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Your colleague, another reporter, is pushing for all the known facts to be reported. But the editor argues that the fact of the girls’ nudity should not be revealed; he claims that such information will just be an additional insult to their parents, who already are suffering from the girls’ deaths.

**Ask: Do you have a right to publish:**

The fact that the driver was drinking? The fact that the girls were nude at the time of the accident?

1

              

Would it be responsible to publish these facts in reporting the accident?

**Brainstorm ALONE about things to consider in deciding whether to report this information**:

Do we have all the facts? Has anyone interviewed the survivor?

Does the newspaper have a policy on printing names of sexual-assault victims?

Will publishing the information help anyone else?

***Case 2***

**Detachment or involvement?**

**THE SCENARIO:**

You are a reporter for a large urban daily. The paper plans a major series on poverty. Your editor assigns you to do an in-depth piece on the effects of poverty on children, with special emphasis on what happens when drug addiction becomes part of the story.

You have identified several families willing to be subjects for the story. Three families agree to be photographed — and identified — and you spend four months with them, visiting their homes every day and observing what goes on. You tell them your job is to be an observer — a “fly on the wall” — so you can gather information for this important series.

In one home, you watch as a mother allows her three-year-old daughter to go hungry for 24 hours. You see this same child living in a filthy room, stepping on broken glass and sleeping on a urine-soaked mattress. You know the mother is HIV-positive and you watch as she brushes her daughter’s teeth with the same toothbrush she uses. You see the mother hit the child with full force. You see the little girl about to bite on an electrical cord. Her plight haunts you.

**What do you do to satisfy both your conscience and your responsibilities as a reporter?**

1. Report the mother to the authorities so the girl will be removed from this environment and placed in a foster home. Then write the story.
2. Write the story first, detailing your observations. After the story has been published, notify the authorities, giving the mother’s address.
3. Write the story, but don’t identify the mother or child to police or social service authorities. Remember, you are a reporter. You’ve put the information in the newspaper. It’s not your job to act as a police officer.
4. Your own solution to the dilemma.

2

***Case 3***

**To what lengths should you go to get a story?**

**THE SCENARIO:**

You are a correspondent for a major television network. Your producers have done a great deal of research about a national grocery chain; they allege that some of its grocery stores are asking employees to participate in unsanitary food-handling practices.

This is an important story. Consumers may get sick if they eat tainted food, you argue, and they have a right to know that a food store is not handling its food in a safe manner. You want to make sure this story airs on national television. You believe that to get good footage you have to go into the store with cameras and film the store’s workers actually engaging in unsafe practices. You need proof.

**As the television correspondent, how will you get your story?**

1. Call the store manager and request an on-site interview, with cameras. Explain that you have some information that consumers will want to know about and give the store a chance to show its side of the story.
2. Just appear at the store one day, without advance notice to the manager. That way you won’t tip off the staff that you’re onto a story.
3. Pretend to be looking for a job in the store; complete an employment application and actually get hired. Then, while you’re at work, use hidden cameras to document the unsafe practices you see.

D. Your own solution to the dilemma. Be specific.

***Case 4***

**Will a negative story be allowed to run in a high school newspaper?**

**THE SCENARIO:**

As a high school journalist, you have developed several sources of information about the football camp held each year at your school. You hear that brutal hazing is part of athletes’ initiation to the team. Investigating further, you learn that new players are subject to various humiliations and assaults, sometimes with broomsticks, electrical cords and socks stuffed with tennis balls.

This is a big, important story. Kids are being hurt. You work hard to get your facts right and spend a great deal of effort checking and double-checking your sources. Your newspaper’s adviser supports you and your work. But when you are ready to publish the story in the school newspaper, the principal says you can’t run it unless you make substantial changes. You must eliminate a player’s comments and add a prepared statement from the football coach. The coach also says this is “negative journalism” and wants you to hold the story until after the playoffs.

3

**What do you do?**

1. Drop the story. You know you’ve done a good job, but if the principal won’t let you run the story as you have prepared it, you won’t run it at all.
2. Wait until after the playoffs, as the coach requests, and then print the story according to the principal’s requirements: Drop the player’s comments and run the football coach’s statement. At least some of the information you have uncovered will come out.
3. Print the story as your principal demands, by dropping the player’s comments and running the football coach’s statement. But add an editor’s note at the end of the story, explaining that school officials, including the coach, reviewed the story and insisted that changes be made to it before it was published.
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**Ask: Do you have a right to publish:**

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1

              

Would it be responsible to publish these facts in reporting the accident?

**Brainstorm ALONE about things to consider in deciding whether to report this information**:

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