

Research Assessment #2

Date: 9/9/2020

Subject: Journalism ethics and objectivity

MLA Citation:

Davenport, Lucinda D. "A Question of Journalism Ethics." *Syracuse Scholar*, vol. 10, no. 1, 1979, pp. 1-4.

Assessment:

For this assessment, I wanted to look into the ethics and organization of basic news articles. I came across an article titled *A question of journalism ethics* by Lucinda Davenport, an assistant professor at Michigan state university with a doctorate in mass communication and a master's degree in journalism. I had originally believed that journalism centered writing was commonly pretty straightforward and simple, but from this article, I learned the more in depth aspects of it as well as the fundamentals of biased reporting and credibility.

In the beginning of the article, it tackles the distinction between technically trained writers and liberal arts trained writing in journalism. I wasn't aware there was any type of liberal arts training that was associated with journalism but it's very clear now that having a liberal arts background holds way to many different advantages. Technically trained writers traditionally are very cut and dry. They look at a situation or event and solely report words spoken, actions done, or people present. While writers with a liberal art background tend to look much more in depth on the topics of their writing. Davenport uses the words "The who, the what, and the when" to describe how technical writers look at their writing but introduces "The how and why" when discussing liberal arts writers. This made me think of having a liberal arts view of writing as having a figurative pair of 3-D glasses to give your writing more depth and importance. It is apparent that once the "how and why" is introduced to writing then that is when the big question of ethics comes into play.

When writing or reporting on events the author must always think ahead. No matter what perspective you are writing from the contents of your writing will both influence the reader's perspective of that event or situation and will directly affect those involved in that event. I had always believed that politicians and those in power were able to control or directly affect their citizens but I now see that in reality journalists and reporters are the ones to have a wide range of control over the populations. This is why I agree with Davenport on the importance of journalistic objectivity. Objectivity is the ability to no sway to one side of an argument. Being one hundred percent objective is nearly impossible. No matter how hard a writer tries their individual life experiences or knowledge will find a way into their writing. I think that one of the most important jobs of a journalist is to try and remain as objective and unbiased as humanly possible so as to not influence the reader any specific way, allowing them to develop their own ideas or thoughts. In recent years ,however, I've seen the appearance of more biased news sources. These sources tend to lean one way or another in terms of party affiliation among other kinds of associations. These news organizations report on topics under specific lenses to paint a clear picture of what is right and wrong rather than letting the viewer decide. The biggest example of

this that came to my mind while reading was Fox News. My family had used to watch Fox News regularly as our mode of getting information but following the 2016 election, the fundamental biases of the organization became more and more blatant. Fox leaned heavily towards the right side of the political spectrum and was much more conservative than other news outlets. This causes the delivery of many of their stories to be antagonistic to more liberal politicians or movements. This influences the viewer and causes them to not really think for themselves and to just follow what they see or hear. I think it's important to get information from as many different sources as possible in order to get all the viewpoints or biases so you can make your own decisions on how to view things.

In conclusion, I gained a new perspective on biased writing and how our personal experiences can affect how we write. This information will definitely affect my writing from now on and I will try my best to get as much unbiased information as I can when writing. It's also made me curious of the situations when a writer's decision to publish a piece either negatively or positively affected the lives of who the writing is about and I will seek out information or articles about that topic.