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Ethics Essay

The code of ethics relies on a journalist seeking the truth without bias. According to the Society of Professional Journalists “ethical journalism should be accurate and fair,” which is everything Stephen Glass was not as a reporter.

Before watching the film, I did not see the harm if a journalist were to change a detail or two in a story. After seeing the repercussions and how one lie can snowball into various fabricated pieces, I stand corrected. Ethical journalism is essential to ensure that the media is not only accurate and unbiased but honest.

A journalist should avoid stereotyping in their reporting. When describing the wants of the supposed teenage hacker Glass stereotyped what he thought a teenager would want throwing in items such as an Xbox and pornographic magazines as quoted items.

In addition, another section of the code of ethics states “journalist should refuse gifts, favors, fees, free travel and special treatment, and avoid political and other outside activities that may compromise integrity or impartiality or may damage credibility.”

This is a rule that Glass seemed to break in every story he reported from attending dinner with the teenage hacker to allegedly spending a night with young republicans in a hotel room. Glass also seemed to never worry about the long-term effects on the organizations, places, and people who he would mention in his stories.

One example of this was when he reported that the young republicans at a convention were drinking mini alcohol bottle, but the convention leader stated there was no alcohol present in the hotel.

An ethical journalist should be able to prove accuracy in their reporting to ensure credibility. This something Glass was lacking every time he was asked to verify minute details in his story. Anytime the editor would question Glass he would immediately say he needed to check his notes but never had them on hand. He even went through the process of creating an elaborate scheme to try and fabricate his story into reality, going as far as recruiting his brother. Not being able to control his lies, Glass was held accountable in what I consider to be the most important code.

The code of ethics states “journalist should expose unethical conduct in journalism, including within their organizations.”

Glass was held accountable for his false reporting not only by Adam Penenberg of Forbes magazine but also by his editor and colleagues. While his coworkers and editor wanted to believe him, they all started to see the lies Glass was creating.

More specifically, Glass’ colleagues understood why their editor was holding Glass accountable in the same way all of them would be.

Journalism is honest and unbiased. Honest journalism can only be achieved when following ethical practices. The code of ethics provides journalists with set guidelines to be able to report ethically.