reasons behind it.

"I’m standing on principle that what I posted absolutely was not breaking any type of social media policy; I didn’t interject any opinion. And the fact of the matter is, it’s not an effort for me to slam Freedom Communications, to slam the new owners, 2100 Trust. That’s not what I’m doing," Tryon told the *Colorado Springs Independent*, in its report of Tyron’s unwanted administrative leave and the reasons behind it.

On June 19 2012, about a week after Barrett Tryon posted the *LA Times* story to his Facebook page, his bosses at Freedom Communications called him with an offer to reinstate him. Tryon resigned instead. He announced his decision to followers on Twitter, referencing a hit song by the musical group, Goyte.

"I think after I realized there was support from so many people locally and nationally that I’m not really interested in working for an organization [where] we would evey have this conversation; that there was never a dialogue to begin with—and that’s unfortunate," he told the *Colorado Springs Independent*. "I hope that the takeaway is that people realize that, if you do have a social-media policy in place, it’s important that you know what it is, and how it can be interpreted or misinterpreted."

**Micro Issues**

1. Did Barrett Tryon violate Freedom Communications’ social media policy?

2. Was Freedom Communications within its right to demand Tryon remove the post from his Facebook page?

3. What risks does an employee take when posting about his or her employer on social media? A competitor? A news story that has already been published or broadcast?

4. What loyalties did Tryon’s boss demonstrate in how she handled her initial objections to the first Facebook posting?

**Midrange Issues**

1. Should news organizations expect employees to follow social media policies and guidelines on their personal accounts?

2. Evaluate the social media policy that suggests that news should not be broken on social media but through more traditional channels.

3. What, if any, types of social media posts should be fireable offenses for a journalist?

**Macro Issues**

1. Should news agencies publish their social media policies for public view?

2. Is there such a thing as “private” social media presence for a journalist? Should anything published under a journalist’s name uphold all journalistic standards?

3. Tryon said he had a First Amendment right to publish on his Facebook page. Evaluate this claim ethically. Does the First Amendment trump professional loyalty in this case?

4. Do news organizations that promote their Web sites and encourage employees to use social media set themselves up for these sorts of conflicts? How might they be avoided?

**CASE 4-B**

What Would Socrates Have Done? The Disappearance of Hillary Clinton

LEE WILKINS

University of Missouri

Photographs are sometimes labeled iconic too soon. But the photograph of President Barack Obama surrounded by his cabinet watching the real-time video of the attack on the compound where Osama bin Laden had been in hiding was labeled iconic before it was 24 hours old. As you look at the picture, notice that the papers in front of Secretary of State Hillary Clinton and others are “blurred.” The White House, before it released the photograph, distorted the image so that, it said, high-security information would not be revealed through a detailed examination of the photograph itself.
CHAPTER 4: Loyalty: Choosing Between Competing Allegiances

The meaning of the photograph, generally through an analysis of the expressions on people's faces, has been debated. For example, many who viewed the photograph said Clinton was the only person in the room showing shock at the images. Clinton herself has countered that interpretation, saying she was merely covering her nose and mouth to block a sneeze. The photograph itself, as well as the raid on the bin Laden compound, also became the subject of a political campaign commercial and the subtext for foreign policy discussions in the 2012 presidential election.

Numerous print publications and broadcast outlets reproduced the photo. One of those was a Brooklyn-based Hasidic newspaper *Der Zeitung*, a paper that is written in Yiddish and serves a small segment of the ultra-orthodox Jewish community in that city.

In the photograph of the bin Laden raid printed in *Der Zeitung*, the image of Hillary Clinton and White House staffer Audrey Tomason, director for counterterrorism for the U.S. Security Council, were literally Photoshopped out of the picture. Editors claimed that Secretary Clinton was deleted from the photograph because the paper serves a readership that places a high value on female modesty.

Critics countered that *Der Zeitung*, which translates as "The Time," has edited out other images of women because the publication itself has an ideological objection to women holding positions of power.

Visit these links to read more about this story and see Der Zeitung's controversial photo:
http://www.npr.org/blogs/thetwo-way/2011/05/09/136145392/
hasidic-newspaper-removes-clinton-another-woman-from-iconic-photo"

Micro Issues

1. As you look at the two images, does how Hillary Clinton is dressed support the claim of editing for "female modesty"?
2. Would it have been appropriate for the paper to simply crop the picture on the right-hand side, thus cutting out the images of Clinton and several others and resulting in a photograph that focused more specifically on President Obama and Vice President Joe Biden?
3. Since this newspaper reached only a small group, and since the undocotored photograph was available from many other sources, is any of this really significant?

Midrange Issues

1. The doctored photograph was brought to the attention of the wider public when it was reported—critically—in other newspapers. What is the role of these other newspapers with regard to *Der Zeitung* and readers, viewers and listeners?
2. One commentator, quoted in the *Daily Mail* in the UK, noted, "This is a bit silly. Secretary of State Clinton was not dressed immodestly. There was no intent of objectification in the photo. Haven't the editors got something better to do?" How should the editor of *Der Zeitung* respond to this criticism? How might such a response emphasize the concept of loyalty?

Macro Issues

1. This same event—the death of Osama bin Laden—became controversial for another reason: The White House refused to provide photographs of bin Laden's corpse or his burial at sea? Some journalists—in many countries—supported this approach; others disputed it. How would you analyze the White House approach in your role as journalist? In your role as strategic communication professional?
2. What should be the role of ideology in journalism?
3. What should be the role of ideology in strategic communication?

CASE 4-C

Twitter Ethics for Journalists: Can You Scoop Yourself?

CHARLOTTE BELLIS
TVNZ—Christchurch, New Zealand

Journalists in every developed nation are experimenting with using Twitter as a reporting tool. The site allows members to post searchable updates of fewer than 140 characters at a time about themselves and the world around them in updates called "tweets." "In countries all around the world, people follow the sources most relevant to them and access information via Twitter as it happens—from breaking world news to updates from friends," reads Twitter.com. One blogger on CisionBlog headlines, "Social media is a virtual Rolodex for journalists and media relations people." ReadWriteWeb.com believes Twitter helps them with quality assurance, discovering breaking stories, conducting interviews and promoting their work. A columnist on Poynter believes Twitter's ability to search updates "could make it easier for journalists to track beats, trends or issues."
However, some have questioned whether the personal element Twitter invokes could result in a lack of vetting, unethical behavior or a blurring of traditional boundaries between journalist and citizen.

In January 2009, David Schlesinger, Editor-in-Chief at Reuters, published a blog entitled Full Disclosure: Twittering away standards or tweeting the future of boundaries between journalist and citizen. Other journalists then joined @davos in his Twitter experiment as they pushed to be the first to break developments, post comments on the behind-the-scenes experience and promote their stories. With ‘#davos’ as the standard signoff for the attending journalists, any Twitterer could follow a continuous stream of comments from the ski resort.

However, the Silicon Alley Insider highlighted Schlesinger in a story headlined “Reuters Scoops Itself by Twittering from Davos.” While at the meeting, Schlesinger—under his Twitter handle @Daschles—had tweeted comments like, “[Financial speculator George] Soros—financial industry has to shrink by half! #davos.” And another: “Soros—new financial system needs to emerge before we can talk about length of recession.” The Insider article asked Schlesinger “If a Reuters correspondent had done that, would you fire him/her?”

Schlesinger responded that Twitter is journalism and that it has the potential to be dangerous. He said he was not embarrassed that his tweets beat the Reuters newswire, adding he was not destroying Reuters standards by encouraging tweeting: “If great storytellers use [microblogging, macroblogging and social networking] platforms to display their knowledge, access, expertise and abilities, I think that is a marvelous advance.”

In a follow-up interview Schlesinger said he encourages his reporters to experiment but understood how his tweets could stir debate, particularly because journalism is at an “inflection point” in history. “...A company like Reuters makes most of its money from being first, so by challenging our own systems and thus business model I became a legitimate target.”

“Twitter is such a fast medium that it challenges our standards to always have, for example, two pairs of eyes on a story,” said Schlesinger. “Do we have whole new standards for Twitter? Do we allow the unedited and unvetted?”

As journalism works to remodel itself for the 21st century, many believe the instantaneous nature of the Internet is a key element in the industry’s viability. For journalists the problem becomes should they publish—via tweets—information as soon as it is known, even when the nature of the medium itself dictates that the information will lack context. Or should the journalist hold off and spend time getting the context of the story, vetting it through a more regular editorial process and publishing it in a more traditional, less instantaneous medium?

Another problem for journalists using Twitter is that the social networking site was built for instantaneous, personal thoughts. Twitter naturally lends itself to divulging information as if to a friend and results in tweets that have a personal tone. Twitter makes it easy to muddle the personal and the professional as Canada’s National Post technology reporter David George-Cosh, known as @sirdavid on Twitter, learned. After declining an interview with reporter George-Cosh, a marketing professional tweeted: “Reporter to me, ‘When the media calls you, you jump, OK!?? Why, when you called me and I’m not selling? Newspapers will get what they deserve.”

The reporter saw the tweet and responded with six heated tweets that included multiple expletives directed toward the marketing professional. MediaStyle.ca characterized @sirdavid’s response with this headline: “National Post reporter has total Twitter meltdown.” Hours later, the National Post apologized on their Editor’s blog for the reporter’s conduct on Twitter.

**Micro Issues**

1. Do you think it is important for journalists to distinguish their professional roles from their personal ones on social networking sites? If you do, how might that be accomplished?
2. If you were Schlesinger’s editor, how would you have responded to him “scooping” his own organization on the story? Does it matter that the organization paid him a salary to do this work?
3. If Schlesinger were a freelancer, do you think the same rules should apply? Why or why not?

**Midrange Issues**

1. Has the advent of Twitter or the Internet changed the nature of the “scoop” or of objectivity?
2. Should news organizations, or individual journalists, develop policies outlining how they will and will not respond to things that are written about them or their work online?
3. Is promoting a story an appropriate use of Twitter? Who should do it? Why?

**Macro Issues**

1. Does the personal nature of a social networking site make it an inappropriate place for journalism? Does the fact that tweets are so brief? How might your answers be supported by concepts such as Ross’s duties?
2. Ask your friends how much it matters to them that the news and/or entertainment media they use, get something first. What do you think hard news journalists should make of these responses? Feature reporters?

**CASE 4-D**

Where Everybody Knows Your Name: Reporting and Relationships in a Small Market

GINNY WHITEHOUSE

Eastern Kentucky University

Everybody is a source when you’re covering an agricultural town with a population under 12,000. But Sunnyside Police Sergeant Phil Schenck had not been a source for Jessica Luce when she asked her out for a date during a Halloween party in 1999. Luce had worked as a general assignment reporter at the Yakima Herald-Republic for almost a
year. Sunnyside, Washington, was one of four communities she covered in this first job out of college. The two spent time together infrequently over the next two months.

“I was interested in him, we had fun, but if I had been asked what was going on I would have said we were friends,” Luce said.

Nonetheless, a co-worker was incredulous. Luce remembers him saying, “You can’t go out on a date with a source. It’s one of the biggest taboos in journalism!”

The Herald-Republic’s four-page code of ethics advises staff to avoid conflicts of interest but offered no specifics on personal relationships that might cause conflicts of interest.

Luce decided to keep her relationship with Schenck quiet. She had never needed Schenck as a source and never thought the occasion would arise.

Schenck’s boss, however, was another matter. Sunnyside Police Chief Wallace Anderson had been accused of shooting a great blue heron outside the police station, storing explosives at the station, house and of having a threatening temper. Following a lengthy and expensive investigation, Anderson resigned in November.

By New Year’s Day, Luce and Schenck decided they were definitely dating.

“I kept my relationship under wraps save for a few confidants at work. I felt the relationship would be perceived as something wrong,” Luce said. “But I didn’t see it interfering with my job. Phil and I didn’t talk about work as much as normal couples might. We knew it wasn’t fair to either one of us.”

In mid-February, Schenck was named acting captain, the number two position in the Sunnyside police department and the official media spokesman. Luce realized she needed to be pulled off the Sunnyside police beat immediately. Her editors agreed.

“It was hard to talk with them about my private relationship and I was forced to define things about the relationship that I hadn’t even done for myself,” Luce said.

Craig Troianello, her city editor, sat her down for a long conversation. “Jessica made it easy because she was straightforward. We didn’t ask intimate questions—that’s irrelevant in this case,” Troianello said. “By taking the proactive ethical stand that she did, it was easy for us to deal with this.”

Luce said Troianello emphasized that he was not questioning her integrity: However, he had to make sure he hadn’t overlooked something that could be perceived as a conflict by readers.

“This was a lesson on perception versus reality,” Luce said. Luce’s reporting did not affect Schenck’s promotion, nor had Schenck ever implied that a story should or should not have been covered. Nonetheless, Schenck benefited from the chief’s departure.

Troianello said he was never worried that Luce’s reporting was compromised, but he wanted to make sure the newspaper was above suspicion. “Issues involving the police department were in the forefront of the news,” Troianello said. “People could read anything into it—that she was protecting the chief that she was trying to bring the chief down. Those kinds of spins drove my concern.”

On the other hand, Schenck questions whether a strict conflict-of-interest standard is realistic in a small town. “Everybody is a potential source—even the clerk at the grocery store. We eat food: If her husband or boyfriend is a farmer, you could lay she is profiting eating. This is an ideal that might be somewhat impractical,” Schenck said. “If you can’t be a real person, how can you report on real people?”

Luce says if she had to do it all over again she would not have kept the relationship a secret as long as she did. Nonetheless, it would still be hard to talk to a supervisor about dating. Troianello said he understands the complexities of a journalist’s personal life but would rather Luce had brought the relationship to the newspaper’s attention by New Year’s Day, when the two began dating.

However, he understands the dynamic of the situation. “She’s in a small town where the number of people with four-year degrees and professionals is small,” Troianello said. “It seems like there will be some mixing at some point: Relationships could occur as naturally as it does in the newsroom. I married a copy editor.”

Once their relationship went public (they were later engaged), Luce was surprised at how supportive the community and city officials were, including the new police chief (someone other than Schenck). “What we as journalists see as an ethical problem and conflict of interest isn’t necessarily going to be seen as an ethical problem by the public.”

However, Luce never heard comments one way or another from the former chief or his supporters. On several occasions, city officials have questioned whether Schenck leaked information to Luce or Herald-Republic reporters. Schenck simply explained that he had not. “I deal with stuff every day that Jessica would love to get her hands on,” Schenck said. “But we just don’t talk about it.”

Luce now covers education in the city of Yakima.

Micro Issues

1. Did Luce have a responsibility to tell her editors about her relationship with Schenck? If so, when should Luce have informed them?
2. What responsibility did the Yakima Herald-Republic editors have to explain expectations on conflicts of interest? If spelling out those expectations necessary or appropriate in a code of ethics?
3. How would the ethical questions have changed if Schenck worked in another capacity for the city, such as being a teacher?
4. How would the ethical questions have changed if Luce and Schenck had remained only friends?

Midrange Issues

1. What aspects of their lives should journalists be able to keep private?
2. Is public perception of an ethical problem truly relevant?
3. Journalists spend most of their time with two groups: their sources and their co-workers. Considering those limitations, is dating possible or advisable?

Macro Issues

1. Can journalists cover communities effectively if they are expected to remain remote and removed?
2. How specific should codes of ethics be on conflicts of interest?
A Question of Role: Is a Documentary Filmmaker a Friend, a Journalist or An Entertainer?

NANCY MITCHELL
University of Nebraska–Lincoln

In 1998, independent filmmaker David Sutherland wrote, produced, directed and edited a story about a young Nebraska farm couple, Juanita and Darrel Buschkoetter and their three daughters. It is a riveting story of the family facing the dual hardships of trying to keep the family farm and the family intact. With more than 200 hours of film shot over three years, Sutherland painted a portrait of the impact of the economic struggles of family life.

Sutherland interviewed 40 families before picking the Buschkoetters. Sutherland showed the couple examples of his work so they knew what they were getting into: During filming, neither Sutherland nor his crew ever became friends with the family. However, he said lie did develop a friendship after the project wrapped up.

The series won critical acclaim. The documentary was nominated for four Television Critics Association awards, including Progmm of the Year. The project also was included in many critics’ list for Best of TV for 1998, including the Chicago Tribune, TV Guide and the Boston Globe. Steve Johnson, critic for the Chicago Tribune, called it: “One of the extraordinary television events of the decade. ‘The Farmer’s Wife’ is a breathtaking piece of work, a harrowing intimate love story set against an unforgiving physical, and cultural landscape.”

David Bianculli, New York Daily News said: “Watching ‘The Farmer’s Wife’ is time very well spent. This is an honest, haunting, unflinching instructive and intimate study of a family that seems doomed to fail, but refuses to give up easily.” Roi Miller of The Oregonian, wrote, “Not until this week’s ‘The Farmer’s Wife’ has any filmmaker probed so deeply into the heart of an American family with such gut-wrenching results.”

The film attracted 18 million PBS viewers when it first aired, making it one of the most watched series in PBS history. The six and one-half-hour documentary aired in three segments. The first segment introduced viewers to the Buschkoetters, who tell the story (without the intrusion of a narrator) of the troubles they face both in their marriage and the risk of losing the farm after years of drought.

The second segment chronicles family life and the relentless challenge to make ends meet and the danger of losing the farm. The loan officer, Hoy Bailey of the USDA, tells the Buschkoetters to ask all the creditors for an extension. In one scene Juanita drives at night to the office of one of the creditors, where she asks for a two-year extension. “The creditor, Rich Kucera, listens to her and eventually agrees. The next scene finds Darrel in the kitchen of their home and Juanita arrives home to tell Darrel that Kucera has agreed, reluctantly, to extend their agreement. Darrel comments that he can’t believe that Kucera was nice:

DARREL: “He wasn’t even nasty?”

JUANITA: “No.”

DARREL: “Richard, not nasty? That’s a first. . . . I couldn’t even imagine that guy being nice.”

In the ensuing scene, Darrel calls Hoy Bailey. The loan officer tells Darrel that all of the extensions have been granted except for one for $100 and without that, they’ll lose the farm in a buyout.

DARREL: “You mean $100 would cause a buyout?”

HOY: “Yep.”

DARREL: “Don’t you think that’s a little bit ridiculous? I mean, if it had to be, I could go out and sweep a street and make $100 and eliminate a buyout.”

The last episode depicts the resolution of their problems. Darrel harvests a bumper crop but suffers the stress of working his farm and another to make enough money to feed the family. After Darrel lashes out, Juanita takes her girls to her sister and leaves him, but they return after a week or so. Darrel seeks counseling and the couple seems to be saving their farm and their relationship.

Sutherland describes himself as “a portraitist,” not an investigative reporter. He said he crafted the film in such a way as to let interactions tell the story without a narrator. Sutherland described the approach as “third person, close up.” Sutherland said he had no agenda for the film but added that he was concerned about those being filmed trying to use him to promote their agenda.

In answer to the question of how far he would go to not interfere with the story he said: “If someone’s life were in the balance, I’d have come up with the money.” Sutherland said Darrel and Juanita’s dream of saving the family farm was parallel with his own dreams of creating a documentary that was an intimate portrait with a social issue as a backdrop. To Sutherland, it was important to “talk to them [the subjects] from your heart and not taking advantage of them.”

In the final episode, when Juanita left Darrel, Sutherland chose not to follow her even though Juanita gave him permission. Sutherland trusted the story could be told in another way at another time and he eventually captured a summary of the event after the family was reunited.

Response to the series and the publicity led to opportunities for the Buschkoetters. They testified before Congress on the plight of the family farm, traveled on publicity tours and gave speeches. Sutherland stated that the Buschkoetters’ gold gained more self-esteem. Sutherland said the project “made me fall in love with America again. It was about people who tried their best. What more could you ask for?”

Micro Issues

1. If you were the producer, would you have lent the Buschkoetters the $100 if doing so meant they wouldn’t lose the farm? What does it do to the story if you lend the money? What does it do to the story if you don’t lend the money? What does it do to the family?

2. Would you answer the question differently if you were a news journalist working on an in-depth piece on the same subject?

3. Did Sutherland make the right decision about filming the marital breakup? By not following her, do you think Sutherland helped or hurt the situation, or was there no effect?

Midrange Issues

1. When asked if he thought the personal rewards of creating a documentary might be construed as using people for personal gain, Sutherland responded: “I’m as uptight about
4. When, if ever, can a journalist or documentarian become friends with those he has written about?

2. Sutherland describes himself as a portraitist, not an investigative reporter (e-mail to author, Sept. 7, 2003). Do you think this gives him freedom to make different choices than he would had he claimed to be an investigative reporter?

3. Does having a camera present change the story? Do you think filming the meeting when Juanita asks the creditor for the extension on the loan changed the creditor's behavior? Does that matter?

4. When, if ever, can a journalist or documentarian become friends with those he has written about?

**Macro Issues**

1. Is it possible to produce a documentary from an objective point of view? What should be a guiding principle in creating this type of work?

2. Does a documentary need to conform to different ethical understandings than other entertainment forms—for example, reality television or a prime-time magazine show? Why?

**CASE 4-F**

**Conflicted Interests, Contested Terrain: The New York Times Code of Ethics**

**BONNIE BRENNEN**

*Marquette University*

In January 2003, the New York Times broke a lengthy tradition and published its new ethics code on the Web. The Times decision was an important one, for ethics codes are often controversial, in both their creation and their application. However, ethics codes can be an important marker of specific social practices created under particular social, economic and political conditions at distinct times in history.

For example, members of the American Newspaper Guild in 1933 crafted one of the first ethics codes developed by journalists rather than managers. That code suggested the “high calling” of journalism had been tarnished because news workers had been pressured by their employers to serve special interests rather than the public good. Conflict of interest was centered on the relationship between reporters and sources and the code made a particular point that business pressures were putting undue stress on newsrooms. The code recommended that to combat business pressures, the news should be edited “exclusively in newsrooms.”

Ethics codes in general are controversial among professionals and scholars. Some maintain that ethics codes are nothing more than generalized aspirations—too vague to be of any use when specific decisions must be made. Others insist codes can be helpful to beginning journalists, photographers and public relations practitioners; they provide some guidance in the form of rules that can be internalized as professional expertise and experience deepen. And still others see codes as a manifestation of the ideology of an era—more about power and politics than ethics.

The new Times code, linked its creation to the public perception of the “professional reputations of its staff member(s).” The code was directed to “all members of the news and editorial departments whose work directly affects the content of the paper.”

The code focused primarily on conflict of interest: In fact, the code did not mention accuracy and fairness devoted only a single sentence to privacy. However, when addressing conflict of interest, the code was both specific and detailed. The Times code considered the impact that spousal relationships might have on news coverage. It also addressed whether journalists working abroad should abide by the ethics and mores of the countries in which they are stationed, most of which do not provide the equivalent of First Amendment protections.

The code required staff members to disclose yearly speaking fees in excess of $5,000 and prohibited staff members from accepting gifts, tickets, discounts or other “inducements” from organizations the Times covered. Staff members could not invest in companies they covered, and payment for favorable or altered coverage was specifically forbidden.

However, staff members were allowed to do certain sorts of unpaid work—for example, public relations for a child’s school fund-raising event. But Times staffers were forbidden from giving money to candidates or causes, marching in support of public movements or appearing on radio and television shows to voice views that went beyond those of the paper. When family members, such as spouses, participated in such activities, Times staffers were required to disclose those activities to management and recuse themselves from certain sorts of coverage.

The Times code was protective of the newspaper’s place in the marketplace. Staffers were prohibited from disclosing confidential information about the operations, plans or policies of the newspaper to other journalists. Such questions were to be referred to management. If readers asked such questions, ‘Times’ staffers were encouraged to respond “openly and honestly.” Times staffers also were prohibited from doing freelance work for any media outlet that competed with the Times. “Staff members may not appear on broadcasts that compete directly with the Times’ own offerings on television or the Internet.” As the paper moves further into these new fields, its direct competitors and clients or potential clients will undoubtedly grow in number.”

**Micro Issues**

1. Should managers and owners be subject to a code of ethics, particularly for publications as influential as the Times?

2. Why is the notion of perception—as opposed to action—important in considering the issue of conflict of interest?

3. Should the Times code have addressed a variety of common journalistic issues—such as accuracy, fairness and privacy?

**Midrange Issues**

1. Disclosure is often suggested as a remedy for conflict of interest. Evaluate this remedy.

2. Should conflict of interest rules be different at a small newspaper as opposed to the Times?
Promised a tumultuous situation, the new administrators aggravated the problem by how they handled it. Rather than sharing the issue with the community or with school faculties to seek a mutually agreeable solution, they tried to resolve the entire problem behind closed doors.

I first learned about the closed-door approach at a "study meeting" with the school board. The new superintendent held these informal meetings during his earliest days in the district; they tended to be so boring and ambiguous that journalists seldom attended.

Before the meeting in question, the superintendent asked me whether any media would be present; I told him one reporter might come late. As the meeting began, I was surprised to hear him tell the board and the few staff members, "If any reporter shows up, I will change the subject—but today we're going to talk about closing a high school." He then outlined the results of meetings he had already held on the issue, discussed a proposal from a local-community college to buy the building so it would not be abandoned and sought the support of the four high-school principals.

Thus began my ethical conundrum. I agreed that the enrollment problem was serious and that closing a school was probably the best alternative, but I opposed the administration's method of resolving the issue. As public relations officer, I believed that public institutions must be open and that involving those affected by the closure, the actual decision-making process would eventually generate long-term support for whatever decision was made. I was appalled at the attempts to exclude the public; but I said nothing:

Closed doors can quickly swing ajar, and it took less than one day for news of the decision to leak. The school targeted for closure was one of the oldest in the state. It had recently received a U.S. Department of Education award as an exemplary inner-city school, but its community was the least affluent and arguably the least politically powerful.

The setting was an urban school district with about 40 schools and more than 35,000 students. Its superintendent had a national reputation for innovative community outreach, and he was a media favorite. I worked with him for five years before he accepted a statewide position. His replacement was a quiet man with conservative views who, along with the administrative team he brought with him, believed that educators were to be run the schools and could do so best with minimal interference.

Like most inner-city school districts, the system was losing students as people moved to the suburbs. In the previous decade, a student population that once filled four high schools could now fill only three.

The seven-member school board had approached—and then abandoned—the question of closing one of the schools because the proposal aroused such strong feelings among students, faculty and parents. However, the new administration, trying to balance those responses against the financial drain of supporting an additional high school on taxpayer dollars, decided to broach the question again.

3. Does the Times code infringe on staffers' First Amendment rights? Do journalists give up some of their rights as citizens in order to do the work of journalism?

4. Are there instances when recusing oneself from an assignment is unsatisfactory? What should journalists do if such a case arises?

5. Should a conflict of interest extend as far as prohibitions against a journalist being an officer in the parent-teacher association (i.e., PTA or PTSA) of his or her child's school? An officer in your local homeowners' association? Does the potential for those organizations to get involved in the news pages (i.e., teacher problems, zoning protests) influence your decision?

**Macro Issues**

1. What are the specific historical developments in the field of journalism that may have promoted the development of this particular version of The New York Times code?

2. Research indicates that codes that are developed by the newsroom have a much better chance of influencing behavior than codes that are superimposed by management. If the Times had used this approach, would it have "discovered" the actions of reporters such as Jayson Blair (details of the Blair case may be found on the Internet) and his falsified stories?

3. Does the Times code place the organization's financial health on equal footing with the public trust? Is that appropriate?

**CASE 4-G**

Quit, Blow the Whistle or Go with the Flow?

ROBERT D. WAKEFIELD

Brigham Young University

Anyone who spends sufficient years in public relations will face a crisis of conscience. Practitioners are trained for the tenuous task of balancing institutional advocacy, with the "public interest" (Newsom; Turk and Kruckeberg 1996). Yet this role can lead to personal conflict, as did it in my case.

The setting was an urban school district with about 40 schools and more than 35,000 students. Its superintendent had a national reputation for innovative community outreach, and he was a media favorite. I worked with him for five years before he accepted a statewide position. His replacement was a quiet man with conservative views who, along with the administrative team he brought with him, believed that educators were to be run the schools and could do so best with minimal interference.

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years and felt comfortable giving them background so they could seek additional materials without revealing me as the original source. It was a personal risk, but the reporters never betrayed my trust.

Two additional incidents epitomized my ethical struggles. The first—occurred after the initial board meeting, when a top administrator said the community misunderstood why decisions were made behind closed doors. I lobbied for openness.

The administrator admonished me to remember who paid my salary, a rebuke that confirmed the new administration did not share my own values.

The second incident occurred when I was asked to meet with a man who had been chosen to speak on behalf of the community. I had taken only a few steps into his office when he said to me, “You don’t agree with your administration, do you?” My response was silence while he explained his position.

For some reason, it was this encounter that forced my crisis of conscience: do I quit, blow the whistle, or keep quiet? I had a wife and child to support; the employment picture at the time was not robust. Right or wrong, I surmised that the various relationships I had developed could appease many angry feelings. I also believed in the importance of education. So, I decided to stay through the crisis, then seek new employment.

About one month into the crisis, the board retained a consultant, who, like me, believed in open communication. Two weeks later, four board members came to my office and requested a meeting. Because this constituted a majority of the board, such an assembly violated the law requiring the meeting be made public. I violated the law and invited them to stay. They said they were worn down by the constant tension and asked what I, as a public relations practitioner, thought they should do.

To me, the answer was straightforward. Relying on basic public relations formulas and common sense, I suggested that they could diffuse the tension by reverting to what should have been done in the first place: announce that selected representatives from throughout the city would form a committee to help review the situation and come to a decision that would then be discussed by the board.

To my surprise, the board members took this advice to the administration, and much of what I recommended was done. A few months later, the school was closed in a tearful farewell. And, five weeks after the school closed, I accepted a job with a local public relations firm.

**Micro Issues**

1. What sort of press releases or other talking points should Wakefield have prepared once the rumors began?
2. Should Wakefield have gone off record with reporters he trusted?
3. Are there some sorts of decisions governmental bodies make that really should be kept from the media and hence the public? Is this one of them?
4. How should Wakefield have responded to the racial subtext of some of the protests about the closing of the school?