

#McDStories: In 2012 McDonald's was hoping to start a social media conversation. The company asked Twitter users to share their stories about eating at McDonald's restaurants. Instead of feel-good stories, users responded negatively. Twitter users made jokes about diabetes, about how the food never seems to go bad or how horrible kitchen conditions were at restaurants. **Why didn't the campaign work? How do you think McDonald's recovered?**

#myNYPD: Following a similar concept to the previous example, the New York Police Department's public relations department decided to ask people to share their stories. Instead of positive stories, people responded with pictures of alleged police brutality. **Why was the campaign unsuccessful? What could have been done differently?**

"The Family Issue(s)" Ebony cover: Ebony Magazine published a story about Bill Cosby and his fictional television family the Huxtables for its Nov. 2015 issue. The cover shows a photo of the iconic family with piece of broken glass overlaid on Cosby's face. Ebony readers have responded two very different ways: Some thanking the magazine for bringing sexual assault to the forefront and inviting conversation, others calling it libel, saying Cosby has not been convicted. The discussion has been so vast that *#NotBuyingEbony* became a trending hashtag. **Do you think Ebony should have ran the cover? Why or why not? Was in, as the editor has said, in the best interest of journalism? Or was it done for shock value?**

"NYMed" and death on television: Mark Chanko died at a New York hospital in 2011 after being hit by a sanitation truck. More than a year later his widow was watching television in the early hours of the morning and saw him die again, on television. His death was recorded as part of Dr. Mehmet Oz's "NYMed" show. Chanko's wife, Anita, hadn't given permission for his image to be used. So his face was blurred. But the final moments of his life still aired on television. **Do you think "NYMed" should have ran the footage of Chanko's death? What do you think the widow did? Would you be upset if it was your family member?**

NBC doctor breaks quarantine: In 2014, NBC News Chief Medical Editor Dr. Nancy Snyderman broke a voluntarily Ebola quarantine after visiting Liberia for a story. She was supposed to stay at home for a specified period. She was seen outside a restaurant in New Jersey. NBC and Snyderman apologized to members of the public. **As a member of the media, did Snyderman practice good ethics? Should she have been fired for violating the quarantine? If it was "voluntary," why did NBC apologize?**

Ray Rice coverage: In 2014, TMZ release video of National Football League quarterback Ray Rice was assaulting his then girlfriend, now wife in an incident on an elevator. Members of the media got caught up in the coverage too. ESPN analyst Stephen Smith said, on air, that women “provoke” that sort of assault. He said he wanted to see the “elements of provocation” for an assault. He was later suspended. **Do you think his suspension was warranted? It is ever OK to blame the victim? Do you think Smith should have been fired?**

Airing an address: Much drama surrounded the death of teenager Michael Brown at the hands of Ferguson police officer Darren Wilson. St. Louis television station KSDK, in its reporting on the officer, showed where Wilson lived. The station later apologized, but the location had already aired. **Is the station liable if something happens to him? Is an apology enough? Do members of the public have the right to know where the police officer who fired the shot that killed Brown lives?**

Reporting a celebrity suicide: Robin Williams’ suicide in Northern California shook the entertainment industry across the country. News outlets began reporting on it immediately. In general, news stations choose not to report on suicide, yet Williams’ death was all over the news for weeks. Many in the industry were angered at Williams, one Fox reporter even called him a “coward” on air. **Is it ever OK to report on suicide? Did Williams’ celebrity status make it necessary? Is it ever OK to belittle someone who has died on air?**

“A Rape on Campus” and Rolling Stone: In late 2014, Rolling Stone Magazine published a story titled “A Rape on Campus.” In it, the writer centers her narrative around one central victim who is called “Jackie.” The story contains graphic details of Jackie’s alleged rape by fraternity members at the University of Virginia. After publication, critics began tearing apart the story. When the magazine investigated, it found that many elements had not been fact checked. The writer had trusted the word of “Jackie.” **Should a reporter take a source at her word? Should you ever question a victim to give you more information to verify an attack?**

He’s not in rehab: In September, In Touch magazine reported that country singer Blake Shelton “finally hit rock bottom.” A story alleged that Shelton’s drinking and womanizing are what brought upon the demise of his marriage from Miranda Lambert. Shelton’s representatives have now filed a lawsuit against In Touch, alleging – of many things – that no one was ever contacted to provide a statement. Instead the reporting relied on anonymous sources. **Is it OK to rely on anonymous sources? If you were in Shelton’s position, would you sue? Is In Touch magazine a trustworthy source?**

No show interview or no interview at all: NewsRadio 106.7 in Atlanta recently fired host Steve McCoy for airing footage of an audio interview done with Donald Trump that he was trying to pass off as new. McCoy said on air that he wasn't allowed to ask Trump questions involving recent policies. Then he aired the old, canned interview. He was suspended and then fired. **Should McCoy have said the interview was old? Were his bosses right to fire him? Why do you think he aired the old interview?**

PETA's not so subtle push: People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) is a well-known non-profit organization that protects animal rights – sometimes with a lot of controversy. Case in point: The 2003 “Holocaust on Your Plate” campaign that compared the killing of animals to the murder of 6 million Jews during World War II. PETA published large, including some full human scale, images comparing cows behind fences with Holocaust victims behind fences. There was much backlash. **What do you think happened to PETA? Do you think the organization wanted a certain reaction? It is ever OK to use imagery of Holocaust victims in mass communication?**

The confession: John Mark Karr was arrested in Thailand after email correspondences with Michael Tracey, a journalism professor at the University of Colorado. In emails to Tracey, Karr had admitted to the 1996 killing of Jon Benet Ramsey at her home. Tracey had been corresponding with Carr for years before he turned over information to authorities. Karr was later cleared of the charged. **Should Tracey have provided the police information from Karr? Was it his responsibility to do so? Is it ever ok to break confidence with a source and report information that is supposed to be private?**

DUI policy different based on individual: A small newspaper with a circulation of only 5,700 in Kentucky had a policy of publishing the photos of DUI offenders after arrest. The newspaper often ran the photos, which usually brought anger from those who had been arrested. The photos were typically run inside the newspaper. The editor, though, offered special treatment only once: when an elected official was arrested for his second DUI in five years. The editor decided to run the photo with a story about the official on the front page instead of burying it in the newspaper. **Should a newspaper be publishing photos of DUI offenders? Is it ever OK to single one out? If you were convicted of a DUI, would you want your information broadcast to your community? Do you have the right to tell the newspaper not to publish?**

Knowing the results, but still asking for imagery: In 2005, caricatures of the Prophet Muhammed were initially published and didn't cause a stir. In 2006, when the images were republished, Muslim leaders called for action and the resulting media storm set off riots in the Islamic world. People were killed. Embassies burned. The newspaper responsible for publishing the images then asked people to send in their own drawings of the Prophet Muhammed, saying it was time to confront stigmas otherwise “the terrorists will have won.” **Is it ever OK to publish images of a religious icon who is not supposed to have a likeness published? If the images had initially set off a storm, why would the newspaper push the envelope and ask for people to draw their own?**

A Congressman's past: In 2004 David Wu, a Democratic member of the U.S. Congress, is up for re-election to his fourth term, but had been accused by an ex-girlfriend of a sexual assault some 28 years previously. Criminal charges never were filed, and neither the congressman nor his accuser wanted to discuss the case. **Is there a story here? Should the newspaper publish a story about Wu and his accuser that basically says no one wants to talk? Is it ethical to publish this story if you only have a police report as a source?**

Music pirate attack: Pop-rock band The Ting Tings' new album was leaked online almost a month before the official release. The result was that the band's record label lost hundreds of thousands of dollars because fans were downloading the music illegally instead of waiting to purchase it. In an article after the leak, magazines "Rolling Stone" and "Billboard" do articles that are essentially called "how to" guides for pirating. **Is it ethical to show readers or viewers how to break the law? Should the magazines have had articles about pirating that includes info on how to pirate? Should the magazines be held responsible for a lowering of profits as a result?**

Not so sure catches: The newsmagazine Dateline teamed up with a company called Perverted Justice to lure men into conversations with alleged underage victims. Members of the Perverted Justice team would talk to men online and then arrange a meeting. Once the men showed up, Chris Hansen from Dateline would appear and ask the men why they were meeting underage children. After the interview, the men were often arrested for solicitation of minors, child abuse and other charges. One man who engaged with an undercover Perverted Justice worker, but never showed up to the meeting, killed himself when police showed up at his doorstep. His family later sued NBC and Perverted Justice. **Is this sort of investigative reporting ethical? Is it entrapment? Are Dateline and Perverted Justice responsible for the man's death?**

A media foul: The Chicago Cubs in 2003 were five outs from advancing to the World Series when a 26-year-old fan tried to grab a foul ball, preventing outfielder Moises Alou from catching it. The man who deflected the ball was escorted by security guards from Wrigley Field after he was threatened and cursed by angry fans and pelted with beer and debris. The fan's identity was unknown. He became recognizable through televised replays as the young baby-faced man in glasses, a Cubs baseball cap and earphones who bobbled the ball and was blamed for costing the Cubs a trip to the World Series. **Should the media have identified the man? Was he in danger if they did? Is it anyone's business who he is? If you were an editor, would you run his name?**

The boss's orders: Members of the Eagles rock band came to Denver during the 2004 campaign season to play a fundraising concert for U.S. Senate candidate Democrat Ken Salazar. Rocky Mountain News editor John Temple told his staff that no one should go to the concert because it would be viewed as an endorsement from the newspaper or a conflict of interest. **Does an editor have the right to tell his staff not to attend an event? Would you have gone to the concert (consider it was a more relevant band you enjoyed)? Do your actions outside of work matter at work?**

A name game: On Oct. 1, Chris Harper-Mercer shot and killed nine people at Umpqua Community College in Roseburg, Ore. After the shooting, local sheriff John Hanlin said he would not be saying the shooter's name because Harper-Mercer likely wanted publicity for the "cowardly act" and Hanlin would not give it to him. Media organizations followed suit, many citing Hanlin and saying the shooter would not be named because he did the act for notoriety. **Are journalists responsible for providing the shooter's name if they know it? Would you air the shooter's name? Do you think it's unethical to not do so? Why or why not?**

The photographer and the fire: Earlier this year, long-time Sacramento Bee photography Bryan Patrick was fired for manipulating a photograph he submitted for award consideration. In his initial photograph, which was submitted to the Associated Press, Patrick frames a man with a house still burning behind him. There are subtle hints of fire, including a few active spots. The original photo shows the fire less than the manipulated image. Simply put, Patrick made the fire look more dangerous than it was. The doctored image never ran in print. **If you were an editor, would you fire Patrick? What if you found out he had done this previously? Is it ever OK to manipulate an image?**

Never before seen ... or not: Tapes of O.J. Simpson's deposition recently came to light, with ABC News' magazine hour "20/20" citing the playing of them as "exclusive" in their teases. Anchor Elizabeth Vargas even said that it was "hard to believe" the tapes had sat for 20 years. The problem is that the tapes had aired, in length, 15 years prior. "Dateline" even called "20/20" out and said it was time to party like it's 1999 – the year "Dateline" aired the tapes. **Should the tapes still be aired if they were in 1999? When should a media company call something "exclusive?" Once the snafu had been discovered, should ABC have issued a retraction?**

The real owner: In Sept. 2014, viewers of KTVA's late news broadcast got a bit of a surprise when broadcast journalist Charlo Greene announced on-air that she was the owner of the pot shop she was covering in a report about legalizing marijuana in Alaska. She then quit on live television, basically saying there was no way for her to continue her work as a journalist. Instead, she'd be devoting her time to marijuana legalization. Greene wasn't proper about her resignation at all. "F#*k it, I quit," she said. KTVA later apologized for the incident. **Should Greene have been reporting the story if she was an ethical reporter? Was her resignation proper? If you were a station manager, what would you have done to Greene?**

Interview comments take stage: In an interview, producer Lee Daniels made comments about how Empire's Terrance Howard, who recently had a domestic violence incident surface, isn't doing anything that "Marlon Brando" or "Sean Penn" didn't do. Penn took offense to the statement, saying it caused "emotional distress." He's now suing Daniels. Court records and police reports show Penn was allegedly abusive to Madonna when the two were married. **Does Penn have a case against Daniels? Was Daniels out of line in his comment? Is it ever OK to make light of domestic violence?**

Perpetuating the hoax rumor: On Aug. 26, Alison Parker and Adam Ward were killed during a live television broadcast in Virginia. Former co-worker Vester Lee Flanagan shot the two. On Aug. 30, two Missouri radio hosts were suspended when they insinuated that the shooting was an elaborate hoax set up to push gun legislation in Virginia. The station where the two radio announcers worked made a public apology. The two then returned to work. **Was this a friable offense? Should the radio announcers have apologized themselves? Why would they say something like that?**

Misleading memories: NBC news anchor Brian Williams was suspended in early 2015 when he was busted by a group of veterans who said he fabricated a 2003 story about being in a helicopter hit by a RPG during the invasion of Iraq. Williams later apologized for the incident. He was suspended for six months, returning to air in Sept. 2015, but losing his lead anchor position to Lester Holt. **Does a journalist lose all credibility when something like this happens? Should Williams have been fired? If you were in charge, would you have let Williams go?**

No photos to show impact of photography: In early September, Germany's largest newspaper *Bild* published images for a toddler who had drowned during the Syrian refugee crisis, lying lifeless on a beach. *Bild* was immediately criticized for including the image, viewers saying it was too graphic and inappropriate. The next day, *Bild* ran a front page with all the photos grayed out to show the power of photography. **Should *Bild* have ran the image of the dead boy? Was the criticism appropriate? Was the response for the next day's issue a mature response (i.e. the running of an entire front page with no images)?**

Different genders, different analysis: With the 2016 election starting to shape up, news stations are spending a lot of time talking about the candidates, particularly the presidential hopefuls. Hillary Clinton is getting a lot of criticism for her clothing choices. The male candidates aren't. **Is it OK to analyze one candidates clothing and not another's? Is this criticism only because she's a woman? Do you think we would discussing clothing at all if a woman was not in the race?**

Bad comparisons: UK Sun columnist Katie Hopkins said that African "migrants are like cockroaches." In journalism, opinion pieces are often protected because opinion can neither be true nor false. Media critics complained that the analogy went too far. The United Kingdom doesn't have explicit First Amendment protections like the United States does. **Did Hopkins go too far in her comparison? Is it ever right to demean an entire group of people?**

Permission not granted: Alfonzo Cutaia of Buffalo, N.Y. sued the Canadian Broadcast Corporation and CNN after it re-uploaded content he had published on his personal YouTube page of a man yelling in the snow after his car gets stuck. Cutaia was allowing news organizations to play his video, only if it was linked back to his YouTube account so he could take advantage of YouTube's monetization. CBC and CNN, however, took the content without linking back and added the company logos to it. **Did the news stations need permission to use the content? Should Cutaia be awarded money for the use of his video?**

Drawing up controversy: The Sacramento News & Review published a cartoon showing Mayor Kevin Johnson reading the alt-weekly paper with sweat dripping down his head, looking nervous. The cartoon was meant to show Johnson's reaction after allegations of email misuse. The local chapter of the NAACP claims the images are racist. Without admitting wrongdoing, the Sacramento News & Review said it is starting a diversity program to help in decision making of news. **Was the Sacramento News & Review in the wrong? Was the NAACP justified in its claim? Is setting up a "diversity program" an appropriate response?**

Actor vs. no name nobody: Actor James Woods is taking legal action against a Twitter user who only goes by "AL" and uses the Twitter handle "abelisted." The user posted a Tweet that said Woods' is a "cocaine addict." The lawsuit is asking for \$10 million in damages for the actor, saying that the Tweet could potentially cause him to lose jobs. **If no one knows who "abelisted" is, can he still be sued? Will Woods get the \$10 million? Do you think this lawsuit will even get to court?**

34 Patient or not: Dr. Sanjay Gupta is a correspondent for CNN and also a practicing medical doctor. This past summer, information came forth that the name of the girl who Gupta operated on during coverage of the earthquake in Nepal was not an eight-year old CNN had originally reported. Instead the surgery was performed on a 14-year old. The teenager's life was saved in the process. **In this case, did it matter that the story didn't cite the name right? Should it have become a controversy? Was it negligent reporting?**

Losing place in the courthouse: "Newsweek" Magazine was banned from the courtroom during deliberations for the James Holmes trial earlier this summer. Holmes is the shooter responsible for killing 12 people at an Aurora, Colo. theater in 2012. Newsweek editors accepted the punishment and apologized to the court for revealing the juror's identity. **How much information is too much to giveaway during the trial? Why does a jury's identity need to be protected? Should Newsweek have fought the punishment?**

Plans for the weekend?: USA Today published a blurb about a Klu Klux Klan rally as part of a tweet for “What’s going on this weekend?” during July 2015. USA today claimed that Twitter pulled the image as auto fed content, as the post had been set up prior to the time it published. The digital editors apologized for the offense. USA Today removed the tweet and apologized. **Should USA Today have been more responsible for the content posted on the Twitter feed? Is an apology enough? What actions should the newspaper take so that it never happens again?**

Contacting the witness to a crime: On Oct. 1, 2015, a man walked on to the Umpqua Community College campus near Roseburg, Oregon and fatally shot a professor and eight students. The media coverage that followed consisted of representatives for different broadcast outlets (CNN and NBC included) reaching out via Twitter to people who were there. The representatives were asking to be followed so they might direct message the person at the scene. **Is this ethical? If a person is tweeting out information, does he or she have a right to privacy?**

Selfie society: After the Paris attacks of November 2015, a Southern California television news anchor was sent to cover the unfolding scene, particularly the story of a student from the area who had died. Dave Ono tweeted photos of himself on the plane going to Paris with his cameraman. He was called out on social media for making the story about himself, not about the victims. **Was the outrage justified? Is it ever OK to take a selfie while covering a story? Or is it unprofessional?**

Not a serious competitor? In July 2015 the Huffington Post, an online news organization, offered a disclaimer to it’s coverage of Donald Trump’s presidential run: “... we will cover his campaign as part of our entertainment section. Our reason is simple: Trump's campaign is a sideshow. We won't take the bait.” By December 2015, HuffPo founder Ariana Huffington wrote a story saying that Trump and his campaign were an “ugly and dangerous force in American politics” adding that coverage would now be classified as news. **Is it OK for a newspaper to cover any presidential candidate from an entertainment standpoint? Does the first decision (to do so) make HuffPo look bad? Did the news organization do the right thing?**

What nice pants she has: Much of the coverage of the 2016 presidential election has been focused on politics, but in mid 2016, Hillary Clinton’s wardrobe started to get a serious look by major news outlets. In fact, headlines such as “Hillary Clinton’s most fashionable looks” and “The surprising strategy behind Hillary Clinton’s designer wardrobe” offer up recent articles about the presidential candidate. Media critics say this is unacceptable, specifically because little attention is paid to what Clinton’s rivals are wearing. **As a reporter, would you focus on a candidate’s clothes? If the candidate is a woman, does that change your decision? Should it? Why is so much focus being placed on what she’s wearing?**

When the source won't speak: Stockton Mayor Anthony Silva has, on occasion, told *The Record* he will not be answering any of its reporter's questions. His reasoning: *The Record* is a bias newspaper. This isn't a new problem to the industry. In 1965 writer Gay Talese penned a piece called "Frank Sinatra has a cold" after the famed singer declined to be interviewed for an *Esquire* piece because he was under the weather. **Would you publish an article without getting quotes from a main source? Is it OK to write around the person? Is it responsible journalism if you don't get that interview?**

Race as an identifier: Newspapers across the country have different standards that apply when it comes to identifying. Some newspapers, including *The Record* locally, have standards that say in order to identify a person's race – specifically in crime stories where identification is important – at least four other traits must be named (i.e. height estimation, clothing worn, hair color). In Oct. 2016, *The Toronto Star* public editor receive letters with criticism for a few of *The Star's* stories that identified race. The editor responded by saying that the additions of race were necessary to help police, in both cases, find the individual. **Should race be named in newspaper articles? When it is OK? Should there be other alternatives to identifying race?**

When the past catches up: Today show anchor Billy Bush lost his job in Oct. 2016, two weeks after *The Washington Post* put up recordings of him and Donald Trump engaged in what the media is now calling "locker room" conversation. The recording was from a 2005 interview Bush did for entertainment show *Access Hollywood*. **Should a reporter be punished for inappropriate comments made 11 years ago? Was Bush held to a higher standard than Trump? Should he be?**

Too much information: The Toledo Blade got attention for its coverage of the murder of 20-year old Sierah Joughin in mid 2016. Joughin was killed, brutally, while riding her bicycle. The newspaper reported her cause of death, asphyxiation, and mentioned she was "hog tied" among other details. Readers complained that the details were too graphic and would likely serve to re-victimize the family. Do you think details of a murder should be included in a story? Are graphic details relevant? Does a newspaper have a responsibility to protect the public from such imagery?

Prejudicing the jury: In summer 2016, an Australian reporter Krystal Johnson published a story online about a murder trial involving a man who killed his girlfriend. She included information that had not been presented to the jury in the case. Further investigation showed that she lifted some of the content from another news source, then added the prejudicial information in. As a result, the jury for the murder trial was discharged since some members had seen the information. Johnson claims she "forgot" she was reporting on a trial. **Should Johnson be punished? What is the proper punishment here? What could have been done to prevent this sort of mess up?**

Not for publication: In 2015, a writer for The Miami Student newspaper published a piece by a beginning journalism student written for a class. In it, the writer attributed quotes to a hockey team member that were never said, plus the hockey team member said he was never told a story would be published. The article was unpublished and retracted. The editor of the paper has since said the newspaper is rethinking its relationship with publishing class-produced work (the newspaper is not part of a class at Ohio's Miami University. The editor said it also relied on the reporter to tell sources the story would be published. **Do you think the hockey team member regretted what he said and then recanted? Do you think the journalism student was just untrained and didn't know? What do you think the student newspaper should have done before removing the story? Why?**