

2. Should reporters disclose to their readers when they have submitted a story for quote approval?
3. How is quote approval related to truth?

## Macro Issues

1. Media based on social responsibility is premised on the idea that freedom of expression is a positive freedom (Nerone 1995). The moral right of freedom of expression is not unconditional (The Commission on Freedom of the Press 1947) but a right granted to do moral good (Nerone 1995). By agreeing to “quote approval,” are reporters opening the debate as to whether they are serving the best interests of the public or serving the interests of politicians?
2. How does the notion of citizen journalism influence the concept of quote approval? Of candidates’ willingness to speak “off the cuff” with citizens?

## CASE 2-E

### NPR, THE NEW YORK TIMES, AND WORKING CONDITIONS IN CHINA

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On Jan. 6, 2012, Ira Glass, host of American Public Media’s “This American Life,” devoted a 39-minute segment to a report on working conditions at manufacturing plants in China.

The show was based extensively on a single source, Mike Daisey, who recounted what he had seen and what he had been told through an interpreter on a visit to a Foxconn factory in China, a plant that makes parts for the popular iPhone and iPad. Daisey recounted stories about working conditions and stated some workers in the plant had been poisoned during the manufacturing process.

Less than a month later, the *New York Times* ran a series of investigative stories on working conditions at Chinese plants making Apple products.

“Mr. Daisey and the Apple Factory” quickly became the most popular “This American Life” podcast, with about 880,000 downloads. Daisey, a performance artist, became something of a celebrity and Apple critic,

granting numerous interviews about his experiences. Faced with the publicity, Apple itself responded, announcing that it would for the first time allow third-party inspections of its Chinese manufacturing facilities.

NPR's "Marketplace" reporter Rob Schmitz also had spent a great deal of time in China and reported on working conditions there. He, too, heard the Mr. Daisey segment—and he told his bosses at NPR that there were facts included in it that did not ring true. He was given the go ahead to do independent reporting.

Less than three months later, Glass aired the following retraction:

I have difficult news. We've learned that Mike Daisey's story about Apple in China—which we broadcast in January—contained significant fabrications. We're retracting the story because we can't vouch for its truth. This is not a story we commissioned. It was an excerpt of Mike Daisey's acclaimed one-man show "The Agony and the Ecstasy of Steve Jobs," in which he talks about visiting a factory in China that makes iPhones and other Apple products.

The China correspondent for the public radio show "Marketplace" tracked down the interpreter that Daisey hired when he visited Shenzhen China. The interpreter disputed much of what Daisey has been saying on stage and on our show. On this week's episode of *This American Life*, we will devote the entire hour to detailing the errors in "Mr. Daisey Goes to the Apple Factory."

Daisey lied to me and to *This American Life* producer Brian Reed during the fact checking we did on the story, before it was broadcast. That doesn't excuse the fact that we never should've put this on the air. In the end, this was our mistake.

Subsequent inspections at Foxconn plants did reveal numerous violations of agreements to working conditions there. Mr. Daisey, in subsequent interviews, has said that while the specifics of his allegations are fabrications, the overall indictment of Apple is "true."

## Micro Issues

1. Justify Schmitz's decision to go to his editors, who work for the same organization that broadcasts "This American Life," asking to reinvestigate this story?
2. Download the original Mr. Daisey piece and the *New York Times* investigative report. Examine the sources for each. What principles regarding "knowing" and "telling" the truth emerge?
3. Was the retraction that Ira Glass provided ethically justifiable? Why?

## Midrange Issues

1. Many reporters work in countries where they do not speak the native language(s). What are the risks to accurate reporting when the individual journalist does not understand the words that are being spoken? Should “helpers” such as translators receive some byline or on-air credit for their assistance with such coverage?
2. What journalistic norms made Mr. Daisey’s accounts so believable? How do you see those norms expressed in other investigative reports?
3. The *New York Times* has never had to retract any of its reporting on this issue. Evaluate the distinctions between the *Times* report and the Mr. Daisey piece based on the ethical news values outlined in this chapter.

## Macro Issues

1. How should journalists treat sources that lie to them, particularly after the lie has been discovered? Is what Ira Glass did in his retraction ethical?
2. Is Mr. Daisey right—even though his facts were wrong? Was the overall story “true”? What definition of truth do you use in responding to this question?

## CASE 2-F

### WHEN IS OBJECTIVE REPORTING IRRESPONSIBLE REPORTING?

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Amanda Laurens, a reporter for a local daily newspaper, covers the city mayor’s office, where yesterday she attended a 4 p.m. press conference. The mayor, Ben Adams, read a statement accusing Evan Michaels, a city council member, of being a “paid liar” for the pesticide industry. “Councilman Michaels,” the mayor said at the press conference, “has intentionally distorted the facts about the effects of certain pesticides on birds indigenous to the local area.” “Mr. Michaels,” the mayor continued, “is on the payroll of a local pesticide manufacturer,” and his views on the effects of pesticides on bird life “are necessarily tainted.”