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MCA 311

Issue Reaction Paper #2

Issue: Conflict of interest and code of ethics

Case: Sandusky Scandal

Before the Sandusky scandal broke out and all the media networks knew about what was going on, Sara Ganim of the Patriot News staff was first to cover the story. Ganim a 2008 Penn State graduate has taught journalism at the university and has a sister who goes there wrote several articles about the defensive coordinator and his wrong doings (Solomon Dec 2011/Jan 2012). With her being involved with the school and reporting on the scandal lies a conflict of interest.

She was not the only one who was covering the story and had close ties to the school. Once the story broke out Jake Kaplan a Penn State student intern at the Philadelphia Inquirer supplied commentary, analysis, and perspective through his blog posts, stories and videos (Solomon Dec 2011/Jan 2012). Both Ganim and Kaplan did a great job covering the story and captivating the audience. Ganim gave voice to the voiceless by including mothers of two boys who Sandusky allegedly abused in her March 31, 2011 article “Sandusky Faces Grand Jury Probe”, and Kaplan was giving the public up to the minute coverage after the story broke out. Both writers took a risk while covering this story, both could of told the story with their opinions in mind instead of remaining objective.

The SJP Code of Ethics states journalists should be free of obligations other than the public’s right to know, conflict of interests should be avoided (SJP 1996). Both newspapers should have had other reporters who had no ties to the school to cover the story in order to avoid conflicts of interests.

Even though Ganim had a conflict of interest while reporting the story I think she did a very good job staying neutral through out all the articles about the Sandusky scandal. She wanted to inform the public about what was happening at the university, she felt the story needed to be covered even when nobody was taking an interest. In her November 5, 2011 article “Sandusky Indicted” she included a comment of a mother who said “in 1998 her son and a second boy told their stories to the police, but no charges came of the incident”. The woman was never named and neither was her son or the second boy. This makes me question if the source she used was a reliable one or if she used the comment to tug at her reader’s hearts.

Ganim, S. (2011, March 31). Sandusky Faces Grand Jury Probe.

*Patriot-News* [Harrisburg, Penn], pp. 1-4.

Ganim, S. (2011, November 5). Sandusky Indicted. *Patriot-News* [Harrisburg,

Penn], pp. 6-10.

Society of Professional Journalism (1996). SPJ Code of Ethics.

Solomon, G. (2011, December). Slow to React. *American Journalism Review*.