



Journalism Code of Ethics, Practical Logic & Sapience Guidelines

The SAPIENT Being utilizes the Society of Professional Journalists: Code of Ethics (Straubhaar, LaRose & Davenport, pages 478-79) in regard to its journalistic research and reporting standards. The Society of Professional Journalists created a code of ethics that are in effect today and is outline below.

Using the 2020 Pulitzer essay prize winner “1619 Project” from project’s creator Nikole Hannah-Jones, she and her 100 page August 2019 article in the *New York Times* provides the WOWW Program a prime example of the abuse and violation of the code of ethics in journalism and fake news journalism using the Society of Professional Journalists: Code of Ethics as a litmus test.

Below is a copy of the entire article from The Wall Street Journal titled “The ‘1619 Project’ Gets Schooled” by Elliot Kaufman, Dec. 16, 2019. The subheading reads: “The New York Times tries to rewrite U.S. history, but its falsehoods are exposed by surprising sources.”

All WOWW members are encouraged, but not required, to use the 100 page “1619 Project” article to critique the number and location of the extensive violations and abuses to the journalistic code of ethics and demonstrate this is the kind of fake news journalism that the WOWW Program is fighting. Per Elliot Kaufman:

‘So wrong in so many ways’ is how Gordon Wood, the Pulitzer Prize-winning historian of the American Revolution, characterized the New York Times’s “1619 Project.” James McPherson, dean of Civil War historians and another Pulitzer winner, said the Times presented an “unbalanced, one-sided account” that “left most of the history out.” Even more surprising than the criticism from these generally liberal historians was where the interviews appeared: on the World Socialist Web Site, run by the Trotskyist Socialist Equality Party.

The Pulitzer “1619 Project” Example

The “1619 Project” was launched in August 2019 with a 100-page spread essay and commentary in the Times’s Sunday magazine. It intends to “reframe the country’s history” by crossing out 1776 as America’s founding date and substituting 1619, the year 20 or so African slaves were brought to Jamestown, Virginia. The project has been celebrated up and down the liberal establishment, praised by Sen. Kamala Harris and Mayor Pete Buttigieg.

A September essay for the World Socialist Web Site called the project a “racialist falsification” of history.

That didn’t get much attention, but in November the interviews with the historians went viral. “I wish my books would have this kind of reaction,” Mr. Wood says in an email. “It still strikes me as amazing why the *NY Times* would put its authority behind a project that has such weak scholarly support.”

He adds that fellow historians have privately expressed their agreement. Mr. McPherson coolly describes the project’s “implicit position that there have never been any good white people, thereby ignoring white radicals and even liberals who have supported racial equality.”

The project’s creator, Nikole Hannah-Jones, is proud that it “decenters whiteness” and disdains its critics as “old, white male historians.” She tweeted of Mr. McPherson: “Who considers him preeminent? I don’t.”

Her own qualifications are an undergraduate degree in history and African-American studies and a master’s in journalism. She says the project goes beyond Mr. McPherson’s expertise, the Civil War. “For the most part,” she

writes in its lead essay, “black Americans fought back alone” against racism. No wonder she’d rather not talk about the Civil War.

To the Trotskyists, Ms. Hannah-Jones writes: “You all have truly revealed yourselves for the anti-black folks you really are.” She calls them “white men claiming to be socialists.”

Perhaps they’re guilty of being white men, but they’re definitely socialists. Their faction, called the Workers League until 1995, was “one of the most strident and rigid Marxist groups in America” during the Cold War, says Harvey Klehr, a leading historian of American communism.

“Ours is not a patriotic, flag-waving kind of perspective,” says Thomas Mackaman, the World Socialist Web Site’s interviewer and a history professor at King’s College in Wilkes-Barre, PA. He simply recognizes that the arrival of 20 slaves in 1619 wasn’t a “world-altering event.” Slavery had existed across the world for millennia, and there were already slaves elsewhere in what would become the U.S. before 1619.

But “even if you want to make slavery the central story of American history,” he says, the *Times* gets it backward. The American Revolution didn’t found a “slavocracy,” as Ms. Hannah-Jones puts it. Instead, in Mr. Mackaman’s telling, it “brought slavery in for questioning in a way that had never been done before” by “raising universal human equality as a fundamental principle.” Nor was protecting slavery “one of the primary reasons” the colonists declared independence, as Ms. Hannah-Jones claims. It’s no coincidence the abolitionists rapidly won votes to end slavery in five of the original 13 states, along with Vermont and the new states of the Midwest.

Ms. Hannah-Jones insists “anti-black racism runs in the very DNA of this country.” Mr. Mackaman calls that claim “anti-historical.” Proving it requires her to belittle the most progressive declaration of modern history: “that all men are created equal.” Ms. Hannah-Jones calls this a “lie” and claims its drafters didn’t even believe it. The abolitionists disagreed. So did Martin Luther King Jr: He saw it as a “promissory note.”

Mr. Mackaman also protests Ms. Hannah-Jones’s “cherry-picking” of quotes to present Lincoln as a “garden-variety racist.” He attributes the misleading picture to her “totally racist interpretation.” If whites and blacks are supposed to be “diametrically opposed to each other,” he says, “then you have to disregard all the history that runs contrary to that—and there’s an awful lot.”

Other “1619 Project” essays are similarly tendentious. Sociologist Matthew Desmond marshals substantially discredited research to tar the whole of American capitalism as a legacy of slavery. Legal activist Bryan Stevenson presents the war on drugs and broken-windows policing as successors to lynching, the Black Codes and other white “strategies of racial control.” *Times* columnist Jamelle Bouie claims Republican opposition to raising the debt ceiling in 2011 was of a piece with Southern defenses of slavery and Jim Crow.

Joseph Kishore, the Socialist Equality Party’s national secretary, says the “1619 Project” is aimed at legitimizing the politics of the Democratic Party and at “dividing workers” by race. “The interests of a black worker on the line in an auto plant and a white worker,” he says, “are fundamentally the same, and a million miles from the interests of an Oprah Winfrey or a Hillary Clinton.”

He rejects the “pseudo-left politics” of identity, which “fight out conflicts within the top 10% or so over access to positions of power and privilege” through diversity programs, then “denounce white workers for being supposedly privileged even as they suffer from a decline in life expectancy and horrific social conditions.” Nobody is better at deflating the pretensions of progressives than the Left Opposition.

To be sure, the Trotskyists have wild ideas of their own: The World Socialist Web Site’s September essay claims “the event that had the greatest impact on the social condition of African-Americans” was the Russian Revolution. But the *Times*’s equally extreme ideas are being feted by the intelligentsia and turned into lesson plans for schoolteachers. “A re-education is necessary,” the “1619 Project” webpage warns.

Even communists now tell the *Times* to cool it!

Society of Professional Journalists: Code of Ethics

The code is powerful because it reminds going down the list how mainstream fake news media flagrantly and continuously violate every item on the list. This list can be used to critique fake news journalism, unsound research, fact checking, agendas, sources, stereotyping, and so on. In one item there is added term (ideology) that is shown in parenthesis.

Best Practices

The main mantra of the code is "Seek truth and Report it!" The code also states that: "Journalists should be honest, fair, and courageous in gathering, reporting, and interpreting information. Journalists should:

- ✓ Test the accuracy of information from all sources and exercise care to avoid inadvertent error. Deliberate distortion is never permissible.
- ✓ Diligently seek out subjects of news stories to give them the opportunity to respond to allegations of wrongdoing.
- ✓ Identify sources whenever feasible. The public is entitled to as much information as possible on sources' reliability.
- ✓ Always question sources' motives before promising anonymity. Clarify conditions attached to any promise made in exchange for information. Keep promises.
- ✓ Make certain that headlines, news teases, and promotional material, photos, video, audio, graphics, sound bites, and quotations do not misrepresent. They should not oversimplify or highlight incidents out of context.
- ✓ Never distort the content of news photos or video. Image enhancement for technical clarity is always permissible. Label montages and photo illustrations.
- ✓ Avoid misleading reenactments or staged news events. If reenactment is necessary to tell a story, label it.
- ✓ Avoid undercover or other surreptitious methods of gathering information except when traditional open methods will not yield information vital to the public. Use of such methods should be explained as part of the story.
- ✓ Never plagiarize.
- ✓ Tell the story of the diversity and magnitude of the human experience boldly, even, when it is unpopular to do so.
- ✓ Examine their own cultural values and avoid imposing on those values on others.
- ✓ Avoid stereotyping by (ideology), race, gender, age, religion, ethnicity, geography, sexual orientation, disability, physical appearance, or social status.
- ✓ Support the open exchange of views, even views they find repugnant.
- ✓ Give voice to the voiceless; official and unofficial sources of information can be equally valid.
- ✓ Distinguish between advocacy and news reporting. Analysis and commentary should be labeled and not misrepresent fact or content.
- ✓ Distinguish news from advertising and shun hybrids that blur the lines between the two.
- ✓ Recognize and special obligation to ensure that the public's business is conducted in the open and that government records are open to inspection.

Minimize Harm

Ethical journalists treat sources, subjects, and colleagues as human beings deserving of respect. Journalists should:

- ✓ Show compassion for those who may be affected adversely by news coverage. Use special sensitivity when dealing with children and inexperienced sources or subjects.
- ✓ Be sensitive when seeking or using interviews or photographs of those affected by tragedy or guilt.
- ✓ Recognize that gathering and reporting information may cause harm or discomfort. Pursuit of the news is not a license for arrogance.
- ✓ Recognize that private people have a greater right to control information about themselves than do public officials and others who seek power, influence, or attention. Only an overriding public need can justify intrusion into anyone's privacy.
- ✓ Show good taste. Avoid pandering to lurid curiosity.
- ✓ Be cautious of identifying juvenile suspects or victims of sex crimes.
- ✓ Be judicious about naming criminal suspects before the formal filing of charges.
- ✓ Balance a criminal suspect's fair trial rights with the public's right to be informed.

Act Independently

Journalists should be free of obligation to any interest other than the public's right to know. Journalists should:

- ✓ Avoid conflict of interest, real or perceived.
- ✓ Remain free of associations and activities that may compromise integrity or damage credibility.
- ✓ Refuse gifts, favors, fees, free travel, and special treatment, and shun secondary employment, political involvement, public office, and service in community organizations if they compromise journalistic integrity.
- ✓ Disclose unavoidable conflicts.
- ✓ Be vigilant and courageous about holding those with power accountable.
- ✓ Deny favored treatment to advertisers and special interests and resist their pressure to influence news coverage.
- ✓ Be wary of sources offering information for favors or money; avoid bidding for news."

Be Accountable

Journalists are accountable to their readers, listeners, viewers, and each other. Journalists should:

- ✓ Clarify and explain news coverage and invite dialogue with the public over journalistic conduct.
- ✓ Encourage the public to voice grievances against the news media."
- ✓ Admit mistakes and correct them promptly.
- ✓ Expose unethical practices of journalists and the news media.
- ✓ Abide by the same high standards to which they hold others.

All of these guidelines are for the betterment of society and the regulation of fake news and biased media. If you have any questions or require additional info regarding our code of ethics in journalism, please don't hesitate to contact SAPIENT Being HQ at (951) 638-5562 or at sapientbeing@att.net.