

Amanda Baez

Dr. Sharron Greaves

Media Ethics

16 February 2023

Homework Chapter 2

In chapter 2 the ethical issue that is addressed is the issue of truth telling. I always had my own understanding of what news, media and/or journalism's role was and what the purpose they were set out on completing was. The news and journalism tell us the news. They tell us what is happening in the world and we assume that they are honest about it. The news in my understanding was the iteration of facts and a clear look at what is going on in the world around us without opinions and individual perspective. Upon reading about truth telling as a media ethic it is entirely understandable why this would be a serious ethic to be taken into consideration by news platforms.

The article that I wanted to reflect on is number 9, Fabrication at the Globe. Our society is democratic and the news and press play a big part in the maintained and insured freedom of the people. A society of people cannot make decisions about the direction they want their nation, society and individual lives to go if they do not know what is going on in the world, in their nation, or how they fit into the world. The way the people stay informed is through media sources. This is evident through examples of other nations where the people are not as free. There is a pattern across nations of communism where the press and news outlets are either non-existent or controlled solely by the government instead of the people. This if for the purpose of controlling what the people understand truth is. As I am reflecting on *Fabrication at The Globe*, I

came to the conclusion that these journalists lost sight of their purpose as news reporters. Both Patricia Smith of the Boston Globe and Mike Barnicle did not take into consideration the level of responsibility that they both had to the people of the nation in promoting the truth and ensuring their freedom is maintained and both instead became focused on their own success and maintained and developed careers.

Patricia Smith fabricated quotes from people that she actually made up entirely. She did this in order to strengthen the points of what she was writing about. One example that the chapter gave of her fabricating quotes was that of a made up cancer patient named Claire, reacting to cancer therapies that showed promise in mice. She made up a quote of this invented character depicting the character's desperate support for these new cancer therapies. This makes me uncomfortable as the quotes, if believed to be real, have the effect of tugging at your heart. Patricia seemed to be using these quotes to convince support of these cancer therapies based on the pathos of this desperate and sick cancer patient instead of the actual science of the researched therapies convincing people. This particularly fabrication does not seem as serious as to fire someone from the paper looking at the situation surface level however when you start to consider what these lies can lead to it suddenly becomes a lot more serious and dangerous. The ability to convince people of something through connection, emotion and empathy can be used as a weapon against others, to convince them into believing or doing what you want them to. As I thought about how others countries's governments control the media, it is dangerous to let even smaller fabrications slip through unpunished. I believe that just from one fabrication from Patricia warranted her termination from her position at The Globe. I believe that the approach the Globe took in letting her go from her position and prompting her to write a public apology piece was an appropriate response. Even letting the people know what had happened, how they were

lied to, and how The Globe would handle such cases like these was important for the people in the growing of trust for a free and honest media.

In Patricia Smith's apology she explains how she set out to "be ten times as good by doing 10 times more". She reveals how her ambition and seeking of recognition fueled her lies. She also brings up how lying is one of the "cardinal sins of journalism" to ensure to the audience that what she did was a great wrong. When The Globe asked for her resignation she resigned immediately without putting up a fight because she knew what she did was wrong but also that no one would believe her anymore. Credibility in general is extremely important in developing relationships and communicating with people.

Mike Barnicle told lies to the people in a different way than Patricia Smith did but I believe it is just as much an issue. Mike Barnicle is mentioned in this chapter because of his plagiarism. When he is initially caught and The Globe asks him for his letter of resignation he refuses. As he receives support from colleagues and readers The Globe decides to keep him and brush off what he had done. I believe that in this case The Globe's handling of this case was entirely different than their handling of Patricia Smith's case and they ended up giving the impression that plagiarism is a forgivable offense in the world of news and journalism. I believed this to be an issue because plagiarism is an offense that attacks individualism, freedom of speech and the integrity of media sources. Mike Barnicle did not stop plagiarizing and later does submit his resignation as he is monitored and caught again. Barnicle finally resigned when the Reader's Digest wanted to reprint one of his pieces but could not verify his facts. If actions like this are allowed in news medias it creates distrust in me for news outlets as I am unsure of what is true or what is not. When people begin to not believe news outlets that is where their purpose becomes entirely useless in informing the public of truth and as a result, maintaining their freedom.