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Media Ethics

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### Chapter 5 Homework

The media ethic presented and explained in chapter 5 is the ethical issue of privacy. The chapter is titled invasion of privacy. This is an ethical issue that I have seen come up the most especially in today's cancel culture. There is often times that I have believed that people's privacy should have been protected as they cannot move on from the mistakes they have made deep into the past. Today's culture where they "cancel" someone for making a mistake as a kid or just before they grew up and changed has left people's livelihoods damaged. I think with the beliefs that I have that everyone is capable of being redeemed makes the issue of privacy within media stand out the most to me because when we do not protect people's privacy we leave them to be judge, ridiculed or provoked by the public.

The passage that I chose to reflect on was number 21 *A Prostitute on Page 12*. This is a story of a young girl from a prominent family being murdered and then exposed in media as a secret prostitute. The young girl was a gifted student and musician with a promising future. The ethical issue of invasion of privacy presents itself here as the writers seem to lack empathy for the girl or her family. It became known to the media that the young girl that was murdered had become a prostitute before her passing although she was a brilliant girl with a bright future and came from a good family. The fact that the girl came from a good family is what made the story. It was unexpected and that is why the media wanted to capitalize on it.

In this case the ethical issue of privacy does not seem to have to be invaded. It does not seem necessary. I could understand other issues of where the debate of the information either helps the public and harms the privacy of the person the story is about or harms the public and helps the person. If the knowledge is necessary for the public to know then I could understand why the ethical principle of privacy would be invaded. However, in this case it was not necessary for the public to know about this young girl's mistakes. In the passage the pimp is rarely mentioned and receives about two sentences within the piece. If exposing the girl's secrets after her brutal murder would have helped get the pimp off the streets or even warn other at risk families of the dangers of what he was involved with would have been the reason to expose these secrets to the public then I believe there would be a real debate. It seems exposing the girl's secrets was merely for the sake of numbers, money, and gossip.

I could understand that privacy cannot be an absolute rule in all scenarios because in certain scenarios the knowledge or story can benefit the public. I agree with the description of the passage, *A Prostitute on Page 12*, that being able to control information about ourselves and choose to keep some things private is vital to our person hood and individualism. This is why maintaining and protecting privacy is a moral good. I believe that if we can protect privacy we should.

In this case the girl had been murdered and was no longer alive to see her secrets unfold in the media. However, her family had to witness her secrets unfold in the media. It is already bad enough that they had to find out of their daughter's secret life and decisions after she had passed but to find out because it is going to be publicized in the media is way worse. In this case

the failure to protect the girl's privacy did not affect her but effected the mourning of a broken family. In this case this seemed inappropriate to me and I could understand why the media source received scrutiny and backlash for it. Not only did they fail to protect the privacy of the family but they also denied the request of the family to delay the paper if it had to go out and be published regardless.

The paper received a lot of backlash because of the insensitivity of the article and a lot of businesses pulled from the paper and chose to no longer work with them. The paper argued that the article and story of the young girl, named Cindy, was good for the public as it could inform young girls and serve as a warning as the man who pimped her out was still out recruiting girls like Cindy. The writer of the article, Deckert, argued that if he did not print the piece that people would start to question whether or not he has withheld other pieces for the sake of privacy. I believe that these reason are not good enough to expose Cindy and her family in the way that he did. I think he could have been a bit more sensitive and at the very least agreed to the request of postponing the publishing date to when it could be received better. The arguments that Deckert used to support his decision all did not take. The article did not have the intended affect that he thought it could have in any capacity. It did not promote people to look deeper into the pimp and it did not prevent him from public scrutiny of keeping other stories private.

I think that regardless this was a tricky situation of whether or not to invade the privacy of the people involved and I do think this was handled poorly. I believe the writer handled it poorly as did the paper.