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TEACHING THE "UNTEACHABLE"

Toward a model for ethics instruction in Canadian university
schools of journalism

by
Nancy Payne, B.J.

A thesis submitted to
the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research
in partial fulfilment of
the requirements for the degree of

Master of Journalism
Department of Journalism

Carleton University
Ottawa, Ontario
25 May 1992

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submitted by Nancy Payne, B.J.
in partial fulfilment of the requirements for
the degree of Master of Journalism

Thesis Supervisor

Director, Department of Journalism

Carleton University
1992

ABSTRACT

Improving the standards of ethical journalism in Canada necessarily means graduating more ethically aware students from university journalism programs. Separate courses in ethics, rather than half-measures throughout the curriculum are essential to a journalist's education. Bad ethics courses can do much harm, but there are clear goals which good courses and a properly trained instructor can achieve.

Such courses should aim to give students the skills to reason through ethical questions, as well as stimulating their moral nature and their sense of moral obligation to the public. The best way to impart these skills is in a course which discusses the major theories of ethical behaviour and potential pitfalls in reasoning, using the Socratic method and real-life examples to help students analyse their beliefs and establish a personal framework for making ethical decisions.

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INTRODUCTION

Journalists everywhere are facing a decline in the credibility they once enjoyed as sources of the information people need to function as citizens of a complex world. This rampant scepticism is not necessarily due to poor reporting skills or journalistic incompetence -- indeed, more journalists than ever before have university training by the time they enter a Canadian newsroom. (Desbarats 1990, 89)

Rather, the crisis indicates deep concern on the part of the reading, viewing and listening public that journalists do not necessarily apply to themselves the high moral standards by which they judge public figures. The list of ethical embarrassments seems to grow daily: Gulf War boosterism, evidence of plagiarism by several journalists, electronic tampering with photographs and videotape, and any number of day-to-day transgressions that inspire further contempt on the part of the public. Even journalists themselves ranked their profession well down on the list of occupations according to their degree of high ethical standards and honesty. (Levine 1991, 14) One American magazine editor has "called the term 'journalistic ethics' an oxymoron" (Rykken 1989, 44), reflecting the widespread cynicism and disillusionment of both

the press and the public with the ethical conduct -- or lack thereof -- of supposedly "professional"¹ journalists.

There is at the very least a gulf of understanding between journalists and the public that must be negotiated. One study suggests that consumers generally perceive the news to be "a fixed, finite, and findable body of facts", and "appear to believe that techniques [of newsgathering and presentation] are biased and can be used to serve particular purposes. . . [they also] assume intentionality in errors or distortions of the news." (Braman 1988, 77) Where journalists see honest mistakes and incomplete research, the public sees intentional omission and purposeful slanting. When consumers hear of a reporter who fabricates quotations, or an editor who uses a news outlet to promote a cause in which he has a stake, their cynicism mounts, for good reason. As one senior manager in the newspaper field notes, "no matter how good we think we are, much of the public doesn't trust us and some just plain don't believe us." (Burleigh 1989, 37) It is not surprising that the profession of journalism should be attempting to clean up its image among consumers of news in order to maintain some level of trust, and, therefore, reader, viewer, or listenership.

¹ The term "profession" should be understood here and throughout the paper in its general sense of a vocation whose practitioners adhere to certain standards of behaviour which inspire public respect, such as law, medicine, etc. The debate over journalism's right to be considered a profession per se is not within the scope of this thesis.

But it is not enough for journalism to react instinctively to such concerns simply in order to allay the public's distrust. Such an exercise would be little more than the type of damage-control public relations so scorned by members of the news media.

If there is one consistent motive in the way that news people approach ethical problems, it is the desire to please. So ethics is treated not as a striving toward integrity, but as a public relations problem that follows the shifting winds of public attention.
(Meyer 1987, 19)

In fact, the collective op-ed page soulsearching which ensues when a political columnist admits to writing speeches for politicians, or a Parliamentary reporter uses illegally obtained information in a story "in the public interest," probably serves to reinforce public cynicism about the shallowness of journalists' commitment to the idea of the ethical amelioration of the profession. As long as "ethics are seen as a public relations problem rather than pursuing good for its own sake" (Martin 1988, 13), the more important goal of a morally aware and sensitive profession cannot be reached.

What is required, then, is a genuine response to the concerns being raised with increasing frequency and intensity by both the public and thoughtful journalists everywhere. While the depth of commitment to such concerns is sometimes criticized as little more than "hour-long handwringing sessions at the professional organizations' annual meetings,

preferably in the early morning ghettos of convention scheduling" (Hodding Carter III's introduction to Christians, Rotzoll and Fackler 1983, xii), the push for real change in the ethical practices of journalism -- or, at least, the appropriate rhetoric -- is getting stronger all the time.

Editors, columnists, convention panellists and keynote speakers plead that "a commitment to ethical journalism is as much an attitude or a state of mind -- a way of looking at the world -- as it is the daily decision-making about what to cover and what not to cover." (MacDonald 1985, 2); that "the signs abound that we're being called to a higher standard" (Burleigh 1989, 37); that

It is time that the ethical vacuum that lies at the heart of most media institutions be filled with something better than situation ethics or a value-free approach that substitutes a hazy concept of the general welfare for a more rigorous moral accountability. (Carter, in Christians, Rotzoll and Fackler 1983, xi)

Some tangible evidence of this type of concern has emerged in the form of codes of ethical standards, particularly for newspapers. The Ottawa Citizen's recent adoption of such a code is an example of both a desire to clean up the newspaper's act and to boost its readers' confidence in the paper. It attempts to set out "a framework of ethical guidelines. . . which will be expanded as circumstances warrant." (MacPherson 1991, B7) The Globe & Mail incorporates its major ethical principles in its style

guide under the heading of "code of conduct" (McFarlane and Clements 1990, 58), while three other Canadian newspapers have guidelines. and at least three more are working to produce their own (MacPherson 1991, B7). The Canadian Broadcasting Corporation published its principles for both radio and television in the 1982 Journalistic Policy.

Clearly, the desire for change to improve the state of journalism, rather than simply to respond to public relations concerns, is beginning to permeate most sectors of the field. However, this desire is equally clearly not a universal one. It is an idea to which much lip service is paid, but little in the way of concrete change beyond the establishing of codes of ethics or conduct at a handful of news organizations has yet to be seen.

As the speed of reporting increases with technological advances, the amount of time available for moral considerations is further decreased, and journalists are forced into an ethical decision-making process comparable to "discovering the principles of aerodynamics while staying aloft." (Ronald Munson, quoted in Martin 1988, 11) In fact, questions raised nearly 70 years ago can still be asked about the level of concern over ethical issues, and the way with which they are dealt. In 1924, L.N. Flint noted about journalists that

. . . we are reticent about the things that matter much, and that, even if we would, we probably could not trace the line of causation back from some decision

having moral content to its determining
factors two or three times removed.
(Flint 1924, 21)

Journalists wring their hands over the transgressions of their colleagues, and yet there is little to encourage them to think in terms of "causation" and "determining factors" when making the difficult moral choices that are an inevitable part of their work.

There is no question that such scrutiny of their ethical decision-making patterns, let alone the "language and approach . . . of modern moral philosophy" (Klaidman and Beauchamp 1987, 4) still makes many, perhaps most, journalists very uncomfortable. Without a coherent set of personal guidelines developed after much thought and informed by some overarching ideals, a journalist's decisions on ethical issues are made in a kind of moral vacuum. Such decisions are, ultimately, a betrayal of the trust of the news-consuming public, who must be able to assume a certain level of integrity on the part of journalists if they are to accept any media-proffered information as trustworthy.

As Elliott notes, "The journalistic relationship is, at its base, one of power. . . This power relationship, like other power relationships, implies obligations." (Elliott 1987, 9) It is not enough for journalism to continue in its current pattern of often-arrogant justifications for often-questionable actions. To improve its credibility and level of respect with the public, but, far more importantly, to create

a more ethical profession, it is essential that journalists have some reasoned framework within which to make their difficult decisions. That is not to suggest that there exists a simple process by which journalists can become ethical by obtaining a set of pre-determined principles, rather like getting test answers ahead of time.

No system of ethics can provide full, ready-made solutions to all the perplexing moral problems that confront us, in life or in journalism. A reasoned and systematic approach to these issues is all that can be asked. . . (Klaidman and Beauchamp 1987, 20)

And if the profession is not encouraging the development of this kind of moral reasoning -- and, for the most part, it is not, despite a few newspaper ethics codes and the odd professional workshop -- then university schools of journalism must pick up the slack. "Any inquiry has to start with how well today's journalists are being educated. Are they being trained as narrow technocrats or as truly principled individuals. . .?" (Burleigh 1989, 37) Begin by graduating thoughtful students with an awareness of moral reasoning, and the practice of journalism must naturally become both more ethical and more credible.

While such a goal may seem overly idealistic, it is reasonable to suggest that, in Canada, post-secondary journalism programs are the ideal place to sow the seeds of a more ethical profession. Given the number of such programs, it is helpful to narrow the discussion by focusing on those

offered by Canadian universities, at both the graduate and undergraduate level. The reasons why ethics should be taught in journalism programs at all will be explored in the following chapter.

As with any course of study, there is no guarantee of success with a course devoted to ethics and journalism, no guarantee that it will ameliorate the ethical state of the profession. However, a 1987 study of students before and after a course in mass communication ethics found that "by the conclusion of the course students were. . . more self-contented, more concerned with the welfare of others, more open-minded, less driven by personal gain, and more independent." (Surlin 1987, 568)

No one is suggesting that even the best of ethics course will effect dramatic, overnight changes in the way an entire group of students thinks and behaves, but it seems very likely that such a course could help those students see the importance of thinking for themselves and acting according to a coherent set of personal ethical ideals. Surlin's results concur:

This author believes that [by the end of the course] students came to the realization that to be moral, fair and open-minded one must be less tied to the influence of other people and their opinion. At times, to be a moral thinker one must be an independent thinker. (Surlin 1987, 678)

At present, however, similar beliefs do not dominate the teaching of ethics cour in Canada's university journalism

departments. Not surprisingly, there are almost as many different approaches to teaching ethics courses as there are universities and instructors involved.

Canada's eight universities offering degrees in journalism, or in a journalism specialization in a communications course, employ a wide range of different approaches to dealing with journalism ethics in their various curricula. The level of ethics instruction appears to increase somewhat in graduate programs, but whether this is intentional or simply a function of the slightly different aims of graduate and undergraduate curricula is unclear. Information on the nature of ethics courses was gathered in the early months of 1991, and should be considered a picture of ethical instruction at that time. Thinking at any of the institutions mentioned below may have changed since then.

Two schools, Carleton University (Johansen interview) and l'Université de Québec à Montréal (1991/92 undergraduate calendar), do not offer or require any courses concerning journalism ethics, although faculty may attempt to work such issues into other courses. The same is true of Ryerson Polytechnical Institute's four-year program². (Miller interview) L'Université Laval, which offers a graduate

² Ryerson's four-year program is for students who do not have a university degree. Those who do have such a degree can earn the same degree after two years of study. For the purposes of the study and the rest of this paper, Ryerson students will be referred to, not completely accurately, as undergraduates and graduates, respectively.

program only, rolls such considerations into its course on communications law and ethics. (Sauvageau interview)

The remaining programs make some kind of effort to deal with the ethical side of journalism in a special course set aside for that purpose. Some courses are new, while others are long-established components of the journalism program. Professors use a number of different approaches to emphasize the various areas of professional concern.

At the University of Western Ontario, which offers a degree in journalism at the graduate level only, Professor Valerie Alea teaches a course whose stated aim is to "explore ethical problems and problem-solving, with emphasis on decisions journalists make daily, on and off the job." (syllabus) At the time of information-gathering, the course was brand new, and, as Alea describes it, definitely "not a philosophy course", as well as somewhat "off-beat, using more cross-cultural material instead of case studies." (interview)

Alea uses John L. Hulteng's The Messenger's Motives as the required text, with Sissela Bok's Lying, Susan Sontag's On Photography, and shorter readings as supplements. Topics for discussion deal with identifying values, problems and perspectives; ethical theories and their relevance to journalism; the ethics of visual media; and the conflict between ethics and deadlines.

At Ryerson, graduate instructor Robert Fulford approaches the subject from a news gatherer's point of view, looking at

ethical questions as they relate directly to the practice of journalism. The course "attempts to look clearly at ethics in current journalism, to heighten students' awareness of ethical issues, and to prepare students for the ethical questions they will inevitably encounter in their work." (syllabus)

Case studies, preferably recent ones, are used to illustrate ethical questions, as are the opinions of guest speakers from the field of journalism. There is no text; readings are made available to students a few days before classes. Each class focuses on an area of ethical stickiness: the ethics of language, privacy, conflict of interest, the rights of and relationships with sources, and plagiarism, for example.

The University of Regina's Jim McKenzie, on the other hand, believes that "students should have their ethics before they get here," and that students will encounter the really direct, important ethical situations elsewhere, particularly in reporting classes (interview). He raises questions about "the relevant areas," and opens up discussions, making sure "the students know where I'm coming from." For McKenzie, there is no point 'teaching' ethics, since ethical standards in the field are constantly under review, although he emphasizes that he feels "ethics are not situational." He employs what he describes as "a fairly simplistic model -- ethics are the same as duties or obligations. You put them in order and use them as a basis for your actions."

Yet another approach is taken by instructor Bruce Wark at King's College. His course looks at the history of journalism and examines its various periods and influences, such as authoritarianism, the rise of the commercial press, social responsibility theory, and journalism as a business. (interview) From this background, students attempt to derive the principles of ethical journalism. At the end of the course, students have created a "personal mission statement of why they want to be journalists", taking ethical questions into consideration. Wark uses the work of Francois Demers to examine the concept of journalism as a profession, as well as Edmund Lambeth's Committed Journalism: An Ethic for the Profession as a text.

Perhaps the most philosophically oriented of the ethics courses offered at Canadian university schools of journalism is the one taught by Professor Enn Raudsepp at Concordia. Raudsepp acknowledges the influence of the pre-eminent American in the field of ethics and journalism education, Clifford Christians, on his belief in the importance of a philosophical base for such a course. (interview) The aim of the course is to "encourage [students] to think ethically and approach problems equipped with some prior thoughts" about ethical reasoning.

The first four weeks of the course are spent looking at major philosophers and their theories of behaviour: Aristotle, Mill, Kant and Rawls. These principles are then

examined for their usefulness in solving ethical dilemmas faced by journalists. Classes cover several areas of ethical difficulty, such as truth-telling, privacy, compassion and taste, freebies, and the journalist's role within a news organization.

Raudsepp encourages students to arrive at their ethical conclusions through a more sophisticated reasoning process, rather than simply justifying their actions after the fact. The course underlines that there is rarely a correct answer to an ethical problem, and that individuals must learn to think their actions through thoroughly and with reference to a personal framework of moral reasoning.

Despite their varying methods and approaches, most of the abovementioned ethics courses -- indeed, even those schools without a formal course -- profess to aim at the same basic goal, however it is worded. The intention is to encourage students to think for themselves, to come up with a consistent, reasoned approach to making the complex and difficult ethical decisions that will face them virtually every day of their working lives.

This, then, is the most important function of a university course in journalism ethics: to give students the background in philosophical and moral reasoning required to help them make consistent and considered ethical decisions. The principles cannot simply be instilled; each individual student must discover them for herself, using the analytical

tools provided by an effective course in ethics. Without this kind of reasoned approach, journalists will continue to make the sort of ad hoc decisions, often based on expediency or fear of an editor's displeasure, that currently mar the reputation of the profession. After all,

If there is not a large dose of reason in one's ethical determinations, there can really be little or no consistency and predictability to ethical actions. And, of course, one of the main purposes of ethics is to serve as a reliable and helpful guide to right actions. (Merrill 1975, 119)

The image of the profession, as well as the profession itself, cannot help but be justifiably boosted by an influx of practitioners who can "recognize and analyze a moral dilemma, develop a personal belief system for making difficult moral decisions. . .and recognize the belief systems of others." (Martin 1988, 11)

The purpose of this paper, then, is to use a number of different methods of inquiry to help establish some basics about ethics and journalism education in Canada. Too many of the arguments and conventional wisdom about ethics and journalism have gone unexamined; this paper will attempt to bring these covert opinions into the light of day, and determine which are valid, and which are groundless. It will establish the need for well-planned, thoughtful courses in ethics, after examining the arguments against ethics courses.

Using data gathered from the questionnaire sent to graduating Canadian journalism students in the spring of 1991,

it will paint a picture of current thinking about ethical issues among these students. By analysing their objections to ethics courses, the fact that most are built on prejudice, apprehension, or a previous bad experience with such courses will be clarified.

The preferred goals of a useful course in journalism ethics will be identified, as will the worst and best ways to organize an ethics component to meet those goals. Finally, the paper will discuss who is best suited to teach in this area, and propose a model for a valuable and effective course in ethics and journalism.

Through a synthesis of the arguments of scholars and journalists, as well as the opinions of students and other information garnered from the questionnaire, the rhetoric surrounding journalistic ethics and their place in university schools of journalism can be stripped away, and the arguments of value examined. The range of opinion and observation on this subject will help inform the central tenets of this thesis: that ethics courses are a valuable part of a university journalism curriculum, and that there is a valid way to conduct such courses in order that Canadian schools of journalism will graduate students with a greater moral awareness and a greater commitment to the practice of ethical journalism.

CHAPTER 1

Journalism students' perceptions of ethics and ethics instruction

One of the major problems inherent in trying to design a useful course in ethics and journalism for a university curriculum is a lack of knowledge about how students feel about and perceive ethical issues. Most of the academic inquiry into teaching journalism ethics completely ignores the students' perspective, and does little to address the concerns they may have encountered in school or at work.

In order to add some useful information to the debate over how best to teach ethics in a university journalism curriculum, a questionnaire was sent out to all final-year undergraduate and graduate students in Canadian university journalism programs. In addition to collecting the necessary demographic data, questions were designed to address a wide range of areas related to ethics, including:

- students' responses on a scale of 1-10 to ethical dilemmas

- their reaction to an increasingly difficult ethical situation

- their ranking of influences over their news judgments and ethical decisions

- whether their attitude toward ethical issues had changed over the past year, and if so, why

- their opinion of any ethics courses they had taken, whether they would like an ethics course if their school didn't have one, and why

-whether they had ever encountered an ethical dilemma, what it was and how they handled it if they had

(See Appendix B.)

Approximately 35 per cent of the students in the desired group responded to the questionnaire, which was administered in the winter term of 1991. Questionnaires were mailed to faculty members at the various universities, who then gave them to students to be completed.

The students' responses to the questionnaire prove both helpful and fascinating for a number of reasons. They provide clear data on journalism students' feelings about specific ethical issues, as well as their attitudes toward ethics courses and professors. As a tool to facilitate the design of a good ethics course, the questionnaire data also give us an idea what issues are the ones weighing most heavily on students' minds, or the ones which haven't yet occurred to them. These can then be included in a course design that takes into account, in essence, where journalism students in Canada are in terms of their level of ethical awareness and interest.

It should be noted that the questionnaire was not designed to and indeed did not yield a clear indication of the impact of ethics courses on students by, for example, repeating its administration before and after students took a course in ethics. However, it does provide shading to the conclusion that "a greater saliency of moral and social values [as discussed in a mass communications ethics course] actually

lead[s] to more ethical decision-making." (Surlin 1987, 678) What is important here is not so much obtaining concrete evidence of an ethics course's ability to change the way students behave, but rather a sense of who journalism students are, and what concerns and issues are bothering them -- or, perhaps, not bothering them enough -- and need to be addressed in an effective course in journalistic ethics.

Perhaps most useful of all the information as background to an ethics course is that which explains the role now played by other influences in students' lives. These include the experience of actual journalistic work and the length of that experience, the student's first language, religious feeling, gender, interest in ethics courses, and year in the journalism program. These major areas were the ones chosen for analysis here, to help explain what determines students' feelings about ethical issues. By understanding a little more about how these and other existing factors influence students' ethical awareness and decision-making, the creator of an ethics course can better understand how to approach the students and best meet their needs

Work Experience

Many journalism students work or do apprenticeships in their field during their time at school, or in summers, or, in the case of master's students, as a career. Respondents were

asked to indicate whether they had such work experience. Eighty-one per cent did have work experience, while 19 per cent did not.

Those students without work experience were substantially more likely to take free theatre tickets (Appendix C). They were also strikingly more likely to go ahead with the story about a Nazi officer, but very much less likely to write the story on toxic dumping. Students with work experience were substantially less likely to run the fire photo, but somewhat more likely to write the story concerning the gay mayoral candidate, and to file one dealing with an editor's drunken driving.

Students with work experience were nearly three times as likely to supply a source's name to their editor, but only a little more likely to supply the name to the police, to appear as a Crown witness, or to supply the name to avoid a contempt charge.

A few noticeable differences occurred when the two groups were asked to rank influences over their ethical decision-making.³ Understandably, students with work experience placed a higher value on the influence of the newsroom. This group also gave higher values to the influence of others' opinions and their upbringing. Students who had not had work

¹ The different methods of scoring this section should be noted: students are asked to rank influences in order, which also results in a mean score for each influence. The first is a straightforward first, second, third, etc. ranking, while the second is the mean numerical value that determines that ranking.

experience gave a very significantly higher value to the influence of ethics class. While both groups ranked personal morality and the newsroom as their two strongest influences, students without experience placed ethics class third, and their upbringing fourth; students with experience reversed that order. The latter group ranked others' opinions sixth and teachers' opinions seventh, while the reverse was true for the students without experience.

In ranking influences over their news judgment, the two groups produced identical lists. However, students who had not had work experience gave higher values both to the story's potential impact on the audience and on its source.

Students with work experience were substantially more likely to say their opinions had changed in the past year, but were noticeably less likely to want to see an ethics course in their program. Finally, students who had worked were almost twice as likely to report having had an ethical dilemma. Whether this was due to an increased ethical sense, or simply a more realistic apprehension of the world of journalism is not clear.

Language

Respondents were asked to indicate which was their first language, French, English or something else. Seventy-seven per cent of respondents listed English as their first

language, 17 per cent French, and 6 per cent Other. The last group was, unfortunately, too small to allow for statistical examination, and so was excluded from analyses done by language.

The two language groups showed small discrepancies on most questions in the first section, with some notable exceptions (Appendix D). Francophones were significantly more likely than anglophones to agree with an editor that misrepresentation was justified in getting a story. Anglophones were strikingly more likely to write the story about toxic dumping, while francophones were significantly more likely to spike the picture of a couple watching a fire. Finally, francophones were much more likely to ignore the story of a mayoral candidate's homosexuality.

If there is a common thread in these answers, it appears in the last three, and seems to involve a heightened sense of impact on the community of a given story on the part of francophones. French-speakers appear to place a higher priority on the fallout from their stories, be it in the form of lost jobs at the chemical plant, personal upheaval for the couple in the photo, or potential public embarrassment for the homosexual politician.

Perhaps the most striking area of difference between the two language groups emerged from the section dealing with protection of a source's identity. Anglophones were twice as likely to supply the name to their editor, the police, and to

appear as a Crown witness. They were also three times as likely as francophones to give the names to a judge to avoid a contempt charge. The consistency of these results certainly suggests a difference in standards between francophones and anglophones; however, it is difficult to determine whether that difference is the result of a particular ethics course or instructor, or a genuine cultural anomaly. (See below for further discussion of this issue.)

In ranking the influences on their ethical decision-making patterns, francophones and anglophones made some interestingly different choices. Personal morality and the influence of the newsroom were ranked first and second, respectively, by both groups. However, anglophones placed their upbringing third on the list by the tiniest of margins, while that factor ranked fourth for francophones. The latter group ranked ethics classes third as an influencing factor, by a strikingly large amount over anglophones. Francophones also ranked the influence of their teachers' opinions one place higher than anglophones.

These latter points appear to suggest that ethics classes are both considered more valuable by, and have more influence on, francophones. However, some caution must be exercised in reaching such a conclusion: the majority of francophone respondents were concentrated in one school, l'Université de Québec à Montréal, given the low response rate of l'Université de Laval. Thus it is difficult to know whether the

francophone students' embrace of ethics classes is the result of a cultural difference or simply the effect of a particularly effective and/or enjoyable course at UQAM.

The two language groups ranked influences on news judgments identically, although anglophones gave a significantly higher numerical rating to the public's right to know, and francophones a significantly higher rating to the reflection of the story on themselves. Francophones also rated individuals' right to privacy significantly higher than did anglophones.

Francophones were much more likely than anglophones to report a change in their views over the past year, and a little more likely to want to see an ethics course taught at their school. However, anglophones were more likely to report having had an ethical dilemma in the course of their reporting experience.

Religion

Religion did not consistently explain a set of responses, but showed a clear effect on the ones it did explain. Respondents were asked to describe how important religion was both in their upbringing and at present. These open answers were then collapsed into five categories (Very important, More than moderately important, Moderately important, Less than moderately important, Unimportant and Important as a moral

system or object of study), which were further collapsed into Important (26.8 per cent) and Unimportant (73.2 per cent) out of 157 responses.

On six of the eight questions in the first section of the questionnaire, there were only marginal differences in the responses of these two groups (Appendix E). However, answers to question three, which asked for the student's position on misrepresentation to get a story, and question seven, which measured the likelihood of the student doing a story on a rumour of a mayoral candidate's homosexuality, produced striking differences between the two groups. Those who rated religion unimportant were significantly more likely to agree with an editor that misrepresentation to get a story was justified. By contrast, those who rated religion important were significantly more likely not to ignore the story about the gay candidate.

It appears, then, that religious feeling comes into play when the question is one of personal moral integrity or religious teaching, as opposed to professional ethical conduct. Thus the more religious respondents appear reluctant to transgress moral teachings against lying, but willing to publicize the sexual orientation of a political candidate, perhaps also due to the moral injunctions of many established churches against homosexuality.

When faced with conflict concerning protecting a source's identity, religion also appeared to play some role. Those who

considered religion unimportant were more than twice as likely to supply the names to their editor. The two groups were roughly equally likely to give the names to the police, while 30 per cent of the religious group was somewhat more likely to appear as a Crown witness. Finally, the more religious group was almost a third more likely to provide the names to avoid contempt of court charges.

Again, religion seems to function on a personal level -- the more religious group appears to be willing to go some distance in keeping a promise of confidentiality, until the authoritative justice system comes into play, and the larger good, represented by the legal system must be taken into consideration by the reporter.

Not surprisingly, the religious group ranks personal morality higher on the scale of ethical decision-making than does any other group identified, and ranks the influence of upbringing significantly higher than those who attach less importance to religion. The latter group places the influence of the newsroom second to personal morality, and ahead of upbringing.

Fifty-nine per cent of the more religious group said their answers had changed in the past year, compared to 46.4 per cent observing a change in the less religious group. 85 per cent of the former group expressed desire for an ethics course at their university, while only 70.2 per cent of the latter group did so. Finally, 64.9 per cent of the first

group reported encountering an ethical dilemma, compared to 59.6 per cent of the second. Clearly, the group which places more importance on religion is more aware of -- or simply perceives more -- instances of ethical conflict, and is more interested in studying ways to deal with those situations.

Length of work experience

Those students who indicated they had had work experience were further asked how long that experience had lasted. In the original categories provided, 1.5 per cent had one week's experience, 28.5 per cent two to four weeks, 43.1 per cent one to five months, 9.5 per cent six months to a year, and 17.5 per cent more than one year. To make the distinction between an apprenticeship/summer job situation and that of a lengthier, perhaps more realistic position, these categories were collapsed into two, indicating whether respondents had had more or less than six months' experience. The tiny number of students who had worked for one week was discarded on the assumption that a week was simply not long enough for any ethical considerations to penetrate the confusion and culture shock of encountering a working newsroom.

With only a few exceptions, the two resulting groups answered the first set of questions in a strikingly different manner (Appendix F). Students with more than six months experience were much less likely to take free theatre tickets,

or to agree with an editor that misrepresentation was justified. The group with less experience was significantly more likely to write the story about a former Nazi officer, the one about a company involved in toxic dumping, and the one dealing with a mayoral candidate's sexual orientation. Surprisingly, the biggest difference occurred when respondents were asked whether they would write a story concerning an editor's drunk driving charge: the more experienced group was substantially more likely to write the story than were students with less experience.

Differing responses also emerged from the two groups' responses to questions about revealing a source's identity. The less experienced students were notably inconsistent in their answers: they were somewhat more likely than the other group to give the name to their editor, but slightly less likely to give it to the police. Those with less than six months' experience were a little less likely to appear as a Crown witness, but almost twice as likely to provide the name in order to avoid a contempt charge. Despite these clearly differing answers -- perhaps the most clearly differing of all factors examined -- the opinions of the two groups converged remarkably on the section asking them to rank influences over their ethical decision-making and news judgment. Rankings for both groups in both sections was identical, with virtually no notable differences in numerical values assigned in the first one. Some influences were given differing values in the

second section: students with more than six months' experience gave markedly higher values to the public's right to know and an individual's right to privacy.

Students with less experience were somewhat more likely to report a change in their attitudes over the past year, while the two groups were almost identically interested in the addition of an ethics course to their curriculum. Finally, despite varying levels of work experience, the two groups were almost equally likely to report having had an ethical dilemma, suggesting that ethical issues can arise even in the course of an apprenticeship or summer job.

Gender

Fifty-six per cent of respondents to the questionnaire were female, and 44 per cent male. Analysis by this factor showed noticeable differences in several areas, but highly similar responses in others.

In the first section, men's and women's answers differed significantly on all but two questions (Appendix G). Women were much more likely to hold off on the wife beating story, to refuse the free theatre tickets, and strikingly less likely to agree to misrepresent themselves to get a story. Men were significantly more likely to hold off on the Nazi officer story, somewhat more likely to run the fire photo, and

significantly more likely to write the story of the gay mayoral candidate.

On the questions concerning protection of a source's identity, women were somewhat less likely to give the editor the source's name, but somewhat more likely to provide that name to the police and appear as a Crown witness. Women were significantly more likely to provide the name in order to avoid a contempt of court charge.

Men and women showed different patterns in rating influences over their ethical decision-making patterns. Both ranked their personal morality first, but men ranked their upbringing, the newsroom, the opinions of others, teachers' opinions, other disciplines and ethics class in that order. Women ranked the newsroom second, followed by upbringing, ethics class, other disciplines, others' opinions, and teachers' opinions.

However, there were no such striking differences between the sexes when they rated influences over their news judgment. Both ranked the influences identically, suggesting that journalism schools do an effective job of inculcating the same bases for news decisions in both men and women. The only noteworthy areas here are men's placing of a higher value on the story's potential effect on its source, and women's doing so with the public's right to know.

Men were a little more likely than women to report a change in their ideas over the past year, as well as a higher

desire for an ethics course in their school. Women and men reported virtually equal levels of encountering an ethical dilemma.

Desire for ethics course

Respondents were asked whether they would like to see an ethics course taught at their school. 73.5 per cent answered yes, 26.5 per cent no.

In the initial group of questions, differences in responses were significant in three cases (Appendix H). Those who said they would not like to see an ethics course taught were significantly more likely to agree with an editor that misrepresentation to get a story was justified. This group was also much less likely to go ahead with the story about the Nazi officer, and much more likely to go ahead with the story on toxic dumping. These respondents were also less likely to run a photograph which could cause problems for the couple pictured.

Students who did not want an ethics course were somewhat more likely to provide the name of their source to an editor, but the two groups were almost equally likely to give the name to the police. The opposite group was somewhat more likely to appear as a Crown witness, but slightly less likely to provide the name to avoid contempt of court charges.

The section asking for ranking of factors affecting ethical decision-making processes showed noticeable

differences between those desiring and those not desiring an ethics course. Respondents in the latter category said they were significantly more likely to be affected by teachers' opinions, the newsroom, the opinions of others, their upbringing, and other disciplines. Interestingly enough, this group also gave a marginally higher value to the impact of ethics class.

The two groups ranked the first three influences in the identical order -- personal morality, upbringing and the newsroom -- but those who said they would prefer to see an ethics course taught at their school ranked the influence of ethics class and teachers' opinions fourth and fifth, followed by other disciplines and lastly, others' opinions. The bottom part of the list for the other group seems to reflect a different set of influences: other disciplines was ranked fourth, followed by ethics class, teachers' opinions, and the opinions of others.

The two groups showed some variation in the second ranking section dealing with influences on news judgment. Those who said they did not want to see an ethics course gave a noticeably higher value to accuracy, the public's right to know, and the right to privacy. The other group gave a higher value to the story's impact on the audience, the way the story reflected on the reporter, and news value. Rankings varied a little by group: both ranked accuracy first, while the "yes" group put news value second and the public's right to know

third, the "no" group reversed that order. The former group placed effect on audience fourth and right to privacy fifth; the latter group reversed the two.

Again, there seems to be no particular pattern to the differences -- those preferring an ethics class do not seem to demonstrate more consistently "ethical" behaviour; nor does the opposite group appear consistently "unethical".

However, there are notable differences in respondents' answers to two questions. Those in the yes group were significantly more likely to report a change in their answers over the past year, suggesting a less rigid approach to ethical questions. In addition, this group is significantly more likely to report having encountered an ethical dilemma. This response seems to indicate a greater ethical awareness on the part of this group, but it would be risky to attempt to draw any conclusions about cause and effect -- perhaps a more ethically aware group simply wants more ethics instruction, rather than that instruction creating ethical awareness.

Year

While there is no clear, consistent pattern to responses tabulated by students' year in the program, large differences in answers do appear frequently. Respondents broke down as follows: 21.2 per cent were in third year, 41 per cent in fourth, 16 per cent in master's I, and 21.8 per cent in

master's II. (It should be noted that the majority of students in the last category are from Carleton.)

Significant spreads in opinion among the four levels of students occurred on five questions in the first section, with a narrow spread occurring on one (Appendix I). Second-year master's students were most likely to take free theatre tickets, while first-year master's students were the least likely. Master's II students were also most likely to agree with an editor that misrepresentation was justifiable, while fourth year students were the least likely.

On the toxic dumping story, master's II students were most likely to go ahead, while third year students were the least likely. First year master's students were most likely to spike the incriminating photo, while master's II students were most likely to run it. Finally, fourth year students were the most likely to consider the story about a gay mayoral candidate newsworthy, while master's I students were the least likely to do so. The narrowest range of opinion came on the question asking whether students would write a story about an editor's drunk driving -- responses in the highest and lowest groups differed only negligibly.

In the section dealing with responses to requests to reveal a source's identity, first-year master's students were consistently more willing to cooperate with authorities. On all four questions, this group was the most likely to supply the names to an editor or police, appear as a Crown witness or

avoid contempt of court charges. In the first three instances, second-year master's students, fourth-year students and third-year students followed respectively, with descending levels of agreement. In the last case, the order changed slightly, with fourth-year and master's students reversing their place.

Clearly, first-year master's students stand out as having consistently different responses to the questions examined so far. This tendency makes sense in light of these students' newness to the discipline of journalism -- the majority of them come from undergraduate backgrounds other than journalism, and are being exposed to the norms of the field for the first time. Thus, the unwritten rules for dealing with certain ethically tricky situations -- acceptance of freebies, treatment of sources -- are either still unfamiliar to them, or, perhaps, are being actively rebelled against. Third-year students, on the other hand, often appear on the opposite end of the scale from the previous group, again for apparently obvious reasons. Generally speaking, these students have had at least two years of fairly intensive exposure to journalistic norms, and have little or no outside experience with which to temper their acceptance of those norms. Work experience and age may have a moderating effect, or, on occasion, may result in a consolidation of a personal code of ethics.

These observations appear to be borne out by the first ranking section, dealing with influences on ethical decision making. Third year students gave significantly higher values than the others to factors such as teachers' opinions, ethics class, and other disciplines. Master's I students gave high values to the newsroom and the opinions of others, while master's II students placed a high value on their upbringing.

Third year students ranked ethics class higher than any of the other groups, in third position, while master's I students ranked it at the bottom of the list, and master's II fifth. All groups had personal morality first on the list, and included newsroom influence and upbringing in the top four. Undergraduates included ethics class in the top four, while master's I listed others' opinions, and master's II other disciplines, perhaps referring to their undergraduate studies. Again, the dramatic difference in the importance of ethics classes to undergraduates versus graduates is clear.

However, on the second ranking section, all four groups ranked factors influencing their news judgment identically. Master's I students gave a higher value to accuracy than the others (with third year students giving it the lowest), while third year students gave higher values to the reflection of the story on themselves, and the public's right to know (with master's I students giving it the lowest in both cases). Second-year master's students gave a higher value to news value of a story, with master's I students on the low end.

First-year master's students were more likely to say their answers had changed over the past year, again apparently reflecting the results of their recent exposure to journalistic practice, while fourth year students were the least likely to report change. Third year students were substantially more likely to indicate a preference for an ethics course in their school of journalism, with fourth year students showing the least interest in such a course. Finally, master's I students were significantly more likely than the others to report having encountered an ethical dilemma, perhaps because of a tendency to see an ethical problem where other students would apply their journalistic norms; third year students were the least likely to say they had run into an ethical dilemma, perhaps because of their lack of practical experience, or because of their acceptance of the aforementioned norms.

Discussion

Despite the concerns noted in Appendix A, several useful conclusions have emerged from the questionnaire results. First of all, it appears that Canadian schools of journalism have been extremely successful in instilling a clear set of news values in their students. Respondents in virtually every category ranked the provided influences over their news judgments identically.

It is also clear from students' answers that they are far from agreed on the necessity for ethics instruction. Those who have not had it range from scorning its usefulness to lamenting its absence, although those who answered the question asking whether they would like a journalism course offered at their school were more than three-quarters in favour.

Those who have had it describe it in some cases as the most valuable course they have ever taken, and in others as the biggest waste of time they have encountered. Again, this type of division is difficult to analyse without knowing whether a group of students at one particular school simply reacted strongly against a bad ethics course or in favour of a good one, or considered the potential usefulness of such instruction.

In very general terms, it appears that ethics courses are most influential with women, francophones, students with less work experience, students in lower years of study, and the non-religious. This is not particularly encouraging for proponents of ethics classes, since it is the young and inexperienced students who put faith in ethics instruction.

When they are older and more experienced, they seem to prefer to rely on their own ability to evaluate a situation and make an ethical decision. Work experience in particular appears to heighten both awareness of and concern for ethical issues, and the level of pragmatism, but does not seem to

prompt an interest in ethics classes as a method of dealing with these issues. However, it is entirely possible that given the tools to create a consistent set of personal ethical beliefs that this tendency to look within for moral guidance would be a positive thing, both for the individual journalist and the profession as a whole.

It is somewhat comforting, perhaps, to note that more experience in the world of journalism does not seem to automatically breed cynicism and unethical behaviour. In fact, in examining the responses of students with varying levels of work experience, it is those with the most experience who answer the most "ethically," in the broadest terms. This raises interesting questions which are beyond the scope of this paper, relating to existing ethical norms in journalism, and the type of journalists who choose to return to university or attempt a degree for the first time, having worked in the field already.

One area which has not yet been examined, but is among the most interesting of the study, is that of the qualitative questions where students were given free rein to answer in as much or little detail as they chose. For precisely this reason, the answers were extremely fragmented and impossible to generalize from, but have been used as illustrations of certain points of view throughout this paper.

Briefly, when students were asked how their responses might have changed from the previous year, the most common

responses were, in order: I've become more practical; I've become more cynical; discussions in class and/or with peers have clarified my ideas; I'm more concerned about the impact of my stories; my ideas changed since my moral positions have been in place for some time. When asked for their opinions of the ethics course or courses they had taken, students were most likely to answer, in order: it was excellent; it was unrealistic; it was good to be exposed to other people's ideas; it was useless; ethics can't be taught; there should be more ethics courses. These responses illustrate more clearly than the statistics the aforementioned split in attitudes on the worth of ethics classes.

Students whose schools did not have an ethics course were asked why they would or wouldn't like to see one added to the curriculum. Results here may have been contaminated by responses from students who were not in this category, however, the top answers, in order, were: yes -- ethics is an integral part of your education as a reporter; yes -- it's good to be exposed to others' ideas; no -- ethics can't be taught; yes -- it's good to discuss this issues before encountering them in the real world; no -- other courses deal with ethical concerns adequately.

Students' descriptions of ethical dilemmas they had encountered in their reporting careers fell into a number of broad categories, the most frequently mentioned of which are: the ethical use of information; sensitivity to/protection of

a source's feelings; pressure from a source to change information or review a story; misrepresentation of reporter in order to obtain a story.

Obviously there are some general influences at work on here on the formation of students' ethics. What are not obvious are several other concerns: whether those influences can be given different emphases, whether any amount of discussion of ethics will prompt more ethical behaviour, or whether students will end up judging each situation as it arises without reference to any kind of moral framework. Likewise, there did not emerge from this study a definite answer on whether or not ethics courses do influence students' beliefs and behaviour. However, the information gathered by this questionnaire -- imperfect and incomplete though it may be -- is an excellent starting point from which to begin the task of examining how best to avoid the pitfalls outlined by the students who responded, and, ultimately, how to design and carry out an ethics course that will prod their moral awareness into life.

CHAPTER 2

Arguments against courses in journalistic ethics

For most thoughtful journalists and scholars it is a foregone conclusion that a university department or school of journalism should make some attempt to raise and discuss questions of ethics in a course designated solely for that purpose. However, students themselves and working journalists do not always share this view. Given that some universities do not have a course devoted to ethics, the question of whether a separate course in ethics and is a necessary part of a pre-professional's journalism education is of paramount importance and must be addressed.

Certainly, objections to ethics courses do exist, but they are rarely raised in the academic literature dealing with journalism instruction. In an attempt to discover some of the objections felt by journalism students, questionnaire respondents were asked both whether they thought ethics classes were a good idea and why, and what their opinion was of any ethics classes they had taken.

The most common explanation given by those who said they did not want ethics instruction at their school was that, in their opinion, ethics couldn't be picked up in a classroom. Their comments were variations on the same theme: "I don't think judgment calls can be taught" (Ryerson graduate). "Ethics is not something that can be taught in a classroom,

but should come from personal experiences and discussions with other journalists" (Carleton undergraduate), and, flatly, "You can't teach morality. People have a right to react however they want without external influence to any situation." (Carleton undergraduate)

These responses reflect a common attitude among some students, a near paranoia that ethics courses are designed to inculcate one set of rules over which the student has no influence. They tend to equate ethics and morality as unteachable subjects, and go on the defensive the second anyone suggests that a course in ethics might be worthwhile.

These students do not want to feel as though an instructor is simply inculcating a set of moral principles which they must memorize and at least pretend to agree with or risk failing the course. "Ethics are personal" wrote a Carleton undergraduate, "not something that can be taught. All instructors have a particular bias; therefore that bias would be brought to the course." "I don't really feel I learn much and don't like the fact that professors' morals are imposed on us." (Carleton undergraduate)

Of course, no teaching is value-free, and journalism instructors cannot help but impart -- consciously or otherwise -- a particular set of ideas as they discuss any kind of course material. As Elliott (1984, 130) notes, "whatever the climate of the classroom, students are expected to glean and accept the values of the teaching/learning process which are

prized by the instructor." However, if the instructor is aware of the existence of these pressures, her unconscious attempts to inculcate a system of ethical behaviour can be minimized.

What will be more obvious to students -- and, the survey responses would suggest, vigorously opposed by them -- is an overt attempt to steer them toward one style of ethical decision-making, or even a particular set of ethical rules of behaviour. While an instructor may have extremely strong and passionate beliefs about the rights and wrongs of journalism, efforts to set students in a predetermined path of righteousness can only fail. Students will resent the implication that they cannot analyze ethical questions and decide on the best course of action.

As a report on the teaching of professional ethics in general in the university classroom notes, such an approach cannot help but be counterproductive.

Indoctrination. . . is wholly out of place in the teaching of ethics. Although students should be assisted in developing moral ideals and fashioning a coherent way of approaching ethical theory and moral dilemmas, the task of the teacher is not to promote a special set of values, but only to promote those sensitivities and analytical skills necessary to help students reach their own moral judgments. (Hastings Center 1980, 81)

Thus, clearly, any course in ethics and journalism which has as its goal the instillation of a particular set of professional and/or personal values is one which is very

seriously flawed. It has no value for students, and the attempt to teach a course this way would inevitably sour many students on the whole process of reflecting on ethical journalism.

The concerns expressed by students on the questionnaires are certainly valid, but only in terms of their authors' preconceived ideas of what an ethics course may be like, or their experience with one which was poorly conceived and taught. Students who expect an ethics course to be like any other university course naturally fear the professor's tendency to "teach" what they feel should come naturally, and impose her own ideas as fact. If a student goes by his experience with other university courses, he will naturally expect a situation where professors lecture, and students are expected to take notes, memorize, and call up the imparted information for use on assignments or exams.

And if one considers such a possibility, with a professor lecturing on the rules for handling requests for confidentiality, for example, then expecting a regurgitation of same on a year-end exam, ethics classes begin to look very unpalatable indeed. As was noted by a journalism instructor more than 65 years ago

It is reasonably obvious that the method that promises least by way of giving the instructor in journalistic ethics an influence on decisions made by his students ten years later, is the lecture method -- the classroom sermon. (Flint 1924, 21)

However, if students are encouraged to conceive of a non-threatening class where discussion is essential and the professor doesn't have all the answers, just a lot of different perspectives for consideration, then the hostile attitudes suggested in some of the questionnaire responses need not be borne out. Clearly, a journalism ethics class is not the place for "instruction" or "training" as it is done in, say, Broadcast 101, where neophyte reporters are given clear, unyielding rules on how to write for radio or how long a television story should run.

A course in which an instructor lays down iron-clad precepts and expects a group of intelligent iconoclasts to accept them simply does not make sense; rather, the purpose of an ethics class, as will be discussed in much greater detail in the next chapter, is to encourage students to think for themselves, to challenge the notion that there is no higher guiding factor in journalism than ratings or circulation, the editor's command, or pure expediency. The glib resort to the public's right to know as justification for virtually any action must be challenged, and students encouraged to develop their own guidelines for making ethical decisions.

In fact, the students who responded defensively that ethics can't be taught were correct; what schools of journalism must do is accept this as a given, and move on to how best to deal with ethical concerns within their curriculum. The question of a professor's ability to impose

his views on students is of greater concern; however, it is interesting to note that when the questionnaire asked them to rank the influence of various factors over their ethical decision-making, teachers' opinions were almost universally given last or second-last place on the list. Thus, while they fear an instructor's intervention, most students appear to feel it has, in reality, little influence over them.

But there is more to this concern than the student's perception; it is not difficult to picture even the most well-meaning professor expressing shock at a particularly provocative student argument, or overriding, however good-naturedly, dissenting opinion. Elliott (1984, 20) quotes one American student as saying of his ethics instructor "He gave me a C because I gave my opinion and not his. . .Everybody else in class is just feeding back what he says, but I say 'Screw them, this is what I believe.'" It is difficult to know to what extent this could be an attitude problem; however, Elliott (1984, 25) also notes that by the end of the course, the same student felt that "'(the professor) and I don't agree, but as long as I back things up he gives me good grades. He's taught me to think about issues in a certain way.'"

Difficult as it may be for opinionated professors to resist proselytizing for their particular ethical position, it should be possible for a disciplined instructor to allow for differences of opinion with students, as long as the student

can justify his ethical stance. Thus it would seem that the major sticking point with these particular objections to ethics courses is that of a shared definition -- the students need to be confident that they will not be preached at or expected to toe the instructor's ethical line, and instructors need to make it clear that while they may express their own opinions, they will listen to any reasoned response and avoid "teaching ethics" by laying down the ethical law as she perceives it for her class of prospective journalists.

In passing, it is interesting to note how many of the strongly apprehensive and/or negative comments came from students in the Carleton University journalism program. Respondents from other schools also expressed contempt for ethics courses, but none in such high numbers as at Carleton. It is tempting to wonder whether this is not simply a case of rejection of the unknown, or rejection of the badly or hastily taught. Since there is no systematic approach to ethics at Carleton, students have nothing but prejudice on which to base their perceptions about ethics courses.

While students at schools with ethics courses also gave negative opinions about ethics courses, they often appear to have been direct results of the type of course and its approach. For example, there seems to be a cluster of dissatisfaction among University of Western Ontario respondents about their ethics course and the likelihood of a better one being possible, while students in the graduate

program at Ryerson generally had more favourable things to say about their course and ethics courses in general. Thus it would seem that students' opinions about the value of ethics courses depends on their exposure to them, and how well they are taught.

So, while some students who have never had a separate course in ethics react eagerly to the thought of having one in their curriculum, more react with mistrust and negative opinions. Among students who have taken an ethics course, the quality of that course appears to be a major factor in determining how they feel about the idea of ethics instruction in general: those who have had what they consider a useless experience are, not surprisingly, much more negative about the entire concept. In the end, then, it would seem that the most vehement student objections to ethics courses are based on nothing more than prejudice and personal antipathy, rather than any rational look at their positive potential. A strikingly similar attitude is also to be found among many professional journalists, something a future questionnaire could test.

While universities should be trying to dispel these vague and negative notions about ethics courses, it is equally important that they challenge the commonly held idea that ethics simply happen without substantial thought or effort, that the process is a completely natural one with no need of "artificial" examination. As some respondents wrote, "It's

basically common sense and common courtesy combined," (Carleton undergraduate) "Personal ethics are developed over time by the individual based on experience. Ethics shouldn't or can't be imposed on someone." (Carleton undergraduate) Personal ethical systems simply grow, they write, without any outside fertilizing.

Another concern of respondents as well as working journalists is the feeling that ethics courses are unrealistic, ivory-tower exercises which do little to prepare students for the reality of life as a journalist. Whereas a professor or philosopher may prefer a course which discusses great thinkers and their bases for ethical behaviour, many journalists agree that the purpose of an ethics course is to ground students in the concrete realities of ethics in the newsroom: "To make students keenly aware of what is ethical, and what isn't" (newspaper editor Joe Shoquist, in Goodwin 1979, 14) or "To explain what constitutes ethical journalistic conduct." (magazine editor Donald McDonald, in Goodwin 1979, 15)

Indeed, students who said they did not want or had not been impressed with an ethics course often felt that way out of a sense that ethics courses were too unrealistic: "[The ethics course is] OK, but tends to 'airy-fairy' pretend dilemmas and the sort, instead of the types of situations we'll really face," (King's undergraduate) "Could be a better course if it was grounded in more practical discussions of

newsroom dilemmas," (Western graduate) "Void of substance and irrelevant." (Western graduate) In addition, students who had taken an ethics course at some point often responded that the experience had, in purely pragmatic terms, not been particularly useful: "So much is learned in the field. You can't say how you'd react to a situation until confronted by it," (Concordia graduate) "Waste of tuition. Little more than coffee-break chit-chat." (Carleton graduate)⁴

It is difficult to know what prompts these responses, beyond a negative experience with a particular ethics course that has put the student off the field for good. It is possible, however, that some of these respondents expected something different from their course which it was not necessarily designed to give, perhaps specific guidelines, perhaps a case-by-case discussion of quandaries taken from reality. Their answers seem to indicate a desire for some kind of practical ethics instruction that does not put "too much emphasis on philosophers like Aristotle, Plato and Socrates instead of modern-day media ethics," as a Ryerson undergraduate wrote. A Western graduate student concurred, noting that that school's course gave "little advice on how to handle practical problems, with too much emphasis on the philosophical underpinnings of ethics."

⁴ While Carleton does not have a separate course dealing with journalistic ethics, instructors of a graduate course in professional practices are encouraged to include an ethics component. Thus, some Carleton students will respond as if they have taken a full ethics course, when, in fact, they have only had a few classes on the subject.

There seems to be a feeling among this group that ethical theory is irrelevant to the training of a working journalist, but the resentment may also simply be the legacy of a poorly taught course which did not allow for student input and reference to the realities of journalism. Inclusion of philosophical theory should deepen and enrich discussions of troubling ethical questions about journalism, not replace them. And, as Cam Sylvester (1988, 10) notes:

. . . a little navel-gazing never hurt anyone. Besides, if the students are unable to see any link between the abstract and the concrete, we have to question whether they possess (sic) the critical thinking skills necessary to make sense of and then report on an increasingly complex world.

Too often, what the student or employer perceives as an unrealistic or useless ethics course is the fault of the instructor or department, rather than the concept of such a course, which need not and should not be only an exercise in philosophical theory.

Some respondents to the questionnaire said that with what appear to be constant changes in the area of journalistic ethics, no course could prepare students for what they would encounter at work, and would ultimately be useless. Things that used to be acceptable behaviour no longer are, whereas behaviour that once would have been frowned on is now condoned. How, then, ask students, can an ethics course keep up, let alone be of any value?

Journalism is a business like any other.
A code of ethics in journalism changes or
varies slightly with every medium and
circumstance you work in. (Carleton
undergraduate)

Or, as another Carleton undergraduate put it, "I find ethics change and it depends on the news agency. Idealism cannot co-exist with reporting." This reinforces the earlier noted common belief that the study of ethics in journalism school and the practice of journalism in the working world are completely separate things, with the first having no bearing on the second.

Again, the problem seems to arise from a differing conception of what an ethics course should be. If it is simply a place where rules are laid down and memorized, then these students may well have a point. It would indeed be difficult to keep track of the varying standards of different news organizations and attempt to transmit those to students. And, of course, little of value would have been achieved if students simply focused on descriptive ethics in attempting to decide what the pros do, and, thus, what they should do. Since there is no professional consensus on ethics, individual journalists need a solid ethical base of their own in order to fill in the blanks where working journalists' opinions cannot help.

However, if an ethics course is a place where students are forced to arrive at their ethical positions through critical thinking and consideration of multiple viewpoints,

then this criticism does not apply. Once again, the preconceived notion of the nature and purpose of an ethics course seems to be the enemy, not the course itself, when handled properly.

One final objection to ethics courses noted by some students should be mentioned -- that ethics should be learned in life, preferably a journalistic environment. As one Western graduate student put it, "We make these [ethical] decisions daily. A classroom situation just doesn't cut it." One suspects that these respondents prefer to believe that there is no such thing as ethics, but rather a series of unconnected situational judgments for which there is no real preparation.

Surely no thoughtful journalist can agree that it is better to leave students to form their own ethical systems in a vacuum, with no information to consider but their own instincts (which may be honourable) or expediency (which rarely is). Obviously students' views will be tempered by the realities of reporting, but it is essential to have thought about those views in detail in advance, in order to have some perspective on the pressures of the work environment. A set of ethics will not suddenly be revealed to the eager journalism graduate the second she hits the newsroom.

Thus it would appear that the majority of the objections to formal ethics instruction in journalism schools is based on students' perception of what such instruction would be like,

or on specific experiences with less-than-perfect courses. Viewed in this light, there is a certain validity to some of the complaints made by students -- ethics, indeed, cannot be taught, school is certainly not the real world -- but it is vital to understand how these problems can be avoided in the best of all possible journalism curricula.

Student criticisms of ethics courses, as well as those of some professional journalists, then, are often unfounded, or simply not thought out, based as they seem to be on an entirely negative perception of or experience with a class that does not have to and should not be the norm. Why then should university journalism programs include ethics courses? The next chapter will attempt to answer this question by outlining the goals of an effective courses in ethics and journalism, one which would leave students aware of their moral obligations and reasonably confident in their personally created set of ethical guidelines.

CHAPTER 3

Goals of a university course in ethics and journalism

If students and journalists tend to object to ethics courses based on prejudice, lack of information and scepticism, it is necessary now to illustrate the justifiability of teaching such a course, and teaching it well. The best way to do this is to clarify the reasons for teaching courses in ethics and journalism by explaining the goals of such courses. In examining a few of the principles which are commonly cited by students as worthless in a course in journalistic ethics, some clarification of what goals are in fact worthwhile should emerge. What should be the major objectives of such a course? While the answers to that question may vary widely from professor to reporter to student to editor, it is possible to outline and evaluate the most commonly suggested objectives of a course in journalistic ethics.

A goal which may be an unintentionally large part of a poorly conceived course in journalism and ethics involves descriptive ethics. Christians (1979, 27) describes this as the "quandary" approach to the subject, in which "we take classic cases, sensational situations, group several side by side, puzzle over the options, and call it an ethics course." In this type of course, the instructor's objective, whether articulated or not, is often simply to describe "the way

things are done" by professional journalists. (Of course, such descriptions may be based on anything other than the instructor's "feel" for journalism's predominant values.) If pressed for justification of such an approach, the instructor would likely suggest that it prepares students for the work world they will enter upon graduation.

The feeling does exist among working journalists that students would be better off discussing specific cases or "quandaries," and the ways such concerns are dealt with in a real-life newsroom. Television managing editor Ernie Ford (in Sanders 1979, 37), for example, feels that journalism students "have a great deal of trouble relating . . . normative ethics to the real world. . . I think where ethics courses fail is when they don't do enough" discussion of real life cases.

However, as Christians (1979, 27) clearly points out, there are serious drawbacks to a course which makes imparting descriptions of the present state of journalistic ethics a central objective. "If descriptive ethics moves into the forefront and becomes our exclusive domain, it tends toward quandry (sic) ethics," an approach which may appeal to journalists like Ford, but does little to leave students with a basis for ethical decision-making.

Setting up a course with descriptive ethics as a goal also runs the risk of misleading students as to the existence of consensus on ethical issues, as well as, in the words of a Carleton graduate student, "confusing rather than enlightening

students." Not only does a course with such a goal avoid the most important issues in journalistic ethics, it also runs a much higher risk of alienating students than does one which is thought-provoking and covers new ground.

A similar concern which was expressed in several questionnaire responses was the desire for ethics courses to **give students a set of rules to follow** when they graduate and enter the field of journalism. Some students felt that "in today's complex environment it's really important for good journalists to know what they can and can't do and what they should do," (Carleton undergraduate) and that "although 'ethics' differ according to a person's own upbringing and there is no hard and fast rule in the industry, it would help to have some guidelines." (Carleton undergraduate) This, of course, is not the real purpose of a thoughtful ethics course.

Students who want a professor to lay out a reliable set of ethical standards which can be referred to forever as a guide to proper journalistic behaviour are simply ignoring the true nature of journalistic ethics: that it is a confusing and treacherous minefield, and one which can be negotiated best with a great deal of debate, soul-searching and cross-examination of one's own values. A university-level journalism course is simply not the place for an authority figure to intone "Freebies bad, protecting source good" and thirty students to nod in assent and inscribe that day's rule in their notes. Students who expect this from an ethics

course would -- in fact, should -- be both surprised and disappointed at the course outlined in Chapters 5 and 6.

It is obvious, then, that there are some goals, such as the pursuit of descriptive ethics or the laying down of immutable ethical guidelines, which can undermine and even make impossible expansion of the journalism student's awareness of and ability to deal with ethical issues. As is so often the case with ineffective courses which students ultimately resent and dismiss as valueless, the fault lies with the objectives of the course, its organization and the content aimed at achieving those goals. To be a truly effective exercise in examining the pressing questions of ethics and journalism, a course must be meticulously planned and carried out, always with specific objectives in mind.

What, then, are some of the valid objectives which have been suggested for a valuable course in journalistic ethics? If the instructor cannot fall back on inculcation of a specific set of moral precepts or a description of the state of the profession's ethical standards, what goals of lasting value should a course be designed to achieve? Some opinions drawn from the general literature, as well as those specific to journalism and journalism education will be examined and synthesized to provide the basis for designing a valuable course in ethics and journalism.

One of the most helpful discussions of the general subject of moral education at the university level is found in

the Hastings Center's 1980 report, The Teaching of Ethics in Higher Education. As an introduction to some of the aims of a useful course in professional ethics, the following descriptions will borrow heavily from that report.

The report's authors acknowledge the different agendas of the different professional courses of study, whether the preferred result is a specific type of behaviour, or a coming to terms with certain professional pressures. They go on to suggest five major goals toward which any course in professional ethics should strive, beginning with the **stimulation of the moral imagination**. The main purpose here is to encourage students to understand that there is a moral dimension to their lives, "that a consequence of moral positions and rules can be actual suffering or happiness" (Hastings Center 1980, 48). What is important here is gaining a sense of empathy with those affected by one's moral decisions. The report suggests evoking students' emotions, then helping them to understand under what circumstances their decision might be different from the one initially provoked by their emotional response (Hastings Center 1980, 49).

Recognizing ethical issues, the report's second goal, follows closely on the emotional responses engendered by the first step, building on them and shifting "to a conscious, rational attempt to sort out those elements in emotional response that represent appraisal and judgment, however inchoate at first" (Hastings Center 1980, 49). Of great

importance also is increasing students' ability to recognize the undercurrents of "hidden value biases and tacit moral premises" (Hastings Center 1980, 49.) Again, the basic intent is to provide students with the tools to recognize the moral implications of their actions (Hastings Center 1980, 49).

The third objective outlined in the Hastings Center report involves helping students **develop analytical skills** in order to rationally work through the implications of moral decisions. Such skills are also needed to come to an understanding of sweeping concepts such as "justice" and "good" (Hastings Center 1980, 50). The ability to analyze ethical theories and principles is one an effective ethics course should impart to students in order to help them negotiate the ethical minefields of their chosen profession.

In response to the question "why ought I to be moral?," the fourth objective of a professional ethics course suggested in the report is **eliciting a sense of moral obligation and personal responsibility** (Hastings Center 1980, 50). The authors acknowledge the uncertainty many students may feel over what ethical behaviour involves: recognizing and accepting moral rules and their implications, or recognizing and accepting the necessity of doing what one believes to be right. Simply put, "it makes no sense to talk of ethics unless one presupposes that individuals have some freedom to make moral choices and that they are responsible for the choices they make" (Hastings Center 1980, 51).

Finally, the report notes the need for **tolerating -- and resisting -- disagreement and ambiguity** as a goal of a course in professional ethics (Hastings Center 1980, 51). Students should be encouraged to find the sources of disagreement, and attempt to both understand and accept them, if they are valid and genuinely held. The give and take of classroom discussions on ethical matters should generate not only recognition that there are other legitimate points of view, but toleration of them and, ultimately, re-evaluation and/or reinforcement of the students' own. As the report's authors note,

. . .while there must be toleration of disagreement and ambiguity, there must no less be an attempt to locate and clarify the sources of disagreement, to resolve ambiguity so far as possible, and to see if ways can be found to overcome differences of moral viewpoint and theory. (Hastings Center 1980, 51)

These five objectives largely capture the essence of what is important in a course in professional ethics, and while many of the other opinions on the subject may cover some of the same ground, it is also important to look at the goals which are unique to a university course in journalistic ethics. For example, the bases of the Hastings Center guidelines are synthesized by Christians when he suggests that the purpose of a university-level course in media ethics

. . .is to leave students with a **set of integrating principles**, with the concepts and rules that will stimulate the moral imagination so that they recognize ethical issues. (Christians 1979, 29)

He adds that his related goals are providing students with "the terminology, frame of reference, and the analytical skills for doing valid ethical inquiry." (Christians 1979, 29) With the central aim of helping students develop their own framework for moral decision-making comes the necessity of teaching the skills required to create such a personal and complex structure.

Denise Elliott (1984, 5) outlines another system of interlocking goals to be achieved by an ethics course, a system she refers to as the "tri-foundational theory of journalism ethics." This theory comprises three basic elements which Elliott sees as integral both to professional practitioners of journalism, and students learning the skills and norms of journalism in a pre-professional setting. The first of these elements is "the relationship of press to society" (Elliott 1984, 5); in a journalism school, that would involve "a course in professional ethics [that] . . . include[s] student exploration into the obligations of the profession in society and student understanding of the shared values of the profession." (Elliott 1984, 129)

The second of Elliott's foundations concerns journalists as "an indentifiable (sic) group" whose members are "obligated to uphold shared values which can be shown to be essential to the public interest." (Elliott 1984, 5) In rather general terms, she adds that

professional schools have a
responsibility to teach values

appropriate to the profession in question, if they are completely preparing their students for membership in the profession. (Elliott 1984, 131)

Thirdly, Elliott notes that "the individual moral system of each practitioner" is the last foundation for journalistic ethics, given that "each journalist is, above all, an autonomous moral agent, capable of choosing action and morally accountable for actions chosen." (Elliott 1984, 6)

When transposed into the context of a university-level course in ethics and journalism, Elliott's tri-foundational theory points to a program of study which will: **"1. assist students in their understanding and knowledgeable acceptance of essential shared values of the profession."** (Elliott 1984, 137) This involves discussing and evaluating those values which are held to be basic to the practice of journalism, such as, for example, truth-telling or fairness. However, it is clear that this principle veers rather too close to descriptive ethics, and suggests that there is an easily identifiable body of "essential shared values" in existence.

A course designed along Elliott's guidelines will also **"2. assist students in articulating and testing their own system of moral belief so that they can act as autonomous moral agents within the profession"** (Elliott 1984, 137-138), a suggestion closely akin to a combination of the last three of the Hastings Center's stated goals. Finally, this ethics course will also, it is suggested,

3. provide an understanding of the function of the institution within society to serve as criteria for judging the adequacy of the moral judgments of individual practitioners and the conventions of the profession as a whole. (Elliott 1984, 138)

This final element is intended to provide a sense of the journalist's interdependence with society, as well as of the relative worth of the ethical behaviour and positions of both individual journalists and the field in general.

In a similar vein to Elliott's lattermost contention, but nearly 50 years earlier, journalism instructor George F. Church (1939, 172) noted that since "ethics deals with conduct, and conduct is a matter of social relationships," the primary objective of a course in journalistic ethics is to help students develop the capacity to recognize and analyze "the social relationships which exist between the journalist and the other elements in his society." (Church 1939, 172)

The point here could be said to be **awareness**, both of the journalist's place in society and relationship to it, as well as the fact that "communication is the very basis of society's existence, and that as practicing journalists they will have a definite social responsibility in maintaining the integrity of the channels of communication." (Church 1939, 173) While the noble-purveyor-of-truth image underlying such contentions should be taken with a grain of salt, Church's emphasis on recognition of the journalist's place in a web of social relationships, and, ultimately, sensitivity to the others in

that web, are potentially valuable goals for a course in ethics and journalism.

A different perspective on much the same basic goal is provided by Edmund Lambeth (1986, 178) in his discussion of what he terms "community journalism." He suggests that if the "vineyard" of journalism is to be passed along in "a more productive state," current tenders of the crop will need to "prune excesses of individualism, spurn lethargy of intellect and cultivate, if ever so slowly, a richer perspective on their work." (Lambeth 1986, 178)

He advocates journalism's participation in, and, indeed, contribution to creating, a genuine community. This devotion to community is not simply mindless fealty, but rather a realization that the individual journalist's career is not all-important, and that caring for one's community means caring enough to expose what is wrong and advocate for change. (Lambeth 1986, 178) Simply put, Lambeth is promoting as an objective for journalism in general, and, by association, journalism students in particular, a **sense of interconnectedness with and loyalty to the community** in which they practice their craft.

One desirable goal mentioned by several questionnaire respondents was the need to define one's own system of ethics and ethical decision-making, a goal similar in intent to Christians's "integrating principles." "It's important for people to be able to discuss their ethical standards with

other potential journalists in order to clarify and refine their own personal code of conduct," wrote one Carleton undergraduate; "[An ethics course] provides good fruit for discussion and interesting ideas that help define a reporter's personal ethics" noted another.

Through reading, reflection, and, most importantly, discussion, a course in ethics should encourage students to think of ethical behaviour as something more than whatever seems like the thing to do at the time. An ethics class should introduce the idea that one's ethics should not be infinitely flexible, but governed by a personal system of some kind. Of course, the definition of each student's system is entirely up to her; it may even be abhorrent to the instructor, whose duty it is to raise issues the student may not have considered, and guide him through a thorough examination of his beliefs.

John Merrill echoes these opinions in listing his objectives for ethics courses:

To raise the consciousness of students in the area of ethics. To cause the students to think systematicall, and seriously about ethical behaviour in journalism...To consider various ethical problems in journalism, come up with solutions, analyze and discuss these solutions. (quoted in Goodwin 1981, 15)

This passage neatly sums up this particular goal of ethics instruction: to get journalism students thinking about their own ethics, and, ideally, identifying their own set of beliefs and rules, however tentative.

Eugene Goodwin proposes not specific goals, but rather, **the ability to answer seven questions** of his devising, as the objective of his ethics courses at Penn State University. Being able to analyze the various factors and justify the subsequent answers should demonstrate the student's ability to function as an ethical, thoughtful journalist.

Echoes of concerns for the community, familiarity with the profession's shared values, and others can be heard clearly in Goodwin's seven questions:

1. What do we usually do in cases like this?
2. Who will be hurt and who will be helped?
3. Are there better alternatives?
4. Can I look myself in the mirror again?
5. Can I justify this to other people, the public?
6. What principles or values can I apply?
7. Does this decision fit the kind of journalism I believe in? (Or does it fit my general feeling about life and how people should treat one another? (Goodwin 1987, 24-25)

Given an individual instructor's personal stamp, questions such as these could prove very valuable to students who feel lost in the unfamiliar terrain of personal and philosophical evaluation.

While not relating her suggestions for ethics in journalism directly to the university classroom, June Martin (1988, 11) points out another area which is worthy of pursuit if ethical journalism is to be encouraged. In opposition to what she calls the tendency toward "group-think" solutions to

ethical problems in the form of codes of newsroom behaviour, she underlines the importance of some basic personal and educational goals.

A strong base in ethical theory enables journalists to recognize and analyze a moral dilemma, develop a personal belief system for making difficult moral decisions in work and private life and recognize the belief systems of others.
(Martin 1988, 11)

That grounding in ethical theory, Martin suggests, gives journalists, and, by extension, journalism students the basis for resisting the imposition of unrealistic codes in their professional lives, and enables them to make these most important of decisions from a solid, considered basis. Martin does not expand on the necessity of theory per se, so it is unclear whether she means to promote the teaching of classical ethics, or simply an understanding of how to approach questions of journalistic ethics.

While the need for a familiarity with classical ethics as a goal for a course in ethics and journalism is rarely expressed by students or working journalists, it is mentioned on occasion by scholars, and so warrants a brief mention. Clearly, the important consideration here must be balance, and an understanding of what is most helpful, in the broad sense, to students. Knowledge of classical ethical theories may well be useful to an aspiring journalist, but they must be made relevant and applied to potential ethical difficulties.

A course in pure philosophical ethics is a worthy end in itself for the philosophy department, but has no place in the journalism curriculum. Judging from students' responses to the more exclusively philosophical courses -- "It's been a waste of time; we need more substance (Western graduate) -- an ethics course which focuses on traditional philosophical approaches without incorporating material to relate the course directly to the students' own future pursuits is of little value, and may well inspire contempt for its irrelevance.

Although writing in a very different time, L.N. Flint outlined some basic goals of such a course in 1924. Even then, journalists and academics were wringing their hands over the state of journalistic ethics, and casting about for ways to make the ink-stained wretches into more moral beings with a greater regard for those about whom they wrote, and for society as a whole. Flint (1924, 21-22) summarized many of these opinions by stating his own goal for a university course:

That the decisions made by this graduate in journalism may be on a high plane ethically, that they may tend to further social well-being, that concessions to selfish expediency may be kept at a minimum -- this, I take it, is the aim of a course in the principles of journalism.

Flint's goals are, of course, very general, and are couched in the rhetoric of the day, but nevertheless, they tap into some of the deep-seated concerns which are still expressed about the state of ethics in the modern news media.

He is also one of the few writers to face directly an issue which often goes unaddressed, namely, that students -- and journalists -- may at times, in fact, may frequently, act not from any ethical motivation, but simply to get a story in by the deadline with a minimum of managerial or editorial repercussions. The necessity of producing material to fill a time slot or a printed page often overwhelms any moral considerations a reporter may have, given the consequences of not producing on time. Like it or not, expediency is a major factor in the ethical decision-making process of virtually every journalist, and Flint does well to draw our attention to it.

Flint's comments also point to a generally stated goal which is one of those most commonly suggested as the major purpose of a course in ethics. The centrality of ethical conduct to professional -- e.g. highly accurate, ethical, and responsible --journalism, this suggestion goes, cannot be overstated. As journalism becomes more "professionalized," many argue, it is vital that ethics courses have as their goal **the production of students who are more morally aware and behave more ethically than practitioners in the past.**

There is not space in this paper to discuss the pros and cons of the move towards shaping journalism into a profession along the lines of law or medicine, with a specific body of knowledge to be learned before entrance into the field, as well as self-regulation through a professional association

such as the various law societies. However, it can probably be accepted without too much argument that journalism is gradually becoming more "professional", with an increasing number of practitioners holding university degrees (Desbarats 1990, 89) and more and more news organizations discussing codes of ethics.

For practitioners, it is important to be seen as having some sort of guidelines for behaviour to have their work inspire confidence among their audience. For members of the public, the knowledge that the people from whom they receive their news and analysis have been given some training in approaching ethical questions is important to maintaining trust and credibility. Setting aside the question of the implications of "journalism as profession", then, it is obvious that journalism's increasing professionalism requires a greater emphasis on those areas which have traditionally been neglected, or which cause the audience to lose faith in or become cynical about the news.

And it is surely beyond argument that if journalism students are to enter this increasingly professionalized field, then ethics training should be a part -- indeed, an essential part -- of their preparation to do so. On the question of ethics instruction for professions on the whole, Bok (1976, 29) notes that if traditional sources of values no longer exert the same influence, then it is up to universities to fill the gap.

Unless one is prepared to argue that ethical values have no intellectual basis whatsoever, it seems likely that [ethics classes] will play a useful role in helping students develop a clearer, more consistent set of ethical principles that takes more careful account of the needs and interests of others. And it is also probable that students who fully understand the reasons that support their ethical principles will be more inclined to put their principles into practice and more uncomfortable at the thought of sacrificing principle to serve their own private ends.

Comments gathered from questionnaires reveal many students' feelings about the necessity of ethics to professional status: "Personal and professional integrity is everything -- if you can't believe in yourself and make appropriate, rational and fair choices, what is there?" (Carleton graduate); "It's definitely important -- it still scares me knowing how many people work out there with no inkling of what ethics are," (Regina undergraduate) and "It is THE MOST IMPORTANT instinct to develop as a journalist. A journalist without a fully-developed ethical code is like an armed hunter without a safety/training licence." (Carleton undergraduate) Another Carleton undergraduate wrote,

We are not objective -- that's a myth, so when we are obviously dealing with biased publishing we should put personal and moral obligations first because we could have a disastrous effect on people working under the guise of objectivity.

Thus it would seem that several of the goals stated by other authors -- stimulating moral awareness and a sense of moral obligation, as well as developing and acting on a personal

ethical code -- are combined by some students into a larger goal for an ethics course: providing a vital element of a truly "professional" education.

Another objective of journalism ethics courses emerged from the questionnaire responses, although it was given scant mention by academic writers: the need to **expose students to situations they are likely to encounter as working journalists**, and force them to examine those situations from different perspectives while they have the luxury of ample time for consideration. Since as professionals they will rarely have time to agonize over difficult ethical situations, it is essential that they be given time to do so in a situation where they cannot simply fall back on platitudes such as "whatever sells newspapers" or "that's what the lineup editor said." This is not intended to provide them with ironclad rules of behaviour, but rather to stimulate thought about issues and quandaries many students will face in the working world.

Judging from questionnaire results, students are unsure what faces them upon graduation, but some feel very strongly that ethics courses are essential to help them prepare for potential future problems:

. . . reporting perhaps more than other jobs involves putting yourself in situations where you might feel morally uneasy. To achieve some peace of mind, you have to consider some of the ethical dilemmas before they overwhelm you in practice. (Carleton graduate)

Journalists can be faced with extremely large ethical dilemmas with no advance warning that require split second decisions. An ethics course could help. (Carleton undergraduate)

The unease students feel about facing a newsroom unprepared could, these respondents suggest, be allayed if an ethics course has as a goal the examination of some of the types of ethical quandaries they are likely to encounter. Ethics instruction, then, is important in

. . . making [students] aware of the ethical dimensions of the problems they will confront in the course of their careers, and to give them some practice in analyzing these problems from an ethical perspective. (philosophy professor Lisa H. Newton, quoted in Goodwin 1981, 15)

Equally important is the discussion of such situations in a more relaxed setting which allows for ample reflection and possibly even a change of heart, neither of which the professional journalist generally has time for in the rush to complete a story by deadline.

A practical goal of ethics courses is suggested by Christians, Rotzoll and Fackler (1983, xvi): they rightly point out that controlled, systematic discussion of ethical issues **"advances our problem-solving capacity."** By considering situations in detail and arriving at one's personal conclusion

about such types of problems, ethics courses aim at **keeping students from "reinventing the wheel too often."** (Christians, Rotzoll and Fackler 1983, xvi) Discussing a subject thoroughly once or twice does not supply students with ready-made answers to all future problems, but it does establish a basis from which to make a decision. They need not hastily brush aside the various nagging concerns which bother them again and again, because they have been, to the extent it is possible to do so, worked out beforehand and placed in some kind of hierarchy to help facilitate decision-making.

It is only by **imparting the skills of discussion, analysis and encouraging their use** that students' existing, often unexamined ideas about ethics will be brought to light and questioned, in order to be refined or rejected. Christians notes that "schools that have implemented a specific course indicate that the amount and intensity of discussion about ethics have increased noticeably" (Christians 1985, 18). Thus the objective of an ideal ethics class is the **generation of thought and discussion that transcends the time slot devoted to it**, and percolates in many students' minds, helping them examine and clarify their own values. The importance of these skills is underlined by newspaper reporter Jim Godbold (in Sanders 1979, 37):

I can't argue strongly enough for the kind of synthesis in journalism ethics teaching that provides the student with the ability, even if he doesn't understand, to accurately and

intelligently question that which he has been told is ethical or non-ethical.

A goal to be strived for indeed; one wonders how different journalism would be were all practitioners instilled with this ability.

A final objective of an ethics course is one which is referred to in passing by many authors, but should be articulated briefly here: the importance of **giving students the time to consider ethical issues** from as many perspectives as possible, time they don't have while struggling to meet a deadline. As journalism professor Nick Russell (1988, 11) observes, students "recognize a deadline just as well as the oldtimers -- and they know 10 minutes to the hour is not the time to start an abstract debate in a newsroom."

These students are under so much pressure to produce on time that their ethical sense must often be suppressed until the story is in and a bad mark averted. An oasis of time in which to consider the sticky questions of journalistic ethics allows them to interrogate their own actions, and determine whether they fit into the system of decision-making being developed. As an undergraduate from l'Université de Québec a Montréal noted, ethics courses "permet de réfléchir, de marquer un temps d'arrêt, un certain recul critique": they allow reflection, a pause, a certain critical perspective.

In the end, what could be more valuable to students than encouraging them to consider the moral dimensions of actions undertaken unthinkingly in order to get or complete a story?

In doing so, they must confront their unease instead of burying it, and are forced to decide whether their behaviour was justified in the light of day.

There are, of course, other points of view as to what should be the goals of a university-level course in ethics and journalism which have not been included in the overview presented here. For instance, there are undoubtedly members of the "publish-and-be-damned" school of thought who would want ethics courses to emphasize that the story ultimately overrides virtually all ethical concerns. There are those who would promote a particular religious or philosophical line, and even those who would say that "ethics is a euphemism for playing mental games while the status quo remains intact." (Christians, Rotzoll and Fackler 1983, xviii) However, if we assume that there is a reason for courses in ethics and journalism, and such courses should have some clearly outlined goals in order to be effective, then some basic ideas can be drawn from those suggested above.

One common thread running through several suggestions is the rather vague notion that ethics classes should be giving journalism students some sense of where their profession fits in relation to the rest of society. This principle is one which sounds appealing, yet, upon reflection, is extremely difficult to pin down.

To impart such knowledge to students, there must be a consensus of some kind as to what the journalist's role in

society is, but such a consensus continues to elude academics and practising journalists both. For instance, is a journalist an adversary? A crusader? A conduit for information? Is he part of society or somehow set apart from it, acting as an observer? While it would be nice to be able to tell students where journalism fits into society as a whole, any attempt to do so would bog down in caveats and differing points of view.

What is perhaps more valuable is a second, related theme underlying several of the aforementioned proposals: making students aware that as journalists, they are part of a complex, interconnected social network. The journalistic arrogance alluded to by Lambeth and Flint is a dangerous thing; it is imperative that students realize as early as possible that their decisions do affect others, possibly profoundly. Extra effort must be made to emphasize this point in a university setting, where students' work may not be seen outside the classroom, giving them a false sense that they are free to write, shoot, or tape whatever they wish, without harming a source or consumer through inaccuracy or unethical behaviour.

A more concrete goal suggested by some writers deals with the skills necessary to cope with ethical dilemmas. The need for well-developed analytical skills is a common theme, from learning the connotative and denotative meanings of the terminology of ethics, to promoting problem-solving

techniques. The ability to trace an argument logically and assess its validity is an essential one to properly considering an ethical question. To these skills should be added the importance of recognizing the logical fallacies which frequently substitute for reasoned argument. Ideally, with these abilities would come the capacity to look at one's own actions reasonably objectively, and interrogate and evaluate the reasons for them.

The ultimate goal of a course in ethics and journalism, however, is stated repeatedly in various forms throughout this chapter, and is the final objective toward which the others point. Christians (1979, 29) describes it as "a set of integrating principles," Elliott (1984, 137-138) as "articulating and testing [students'] own system of moral belief so that they can act as autonomous moral agents," the Hastings Center report (1980, 81) as "fashioning a coherent way of approaching ethical theory and moral dilemmas." What they and others propose as the most important goal of a course in journalistic ethics is the provision of the students with the tools to form their own system of determining what is ethical, and acting on their beliefs.

The essential elements of such a goal are helping students recognize ethical concerns, instilling a sense that they have a moral duty to act in the most ethical manner possible, helping them recognize that others have different opinions and, while there is a diversity of sentiment, that

the answers to ethical questions are not utterly individual and subjective. Most journalists and instructors would no doubt have other elements to add, but these basic concepts, in addition to the tools of logic and analysis described earlier, are the most important. They form the basis of an effective course which will stimulate students' ethical imagination, challenge their preconceived ideas, and, perhaps, contribute to the gradual improvement of the ethical climate of journalism as a whole.

CHAPTER 4

Problems with common approaches to teaching ethics course

Given the range of divergent opinions as to the ultimate goal of an ethics course, it is not surprising that there are a number of different approaches used to impart ethics or encourage discussion of ethical issues in university journalism programs. Often, however, there are assumptions about ethics and their role in the education of a journalist that go unexamined precisely because they are never mentioned overtly. What is implicit in teaching methods and course content is at least as important as what is explicit, but the former is rarely submitted to any kind of rigorous interrogation for its coherence and value.

It is important, then, to look at some of the most common techniques of ethics education in journalism, with specific reference both to some Canadian universities, and to the efficacy of each particular approach. It is particularly important to examine the underlying rationales for some of these approaches, since they are so often taken for granted, and assumed not to need either articulation or defence.

Saturation

One of the most common approaches, or, perhaps more properly, non-approaches, to the ethics component of a university education in journalism has come to be known as the

"saturation" or "saturate-the-curriculum" method (Christians 1980, 21)⁵. The rationale here is that ethics training "should begin at the outset of students' journalism education and should permeate every course to emphasize the importance of high ethical standards" (McDaniel 1983, 16-17). Proponents of the saturation method emphasize the dangers of setting ethics apart from the practice of journalism somehow, of suggesting that ethical considerations are not a part of the everyday newsgathering process.

It was felt that if we had separate courses, then ethics itself would be seen as some kind of separate appendage to the practice of journalism. (Johansen interview)

For many instructors and professional journalists, this approach certainly "seems more natural, more nearly to emulate the situational, inductive necessities impinging on professionals throughout their careers" (Christians 1980, 21).

Journalism schools or departments may choose to simply let the curriculum saturate itself by taking no particular action other than allowing for the possibility of class debate of ethical issues, or give professors latitude to introduce ethics segments wherever they wish, or may actively encourage discussion of ethical questions that arise in the course of assignments done for reporting courses. The situation where

⁵ It should be noted here that few scholars or journalists besides Clifford Christians have devoted much time to systematically describing and evaluating the various methods of teaching journalistic ethics. This chapter will, of necessity, draw substantially on his work.

professors attempt to deal with ethics in one or two classes of a course devoted to other subjects such as media and society or reporting will be discussed in greater detail later. What is of most interest at present is the common tendency of journalism schools such as Carleton and Ryerson, in its undergraduate program (Miller interview) to attempt to emphasize the importance of ethics by "saturating" their curriculum with ethical concerns.

Generally, the most common justification for this sort of approach is that ethics is simply too important a component of journalism education to be set aside from the daily business of reporting. As Carleton's journalism school director notes, "If [ethics] is integrated into other courses then it becomes a much more natural understanding that you can't do journalism without an awareness of ethics" (Johansen interview). In American schools of journalism in 1984, fully 86 per cent of administrators whose programs did not contain ethics courses "believe it is pedagogically preferable to treat ethical issues whenever they arise in the classroom" (Christians 1978, 18).

At a theoretical level, the arguments for the saturation approach are persuasive. Of course, it would be ideal to discuss students' ethical concerns as they arise, and weave such discussions into every part of the fabric of their journalism education to stress the importance of a journalist's ethical decisions. That, however, is only the

theory. It is at the practical level that problems with the well-intentioned ideal start to appear. In short, it is fine to espouse certain lofty ideas about the nature of ethical journalism and how it is promoted in the program, but if the students do not take from their experience what it is assumed that approach gives them, then precious little in the way of reflection on ethics has occurred.

In the case of Carleton University, for example, the historical reasons cited by director Johansen for not having a separate ethics course are not necessarily borne out in the school's actual operations. According to one graduate student there,

Our class had one hour of ethics in 1-1/2 years. That's highly inadequate. I also believe there was ample fodder for discussion among the class about ethical dilemmas we faced during our summer jobs. For some reason that just didn't happen. (survey)

In the second and third year reporting classes where students produce news stories and eventually a newspaper and radio and television broadcasts, mention of ethical issues rarely, if ever, occurs in the classroom. Discussions of difficult decisions or ethical quandaries occurred between or among peers, or with a professor if the situation was particularly problematic.

Based on personal experience and observation, it is virtually unheard of for an instructor to ask students what ethical decisions they had had to make, or for students to

initiate classroom discussions of problems they had encountered. (In the author's experience of four years as an undergraduate, one instructor devoted one class to debates on ethical dilemmas, an approach that will be discussed in more detail elsewhere.)

When an ethical question encountered during the completion of an assignment was mentioned, notes a fourth-year Carleton student "it almost always turned into a discussion about legality -- how far can I push it, what am I allowed to do" (interview). Or, in the words of a second-year student, "when [an instructor] talked about ethics, he threw so many examples at you that you couldn't really make up your mind" (interview). Such descriptions hardly conform to statements about the value of students' encountering ethics at every turn -- even if that were the case, there is clearly no consistent framework underlying the attempts to address ethical issues.

While the evidence used here is anecdotal, it is far from unusual, and demonstrates the tip of a very large iceberg representing the poorly handled or not-handled-at-all field of ethics in journalism.

The problem is clear; the well-intentioned saturation philosophy simply has not translated into the kind of systematic approach to dealing with questions of journalistic ethics necessary to realize the stated goal of assuring that students encounter ethical considerations at virtually every turn. Dealing with ethical issues is left up to the

proclivities of the individual instructor. That person's interest in the subject may range from enthusiastic proselytizer for certain ethical precepts through neutrality to active contempt for those who consider ethics important.

Many instructors choose -- consciously or not -- not to deal with students' inevitable ethical concerns, even among those instructors who do encourage discussions of ethics, the parameters of those discussions vary wildly depending on the instructor's opinions. All of which, of course, sends a very clear message to students about the likelihood and desirability of establishing a personal system of moral decision-making.

This confusion and inconsistency seems to be common when the saturation method is used. If saturated curricula were working, it would be natural to expect lively and thoughtful discussions of ethical issues to occur frequently and in virtually every area of study in a journalism department. In fact, it is the schools which "have implemented a specific course [which] indicate that the amount and intensity of discussion about ethics have increased noticeably" (Christians 1985, 18). Nowhere in the academic literature on the subject (which, admittedly, tends to be written by those advocating change in the way journalism schools deal with ethics) is there any empirical justification or proof of any kind that the saturation method produces greater and/or deeper discussions of ethical issues.

In fact, such limited "proof" as there is would seem to suggest that saturation may even produce the exact opposite results to those desired by administrators. To return to the example of Carleton's approach to journalism ethics, an informal study of upper year students showed that more than half the students contacted had encountered an ethical problem during reporting assignments. However, instead of thoughtful examinations of these issues scattered throughout the curriculum enabling students to deal openly with their concerns, the authors found that "the result is a system of under-cover ethics, concealed from faculty" (Scanlon and Pottier 1989, 28). Far from encouraging discussion of ethics and striving for a higher standard of journalistic conduct, the saturation approach in this case appears to have unintentionally encouraged students to avoid public discussion of ethical concerns and adopt a method of evaluating them based on nothing more than expediency and casuistry.

While the evidence is limited, examination of its bases suggests strongly that the saturation approach may not only not achieve its stated goals, but may actually do serious harm to students' perceptions of the role of ethics in journalism. The most basic assumption to be challenged here is that if there is no formal course in ethics, then ethical considerations are somehow being dealt with organically, without the need of an instructor's systematic guidance. Even

a moment's reflection, however, reveals the danger of such an assumption.

Criticisms levelled at formal ethics classes for potentially inculcating the instructor's values and opinions are just as applicable to the saturation method; the only difference is the visibility of the potential for inculcation. It is naive, even dangerous, to assume that because a professor is standing in front of a class discussing how to choose a lead rather than Kant's categorical imperative, she is not communicating and even unconsciously advocating a set of attitudes about ethical behaviour. As Carleton's Johansen notes, there are two kinds of ethical instruction, one where ethics is studied and discussed, and one where

. . .in the ways students are told to go and deal with their sources, or to be more aggressive . . .although that's not being taught as ethics, it teaches an ethical norm. We cannot avoid doing that second kind of teaching, simply by giving assignments and so on. (Johansen interview)

The result, of the saturation approach, then, is that ethics may indeed be imparted, but often in an offhand, unacknowledged manner that suggests that there is no teaching going on. Thus the student internalizes the ethical values being implied precisely because they are never overtly stated, and thus never debated or evaluated for their usefulness or ethical justifiability.

It is one thing to say "Sensitivity to a source's feelings may have to be ignored in some instances" in an

ethics class, and then discuss the implications of such a position. It is quite another to say while going over students' assignments in a reporting course "If you'd pushed harder and hadn't been so worried about upsetting your source, you'd have gotten a better story." In the first instance, there is a proposition to be debated; in the second, no such debate can occur because the proposition takes on the status of a rule. Students, even if they disagree, are left with a powerful impression of what one authority figure -- from whom they learn the absolutes of reporting -- has, however unintentionally, decreed to be an absolute of ethical behaviour.

In refusing to "separate" ethics to be discussed at length, proponents of a saturation approach are unintentionally lending greater weight to the offhand ethical pronouncements of any instructor. Without any systematic discussion of ethical principles, students have no perspective on such pronouncements other than their own moral background, something which is inevitably thrown into confusion from the moment they step into a journalism school and are confronted with complex ethical decisions which can no longer be decided on the basis of lifelong values.

Another problem with the saturation method is that it may well suggest to students the exact opposite of the intended message, namely, that ethical concerns are of little or no importance, and something to be dealt with clandestinely. If

ethical questions are supposed to be central to every aspect of the process of journalism education, but in the reality of the classroom rarely arise, it is not hard to picture a group of students already predisposed to cynicism viewing ethics as marginal at best to the business of reporting the news.

After all, if ethical problems with assignments are not debated as they arise, and instructors casually issue ethical edicts in the guise of reporting methodology, why should students assume that personal ethics are anything more than individual problems which can be dealt with in any way that seems to work? As Scanlon and Pottier suggest, a further effect of this approach may be unconscious encouragement of a tendency to rationalize behaviour after the fact rather than of systematic ethical inquiry beforehand. Thus the saturation method can easily produce indifference and even contempt in students whose only experience with ethics suggests such concerns are trivial.

In some schools, topics in the news are periodically discussed in terms of a reporter's or news organization's ethical standards. This is the approach taken at Ryerson Polytechnical Institute in its undergraduate journalism program. (Miller interview) However, the question of relevance to the students arises here; if the only ethical debates the students are involved in concern other people, and problems which seem remote from their own experience, it is difficult to imagine them making the intimate connection

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necessary between those ethical dilemmas and their own lives. Such an approach may raise students' awareness of the existence of ethical pitfalls in journalism, but may also serve to make ethics something that happens to high-profile reporters with momentous decisions to make, rather than something that faces every journalist constantly, in however apparently insignificant a form.

Even if a school does encourage students to deal with ethics by setting aside time for that purpose in other classes, another obstacle to effective and relevant discussion remains: human nature. Ideally, the most value would be gained from debating situations, however minor, that gave students pause while working on an assignment or working in the field. Such discussions would be relevant to students' lives and something they could relate to immediately.

However, if such a proposition is considered even briefly, the problem becomes apparent; the vast majority of students will be too intimidated, whether by fear of a negative reaction from an instructor or of ridicule by peers, to bring up ethical situations they have encountered. All it would take is a few snickers at an earnest mention of personal misgivings over accepting a free concert ticket to ensure a concerned student never mentions his own ethical dilemmas in public.

It is inevitable that even if they do bring up problems they have encountered, students will be extremely defensive

about any ensuing discussion, believing themselves and their actions to be on trial and possibly found wanting. So while faculty may hope "students [will] bring up the issues for discussion" (Miller interview), the reality would seem to be that the only things students feel safe discussing are those removed enough from their own lives to be both unthreatening and, in all probability, irrelevant.

If the stated intention of a curriculum "saturated" with ethical issues is to promote discussion of these questions and work them into all aspects of a students' university journalism experience, then the adequacy of faculty members to deal with such a mandate also becomes a concern. The assumption that an instructor who has no formal training in ethics is considered qualified to make decisions on ethical questions for confused students based on his professional experience is a potentially serious one.

It is surprising that schools which pride themselves on attracting faculty with impressive credentials in professional journalism to teach reporting courses pay little attention to hiring instructors with a solid background in ethics. The unstated assumption here would seem to be that someone with professional experience must also have ethical insight, an assumption whose truly ludicrous nature becomes apparent when exposed to the light. An instructor with extensive experience may be no more ethical or no more capable of dealing with ethical issues than anyone else. In fact, she may have an

even greater tendency to resort to "that's how it's done in the field" as an authoritative justification in making ethical decisions. Given that journalism school administrators would not likely hire faculty skilled in classical ethics and expect them to deal with reporting as a sideline, it is remarkable that so many of them are quite willing to do the exact opposite, without considering the potential impact of such an approach.

Clearly the problems with the saturation method of dealing with journalistic ethics are many and serious. Once the true theoretical underpinnings of such an approach are examined and contrasted with reality, the causes for concern multiply. Christians suggests a number of questions journalism school administrators should ask themselves if they honestly wish to assess the effectiveness of any approach to ethics, but particularly of saturation:

Is everyone just assuming ethical matters are being treated, or is the faculty certain; who covers the issues and how; what normative framework is presented; are students forced to explain why they hold particular points of view?
(Christians and Covert 1980, 21-22)

Nothing is easier than to justify the saturation method with epistemological theories, but those theories must be examined and the effectiveness of such a course evaluated if the pitfalls suggested above are to be avoided. If the goal is an education in ethical awareness and moral reasoning that remains with journalism students and helps shape their

decisions as practitioners, then, as Cam Sylvester (1988, 10) notes,

Journalism schools have a responsibility to their students, to the news business, and to the general public to integrate ethics courses into the curriculum rather than leaving it up to teachers to discuss issues on an ad hoc basis.

Single class in reporting course

For faculty who are dissatisfied with their department's lack of discussion of ethics, the option often exists of reserving one or two classes of their reporting courses to attempt to fill the gap. (This approach is also used in some theoretical courses, a method which will be discussed later.) Typically, this will involve a cursory look at major ethical issues facing reporters, but given the concrete nature of the course, it usually involves discussion of specific cases rather than theory or general principles. It is difficult to know how many reporting instructors make an effort to include ethical concerns in their courses, since the focus of such courses is on skills, and the ethics class may be seen as an extra, not included in course descriptions or possibly dropped if more time is needed for technical training.

An example of an attempt to work ethics into the reporting-course format is provided by Carman Cumming, a former professor at the Carleton School of Journalism. His preferred approach within his writing courses involved three

steps: discussing several short case studies, attempting "to draw patterns out of the case studies to define the general guidelines of the trade," and then, ideally, "a more challenging effort to get a clear view of the ideas that shape the professional consensus." (1988, 8-9) However, observation of Cumming's classes in the past suggests that despite his noble intentions, rarely did the discussion progress beyond the case studies, a sure-fire method of ensuring class participation but also requiring a great deal of time, leaving little or none for a quick stab at determining the overarching principles of a broad and diverse profession.

While the instinct to raise the question of journalistic ethics in a school which may not do so anywhere else is laudable, the problems inherent in such an approach should give these well-intentioned instructors pause. As with the saturation method, it is quite possible that setting aside one or two classes to deal with the huge and confusing field of ethics and journalism may ultimately be damaging to students' perceptions of this important subject.

There are strong messages sent to students by this approach even before its content is considered. An attempt to deal with ethical issues in a few hours reinforces the worst fears of those who advocate saturation methodology: that ethics are perceived as separate from reporting, and can be safely marginalized. Despite earnest exhortations from an

instructor at the end of class to think about the ethical issues which arise all the time in their own lives, there is a strong possibility that students will simply walk out with a vision of "ethics" as being a neat package in its own compartment, separate from that of "reporting" or "assignments."

Discussions limited to such a short time will almost inevitably focus on attempts to arrive at solutions to "insoluble" journalistic problems, whether from the students' own experience or from real or fictitious cases. With the emphasis on the goal of satisfactorily resolving a tricky problem, there is little time left for considering how the resolution is arrived at, or its potential impact. Students are again encouraged to see ethical dilemmas as a series of soluble problems, to be solved using a sort of rudimentary ethical calculus developed hurriedly in response to a few hours of class discussion.

Such a belief is unintentionally supported by the atmosphere in which such classes occur. When students are asked to switch from questions of precision and conciseness to those of truth-telling and fairness, it is inevitable that the conclusions in the latter cases will be affected by the standards of the first. Since reporting courses tend to stress basic rules of information-gathering and writing, it is doubtful whether an abrupt switch to discussion of ethics

would produce much more than an application of those rules to potential dilemmas.

An adequate journalism ethics cannot prosper in a professional school environment totally saturated by trade-school assumptions emphasizing entry-level skills. (Christians and Covert 1980, 55)

Any attempt to bring ethical discussions out from Scanlon and Pottier's undercover world into the open is a good idea, in theory. And it is entirely possible that even the briefest interrogation of journalistic ethics in a reporting course will prod students into a realization that ethical issues do arise constantly, and are worthy of serious consideration. However, the potential of such an approach to undermine and trivialize the importance of ethics to professional journalism outweighs its potential for positive effects on nascent reporters.

Encouraging/requiring philosophy credits

While no university level journalism programs in Canada require students to take philosophy courses in ethics, such a requirement is a more common tendency in American schools. Rather than ask ill-equipped journalism faculty members to teach courses or classes in journalistic ethics, some programs either require or strongly encourage students to study philosophical ethics.

One of the strongest proponents of this approach is American journalism professor James Carty Jr.⁶, who argues that journalism majors should study ethics in philosophy departments, rather than in journalism departments, for several reasons.

Few journalism-orientated (sic) teachers are as qualified as philosophers to teach courses which treat problems of communications ethics . . . [If they take philosophy courses], after reflecting on the wisdom of the ancients and their own experiences, future journalists can create their own ethical philosophy, based on a historical position or their own created eclectic perspective. (Carty 1978, 8)

The teaching of ethics, this argument goes, should be left to those who are trained and experienced in philosophy. And there are some advantages to such an approach -- the course has "a clear sense of direction and . . . a discernible conceptual framework" (Christians and Covert 1980, 22) which help students progress towards specific goals and consider a variety of ethical positions; and, of course, the material is taught by someone with a firm grasp of the field and its complexities.

In addition, journalism students are provided with a valuable new perspective on their actions, allowing them to be "made more aware of problems of ethics from the viewpoints of

⁶ The author of the article quoted is cited by Journalism Educator as James W. Carty Jr. However, it is possible that this is a misspelling of professor James Carey's name -- extensive checking yielded no verification.

society generally rather than journalism specifically" (quoted in Christians and Covert 1980, 23). Their separation from the journalism department also gives them some separation from its pervasive norms, allowing them to see their actions as news consumers would. This insight alone is a powerful reason for relocating an ethics course away from the often unquestioned assumptions of schools of journalism whose instructors may well be unintentionally imparting a rigid set of ethics without giving students a chance to examine it.

However, there are some equally powerful counter-arguments to this position which will be immediately clear to any journalism professor. The distance from the journalism department can be an advantage, but it carries with it other potential problems, several of which have already arisen in discussions of other methodologies. The recurring difficulty of the relationship between ethics and journalism also occurs here: the possibility that putting ethics in a neat box in another department will subtly suggest to students that it is not important enough or closely enough related to journalism to warrant inclusion in the department itself. Such an approach could foster a belief that ethical journalism only results from training in philosophical ethics, an assumption that would invariably turn a large number of students off both areas of study.

A general course in ethical theory is in danger of being seen by students and employers as being stuck "in another

world" (Goodwin 1981, 13) with little or no relationship to the daily grind of professional journalism. While discussions of utilitarianism and libertarianism are valuable knowledge for any student, they do not fill the need for discussions of journalistic ethics. As some survey respondents noted, extensive discussion of classical ethics as taught by philosophers puts "too much emphasis on philosophers like Aristotle, Plato and Socrates instead of modern-day media ethics" (Ryerson undergraduate), providing "little advice on how to handle practical problems" (Western graduate). The danger of dismissal by students on the ground of irrelevance is, without a doubt, highest with this approach.

Even courses which discuss professional ethics as they apply in a number of fields such as medicine and business run the risk of being considered a waste of time by the student who is aware of the unique demands of journalism. As one television editor put it,

There is a good number of students that seem to know about Kant and Aristotle and other things, and then they've taken journalism classes, and there is no connection between the two. (Ernie Ford, quoted in Sanders 1979, 37)

In purely pragmatic terms, it is questionable whether a philosophy department could afford to set up a course dealing specifically with ethics as they relate to journalism, despite the potential problems for journalism students with any other type of philosophy course on the general subject.

The isolation of an ethics course outside the journalism department also carries certain risks. Students may attempt to apply or discuss what they have learned in philosophical ethics courses back in journalism, only to have the results belittled because the ideas stem from ivory-tower non-journalists. Christians notes the value of the "ripple effect throughout the curriculum" (quoted in Goodwin 1981, 13) of a well-taught course within a journalism department, where faculty would have greater difficulty ridiculing a subject their curriculum has deemed to be important, and which is taught by a peer. The split between journalism/training and philosophy/ethics is also minimized when the course is included in the department where journalism majors spend the majority of their time.

Media law

Most journalism programs require students to take at least one course designed to familiarize them with the basic legal considerations a reporter should be aware of. In many schools in the United States, this course in media law is also the place in the curriculum where ethics discussion is located. In Canada, l'Universite Laval requires students in its graduate program to take a course in communications law and ethics, which attempts to deal with both the legal and ethical dimensions of modern journalism.

In his 1984 survey of American college journalism programs, Christians noted that 117 had ethics courses, of which 33 were "designated as a combination of law and ethics" (Christians 1985, 18). Obviously, then, this approach is a common one in many schools; whether it is particularly effective is questionable. Certainly there are natural links between some areas of the law and ethical considerations: privacy, protection of a source's identity, and deception are just some of the areas which carry weighty concerns of both a legal and a moral nature. However, despite its potential advantages, there is one serious flaw with this approach which renders the media law method of dealing with journalistic ethics both useless and potentially harmful. That "the overall trend in the conceptualization of the issues among journalism educators seems biased toward legalization" (Christians and Covert 1980, 23) is cause for concern indeed.

To return to the central question being addressed in this paper, the fundamental purpose of an ethics course should be to guide journalism students toward developing their own independent system of ethical judgment. Students should be encouraged to decide what constitutes ethical behaviour for them as individuals, without reference to the potential for "reward or punishment", as Deni Elliott (1987, 7) notes.

Ethics tells us what we should do, and there is not necessarily a reward or punishment hooked onto the following through of an ethical or moral obligation.

This view of ethics, of course, is not particularly compatible with -- and indeed, may be antithetical to -- the function of a communications law course, the intent of which is to impart a body of knowledge about what is legal or illegal journalistic behaviour, and, ideally, why.

And therein lies the biggest danger of combining studies of journalistic ethics and media law: the potential for confusion between ethically acceptable behaviour and that which is legally permissible. No insult is intended to journalism students in suggesting that the assumption that, for example, because shooting photographs from public property is legal, it is also ethical, is an easy one to make. After all, an appeal to the law can be settled, because the law does not fluctuate the way situational decision-making does.

The danger here lies in equating the legal with the moral, something a student with no other fixed set of rules governing her behaviour is entirely prone to doing. Many students have never considered the moral dimensions of their actions as journalists, and so tend to latch onto legality as a justification for actions about which they may have misgivings. The law can provide an easy out, a way to rationalize behaviour without really thinking about it and its impact in detail. A course which attempts to roll media law and ethics in together may ultimately

. . . confuse the philosophical distinction between the necessary and the sufficient; that is, rather than viewing the law as one necessary component in the

analysis of issues, the legal dimension is often expanded to become a sufficient criterion for understanding them. (Christians and Covert 1980, 24)

A student who emerges from journalism school feeling that his strong grasp of communications law also provides him with a solid ethical base is one who has been misled and done a disservice. Cases will eventually arise where recourse to the law cannot solve a difficult ethical problem, and such student will be ill-equipped to cope. "The law has nothing to say about whether to lie to a source" (Elliott 1987, 7), or whether to badger the family of a missing teenager for her picture, or whether to accept a junket to Hollywood.

A secondary concern with this approach to incorporating ethics in the journalism curriculum is raised by Christians. He observes a tendency among American courses in media law and ethics to focus on an "embattled and defensive press concerned for its privilege rather than its obligation" (Christians 1985, 19). Underlying such an approach is a picture of the press as a noble institution often persecuted by the fearful for speaking the truth. An attempt to weave discussions of ethical issues into such an atmosphere would inevitably mean that

The result would not be a greater moral awareness or more skill in ethical analysis but a commitment to avoid legal catastrophe, a minimalist definition of responsibility, and an adversarial paradigm of social institutions. (Christians 1985, 19)

Clearly, then, there are fundamental and very serious dangers inherent in lumping journalistic ethics in with communications law to create a course of study. Attractive as such a set-up might be in financial terms for many schools, it is one which has the potential to mislead students about their obligations as journalists and discourage them from interrogating their own positions to create a personal ethical system.

Journalism and society

In general, the curricula of most university level schools of journalism include a course which attempts to locate journalism and discuss some of the issues the profession faces in the context of society as a whole. Often, this course is the place where the issue of journalistic ethics is addressed, whether as a historical problem, as a component of professionalism, or as an issue in winning public confidence. The content of such a course can vary widely, as can the approach taken toward the discussion of journalistic ethics. While this type of setting is potentially more conducive to deeper consideration of ethical questions, ultimately it is not the most desirable vehicle for discussing ethics in journalism.

The central problem with incorporating ethics into a media and society type course is that the overall direction of

the course has the potential to colour the ethics component, leaving the impression that ethics are of a piece with whatever else is being discussed.

For example, a course that emphasizes the history of a free press may, even unintentionally, also emphasize an ethical standard that coincides with such a philosophy. Christians cites the example of one course whose "syllabus said. . . 'You will be taught that journalists are free of any obligation other than the people's right to know'" (Christians and Covert 1980, 19). Clearly there is no room for discussion of a wide range of ethical opinions when "freedom of the press," "the people's right to know," and other slogans replace genuine ethical inquiry.

As with the media law approach, this method of handling ethics tends to "entrench certain conventions and teach students to appeal to epithets" (Christians and Covert 1980, 19), instead of encouraging development of a personal ethical system. A truly valuable ethics course would not fall back on the fallacy of appeal to a false authority, but would examine in detail such supposedly inviolate statements and why they have traditionally been seen as legitimate justification for ethically questionable behaviour.

This type of course also lends itself to concerns expressed earlier about an instructor's tendency to impart ethical standards unconsciously as other issues are discussed. Or, as Christians and Covert note (1980: 19),

If one distinguishes between C-content (formal subject matter) and P-content (the cluster of procedures surrounding the acquisition of knowledge), it is worthy of discussion to consider just what the typical course process teaches students.

In other words, if a course focuses on valiant efforts by journalists to protect their freedom by publishing information gained by, say, surreptitious tape recording, then clearly a set of ethics dealing with truth-telling is being imparted. Similarly, if the course attempts to take the position of a consumer of news and discuss questions of invasion of privacy by emphasizing the source's feelings, then another set of ethics is being imparted. Neither the formal content of nor the process of teaching a media and society course is value-free, and the values reflected in other components of the course may well irreparably taint the component on ethics.

The ever-present question of time is also a factor. Most journalism and society courses are broad surveys, comprising a wide range of subject matter to be covered in a relatively short period of time. The inclusion of ethics as just one of those subjects sends some clear messages about its importance. If the course allots an equal number of classes to the history of press freedom in Canada, the growth of television broadcasting, and journalistic ethics, the latter will simply be seen as a separate little compartment of one course, meriting, say, two class sessions and an essay question on the final exam.

In addition, the sheer amount of ground a media and society course must cover inevitably means that there will not be enough time to look at ethics in the depth such a difficult topic deserves. Once again the complaint arises that young journalists cannot develop an independent ethical decision-making system in the space of a few weeks, sandwiched between the Padlock Law and the Kent Commission. Devoting a few classes to questions of journalistic ethics may be helpful in raising students' awareness of the existence of ethical dilemmas, but given the potential for them to see ethics as so much exam fodder or something that can be justified by resorting to simple-minded epithets, or simply a matter of "professional rectitude" (Christians and Covert 1980, 23), it is clear that a media and society course is not the place to deal effectively with a study of journalistic ethics.

Case by case

One final approach to teaching ethics should be discussed, given its frequent use by journalism instructors. It is the technique of using specific cases or dilemmas to examine ethical questions, often taking the form of "what would you do if. . ." This technique is frequently used when only a few classes are to be allotted to professional ethics, whether as part of a reporting or theory class. Generally, the instructor poses a tricky ethical question, then the class

discusses pros and cons of various approaches to solving it, and possible ramifications of a particular decision.

For many instructors with a limited amount of time to devote to journalistic ethics, this approach is a way to deal with some of the types of issues students may well encounter as working journalists. It attempts to avoid what is often perceived as the irrelevance of more theoretical courses by taking problems from real experiences of journalists or simulating realistic situations. Indeed, this type of discussion is praised by some working journalists and instructors precisely for its relationship to the real world.

I think that generally where ethics teachers fail is when they don't do enough of that [discussion of 'quandary' ethics]. I think that's the kind of approach that helps a student when he gets into the real world, and it is the only one that is really going to stand in a very good stead when you make an ethical decision [sic] on a day-by-day basis. (Ernie Ford, quoted in Sanders 1979, 37)

But while this approach appears to emphasize relevance and concrete solutions to real problems, there are several problems inherent in it as well.

By stressing that there is one easily reachable solution to an extremely complex ethical quandary, the case-by-case approach tends to over-simplify potentially wrenching decisions, all too often by appealing to the aforementioned truisms of journalism. Worse, if the class is conducted in

such a way as to suggest a "correct" solution, the goal of self-examination and ethical growth is destroyed.

Does our use of journalism cases really teach students how to fish or does it simply give them fish instead? Does this approach (at least when it predominates) enable students to reach justified moral judgments successfully? (Christians and Covert 1980, 21)

Students who feel prepared to face the world of journalism armed with simplistic solutions gleaned from case studies -- never accept freebies, always protect your sources -- have been cheated of a genuine discussion of journalistic ethics.

Clearly they will encounter situations for which they will have no pat answer, and in the absence of a personal framework for ethical decision-making, a tendency to fall back on the pseudo-justification of expediency would hardly be a surprise. It is precisely that lack of a unified basis for deciding ethical questions in a quandary-oriented class that causes further problems with this approach.

As one Carleton graduate student commented, "Hypothetical scenarios are an inadequate way to deal with the topic, because every situation is different" (survey response). A student can decide in class that crime victims should always be named when legally possible, then encounter in real life the panic of a rape victim, and realize that the classroom decision may have to be modified. By attempting to arrive at a solution for the major types of ethical problems, case-by-case classes discourage the need for individual development of

a system of ethical decision-making. Instructors focus on the specifics of a quandary and ignore the over-arching questions of truth-telling and moral responsibility.

. . .the heavy use of cases appears to raise the question of how instructors get beyond specific situations to basic principles. (Christians and Covert 1980, 20-21)

There is simply no way that even a full-credit course could cover all possible permutations of ethical quandaries in order to completely prepare students for problems they may encounter as journalists. The sensible solution would seem to be the cultivation of a consistent set of personal ethical fundamentals by each student to establish the principles of behaviour that will govern her behaviour when she encounters ethical dilemmas as a journalist. Henry Overduin (1985, 3) draws a connection between the case-study mentality in schools and its reflection in the field of journalism:

Journalism ethics, as taught in most universities, are still stuck with case-study doldrums. And journalism ethics in practice, I fear, are all too often mere casuistry after the fact.

As Overduin points out, a natural outgrowth of the belief that there are no basic ideals -- indeed, no need for basic ideals -- which inform ethical decision making is the assumption that all ethical decisions are situational. It should not be surprising that a student who is repeatedly told "it all depends. . ." gradually comes to believe that there is nothing wrong with making each ethical decision in isolation,

with reference only to the over-simplified generalities mentioned in class. Without a personal ethical framework, each decision is unrelated to the next, and, ultimately, virtually any action can be justified by appealing to deadline pressure, displeasure of superiors, or expediency by any other name. The result is hardly the type of thoughtful and ethical journalism likely to restore the public's confidence in a profession that even the readers of the Columbia Journalism Review ranked below clergy, pharmacists, academics and doctors in terms of honesty and ethical standards (Levine 1991, 14).

Another common complaint about the case by case approach to journalistic ethics is its confusing nature. The focus on specific details of a plethora of cases "yields only perplexity in our students and readers" (Christians 1979, 27). If students are made aware of the vast array of subtly different problems that lurk in the world of journalism, it is possible that the resulting confusion may cause a shutdown of any attempt to make systematic ethical decisions. One Carleton graduate student described a course which

. . . took a case-by-case approach to ethics that ended up confusing rather than enlightening students. We'd have been better off if they tried to teach principles and the reasons for them instead of narrow situations.

Given the numerous dangers inherent in this approach to teaching ethics, it too must be rejected as ineffective. When its shortcomings are coupled with those of the types of situations in which it is likely to be used -- limited class

periods in a reporting or media and society course -- its utter unsuitability is clear.

This is not to say that case studies are not valuable tools in the teaching of journalistic ethics; they can help to anchor ethics courses in reality, provide welcome anecdotal information, and give students a chance to test their individually developed principles by applying them to cases taken from reality. However, the all-too-common tendency to present quandary after quandary followed by a "What-would-you-do?" discussion rarely provides "a critical inquiry in a generous educational sense" (Christians and Covert 1980, 20). As will be seen later, quandaries are an effective part of a thoughtful course in journalistic ethics, but as the mainstay of a class consisting of ad hoc discussions they are not only ineffective, but potentially harmful.

CHAPTER 5

Requirements for an instructor in journalism ethics

Having established how not to go about teaching journalism ethics in a university program, and what the objectives of a well-constructed course should be, there remains only one area to be examined before drawing all threads together in the form of a neatly woven design for a course in ethics and journalism in a professional program. The main question to be answered now is, who should teach a such a course -- who is best able to help journalism students develop the skills in moral reasoning and recognition of their moral obligations that would help them become better journalists?

Asking that question is somewhat easier than uncovering thoughtful opinions with which to answer it. The various types of writing on the subject of journalism ethics rarely touch on the specific issue of who should teach a course in the subject. Textbooks tend to focus on areas of journalistic debate and potential ethical difficulty, such as conflict of interest or reporter-source relationships. Their main components are case studies and analyses, together with discussions of current practice and types of decision-making. For obvious reasons, the texts do not specify the type of person who should teach ethics, to avoid embarrassing or alienating the instructor using them.

Scholars who write about issues connected with journalistic ethics are equally unhelpful. Most of these treatises look at the current state of journalism, criticisms of it, and how to improve it. Even those which deal specifically with ethics instruction tend to focus on what should be taught, the value of ethics courses, or, in publications such as Journalism Educator, how to approach teaching them. Virtually absent from all of this -- with one major exception -- is debate concerning who is best suited to impart the material these writers would like to see covered in an ethics course.

Finally, the popular or journalistic writing on the subject never comes near the question at hand. Rants about the deplorable state of journalists' ethical standards, or defences of them, are utterly useless in this particular search for answers or, at the very least, helpful suggestions. These types of articles sometimes touch on the role of professional training when they propose ways of improving the state of the art, but are highly unlikely to examine the role of the instructor in a course in journalistic ethics.

As a result, the conclusions of this chapter must be reached with only the most limited of considered opinions upon which to draw. The most helpful paper in this respect is Eugene Goodwin's "News Media Ethics -- Where Should It Be Taught and by Whom?" The second extremely useful source (in fact the only other one encountered, period) is the Hastings

Center report, which discusses the appropriate qualifications for anyone teaching professional ethics at a university level. This chapter will draw heavily on these two sources.

There are many who would question the need to lay out the best attributes for an instructor in a journalism and ethics course, under the assumption that, with a little time, virtually any thoughtful journalism professor or journalist could construct such a course. However, there are some academic and professional qualities which are essential in a truly effective instructor. As the Hastings Center committee looking into the teaching of professional ethics in universities noted,

The principal reason for considering the qualifications of those who teach ethics is a concern for the quality of that teaching. Courses in ethics should be taught with the same rigor and background store of knowledge as any other course; hence, qualifications are critical.
(1980, 62)

The respondents to Goodwin's survey of journalists, journalism instructors, and philosophers clearly delineated a number of attitudes toward the question of who should teach courses in journalistic ethics. These attitudes can be divided into four classifications according to the preferred type of instruction.

Specialist in philosophy

Needless to say, this opinion was held most strongly by the respondents from philosophy departments, and opposed most

vigorously by working journalists. A typical response came from Fairfield University philosophy professor Lisa H. Newton:

The problems confronted by journalists are, in their ethical dimensions, continuous with problems faced in other professions -- e.g. the relative weight to be given to the value of truth-telling vs. other values, the extent of the duty of confidentiality, etc. (quoted in Goodwin 1981, 14)

Generally, those who feel this way also concede the importance of knowledge of the professional field, but, as Goodwin (1981, 15) notes, they "tend to view journalism ethics as just one more in the spectrum of professional ethics that are best. . . taught by faculty who have specialized in applying ethical theory to problems of the profession."

Not surprisingly, working journalists and even journalism instructors tended to feel very differently. Comments from these specialists included "Ethics for a journalist should not be (and it isn't) the same as for a philosopher . . . it has to be brought down to real life" (Manny Paraschos, University of Arkansas journalism professor, quoted in Goodwin 1981, 12), and, bluntly, "Not philosophy -- heads in another world" (Jon A. Roosenraad, chairman, University of Florida Dept. of Journalism, quoted in Goodwin 1981, 13).

In the end, a PhD in philosophy does not necessarily give someone the perspective and familiarity with the realities of journalism necessary to teach an effective course in this subject area. Simply put, "a philosopher without any exposure

to the field of journalism is not qualified to teach ethics and journalism." (Hastings Center 1980, 64)

Specialist in journalism

This, of course, is the option most often suggested by working journalists, who constantly restate the need for someone familiar with journalistic practice to be at the helm of a course in ethics. Such a position tends to be expressed with varying degrees of emphasis, with descriptions of the ideal instructor ranging from "a faculty member who is strongly committed to journalism ethics" (Milwaukee Journal managing editor Joe Shoquist, quoted in Goodwin 1981, 11) or "experienced journalists. . .who personally have a strong ethical sense" (Ben H. Bagdikian, University of California at Berkeley journalism professor, quoted in Goodwin 1981, 11) to someone "with some managerial experience. . .[who has] had to deal with conflicts of interest, freebies, legal challenges" in the newsroom. (Norman E. Isaacs, editor-in-residence, Columbia University Graduate School of Journalism, quoted in Goodwin 1981, 11) Such statements reflect Goodwin's (1981, 16) conclusion that

Most of the journalism professionals and teachers emphasize the importance of the "environment" in which ethical problems arise in journalism, arguing that journalism ethics must be taught by faculty who know how journalism works.

However, there are a number of criticisms which can be aimed at proponents of this position, given the lack of

analysis and grasp of the larger picture demonstrated by these respondents. If a graduate degree in philosophy is not sufficient qualification to teach a course in ethical inquiry into journalistic practices, then it is difficult to see how professional experience and good intentions could be considered sufficient either. Advocating this position means ignoring or discounting the need for any knowledge of moral analysis or reasoning. In short, assuming that a practitioner or professor of journalism could teach a course in ethics without an understanding of moral philosophy is tantamount to dismissing the importance of such a course out of hand. After all,

Enthusiasm, good will, and interest are not sufficient qualifications for teaching courses in organic chemistry, microeconomics, or Greek literature. There is no reason why they should be thought sufficient for the teaching of ethics, a difficult subject with a long history. (Hastings Center 1980, 63)

Likewise, there is nothing about having grappled with the issues mentioned by Isaacs that ensures any kind of moral enlightenment on the part of former journalists. Practical experience and training do not "automatically confer any special skill in analyzing or resolving moral dilemmas" (Hastings Center 1980, 63). Without the essential knowledge of philosophical theory and technique, even the most well-intentioned of journalists or instructors runs the risk of setting up a course that simply falls into the traps described

in earlier chapters, and may well prove worse than no course at all.

Team teaching

This appealing option is most often suggested by educators, those familiar with the content and approach of the disciplines of journalism and philosophy. A course designed and taught this way works best "if one faculty member is thoroughly familiar with the profession [of journalism], but works with another who is grounded in ethical criticism" (Edward Pitts, former coordinator, Pennsylvania State University Center for Value Studies, quoted in Goodwin 1981, 14) in order to "best combine theory and practice." (L. Duane Willard, chairman, University of Nebraska at Omaha Dept. of Philosophy, quoted in Goodwin 1981, 11)

The Hastings Center report (1980, 66) suggests two conditions necessary to good team-teaching of professional ethics:

The first is that the course be structured in a way that weaves together as tightly as possible the technical material from the non-ethics discipline with the material that is squarely in the field of ethics. The second is that those engaged in team-teaching be fully prepared themselves to grapple with material from their colleague's discipline.

It is not hard to conjure up a picture of two personally and philosophically compatible colleagues from the concerned departments creating a fascinating and educationally

invaluable course for journalism students. Instructors would learn from each other, and, ultimately, give their students a much more complete picture of how philosophical and moral concerns interrelate with the practice of journalism than either could separately, with the assurance of having the colleague's expertise to rely on. A team-taught course would also provide students with a visible example of the improvement of journalism by drawing on the knowledge of another academic field. (Hastings Center 1980, 65)

The only disadvantages to such a solution are practical ones. The creation of a dynamic team of a journalism and a philosophy professor is a highly unpredictable thing: if the mixture of personalities and perspectives is not similar or at least complementary, the result could be disastrous, perhaps even to the extent of one half of the team finding subtle ways to undermine the other.

Money is another major concern in these days of diminishing education spending; to justify the expense of two instructors for one course would be a challenging task indeed. Finally, there is the danger of establishing what appears to be an effective team, only to have the course become merely the presentation by each instructor of his material "in a parallel, side-by-side way, with little effort to achieve a full integration." (Hastings Center 1980, 66)

Specialist in one field with in-depth knowledge of the other

This proposal involves the teaching of a course in ethics and journalism by either a philosopher or a journalist who is very familiar with the other discipline and, in the case of journalism, its practical aspects. University of Illinois professor Clifford Christians describes this type of teaching as being done "preferably [by] those who are specialists in either ethics or communications and thoroughly trained in the non-specialist's side." (quoted in Goodwin 1981, 11)

Another description of the ideal is provided by the Hastings Center report (1980, 64):

. . .when the teaching of ethics requires the knowledge of two or more fields, it is a necessary but not sufficient condition that there be a full grounding in one of the fields; a sufficient condition would be some degree of grounding in the other field as well.

Attempts at decreeing the exact levels of qualification necessary to teach journalism ethics effectively are probably doomed to failure, but a definition of an adequate grounding in the second discipline is necessary. The Hastings Center report's suggestion that such a grounding consist of at least a year's education in the non-specialist discipline, whether done in one bloc or cumulatively, is a good, if arbitrary, place to start.

G. Stuart Adam, former director of the Carleton University School of Journalism, used a similar approach to familiarize himself with issues of media law before teaching

them, and recommends it to a potential ethics instructor before building a course around good intentions.

I wouldn't encourage someone going into that naively. . .there is a way of preparing yourself -- it takes a certain formal phase of sitting down with the primary texts in moral philosophy and ethical reasoning and incorporating that part of philosophy that could be applied to practising journalism. Then the second phase, once you've got that sorted out, is to construct a model and to develop the case studies and think through the problems. (interview)

This proposition for the teaching of journalistic ethics is the most reasonable and potentially applicable of the lot, in addition to providing a high level of intellectual satisfaction. The only potential problem is one which is impossible to genuinely control, and that is any way of determining whether the designated instructor has indeed truly familiarized herself with the essential concepts and processes of the other discipline.

However, it is likely that instructors who put their names forward as a teacher of a course in ethics and journalism, or who propose the instatement of one, do so out of an interest in and desire to know more about the other half of the material involved. It is also likely that such instructors would be eager to soak up more of what the other discipline has to offer, and to integrate it with their intimate knowledge of their own.

Such an instructor would be the most valuable asset a course in ethics and journalism could have; students would

inevitably respond to the synthesis of philosophical and journalistic concerns such an instructor could provide. Students could not reject such a person's teachings as irrelevant to journalism or lacking in ethical insight, and the result would surely be more ethically aware graduates, and, ultimately, better journalists.

CHAPTER 6

A model for a university course in ethics and journalism

Translation of the previously outlined goals and ideals into a coherent, teachable plan for an ethics course requires familiarity with many of the numerous books and articles written on the subject, and on the wider questions of ethics in journalism as a whole. While there are a number of useful books available, none strikes the ideal balance of elements: discussion of philosophical bases for ethical behaviour; application of those principles to realistic situations from practical journalism; knowledge of the realities of daily journalism; and, ideally, a Canadian context. The latter, of course, is particularly difficult; given the small number of Canadian schools, the economics of printing a Canadian ethics textbook have not been particularly viable. And, unfortunately, virtually all of the American texts place a heavy emphasis on the centrality of First Amendment freedoms to any discussion of ethics, a concern which is not analogous to the Canadian situation under the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, and, ultimately, confusing.

Christians, Rotzoll and Fackler's Media Ethics: Cases and Moral Reasoning is one of the most helpful texts available, with its discussion of five different ethical theories and use of numerous real-life cases presented for students consideration without suggesting a correct answer. However,

journalism ethics only constitutes one third of the book, with the rest devoted to ethics in the advertising and entertainment industries.

Another text in common use is Goodwin's Groping for Ethics in Journalism, which examines a major area of ethical concern in each chapter. While Goodwin's familiarity with journalism is an advantage, there is no sense in the book of a consistent set of moral principles with which the given cases may be analysed. In addition, the work lacks any discussion of ethical theory.

Among the best attempts at applying ethical theories to practical journalism is found in Lambeth's Committed Journalism: An Ethic for the Profession. However, much of the book is highly specific to the United States, and many major areas of common concern, such as deception, newsgathering technique and privacy are only touched on briefly.

While none of these books is the perfect text for a Canadian course in journalism ethics, each has several valuable elements and points of view to add to such a course. They, in combination with other works on journalistic ethics in general, form the basis of the reading material for the proposed course.

Illustrations for specific cases can be drawn from Frank McCulloch's collection of ethical dilemmas reported by editors, Drawing the Line. Some other useful books include

Philip Meyer's Ethical Journalism, John Hulteng's The Messenger's Motives, Questioning Media Ethics edited by Bernard Rubin, and Ethics and the Press edited by John Merrill and Ralph Barney.

Sections of certain philosophical works are also helpful in creating a well-rounded course: A.I. Melden's edition of Ethical Theories: A Book of Readings, John Rawls seminal A Theory of Justice, and Sisella Bok's important work Lying all add valuable components to an effective ethics course.

To breathe life into discussions of specific ethical problems, readings from sources such as The Quill, Columbia Review of Journalism, Journalism Quarterly and magazines and newspapers will be added to the reading list. Videotaped material would also be used extensively where appropriate.

To clarify how all this information fits into the master plan for a course in journalism ethics at the university level, a detailed, week-by-week discussion of the course syllabus found in Appendix J is necessary. This model is only a suggestion based on the premises which have already been outlined. With consideration and planning, there are undoubtedly other effective models possible.

Week 1

This first class session is essential to setting the proper tone for the rest of the course. It is vital that students understand how the course is to work if they are not

to dismiss it out of hand as an irrelevant academic exercise. It should be made clear from the outset that the course is intended to give students one of the few chances they will ever have to reflect on the practice of journalism in a situation where the potential for harm in their deliberations is minimized.

The central issues of the course will be discussed openly, with the understanding that the instructor's view is her own, and need not carry undue weight with students -- all arguments are valid if they help others clarify their beliefs and can be reasonably supported. There are several areas to be touched on in this class:

- (a) Recognizing what ethical questions are not. The major point of discussion here is the discredited notion of objectivity, and the potential for confusing objectivity with morality. Another sacred cow of journalism, "the public's right to know" will be discussed, with a view to minimizing its role as justification for unethical actions. The elimination of these two subjects will help establish the course's nature as one where genuine self-examination and critical thinking, rather than knee-jerk resorts to cliches, are valued and, indeed, rewarded.
- (b) Recognizing the nature of ethical problems. What elements combine to make a difficult situation one with an ethical dimension? The discussion should raise things

such as the capacity for damage to someone's feelings or reputation, deception, manipulation, conflict of interest and fairness. The important point here is to clarify that it is rarely possible to come to an ethical conclusion simply by requesting more and more information; there is, ultimately, a moral dimension, beyond the realm of facts, for which the individual student/journalist is responsible.

- (c) Recognizing pre-existing determinants of ethical behaviour. It is essential that students look critically at the elements in their own make-up that come into play when they are faced with moral questions. Once factors such as religion, upbringing, peer values, cultural background and teachers' opinions are identified, then students are well on the way to understanding why they act as they do, and evaluating their existing system of beliefs as they apply to journalism. Special attention should be given to the influence of their skills training and its implicit values in the formation of their ideas. In the absence of any interrogation of their ethical actions in reporting courses, many may have already formed a journalistic value system based on simple expediency. That the values of Television 201 or the editing workshop are not the only ones to be considered is essential to students' understanding of themselves,

their field, and their own ethical decision-making systems.

- (d) Recognizing that it's not all relative. Students will be encouraged to step back from their personal experience and consider that it is possible to come up with a coherent system of values which will be invaluable in helping them determine a course of action when faced with an ethically difficult situation. The basic purpose of the course will be presented and underlined: ethics cannot and will not be "taught," but the tools for helping individual students develop their own method of ethical evaluation can and will be taught.

Other elements of importance to the course will be explained as well, to clarify the nature and thrust of the course. The marking scheme places great emphasis on class participation, where students increase their grades by answering questions posed by the instructor and classmates on a particular issue (the method will be explained further in Week 5), and posing questions to others. To give students a taste of how the Socratic method will work in this future sessions, the class will be broken into groups, preferably with people they don't know well. Each group will be given an ethical problem to discuss over the course of fifteen or twenty minutes, after which they must elaborate on and defend

their position to their classmates. This exercise should serve a number of purposes, both by introducing the Socratic approach in a non-threatening way, and by breaking the ice of the first class and helping to dispel students' inevitable fears of a dry, academic term to come.

Week 2

This class will be devoted to an overview of the first two major ethical systems of thought that the course will cover. If the course is taught at the third-year, fourth-year or graduate level, as is likely given the structure of most current journalism schools, many students will already have encountered such thinkers as Mill, Kant or Hobbes in any one of a number of other disciplines. This course will look at some of the most important theories as they apply to ethical decision-making in journalism. It does not take much imagination to picture journalism students tuning out completely at the mention of philosophy, so every effort will be made to avoid jargon and emphasize the key points of each ethical system and how it could be applied to journalism. Clearly, such an approach runs the risk of shallowness, and may well not do justice to the complexities of the philosophies involved; however, what is essential is that students grasp the major elements of those philosophies, and come to understand that a rigorous inquiry into ethical considerations

can produce a set of profound and satisfying principles on which to act.

It is also essential, as Lambeth notes, to be prepared for students to question the value of having any system if the ones they look at in class all appear to be flawed (Lambeth 1986, 25). Students must not be left with the assumption that anything is justifiable since all major theories of classical ethics have weaknesses:

Ethical theories are not like "black boxes," gimmicks that can be called upon to accept ethical questions and spit forth answers with mechanical regularity and precision. Rather, such theories are like windows onto the world of moral reasoning. They are meant to provide vantage points from which important ethical decisions can be considered. . Moral reasoning is an art and not a science. (Lambeth 1986, 25)

The first issue to be addressed when dealing with principles governing ethical behaviour is that of the pervasiveness of Judeo-Christian ideals. It is likely that the majority of students in any Canadian university journalism class, while not necessarily "faithful" or "practising" Jews or Christians will have unconsciously absorbed the basic precepts of Biblical thinking. It is necessary to bring to light the existence of these deeply ingrained ideas, as well as discuss any other major religious traditions which may be represented in the class, to help students recognize principles of which they may be unaware but which invisibly guide their thinking on moral issues.

Once identified, these principles can be evaluated by the students for their relative worth; they will not be introduced as an ethical theory simply because they run so deep in so many students without their really understanding their powerful sway, and because it seems particularly ethnocentric to look only at one of the world's major religions' ways of dealing with moral questions. The course could very easily get sidetracked into a comparison of religious precepts and debates over the merits of the major religions, secular humanism and atheism. Fascinating subjects, all, but ultimately ones which would draw this ethics course off topic and into an area with which very few university students are comfortable, for questionable gain in developing a personal system of ethical decision-making.

A final caveat before embarking on the description of this week's material: note should be taken of the pitfalls outlined by Henry Overduin (1985, 3-4) of the chosen approach here to teaching a course in journalistic ethics. He warns of the dangers of "taking our students on an ethical shopping trip," pointing out to them Aristotle's Golden Mean on one shelf, Mill's Utilitarianism on another, and so on. He stresses the importance of helping students develop their own principles, rather than simply adopting the ones presented to them on their ethical shopping expedition.

It is a point ethics instructors would be wise to remember; the great ethical theories are intended as jumping-

off places from which students develop their own ethical beliefs. Kant, Mill and the rest are not merely exam fodder, but thinkers who have made invaluable contributions to moral reasoning, and students should be encouraged to adopt those elements which make sense to them in and reject the others, rather than simply dumping them all into the "shopping cart" and emerging confused and without a set of principles to call their own. The shopping expedition should involve an instructor guiding students through the aisles, pointing out salient features of other theories which students may want to use in constructing theories and, ultimately, guiding principles of their own.

The two major schools of thought to be covered in this class, then, are utilitarianism and ethical egoism. There is some debate over whether the latter is in fact coherent enough to be considered a system of thought (Christians, Rotzoll and Fackler 1983, 21); however, examining this articulation of a way of thinking precisely because it is both pervasive and generally unarticulated should prove valuable to students. It should be noted that descriptions of the key elements of the ethical theories outlined in Weeks 2 and 3 owe much to Carleton philosophy instructor Kevin Sullivan and his History of Ethics course.

(a) utilitarianism

A principle that turns up in most humanities disciplines from sociology to political science, utilitarianism is one of the most well-known of the classical ethical theories. Students will be introduced to its basic elements through readings which combine the original works (Mill, Bentham and Hume in Melden) with commentary and explanation (Christians, Rotzoll and Fackler).

While it is unfortunate that important and involved ethical theories are reduced to catch phrases or epithets, in the end it may be more valuable for the journalism-oriented student to have a single clear notion to take away from the study of theories such as utilitarianism than to have grappled with its many layers and complexities and emerge confused. Thus the descriptions of the ethical theories to be discussed in Weeks 2 and 3 may seem simplistic, but given constraints of time and relevance to journalism, simple versions of these theories are clearly more appropriate than more complete ones which would demand much more class time and reduce the time available to discuss application of theory and principle to the business of everyday journalism.

The clearest message of the utilitarian is that ethical behaviour is that which seeks the greatest good for the greatest number. The distinction between act and rule utilitarianism will also be made, with the help of Christians, Rotzoll and Fackler (1983, 12). Issues such as the definition

of "the greatest good", and the greatest good for whom, will be debated. Lambeth's application of act and rule utilitarianism to a specific case is also helpful in pointing out the merits and weaknesses of each (1986, 15-17, 9-10).

(b) ethical egoism

As a theory, ethical egoism is among the more difficult to pin down satisfactorily in a single sentence. Its classical bases are outlined in Hobbes's Leviathan, reproduced in Melden. The Edward Regis's "What is Ethical Egoism?" may be heavy going for students who have never been exposed to philosophical writing, but is worthwhile in characterizing some of the variations on the theme of ethical egoism.

Here, the essential message to be examined is that the individual ought to make decisions about ethical matters on the basis of what will promote his self interest. This maxim does not necessarily imply utter ruthlessness. Rather, it is a more formal articulation of often-heard justifications such as "I'm just looking out for number one."

That having been said, the weaknesses of such a theory are evident in a society that depends as heavily as ours does on interdependence. Egoism does not attach importance to the consequences of an action to anyone but the actor, a dangerous course indeed for a profession with the power of journalism. While egoism is not a particularly appealing basis for ethical decision-making in journalism, its value lies in making

explicit some of the ideas that are implicit in statements such as "Publish and be damned" or "I just do my job as a journalist -- what happens after that is none of my business."

A final element in this class will be the use of Lambeth's discussion of teleological ethics, which encompasses both egoism and utilitarianism. Lambeth looks at both theories, then attempts to apply them to the case of a reporter faced with an ethical dilemma. This last component will help to relate the ethical theories --- which may well be difficult to assimilate for students unfamiliar with the philosophical approach -- to realities with which a journalism student would feel more comfortable.

Week 3

Two more classical ethical theories will be examined in this class, namely, Kant's categorical imperative and the justice theory/ veil of ignorance of Rawls. Each has much to offer the student casting about for tools to help clarify her own ethical beliefs.

(a) categorical imperative

By reading excerpts from Kant's Grounding for the Metaphysics of Morals, together with Christians et. al.'s useful synthesis, students will begin to understand the most basic elements of this important moral theory. Reduced to simplistic terms, that theory states that individuals should "act in such a way that [they] can also will that the maxim of

[their] action should become a universal law" (James W. Ellington's introduction to Kant 1981, v).

Such a theory should give any thoughtful student much to consider when he reflects on his own behaviour and whether he would choose to have his reasons for action become universalized. This theory stands particularly strongly in contraposition to the pervasive thinking about journalism and moral issues: that most decisions must be made so quickly that there can be no time for ethical debate. If students can take a step back from their own experience and attempt to apply Kant's categorical imperative, even if they subsequently reject it as a standard of moral judgment, an extremely useful exercise has taken place.

(b) justice theory/ veil of ignorance

The addition of an important, relatively recent thinker in the person of John Rawls should serve both to add another perspective to students' thinking and to indicate that all the important thinking on the subject of ethics was not done in the dusty past.

Working from Rawls' basic principle that justice is the most important element of any theory of behaviour, students will learn about the concept of the "veil of ignorance": when there is an ethical decision to be made, the person involved should remove herself "from real circumstances into an 'original position' behind a barrier where roles and social differentiations are gone" (Christians, Rotzoll and Fackler

1983, 14). In theory, then, this technique allows for decision-making unclouded by such factors as sex, race, class, etc. The resulting ethical choice will be made on the basis of what will "protect the weaker party and minimize risks" (Christians, Rotzoll and Fackler 1983, 15).

Some of the problems with this theory are obvious points of discussion, the difficulty of truly stepping back from all factors affecting one's judgment being the most immediately apparent. However, Christians et. al. do an excellent job of clarifying Rawls' writings, which may be difficult for students unused to reading philosophical works. The authors explain his theories clearly as well as effectively illustrating their application to journalism.

In addition, the second part of Lambeth's look at one particular journalistic ethical dilemma and the application of different theories to the reporter's behaviour will be used. His discussion of deontological theories and how they translate into behaviour will once again serve to clarify how philosophy can help clarify and order the journalist's ethical decisions.

Week 4

This class will be the last to deal with explicitly philosophical subjects, in the form of informal reasoning techniques. The goal here is to make students aware of the traps of everyday rationalization of behaviour when the

reasoning itself is flawed. Without the ability to construct a clear, valid argument, the likelihood of an individual student being able to create a system of moral judgment is doubtful.

A beneficial side-effect of this class is to increase students' knowledge of clear argumentation and the commonly used techniques which sidestep reason for persuasion. An understanding of selected logical fallacies will help the student journalist recognize when her source is sidestepping a question, and, while the purpose of discussing fallacies is to improve the students' own reasoning process, there are many advantages to being able to recognize such logical mistakes.

Since most universities' philosophy departments teach entire courses in informal reasoning, the range of what could be included in a single three-hour class must be narrowed. However, there are certain logical fallacies which are so common and so easy to grasp that they must be part of any discussion of clear reasoning and the impediments to it. A brief description of each follows; the explanations will be accompanied in class by examples taken from the news media and advertising. Descriptions of the fallacies are drawn directly from Malcolm Acock's clear and helpful Informal Logic Examples and Exercises.

(a) False Authority: The reason given for a position is that some figure of authority holds that position. This is

fallacious when the authority is merely popular (as in much endorsement advertising), has no authority in the field in question, or when the authority figure is the traditional wisdom of the bulk of humanity.

(b) Two Wrongs Make a Right: An attempt to argue that a wrong is not, in fact, wrong, because others have committed the same act. Another form of this is fallacy is the "argument from common practice," which involves arguing that something is not wrong because it is widespread.

(c) Irrelevant Reason: As its name implies, an argument where the reasons given to support a conclusion have no particular relevance to that conclusion.

(d) Ambiguous Argument: This occurs when a flawed conclusion is reached because of ambiguity in the premises leading to it. Another form of this argument is the "fallacy of stress," where the ambiguity occurs through changing a premise's meaning by stressing different words in a statement.

(e) Slippery Slope: An extremely common fallacy, this argument suggests that one event will lead to another, and yet another, and so on until an inevitable and usually unpleasant outcome is reached. The plausibility of each link in the logical chain is not evaluated; the argument simply leaps from one occurrence all the way down the slope to a conclusion which is by no means the only possible one.

(f) Argument from Force or Pity: An attempt to get someone to accept a conclusion or undertake action by threatening dire

consequences if she doesn't, or by suggesting that the "dire consequences" will leave someone -- usually the proponent of the argument -- in a piteous state. No reason independent of the threat or plea is given.

(g) **Ad Hominem:** This fallacy involves arguing against a position by attacking the person who holds the position, rather than his arguments. While this can be a valid approach if the other person is genuinely a liar, more often it is used to obscure the issue at hand and switch the focus to the opponent's weaknesses rather than those of his reasoning. A variation on this theme is the "guilt by association" attack, in which the attack consists of linking the opponent to a generally disapproved-of group.

(h) **Fallacy of Questionable Analogy:** This occurs when a conclusion is arrived at on the basis of incorrectly drawing an analogy between two situations that are not truly analogous.

(i) **Fallacy of Questionable Cause:** Here the arguer suggests that one event is the cause of another without sufficient evidence for a causal relationship.

(j) **Straw Man:** This approach attempts to give the impression that the opponent has argued for a strong conclusion, when she has only argued for a weaker but related one. This often takes the form of overstating the other person's conclusion in distorted terms.

(k) False Dilemma: This fallacy occurs when someone presents two or more alternatives in the premises of an argument as if they were the only alternatives when, in fact, there are others.

(l) Begging the Question: When understood correctly, this fallacy involves not prompting a listener to ask a question left unanswered by an argument, but rather making an assumption in the premises of an argument of what should be proved. This is also known as "circular reasoning."

(m) Red Herring / Evading the Issue: This technique attempts to lead the topic from the subject matter at hand to some different but usually related topic. Even the most inexperienced of journalism students will be able to understand this fallacy after attempting to interview a diplomat or professional spokesperson on a controversial subject. It is often found in conjunction with the straw man fallacy.

(n) Fallacy of Small Sample: This argument reaches a conclusion on a large scale by drawing evidence from a sample which is too small in comparison to the population. It often takes the form of drawing a sweeping conclusion from very limited, usually anecdotal, evidence.

After discussing the various fallacies and both providing and soliciting examples, a selection of fallacious arguments taken from the news media will be examined and classified. Students will be encouraged to come up with and then evaluate

fallacious arguments. It should be clear by the end of this class that certain common forms of so-called reasoning such as the slippery slope or argument from authority or tradition will not be acceptable in the students' own assignments, whether written or oral.

Inevitably, the removal of such frequently used crutches to argumentation will throw many students into confusion as to how to justify ethical decisions in future classes, but will also help them to build a relatively fallacy-free set of arguments to explain those decisions, if only to themselves.

The second major component of this class is a discussion of an important question raised in the title of John C. Merrill's 1985 article, "Is Ethical Journalism Simply Objective Reporting?" The discussion will examine the commonly held belief (as demonstrated in the other key reading for this class, Rilla Dean Mills' "Newspaper Ethics: A Qualitative Study") among journalists that ethical journalism simply means getting the facts straight and being as balanced as possible. This assumption will be explored -- to what extent is it true? -- then evaluated -- what about the missing moral dimension for which it cannot account?

While this discussion is not intended to drive home a particular point with a philosophical sledgehammer, it is hoped that students will come to realize that there is more to truly responsible, ethical journalism than simply following the canons of fair reporting. By examining and largely

discounting these commonly-held-but-rarely-questioned assumptions, this realization helps to clear the way for discussions of ethical issues on a deeper, more important level in the classes to come.

Week 5

This class marks the end of the philosophical segment of the course, and the beginning of the practical or application segment. Each class will look at one or more areas of ethical difficulty in the field of journalism, using readings from a number of sources and class discussion to analyze each and attempt to come up with one or more acceptable ways of handling the difficulty.

One important element in this second segment should be explained in some detail now. Over the course of the remaining several weeks, each student will be expected to prepare a response to an ethical dilemma. Depending on the number of students in the class, one to three per session will be required to present their responses orally, then answer questions posed both by the instructor and by classmates.

This application of the Socratic method to journalistic ethics is based on a description by Richard Schwarzlose in Journalism Educator. Schwarzlose notes that "the strength of the method in Socrates' hands is evident in the fact that his pupils, all subjected to the same questioning process, came away formulating their own unique and quite different

philosophies." (Schwarzlose 1978, 10) He also suggests that the process is helpful in breaking down the common, knee-jerk reactions that so many students use to decide or evade ethical issues such as "the public's right to know," or appeal to an editor (Schwarzlose 1978, 10) Ultimately, he writes,

. . .students will (1) gain insight into their own biases and thresholds for handling news and information, (2) hear other students' responses and realize the diversity of professional standards journalists bring to their craft, and (3) be exposed to a method of questioning which they can employ professionally later on. (Schwarzlose 1978, 13)

The instructor will draw on a file of real-life ethical dilemmas, which will be distributed ahead of time to all students so that they can prepare for the following week's debate. Dilemmas will not necessarily correspond to the day's class discussion. Of course, there are some potential pitfalls which must be carefully avoided by the instructor to ensure the process does not degenerate into chaos. The instructor must take great care to emphasize that the debate and questioning will take place on an intellectual level, and personal attacks will be penalized. Participation in these discussions will form a large portion of the students' final grade, thus the withholding of marks for unhelpful contributions should impart some seriousness to the consequences of such behaviour. In addition, the "Socratic" component should occupy a different portion of the class time each week, to avoid giving students the impression

that it is the last thing on each day's agenda, and thus not as important, or the first thing, and easily missed.

The first few participants will inevitably have a more difficult time than those who must defend after the ice is broken. An instructor who is at all familiar with the students, or who can check with other faculty members, should be able to engineer the participation of class leaders or those most comfortable with such a situation towards the start of the segment. Marking for the first few students should also take into consideration the difficulties they may have had in an unfamiliar format.

With care, a conscientious instructor should be able to ensure without too much difficulty that the Socratic questioning part of each class will be a non-threatening exercise in joint discovery and clarification to which many students will look forward, both for the potential of high participation marks for getting involved, and for the pleasure of the intellectual challenge. It is essential that the sessions not be seen as a chance for students to score points at each others' expense. The instructor must keep a tight rein on certain types of questioning, and point out fallacious reasoning, as gently as possible, when required. Making mistakes and exploring unusual ideas must be seen as positive, even deserving of reward, to help students break out of the knee-jerk mode of ethical decision-making.

Schwarzlose also notes the value of a certain amount of "theatrical flair" to "elevate the students to levels of personal involvement and responsiveness commonly lacking in the classroom." (Schwarzlose 1978, 13) In the end, the instructor must endeavour to create an atmosphere of cooperation which permits students to examine as many different lines of reasoning as possible, as long as they attempt to avoid fallacious arguments and to defend their ethical conclusions in a coherent and rational way.

The subject of this week's class is one which is mentioned by nearly all writers on the topic of journalistic ethics, and one which usually prompts prolonged debate: codes of ethics. Philip Meyer's Ethical Journalism is an extremely useful resource for this class, particularly the second chapter, as are the Globe and Mail's code of conduct (McFarlane and Clements 1990, 58-59), and the codes of ethics of the Ottawa Citizen, the American Society of Newspaper Editors, and Sigma Delta Chi/the (American) Society of Professional Journalists, the latter two reprinted in Meyer. Two examples of broadcast codes in Rivers and Mathews, as well as chapter 13 of their Ethics for the Media are also useful.

C. June Martin's article "The case of the lost ethic" and Carman Cumming's "Ethics -- no easy answers" and its sidebar "Something to live up to" are good illustrations of the problems, both philosophical and practical, inherent in attempting to construct a formal code of ethics for

journalists. Pritchard and Morgan's "Impact of Ethics Codes on Judgments by Journalists" provides evidence that codes do not appear to influence journalists to be more ethical.

There are two basic questions to be explored in this class. The first of these is obvious -- are codes of ethics a good way to promote more ethical journalism? Further questions naturally arise from the first one, such as Cumming's suggestions for partial guidelines for behaviour. A useful exercise would be to encourage discussion of what a good code -- if students feel there is such a thing -- would look like. In discussing the strengths and weaknesses of ethical codes, it is hoped the class will come to appreciate the importance of individual decision-making and the desirability of avoiding buck-passing.

The second major area to be explored in this class is that of written versus unwritten codes of ethical behaviour in a news operation. Meyer is very helpful here, enlarging the problem of formalized rules of behaviour to include those which are informal, but often even more stringent. If the students have not yet encountered Warren Breed's "Social Control in the Newsroom," its introduction would also help to highlight the subtext which is so keenly felt by many reporters, but so difficult to question because of its "invisible" nature.

Week 6

As the first class dealing with actual ethical concerns which students may have already encountered in the course of their schoolwork, apprenticeships or work experience, this session will start with one of the most basic elements of journalism; one which is not at this stage often seen as the ethical minefield it is: newsgathering technique. By the time they reach the upper year level in which this course is likely to be included, most students will have felt some uneasiness about some aspect of reporting (author's survey).

Concerns over accepting freebies or being pressured by a source may supersede the importance of ethical concerns over technique for many students; however, of those who indicated they had encountered an ethical dilemma, fully 37 per cent said it was connected with technique, whether it involved the choice of a lead or the use of unchecked information (author's survey). It is possible that the students' initial misgivings about the ethics of emphasizing one aspect of a story or cleaning up a quotation are gradually soothed as they see others doing the same, and begin to internalize the norms of their newsrooms. Thus the techniques of gathering the news are often seen as, if not always neutral, simply "the way things are done," and left unquestioned.

In order to look at these techniques, some readings will be used to illustrate the range of issues involved in such a seemingly uncomplicated area. Richard Petrow's "Gatekeeper

exercises are effective, revealing, easy to construct" and the method described in it are useful tools to help students begin to see how deeply ingrained certain decision-making patterns are, and to recognize that news judgments also have an ethical dimension.

The short section in Olen adds the perspective of television, forcing students to look at techniques such as the re-ask or the reaction shot as they may have when first introduced to them, and evaluate their ethical merits and flaws. While there may be little they can ultimately do to change the way television news is constructed, they can at least look critically at its techniques and consider other ways of gathering and presenting the news. Finally, Richard Cunningham's brief Quill piece, "Doctoring quotes," also explores an area which remains ethically sticky for many journalists for their entire professional lives. Open discussion of the cleaning up or rearranging of quotations should make explicit the choices and value judgments implicit in such a routine newsroom occurrence.

The basic issues to be discussed in this class are fairly clear: the main goal is to give students some perspective on journalistic technique, to realize that the way things are done is not necessarily inevitable or value-free, to recognize that the lines drawn between ethical and unethical technique are often blurry and arbitrary, and to provoke reflection on whether there are alternatives to generally accepted

techniques, or, at least, more ethically satisfying ways to work within them.

Week 7

Following closely on some of the issues raised in the previous week's class, this session deals with the huge and problematic area of truth-telling in journalism. Students identified issues of self-misrepresentation, surreptitious taping or out-and-out faking of material 14 per cent of the time when asked to describe an ethical dilemma they had encountered. (author's survey) Clearly, students already have some idea of the threats to truthfulness and the temptations to deceive that are common in journalism. This class will try to look at those situations in more depth, by giving students the time to reflect that is so rarely available at the moment of decision, leading to impulsive reactions and rationalization after the fact.

Sections of Sisella Bok's important book Lying will be used to present her illustration of lying from the viewpoints of both the deceiver and the deceived. These perspectives must both be carefully considered by a journalist who is contemplating whether or not to deceive a source or the public. The philosophical nature of Bok's work helps to remove the debate somewhat from journalistic truisms about the public's right to know.

Two perspectives on a much-debated example of journalistic deception will form the basis of one area of discussion. Both Lambeth and Olen discuss the case of the Chicago Sun-Times's establishment of a bar to investigate corruption among city inspectors, police, and others, but they arrive at different conclusions, each of which is clearly reasoned. This example should also underline the fact that there is rarely one right answer to ethical questions, but thinking them through is essential to arriving at an answer with which the individual can live.

A second major example should help to spark discussion and reflection among students. The two articles to be used here are Frederick Talbott's "Taping on the sly" and Thomas Cooper's "Hidden Taping: The Arguments For and the Ethics Against." These differing perspectives on the ethics and practicality of surreptitious taping raise interesting points for students to consider, and help illustrate the problems of arguing on different levels -- where one article defends the practice on pragmatic grounds, the other eventually argues against it on ethical grounds. This divergence is a helpful example of the way ethical debates are often carried out, with opponents operating on different assumptions, often pointing to the realities of journalism as the deciding factor instead of considering moral arguments that may conflict with those realities.

The larger questions here -- and they are large indeed -- should engender consideration of a number of factors. Discussion of when, if ever, it is acceptable to deceive a source, or of when, if ever, it is acceptable to conceal or misrepresent one's identity should provoke a range of responses and, ultimately, call into question the ease with which so many students gloss over precisely such issues in their schoolwork and elsewhere.

Week 8

The topics of this class are ones which are often overlooked in discussions of ethics and journalism. The first deals with the business and organization of journalism, including the role of the journalist as an employee of a business, as opposed to the simplistic view of the journalist as a crusader who answers to no mere concerns of money-making. Indeed, a surprising 5 per cent of student survey respondents said their attitudes toward ethical issues had changed for precisely this reason after working in the field; their level of cynicism soared when they saw profit margins coming before ethical concerns.

A few authors address this area with insight, helping to create a more realistic picture of journalism and the pressures on its ethical standards which come from its nature as an enterprise for generating profits. A case described in the first chapter of Christians et. al. illustrates the tricky

nature of issues where the interests of business and journalism conflict, namely, trying to balance a newspaper's role as informer to all and the reality of inner-city demographics. Another useful source is Lambeth's chapter 6, appropriately subtitled "Handling the Organizational Pressures on Media Ethics."

This segment should help make students aware of the journalist's role within the news organization, the larger corporation, and, increasingly, the controlling national or international conglomerate. More importantly, however, it will help to make clear the pressures, subtle and otherwise, on one's ethical decisions that being part of such an organization often entails. The central notion here is that it is essential for a journalist to have her own ethical ideas clearly thought out in order to deal with the exacting internal pressures on her decisions.

The second half of this class deals with a problem that will be all too clear to any students with work experience in a small-town news outlet. The pressures on a reporter in such a situation are much more immediate and personal than at a large, relatively impersonal organization where journalists often report on people they don't know. In a small community, however, the difficult ethical decisions are made vastly more difficult, given the interrelationships, different standards, and generally smaller sphere of operation. When a journalist

knows the person whose feelings or trust is involved, the consequences of his decisions are made much more immediate.

Former suburban editor George McGeehan's article "My Weekly Seizure" deals with the kinds of ethical concerns reporting on a smaller community can raise. His illustrations should help shake students out of the major-market-daily mould many cast themselves in when considering ethical questions.

These two areas of ethical pressure raise several interesting points for discussion: How do you deal with pressure from advertisers to change editorial content, in both a large and a small news organization? Do your ethics change when you know the people involved in a situation? Does your answer to that change your perspective on other types of ethical questions? Are ethics only what your organization can afford? How do you resist internal organizational pressures on your ethical choices. . .or do you?

Week 9

Issues of compassion, privacy and taste are the basis of this week's class. These concerns are ones which inevitably draw strong opinions from students, and evaluating them in ethical terms should prove interesting for all. Removal of simplistic appeals to journalistic maxims about the precedence of the news should also force many students to discover and evaluate their real reasons for justifying certain types of

behaviour that would be considered reprehensible in any other circumstances.

Chapter five of Christians, Rotzoll and Fackler deals with the question of invasion of privacy in a thoughtful way. Illustrations from real-life cases provide sobering subject matter for those inclined either to avoid anything sensitive or to publish and be damned. Similarly thought-provoking are three cases outlined by Frank McCulloch in Drawing the Line. This class also provides an excellent opportunity to spend time exploring the enormous potential for exploitiveness and invasion of privacy of television. Given some lead time, the instructor should be able to obtain examples of controversial items, or, better still, raw footage of an important news event which poses conflicting problems of news value and taste or compassion.

Two magazine articles also provide useful perspectives on this very difficult and often emotional area of journalistic ethics. Saul Wisnia's "Private grief, public exposure" focuses on the reactions of a student journalist to the mainstream media's coverage of a plane crash which killed several students from her university. Mike Pride's "A Grieving Concord Repelled by Media Misbehaviour" describes the concerns of the author (editor of the local newspaper) about assisting the national news media in an invasion of privacy and exploitation of grief after the space shuttle Challenger disaster.

The discussions in this class promise to be more difficult to focus and to approach rationally, since these issues tend to evoke strong emotional reactions in most people. However, there are several useful things that can emerge from an emotionally charged class such as this one: students will come to realize that judgments based on news values also have a very clear human dimension; that there may well be emotional components to some of the other issues under discussion which also merit attention; that knee-jerk decisions based on gut feelings are, in the end, no more valid than knee-jerk decisions based on "the public's right to know."

In addition, this subject provides a particularly good opportunity to apply the various ethical theories to practical situations. While it is hoped that the theorists' principles will be woven into virtually every class, questions of privacy and compassion lend themselves extremely well to analysis in light of ethical egoism, utilitarianism, the categorical imperative, and Rawls' veil of ignorance.

Week 10

This week's class looks at an area which is one of the highest-profile when it comes to questions of ethics in journalism, namely, the problems inherent in the relationship between journalists and their sources. Elements of previous discussions on deception and journalistic techniques will co: e

into play when students begin to examine the complexities of the reporter-source relationship.

Once again, Christians, Rotzoll and Fackler provide a useful starting point for the discussion in chapter three of their book. While the first few case illustrations (Watergate, the Pentagon Papers, Abscam) deal with ground which is too familiar, too broad, and therefore too difficult to see from a fresh perspective, the cases involving an individual television and print reporter carry much more weight. McCulloch furnishes further examples of problems in this area emanating from real life.

Since the question of source confidentiality tends to bring out strong, even militant opinions in journalists about freedom of the press and personal morality, as well as serious legal considerations, their arguments on this subject are interesting examples of rare occasions when personal ethics are trumpeted. Langley and Levine's Columbia Journalism Review piece "Broken Promises" warns of the dangers to a free press of what the authors see as an increasing tendency for journalists to reveal, either voluntarily or under pressure, the names of sources promised confidentiality. John Sawatsky's statements, ultimately never needed in his contempt of court trial, about his responsibilities to his sources in the RCMP/Long Knife case provide a personal viewpoint. They also have a welcome Canadian context which does not rely, as

so many American arguments do, on insistent, frequently puerile slogans about First Amendment absolutism.

Unfortunately, there is virtually nothing in the pages of the major journalistic reviews and journals which coherently argues the other point of view: that sometimes journalists should reveal their sources for the greater good of society. The instructor may find Peter Goldsworthy's Osgoode Hall Law Review article "The Claim to Secrecy of News Source: A Journalistic Privilege?" helpful.

However, there are other major questions to be examined in this class, many of which students may have already encountered. What does "off the record" mean? When is something said off the record important enough to break the promise of confidentiality? Under what circumstances is it okay to burn a source, considering future problems of access and the importance of keeping promises? Can journalists justifying drawing their ethical lines in different places, depending on the "importance" of the story? Discussion of these questions and the others that are sure to arise should help make students aware of the shades of grey that prevent the making of simple black-and-white decisions about their relationships with their sources.

Week 11

The issue of whether or not journalists should accept freebies, or under what circumstances accepting them is

permissible, is one of the most frequently raised when journalistic ethics are under discussion. The arguments on either side are so deeply entrenched that they are rarely thought through very clearly, with the result that the debate often consists of opponents repeating defences which no longer require much in the way of soul-searching. Given its prominence in discussions of ethics, then, the issue of freebies deserves examination that goes beyond the easily defined battle lines, and asks questions about the real motivators of and ethical positions on a journalist's accepting freebies.

To focus the debate somewhat, sources for this class deal specifically with a particularly troublesome area of journalistic ethics: travel writing. A useful Canadian document is the Ontario Press Council's 1978 report, Press Ethics and Freebies, which arose from a complaint (filed by CBC reporter Gerry McAuliffe) about a Hamilton Spectator travel story for which the paper accepted free trips and accommodations. On a similar note, Jeremy Alderson's "Confessions of a travel writer" outlines one journalist's methods of deciding what is acceptable behaviour in the face of so many freebies. Christians, Rotzoll and Fackler also deal with this specific issue in a case study contained in their chapter on business pressures.

Of course, there are many other types of freebies, some of which students may already have encountered, from a free

lunch to the incident at Carleton University in which a trip to Europe offered to journalism students was paid for by the Department of National Defence. Once again, the question of drawing extremely fine lines arises, and it is hoped that by this point in the course students will be honest enough to discuss all aspects of this issue, including enjoyment of the proffered freebie and the residual guilt they may feel at accepting it.

This area of ethical inquiry is another which requires careful navigation by the instructor if the same old arguments are to be avoided. It is not enough for students to say "I wouldn't change my story because someone bought me dinner"; that might well be the case, but it is essential to again take a few steps back and attempt to look at the more far-reaching issues involved, such as personal accountability and the potential for clouded judgment.

One of the most important points of discussion for this class is the degree to which the **appearance** of ethical behaviour, the public perception of it, is widely accepted as a determinant what should be done. In the end, how many concerns about accepting freebies are truly ethical ones, and how many are simply the kind of papering over of obvious problems that Meyer describes as journalism's tendency to treat ethics as "a public relations problem, one that follows the shifting winds of public attention." (Meyer 1987, vii) Class discussions should become even more interesting if "it

won't look good to our audience" is shown to be an inadequate moral response to the problem of accepting freebies.

Week 12

This final session works in tandem with that of the previous week in looking at conflict of interest; many of the arguments presented when debating conflicts of interest and their potential to interfere with ethical journalism are the same as those discussed in the description of Week 11. This subject also relates to the class on codes of ethics, given that codes are often thought to be useful primarily in providing specific guidelines for what journalists can and cannot do. (Pritchard and Morgan 1989, 936)

The two cases selected from Christians, Rotzoll and Fackler provide plenty of food for thought, dealing as they do with a newspaper crusading on one side of a public issue, and the point at which leisure-time involvements may create conflicts for journalists. The brief selection from Olen puts the "Ethics" section of Sigma Delta Chi, the Society of Professional Journalists' code under a moral microscope, examining its guidelines near-obsession with conflict of interest. This tendency of journalists to focus on conflict of interest as the most important ethical issue (also as noted by Pritchard and Morgan), to the exclusion of others is an interesting topic of discussion in itself. Why the obsession

with guidelines to preserve the appearance of a clearly impossible neutrality?

The chapter from Meyer incorporates both freebies and conflict of interest, and also provides some valuable perspectives on this question, which seems to haunt so many journalists. The survey questions sent to a large number of American editors, publishers and reporters and included in this chapter should spark some lively debate among students. Finally, the Charles Bailey article, "Conflicts of Interest: A Matter of Journalistic Ethics" presents some useful thoughts on the relationship implied in the piece's title.

The major issues to be discussed in this class are, as previously noted, very similar to last week's. Again, the overriding question is whether doing something, or refraining from doing it, on the basis of its impact on public perceptions, is defensible on ethical grounds. And if there must be other grounds on which to defend an action, what are they? The class may easily get sidetracked into debating what constitutes a conflict of interest, and as long as this debate is not allowed to dominate the whole session, it may raise some important considerations. Once again, it is up to the instructor to steer discussion away from the hackneyed traditional justifications into territory which each individual student must explore for himself, and from which he must emerge with his own ideas refined.

In schools where another week of class time is available, there are numerous other ethical issues that could be explored, or existing topics which could easily be expanded to cover two classes. Further options for this time include an overview/review of the value of the class and ways to improve it, free-form discussions about the state of ethics in journalism and the directions in which it seems to be going, a complete class of student presentations and defences, the showing and discussion of . . . And Justice for All or other films dealing with journalistic ethics, or simply a chance for the instructor to answer questions.

Marking

A common criticism of ethics courses before they have taken place is that such an exercise in moral consideration must be virtually impossible to mark. However, upon reflection, it is obvious that students can be evaluated for the quality of their reasoning, ability to explain and justify their ethical decisions, and grasp of the aforementioned theories and their possible application to real situations.

With these factors in mind, then the marking scheme for the course is straightforward, with, as already mentioned, a heavy emphasis on class participation. The quality and quantity of the student's contribution to class discussions will be worth 50 per cent of her final mark.

There will also be a paper of 10-20 pages requiring students to track a story in the news, the treatment of which has an ethical dimension, and evaluate that treatment, with reference to their own system of ethics. The story may be a small, one-time piece, or a large, continuing issue. The choice of item must be clearly justified, and the argument presented must be coherent and effectively reasoned. These elements, as well as grammar, spelling and style, will form the basis for marking. The paper will be worth 25%.

The final 25% of the mark will be based on a take-home exam. First, the exam will describe two difficult ethical situations and how a journalist reacted to each. Students will be asked which they feel was the more problematic, and why, to evaluate whether they have begun to recognize the elements of ethical decision-making. They will then be given descriptions of several ethical dilemmas from which they must pick two to evaluate. They must describe how three of the classical ethical systems could be applied to the issue, then describe their personal approach, ideally demonstrating an understanding of moral reasoning and evidence that there are reasonably consistent principles underlying their decision. Finally, they will be asked which of the areas discussed in class -- or any ethical areas not covered -- presents the most, or the most serious, problems, either for them as individuals, or for journalism as a whole.

CONCLUSION

If a more ethical and sensitive profession is the aim of those involved in journalism in Canada, then it is time we examined how that aim can and should be translated into reality. It is not enough to bemoan what are perceived as low ethical standards among journalists; we must work to improve them. A method which offers much promise in doing just that is the inclusion of courses devoted to ethics in Canadian university schools of journalism. Teaching journalism students the skills of newsgathering and presentation without encouraging them to consider the moral dimensions of their field is tantamount to saying the current state of ethical justification among journalists is entirely acceptable. Universities have a responsibility to include thoughtful courses in journalistic ethics in their curriculum, both to give students the well-rounded education they expect, and to improve, however gradually, the ethical behaviour of the profession as a whole.

There are, of course, some arguments which will always be advanced against the need for ethics courses: both students and journalists may contend that such courses are unrealistic, or that the instructor will impose a set of principles, or that ethics must be developed entirely independently by the student. When these objections are examined carefully, however, there is one common denominator -- all are based on ignorance and prejudice. They are merely projections of what

could happen, or, in the case of students who have suffered through a poorly taught class, projections of their own unfortunate experience. There is virtually nothing in these arguments that stands as a valid counter to the need expressed in this thesis for ethics courses in the the university journalism curriculum.

Preconceived notions of boring, irrelevant, useless courses in ethics and journalism simply do not have to be the case. A perusal of the suggestions made by scholars, journalists and students reveals a number of challenging, worthwhile goals a course could, with a little thought, be designed to achieve. A course organized in such a way as to stimulate students' moral awareness, and inform them of other ideas about ethics in order to help them develop their own coherent set of deciding principles is an exercise which cannot help but give students food for thought and time to reflect on the ethical dimension of their chosen craft.

That having been noted, it is also apparent that there are ways of teaching courses in ethics which are more detrimental to the achievement of these goals than not teaching the subject at all. Attempts to cover ethics in all courses and, as a result, covering them in few, if any; in one or two segments of other courses; or in a course divorced from the journalism department are just a few methods that may do as much harm as good. A separate course incorporating

philosophical theories but firmly grounded in the realities of journalism is vastly preferable.

To teach such a course effectively, however, it is vital that the instructor involved have some specific qualities and qualifications. A solid basis in practising journalism is essential, in order to be able to deal competently with students' questions about the workings of a real news operation. Also important, however, is a solid grounding in the ethical theory and moral reasoning. Patience and a lively sense of humour are also recommended.

Finally, it is hoped that this thesis has demonstrated that there is a way to achieve at least some of the definite goals described earlier in a course in ethics and journalism. Using the array of tools available, it is possible to show students a few of the great ethical theories and some aids to clear reasoning, and encourage them to use these skills to construct for themselves a coherent system of making ethical decisions. Through debate and constant questioning, these students will come to realize that there are certain moral obligations inherent in the practice of journalism, and decide the best way for them to address those obligations in their own lives.

Ultimately, good ethics courses taught by competent instructors will help students become more morally aware human beings, something which can only benefit journalism as a whole. Ethics courses must not be designed as public

relations enterprises which universities and employers can use to allay the public's concern over the state of ethics in journalism. Rather, they should be exercises in intellectual and moral challenge which will play a major role in making students better journalists and better people.

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APPENDIX A

Methodology and notes

An explanation of the methodology and results of the questionnaire referred to in the previous chapters is in order to give some perspective to the data on which many conclusions in this paper are based. Given that the author has limited experience in the field of statistical design and analysis, the project was supervised by Prof. Alan Frizzell, head of the Carleton University school of journalism survey centre.

The questionnaire was intended to reach all final-year undergraduate and graduate students of journalism in Canada, thus concerns about the sample's representativeness were nonexistent. Students more concerned about ethics might have been more likely to complete and return the forms. A certain number of the responses may have been filled out by students who were outside the desired population, but these were few enough not to have skewed the results.

The questions were intended to test several aspects of students' ethical beliefs and reactions: their responses to specific, virtually insoluble, ethical dilemmas; the factors affecting their decision-making in difficult ethical situations, and their news judgment; changes in their ethical positions over time; reactions to ethics courses and the reasons why; the nature of ethical dilemmas they had encountered and their reactions, and to determine demographic data such as age, sex work experience, etc.

The questionnaire was pretested on a class of 30 third-year students at Carleton University. As a result of their responses, several questions were dropped to make the questionnaire clearer, shorter to complete, and easier to code.

The final version was then mailed to all Canadian universities with journalism programs: Carleton University, University of Western Ontario, King's College, University of Regina, Concordia University and Ryerson Polytechnical Institute. A version translated into French was sent to Université de Quebec a Montreal and Université de Laval.

Unfortunately, the numbers of returned questionnaires varied wildly. This made impossible one of the original aims of the questionnaire, namely, to evaluate results by school to determine if there were patterns which might reflect the effectiveness of certain teaching styles.

As completed questionnaires were returned, they were coded according to responses, and the resulting numerical data were entered into a computer data file. These data were then analysed using the SPSSX program, yielding several different types of final results.

Frequency tables yielding the "average" answer for every question were run, giving percentage answers as well as more detailed statistical information which was not used in analysis. Some questions, such as the first eight ethical dilemmas, were analysed using the mean numerical response on

a scale of one to 10. Others were cross-tabulated, that is, the answer for one question (e.g. an ethical dilemma) was used as a dependent variable analysed in terms of a second, independent variable (e.g. sex). Finally, any resulting patterns which appeared interesting or significant were explored generally, also using cross-tabulations. An example of this method is the cross-tabulation of responses to questions asking students' desire for an ethics course and whether or not they had ever had an ethical dilemma.

Given the small number of responses to some areas of the questionnaire, and the nature of some of the questions, substantial qualitative analysis was also done to determine certain characteristics of the responses which could not be measured numerically. This involved the use of comments supplied on open-ended questions, and of specific responses where numbers were simply too small to be readily analysable.

Without the time and money required to do a more extensive analysis of the resulting data, several key areas were chosen to be examined in detail. These were the ones which which jumped off the page in their apparent reflection of a trend: whether the student had work experience, his or her first language, degree of commitment to religion, length of work experience, sex, interest in having ethics courses in his or her program, and the student's year in the program.

The design and execution were, of course, a long way from perfect. While the results of the study are highly

interesting and valuable as a starting point in an area where the extant research is minimal, the problems with this particular project should be noted in order to place the results in perspective. In both designing the questionnaire and interpreting its results, several pitfalls presented themselves, not all of which were realized quickly enough to be overcome.

For example, upon reflection it appears several questions in the first section dealing with sticky ethical situations do not yield the desired unambiguous answers; a low score or a high score could potentially be seen as an "ethical" response. For example, in question four, concerning the former Nazi officer, a low score could reflect an ethical concern for the man's victims, while a high score could reflect the same for the man himself. In question five, it is difficult to determine which ethical concern is dictating the respondent's answer -- for the community affected by the closure of the plant, or for the environment affected by its toxic dumping.

Two questions bring up a further concern, that of ethics versus pragmatism. For instance, when a respondent answers that she is more likely to agree with an editor that misrepresentation is justified to get a story, it is not completely clear whether the respondent is demonstrating a lack of ethical standards, or simply doing what is most pragmatic in a real-life newsroom where questioning an editor's judgment could endanger one's job. Similarly, the

question which deals with whether or not to write a story concerning an editor's drunk driving charge could be answered in a way that reflects one's ethical standards, or one's awareness of newsroom politics.

In addition, there are potential areas of concern in the third section asking students to rank influences over their ethical decision making and their news judgment. Respondents were asked to rank a limited number of influences, without the ability to add others. This option was given to students in the pretest, and no influences appeared to need to be added to the list. However, this does not mean that respondents in the final survey did not wish to include other influences in their own ranking. One of the influences listed in the first of the two sections is also difficult to interpret -- it is the story's reflection on the reporter, but could conceivably be understood either positively (wanting to uphold one's personal ideals) or negatively (avoiding recriminations).

A further problem is the relatively low response rate. Despite repeated contact with professors and heads of departments, the questionnaires were not always distributed and collected in the manner requested, resulting in extremely disparate rates of return. The population is still a reasonable size from which to draw some conclusions, constituting roughly 35 per cent of Canada's graduating university-level journalism students, but the uneven level of

response from the various schools creates problems in generalizing results to the population as a whole.

Due to inexperience and lack of time and resources to spend on analysing the resulting data, it is almost certain that some useful areas of analysis have been missed. The data were examined according to factors that appeared to produce explanatory patterns, but the abovementioned limitations meant that the full range of potentially helpful factors could not be examined. For instance, under ideal conditions, all potentially explanatory factors from the last half of the questionnaire would have been used to analyse responses to the questions in the first half, then the results examined for significance. Unfortunately, without a sizeable staff of assistants and an even more sizeable government grant, this simply was not possible.

In addition, some types of analyses could not be done due to the small groupings resulting when the total group was broken down. An example of this is one which had to be discarded, namely, analysis by the students' chosen field of work. When the 169 respondents were assigned to groups according their preferred type of journalism, it became difficult to compare results from the large newspaper group with the small magazine or public relations group.

However, the factors that were analysed have yielded material previously only guessed at, and it is hoped that this

study will serve as the starting point for further inquiry into the field of ethics and journalism education.

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APPENDIX B
Questionnaire and results

THE REPORTER'S JOB

You've discovered that a prominent political figure beats his wife frequently. She calls you in a panic after you return to the newsroom, telling you her husband has decided to seek counselling, and begging you not to publish the article. How likely is it that you would hold off on publication?

V. likely 1...2...3...4...5...6...7...8...9...10 V. unlikely

MEAN: 5.777 N=166

During your summer job as a general assignment TV reporter, you are offered free tickets to *The Phantom of the Opera* by a local PR company. How likely is it that you would take them?

V. likely 1...2...3...4...5...6...7...8...9...10 V. unlikely

MEAN: 4.899 N=168

Your editor has asked you to pretend that you're an irate citizen and call a city councillor who's been accused of being abusive to her constituents. How likely is it that you would agree with the editor that the tactic is justified?

V. likely 1...2...3...4...5...6...7...8...9...10 V. unlikely

MEAN: 6.266 N=169

You discover through some hard investigative work that a prominent member of the community was a Nazi officer in World War II. Since moving to your area he has been a model citizen active in church and community work. He is currently in Europe on business and unavailable for comment. How likely is it that you would go ahead with the story as soon as possible?

V. likely 1...2...3...4...5...6...7...8...9...10 V. unlikely

MEAN: 6.556 N=169

You discover that the nearby chemical producing plant, which employs hundreds of local people, has been dumping toxins into the local watershed. The company's been hit hard by the recession, and the fines for the dumping will probably mean bankruptcy. The community has had several plant closures in the past six months. How likely is it that you would hold off on the story?

V. likely 1...2...3...4...5...6...7...8...9...10 V. unlikely

MEAN: 8.363 N=168

You take a terrific photo of a distraught couple consoling each other as they watch a house burn down. A colleague identifies them as being married to other people. How likely is it that you would spike the picture?

V. likely 1...2...3...4...5...6...7...8...9...10 V. unlikely

MEAN: 6.061 N=164

It's municipal election time, and there's a very close race for mayor between the incumbent and one opponent. Someone from the challenger's camp drops a hint about the mayor's homosexuality. You check it out and discover it's true, but a very carefully kept secret. How likely is it you would go ahead with the story?

V. likely 1...2...3...4...5...6...7...8...9...10 V. unlikely

MEAN: 8.473 N=169

You're working as the court reporter on your paper, when you run across information about the city editor. She's been fined heavily for causing serious damage to several parked cars while driving drunk. Your paper has been on an anti-drunk-driving campaign lately. How likely is it that you would write the story?

V. likely 1...2...3...4...5...6...7...8...9...10 V. unlikely

MEAN: 5.089 N=169

THE REPORTER'S REACTIONS

While working on an investigative story on a local bike gang, you've gained the gang members' trust by promising not to reveal their names to anyone. When the story runs, with its details of pimping and drug dealing by the gang, your editor demands to know who your sources are for legal reasons.

Would you supply the names?

YES: 22.0% NO: 78.0%
N=168

The police say you've confirmed their suspicions that the gang is the biggest player on the local drug scene. They want the names of the gang members you quoted in the article.

Would you supply them?

YES: 8.3% NO: 91.7%
N=168

The police go ahead and make some arrests, saying afterwards that they're sure they've stopped the major source of drugs in the city. You've been asked to appear as a Crown witness at the gang members' trials.

Do you?

YES: 25.7% NO: 74.3%
N=168

The judge has threatened you with contempt of court if you don't identify the gang members you wrote about.

Do you give their names?

YES: 27.7% NO: 72.3%
N=168

THE REPORTER'S DECISIONS

Below is a list of things that might affect the way you make decisions like the ones asked for in the previous questions. Please rank their influence by putting a 1 beside the most important, 2 beside the next most important, etc. If any have no importance for you, leave the space blank.

MEAN SCORES:**N=**

4.574	opinions you've heard teachers express	129
1.434	your personal system of morality	166
3.072	things you've absorbed from working in a newsroom, at school or outside	152
4.108	ideas you've discussed in ethics classes	130
4.533	other students' or reporters' opinions	135
3.211	the way you were brought up	142
4.297	ideas you've encountered in philosophy or other disciplines	118

+++++

Below is a list of things that affect everyday news judgments. Please rank them in what you believe to be their order of importance, putting a 1 beside the most important, 2 beside the next most important, etc., leaving blank any you consider unimportant

MEAN SCORES:**N=**

1.807	the story's accuracy	166
3.792	the story's potential effect on your audience	154
4.772	the impact of the story on your source	136
5.795	the way the story reflects on you	112
2.924	the public's right to know	158
4.546	protection of privacy	141
2.481	the news value of the story	160

Would you have answered any of these questions differently, say, a year ago?

YES: 49.4% NO: 50.6% N=160

Why? How would your answers have changed?

NO FREEBIES: 2.4%	NEWS VALUES OVER PRINCIPLES: 4.7%
INFLUENCED BY EDITOR: 4.7%	MORE CYNICAL: 12.9%
MORE ETHICAL: 2.4%	PUBLISHED MORE/IMPACT: 4.7%
NO CHANGE REPORTING: 1.2%	LEGAL OBLIGATIONS: 5.9%
MORE PRACTICAL 20.0%	MORE CONCERNED ABOUT IMPACT: 8.2%
NO CHANGE MORAL: 8.2%	DISCUSSIONS CLARIFIED: 10.6%
PROFIT OVER ETHICS: 4.7%	PUBLIC'S RIGHT TO KNOW: 4.7%
NO CLEAR ANSWERS: 2.4%	CONSTANT CHANGE IN FIELD: 1.2%
PUBLIC NOT NEED TO KNOW: 1.2%	

N=85

If you took an ethics course, or are currently taking one, what is your opinion of it?

GOOD BEFORE PROFESSION: 8.0%	NOT WORTH FULL COURSE: 2.7%
EXCELLENT: 20.5%	EXPOSED TO OTHER IDEAS: 10.7%
SHOULD BE MORE: 6.3%	NOT INFLUENTIAL: 5.4%
CAN'T TEACH ETHICS: 6.3%	UNREALISTIC: 15.2%
USELESS: 8.9%	HELP DEFINE OWN ETHICS: 4.5%
OTHERS HELP MORE: 1.8%	COULD BE BETTER: 2.7%
IRRELEVANT: 4.5%	MADE YOU THINK: 2.7%

N=112

If your school doesn't offer an ethics course, would you like to see one?

YES: 73.5% NO: 26.5% N=83

Why or why not?

EXPOSE TO OTHER IDEAS: 13.8%	GIVE GUIDELINES: 7.7%
ESSENTIAL TO TRAINING: 15.4%	REPORTERS MUST LEARN: 10.8%
BEFORE REAL WORLD: 10.8%	CAN'T TEACH ETHICS: 12.3%
PROF WILL IMPOSE VIEWS: 4.6%	OTHER COURSES DEAL WITH FINE: 7.7%
NOT WORTH WHOLE COURSE: 3.1%	FIELD CHANGES TOO MUCH: 1.5%
ETHICS IRRELEVANT: 1.5%	SHOULD BE LEARNED IN LIFE: 1.5%

N=65

Have you ever run into something you considered an ethical dilemma, either as a student or during an internship or summer job?

YES: 62.1% NO: 37.9% N=153

If yes, could you describe it and your decision briefly?

FREEBIES: 9.9%	SOURCE PRESSURE/REVIEW: 9.9%
PROTECT SOURCE'S FEELINGS: 11.1%	CHOICE OF LEAD: 1.2%
THREAT TO OBJECTIVITY: 1.2%	SOURCE ANONYMITY: 2.5%
FAKING: 2.5%	UNCHECKED INFO: 2.5%
TAPING UNAWARE SOURCE: 3.7%	ENCOUNTER CONSTANTLY: 4.9%
SELF-MISREPRESENTATION: 7.4%	USE OF INFO: 14.8%
SMALL TOWN: 4.9%	PEERS' ACTIONS: 4.9%
QUOTATIONS: 4.9%	I M P A C T O N
	SOURCE/COMMUNITY: 2.5%
CONFLICT OF INTEREST: 4.9%	PRIVACY: 1.2%
NOTHING SERIOUS: 1.2%	OBEYING EDITOR/PUBLISHER: 1.2%

N=81

AGE: 17-20: 5.4% 21-23: 47.6% 24-25: 24.4% over 25:
22.6%

N=168

SEX: F: 56.0% M: 44.0

N=166

SCHOOL: Concordia: 3.6% Western: 14.2% Laval: 2.4%
Regina: 3.6% King's: 3.6% UQAM: 11.2%
Carleton: 43.2 Ryerson: 18.3%

N=169

YEAR: third: 21.2% fourth: 41.0% master's I: 16.0%
master's II: 21.8%

N=156

PROGRAM TYPE: pass degree: 26.5% honours degree: 36.4%
certificate: 3.1% one-year master's: 17.9%
two-year master's: 16.0%

N=162

If you're a graduate student, in what discipline did you do
your undergraduate degree?

FILM: 3.0%	POLITICAL SCIENCE: 19.4%	ANTHROPOLOGY: 3.0%
JOURNALISM: 10.4%	LAW: 1.5%	BIOCHEMISTRY: 1.5%
SOCIOLOGY: 3.0%	HISTORY: 16.4%	FRENCH: 3.0%
ENGLISH: 14.9%	MASS COMM: 1.5%	ENGLISH/POLI SCI: 3.0%
BIOLOGY: 4.5%	PHILOSOPHY: 6.0%	ARTS: 3.0%
COMMERCE: 1.5%	ECONOMICS: 1.5%	LINGUISTICS: 1.5%
WORK EXPERIENCE: 1.5%		

N=67

FIRST LANGUAGE: English: 76.8% French: 16.7% Other: 6.5%
N=168

Are you in a joint degree or double major program?

YES: 10.7% NO: 89.3%

N=159

If you answered yes, what are your majors?

POLITICAL SCIENCE: 29.4% FRENCH: 5.9% CANADIAN STUDIES:

11.8%

ENGLISH: 41.2%

MASS COMM: 11.8%

N=17

PREFERRED FIELD: newspaper: 42.1% (18.8%) TV: 15.7%
(12.5%)

radio: 11.3% (28.1%) magazine: 20.1%
(15.6%) public relations: 5.0% (15.6%)
fiction writing: 5.7% (9.4%)

(SECOND CHOICE) N=159 (N=32)

Have you ever had work experience, i.e. an internship or summer job, in journalism?

YES: 81.0% NO: 19.0% N=163

If yes, in what field? newspaper: 46.2% (5.6%) TV: 11.7%
(13.9%) radio: 19.0% (38.9%)

magazine: 7.3% (22.2%)

public relations: 4.4% (17.5%)

(SECOND CHOICE) N=137 (N=36)

For how long?
28.5%

one week: 1.5% two weeks to four weeks:

one month to five months: 43.1%

six months to one year: 9.5%

more than one year: 17.5%

N=137

How important was religion in your upbringing?

IMPORTANT: 39.0% MODERATE: 10.1% UNIMPORTANT: 50.3%
AS MORAL SYSTEM: 0.6%

N=159

How important is religion to you now?

IMPORTANT: 26.8%

UNIMPORTANT: 73.2%

N=157

APPENDIX C
Work experience

I	Yes Mean	No Mean	N
Wife beater	5.8538	5.7419	161
Free tickets	4.9160	4.4839	162
Call councillor	6.2197	6.3548	163
Nazi officer	6.6818	5.8065	163
Toxic dumping	8.4885	7.6452	162
Fire photo	5.9297	6.6000	158
Gay candidate	8.4242	8.6774	163
Drunk editor	5.1364	5.0000	163

II	% Yes	% No	% Yes	% No	N
Names to editor	25.0	75.0	9.7	90.3	163
Names to police	9.1	90.9	6.5	93.5	163
Appear as Crown witness	26.2	73.8	22.6	77.4	161
Avoid contempt charge	28.5	71.5	26.7	73.3	160

III	Rank	Mean	Rank	Mean	N
Teachers' opinions	7	4.5490	6	4.6366	124
Personal moral system	1	1.4846	1	1.3000	160
Newsroom	2	2.9512	2	3.2500	147
Ethics class	4	4.2941	3	3.3043	125
Others' opinions	6	4.4352	7	4.8182	130
Upbringing	3	3.1081	4	3.6296	138
Other disciplines	5	4.3723	5	4.1053	113

Accuracy	1	1.8062	1	1.9032	149
Impact on audience	4	3.9000	4	3.5172	131
Effect on source	6	4.8519	6	4.5217	109
Reflection on you	7	5.8068	7	5.7143	154
Public's right to know	3	2.9120	3	2.8621	137
Protection of privacy	5	4.5182	5	4.5185	154
News value	2	2.4560	2	2.5172	154

IV	% Yes	% No	% Yes	% No	N
Views changed in past year	51.6	48.4	36.7	63.3	154
Like to see ethics course	70.3	29.7	80.0	20.0	79
Had ethical dilemma	67.8	32.2	34.6	65.4	147

APPENDIX D
Language

I
Wife beater
Free tickets
Call councillor
Nazi officer
Toxic dumping
Fire photo
Gay candidate
Drunk editor

English Mean		French Mean		N
5.8819		5.9630		165
4.9141		4.6786		167
6.1860		6.6429		168
6.4729		6.6071		168
8.8295		6.5556		167
6.1680		5.3571		163
8.4264		9.2143		168
5.1240		5.1786		168

II
Names to editor
Names to police
Appear as Crown witness
Avoid contempt charge

% Yes	% No	% Yes	% No	N
22.7	77.3	10.7	77.3	167
8.6	91.4	3.6	91.4	167
29.9	70.1	14.3	70.1	166
33.1	66.9	11.1	66.9	165

III
Teachers' opinions
Personal moral system
Newsroom
Ethics class
Others' opinions
Upbringing
Other disciplines

Rank	Mean	Rank	Mean	N
7	4.6214	6	4.5263	129
1	1.3968	1	1.6429	165
2	3.1511	2	2.8000	152
4	4.2157	3	3.4286	130
6	4.5093	7	4.8571	135
3	3.1518	4	3.8500	142
5	4.2688	5	4.3846	118

Accuracy
Impact on audience
Effect on source
Reflection on you
Public's right to know
Protection of privacy
News value

1	1.7381	1	1.9643	165
4	3.7797	4	3.8400	153
6	4.8879	6	4.5500	135
7	5.9556	7	5.1176	112
3	3.0744	3	2.5769	158
5	4.6909	5	4.1364	141
2	2.5161	2	2.4167	159

IV
Views changed in past year
Like to see ethics course
Had ethical dilemma

% Yes	% No	% Yes	% No	N
45.1	54.9	74.1	25.9	159
71.2	28.8	77.8	22.2	83
65.8	34.2	51.9	48.1	152

APPENDIX B
Religion

I	Important	Unimportant	N
	Mean	Mean	
Wife beater	5.8571	5.8750	154
Free tickets	4.6667	4.7895	156
Call councillor	5.9286	6.4000	157
Nazi officer	6.6429	6.5217	157
Toxic dumping	8.3571	8.3421	156
Fire photo	5.9762	6.0982	154
Gay candidate	7.7381	8.6696	157
Drunk editor	4.7857	5.0957	157

II	% Yes	% No	% Yes	% No	N
Names to editor	11.9	88.1	25.4	74.6	156
Names to police	9.5	90.5	7.9	92.1	156
Appear as Crown witness	30.0	70.0	25.2	74.8	155
Avoid contempt charge	36.6	63.4	25.7	74.3	154

III	Rank	Mean	Rank	Mean	N
Teachers' opinions	7	4.7500	7	4.4545	120
Personal moral system	1	1.1707	1	1.5752	154
Newsroom	3	3.2222	2	2.9905	141
Ethics class	4	4.2727	4	4.0337	122
Others' opinions	6	4.5588	6	4.4457	126
Upbringing	2	2.9167	3	3.3229	132
Other disciplines	5	4.4444	5	4.2716	108

Accuracy	1	1.7436	1	1.8435	154
Impact on audience	4	3.7632	4	3.8269	142
Effect on source	6	4.9688	6	4.6989	125
Reflection on you	7	6.0800	7	5.7375	105
Public's right to know	3	2.9737	3	2.8532	147
Protection of privacy	5	4.8710	5	4.4510	133
News value	2	2.4103	2	2.4312	140

IV	% Yes	% No	% Yes	% No	N
Views changed in past year	59.0	41.0	46.4	53.6	149
Like to see ethics course	85.0	15.0	70.2	29.8	77
Had ethical dilemma	64.9	35.1	59.6	40.4	141

APPENDIX F
Length of work experience

I	< 6 Months	> 6 Months	N
	Mean	Mean	
Wife beater	5.9691	5.7778	133
Free tickets	4.7423	5.4054	134
Call councillor	6.0510	6.7568	135
Nazi officer	6.9286	6.1351	135
Toxic dumping	8.6186	8.0000	134
Fire photo	6.0211	5.8889	131
Gay candidate	8.5306	8.2703	135
Drunk editor	5.4898	4.2162	135

II	% Yes	% No	% Yes	% No	N
Names to editor	27.6	72.4	18.9	81.1	135
Names to police	8.2	91.8	10.8	89.2	135
Appear as Crown witness	24.7	75.3	30.6	69.4	133
Avoid contempt charge	32.3	67.7	18.9	81.1	133

III	Rank	Mean	Rank	Mean	N
Teachers' opinions	7	4.4937	7	4.7407	106
Personal moral system	1	1.4375	1	1.5405	133
Newsroom	2	2.9780	2	2.8824	125
Ethics class	4	4.2740	4	4.2333	103
Others' opinions	6	4.4268	6	4.4828	111
Upbringing	3	3.1429	3	3.3000	114
Other disciplines	5	4.3944	5	4.3462	97

Accuracy	1	1.7604	1	1.8056	132
Impact on audience	4	3.9551	4	3.6471	123
Effect on source	6	4.7619	6	4.8889	111
Reflection on you	7	5.7910	7	6.0000	91
Public's right to know	3	3.1277	3	2.6061	127
Protection of privacy	5	4.6667	5	4.1379	113
News value	2	2.4632	2	2.4545	128

IV	% Yes	% No	% res	% No	N
Views changed in past year	53.8	46.2	44.1	55.9	127
Like to see ethics course	72.3	27.7	71.4	28.6	68
Had ethical dilemma	67.0	33.0	65.6	34.4	123

APPENDIX G
Gender

I
Wife beater
Free tickets
Call councillor
Nazi officer
Toxic dumping
Fire photo
Gay candidate
Drunk editor

Female		Male		
Mean		Mean		N
5.6333		6.0548		163
5.1087		4.5479		165
6.6344		5.7671		166
6.2473		6.8356		166
8.4565		8.3151		165
5.8764		6.1806		161
8.6237		8.2877		165
5.2043		5.0137		166

II
Names to editor
Names to police
Appear as Crown witness
Avoid contempt charge

% Yes	% No	% Yes	% No	N
19.6	80.4	24.7	75.3	165
9.8	90.2	6.8	93.2	165
27.5	72.5	23.3	76.7	164
33.0	67.0	22.2	77.8	163

III
Teachers' opinions
Personal moral system
Newsroom
Ethics class
Others' opinions
Upbringing
Other disciplines

Rank	Mean	Rank	Mean	N
7	4.7027	5	4.3774	127
1	1.3656	1	1.5000	163
2	2.8989	3	3.2951	150
4	3.8378	7	4.5926	128
6	4.6800	4	4.3103	133
3	3.1538	2	3.2097	140
5	4.2258	6	4.4182	117

Accuracy
Impact on audience
Effect on source
Reflection on you
Public's right to know
Protection of privacy
News value

1	1.7582	1	1.8750	163
4	3.8929	4	3.6119	151
6	4.8986	6	4.6406	133
7	5.8333	7	5.7647	111
3	2.7978	3	3.1194	156
5	4.5200	5	4.5938	139
2	2.4432	2	2.5217	157

IV
Views changed in past year
Like to see ethics course
Had ethical dilemma

% Yes	% No	% Yes	% No	N
47.8	52.2	50.7	49.3	157
70.6	29.4	77.4	22.6	82
61.0	39.0	61.8	38.2	156

APPENDIX H
Desire for ethics course

I	Yes	No	
	Mean	Mean	N
Wife beater	6.1667	5.8095	81
Free tickets	4.6885	4.5455	83
Call councillor	6.4426	4.9091	83
Nazi officer	6.1803	7.2273	83
Toxic dumping	8.0984	8.7727	83
Fire photo	6.4211	6.0000	79
Gay candidate	8.3770	8.1818	83
Drunk editor	5.1475	5.3182	83

II	% Yes	% No	% Yes	% No	N
Names to editor	18.3	81.7	22.7	77.3	82
Names to police	8.3	91.7	9.1	90.9	82
Appear as Crown witness	28.3	71.7	22.7	77.3	82
Avoid contempt charge	33.9	66.1	36.4	63.6	81

III	Rank	Mean	Rank	Mean	N
Teachers' opinions	5	4.4074	6	4.0769	67
Personal moral system	1	1.3390	1	1.4545	81
Newsroom	3	3.4434	3	3.1429	74
Ethics class	4	4.0200	5	3.9167	62
Others' opinions	7	4.9020	7	4.3684	70
Upbringing	2	3.3860	2	2.8824	74
Other disciplines	6	4.4167	4	3.8000	63

Accuracy	1	1.8475	1	1.5909	81
Impact on audience	4	3.3570	5	4.2857	77
Effect on source	6	4.9400	6	4.8500	70
Reflection on you	7	5.5625	7	6.3571	62
Public's right to know	3	3.0862	2	2.7619	79
Protection of privacy	5	4.7885	4	4.0952	73
News value	2	2.2203	3	3.1579	78

IV	% Yes	% No	% Yes	% No	N
Views changed in past year	45.8	54.2	33.3	66.7	80
Had ethical dilemma	64.9	35.1	52.4	47.6	78

APPENDIX I
Year

I	III	IV	M1	M2	N
	Mean	Mean	Mean	Mean	
Wife beater	5.4545	5.8387	6.1600	5.8529	154
Free tickets	4.2121	4.4844	3.6800	7.0606	155
Call councillor	6.3333	5.9375	6.0000	7.1176	156
Nazi officer	6.0606	6.5469	6.8400	6.1765	156
Toxic dumping	7.6667	8.4375	8.6400	9.0909	155
Fire photo	6.4688	6.3770	4.6800	6.3939	151
Gay candidate	8.5455	8.2813	8.8400	8.3824	156
Drunk editor	5.0000	5.1875	4.4400	5.3529	156

II	% Yes	% No	% Yes	% No	% Yes	% No	% Yes	% No	N
Names to editor	6.1	93.9	19.0	81.0	36.0	64.0	32.4	67.6	155
Names to police	6.1	93.9	3.2	96.8	20.0	80.0	14.7	85.3	155
Crown witness	15.2	84.8	21.9	78.1	48.0	52.0	31.3	68.8	154
Avoid charge	18.8	81.3	2.0	66.7	40.0	60.0	24.2	75.8	153

III	Rank	Mean	Rank	Mean	Rank	Mean	Rank	Mean	N
Teachers' opinions	6	4.2609	6	4.5957	6	4.5909	7	4.8889	119
Personal morality	1	1.4688	1	1.3968	1	1.4167	1	1.5000	153
Newsroom	5	2.8966	2	3.0333	2	2.8182	3	3.2903	142
Ethics class	3	3.4167	3	3.8511	5	4.9545	5	4.5185	120
Others' opinions	7	4.6667	7	4.6538	3	3.7500	6	4.7241	126
Upbringing	4	3.7000	4	3.3051	7	2.8750	2	2.7500	131
Other disciplines	5	4.0476	5	4.6047	4	4.4762	4	4.1852	112

Accuracy	1	2.0606	1	1.8254	1	1.5000	1	1.8182	153
Impact on audience	4	3.7931	4	3.5667	4	3.9130	4	3.8065	143
Effect on source	6	4.4167	6	5.0800	6	4.4091	6	4.7667	126
Reflection on you	7	5.5789	7	5.8837	7	6.3684	7	5.6522	104
Public's right to know	3	2.5806	3	2.8065	3	3.3043	3	3.2000	146
Protection of privacy	5	4.3793	5	4.8200	5	4.2609	5	4.6207	131
News value	2	2.5455	2	2.4754	2	2.7917	2	2.0968	149

IV	% Yes	% No	% Yes	% No	% Yes	% No	% Yes	% No	N
Changed views	48.4	51.6	32.8	67.2	73.9	26.1	56.3	43.8	147
Want ethics course	91.7	8.3	63.0	37.0	83.3	16.7	87.5	12.5	80
Had ethical dilemma	42.9	57.1	60.0	40.0	81.8	18.2	75.0	25.0	142

APPENDIX J

Proposed syllabus for a course in ethics and journalism

*NB: The readings listed for each week cover a range of opinions, and are intended to represent a pool from which the instructor may draw in setting up a reading list for an ethics course. By no means is it intended that students should be required to read all material listed below.

Week 1 -- Introduction

-discussion of the basic goals of the course:

- (1) to provide students with tools to make ethically defensible decisions as they practise journalism
- (2) to help students recognize ethical problems
- (3) to familiarize students with some classical ethical theories and informal reasoning techniques

Week 2 -- Ethical Theories I

(a) ethical egoism:

-Regis Jr., Edward. "What is Ethical Egoism?" Ethics. Vol 91 1980-81 50-62

-Melden, A.I. Ethical Theories: A Book of Readings. Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall. 1967 218-231 (Hobbes)

(b) utilitarianism:

-Melden 312-316 (Hume), 367-390 (Bentham), 391-434 (Mill)

-Christians, Clifford, et. al. Media Ethics: Cases and Moral Reasoning. New York: Longman. 1983 12-14 "Mill's Principle of Utility"

-Lambeth, Edmund. Committed Journalism: An Ethic for the Profession. Bloomington: Indiana University Press. 1986 14-17 (teleological ethics)

-to consider:

- is ethical egoism a viable theory for responsible journalists?
- what are the merits and flaws of utilitarian theory, especially as it relates to journalism?

Week 3 -- Ethical Theories II

(a) categorical imperative

-Kant, Immanuel. Grounding for the Metaphysics of Morals. Indianapolis: Hackett. 1981 1-19

-Christians et. al. 11-12 "Kant's Categorical Imperative"

(b) justice theory/veil of ignorance

- Rawls, John. A Theory of Justice. Cambridge: Harvard University Press. 1971 11-22
- Christians et. al. 14-16 "Rawls' Veil of Ignorance"
- Lambeth 17-26 (deontological ethics)
- to consider:
 - is the categorical imperative a useful tool for journalists when evaluating the ethics of their behaviour?
 - is the veil of ignorance a better or worse theory?

Week 4 -- Logical Fallacies: Ethics = Objectivity?

- (a) recognizing the major fallacies and avoiding them in your own reasoning
 - Acock, Malcolm. Informal Logic Examples and Exercises. Belmont: Wadsworth 1985 199-201, 213-214, 223-224, 233-235
- (b) is ethical journalism anything more than fair, accurate reporting?
 - Merrill, John C. "Is Ethical Journalism Simply Objective Reporting?" Journalism Quarterly. 62(2) 391-393
 - Mills, Rilla Dean. "Newspaper Ethics: A Qualitative Study." Journalism Quarterly. 60(4) 589-594
- to consider:
 - would fair reporting be ethical?
 - what ethical dimensions does the "objectivity = ethics" school of thought not take into account?

Week 5 -- Codes of Ethics

- Ethics and Policies. Ottawa: Ottawa Citizen. 1991
- Meyer, Philip. Ethical Journalism. New York: Longman. 1987 Chapter 2
- Rivers, William L. and Cleve Mathews. Ethics for the Media. Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall. 1988 Chapter 13, Appendix C, D (radio & TV codes)
- Desbarats, Peter. Guide to Canadian News Media. Toronto: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich. 1990 177-183
- Cumming, Carman. "Ethics -- no easy answers." Content. May/June 1988 8-9
- Breed, Warren. "Social Control in the Newsroom." Social Forces. 33(4) 326-335
- Pritchard, David and Madelyn Peroni Morgan. "Impact of Ethics Codes on Judgments By Journalists: A Natural Experiment." Journalism Quarterly. 66(4) 934-941
- Martin, C. June. "The case of the lost ethic: Making moral decisions." Journalism Educator. 43(1) 11-14
- Opitz, Edmund A. "Instinct and Ethics." in Ethics and the Press: Readings in Mass Media Morality. John C. Merrill and Ralph D. Barney, eds. New York: Hastings House 1975
- to consider:
 - there are written and unwritten codes of ethics -- the latter may be more stringent

- is it possible to come up with a useful code or set of guidelines?
- do codes promote ethical journalism?

Week 6 -- The Ethics of Journalistic Technique

- Cunningham, Richard. "Doctoring quotes." The Quill. March 1988 7
- Olen, Jeffrey. Ethics in Journalism. Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall. 1988 115-119
- Petrow, Richard. "Gatekeeper exercises are effective, revealing, easy to construct." Journalism Educator. Autumn 1982 10-11, 41
- to consider:
 - is the choice of a lead an ethical choice?
 - what about cleaning up quotations, or reasks and reaction shots?
 - is there such a thing as a neutral technique?

Week 7 -- Deception

- Bok, Sissela. Lying: Moral Choice in Public and Private Life. New York: Vintage Books. 1978 18-33
- Lambeth 47-mid 50
- Olen 74-81
- Talbot, Frederick. "Taping on the sly." The Quill. June 1986 43-48
- Cooper, Thomas W. "Hidden Taping: The Arguments For and the Ethics Against." Nieman Reports. 41(2) 21-25, 27
- to consider:
 - is deception ever permissible?
 - when --if ever -- is it okay to conceal your identity or pretend to be someone else?

Week 8 -- Business Pressures; Ethics in a Small Town

- Christians et. al., Chap. 1 case 1
- Lambeth chap. 6
- McGeehan, George B. "My Weekly Seizure." The Quill. December 1984 8-10
- to consider:
 - is ethics only what you can afford?
 - advertiser pressure, esp. in small towns
 - do your ethics change when you know the people involved?
 - if so, does that require you to reevaluate your other ethical choices as if you knew the people?

Week 9 -- Compassion, Taste, Privacy

- Wisnia, Saul E. "Private grief, public exposure." The Quill. July/August 1989 28-30
- Pride, Mike. "A Grieving Concord Repelled By Media Misbehavior." presstime. March 1986 12-14
- Olen 59-72
- Christians et. al. 109-124
- McCulloch, Frank ed. Drawing the Line. Washington: American Society of Newspaper Editors. 1984 58
- television footage and taped items
- to consider:
 - what would the major ethical theories have to say about the issues raised in this class?
 - how valid are "gut feelings" in making ethical decisions?

Week 10 -- Relationships with Sources

- Christians et. al. ch. 3
- McCulloch 81, 83
- Sawatsky, John. "Statement given when being cited for contempt of court." Media Law Casebook. Klaus Pohle, ed. Carleton University. 1987
- Sawatsky, John. "Reasons for Refusing to Divulge Sources." Media Law Casebook. Klaus Pohle, ed. Carleton University. 1987
- Langley, Monica and Lee Levine. "Broken Promises." Columbia Journalism Review. July/August 1988 21-24
- to consider:
 - is it ever permissible to reveal a confidential source's name?
 - what is "off the record?" can you ever use it?
 - under what circumstances should you promise confidentiality?

Week 11-- Freebies

- Ontario Press Council. Press Ethics and Freebies. Ottawa: Ontario Press Council. 1978
- Christians et. al. Chap. 1 case 4
- Alderson, Jeremy Weir. "Confessions of a travel writer." Columbia Journalism Review. July/August 1988 27-28
- to consider:
 - how many considerations are truly ethical and how many concerned with public perceptions?

Week 12 -- Conflict of Interest

- Olen 24-2
- Christians et. al. Chap. 1 cases 2 & 5
- Meyer Chap. 5
- Bailey, Charles W. "Conflicts of Interest: A Matter of Journalistic Ethics." Nieman Reports. 38(3) 40-43

-to consider:

- what part does public relations play?
- is the focus on avoiding appearance of conflict a valid one?
- at what point does community involvement or another potential conflict of interest affect a journalist's ethics?

END

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FIN