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Research Paper

Honors: Leadership and IPC

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Ethics Changes Leadership and Communication in Journalism

Section 1

In journalism it is always a journalist’s job to make sure that they understand every angle of a story and a person’s point of view when they are writing a story. All facts must be stated as they were said or written down otherwise the story is misleading. Details must be exact and people must be credited to make an ethical and authentic story. Ethics plays a huge part in journalism as it does in leadership and communication. The problem in the field of journalism is that many journalists encounter a lot of competition with other journalists who are searching for the next groundbreaking story. Which then leads to some journalists who find it difficult to keep their jobs and will do anything to keep them, even break ethical rules to get a groundbreaking story. It can be difficult to write stories or get facts about people and events when interviewing people. Some people find it invasive and don’t trust journalists to get the facts right or to represent their point of view the correct way. How does emotional intelligence affect how editors lead journalists to be ethical and trustworthy in the interview and writing process?

In many classes for my major I have begun to understand the best way to approach each of these different problems. Different genders, cultures and backgrounds change the way a journalist should conduct an interview. The best ways for journalists to get information is through face to face interaction. Interviewing in person makes an interviewee feel that what you will talk about is special and important enough that a journalist wants to meet one on one. Before an interview is conducted there are a few steps an interviewer must do to get ready. An interviewer must do background research of the subject before the interview. It gives them the chance to ask more in-depth questions and find issues that may arise if certain questions are asked and break ethical rules and the trust of the interviewee. At the start of an interview it is always important to ask the interviewee to spell their name out and pronounce their name nicely. This part of the interview is meant to establish trust between the interviewer and interviewee. A small amount of closed ended questions will get the interviewee to open up and then they will be more comfortable to answer the open ended questions in greater detail (Lewis, 2016). As a journalist I know that I look for the story that people would be interested to read, and it can be misleading to some people when I ask questions that may be more personal than they are willing to share. As a future journalist and maybe future editor I must understand how ethics are important to journalism and how to deal with situations when ethics are broken during the time of my leadership position.

Section 2

According to *Psychology Today*, “Emotional intelligence is the ability to identify and manage your own emotions and the emotions of others.” Emotional intelligence states that a person should have a set of three skills to be a competent individual. First, the website states that someone needs “emotional awareness, including the ability to identify your own emotions and those of others” to have competence of emotional intelligence. Second, someone must have “the ability to harness emotions and apply them to tasks like thinking and problems solving.” Lastly, people must have “the ability to manage emotions, including the ability to regulate your own emotions, and the ability to cheer up or calm down another person” (2016). Journalists need emotional intelligence to make sure they are staying on the ethical side of journalism because it not only effects the people that are being interviewed but the interviewer’s reputation, the publication’s reputation and society’s view on journalism. Emotional intelligence is also need to help the interview process be successful. When an interviewer has the knowledge of emotional intelligence they can use those skills to read their interviewee and make sure the interview is going successfully. When an interviewer knows a person’s emotions it can help with knowing what subjects are morally expectable for that person. By knowing their own emotions the interviewer can keep the interview ethical and going in the right direction to create a good story.

Morals and ethics are two different things but can be very similar. “Morals have more to do with a person’s personal perspective on right and wrong, whereas ethics has more of an impact on a society and the people associated with it during the ethical dilemma. Ethics is associated more with a group of people rather than one individual” (Berry, 2008). If ethics aren’t taken seriously in social and cultural situations than trust is lost between human beings from different backgrounds.

In media ethics most journalists are taught how to use ethical reasoning when conducting an interview, writing a story, and reporting the news. One of the main ethical reasoning strategies editors teach is character and virtue ethics. This is the use of “Golden Rule” and “Golden Mean.” The golden mean is finding a middle path for all perspectives and not creating a bias on one perspective. The golden rule pertains to what a person would do if they were in someone else’s shoes and to not judge then before knowing all the facts. These facts are seen from a psychological and social perspective because it is how that individual chooses to think in that moment and also how these group of journalists all know how to respond and act during these social settings. Another ethical reasoning strategy is duty ethics. The main use of duty ethics is the categorical imperative where journalists must not lie about their perspective or the facts that are presented. This view shows that journalist must show multiple points of view for a single situation and must tell the audience what it looks like without holding anything back. Even with a veil of ignorance in place a journalist must find one goal that the audience with take on and be able to put aside differences to learn more about and accept (McIntosh, 2015). Ethics help journalists create their emotional intelligence because it allows journalists to develop their own emotions on topics while delivering the news to the public in an unbiased way. Because of the huge impact ethics has on emotional intelligence and helping editors lead their followers through ethical interviewing and writing ethics connects with the physiological, social, and cultural aspects of leadership. Ethics is how someone can connect to different people from other cultures, how someone can think for their own emotions and ethical views, and how someone can apply their own moral code to social settings.

Overall, “researchers must be mindful of the impact their questioning can have on subjects, especially those who are vulnerable” (Clarke, 2006). If research during interviews is unethical the whole story can be cut and the situation compromised. “Researchers need to address problematic issues by being open and honest,” first, and they also need to take into account every perspective their interviewees give them (Clarke, 2006). If some of the views are missed or misinterpreted the story becomes unethical. “Researchers should allow themselves to be exposed to the observations and sensitivities of participants in order to help increase understanding of the possibilities and problems of conducting qualitative interviews” (Clarke, 2006). Meaning again the interviewers should put themselves in the interviewee’s shoes before coming up with a conclusion about them. By being aware of the other person’s emotions the leader can teach the follower to develop their emotional intelligence further.

Empathetic interviewing helps one to “understand another’s ‘state of mind’ or emotion (Ioannidou, 2008). “Effective empathetic communication enhances the therapeutic effectiveness of the clinician-patient relationship. Appropriate uses of empathy as a communication tool facilitates the interview and increases the efficiency of gathering information (Ioannidou, 2008). With an empathetic view to emotional intelligence in journalism a leader can teach their followers to understand others and get their views to people from different backgrounds. “Emotional intelligence involves the following elements: self-awareness, empathy, handling relationships, managing feelings and motivation. (Ioannidou, 2008). Emotional intelligence is something that can be learned through social situations, cultural differences, and the process of a person’s mind. It is equally important to all aspects of leadership and communication but in journalism the cultural and social aspects stand out the most. Empathy is used in social situations for journalists to use it to conduct successful interviews. Empathy and emotional intelligence are need so an interviewer can connect personally with the interviewee and correctly represent their points of view in the finished publication.

Nowadays, “most of us are privileged to work with clients and colleagues whose religious, ethnic, and economical backgrounds may be substantially different from our own” (Robertson, 2007). To be able to develop understanding in an effective working environment from this perspective university programs need to develop and acquire the “expertise that requires us to embrace and acknowledge the very human aspects of communication and culture” to help us become these emotionally intelligent and culturally diverse people (Robertson, 2007). By attaining a competent level of emotional intelligence a person can begin to understand the concept of cultural intelligence. In journalism I will encounter many different people from many different backgrounds and by having cultural competence and emotional intelligence competence I will be able to develop my cultural intelligence. I think the cultural aspect of communication is one of the most important aspects in journalism because a special bond needs to be made between an interviewer and interviewee and the interviewer can do that by knowing background on the interviewee’s culture. By knowing more about cultures a leader can help develop the journalists understanding of how to personal connect with people and developing a type of trust and relationship during the interview and writing process. The psychological and social aspects of leadership and communication are important in a journalistic setting but the cultural aspect does a better job will connect a journalist to the interviewee to establish trust and create an ethical interview and interesting story.

Section 3

The leadership approach I found to be the most useful for this topic is the transformational leadership approach. Transformational leadership is described as “the process of how certain leaders are able to inspire followers to accomplish great things” (Northouse, 190). Transformational leaders find ways where they must adapt and understand the motives of their followers and get the followers to accomplish more of what is expected of them. This leadership approach “is concerned with emotions, values, ethics, standards, and long-term goals” and it makes it a compatible approach to the problem and editor may face with his or her journalists (Northouse, 161). An editor in chief in this situation needs to be a strong role model for their journalists. An editor leads a team of journalists to make their publications as best as it can be and if the editor doesn’t empower the followers to accomplish important tasks than nothing will get accomplished. In journalism strict deadlines are used to get stories and publications in on time. If journalists do not know how important their role is in the process and have no motivation to do their work the publication will not succeed. When journalists know that if expectations and rules aren’t met and have a positive role model like their editor the whole team will work hard to make the publication a success. Especially when an editor is instructing journalists on how to interact during the interviewing process. An editor must motivate the journalists to interview people the correct way so the reputation of the publication stays positive and the story has a chance to be successful for both parties.

The interpersonal communication aspects that help the leadership approach with the problem are listening, verbal and non-verbal communication, saving face, and establishing trust. Listening is important for solving this problem and it works with the leadership approach to create a relationship from leader to follower and from follower to any outside sources during the interview process. Listening “involves consciously thinking about attending to messages that are being conveyed,” and it improves journalists to develop their ethical and trustworthy interviewing skills because it shows how they can respect others by listening and understand what they have to say (Canary, 2008). Listening also creates a way for leaders and followers to develop their emotional intelligence. According to Canary, listening also “involves what is going on in one’s mind, in their emotions, and in their behavior as they are receiving a message (2008). Listening is connected to emotional intelligence by giving a person the ability to understand their own emotions, as well as how they respond after seeing what someone else in feeling and experiencing in their life. Good listening skills are needed for an editor because an editor needs to understand problems and react in the proper way when their followers ask questions or concerns. Listening works with transformational leadership to show followers that the leader is considerate of their problems, strengths and goals, and that the leader will use these skills to understand how to satisfy their needs.

Another interpersonal communication aspect that is important to transformational leadership and helps solve the problem in the journalistic interview process is verbal and non-verbal communication. Verbal communication is needed to help solve this problem because it is one of the best way to connect the cultural differences between people. Cultures and their language are closely linked to each other. “Culture defines how language should be used, and language helps to create and preserve the culture” (Canary, 2008). This aspect of verbal communication teaches journalists that language is an important aspect to understand for two culturally different people to communicate effectively. If an editor can encourage their followers to be cautious when conversing with someone of a different background because it may not seem ethical to the other person when the interview is in progress. By knowing more about someone’s background before an interview a journalist can gain their trust and the interviewee will open up more about themselves to the interviewer. “People from two different cultures will form strategies to enhance their communication with the other by accommodating in various ways” (Canary, 2008). As for non-verbal communication it is important for all human beings to have a certain grasp on this aspect of communication. Non-verbal communication “involves the creation of meaning through cues other than the words that we use” (Canary, 2008). This form of communication can be expressed through facial expression and gaze, body movement, haptics, proxemics and physical appearance. Non-verbals are used to express different emotions across different cultures. They are useful in transformational leadership because they give the leader the knowledge to see the emotions of their followers. If a follower doesn’t want to share that side of themselves to their leader the leader can try to understand their non-verbals to find out what is wrong with them. Non-verbals help a journalists to understand what a person might be feeling even if they don’t want to verbally share it with them. They help journalists determine if a question is too personal, confusing, or amusing, and if editors can teach their journalists to read non-verbals journalists will be more ethical and trustworthy during the interview process.

An important aspect of communication that is understood in journalism and especially in the interview process is saving face and politeness theory. They are “one’s ability to manage our own ‘face’ and respectfully negotiate another’s ‘face’” (Canary, 2008). One has the ability to control how the act and react in certain situations and how their actions reflection on others in that situation. Saving face it a combination of listening, verbal and non-verbal communication and self-presentation communication aspects. An editor needs to teach its journalists how important this aspect is in the interview process because it show they people who are being interviewed that they can trust the interviewer. When an interviewer saves face it saves the interviewee from becoming embarrassed or from feeling judged and they begin to have more faith and trust in the interviewer. Also, ethical the journalist is responsible for the well-being of the interviewee and must make sure they are comfortable throughout the whole process. By following these steps and mastering these interpersonal communication aspects and transformational leadership an editor can make sure that their journalists can be seen as trustworthy and ethical when conducting an interview.

By using the different types of leadership styles and interpersonal communication aspects I find most effect I am able to apply my own leadership philosophy to this problem. I believe that anyone can accomplish anything he or she sets their mind upon, and that that individual not only needs the strength but also the courage and the will to achieve it. I encourage full honestly, innovation and creativity for the good of future generations and the development of overall knowledge. I believe that honest motivation and short and long term goals are needed for someone to have the power to accomplish anything he or she sets their mind to. I believe that a team has more power in solving problems than one person alone, and a team has the strength to be more creative and innovative. My motivations will be to improve the greater good of everyone in the work place and make sure that no one feels lost or left out. My words will be true and authentic driving my followers to trust and power through tough times. I will encourage and let my team know I will never give up. I will lead with empathy. I will lead with guidance. I will lead with hope for bettering the future for the many. I will stand by my team at all times and question them when I see development can be made. I expect to hold my ethics and morals to my leadership role and to except criticism when it is needed. In journalism it is important to always have an open mind and to be unbiased. With this philosophy a leader will be able to lead their followers to be honest and have integrity in following the ethics of journalism. By being a role model for the journalists they will have the knowledge to make their interview and writing processes ethical and trustworthy.

Editors can lead journalists to be ethical and trustworthy during the interview and writing process by being a positive role model for them during the publication process. By being competent in emotional intelligence and ethics an editor can lead their followers to develop their psychological, social, and cultural aspects of communication and leadership. When people are knowledgeable about correcting problems and following a strong set of people a solution to the problem can be found. Using the leadership strategy leaders will be able to motivate their followers to do well in the journalism processes. Giving people knowledge on how to be diverse and driven will help journalists feel confident they are being ethical and trustworthy when they are writing a ground breaking story or conducting an interview. A competency of emotional intelligence will broaden a person’s understanding of themselves and others in a journalistic setting and will further develop the leadership roles someone will take on in his or her life whether it be as an editor of a nationwide publication or as a local newspaper journalist.

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