

Module Overview: Giving Voice to Values¹

Few skills are as important for aspiring young journalists to learn as those related to giving voice to their values. “Giving voice to values” is an expression for living in sync with one’s values; it typically involves being willing to talk about one’s values and put them into action. Everyone in a newsroom will have times when their values conflict with what others want them to do or expect them to do, and at times like these, the difficulty often is not knowing *what* the right thing to do is, but *how* to do the right thing. These times can be perplexing for young journalists who likely will have to give unwelcomed information to people who outrank them. This module is designed to help journalists develop the knowledge, skills and commitment to give voice to their own values.

The “Giving Voice to Values” module is based on an approach and curriculum developed by Dr. Mary C. Gentile, author of a popular ethics book, “Giving Voice to Values: How to Speak Your Mind When You Know What’s Right.”² We combine materials we have developed specifically for journalists with materials developed by Gentile, which are available free from the University of Virginia.³ Gentile’s Giving Voice to Values (GVV) approach addresses the “post-decision making” phase — what one should do to give voice to values after deciding what the ethical approach is. It focuses on the question, “Once we know *what* we think is right, *how* do we get it done?”⁴ It involves “educating for action” and draws much of its theoretical underpinnings from behavioral theory related to rehearsal or practice “as a way of changing thinking patterns and subsequent behavior defaults” as well as “pre-scripting,” or preparing scripts that can serve as guides in future situations.⁵ Like the modules “Understanding Leadership” and “Creating Safe and Fair Newsrooms,” the “Giving Voice to Values” module draws on theory and research related to behavioral ethics, and students will be asked to identify the reasons and rationalizations that could prevent them from giving voice to their values.

The purposes of this module are multiple:

- To illustrate how journalists at various stages in their career use their voices to effect change.
- To prompt students to consider when they should support or challenge newsroom leadership.
- To give students opportunity to practice giving voice to their values in response to scenarios in news organizations that they might encounter.
- To prompt students to consider how personal identities influence the voices of journalists.

MODULE CONTENT

Cases and Teaching Notes

- The case, “From Covering Protests to Having Their Say: Racial and Cultural Shifts in American Newsrooms” is the centerpiece of the module. It highlights vivid examples of individual journalists and groups of journalists who gave voice to their values in significant ways during the summer of 2020 amid the Black Lives Matter movement. The case also raises timely topics for discussion such as the meaning of objectivity, the role of internal messaging within news organizations and the relationship between news and editorial staffs.
- The Teaching Note for “From Covering Protests to Having Their Say: Racial and Cultural Shifts in American Newsrooms” provides guidance for in-class discussions.

- The document “Giving Voice to Values Cases and In-class Exercise” provides a series of short cases that present ethical dilemmas that young journalists might face and prompts them to think about how they would actually give voice to their values in ways that would be both ethical and effective. The short cases can be used as an in-class exercise to enable students to role play how they would give voice to their values, so that they can benefit from coaching from their peers and the instructor.
- The Teaching Note for “Giving Voice to Values Cases and In-class Exercise” provides guidance for leading discussions.

Readings

- “Starting Assumptions for Giving Voice to Values” states the premises upon which the Giving Voice to Values approach is based.
- “Giving Voice to Values: A Brief Introduction” identifies the distinctive features of the Giving Voice to Values approach and elaborates on the type of reasoning that can derail or empower ethical decision making.

In-class Exercise

- “A Tale of Two Stories” prompts students to recall and reflect on two times when they encountered values conflicts: a time when they gave voice to their values and a time when they did not give voice to their values.

Videos

- Videos of four journalists from marginalized communities enable students to examine how the journalists navigate their identities and their work as journalists. The four journalists are Ailsa Chang of NPR, Sebastian Herrera of the Wall Street Journal, DaLyah Jones of the Texas Observer, and Tony Plohetski of the Austin American-Statesman and KVUE-TV.
 - In “How Has Your Identity Influenced You as a Journalist?” the four journalists address a variety of topics including how they express their identities to others in their newsrooms.
 - In “Refuse or Lean In to Identity while Reporting,” the journalists talk about how their identities do or do not influence their work.
 - In “Advice to Newsroom Managers,” the four journalists provide advice to newsroom leaders about how to create newsrooms in which people from marginalized communities can thrive and do their best work.
 - In “Advice to Journalists,” the four journalists provide advice to other journalists from marginalized communities about how to thrive in newsrooms.
- Dr. Mary C. Gentile explains the Giving Voice to Values, action-based approach to leadership development and what makes it unique.
- In “What It Takes: Leadership in Their Own Words,” Carolyn McGourty Supple interviews Gretchen Carlson about a variety of issues including how she developed discipline as a young person, why she wanted to become a journalist, issues of work/life balance and motherhood, what led her to give voice to her values with her landmark lawsuit against sexual harassment by former Fox News CEO Roger Ailes and the importance of dignity at work. Because she signed a nondisclosure agreement with Fox News, Carlson cannot speak in a detailed manner about her experience with Ailes, but she does describe why she decided to give voice to her values and take a stand against Ailes. The video is 50 minutes long, so instructors might want to reference the following segments:
 - 19:00-22:19 — Carlson addresses why she wanted to become a journalist.
 - 22:20-27:00 — Carlson tells how she built her career as a journalist starting at the local level including getting fired as a local anchor in Cleveland and rebounding to relaunch her career.

- 27:03-32:40 — Carlson addresses issues of work/life balance including motherhood and how her children motivated her to give voice to her values and take a stand against Ailes.
- 40:27-42:42 — Carlson addresses what makes a good leader and the role of giving voice to values in stopping sexual harassment in the workplace.
- 42:43-50:17 — Carlson explains why she decided to give voice to her values and take a stand against Ailes.

Supplemental Materials

- [Ethics Unwrapped](#) has a series of [seven short videos](#) narrated by Dr. Mary C. Gentile that provide an overview of the “Giving Voice to Values Approach.”
- More “Giving Voice to Values” curriculum materials by Dr. Mary Gentile are available at <http://store.darden.virginia.edu/giving-voice-to-values>

¹This teaching note was written by Dr. Minette E. Drumwright for the purposes of facilitating teaching the module “Giving Voice to Values.”

²Mary C. Gentile, “Giving Voice to Values: How to Speak your Mind When You Know What Is Right.” (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 2010.)

³Mary C. Gentile, “Giving Voice to Values Curriculum Initiative.” Darden School of Business, University of Virginia, <http://store.darden.virginia.edu/giving-voice-to-values>

⁴Gentile, “Giving Voice to Values,” 191.

⁵Gentile, “Giving Voice to Values,” 193.