

Ethical Issues in the Workplace
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According to the SPJ Code of [Ethics](#)' preamble: "members of the Society of Professional Journalists believe that public enlightenment is the forerunner of justice and the foundation of democracy. Ethical journalism strives to ensure the free exchange of information that is accurate, fair and thorough. An ethical journalist acts with integrity".

The Code of Ethics is what separates the good journalist from the best journalist. Those who remember those codes as they are reporting the news and writing the latest for audience consumption. While the viewing audience over the years have gained a great distrust for the news media, this next generation of journalist will be able to bring back that great trust, that was once held. Great journalist like reporter, Oona Goodin-Smith.

Oona Goodin-Smith covers breaking news and civil courts in and around Philadelphia area for the [Philadelphia Inquirer](#) for the last three years and before that a reporter for The Flint Journal in Flint, Michigan.

What is the most difficult ethical problem you've ever faced?

I feel that journalism as a whole has had a lot of ethical issues, but one thing that comes to the top of my mind is the unrest after the police killing of George Floyd. The police in two instances used tear gas on Philadelphia protestors. The one that got media attention was when the protestors were on the highway and after the teargas was deployed, they started scrambling

everywhere, which the police chief did apologize for because it was just a horrible situation, but the day before police were in a residential area and they said that it was looting and unrest and the cops had to defend themselves because they were being terrorized and it was overshadowed, until we talked to the residents. What we found was this historically black area was blanketed in tear gas in their homes and one 14-year-old girl had to run into her bathroom to get away from it. And the dilemma is you have to push past what the police were saying and get both sides and it ended up resulting in the city commission looking into it and forcing the police commissioner to apologize.

Another instance was when I was covering a protest/support where Mike Pence was speaking at the police lodge this summer and the Proud Boys showed up and me and a fellow journalist followed them back to the police lodge to get photos of them hanging out with the police, because it needed to be exposed and they surrounded us and we became part of the story. We decided to report on that because it needed to be exposed, but after that I begin to realize I was being mentioned in their hate group and page, which made me aware, after monitoring their activity, that Philly had the second largest chapter of Proud Boys. After monitoring their page, I became aware that they used the media to get more members. Anytime the media mentioned them, and other groups like the KKK, membership went up. There is a [study](#) out of how the correlation between every time they were mentioned in the media, and how the membership went up. That was another ethical concern, because the first inclination is to report on it, but every time you mention them, you end up catering to their membership. Basically, my editors end up monitoring the group and if it wasn't a huge gathering, we wouldn't give them any coverage.

What is the most common ethical problem you faced?

In this past year, I would say issues with wording. When I was covering the unrest, the way it would work was we would have this team out in the field, sending out little pieces and tweeting back to the others that's putting it all together for the news report, and it would usually be someone who was living in the suburbs and was a bit latched from what was going on. The words they chose to use and prioritize in the story, with our names on it, was not good. A lot of emphasis was put on looting and vandalizing. Things like that where reporters were out and was talking to people, and actually watching what happened, had to push back on the reports. I would say that was the most common issue, so just having to make sure we put out the right words when talking about the public.

Word Count: 735

Interviewees:

Oona Goodin-Smith

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Resources used:

SPJ Code of Ethics

<https://www.spj.org/ethicscode.asp>

Data and Study

<https://datasociety.net/library/oxygen-of-amplification>