



Ethical Gatekeeping

Ethics:

A rational decision-making process based on certain philosophical principles

Gatekeeping and Conflicting Loyalties

Conflicts of Interest

- Conflicts between your loyalty to the tenets of ethical journalism vs. loyalty to your personal needs.
- Conflicts between your loyalty to the tenets of ethical journalism vs. loyalty to your own beliefs and prejudices.
- Conflicts between your loyalty to the tenets of ethical journalism vs. loyalty to your employer.

- Loyalty to your personal needs:
 - Things that improve your life or give you pleasure.
 - Stories that might help a business you've invested in.
 - Stories that might please your significant other.
 - Stories that might please your publisher.

- Loyalty to your own beliefs and prejudices:
 - Stories that run contrary or that support your accepted views of the world.
- > Drop in crime rate:
 - Drop caused by tougher laws and longer prison sentences.
 - Drop caused by better economy and aging population.

- Loyalty to your employer:
 - Stories that might embarrass the your paper or its corporate owner.
 - Stories that might further your publisher's or corporate owner's personal agenda.
 - Stories that will generate advertising or circulation, or might hurt advertising or circulation.

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- The Categorical Imperative**
- absolute ethics
 - no exceptions to the rules
 - > what is right for one is right for all
 - > what is right in one situation is right for all similar situations

**Gatekeeping,
taste,
& offensive materials**

- Offensive Material Checklist:**
- Does the story/photo have news value or is it simply a great news photo?
 - How will the people of my community react to it?
 - Is there a way I can tell the story without offending some people?

- Offensive Material Checklist:**
- Who is being hurt and who is being helped?
 - What good would publication do?
 - Is the story, photo or graphic complete and accurate to the best of my knowledge?
 - How do I feel about the action?

Gatekeeping and Privacy

PRIVACY CHECKLIST

- How important is the information I am seeking? Does the public have a right to know? A need to know? Merely a desire to know?
- What level of protection do individuals involved in the story deserve? How much harm might they receive? Are they involved in the news event by choice or by happenstance?

- How would I feel if I were being subjected to the same scrutiny?
- What can I do to minimize the privacy invasion and the harm? Can I broaden the focus of the story by including more "victims," thereby minimizing harm to a select few? Can I postpone the story without significantly jeopardizing information to the public?

- In making the decision to invade privacy, do I need to talk to others in order to gain more perspective?
- Should I be focusing more on the system failure and the big-issue picture as opposed to focusing intensely on individuals?
- Can I clearly and fully justify my thinking and decision? To those directly affected? To the public?

libelous:

Michael Jackson arrested for molesting boy

OK:

Michael Jackson arrested in boy's molestation

libelous:

Angry worker kills 3 at post office

OK:

3 killed in shooting at post office

<http://commfaculty.fullerton.edu/tclanin/comm332/comm332.html>